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ARTICLE

From Textual Reception to Textual Codification: Thessalos and the Quest for Authenticity

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This article examines the content of the *De Virtutibus Herbarum*, an astrological herbal manual by Thessalos which displays the healing and marvelous properties of plants that correspond by means of *sympatheia* with the twelve zodiacal signs and the seven planets.* In particular, the article aims to demonstrate two scholarly points: 1) the dependence of the treatise upon already formulated rhizotomic and astrological 'encyclopedias' through a comparative analysis of some intertextual examples derived from various authoritative writings; and 2) the departure of the manual's preface from this existing tradition in order to highlight its textual authenticity.

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A dynamic nexus of astral semantics and herbal lore appeared during the second century CE in the form of a semi-technical manual entitled *De Virtutibus Herbarum* (hereafter *DVH*) on the healing and marvelous properties of those plants corresponding to the twelve zodiacal signs and the seven planets.¹ This hybrid of astrology and botany is based on two key assumptions: 1) the zodiac and planets form a mechanistic system having a causal effect upon plants; and 2) the lists of plants derive ultimately from the herbalist tradition as formulated by literate rhizotomists and physicians (Scarborough, 1991: 155–6; Ducourthial, 2003: 282–473; Piperakis, 2014: 69–70, 258–61).²

The opening section of the work has the form of a fictional autobiographical letter addressed to the Roman emperor (Claudius or Nero), ascribed erroneously to Harpocraton in the Greek version, and correctly to a certain Thessalos in the Latin version.³ According to the letter, Thessalos accidentally discovered an iatromathematical manual of the legendary Egyptian king Nechepsos⁴ in one of Alexandria's libraries, yet when he tried to use it, it proved ineffective. Having asserted in advance the authenticity of the book to his family and colleagues, and facing the risk of becoming the object of derision and disappointment, Thessalos decided that he would either find the authentic recipes or else commit suicide. Arriving in Thebes (Diospolis),

¹ Each of two lists of the zodiacal and planetary plants is displayed in two separate sections. On the dating of the zodiacal treatise to the second century CE see Moyer (2011: 217–9, 293–7); revised in idem (2015). In my PhD dissertation (Piperakis, 2014: 91, 85–7) I argued that the second section of the *DVH*, pertaining to the planetary pharmacopoeia, was composed around the same time and that both of them were framed by a letter and an epilogue, which were created slightly afterwards, most likely in the same century (see below).

² The work is part of a broader category of texts dealing with the astral plants. On astrological pharmacopoeia see Bouché-Leclercq (1899: 317, 534–6); Pfister (1938: 1449–55); Delatte (1938: 17–20, 41–50, 108–10); idem (1949: 145–60); Festugière (1944: 137–86); Scarborough (1991: 154–6); Barton (1994a: 190–1); Patera (1994: 27–8); Ducourthial (2003: 257–473); Pérez Jiménez (2010).

³ The Greek version of the various sections of the treatise (the introductory letter, the plant lists and the epilogue) was published by Boudreaux (1912) and the Latin version by Cumont (1921). Both editions are superseded by Friedrich's revised edition (1968). For the manuscript tradition see Friedrich (1968: 13–40). On additional Latin manuscripts not included in Friedrich's edition, see the bibliography in Piperakis (2014: 2–3, n. 5).

⁴ Throughout the article I use the transcription of the correct form of the Egyptian name's orthography; 'Nechepsos' instead of 'Nechepso.' See Ryholt (2011: 65–6); Heilen (2011: 27–9).

he became acquainted with the native Egyptian priesthood and inquired whether any magic (*magikē energeia*) was still practiced. An Egyptian priest arranged a face-to-face encounter for Thessalos with the god Asclepius, here considered as the equivalent of the Egyptian god of medicine, Imhotep, who provided him with the genuine recipes displayed in the main text of the *DVH*. Although the letter purports to purvey the knowledge of the *DVH* as a revelation of Asclepius, in a number of later manuscripts it is introduced as a revelation of Hermes Trismegistus (in several cases addressing his student Asclepius) (Friedrich, 1968: 25–35). This attribution is in accordance with a group of strikingly similar astrological writings which were circulating during the Roman imperial period under the name of the Graeco-Egyptian god Hermes Trismegistus (Kroll, 1912: 797–8; Festugière, 1944: 137–86; Gundel and Gundel, 1966: 19–21).

Despite the significant scholarship on various aspects of this narrative,⁵ the implication of the knowledge system encompassed in the *DVH* for understanding the letter itself has received no attention. The attribution of the formulae to a divine figure should alert us to the common practice of pseudonymity in the ancient world. Various treatises that drew on and compiled previous works were then falsely attributed by their unknown authors to an authoritative figure in order not only to enhance their prestige and status but also to indicate their continuum with other relevant texts embedded in an already legitimate context (Gordon, 2006–8: 32–45). Nevertheless, while these compilations did reproduce previous lore, they often modified it and adjusted it to their own purposes and aims, as it is the case with *DVH*, in which Thessalos attempts to break away from pre-existing systems of knowledge upon which the treatise, in its entirety, depends.⁶

⁵ On Thessalos' letter see the studies of Cumont (1918); Festugière (1939); Smith (1978); Ritner (1993: 219–20); idem (1995: 3356–7); Moyer (2003); idem (2011: 208–73); Sfameni Gasparro (2009); Harland (2011); Ní Mheallaigh (2014). See also my PhD dissertation (Piperakis, 2014) (with further bibliography).

