The Classical Quarterly (2021) 71.1 285–291
doi:10.1017/S0009838821000574

TEXTUAL NOTES ON PS.-DIOSCORIDES, *ON SIMPLES**

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the text of the work On Simples *attributed to Dioscorides. It argues that in fifteen places the transmitted text is faulty, and it proposes emendations. It also studies certain types of insertions made in the text by its most recent editor, Max Wellmann, and concludes that they are unnecessary. Finally, it discusses two points where* On Simples *sheds light on Dioscorides'* De materia medica.

Keywords: Dioscorides; Wellmann; text; insertion; στυπτηρία; ἄλευρον; πτερύγια

Max Wellmann edited the Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς (*De materia medica* = hereafter, *M.M.*) and Περὶ ἁπλῶν φαρμάκων (*Liber de simplicibus* = hereafter, *Simp.*) together, both of them as the work of Dioscorides.[1] I take the opposite view from Wellmann on the authenticity of *Simp.*: hence the title of this paper. But that is a subject for another discussion. Here I shall offer some notes on the text of *Simp.*, occasionally relying on clarification provided by *M.M.* Then I shall balance the account somewhat by discussing two points where *Simp.* sheds light on *M.M.* itself.

1.56 ὑπατμίζεται δὲ διὰ καλάμου πρὸς ὠταλγίας καὶ ἤχους ἀψινθίου ἀπόζεμα <ἢ> ὑσσώπου ἢ δαφνίδων ἢ ἁβροτόνου μετ' ὄξους ἢ διὰ κοχλάκων πεπυρωμένων ἑψηθέν.

'These vapours are introduced through a reed tube for pain and ringing in the ears: decoction of wormwood or hyssop or bay berries or *habrotonon* with vinegar or brought to a boil by means of heated pebbles.' Clearly boiling of any of these decoctions is necessary to produce steam, and is not an alternative to mixing with vinegar. Delete the final ἤ (that following μετ' ὄξους).

1.115.2 ἐφηλίδας αἴρει ἐλλεβόρου λευκοῦ μέρη β΄ μετὰ μέλιτος.

'*Ephelides* [rough facial spots or freckles] are removed by two parts of white hellebore with honey.' 'Two parts' would be meaningful only in relation to x parts of some other ingredient, here honey. James Diggle suggests persuasively that <μέρος α΄> has dropped out after μέλιτος through haplography; from the immediate vicinity he cites 1.112.3 λιθαργύρου μέρη β΄, θείου <ἀπύρου> μέρος α΄, 1.116.1 σηπίας ὀστράκου … κεκαυμένου μέρη β΄, βαλάνου μυρεψικῆς μέρος α΄. In this case μετά was later inserted to provide a construction for μέλιτος.

* My thanks to James Diggle for a most helpful critique of this paper; one of his suggestions is recorded below on *Simp.* 1.115.2.

[1] *Pedanii Dioscoridis Anazarbei de materia medica libri quinque*, edidit Max Wellmann, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1907–14). *Simp.* is in vol. 3, which is online at https://archive.org/details/b21459162_0003/page/n5. Earlier editors had published *Simp.* under the title Περὶ εὐποριστῶν; hence it is cited in LSJ as 'Dsc. *Eup.*'

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1.140.3 θέρμινον ἄλευρον καταπλασθὲν εἰς μέλι ζέον ἀσβέστου μιγείσης ἐπιτιθέμενον.

These phrases are from a list of treatments to disperse swellings. But the transmitted text, given here and printed by Wellmann, cannot be construed. The participles καταπλασθείς and καταπλασσόμενος regularly indicate in *Simp*. that a medication is used as a poultice or plaster; ἐπιτεθείς and ἐπιτιθέμενος indicate that a medication is 'applied'. In other words, we have here two prescriptions, which have been wrongly combined: the first is for meal made from lupins (cf. 1.136.1, 1.232.2, 2.69.3; Diosc. *M.M.* 2.109.1); the second, for boiled honey (cf. 1.208.3, 2.31.5; Diosc. *M.M.* 2.82.2). So the puzzling εἰς is interpolated: perhaps it was meant to be taken with ἀσβέστου μιγείσης, and an original ζεσθέν (cf. 1.128, 1.196) was simultaneously altered to ζέον, giving 'with unslaked lime mixed into boiling honey', but this leaves ἐπιτιθέμενον stranded. With εἰς deleted and ζεσθέν restored, we have 'meal of lupins as a poultice; boiled honey applied with an admixture of unslaked lime'. Use of the genitive absolute with passive μείγνυμι is not uncommon in *Simp*.: for example 1.73 ὀλίγου ἁλὸς αὐτοῖς μειγνυμένου, 1.121.2 πίσσης μιγείσης.

