

A Middle English Witness of Guy de Chauliac's *On Bloodletting*

Abstract:

As Keiser fittingly remarked, the “full extent of the translation of learned medical treatises into the vernacular in later medieval England has only begun to be recognized” (1998, 3645). This idea still resonates twenty-five years later: while the last decades have witnessed a growing interest in vernacular scientific texts with the compilation of historical corpora, specific studies and digital editing projects, there is still much work left to be done. The present paper tries to contribute to the knowledge of vernacular learned medical texts in English by focusing on a witness of the treatise *On Bloodletting* by Guy de Chauliac, a fourteenth-century French physician and author of the work *Chirurgia magna*. This was one of the most influential medieval surgical texts and was translated from Latin into several vernacular European languages. The treatise under consideration is housed in folios 165v-166r of Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 307. This manuscript constitutes a fine example of a Middle English medical compendium: it is a compact codex in one volume containing (i) an anonymous Middle English treatise on humours, elements, uroscopy, complexions, etc. (ff. 1r-13r); (ii) the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (ff. 13r-145v); (iii) an anonymous Middle English treatise on buboes (ff. 145v-146v); (iv) the treatise *The Sekenesse of Wymmen* (ff. 149v-165v); (v) the treatise *On Bloodletting* by Guy de Chauliac (ff. 165v-166v); (vi) and a Middle English version of the *Circa instans* (ff. 167r-172v; see Esteban-Segura 2015). The whole manuscript has been labelled *System of Physic* (Young and Aitken 1908, 245-46; Cross 2004, 24-25). It dates from the first half/middle of the fifteenth century.

The objectives of this paper are the following: first, to investigate the transmission of the text; second, to assess the main codicological and palaeographical features of the treatise; third, to explain the principles followed in the edition of the text, which remains hitherto unedited; and finally, to examine the language of the text in order to locate it geographically. The physical analysis of the codex will be carried out by close, first-hand inspection of the manuscript as well as of its digitised images. The edition of the text will adjust to the semi-diplomatic tenets, which postulate faithfulness to the original witness. As for the linguistic analysis, it will be based on the methodology put forward by the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)* (McInstosh et al. 1986). The appraisal of all the aspects mentioned above will help to yield a complete picture of the treatise and to place it in its material and cultural context.

(418 words)

References

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Keywords

GUL MS Hunter 307; Guy de Chauliac; bloodletting; medical prose; Middle English