

Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition

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Popular Medicine in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Explorations

Edited by

W.V. Harris



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Preface

A decade ago Fritz Graf wrote that research on ancient medicine had split into two fields, ‘the scientific, professional medicine of the Hippocratic doctors’ and temple medicine, a separation that he rightly deplored (Graf 2006, 3). But there was and is, I suggest, a still more serious failing in the study of ancient medicine—namely its pervasive if not unanimous refusal to explore popular medicine in a systematic fashion, which has led to a severely unbalanced narrative about ancient healthcare.

It is fairly easy to understand why this should have come about: the large bodies of evidence that concern elite/learned/rationalistic medicine on the one hand and temple medicine on the other present a host of fascinating phenomena and problems, whereas the evidence about popular medicine, however we define that concept, is scattered, refractory and elusive. Furthermore, like the majority of classical scholars, students of both elite medicine and temple medicine habitually neglect the social structure of the world they are trying to study, so that rich and poor, townspeople and countryside—not to mention other distinctions—, are ruthlessly homogenized. I say all this with the proper diffidence of a non-specialist who may seem to be criticizing scholars of the very first calibre who have devoted their careers to the study of ancient medicine.

In order to explore the apparent gap in the study of ancient healthcare I organized a conference at Columbia University’s Center for the Ancient Mediterranean on 18 and 19 April 2014 under the title ‘Popular Medicine in the Graeco-Roman World’. An excellent cast of speakers took up the challenge, and an occasion of quite exceptional scholarly interest ensued. Not least because some of the speakers more or less denied that the subject existed, or proceeded as if it did not exist. The terms of that debate are set out in this book, which may—one hopes—encourage other scholars to adopt a broader, more comprehensive approach to the study of ancient healthcare.

As for a definition I suggest this: ‘those practices aimed at averting or remedying illness that are followed by people who do not claim expertise in learned medicine (Gk. *iatrike*) and do not surrender their entire physical health to professional physicians (Gk. *iatroi*)’.

It is a great pleasure to thank the contributors to this volume for their hard work and their spirit of cooperation. Particular thanks are also owed to an anonymous reviewer who began to help me at a relatively early stage; his learning and good sense have been extraordinarily useful.

until it has no saltiness, adding warm water even if it turns white. Then throw out the liquid and dry in a very hot sun, and put it in jars.⁷¹

The time and energy expended on this preparation is considerable. One can see why doctors would be tempted to take the easy way out and buy such products from drug-sellers—and also understand why the drug-sellers would have a motivation even above and beyond the economic to substitute or adulterate them. All in all, it seems that the market value of ores and metals, the effort expended to produce medicines from them, and the striking therapeutic benefits of some of these preparations would have combined to make them costly items, and so well worth the defrauder's while. By the same token, the very fact of the lengthy descriptions in Dioscorides implies that at least some doctors were willing to put in strenuous effort to ensure that they had genuine ingredients that had been processed correctly—and perhaps even, like Galen, to travel to a mine—and indicates how highly they esteemed metallic medicines.

From the evidence of Pliny and Dioscorides we can see that the manufacturing of metallic medicines generally included several initial steps that were part of the normal processes for turning minerals into metals. In other words, in the normal course of their labours, the workers were part way to having fully processed medicines as described in our texts. Whether or not they themselves developed the remaining steps is beyond the scope of our evidence, but the fact that these medicines were frequently the offshoot of normal manufacturing supports the idea that the workers were the source of the knowledge that such metals were useful pharmacologically.

We can conclude, then, that the biocidal properties of the metals used by the Greeks and Romans, and especially those of copper, were such that the miners and metalworkers who handled them constantly were almost certain to have discovered their therapeutic usefulness. Copper in particular is very fast-acting, and Pliny takes note of how very quickly wounds of those in the copper mines heal. For those medical traditions for which we have Bronze Age textual evidence, we see copper and other metals being used for eye infections, burns, and wound treatment, and I believe that the myth of Telephus indicates that the Greeks possessed the same knowledge at roughly the same time. In later sources, we see metallic medicines consistently held in high regard, and from Pliny, Dioscorides, and Galen, we can detect interaction between miners and metalworkers and our medical authors. Thus, it seems likely that a working knowledge of the therapeutic effects of some metals was possessed by the earliest metalworkers and miners.

CHAPTER 7

Crossing the Borders Between Egyptian and Greek Medical Practice*

Isabella Andorlini

This paper offers a survey of the interrelationship between Egyptian and Greek medical practice in Graeco-Roman Egypt, focusing on the papyri. Magic and religion played a significant role in Egyptian medical practices that remained fairly constant from the Old Kingdom (c. 2600 BCE) until the arrival of Greek practitioners during the Hellenistic period (c. 332–30 BCE). Their arrival introduced changes, but there is evidence that medicine in Ptolemaic Egypt was practiced mainly in the Egyptian style.

