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## EARLY MODERN ENGLISH RECIPES AS A MIRROR OF THE TIME PERIOD

### Abstract

This article explores several Early Modern English recipe compilations extant in medical manuscripts through a purposely-built corpus in order to investigate the recipe genre as a mirror of that time period. Probably no other genre is so permeable to the changes in the cultural and social spheres, given that recipes are reflection of the contemporary society where they are written. This fact is especially noticeable in the abundance of remedies for some ailments of particular concern in the early modern period. Diseases were mainly treated with plants known from Antiquity, but Early Modern English recipes also incorporated new substances from the Continent and, specially, from America.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Recipe genre, Early Modern English recipes, Early Modern English diseases, Recipes as reflection of the time period, New World commodities, Manuscript recipe collections.

### 1. Introduction

Medical recipes have a long-standing tradition from Antiquity. In Britain, several *receptaria* from the Middle Ages have come down to us, both in Latin and in Old English. During the late Middle English period the vernacularisation of scientific texts allowed the compilation of recipe collections in English as part of the “Englishing” process of medical texts. Medical writing in general experienced a growth of interest as a result of the

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<sup>1</sup> I follow Barrera-Osorio’s use of the word *America* to refer to the American continent. According to him, “this usage was already in place in the sixteenth century and is still current in many American countries, with the exception of the United States, where ‘America’ means only the United States” (2006: 12).

increasingly dominant position of English as a language of science and medicine, the proliferation of new diseases, the discovery of the New World and a fast developing print culture, among others (Pahta and Taavitsanen 2011: 1–8). Subsequently, recipe compilations also witnessed a dramatic increase in their production and publication during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This article focuses on the examination of manuscript medical recipes in the Early Modern English period.<sup>2</sup> Recipes retain their prototypical features over the centuries (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 157), but introduce innovations as well. Thus, early modern recipes replicate the medieval structural pattern where the text begins with a title specifying the purpose, the ingredients, followed by the preparation and application phases and a final efficacy phrase. Some of these components are optional, which means not all of them are present in every single recipe. But rather than on the linguistic features and structural patterns of the recipe, my interest lies in the exploration of recipes as a mirror of the contemporary society where they are written. Thus, recipes often tell us “about the cultural expectations and parameters of any given society” (Pennell 2009: 15). Probably no other genre is so permeable to the changes in the cultural and social spheres, reflecting fashion, traditions and conceptions of their time of writing. This fact is especially perceived in the abundance of remedies for some ailments of particular concern in the period. The outbreak of given diseases, such as the French pox or the epidemic plague, which afflicted London at the end of the seventeenth century, have an influence on the number of recipes found for these and other ailments during the early modern period. Some of these new diseases were treated with plants and other components known from Antiquity, but Early Modern English recipes also incorporated new substances discovered in the Continent and, specially, in America. Thus, the aim of the present study is to investigate the recipe genre as reflection of the time period, with specific focus on the vocabulary related to diseases and ingredients to treat them contained in the Early Modern English medical manuscripts.

The article is structured in the following way: after the introduction to the topic, the methodology process is explained, followed by a section on the availability of new commodities from America. After that, the most prevalent diseases in the early modern period are examined and illustrated with passages extracted from the corpus of medical manuscript recipes compiled for the research. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the analysis are presented in the final section.

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<sup>2</sup> The Early Modern English period here is understood to cover from 1500 to 1800 approximately.

## 2. Methodology

In order to undertake the research presented here, a purposely-built corpus of mainly unexplored manuscripts has been compiled. The corpus comprises recipe collections ranging from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. These collections are kept at the Glasgow University Library (henceforth GUL), the Wellcome Library and the British Library. The material has been balanced to include *receptaria* from the three centuries selected for the analysis, even though the number of recipes in each manuscript varies. Thus, sixteenth-century texts are GUL Hunter 93, GUL Hunter 95 and Wellcome 634. Some of the seventeenth-century ones are compiled on the verge of the new century but will mainly reflect the habits and recommendations from the decades previous to their compilation. In this sense, manuscripts GUL Ferguson 61, British Library Additional 27466, Wellcome 3009 and Wellcome 7113 are framed within the seventeenth century. Finally, as samples of eighteenth-century manuscripts, GUL Hunter 43, GUL Ferguson 15 and GUL Ferguson 43 have been selected for the study, as well as Wellcome 1322, which started being elaborated in the seventeenth century but whose compilation extends until 1750.

