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De boke of ypocras in Late Middle English Manuscripts

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Irene Diego Rodríguez (UNED) has published *De boke of ypocras in Late Middle English Manuscripts*, a work that deserves our attention for many reasons. This book is concerned with a linguistic study of a series of fifteenth-century copies of an astrology text, *De boke of ypocras*, which also presents the appropriate semi-diplomatic transcriptions of the witnesses. Yet, all this is combined with an innovative methodological proposal for the dialectal analysis, widening the scope in which this type of texts is encountered and studied. Despite the rising interest in medical scientific texts in recent years (De la Cruz & Diego-Rodríguez, 2021; Esteve-Ramos, 2019; Taatvisainen, Pahta & Mäkinen, 2005 or Honkapohja, 2017 among others) this publication shows not only a work referring to a neglected area such as medieval astrology, but also an approach which is innovative and interdisciplinary. It combines codicology, palaeography, historical linguistics, corpus linguistics and dialectology, which makes it an interesting read not only from a linguistic but also cultural and historical point of view.

The book has an Introduction followed by five chapters, references and the appendixes. The Introduction outlines the aims of the study and it continues by summarising the following parts

of the book. Chapter one reviews the socio-historical background placing the research in a broad and necessary context. The author thoroughly discusses the historical development of medical practice, encompassing a global overview of its development. Here we are presented with the different approaches to medicine, with a highlight on Hippocratic material on medicine and very fundamentally his theory of the four humours. The influence of Hippocrates is also discussed as it becomes a pivotal aspect of the book's topic. It continues by explaining the link between medicine and astrology and describes the categorisation of the astrological medical writing. This chapter, which delves into the basic of medieval medical astrology, provides with a necessary context for the interpretation of the analysed material further on.

In Chapter II we read a detailed account of the text sources and witnesses, as well as a thorough description of the *De boke of Ypocras*. This includes an account of the material, collation, binding, and decoration. I would particularly like to highlight the detail of the codicological description, as it clearly reflects the author's background and training in this area of knowledge. Problems of adscription are also identified, along with others shown by bibliographical errors and catalogue description. This is a long and laborious process -albeit a very important one- and shows the search for a meticulous and well-established methodology, which is the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter III proposes an innovative approach to the analysis of the gathered data. These data are analysed linguistically by using the well-known Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME) in its current electronic version (2013). She then uses a distinction between the so-called diagnostic forms and those which are more generally found, in order to face the limitations of the Atlas when dealing with scientific texts. Diagnostic forms -in this context- are those which stand for a special value in a determining dialect. The author uses these two criteria are then they are combined when attempting to identify each of the linguistic profiles (LP) associated with each manuscript. Subsequently, results are then compared with the resulting questionnaire derived from the transcription, with a careful and detailed description of both similarities and differences between the LP and each of the manuscript witnesses. As a result, a subset of manuscripts has been associated with Norfolk and one is related to the area of Northamptonshire. The author also refers to a substratum of forms located in Somerset. I would, however, point to the fact that the fit-technique is not deployed which implies that each linguistic profile is considered individually. All in all, results are solidly explained, and the conclusions show the success of this innovative and robust methodology.

Chapter IV moves on to the analysis of the Linguistic Profiles obtained by applying the *ad hoc* method designed for this work. In this chapter, data are very neatly presented and tables, graphs and maps are presented. It is easy to follow and well presented.

Chapter V show the concluding remarks. These present a well-structured research, founded and reliable. Results have a solid justification and from them we learn about medical astrology

and Middle English dialects in an innovative way, broadening our knowledge on the topic. Bibliography is updated and thorough, and encompasses all the fundamentals of the different topics it deals with also including the most recent publication of the topic. References are followed by the transcription policies (Appendix 1) and the transcription of the witnesses (Appendix 2). The latter offers a solid base for future research, making an important contribution to the academic community with an interest in this area.

As a conclusion, this book represents a solid and thorough approach to an under-studied text of an area -such as medieval astrology- which has not received much attention. It reflects the work of a well-trained specialist and a dedicated philologist, and it certainly stands out as a detailed and well-informed linguistic and cultural study of the text *De boke of Ypocras* and its witnesses, and it should be read by historians of science, philologists and anyone interested in medieval manuscripts alike.



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