

From Cassius Felix to *Tereoperica*: New Considerations on Indirect Tradition

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Abstract

The main source of the medieval treatise *Tereoperica* is Cassius Felix's work *On Medicine* (*De medicina*). A peculiar characteristic of these Romans from Africa is that they tend to use Greek sources more than other Latin medical authors, as for example Marcellus the Empiricist or Gargilius Martialis; therefore, we find in Cassius Felix's work fragments from Galen translated into Latin and directly integrated into his text. The successive editors of *On Medicine* have only used the testimony of *Tereoperica* secondarily, but in some passages this medieval treatise seems to resemble more the original version of *On Medicine* than its own direct tradition. The aim of this paper is to present a revision of the importance of the indirect tradition for the critical edition of *On Medicine* through the comparative study of both texts and through the example of selective cases.

Introduction

Tereoperica, also called traditionally *Petrocellus*,¹ is a medieval treatise of unknown authorship. It is, like *On Medicine*,² a medical compilation of

※ English translation revised by María Begoña Freire Besteiro and Jon Wilcox. All translations from Latin are mine.

This work has been carried out within the framework of the FPU programme, funded by the Ministerio de Educación of the Spanish Government; and within the framework of the research project funded by the Dirección Xeral de I + D– Xunta de Galicia (INCITE09 204 082 PR), and another from the Secretaría de Estado de Investigación of the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (PFI2010–17070).

1 De Renzi (1856: 4, 185–286) ascribed the authorship of the treatise to a doctor called Petrocellus of Salerno, basing his attribution just on one recent and marginal note that says *Practica Petrocelli Salernitani*. But this attribution is doubtful considering that if there was indeed a doctor called Petrocellus who was a member of the School of Salerno, he would have lived at least two centuries after the copy of the oldest codex that we have found containing the treatise (Paris, BNF, *latin 11219*).

2 Fraise (2002); Rose (1879).

pathology, aetiology, and therapeutics since it presents the description of different illnesses and their causes, as well as the appropriate prescriptions for each of the diseases. The type of medical compilation that is included in *Tereoperica* would have had essentially a practical aim: it would have expected to help the users of the treatise to calm their pains and treat their illnesses, as it is suggested at the beginning of *Tereoperica*:

... Opus ad omnes aegritudines mitigandas et cum Dei gratia corporum uexas.

A work for relieving all illnesses and the suffering of the body by the grace of God.

The composition of *Tereoperica* took place towards the end of late antiquity and the beginning of the early Middle Ages. In this period many treatises like *Tereoperica* were composed through the compilation of medical texts influenced, among other things, by Alexandrian tradition.³ The copied⁴ works are usually treatises in Greek, translated into Latin between the fourth and seventh centuries to satisfy readers' requirements in an increasingly monolingual society.

Certainly, in the early Middle Ages Greek was no longer the language in use, but it was a sign of culture and also the language for medical science, especially in authors like Cassius Felix.⁵ Greek sources and Greek language appear throughout the whole of *On Medicine* and *Tereoperica* and in both treatises we find interesting transcriptions of Hellenisms into Medieval Latin,⁶ some of them very difficult to identify. Sometimes, we must turn to Cassius Felix to find out the sense and the etymology of some odd transliterations in *Tereoperica*,

3 The influence of some philosophical learning methods that were imported from the School of Alexandria is clear in the *Epistola peri hereseon*, introduction to *Tereoperica*; in the *Epistola* we can emphasise the usage of repetitions, the question-answer formula or the *diairesis*. Cf. Duffy (1984).

4 To be precise, they are not literal copies; as we confirm in the case of *Tereoperica*, a complex process of repetition, interpretation, and preservation occurs. Therefore, the sources used do not remain unchanged, but they are often modified through, for example, summaries, additions, extrapolations, as far as necessary.

5 Cassius Felix's work is the one that presents the largest number of Greek loan words among the Latin medical treatises: Celsus 26%, Scribonius Largus 27%, Theodorus Priscianus 35%, Cassius Felix 45%. Cf. Langslow (1994: 228–229).

6 To examine the use and adaptation of the Hellenisms in Latin medical language, especially in Cassius Felix's language, cf. Langslow (1989) and Fraisse (1998).