The transcription of the manuscript contents under consideration have not been published, with the exception of GUL Hunter 93, which entails firstly the necessary access to the texts, either through web digitalisations in the case of the Wellcome manuscripts and the British Library Additional 27466 or through the visit to the Glasgow University Library<sup>3</sup> to consult the material housed in this library. Secondly, the transcription of the contents was necessary to process the information contained in the manuscripts. Thirdly, the extraction of the data was undertaken manually by reading through the texts. Finally, the items were identified in each manuscript and classified in terms of whether they were an ingredient or a disease in order to be able to process the data easily.

The etymological information of the ingredients and the diseases, as well as the dates for the introduction into the English language, rely on the information provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*). Nevertheless, other lexicographic references have also been taken into consideration, such as the *Lexicons of Early Modern English* (hereafter *LEME*), the *Middle English Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary* by Norri to check whether the word appeared already in the Middle Ages, even if the *OED* dated it in the Renaissance period.

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### 3. New Commodities from the New World: Of what avail?

Most recipe collections in the corpus were probably compiled to be used by the author in the domestic area. According to Leong and Pennell (2007: 136), remedies prepared in the household environment relied upon easily accessible ingredients, but new substances from America are also found in *receptaria*. The encounter with the New World in 1492 made available a whole new array of substances, to the extent that America became Europe's store for new products. In Barrera-Osorio's words (2006: 5), during the reign of the Spanish king Philip II the overseas empire became a source of wealth and commodities:

The New World was a source of wealth (primarily silver but also potential commodities), and Philip continued his father's policy of fostering and supporting commercial activities there. The center of these activities was the search for commodities and the improvement of precious technologies and instruments. These activities were based in turn on the empirical study of nature.

Nevertheless, the study of nature in the New World was not without problems, as Barrera-Osorio notes (2006: 102):

Perhaps the single most important difference between the development of natural history in the Atlantic world and in the Old World was that the natural products of the Atlantic world lacked a reference in classical traditions. Not a single classical or religious text could provide information on an avocado or cochineal (an organic red dye). Sometimes the texts did provide a clue, but it was never specific enough.

Thus, new products from America were used because native Indian people have proved their efficacy in the treatment of some diseases, but often also because they were considered sophisticated being new to the market. The outbreak of unknown diseases in the Old World left physicians unarmed, as there were no classical remedies to resort to. This could be the case of the new disorders, such as syphilis, but also of the plague, scurvy or rickets to which several medical preparations were applied, many of which included newly introduced American commodities.

During the early modern period the distinction between food and medicine was not firmly established (Francia 2014: 119). Subsequently, the newly discovered ingredients could be used as one or the other. As the novelties took some time to enter the British diet, it seems that the earlier the manuscript is, the fewer American goods it contains. Thus, Wellcome 634, being a sixteenth-century text, includes mainly medieval ingredients and the early modern novelties are kept to a minimum.

Likewise, some of the new products introduced from America may not have had a medical use properly, but were definitely employed for sanitary purposes. For instance, tobacco is recorded in few manuscripts in the corpus: Hunter 93, (folios 269 and 270), Wellcome 3009 (folio 40v) and

Wellcome 1322 (folios 50r and 50v). In the latter manuscript, both recipes are used to keep bugs away from the bedstead. Thus, one can read *A Receipt for Buggs*:

- (1) Take a pail of Water and put to it some unslaked Lime and let it stand all Night then pour of the Water clear and Boyle in it Tobacco stalks and Coloquintida, boyl them well and strain it wash the floor of the room & all the wainscott and Jester & Bedstead let it dig on & do it 3 times or more together it was never known to fail. [Wellcome 1322, folio 50v]

