

In Galen's writings on pharmacology, he attacks, on several occasions, remedies employed or recommended by other physicians and writers, as disgusting and repulsive. In describing the ingestion of feces, sweat, urine, menstrual blood advocated by Xenokrates of Aphrodisias in the first century CE, Galen's vividly and vigorously phrased rejection not only emphasizes his own disgust, but seems to be trying to create it in the reader: 'But drinking sweat and urine and a women's menstrual blood is outrageous and disgusting, and so are feces, no less than these. Xenokrates describes what cures feces can effect when they are smeared all over the parts at the mouth and throat and then swallowed down into the belly...' Similarly, on the hot donkey urine (for sore throat) and topical application of camel urine (for baldness) recommended by the first century BCE Alexandrian physician Apollonios Mys, Galen frames his own response in terms of an alleged majority opinion, insisting that none 'but a very few' of his own contemporaries would wish to employ such a treatment.

This vigorous rhetoric, combined with modern views on such substances, obscure the fact that the use of such substances was not alien to Greek medicine, insignificant in extent, or reserved for the superstitious, ignorant or disgust-proof. It was part of mainstream pharmacology, which, far from throwing out *Dreckapotheke*, extended their use from their gynecological base into prescriptions for both sexes from the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Apollonios' prescriptions were part of his work on 'Readily available recipes,' Dioskorides listed forty-three applications for animal dung; Celsus' *De medicina* describes excrement remedies in book 5; Pliny included many examples from a variety of sources. Galen himself, elsewhere in his writings, utilized and asserted the value of similar substances. He prescribed feces in his work on drug simples, especially for wounds, commenting on their 'most powerful expulsive force.'

Recent work on Galen (e.g. Mattern, 2008) has tended to focus on Galen's development of his personal and professional persona within Greco-Roman socio-intellectual contexts. The ways in which Galen polemicalises against the use of human or animal feces, urine and blood show him utilizing such substances in the creation of a constructed moral, moderate and majority position for physicians of worth, in line with his methodological self-representations. It is an identity constructed through opposition to decadent populism and appeal to exotica: a trope of medical self-presentation that goes back to several texts of the classical and early Hellenistic corpus, such as *Decorum* and *Precepts*. In this context, it enables Galen to import a social norm, disgust at bodily fluids, into the medical arena.

The relatively positive use of these substances in terms of the presentation of his own pharmaceutical expertise, however, utilizes a different rhetorical framework, that of the empirical analyst, to whom all materials – even ones disgusting to the layman – are read in terms of their medical composition and relevance. This second form of self-presentation implicitly exoticizes the knowledge of the physician even as it familiarizes its previously repulsive subject matter by pulling it into the scientific domain.

Exploring Galen's negotiation of potentially contradictory approaches to a traditional strand within Greek and Near Eastern pharmaceutical demonstrates the responsiveness to emphasis and context of Galen's presentation of medicine, his own position within it, and the relationship of medical practice to wider social norms and taboos.