

A Middle English Version of the Circa Instans. Edited from Cambridge, CUL, MS Ee.1.13, ed. by Edurne Garrido-Anes, Middle English Texts vol. 59 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020), lvi + 209 pages, 2 illustrations, € 70.00 (paperback) ISBN: 978-382-5347-666.

Commonly referred to as *Circa Instans*, the *Liber de Simplici Medicina* is an important and influential Latin medical treatise written at the School of Salerno in the mid-twelfth century. Attributed to Mattaeus Platearius, the work is an encyclopaedic compilation of ‘simples’ or medicine of natural origin such as animals, plants or minerals that possess curative properties innately and do not require the addition of another ingredient to fulfil its medicinal function. Over the course of four centuries the original Latin work was not only copied extensively, as evinced by its extant manuscript witnesses, but it was circulated widely in medieval and early modern Europe in a variety of vernacular versions including English, German, Dutch, Danish, French, Catalan, and Hebrew (xiv). The focus of the present volume is the Middle English translation of the *Circa Instans* tradition of which there are twenty-nine surviving manuscript witnesses (P. ix), but no dedicated study to date. Edurne Garrido-Anes presents the first edition of a complete Middle English copy of the *Circa Instans* and in doing so significantly advances scholarship on the vernacularisation of the *Liber de Simplici Medicina*.

The preliminary material of the work contains important introductory information including the manuscripts of the Middle English *Circa Instans* (p. ix), the manuscripts of the Latin *Circa Instans* in British and American Libraries as well as other manuscripts consulted in the preparation of the edition (p. x). The abbreviations and short titles employed throughout the book are all delineated, with one small omission, on p. vii. The abbreviation ON for Old Norse is not listed but it occurs alongside OE for Old English in the introductory discussion of

dialectal localisation: ‘The reflex of OE and ON *ā* is always registered as *o* in the text except for a few rare and isolated occurrences of *a* in *sare* (f. 31^r), *hatter* (f.73^v) and *bradder* (f. 37^r)’ (P. liii). This is a tiny detail in an otherwise meticulous and carefully constructed edition that is supported by a broad bibliography brimming with relevant scholarship encompassing early printed editions (pp. 196–208), modern editions and secondary sources (p. 197), and pertinent theses and dissertations (pp. 208–9). This diligently detailed work by Edurne Garrido-Anes is surely set to be consulted by both students and scholars of science and medicine in the medieval and early modern periods.

The informative introduction is tidily subdivided into ten sections which cover the objectives of the project, the Latin original and vernacular versions, the sources of texts, the analogues and influence of the Latin text, the impact and distribution of the English translations of the *Circa Instans*, the version of the *Circa Instans* preserved in Cambridge, CUL, MS Ee.1.13, the chosen text of the edition, the Latin source for this specific Middle English translation of medical treatise, the detailed description of the aforesaid manuscript, its dialectal localisation, and the editorial policy for the edition. The significance of the *Circa Instans* for both medicine and botany is elegantly elucidated in the Introduction where Garrido-Anes notes that the treatise was referenced continually up until the sixteenth century but ‘after the introduction of chemical remedies by the physician Paracelsus ... the *CI* ceased to be copied and printed’ (p. xv). Although the scientific revolution rendered obsolete the remedies contained in *Circa Instans*, the nineteenth century saw a resurgence of scholarly interest in the work, concentrated on the artistic, linguistic, and medical value of the treatise.

The section on the principles of medieval medicine and the predecessors and sources of the medical treatise opens with an introduction to the significance of Salernitan works and shifts to focus on

the history and context necessary to comprehend the value of medical compilations (pp. xvi–xix). A helpful overview of the medieval medicinal practice of restoring the balance of bodily humours (*eucrasis*) by first determining the quality causing the imbalance and subsequently prescribing a medicament in accordance with the Hippocratic doctrine of contraries or his law of similars is provided for the reader (p. xvii). The section is completed by a comprehensive consideration of the classical and medieval sources of the Salernitan treatise, dwelling particularly on Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* (p. xviii). Given its excellent elucidation of medieval medicine and textual relationships, this is certainly a commendable section which enriches the reader's understanding of the value of the *Circa Instans* and medieval medicinal practice in general.

There is unequivocal evidence that the *Circa Instans* and its analogues had a significant influence on medical and botanical literature (pp. xx–xxvi). The illustrated manuscript of the Latin *Circa Instans* known as the *Tractatus de Herbis* was first translated and printed in the French edition *Arbolayre*, which was subsequently translated into the English edition *The Grete Herball* (p. xxiii). Conscientiously charting the influence of the work right up to the seventeenth century to a 1652 publication by Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physician*, which seems to preserve the last vestiges of the *Circa Instans* (p. xxv), Garrido-Anes presents compelling evidence for the importance of the treatise for medical literature and closes this section with a consideration of the references to the text in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary works.

