

CALLE-MARTÍN, Javier & Miguel Ángel CASTAÑO-GIL 2013. *A Late Middle English Remedy-book (MS Wellcome 542, ff. 1r-20v). A Scholarly Edition* (Late Middle English Texts 5.) Peter Lang AG, Bern. pp. 183. ISBN: 3-0343-1369-1.



*LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH REMEDY-BOOK (MS WELLCOME 542, ff. 1r-20v) A Scholarly Edition.* Late Middle English Texts 5. Peter Lang AG, Bern is number 5 in the collection *Late Middle English Texts (LMET)* series. This series publishes scientific manuscripts and early prints covering a study of their palaeographic and language features, as it is shown in this number under study, which includes the transcription of a medieval remedy-book (MS Wellcome 542, ff. 1r-20v). The present volume is organised in four different chapters, namely “The Manuscript,” “The Language,” “The Text” and “The Glossary.” The work has been prefaced by medievalist and linguist Irma Taavitsainen.

The preface, “Recipes in Middle English Medical Literature,” emphasises the importance of editing manuscripts and gives the current state of the art of editing Middle English medical recipes, clarifying the importance of non-literary texts and, at the same time, explaining the meaning of recipes. Taavitsainen’s contribution to the book is very significant. She herself has been the author of several articles dealing with recipes both from a linguistic and a cultural perspective (Taavitsainen, 2001; Taavitsainen & Pahta 2004, among others).

Recipes are defined as belonging to utilitarian literature as they “give instructions on how to prepare medicines to cure an illness, how to maintain health or prevent a harmful condition” (p. 13). Taavitsainen also deals briefly with the different electronic catalogues that exist concerning medical texts, emphasising the usefulness of these resources. In her conclusion, she presents this edition as one further step in linguistics and philological studies since it is a contribution to the material available to scholars and researchers.

The first chapter (“The Manuscript”) provides an analysis of the contents of the manuscript, listing other manuscripts with the same contents, which are the *prologue*, *charms* and *other medical formulae*. The authors also give information about the owners, presenting a brief biography of each one, and the way the manuscript was acquired, and the parallel manuscripts, which are a total of 21 copies. The writers explain why they use the term remedy-book to refer to this manuscript and that is because it contains “a collection of recipes including charms, but not a fully developed ‘treatise on bloodletting or urines’ (Keiser 1988: 3365)” (p. 20). In the absence of further considerations, I think the category works well for the volume as it resembles other remedy books in the line of the ones edited in Odgen (1938) and, more recently, Alonso-Almeida (2014).

The second part of this first chapter analyses the codicological aspects, such as material, dimensions and ink, quiring and collation, ruling, foliation, binding and fly-leaves. The manuscript has been written in a quarto size vellum. The black ink is the most used, although the red ink also appears frequently. The text is written in 119 folios, which “present a modern foliation at the top right-hand corner of every folio recto” (p. 29). In this case, more information about collation is badly needed here because the only reference to the manuscripts that can be compared with MS Wellcome 542, ff. 1r–20v, seems to be the listing of 21 parallel manuscripts, but with no further reference or any comparison among these evidences. This collation would greatly benefit the edition but the authors, I guess, may undertake this as future research prospects.

There is a paleographical analysis in which the authors offer the different letterforms found in the manuscript. In this vein, the writers, following Denholm-Young 1954, Hector 1966, and Petti 1977, establish that the letter used is a mixture between the 14th century Anglicana and the 15th century Secretary and include a description of the section titles, which are visually identifiable since they are with a “bigger size written in red ink” (p. 32); numerals, which are Roman figures; punctuation marks (*punctus*, *punctus*

*elevatus* and the *hyphen*); and abbreviations used in the original manuscript. The abbreviations used are contraction, suspension, superior letters, and brevigraphs.

The second chapter, “The Language,” comprises the study of the provenance of the manuscript and the description of the inflections found in the different word classes that are used in the manuscript. To determine the origin of the manuscript, the authors have made a dialectal localisation of the manuscript using the fit-technique, and they have concluded that its provenance is in the county of Norfolk, in a neighbouring area with Cambridge. After this, a morphological study is presented. The description of the inflections used by the scribe and the number of occurrences of each one are provided. In this sense, although the number of instances per inflection is given, there is no reference to the precise location of each case in the text, so the reader cannot find the examples in the text unless he/she conducts an exhaustive analysis. I wonder, however, whether this information is of real value but, if so, a detail description would have been very welcome.

The third chapter, “The Text,” presents the editorial guidelines followed by the authors, who have used a semi-diplomatic edition adapting some guidelines from Petti (1977). The authors have maintained the original spelling, with double ⟨ff⟩ transcribed as ⟨F⟩, and the capital letters at the beginning of each epigraph appear in square brackets. Punctuation does not undergo any alteration and abbreviations have been expanded with the supplied letter in italics. Thus, insertions have been reproduced as ⟨t/e/ye⟩, and marginalia have been included in the textual apparatus. Following this, there is a digitised image of f. 3v of the manuscript and then the transcription starts. In the transcription, the reader can find the different recipes at a glance. The authors have provided editorial line numbers.

The fourth chapter, “The Glossary,” offers a “selected glossary of the Middle English terms found in MS Wellcome 542” (p. 123), without including Latinate terms. This glossary presents the

entries followed by their word class. For this glossary, the *e-MED* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* have been used. The allomorphs and their occurrences have been included in this glossary. In this case, it would have been valuable if the authors had included their localisation in the text to take into account the study of different variations in context. The inclusion of Latinate terms would be also an appreciated aspect to be considered as the authors claim that the glossary is an aid for a better understanding of the edited text.

At the end, the authors give the list of references. This list represents a good deal of the literature written in the topic, and the references are reasonably updated. There are, however, some missing references in the literature, which should be added. Note, for instance, that Carrillo-Linares's (2006) and Garrido-Anes's (2004) works on medical texts have not been mentioned, not even as part of the description of earlier literature.

All in all, this book can be considered as an outstanding contribution to editorial work in the field of early scientific medical manuscripts. These editions can be later used to implement databases of earlier English texts. These compilations would be useful not only for linguists for obvious reasons, but also for students who want to start their professions as philologists. Its internal organisation into the different chapters, even if too concise (between 8–10 pages), makes the book very practical and easy to read and use, emphasising the edition and the glossary as the main and longest parts of the book.

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