1.168 ἀκροχορδόνας <δὲ> τὰς ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ αἴρει ἰχὼρ πνεύμονος ὀπτωμένου καταχριόμενος.

'Thin-necked warts in any area are removed by the juices from a roasted lung used as a liniment.' In using animals' body parts, *Simp*. elsewhere—like Pliny (*HN* Books 28–30) and Dioscorides, *M.M.* (Book 2)—regularly specifies not only the body part (here the lung) but also the animal: clearly we need such a specification here. For warts on the (male) genitalia, Pliny recommends anointing with the gravy that runs from a *ram's* liver in cooking (*HN* 30.72 *arietini pulmonis inassati sanies*). Possibly, then, <κριοῦ> or <ἀρνειοῦ> has dropped out. But elsewhere *Simp*. and Dioscorides refer to sheep by the undifferentiated πρόβατον, and there is nothing gender-specific in the present context; so perhaps <προβάτου> or <προβατείου> is more likely.

1.180 πτερύγια δὲ θεραπεύει … σῦκα ξηρὰ μετὰ σιδίων ῥοᾶς ἑφθῶν καὶ μέλιτος, χαλκίτεως καὶ λεπίδος μιγέντων καὶ ὡς ἔμπλαστρος ἐπιτιθεμένων.

'Treatment for whitlow:[2] … dried figs with cooked pomegranate peel and honey, with rock alum and copper flakes mixed and applied as a salve.' The transmitted reading ἐπιτιθεμένων suggests that it is the rock alum and copper flakes, not the figs, that are to be applied as a salve (ὡς ἔμπλαστρος). But in this case why are they in the genitive, whereas all the preceding medicines in this list are in the nominative? Surely χαλκίτεως καὶ λεπίδος μιγέντων is a genitive absolute like that seen above in 1.140.3, 'with rock alum and copper flakes mixed in', and this whole prescription is to be applied as a salve. Confirmation is provided by Celsus, *Med.* 6.19.2, in a prescription for whitlow using the same five ingredients: *chalcitis, malicorium, squama aeris excipiuntur fico pingui leniter cocta ex melle*. (Similarly Aëtius 14.74, except that he omits *chalcitis*.) Hence ἐπιτιθεμένων should be corrected to ἐπιτιθέμενα.[3] The καί

[2] On the medical meanings of πτερύγιον, see the final note in this paper.

[3] Saracenus perceives this and translates as though his text read ἐπιτιθέμενα rather than ἐπιτιθεμένων: 'caricae cum malicorio et melle coctae, additis chalcitide et squama aeris, ad emplastri compagem reductae et impositae'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

before ὡς ἔμπλαστρος needs deletion: it was inserted after ἐπιτιθέμενα became ἐπιτιθεμένων, to link the two passive participles.

1.204.2 σανδαράκης <· η′, ἀρσενικοῦ χρυσίζοντος <· η′, ἐπίχριε προεσχηματισμένῳ ἀπονεκροῦται <γὰρ> καὶ ἀποπίπτει ἐν ἡμιωρίῳ ἀποξηραινομένη

γὰρ *addidit Moibanus*

Treatment of haemorrhoids; the symbol <· means 'drachma(i)'. '<Take> eight drachmai of realgar and eight drachmai of the gold-coloured yellow orpiment, and smear it on …; for it necrotizes and falls off in half an hour, being dried up.' Dioscorides (*M.M.* 5.104) says that ἀρσενικόν (yellow orpiment) has escharotic properties, that is, it kills unwanted tissue and leaves it to slough off; this agrees exactly with the statement in *Simp*. that it (the haemorrhoid) necrotizes and falls off. But what is the meaning of προεσχηματισμένῳ? If the masculine gender is correct, it must refer to the patient, who has 'first assumed a position' for treatment (cf. LSJ s.v. σχηματίζω II.3: so Saracenus's translation, 'aegrum prius apte compositum locatumque oblinito'). But since the haemorrhoid is the subject of ἀπονεκροῦται κτλ, it seems more likely that the participle too refers to the haemorrhoid, which has 'first been protruded' (LSJ s.v. προσχηματίζομαι): the author has in mind a process such as that described by Celsus, *Med.* 7.30.3A, of first making haemorrhoids more prominent, in order to facilitate treatment (*ora promoueantur … ut omnia quasi … capitula conspicua sint*). This requires correction of προεσχηματισμένῳ to προεσχηματισμένῃ.[4] In either case, the participle illustrates the tendency of *Simp*. towards extreme succinctness.

