

Medieval medical recipes in London, Wellcome Library, MSS 404 and 5262

Middle English medical texts feature different types of medical recipes whose provenance is sometimes unknown or which have not been yet identified. Such recipes have been analysed as a text-type in recent research (Carroll 1999 and 2004; Taavitsainen 2001), mainly focusing on their linguistic features and recipe elements. In turn, these largely depend on the tradition the recipes belong to; that is, as the basis of so-called remedy-books or as embedded items in longer (and usually learned) texts. Yet, the recipes in early English medical writing can give clues about the links between different texts that remain anonymous and help to assess the extent to which they reveal the relatively free exchange from one tradition to the other.

In this line, this paper seeks to explore the similarities between different unidentified texts, chiefly London, Wellcome Library MSS 404 and 5262, which are catalogued as a leechbook and a recipe collection, respectively. For the purpose, a brief description of each text will be first provided; then, the recipes in these texts will be analysed and their connections will be highlighted with a view to casting some light on possibly shared material and textual tradition.

Keywords: medical recipes; Middle English; Wellcome MS 404; Wellcome MS 5262

References

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