## 4. Diseases of the Early Modern English period

### 4.1. Syphilis

The theories about the origins of syphilis are mainly two, according to Cartwright and Biddiss (2000: 42–62). On the one hand, the first theory links the introduction of the disease into Europe with the ships coming from the West Indies. After several months from his departure, Christopher Columbus arrived at Palos in March 1493 with a crew of forty-four men and ten natives of the West Indies. According to Cartwright and Biddiss, “the crew were disbanded and some are said to have joined the troops of Gonzalo de Cordoba who marched with Charles VIII to Naples” (2000: 44). Charles VIII of France invaded Italy in the Autumn of 1494 and finally attacked Naples in February 1495. According to the above-mentioned scholars, “the army was not, in fact, composed of Frenchmen only, but also of mercenaries from Germany, Switzerland, England, Hungary, Poland and Spain” (2000: 44). Thus, the disease was characteristically blamed on foreigners, as foreign armies contributed to its spreading. Subsequently, Englishmen called it “the French pox” or “the French disease”, rendering the Latin denomination *morbus gallicus*, or simply “the great pox”, whereas Frenchmen named it “the Spanish disease” and “la grosse vérole”. In turn, Spaniards used the denomination “el mal francés” (*the French disease*) to designate the illness.

On the other hand, the second theory associates syphilis with Africa, from where it could have been introduced into Spain and Portugal by the importation of slaves. In 1442 a Portuguese expedition captured several Moors and took them on board as prisoners. Furthermore, an extension of the African connection places the introduction of the disease at an earlier date: “Equatorial Africans found their way to Egypt, Arabia, Greece and Rome and they may have brought yaws with them” (Cartwright and Biddiss 2000: 46). Cartwright and Biddiss add that some historians link yaws with leprosy and think that it was brought from the Levant by crusaders, but this disease was in fact syphilis.

Leonardo Fioravanti, a sixteenth-century healer, argues for a different origin story. According to him, the disease was rooted in cannibalism, since several episodes of cannibalism “had allegedly occurred among some armies during the recent European wars” (Elmer 2004: 146). Any of the theories mentioned above stigmatised syphilis patients as people who had transgressed the boundaries of decent behaviour. This idea extended the belief that the disease was a punishment for sinful practices. Therefore, the moral aspect along with the fact that it was highly contagious gave the pox a particular character.

Whichever the actual origin was, the truth is that syphilis became rampant in Europe in the sixteenth century. The way of treating it was often with goods from the New World. One of these products was a resin known as *guaiacum* from *Guaiacum officinale* and *Guaiacum sanctum*, indigenous trees to South America and the West Indies. Wear (2000: 70) comments on the fact that especially *guaiacum* was imported in large revenues to cure the pox and that “the monopoly in its trade was sold by the Spanish Crown to the Fuggers, the wealthiest bankers in Europe”. The Fugger family benefited from selling the drug at high prices, which meant that only very wealthy sufferers could afford the treatment.

In the corpus, several manuscripts refer to the use of *guaiacum* for the French pox. One of them is GUL Hunter 43, in which *guaiacum* and sarsaparilla, both native to the New World, are prescribed for the French pox:

- (2) A Wonderfull good Diet for ye French Pox. Take Coloquintida drachm ij. The bark of Guajacum, Sarsaparilla, Liquerishe ana. ounce semisse. [GUL, Hunter 43, folio 3]

In turn, in GUL Hunter 95, several recipes for the same disease containing similar ingredients, among others, are included:

- (3) Recipe. ligni guiaci libra ij, Cortexe ounce ij, sarsaperilla libra semis. sarsafra Cardus benedictus. manipulus. 4. Camamell flowers meletott flowres ana manipulus ij pollipodi libra semis liquerish ounce .6. sene libra .j. hermodacteles ounce 6. turbit ounce 8. blacke helebor ounce .6: pulp Colloquinted a ounce iiij aneseedes ounce iij ginger. ounce: v semis. Cinamon. ounce ij put all these beinge prepared in aglasse boddye and Couer them ij fingers on with speritt of wine or distilled vineger. [GUL, Hunter 95, folio 2r]
- (4) Recipe. a sarsaparilla Sarsaphras, sene ana ounce iiij Lignum. vitae ounce viij sticadose, sepithimum. ana ounce ij aprickt rubarbe ana ounce. semis. boyle these in .6. quartes of water. & .ij. quartes of white wine & boyle them to the consumption of halfe & drinke of it .3. times adaye. [GUL, Hunter 95, folio 4r]
- (5) Recipe guiaci libra. semis. sarsaparilla ounce iij. China. ounce. j. sheep these in :8: libra of faire water. 20: houres then ad ounce. ij of the rootes of vipers grasse, of Cardus benedictus, ffumitory, ana. manipulus. j. then boyle these till the halfe be spente & when it is almost enough boyled ad: ounce ij of sarsaphras & ounce j. of liquerish & when it is cold strayne it for. vse / [GUL, Hunter 95, folio 9v]

Apart from the well-known *guaiacum* and sarsaparilla, in the example above (5), another foreign plant is prescribed: China-grass or *Bœhmeria (Urtica) nivea*, which is “a small shrubby plant with broadly cordate leaves, native to China and Sumatra; also the strong fibre obtained from the inner bark of this shrub, used in the making of grass-cloth” (*OED*). Apparently, it gets its name from its country of origin, *China*. Other early names were *Radix Chinæ* and *Tuber Chinæ*. In turn, *sassafras* is a plant native to America and Asia that is also recommended in GUL Hunter 95 recipes (examples 3, 4 and 5). It is widely used in the period for several ailments. Thus, apart from being used for the treatment of syphilis, in Hunter 95 it is used for the *The Sanacle drinke* (f. 3v), in a *purging diet* (f. 7r and f. 8r), and in a *Chyna broth for a consumption* (f. 7v).

Alternatively, syphilis could be treated with mercury in the form of ore cinnabar. Giorgio Sommariva of Verona tried mercury for his patients as early as 1496. Thus, in GUL Hunter 43, instructions are given on how to prepare an unguent of quicksilver (mercury) for the French pox:

- (6) An Unguent of Quicksilver For ye French Poixe. Take Hoggs Grease, Oyle of Baies ana. ounce iiiii. Oyle of Petre, Litharge of Gold, Litharge of Silver ana. ounce ii. Oil of Chamomil ounce i. Quicksilver ounce iiiii. Mingle altogether & make an Unguent & use it as ye other. This Unguent is for those yat will not take nor cannot take other medicines. [GUL, Hunter 43, folio 6]

As can be observed, apart from mercury other metals were used, such as litharge of gold and litharge of silver, all of them common ingredients in medieval recipe compilations.

#### 4.2. The Plague

If the Middle Ages suffered from the Black Death, the early modern period “also frames the era of recurrent epidemics of bubonic plague in Europe” (Carmichael 2008: 280). According to this author, the “plague appeared in Europe at least once every generation between 1350 and 1720” (Carmichael 2008: 280). This explains the abundance of remedies found for the disease. Some areas in Europe were so heavily affected by the plague in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Carmichael suggests the economic decline of the Mediterranean area of North-Central Italy and Castile could be the result of the demise of population in the seventeenth century due to the previous plague epidemics (Carmichael 2008: 281).