Greek Experiences in Early Ptolemaic Egypt

In a letter dated around the middle of the third century BCE, perhaps written in Memphis (so C.C. Edgar), a certain Dromon asks Zenon to order one ten of his people to buy a *kyble* (about one-fourth of a litre)¹ of Attic honey (the best honey came to Egypt from Attica, and was considered a great luxury—Attic honey could sometimes be bought in Alexandria, but honey was scarce in Egypt), for Dromon has been commanded by the god to use this as a medicament for his eyes—the order of the god is explicitly described as *κατὰ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ*.

ὁς δ' ἂν ἀνατλήσῃς ὑγιάτων, κύναξόν τινα τῶν παρὰ τοῦ ἀγοράται μέλιτος Ἀττικῶν χοτύλων· χρεῖσται γὰρ ἔγω πρός τοῦς ὀφθαλμοῦς κατὰ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59426, lines 5–8 = *Sel. Pap.* I 91 = Trismegistos 1066; 260–250 BCE).²

* Professor Andorlini was not able to revise this paper for publication. I am most grateful to a reviewer who must remain anonymous, and to Roger Bagnall and David Leith, for help in preparing the present version.—WVH.

¹ For the liquid measure *kyble* in the Hippocratic collection, see Potter 1980, 133.

² The god was presumably the Memphite Sarapis, who prescribed benefits by means of dreams. The best evidence for ordinary worshippers engaging in incubation at Saqqara was

When you are about to sail up-river in good health, order one of those in your company to purchase a *kobyte* of Attic honey, since I have need of it for my eyes, according to the god's command.

At this time, Dromon was probably living in Memphis and the temple to which he resorted would have been the great Sarapeion at Saqqâra, where medical advice was communicated to sufferers through dreams. In any case the god must have been Sarapis (identified by the Greeks with Asclepios/Imhotep), a major Memphite cult.³ The sick Dromon went to this shrine, where sometimes the sick were healed through incubation. Temples were among other things health-care centres. But what may be most interesting here is that another letter from the Zenon archive shows an *iattros* giving a prescription almost identical to the god's (*PSI* IV 413 = Trismegistos 2096).⁴ In other words, men of Greek culture were already making use of Egyptian medicine, which in turn overlapped with Greek medicine.

In another petition of the same period,⁵ a certain Zoilos of Aspendos, otherwise unknown, was apparently instructed by Sarapis to tell Apollonios, the finance minister of Ptolemy Philadelphus, that a Sarapeion should be built for him in the Greek quarter of the town, presumably at Alexandria,⁶ where the writer lived. Evading the task, Zoilos was overtaken by a dangerous illness from which he escaped only by promising to obey the god's bidding. So this text too shows us that in the early Ptolemaic period a man of Greek culture could be deeply immersed in Egyptian medical practices.

One of the temples most renowned for effective cures was the Memphis Asclepieion, where Imhotep's healing power was put into practice by specialized priests. Another much later text, a narrative in Greek preserved in *P.Oxy.* XI 1381, of the second century CE, describes how the writer and his mother regained health thanks to Imhotep, who, during a dream, cured them from a

published relatively recently: a graffito written on the left forepaw of a stone sphinx in the *dromos* around 275–225 BC states that 'there are countless miscellaneous ones in the sleeping chamber' ([ἐ]ν ἐνδοκίτητι[ω]ν] | μύοισι κυνάμ[ω]ποι) (see *XLIX* (1999), no. 2292).

³ Thompson 2012, 19, 72, 241–242 (incubation), and 245 n. 30. On medicine in Egyptian health-care centres, see Clarysse 2010, I, 274–290.

⁴ P. Lang 2013, 126.

⁵ *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59034 (257 BC), lines 9–10 εἰς ἀπὸς[τ]ῆ[ν] | μὲ π[ε]ρίβηθαι μετὰ δὲ καὶ κρυβηθεῖ με (‘I was overtaken by a dangerous illness’). The text has recently been re-edited (Renberg and Bubelis 2011; I follow their text but omit their underdotting). Disease as divine punishment was also of course a Greek idea.

⁶ At Memphis according to others (cf. Renberg and Bubelis 189).

violent fever. The writer's concern is the propagation of the Imhotep-Asclepios cult among the Hellenophone population of Egypt.⁷ Most medical recipes for everyday health needs relied on a pharmacopoeia that drew on an amalgam of Egyptian and Greek medicine. The traffic in drugs seems to have gone in both directions, providing us with very early evidence for an interrelationship. This was in fact very far from new in Ptolemaic times. A recipe in the famous Ebers papyrus of c. 1550 BCE, for example, mentions beans of Cretan origin:⁸

Ebers 28: Another (remedy) to cause purgation... (then comes a section about an unknown herb)... which are like beans from the Kethu land (...).

