

Book Reviews

Tony Hunt, *Anglo-Norman medicine: volume II, shorter treatises*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, D S Brewer, 1997, pp. vii, 284, £49.50 (0-85991-523-9).

This second and final volume of *Anglo-Norman medicine* presents critical editions of four French medical texts copied in England in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries: a brief deontological tract; a verse text on women's diseases which derives from the Latin *Liber de sinthomatibus mulierum* (Book on the conditions of women, one of the so-called *Trotula* treatises) probably via an early thirteenth-century Old French prose rendition; a general treatise on diseases arranged in head-to-toe order entitled *Euperiston*; and, finally, a second general treatise, here called the Trinity *Practica*, which is a lengthy compilation of medical receipts and prognostic material in French, Latin and some English. Hunt supplements his edition of the first text with editions of the Latin and Old French versions, and the second text with the Latin original. Glossaries accompany the first three Anglo-Norman texts.

As with his many other publications of Anglo-Norman medical texts and receipts, Hunt, an authority on medieval French, has set out to make available hitherto unpublished technical works in all their lexical bounty. Rather than merely transcribing the Anglo-Norman texts (all of which survive in unique copies), Hunt has laboured to extract as much meaning out of them as possible, correcting obvious linguistic or grammatical errors as well as those suggested to him by comparison with the Latin originals. (Unlike volume I, the annotations in this volume appear conveniently at the bottom of each page so that editorial interventions and comments are more readily grasped.) These are critical editions that can be used with confidence by scholars from any range of disciplines. Indeed, the Latin editions are as valuable as the Anglo-Norman, for Hunt has searched extensively to find Latin versions (themselves unpublished) that most closely approximate the texts that must have been used by the medieval translators.

As with any study that brings such a wealth of new material to light, Hunt's work generates a host of new questions. Hunt himself queries whether the term "Anglo-Norman medicine" has any real historical validity. Of the six texts Hunt has edited in these two volumes, three have lexical features that hint at composition on the Continent rather than in French-speaking England. Was there, then, anything truly original about medicine written (and presumably practised) in the French vernacular in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England? Hunt notes that the four translations (Roger's *Chirurgia* and Platearius' *Practica brevis* from volume one, and the deontological and gynaecological texts in this volume) reflect the well-known dominance of Italian medicine. Even the compilations, however, reflect this same dominance: I noted nearly two dozen recipes from the Salernitan *De curis mulierum* (On treatments for women) embedded in the Trinity *Practica* along with other Salernitan material, and there is little in either compilation that does not seem to have obvious affiliations with Continental medical traditions. In addition to sources, these texts raise important questions about audience. Does the use of verse for the Anglo-Norman *Liber de sinthomatibus mulierum*, for example, suggest that its purported audience, women (who are addressed directly in the opening line), was expected to absorb its precepts aurally (since verse could more readily be committed to memory) rather than by direct reading? Perhaps, but the lesser literacy (and Latinity) of that particular audience does not explain the function of the other texts nor the dynamics that motivated the use of the vernacular, which so clearly remained in easy juxtaposition to Latin throughout this period. Hunt happily leaves these questions to other scholars who, just as happily, will benefit from Hunt's scholarly industry for many years to come.

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