In the corpus, the plague is a recurrent illness that is present in every single manuscript with few exceptions, like Glasgow University Library Ferguson 15. Its absence in this compilation is understandable, since most of the recipes contained in this manuscript are culinary and only a few of them have a proper medical character. The disease is to be beaten by means of herbal remedies and other ingredients, such as the one provided in Lady

Fanshawe's recipe book, where *Dr Burg's directions in time of Plague* are to be followed:

- (7) Take three pints of Malmsey, boile in it a handfull of Sage, a handfull of Rue, till a pint be wasted, then straine it and set it over ye fire againe and putt thereto a pennyworth of long Pepper, halfe an ounce of Ginger, a Quarter of an Ounce of Nutmeg, all beaten together, then let it boile a little and take if of the fire & put to it 4 pennyworth of Mithridate, 2 pennyworth of Treacle, & a quarter of a pint of the best Angelico water. [Wellcome 7113, folio 5]

Here the reader finds ingredients that were common in the Middle Ages, such as sage, rue, long pepper, ginger, nutmeg or treacle, but also ingredients such as mithridate, which according to the *OED* refers to “any of various medicinal preparations, usually in the form of an electuary compounded of many ingredients, believed to be a universal antidote to poison or a panacea”. Its first recording in the *OED* goes back to 1528, although, according to Elmer (2004: 11), *mithridatum* “was a version of theriac attributed to Mithridates VI, the king of Pontus (120–63 BCE). That it was still in use at this date attests to the persistence of the belief in this ancient and miraculous antidote to all poisons”. In fact, the word *mithridatum* appears in the *Middle English Dictionary* with the first quotation circa 1425 gathered by Norri (2016: 684) in a text by Bernard Liliun in Ashmole 1505 (folio 22r): “3if he be ybede to be mete & hap any suspecioun or he go þerto, he schal ete notys oþer auellanes or fygus or ruwe oþer metridatum oþer tiriacam [L: mitridatum]”. Thus, the medical compound was attested with its Latin name since the Middle Ages in Britain, although the Anglicisation of the denomination is only recorded from the Renaissance onwards.

Similarly, angelico water does not seem to be present in Middle English recipes (see De la Cruz and Diego forthcoming). Presumably it should have been prepared from angelica, the ‘angelic herb,’ or ‘root of the Holy Ghost’, so named on account of its repute against poison and pestilence, probably from the fragrant smell and aromatic taste of its root. The plague must have been particularly pestilent, as several recipes against the smell can be found. One of them is *A Parfume against ye Plague*:

- (8) Take Sage, Bay leaves, Hyssop, Rosemary ana. as much of each as you please, frankinsence a little quantity, make a powder of all: of which burn in a Chafinge dish for a Parfume. [GUL, Hunter 43, folio 17]

Likewise, angelica root is used *To make a perfume to smell vnto against ye Plague*:

- (9) ffirst take halfe a pinte of red Rosewater and putt thereto the quantitie of a hasellnutt of Venice Treacle or Metredate stirring them together Vntill they be well infused, then putt therto a gr of an ounce of Synnamon broken into small peeces and bruised, in a Morter, xij Cloues bruised, ye quantitie of a good hasell nut of Angelica Roote slyced very thyn, as much of Zedoarie rotte slyced, 3 or 4



spoonfulls of white wyne vinigar, so putt them altogether into a glasse, and stop it verie close, and shake it two or three tymes a day for two or three dayes. [GUL, Ferguson 43, folio 10r]

Apart from angelica root and mithridate that I have commented on above, a new ingredient to the period mentioned in (9) is *Venice treacle*, which, according to the *OED*, is “an electuary composed of many ingredients and supposed to possess universal alexipharmic and preservative properties”. It was first attested in 1617.

Regarding the acquisition of the illness, from Hippocratic times the theory of *miasma* was present in the spreading of some diseases emphasising the impact of environment upon health. In the Middle Ages it was applied to the Black Death, whereby the epidemics were thought to be due to a miasma, a noxious form of “bad air” emanating from rotting organic matter, which would cause the disease. Early Modern English medicine was still very much rooted in classical medicine (Taavitsainen 2010: 12), whereby diseases are either the result of the diet or the air we inhale, according to Hippocrates (De la Villa et al. 2003: 47). Thus, the idea that the plague could have spread by the air was well established in early modern medical circles.