Archaeological evidence also suggests that there was traffic of pharmacological drugs between the Aegean world and Egypt.⁹

A papyrus of the second century BCE that refers to a native doctor specializing in the use of clysters as a cure who employed in his practice a Greek who was learning Egyptian script has given rise to extensive discussion. The letter is apparently from a mother to her son:

πυθαγομένη μανθάνειν σε Διγύττια | γράμματα κυεχάρην σοι | καὶ ἐμαυτῆ, ἔτι | νῦν γέ παρὰ γενόμενος | εἰς τὴν πόλιν διδάξει | παρὰ Φαλουῆ[τ] | ἱατροδύκτην τὰ | παιδικαῖα καὶ ἔξει | ἐφόδιον εἰς τὸ γῆρας. (*PLond.* I 43 = *UPZ* I 148 = Trismegistos 3540; second century BCE).

When I heard that you are learning Egyptian letters, I shared your joy, since now at least on your return to the city you will be teaching the boys [probably 'slaves'] in the house of Phalou[tes] the enema specialist, and you will have a way to support yourself into your old age.¹⁰

According to Roger Remondon the employment of a Greek interpreter by an Egyptian doctor has broader implications for Egyptian society: the existence of a school, or a surgery, specialized in healing by the administration

⁷ The text is copied on the verso of *P.Oxy.* XI 1380. See Naether and Thissen 2012, Signorelli 2012. Demotic papyri tell similar tales, see e.g. Ryholt 1998.

⁸ Arnott 1966 and Totelin 2009, 180–182.

⁹ Laskaris 1999.

¹⁰ On this text see among others Remondon 1964, Bagnall 1995, 33–35, P. Lang 2013, 205–206. An enema-doctor called an ἱατροδύκτης occurs also in *PHib.* II 268 (c. 260 BC), lines 14–15, and fr.

of enemas—a typically Egyptian medical practice—proves that Greeks were incentivized to learn Egyptian (demotic script, presumably) by a desire to gain access to Egyptian medical knowledge.

Predispositions

Thus Greek medical experience in Egypt fairly soon became involved with local practices, not surprisingly. There may have been some Greek predisposition in that direction. One should not underestimate the influence of Homer, and according to a well-known passage in *Odyssey* IV, Egypt was rich in drugs and possessed the most knowledgeable doctors.¹¹ Herodotus' journey to Egypt around the middle of the fifth century BCE was by no means unique, and it is plain that by his time, that is to say Hippocrates' time too, some Greeks were greatly impressed by Egyptian medicine. Herodotus provides evidence for this and also for the high degree of specialization among Egyptian doctors:

Ἡ δὲ ἰητροσύη κατὰ τῶδε εἶσι δέδοκται· μή τις νοῦσου ἕκαστος ἰητρος ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ πλεόνων. Πάντα δ' ἰητρῶν ἐστὶ πλεῖα· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀφθαλιμῶν ἰητροὶ χαρτερᾶσι, οἱ δὲ κεφαλῆς, οἱ δὲ ὀδόντων, οἱ δὲ τῶν κατὰ νηδύν, οἱ δὲ τῶν ἀρτηνέων νοῦσων (Herodotus, II 84).

Medicine there is divided up as follows: each physician applies himself to one disease only, and no more. All places abound in physicians; some physicians are for the eyes, others for the head, others for the teeth, others for the parts about the belly, and others for internal disorders.

He singles out Egyptian eye-specialists for particular mention, reporting the story that King Cyrus asked the Pharaoh Amasis to send him the best eye doctor in Egypt.¹² This text cannot by itself be more than a hypothetical guide to the attitudes of the Greek immigrants to Ptolemaic Egypt and their descendants. But the Hippocratic corpus too shows that Egyptian medicine had already aroused Greek interest.

It has been shown that the treatises of the Hippocratic collection share birth prognoses and gynaecological techniques with earlier Egyptian medical

writings, such as the Papyrus Carlsberg VIII (c. 1300 BCE) and the Berlin and Kahun Medical Papyri (c. 1820 BCE), on the one hand, and the works *Barren Women* (*Steril.* 214), *Nature of Women*, and *Aphorisms* (V 59) on the other.¹³ Furthermore, an influx of Egyptian drugs into pre-Alexandrian Greek pharmacology is solidly attested by the ingredients labelled Egyptian appearing in a number of medicines recorded in the Hippocratic writings of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Many of the gynaecological recipes of the Hippocratic works contain Egyptian ingredients from the vegetable kingdom. In addition to *nitry* or *natron*, known to the Greeks as *nitron*, a sodium carbonate, the texts mention Egyptian alum, oil, salt, saffron, acorns, and other substances. Egyptian animal drugs—especially hyena bile and the urine and excrement of various animals (*Dreckapotheke*)—also made their debut in the Hippocratic collection before appearing later in the Alexandrian pharmacopeia.¹⁴