1.233.1 ἢ θύμος ἢ θύμβρα μετὰ οἴνου καὶ ἀλφίτων, ἢ κολοκυνθίδος χλωρᾶς ὁ χυλὸς ἀναμισγόμενος

Medications to treat sciatica. ἀναμισγόμενος is untenable because there is no indication what the colocynth juice should be mixed with. Correct to ἀνατριβόμενος from Diosc. *M.M.* 4.176.2 on colocynth: καὶ χλωρᾶς δὲ αὐτῆς ὁ χυλὸς ἐπὶ ἰσχιαδικῶν ἀνατριβόμενος ἁρμόζει.

2 praef. ἐπελθόντες τε ἐν τῷ πρὸ τούτου βοηθήματα ἁρμόζοντα τοῖς περὶ κεφαλὴν καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἀρτηρίαν καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἐπιφάνειαν συνισταμένοις πάθεσιν, ἐν τούτῳ περὶ τῶν λειπομένων διευκρινήσομεν.

'And having dealt in the preceding book with resources appropriate to ailments affecting the head and eyes and windpipe and the rest of the body's surface, in this one we shall make a thorough examination of what remains.' But while the head and eyes did indeed constitute the opening sections of Book 1 (1–28 and 29–53), the windpipe was treated only twice, as a subsidiary to the mouth and throat (83.2, 86). Nor is the windpipe a good instance of the 'visible surface' (ἐπιφάνεια) of the body. By contrast, the joints

[4] In place of προεσχηματισμένῳ Oribasius has παρεσχηματισμένον, from which I cannot extract any sense (*Syn*. 9.17.18 = 5.287 Raeder). The fact that Oribasius does not use γάρ to link the following explanatory sentence makes one question whether Wellmann was right to accept Moibanus's insertion of it in *Simp*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(especially of the foot) and their ailments—arthritis, gout and sciatica—were the subject of the final section of the Book (219–35). If we read ἄρθρα for ἀρτηρίαν, we have a more satisfactory reference to the opening and closing sections of Book 1, roughly equivalent to the proverbial *a capite ad calcem*.

2.24 μειγνύμενα δὲ κόπους ὠφελεῖ· ἅλες, νίτρον …

Palliatives for fatigue. After salt and soda, *Simp*. lists seventeen further items. But what are they to be mixed with (μειγνύμενα)? Not all together, for *Simp*. deals in simples, and when it does occasionally prescribe compounds (as at 1.223) they are not extensive. Salt is recommended for fatigue as a liniment σὺν ἐλαίῳ at Diosc. *M.M.* 5.109.2, and soda with olive oil or wine or vinegar at *Simp*. 1.220. I suggest, then, that σὺν ἐλαίῳ has dropped out between δὲ and κόπους. (ἐλαίῳ alone would create a hiatus. For σύν used with μείγνυμι cf. *Simp*. 1.170 ἀπόπατος σὺν ῥοδίνῃ κηρωτῇ προβατεία μιγεῖσα.)

2.37.5. *Simp.* 2.37 deals with πλευρῖτις (pleurisy), and 2.38 with περιπνευμονία (pneumonia). These are clearly presented as distinct conditions, as at Hipp. *Morb*. 1.26–7 and Diosc. *M.M.* 1.19.5. So when we read, at the start of *Simp*. 2.37.5, μάλιστα δὲ ποιεῖ ἐπὶ τῶν περιπνευμονικῶν κώδιον, it is evident that this section belongs at the end of 2.38, not in 2.37. Perhaps it was omitted and then reinserted at the wrong point.

2.59 λουέσθωσαν δὲ ὀξάλμης ἢ ὀριγάνου ἢ Ὀσίρεως ἀπόζεμα τῷ λουτρῷ μίσγοντες.

ἀπόζεμα *Wellmann*: ἀποζέματος *Ω*

Cleansing treatment for jaundice: ‘let them bathe, mixing decoction of vinegar-and-brine or of origanum or osyris with the bathwater.’ The early editors took the puzzling transmitted genitives ὀξάλμης and ἀποζέματος as partitive (‘acidae muriae aliquid, aut … decocti’), but this usage is unparallelled in *Simp*. and alien to its plain style. Wellmann’s emendation, however, only half-corrects the text, for we need ὀξάλμην as well as ἀπόζεμα: both have been attracted into the genitive case of the adjacent nouns. A decoction is regularly of a plant, as here of origanum or osyris; one might conceivably boil down vinegar-and-brine for some purpose, but not when about to dilute it by mixing it into the bathwater.