### 4.3. Scurvy

Even if scurvy had been known for centuries, it is a disease whose prevalence was probably higher in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries especially in sailors, but also in other groups within the society. In fact, Carmichael (2008: 285) claims that it was experienced by the most impoverished city dwellers. All in all, the increasingly long journey undertaken by navies and merchant fleets resulted in the effects being more prevalent among sailors. In this vein, according to Elmer’s estimations (2004: 276), “on long voyages a ship could lose between a quarter and a third of its crew to the disease, not to mention those who were temporarily incapacitated”. The high mortality rate among the navy personnel inspired James Lind, a Scottish surgeon in the Royal Navy, to carry out a dietary experiment on those sailors who fell ill with scurvy. Lind published his results in a book, entitled *Treatise of the Scurvy*, in 1753. His proposals for preventing the illness were not adopted immediately, but eventually in 1795 provisions were made to provide lemon juice to “crews who had been on salted provisions for six weeks” (Elmer 2004: 276).

The fact that citrus fruits were good for the scurvy was already known in the sixteenth century, as attested in John Feckenham’s *Book of Medical Receipts*, which contains a recipe for *An electuary for the skirvie, stoping of the spleene, and abstractions*, as edited by Ortega-Barrera (2002: 295):

- (10) The Cofernes of skiruię grasse, roman wormod and of ginger of each two ounces. Of the flowers of rosemary, Ye pulpe of Cyterne, cofernes of roses woodsorrell, succory; gilliflowers, of each one ounce. [GUL, Hunter 93, folio 260]

In the confection of the electuary several plants are used, among them succory, whose form with initial <s> is a sixteenth century alteration of the medieval form *chicory*, after Middle Low German *suckerie*, Middle Dutch *sûkerie* (Dutch *suikerei*, older Flemish *suykerey*, *succory*), according to the *OED*.

Some panaceas, such as *Aqua Vitae*, were also used to treat scurvy, as in “in any disease where any gross humour aboundeth, as in ye Gout, dropsie, french poxe, scurvey & þe like” (GUL Hunter 43, folio 25), but scurvy grass, which is “a cruciferous plant, *Cochlearia officinalis*, believed to possess anti-scorbutic properties” (*OED*), is the most widely used plant for the disease. Thus, it is found in *An approved drink for ye scurvy*:

- (11) Take of water cresses brookcyme of scurvey grass as much as will yeild 3 pints or 2 quarts of juice let y<sup>r</sup> scurvy grass be ye greatest quaintity then take of saxifrage & sarsaparilla of each a good hand full thin shave'd & sew them in a bag of lawn. or some thin cloth but bruise ye woods be fore you put them into the bag & then have a small firkin of ale of 8 gallons after it hath worke'd put into it ye juice of those herbs befor name'd & ye bagg of saxifrage then stick an orange full of cloves & hang it by a thred in ye firkin it will be fitt' te drink after one day it must be drunk. in ye morning tasting & fast 2 hours after it drink it again at 4 in ye afternoon. [GUL, Ferguson 15, folio 124]

Apart from well-known ingredients, such as saxifrage and water cress, and the mentioned scurvy grass, another plant from the New World is recommended in (11): sarsaparilla. According to the *OED*, it refers to “the dried roots of plants of the various species of *Smilacæ*; esp. Jamaica sarsaparilla, *Smilax officinalis*; also, a medicinal preparation of the root used as an alterative and tonic”. Sarsaparilla is one of the ingredients that is present in all the manuscripts in the corpus. The earliest mentions of sarsaparilla often describe its supposed efficacy in the treatment of syphilis. Besides, it is profusely employed in British Library, Additional 27466. Its compiler, Mary Dogget, recommends its use in connection with diverse ailments. For instance, it is supposed to be good for scurvy (folio 20 and folio 45), but also good *To purge the Blood* (folio 51), *To the shortness of Breath* (folio 89) and *To Sweeten the Blood* (folio 299).