An intriguing case study is provided by a Rylands papyrus of Ptolemaic date, which combines the format of a Hippocratic-style gynaecological collection with ingredients attested here for the first time. The text, of unknown provenance and assigned to the third or second century BCE, preserves a version of a recipe against uterine suffocation parallel to a Hippocratic prescription contained in a passage of *Diseases of Women*. A small variation in one of the ingredients indicated, however, merits mention here. While the Hippocratic version reads 'when she is suffocated by the womb, let her drink *castoreum* and leabane in wine separately or together',¹⁵ the papyrus version runs as follows:

πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστερῶν πνιγμῶν ἐνυδρίδος τοὺς | νεφροὺς ἔργασκε δίσκου ἕσον τοῖς τριχίν δακτυλοῖς λαβέν ἐν οἴνῳ εὐώδει τούτῳ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς τῶν δίδυμων πρόνου<<> βοῆιθηβεί καὶ χάλυτρίον ἐστὶν ὑστερῶν (*P.Ryl.* III 531, II, lines 12–15).

13 Iversen 1939. Further discussion in Totelin 2009, 179–183.

14 The use of dung is a mark of Egyptian influence, see Nunn 1996, 148–151 (drugs of animal origin). For animal drugs, see, e.g., Hippocrates, *Nat. mul.* 7.1 (τῶ οὐρῶ τῶ τοῦ ἀφρώστου), 18.3 (καὶ πίνειν δίδουαι τὸν κάτροπον), 32.89 (χολὴν ταύρου), 32.97 (ὄκ χολὴν), 34b1 (οὐροῦ βοείου), *Mul.* I 75 (λύκου κότρον), II 189 (πελάδιον κότρον); *Steril.* 245 (ὠίδα ἔργον), *Supperf.* 28 (τὸς κώληκας δὲ τοὺς κορβήους), 32 (κάτροπος ὄργον) (VIII 164–15; 370.4; 458.21; 492.21; 500.21 Littré), and *Loc. Hom.* 47.8, where cow dung and cow bile are recommended for women's ailments. Crocodile dung and hyena bile were among the animal products utilized by Herophilus for an ointment in the mid-third century BCE, according to Aëtius VII 48 (CMG VIII 2, 393 = Tsgo von Staden).

15 Cf. Hippocrates, *Mul.* II 200–201 (VIII 382–386 Littré, c. 450 BCE; esp. VIII 382.12–13 Littré): "Όταν πνιγῆται ὑπὸ ὑστερῶν κάτροπα καὶ κόνηζον ἐν οἴνῳ χολπικὴ καὶ ἐν ταύτῳ πινέτω.

11 *Odyssey* IV.229–32: 'the food-giving field bears most kinds of drugs: many good when mixed, many harmful. And each doctor there is knowledgeable beyond all men.'

12 Herodotus III 1: ὅτε Κύρος πέμπει πρὸς Ἀμᾶσου ἀρετὴ ἰητρῶν ἀφθαλιμῶν, δε εἶν ἀρετικὸς τῶν ἐν Ἀφύρτῳ ('when Cyrus sent to Amasis asking for the best eye-doctor in Egypt').

In the case of hysterical suffocation, take dried otters' kidneys, as much as can be held in three fingers, and serve in sweet-smelling wine. This is also helpful in the case of pains in the testicles and is an enema for the womb.¹⁶

The author was likely re-contextualizing the existing Hippocratic medications using otter kidneys as a substitute for *castoreum* (a very common drug in Hippocratic and Roman pharmacology, it is the exudate from the castor sacs of the mature *Castor fiber* L., the beaver).¹⁷ Why does the compiler of this papyrus recipe prescribe not *castoreum* but the unusual otter kidneys, of which there is no mention in the Hippocratic writings? The compiler may have had access to collections of recipes that circulated anonymously and independently from the Hippocratic works. An equally attractive hypothesis, however, is that the author was a Greek living in Egypt who was familiar with efficacious Egyptian substances of the animal kingdom. The change seems to furnish an example of the adaptation of a recipe to an Egyptian milieu. Herodotus mentions the Nile otters (11 72), asserting that they were thought to be sacred, whereas *Castor fiber* is hard to imagine in such an environment.¹⁸

Tebtunis

Of the villages in the Arsinoite nome, it is arguably Tebtunis that gives us the best opportunity to analyse Greek-Egyptian medical interactions in the Roman period, and I shall sketch something of the topic as I see it and the kinds of contributions that Tebtunis papyri can make to studying this cultural phenomenon. Tebtunis also offers the potential for putting documents into an archaeological context, a context only partly recoverable from finds at other sites. Moreover, early Roman Tebtunis had a thriving Egyptian temple community, with numerous priests who took an interest in the religious and technical literature pertaining to their status. The House of Life there accommodated a collegium of priests whose prime duty was to use rituals to protect the gods,

¹⁶ = *MP*³ 2418; *LIVAB* 1313. Cf. Hippocrates, *Mull.* II 200–201 (VIII 382 *Litté*). See further Hanson 1998, esp. 79–81, Andorlini 1999, esp. pl. 3, and Hanson 2009, 73 n. 6.