2.89 ἐπιτίθεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦ ἐπιγαστρίου εἰς τὸ ἐπισχεῖν ῥοῦν κρίθινον <ἄλευρον> σὺν κηκῖδι λείᾳ … ἢ πρίνου <φλοιῷ> ἢ βαλάνων ἢ μυρσίνης φύλλοις

ἄλευρον *addidit Wellmann* φλοιῷ *addidit Wellmann*

A poultice to treat female flux. In Wellmann’s text it consists of ‘barley <meal> with ground-up oak gall … or with <bark> of holm oak or of acorns, or with myrtle leaves’. But ‘the bark of acorns’ is untenable: trees have bark, acorns do not. Rather the original βαλάνῳ has been attracted into the genitive by the surrounding nouns πρίνου and μυρσίνης. (For βάλανος as a collective singular, cf. 1.51.3 and earlier in 2.89.) Consequently, one wonders whether the insertion of <φλοιῷ> is justified. Ground-up acorns are used in poultices, without tree bark, elsewhere in *Simp*. at 1.138.2, 1.193, 2.88.2 (the last

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as a pessary for flux). Dioscorides tells us that the acorns of the holm oak are stronger medicinally than those of other oaks (1.106.2). A less intrusive solution, then, is simply to delete the ἤ after πρίνου; it was inserted after βαλάνῳ was corrupted to βαλάνων.

On Wellmann's unnecessary addition of ἄλευρον, see my note below on alum, meal and substantival adjectives.

2.119.3 … ὑπερικόν, χαμαιδάφνη <καὶ δάφνη> Ἀλεξανδρίνη, γιγγίδιον …

χαμαιδάφνη <καὶ δάφνη> ἀλεξανδρίνη *Wellmann*: χαμαιδάφνης ἀλεξανδρίνης *Ω*

A list of diuretics. Dioscorides (*M.M.* 4.147) tells us that χαμαιδάφνη (a species of butcher's broom) is also called ἀλεξάνδρεια. The author of *Simp*. interprets this plant's name as χαμαιδάφνη ἀλεξανδρίνη both here and at 2.42.4, where he recommends its use for griping pains, as does Dioscorides. Since Dioscorides also commends the plant as a diuretic, it is perfectly at home in the present list. True, Dioscorides calls another species of butcher's broom δάφνη ἀλεξάνδρεια at 4.145, but there seems no need to introduce that plant here.

There is no obvious reason why an original nominative χαμαιδάφνη ἀλεξανδρίνη should have been corrupted into a genitive as Wellmann supposed. Rather the transmitted genitive points to the loss of a word indicating what component of the plant should be used. Since *M.M.* 4.147 specifies the χυλός or expressed juice of the leaves as a diuretic, that word should be reinstated here after ἀλεξανδρίνης.[5]

2.138.1 ὄξος δριμὺ μετὰ θύμου λεάναντες πινέτωσαν

λεάναντες *Wellmann*: λειήναντες *Ω*

Means of removing leeches from the gullet and the oesophagus. 'After grinding sharp vinegar with thyme, let them drink it.' Wellmann's adjustment of the manuscripts' spelling does not improve the sense, for it is the thyme that needs to be ground—hardly the vinegar. Read λεανθέντος (for the form, cf. *Simp*. 1.123.2 λεανθέντα). Confirmation is provided by a passage in Oribasius on leeches (probably indebted to *Simp*.), which recommends θῦμος λεῖος σὺν ὄξει δριμεῖ πινόμενος (5.431.18 Raeder).

2.156 λινόσπερμον συγκαθεψήσας αἰγὸς πιμελῇ … ἐσθιέτωσαν

Remedies for poisoning caused by ingesting blister-beetles. 'Having boiled [sing.] linseed together with goat's lard … let them eat it.' Here the participle is even odder than that at 2.138 because of the incongruity with the plural main verb. In addition, it seems unlikely that the poisoning victim is to cook up his own remedy: other preparations in this paragraph are clearly made by a doctor or an assistant (ἔγκλυζε, τρίψας … δίδου), and at Nic. *Alex.* 133–4, which is also on blister-beetle poisoning, it is (naturally enough) the helper, not the victim, who is to prepare the linseed dish. Correct συγκαθεψήσας to συγκαθεψηθέν (for the form, cf. *Simp*. 2.159 συνεψηθεῖσα).