The criteria for identifying the text of the *Circa Instans* in Middle English manuscripts and the circulation the text in England are the paramount points in the succeeding section (pp. xxvi–xxx). To determine whether the text is the *Circa Instans*, the manuscript ought to exhibit one of the following pieces of evidence: a self-identifying statement, or the prologue of the *Circa Instans*, or some rendition of the 'Salernitan core'

(p. xxvii). An extensive examination of more than fifty manuscripts ‘with suspected or proved connections with England’ demonstrates that the Middle English versions were ‘used in English academic, religious, professional, and domestic contexts, both in urban and rural areas’ (p. xxviii). The Middle English manuscripts can be divided into three groups ‘one which is directly rendered from the Salernitan core, and two others in which the *CI* hub was merged with other works’, and it is also possible to categorise further based on their use ‘as a treatise or handbook, as a recipe or remedy book, or as easy reference tables’ (p. xxix). Garrido-Anes’s investigation into the translation and transmission of the *Circa Instans* in medieval England successfully establishes that the English version is of equal importance and is deserving of equal study as the Latin original.

The rationale for selecting Cambridge, CUL, MS Ee.1.13 as the base text for the edition over the other manuscript witnesses is found at pp. xxxvi–xlvi. Apart from being in better material condition than its counterparts, the manuscript contains a complete A-Z list of simples and includes important evidence of engagement from its readers and its use within the domestic sphere. The justification for the base-text of the edition is followed by a section that explores whether there was a Latin or French model for the translation of the *Circa Instans* preserved in the manuscript (pp. xxxiv–xxxvi). The ‘Examples of Latin, Middle English and French Entries’ table is especially effective in this section for confirming a Latin source given the close correspondence between the Middle English and Latin entries (p. xxxv). The introduction then delves into an in-depth discussion of the manuscript that is sub-divided into several sub-sections devoted to the date, cover and binding, the physical description, collation and catchwords, script and punctuation, decoration, lists of contents, and ownership and later history of the manuscript (pp. xxxvi–xlvi). The contents of the codex are especially noteworthy as the compiler

of this manuscript miscellany clearly had a prevailing interest in collecting alchemical, medicinal, and even practical household recipes, which suggests that the manuscript may have been owned by 'landowners or ploughmen rather than university-trained physicians or professional practitioners' (p. xliv). The companion texts of the *Circa Instans* include recipes in Latin and English, some medical and some related to domestic tasks such as dyeing, urine texts, an agricultural treatise by Nicolas Bollard, a treatise with Middle English alchemical recipes, and the well-known alchemical tract, the Philosopher's Stone (pp. xli–xliv).

The penultimate section of the introduction is a study of the dialectal localisation of the text by employing the methodology proposed in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English (LALME)* (pp. xlvi–liii). Due to the domestic and personal use of the codex, the 'provincialisms and localisms' which were often omitted in formal or official texts were retained (p. xlvi). After an examination of this existing evidence, the authors of *LALME* 'point to Suffolk for the *CI* text and to Norfolk for the rest of the works' in the codex (p. xlvi). In the editorial policy (pp. liv–lvi), Garrido-Anes succinctly explains that the principal objective of the edition is to present the text of the *Circa Instans* 'as it was received and perceived by its medieval readers' in this particular manuscript and not to reconstruct the text's archetype (p. liv).

The editorial conventions are effectively employed to deliver a neat and well-presented transcription of the text (pp. 1–89). The original spelling in the manuscript is faithfully represented in the transcription but the word-division, capitalisation, and punctuation have been normalised according to modern practice. The manuscript layout is indicated consistently throughout the edition too by square brackets facilitating those interested in conducting a minute analysis of specific entries. The critical apparatus presents readers with the manuscript's

close textual connection to three other manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 114^r-195^v (A); London, British Library, MS Additional 29301, ff. 64^{vb}-89^{ra} (B); and London, Medical Society, MS 131, ff. 3^r-56^v (M) (p. xxxiii). The listing of salient variants in the critical apparatus as well as the ordered numbering of the transcription in the left margin is unobtrusive and incredibly helpful in guiding the reader through the edition.

The reader's understanding of the text is substantially supported by the commentary and glossary sections. The commentary clarifies any challenging concepts and supplies additional contextual information to make the text more accessible to the reader (pp. 90–123). Similarly, the glossary makes readily available to the reader, the anatomical, medical, and botanical terminology in the Middle English language (pp. 124–75). In a text characterised by an abundance of technical and medical terms and references, the commentary and glossary are much-appreciated assets for the reader.

Another advantage of this edition is the inclusion of two appendices. Appendix 1 is a comparative table of entries in the Latin text which marks the correspondences with the four Middle English manuscripts considered in this edition (pp. 176–80). Appendix 2 lists the marginal material found in the CUL Ee.1.13 vernacular version of the *Circa Instans* in a clear and precise order (pp. 181–95). The folio number and the respective margin for each annotation is presented alongside information pertaining to the date of the hands responsible for the annotation or the passage that it accompanies are included in parentheses. Footnotes are used to explain the context of specific recurring annotations such as *fem.* the abbreviation of the Latin word *femina*, also occurring as *fe. f.* or *nota fe.* in the appendix, which is added 'next to the sections dealing with women's illnesses' by a fifteenth-century hand (p. 183).

The culmination of more than fifteen years of research, Eburne Garrido-Ane's edition is an exceptional example of scholarship that accomplishes its aim to fill an important lacuna in the study of the *Circa Instans* and its Middle English vernacular version with admirable attentiveness. Replete with its invaluable introduction and indispensable accompanying material, the edition is now an essential reference resource for studying the distribution of medical knowledge in medieval and early modern England.

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