¹⁷ Cf. Celsus, *Med.* XXIII 1, 5; XXV 8, 12. The yellowish secretion of the castor sacs was, and still is, used as a tincture in perfumes, and, until the eighteenth century, was used to treat many different ailments (including headache, fever and hysteria).

¹⁸ Cf. Herodotus IV 109 on beavers in Scythia, and the use of beaver testicles there for curing diseases of the womb. Beavers were in fact extinct in the Mediterranean world long before Herodotus or Hippocrates: Devecka 2013, 90.

and to establish an instruction centre where priest-doctors could pass on their knowledge to practitioners. Most of the documents we have, however, did not belong to a temple library, but to individual priests.¹⁹

From Tebtunis too come evidence that the traditional Egyptian use of papyrus for medicinal purposes²⁰ spilled over into the Hellenic or semi-Hellenized community. But the Hippocrates already knew of burnt papyrus as a medical ingredient.²¹ Papyrus served as an ingredient of recipes, while papyrus paper functioned as a bandage or as an adhesive plaster. Papyrus competed with linen as a means of applying remedies to the affected part of the body. Strips of papyrus served on occasion as bandages, but far more frequent was the use of a *chartarion* as a sort of band-aid intended to keep the poultice attached to the diseased part of the body. Both these applications are mentioned in papyri of the Roman period excavated in the temple context of Tebtunis. In the recipes surviving in the collection of *PSI* X 1180,²² 'burnt papyrus' wetted in water is the component of a lotion used specifically to treat leprosy, while a piece of medicated paper was applied locally for lichen.²³ One notes that the instruction given in the Ebers recipe (Ebers 482), in which 'burnt papyrus not

¹⁹ Tait 1992, Ryholt 2008. The Tebtunis papyri of the Roman period come from several groups of different origin: the papyri excavated by Grenfell and Hunt, now at Berkeley; the Florentine fragments, both Egyptian and Greek, excavated by the Italian Archaeological Mission under C. Anti and G. Bagnani between 1931 and 1933, now at the Vielli Institute in Florence; and those found clandestinely and now in many collections. Cf. O'Connell 2007. Our information about this practice goes back to the Ebers papyrus (see above). 'Cooked unwritten papyrus' mixed with 'wax, oil, and *wah*-legume' appears to be applied on the fourth day of a cure to relieve the pain of a burn (Ebers 482).

²⁰ Hippocrates, *Mull.* I 105 (c. 450 BCE; VIII 228–20–23 *Litté*).

²¹ Full edition in Andorlini 2004a. This text was part of a large number of rolls in both the Greek and Egyptian languages, with the Egyptian ones written in both Hieratic and Demotic scripts. The papyrus was found by the Italian excavators at Tebtunis in two subterranean rooms adjacent to the temple complex of the crocodile-god Sobek, cf. Andorlini 2004b (with earlier bibliography); Hanson 2005.

²² Cf. *PSI* X 1180, Fr. A, 11, lines 5–7: τὸν λυγρὸν προεξηγμένον καί τριχὰ καὶ ἑξάδην γόβην ἐπὶ τὸν δὲ | τοῖ [ὅ] φορητὸν χαρτάριον ἐπιθεῖν ('having rubbed the area affected by lichen beforehand, smear it with the finest meal externally, and cover the application with a bandage made from papyrus') and *PSI* X 1180, Fr. A, 11, lines 11–12: τριχὸν λυγρὸν, ἐπὶ ἐξάδην γόβην ἐπιθεῖν, βάλαντα παρτίου κακαυ(έντε) ('against leprosy; when you have scraped off these lesions, prepare an ointment with burnt papyrus'). For this use, cf. Dioscorides, *MM* I 86.1 Wellm.: ἡ δὲ κακαυμένη παρτίου ἐστὶν τριχὸν κακαυμένον ὁμοίως ἐπιθεῖν τὰ ἐν κράττει καὶ παρτί μάρματι βάλαντα καὶ ἐξάδην καὶ ἑξάδην τὸ τοιοῦτον ('papyrus that is burned to ashes keeps in check sores in the mouth and everywhere else; but papyrus roll that was set on fire does this kind of thing better').

previously written on' is specifically recommended, coincides with the information in the recipe book from Tebtunis. Both Egyptian and Greek traditions confirm that the application of papyrus sheets to wounds (sheets assembled into a roll, i.e. a *chartarion*) was by far the commonest medical use of papyrus in antiquity.²⁴

Also at Tebtunis, the use of 'hyena bile' (in *PSI X n80*, Fr. B, col. III, line 15 $\chi\omicron\lambda(\eta\epsilon) \upsilon\alpha\iota\nu(\eta\epsilon)$) and 'excrement of ibis' (in Fr. A, col. III, line 21 $\tau\eta\beta[\text{loc}] \kappa\omicron\rho\omicron\nu$) reveals the penetration of Egyptian *Dreckapotheke* into a *receptarium* composed in Greek.