[5] Gesner thought that the missing word was ῥίζα, but that was because he confused the plant of *M.M.* 4.145, whose root Dioscorides does use for strangury, with the plant of *M.M.* 4.147.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Alum, meal, and substantival adjectives

One type of alum used in ancient medicine is 'split alum'. This is usually designated in *Simp*. (and elsewhere) by στυπτηρία σχιστή. But at eight places in *Simp*. the transmitted text calls it simply σχιστή, with the adjective used substantivally. The usage seems clear and credible, and I see no reason to alter it. Wellmann inserts στυπτηρία in four of the eight places (1.138.2, 1.160.2, 2.108, 2.112), but not in the other four (1.74.2 bis, 1.145.4, 2.27). The justification is uncertain: not comparanda in later authors, since Paul. Aeg. 4.21.2 ad fin. has plain σχιστή in a prescription echoing *Simp*. 1.160.2, where Wellmann would insert στυπτηρία. At 2.112 *Simp*. is admittedly following *M.M*. 3.20, which has the full phrase στυπτηρία σχιστή; but the author of *Simp*. is not *addictus iurare in uerba magistri*, and indeed he often introduces variations on Dioscorides' wording.

'Meal' (ἄλευρον) is usually accompanied by an adjective indicating the seed from which the meal has been ground: κρίθινον 'of barley', ὀρόβινον 'of bitter vetch seed', etc. Sometimes, however, the transmitted text of *Simp*. has the adjective used as a substantive, with ἄλευρον left to be understood: κρίθινον at 1.138.2 and 3, 2.89.1, 2.110, ὀρόβινον at 1.115.2, 1.175, 2.114, 2.120.4, 2.123.2. Again the usage seems perfectly understandable and akin to Dioscorides' routine use of substantival adjectives, such as ῥόδινον with μύρον understood. Wellmann inserts ἄλευρον in some of these places in *Simp*. but not in others, surely without need. Oribasius 4.625.10 Daremberg has substantival ὀρόβινον in a passage cited by Wellmann himself and closely echoing *Simp*. 2.123.2, where Wellmann nevertheless inserts ἄλευρον.

Diosc. *M.M*. 2.104.2 ἔνιοι ἑκάστης ἐξοχῆς ἐρεβίνθῳ ψαύοντες ἄλλῳ καὶ ἄλλῳ εἴς τε ὀθόνιον ἀποδήσαντες αὐτοὺς ῥίπτειν εἰς τοὐπίσω κελεύουσιν, ὡς ἀποπιπτουσῶν τῶν ἀκροχορδόνων.

Treatment for warts. 'Some people, touching each wart with a different chickpea and tying them in a linen cloth, bid throw them behind, on the supposition that the warts fall off.' But if they are doing the touching, etc., whom do they bid? The version at *Simp*. 1.167.1 makes more sense in this regard: 'They say that if … someone, touching each wart with a single chickpea, and tying this in a cloth, throws it behind, they fall off' (φασὶ δὲ ὅτι εἴ τις … ἑκάστης ἐξοχῆς ψαύων ἑνὶ ἐρεβίνθῳ καὶ τοῦτον ἐνδεσμεύων ὀθονίῳ εἰς τοὐπίσω ῥίπτοι, ἀποπίπτειν αὐτάς). Here φασί corresponds to Dioscorides' κελεύουσιν; the persons giving this advice are not the same as those doing the touching, tying, etc. and we need to correct the two participles in Dioscorides to ψαύοντας and ἀποδήσαντας.

Meanings of πτερύγιον

In medical contexts πτερύγιον can refer to an overgrowth of tissue from the inner corner of the eye, or on the fingernails (respectively LSJ s.v. 7, 8). Which of these is meant in *M.M.* at places where Dioscorides does not specify? Here *Simp*. sheds light, since the πτερύγια it treats at 1.44 are explicitly those of the eyes: hence those of 1.180 are likely to be those of the fingernails, especially as they are followed by παρωνυχίαι in 1.181. This is confirmed by the fact that cinquefoil (πεντάφυλλον), listed in *Simp*. 1.180, is used explicitly for πτερύγια of the fingernails at *M.M*. 4.42.2. So we can conclude that the *medicamenta* listed in *Simp*. 1.180, when they are prescribed for πτερύγια in *M.M*., are meant there for the fingers, not for the eyes. They are: ἀκακία 1.101.2, σῦκα

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1.128.2, γλυκύρριζα 3.5.2, ἀλόη 3.22.4, πράσιον 3.105.2, τιθύμαλλος 4.164.4, ἰός 5.80.1, στυπτηρία 5.106.5. Where Beck translates πτερύγια as 'membranous growths over the eyes' (*uel sim.*) at these points in *M.M.*, her translation needs correcting.

University of Victoria JOHN G. FITCH
jfitch@uvic.ca

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000574 Published online by Cambridge University Press