#### 4.4. Rickets

According to Carmichael (2008: 283), “in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, dozens of ‘new’ diseases seemed to demand or defy medical explanation, which resulted in some of the earliest medical descriptions we possess for scurvy, rickets, typhus, syphilis, scarlet fever, the ‘English sweate’ (whatever that was), and even anorexia nervosa”. We cannot be

certain whether rickets is a new disease, but Glisson is credited to have discovered the illness when he published a treatise *De Rachitide sive morbo puerili*, in 1650. An English edition, edited by Nicholas Culpeper, with the title *A treatise of the rickets, being a disease common to children*, appeared in 1651. The result of Glisson's work is part of the studies and discussions carried out in the informal group of physicians that took part in the meetings of the so-called "1645 group", which can be considered as one of the original nuclei of the Royal Society.

Rickets appears in the corpus in Wellcome 7113, GUL Hunter 93, but especially in GUL Ferguson 61 on several occasions: in recipe 36, *A Dyet Drinke for the Rockettes*; recipe 189, *An Ointment for ye Ricketts* and recipes 232 and 233 *Lady Sharlowes receipt for the Ricketts* and *for ye Ricketts*. Lady Sharlowe's recipe reads as follows:

- (12) Recipe of speedwell Liver wort, dandelyon, heart Tongue, of each one handfull, penyroyle ½ a handfull, strawberrye Leaves, & vilet Leaves of each a handfull, of Liquirish & anniseed a ¼ of a pond of Each: 2 or 3 Leaves of Lovage bojle al these in 3 pintes of strong ale tell a pint be consumed, so sweeten it with browne suger & give ye child 2 or 3 spoonfulls. [GUL, Ferguson 61, folio 97]

Except for speedwell, which is first recorded in 1578 and designates "one or other species of *Veronica*, an extensive genus of small herbaceous plants with leafy stems and small blue (rarely pink or white) flowers", according to the *OED*, none of the ingredients in (12) are new. Liverwort, dandelion, hart's tongue, pennyroyal, strawberry, violet, liquorice, aniseed and lovage are all plants used extensively in medieval English recipes (De la Cruz and Diego, forthcoming).

Another instance of the period's interest in the disease is in manuscript Wellcome 3009, where one can read *Mister Johnsons cure for the Ricketts*:

- (13) Take of the juyce of Scury grass four pennyworth to every two spoonfulls of it add one spoonfull of Ieane treacle, begin in February March Aprill and May taking it nine daies in each moneth the spoonfulls in the morning fasting , and as much in the evening after a sleepe, then in the begining of Iune take twenty black Snailles and balme leaves beate togeather, spread it on lambs leather and lay it all along the chine of the back , and Remove it every two daies, this must be used at least three or four times. [Wellcome 3009, 17r]

Apart from scurvy grass, other ingredients such as Genoa treacle, snails and balm leaves are recommended to be beaten together, then you should spread it on lamb leather and lay it on the back several times.

## 5. Conclusions

Through the examination of the recipe collections from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries selected for the study, it can be concluded that recipes

are a mirror of the period in which they were written. No other medical genre reflects better the expectations, habits and experiences of a given time. The contents of the recipes analysed reflect their societies' concern with the outbreak of new diseases, such as the French pox and other old ailments that were particularly rampant in the period, such as the plague, the scurvy and the rickets regardless whether it can be considered an old or new disorder.

The remedies used to deal with these illnesses resort to old-known ingredients, such as plants and metals, but also to new substances recently introduced into Europe from America. Some of the new plants and stuff seem to have been used in the New World for similar symptoms; others bear no witness of their efficacy, but seem to be fashionable and especially well-received among the better-off, since they were expensive. One of the most common goods was *guaiacum*, whose monopoly was granted to a family of bankers. Native to America are also sarsaparilla and sassafras, while others came from Asia, such as china root, or from a nearer territory, as in the case of angelica that was cultivated in the Mediterranean area, or from an unknown origin, like scurvy-grass.

Regarding the dates of introduction of the new terms in the English language, the focus was on ingredients introduced from the sixteenth century onwards. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* was taken as the main reference, some antedatings to it have been identified. The exploration of other products not mentioned in this article, such as coffee or chocolate, leaves the door open to further research on the topic to see how these commodities were accepted among the European population and were introduced as food or medicine in the British diet.

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