Egyptian Medicine in the Wider World

Given the Hippocratic writers' interest in Egyptian recipes and the prestige of Alexandrian doctors such as Herophilus, it is scarcely surprising that Greek doctors in the wider Mediterranean world continued to show interest in Egyptian drugs and medicine.

In an anonymous treatise within the Galenic corpus entitled 'Introduction, or the Doctor' and roughly datable to the first or second century CE, special attention is paid to Egypt.²⁵ At the very beginning the author raises the question of the invention of the art and provides answers emphasizing the Egyptian advances in medicine, referring to the lines in *Odyssey IV* on the use of drugs, and citing other stories of the Egyptian medical tradition that were in vogue in his time: dissections of corpses in mummification, treatment of cataract, the invention of the clyster (or enema), and so on. It has been cautiously suggested that the attention devoted to Egypt throughout may indicate the homeland of the author.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Andorlini 2015.

²⁵ *Εἰσαγωγή ἢ ἰατρὸς* alias *Introductio seu medicus* (XIV 674–797 K.). See now the edition of Petit 2009, I, 1–3: Πᾶς εἰρηται ἡ ἰατρικὴ... πρῶτὸ δὲ Ἀγυπτιακὸν ἦν, μὲν καὶ ἡ τῶν βοτάνων ἡρώτικα καὶ ἡ ἀλλήλα φαρμακεία, ὡς καὶ Ὀμηροῦ μαρτυροῦσι... ἐκ δὲ τῆς ἐν ταῖς ταρρυεταῖς ἀναγκαστικῶν νεκρῶν πολλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐν χειρουργίᾳ πρῶτὰ τοῖς πρώτοις ἰατροῖς εὑρησθέντα δοκεῖ. τῶν δὲ ἐκ περιτρώσεως φασὲν ἐπινοησθέντα... καὶ τὸ κλύζειν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰβιδὸς φασὲν εὑρησθέντα (...). 'How was medicine invented? [A short paragraph about the Greeks follows, mentioning plants and *pharmaka*]. But among the Egyptians too plants and other *pharmaka* were used, as Homer also testifies... It seems that many surgical practices employed by the first doctors were invented as a result of dissection of corpses for purposes of mummification. Others are said to have been discovered by accident [he describes a cataract procedure]. And clyster evacuation is said to have been modeled on observation of the ibis [on the Nile]!'.

²⁶ Isseel 1917, Hanson 1985, 25–6; cf. Petit 2009, 109.

In a further attestation to the enduring reputation of Egyptian practitioners outside the country, we learn from Pliny that Egyptian specialists in skin diseases regarded as native in Egypt, such as leprosy and lichen, were from time to time invited to Rome to treat difficult cases.²⁷ But Galen is naturally our richest source.

A passage from Galen's work *On the Composition of Drugs according to Places* reports the following:

τὸ ἀχάριστρον ἐπιγραφόμενον, πρὸς τὰς μέγιστας ἐπιφορὰς, μόνω τούτῳ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ οἱ ἰατροὶ χρώμενοι εὐημεροῦσι καὶ μάλα εὖ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρροικιστέρων (Galen, *Comp. sec. loc.* IV 7 = XII 749.13–15 K. ex *Asclepiade*).

An eye salve called *achariston*, against severe flux from the eyes. By use of this remedy alone, the physicians in Egypt are successful (in treating the disease), especially among the country people.

In another passage Galen praises a 'yellow plaster' that seems to have been derived from an Egyptian milieu:

τὴν ἐνδοξοτάτην τῶν κίρῶν, ἣν ὀνομάζουσι διὰ δικτάμνου, τῶν λεπῶν ὀνομαζομένων καὶ αὐτῆν, ὡς κρεπὴ ἢ τσις, ἐπιτοῦ φασὲν αὐτὰς ἐκ τῶν ἰερῶν τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ κοιμίσθηναι (Galen, *Comp. per gen.* II 12 = XIII 518.7–9 K.).

the most famous of the 'yellow plasters', which they call 'made with dittany' and which is named among the 'holy plasters', like the 'Isis' plaster, because they say that they have been brought from the temples/priests in Egypt.

