

Books and libraries in a newly-discovered treatise of Galen

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From Galen himself, as well as from Arabic and Hebrew sources, it was known that Galen wrote a work *On not feeling grief* (*περι ἀλυγίας*) after the great fire of Rome that destroyed many of his books and other possessions in A.D. 192. The treatise had been thought irretrievably lost, but V. Boudon-Millot has identified it in a 15th-c. manuscript now preserved in Thessalonica and rediscovered only in 2005, the Vlatadon 14. Despite the difficulties of the manuscript, which besides being defective in many places was only accessible in microfilm, she has now provided a text, translation and commentary. Such an extraordinary discovery will doubtless elicit many further contributions. Here I will discuss two passages, both of which concern the precious manuscripts lost by Galen and others in the fire, and the reasons why he cannot repair the losses.¹

The work takes the form of a letter, written to a person (unnamed) who has asked Galen how it is that he does not exhibit signs of grief after the losses he has sustained in the fire of 192. The inquirer seems to be a real and not an imagined person. He was 'educated along with' Galen, perhaps in Pergamon (s. 57); he had observed Galen's lack of grief during 'a certain attack of the long-drawn-out Plague when I lost practically all the servants I had in Rome' (s. 1); he had suffered under Commodus (s. 57). At the time of writing, presumably in the reign of Septimius Severus, he is not in Rome, but it is not stated where he is.²

As the title implies, the work is concerned with resisting grief or regret, and with rising above circumstances to bear losses with equanimity. It can be divided up as follows:

- 1-38 In response to his questioner, Galen enumerates the losses of equipment, books, and so on, that he has suffered because of the fire;
- 39-46 examples of past philosophers who have borne with losses;
- 47-68 the inability to bear loss is due to the inability to be satisfied with enough, i.e., to insatiability (*aplēstia*): Galen's own self-discipline is due to the training given him by his father and by others;
- 69-84 Galen's *alupia* not the same as *apatheia*; he is not indifferent to suffering, and would never ask the gods to test him by sending it; he only hopes by proper self-care to avoid the worst that they can send.

My concern here is with two passages from the first section, one about manuscripts made precious by being edited or corrected by experts; the other about manuscripts of especially rare works that have perished in the fire, or cannot be re-copied for other reasons.

Galen has just explained to his addressee that the lost books cannot now be replaced, since 'all the libraries on the Palatine were burned up on that day' (s. 12) I give the text of the following section as reconstituted by Boudon-Millot, indicating the manuscript readings where she diverges from them, and thereafter an English translation:

1 V. Boudon-Millot, "Un traité perdu de Galien miraculeusement retrouvé, le *Sur l'inutilité de se chagriner*. Texte grec et traduction française," in ead., A. Guardasole and C. Magdolaine (edd.), *La science médicale antique: nouveaux regards* (Paris 2007) 73-123. M. Schiefsky and I are preparing an English translation. Boudon-Millot has also given a summary account of the discovery and the contents in "The library of a Greek scholar in the Roman empire: new testimony from Galen's recently discovered *Peri alupias*," in L. Gillbers (ed.), *Asclepius: studies on ancient medicine* (Acta Classica Suppl. 2; Bloemfontein 2008) 7-16. On the rediscovery of the manuscript, see also Boudon-Millot and A. Pirotte, "De l'arabe au grec: un nouveau témoin du texte de Galien (le Vlatadon 14)," *CRAI* 2005, 497-510, and the same authors: "Galen ressuscité: édition *priniceps* du texte grec du *De propriis placitis*," *REG* 118 (2005) 168-70. For a first discussion, see P. L. Tucci, "Galen's storeroom, Rome's libraries, and the fire of A.D. 192," *JRA* 21 (2008) 133-49, favoring a date for the fire in the first quarter of 192.

2 On the personality of the inquirer, Boudon-Millot 2007 (supra n.1) 80-81.