Note that there is a recipe entitled 'yellow plaster' in our Tebtunis *receptarium*, namely in *PSI X n80*, Fr. A, II, line 32 (κίρῶ).

In another example Galen records a remedy called 'Hybris' (perhaps to be interpreted as 'very energetic'), apparently devised by someone from Oxyrhynchus and known to him through another Egyptian Greek:

²⁷

Pliny, *NH* XXVI 4: 'advenenturque ex Aegypto, genetrice talium vitiorum, medici hanc solam operam adferentes magna sua praedat', and *NH* XXXIX 93: 'Cossum equitem Romanum amicta Neronis principis notum, cum is lichene corruptus esset, vocatus ex Aegypto medicus ob hanc valetudinem otus a Caesare, cum cantharidum potu praeparare voluisset, interemit'.

"Αλλη, ὕβρις τοῦ Ὀξυρυχίτου, φάρμακον ἐπιτετευγμένον πρὸς παντὸς ἰοβόλου πλῆρη. ἀνεργάφη ὑπὸ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Μεμφίτου. (Galen, *Antid.* 2 = XIV 188.9–12 K.)²⁸

Another remedy called 'Hybris', obtained by a man from the Oxyrhynchite [sc. nome], is very effective against the bite of every venomous animal; it is recorded by a certain Apollonius from Memphis.

This antidote, applied against poisonous bites from animals, curiously overlaps the evidence of a Tebtunis papyrus concerned with bites of asps and crocodiles (*PTebt.* 11 273 = *GMP* II 5, VI, line 9), exemplifying the process of derivation and adaptation from an Egyptian environment.

Galen learned by experience in Alexandria that amputation of fingers was effective for asp-bites (*De loc. aff.* III 11 = VIII 197.9–16 K.).²⁹ He also uses dung of crocodiles, possibly imported from Egypt, as a means to cure skin diseases (*Simpl.* X 29 = XII 308.7–12 K.).³⁰

A Late-Antique Coda

Perhaps the most explicitly medical votives to have survived from Coptic Egypt are those found in the shrine of the local saint Colluthus, commonly referred to as Abu Cola, which are associated with the numerous iatro-magical papyri found during the excavations led by John de Monins Johnson at Antinoöpolis.³¹

²⁸ The text given by Kühn runs ὕβρις τοῦ Ὀξυρυχίτου, alluding to a man named ὕβρις (vel -ίς), a personal name not attested in Egypt so far. For ὕβρις and ὕβρις documented outside Egypt, see *IGPW* 2013, VB, 418. The mention of the nome Oxyrhynchites, however, requires the construction τοῦ Ὀξυρυχίτου. Thus ὕβρις τοῦ Ὀξυρυχίτου can be regarded as a plausible correction.—Both Winkler 1980, 73–79 (on p. 53 she prints Hybristes), and Ihm 1997, 237, assume that the chapter by Galen πρὸς ἐκδοήκτους (XIV 183–190 K.) relies on Asclepiades.

²⁹ See Gourevitch, this volume, p. 000.

³⁰ ἢ δὲ γὰρ τῶν κροκοδείλων κότρες ἄστρεπ τῶν προσώπων τὴν ἐκφυλὴν ἀφαγεῖν πέφυκεν, οἷτω καὶ ἐὰν ἀφούε καὶ λεχθήνας: 'The excrement of crocodiles, just as it naturally removes facial spots, so too it gets rid of leprosy and lichen' (the apparent meaning).

³¹ I am grateful to Rosario Pinardi for providing me in advance with the article of Peter Grossmann on the procedure of incubation in the shrine of St. Colluthus (Grossmann 2014). For images of *ex votos* see *Antinoöpolis I* (Pinardi 2008), 27, nos. 64 and 65. Cf. Andorlini 1998, 19–22. *Pant.* II 66 includes thirteen magico-medical prescriptions; cf. *Pant.* II 65 and 140.

The shrine of Saint Colluthus, recovered in the northern necropolis of the Greek city of Antinoöpolis in middle Egypt, developed a traditional Egyptian oracle procedure. At Saint Colluthus' sanctuary people found familiar rites of divination. In the *kiman* of the northern necropolis were recovered many Christian 'ticket' oracles, still unrolled or thrown away after opening, and some of the most precious *ex votos* of bronze, which were left behind to acknowledge Colluthus' most impressive *miracula*.³² Most of the queries concerned business and travel, but some addressed health issues. The vast majority of the *ex votos* were in the form of breasts, eyes, and feet.³³ Colluthus was a healer renowned for curing eye diseases, supposedly martyred at the beginning of the fourth century CE under Emperor Diocletian. Devotees would present written queries, worded in both positive and negative form, and receive back the portion of the query that the saint's local priests deemed correct.³⁴ Amulets and other objects associated with Colluthus were certainly believed to work, and the regional cult-centre of Antinoöpolis, with its *oeconomus*, eclipsed scientific medicine, following scribal formulations and the practice of incubation identical to those used in traditional Egyptian temples.

This is not the place to write the history of the medical use of amulets in Egypt. Suffice it to say that they were an old tradition in both Egyptian and Greek milieux. Here are two allusions, the first from an Oxyrhynchus papyrus:

τὸ πρὸς παρσίθμια περιλάμια | εἰς τὸ χρυσοῦν πέταλον τῷ Καρμάτῃ | πέμψον
 γράμ. Ἰψαε (lege γράψαε) | εἰς πικράκιον | ὡς περὶ ἐγεί. (*POxy.* XLII 3068.1–4,
 3rd)

The amulet against tonsillitis, for the gold plate, send it to Sarmates, having copied it on a slip of papyrus word by word.

Here is another from the collection of the *Greek Magical Papyri* published by Preisendanz:

Φυλακτήριον κοίταροφύλαξ πρὸς δαίμονα, πρὸς φαντάσματα, || πρὸς
 πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πάθος. ἐπιγραφόμενον ἐπὶ χρυσοῦ | πέταλου ἢ ἀργυροῦ ἢ
 χακκίτηρῖνου ἢ εἰς ἰερατικὸν χάπτῃν φοροῦμένον στρατιωτικῶς ἔστω (*PGM* VII,
 col. 16, 580–584 = Preisendanz II, 26).

³² For the miracles of Saint Colluthus, renowned as *archiatros*, see Till 1951. For therapeutic oracular tickets addressed to Colluthus, cf. Donadoni 1964, Zannetti 2004.

³³ See Devos 1981, Del Francia Barocas 1998, 101.

³⁴ Cf. Frankfurter 1998, 3–48, Fournet 2009, 129 and pl. 26, Schenke 2013.

A phylactery, a guard against daemons, against phantasms, against every sickness and suffering, to be written on a leaf of gold or silver or tin or on hieratic papyrus. When worn it works mightily.³⁵

Conclusions

The ancient prestige of Egyptian medicine among the Greeks, based presumably on the general prestige of Egyptian culture and on the high degree of specialization among Egyptian doctors, is likely to have made the Greek immigrants into Egypt more willing to take up local medical practices, as of course they did. But Egyptian influence was felt outside the country too once writers in the Greek language made Egyptian medicine more widely known in other parts of the Mediterranean and international doctors such as Galen came to know more about it. And there was surprisingly little criticism, even of *Drecksapotheke*.

35 Trans. H.D. Betz 1986, 134.

Representations of the Physician in Jewish Literature from Hellenistic and Roman Times

CHAPTER 8

Catherine Hezser

Ancient Jews who were afflicted with diseases had a number of options to explain the causes and to find healing. These options were partly overlapping and complementary, even though the underlying ideologies might seem contradictory. Biblical tradition traces illness back to sins; only God himself and the human observance of God's commandments were believed to change this state.¹ Throughout antiquity various types of self-promoting healers offered their wares, ranging from herbal remedies to magical spells and amulets.² In addition, trained physicians, whose knowledge was based on empirical science and Greek medical traditions, were active at least in the major cities of Roman Palestine.³ If we apply the labels 'religious', 'popular', and 'scientific' to healing, various overlaps between these three phenomena are recognizable: physicians might complement medicinal treatments with remedies based on 'popular' beliefs; religious leaders such as priests and rabbis would utilize physicians and their knowledge for their own religious and ritual purposes; and these leaders could also possess medical knowledge themselves and/or engage in 'spiritual' healings.

1 On the biblical understanding of illness and its treatment see Allan 2001; Avalos 1995, 284–99. On the ancient belief that illness and disability were punishments inflicted by God/the gods see also the contributions in Avalos et al. 2007. On the rabbinic adaptation of the biblical notion of illness see Kottek 1985.

2 Simon Magus, Jesus, and the wandering charismatics of the early Jesus movement were popular healers whose offers were often linked to certain religious beliefs—they functioned in the sphere of popular religion. Their and their colleagues' practices involved exorcisms, prayers and spells, and objects that allegedly protected against evil spirits and the evil eye. Kottek 1985, 12–15, calls these forms of healing 'irrational medicine'. For the focus on healing in early Christianity see Porterfield 2005, 21–47.

3 On Greek physicians and the Roman appropriation of Greek medicine see especially Nutton 2004, 159–86. See also Kudlign 1986; Jackson 1988; King 2009, 32–7; Kottek 1994, II, stresses that 'it is obvious that professional physicians practiced in Judea in Josephus' times'. Josephus mentions physicians especially in connection with Herod's diseases, see *Ibid.* 21–2 (with references).