⁶ On the communication of knowledge through condensed texts during antiquity see the collection of articles in Horster and Reitz (2010). For further scholarship on the ways of systematization and rationalization of texts pertaining to natural magic, see Gordon (1997a: 131–9); idem (1999: 166, 181–5, 232–9); idem (2007); idem (2010); idem (2011).

1. Organizing Knowledge: The *DVH* and the Tradition of the Empire

The juxtaposition of the manuals of Nechepsos and Thessalos is the key to understanding the process by which authoritative texts were transmitted and expanded upon. The legendary king Nechepsos along with the sage Petosiris were figures of great authority and were considered the pseudonymous authors of astrological writings devoted to omen astrology, horoscopic divination, medical astrology and numerological prognostication. This literary production is now lost, except for a number of fragments preserved by later authors.⁷ The bulk of the extant fragments, citations and quotations point to a compilation of contemporary Graeco-Egyptian astrological tradition circulating in Ptolemaic Egypt at the time of its composition, around the late second or even the first century BCE.⁸ Pseudonymous compendia inevitably recast older materials even as they preserved thematic continuities but they often introduced conceptual changes. Hence, another corpus of texts that are related in content was ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus rather than to Nechepsos or Petosiris and soon after these legendary figures were thought of as students of Hermes or as followers of the Hermetic teachings (Festugière, 1944: 102–4).

The information provided in the letter concerning the iatromathematical manual of Nechepsos is independently verified by several sources on account of both structure and content. According to Thessalos (*DVH*, proem. 6–7, p. 47 Friedrich = fr. 35 Riess), the manual contained twenty-four cures for the entire body with every condition connected with zodiacal signs through stones and plants. The surviving medical fragments of Nechepsos confirm Thessalos' narrative, since they fall into two distinct thematic groups which explore the medicinal properties of

⁷ For the *editio princeps* of the fragments see Riess (1891–3). For a supplementary list and an analysis of several fragments written in iambics see Heilen (2011). On Nechepsos and Petosiris see Kroll (1935); idem (1937); Gundel and Gundel (1966: 27–36); Fraser (1972: I 436–7, II 630–3); Pingree (1974); Barton (1994a: 26–8); Fuentes González (2005); Heilen (2011: 23–31); Moyer (2011: 228–35, 241–7).

⁸ Kroll (1901: 573–7; idem, 1935: 2163–4), based on several fragments, dated the work at the mid-second century BCE or a little later. See also Fraser (1972: I 436–7, II 631–2); Fuentes González (2005: 606–7). However, some historical events included in the fragments rely on the work of the historians Polybius and Diodorus Siculus and therefore they push the date later, at least to the very late second century BCE. See Schwartz (1980: 318, n. 5, 320–1).

stones *and* plants.⁹ As none of them refers to the stars, it is likely that the original work of Nechepsos included the medicinal properties of astral stones and plants and that later compilers omitted the astrological lore, being interested only in their properties. However, it is possible that several of these fragments did not belong to the original work of Nechepsos and were attributed to him because of his authoritative status at a later date.

The manual on the whole constituted a glossary, a lexicographical arrangement of the materials into twenty-four entries, one for each letter of the Greek alphabet.¹⁰ In the same manner, the first book of the Hermetic *Kyranides*, a Byzantine compilation of earlier works dated to the second century CE (Fowden, 1993: xviii, 87–8 and n. 57), arranges the marvelous powers of plants, birds, fish and stones in twenty-four alphabetical entries.¹¹ Even though this alphabetical systematization reflects traditions of Hellenistic Mesopotamia, it also has links to Egyptian scribal exercises that organized bird and plant names into alphabetical order (Quack, 2003: 165, 182–4). Hence, onomastic organization of the material has also been applied to other compendia created in Lower Egypt, such as the plant lore included in pseudo-Democritus' work *Cheirokmēta*, composed by Bolus of Mendes (in Plin., *HN* 24.160–6; see Gordon, 1997a: 136) (late 2nd cent. BCE), and the herbal tractate written by the first century CE lexicographer Pamphilus of Alexandria (Gal., *Simpl.Med.* 6, proem., pp. XI 792, 797–8 Kühn).¹² The material contained in the aforementioned works was

⁹ On Nechepsos' fragments concerning stones of immense therapeutic value see Gal., *Simpl.Med.* 9.2.19, p. XII 207 Kühn = fr. 29 Riess ~ Aët., 2.18, p. I 162 Olivieri = fr. 29 Riess; Aët., 2.19, p. I 163 Olivieri = fr. 31 Riess ~ Ps.-Dsc., *Lap.* 35, p. 183 Ruelle; Aët., 2.47, p. I 170 Olivieri = fr. 32 Riess; 6.92, p. II 239 Olivieri. On the king's fragments of pharmacopoeia see Aët., 1.38, p. I 40 Olivieri = fr. 30 Riess; 15.13, pp. 42–3 Zervos; 15.21, pp. 119–20 Zervos; cf. *P.Bingen* 13, ed. Fournet (2000) (2nd/3rd cent. CE).

¹⁰ In a purported letter of the sage Petosiris to Nechepsos (*CCAG* 7 161) pairs of letters of the alphabet are distributed to each of the twelve zodiacal signs. See Cumont (1918: 104, n. 1).

¹¹ In the prologue of the *Kyranides* (1–5, 7, p. 14 Kaimakis) it is attested that the treatise is a compilation of the book of the Persian king Kyranus and the similar book of Harpocraton, while reference is also made to Hermes Trismegistus. The reference to Harpocraton and Hermes Trismegistus conceptually integrates the *Kyranides* within the same context the *DVH* belongs to.

¹² Galen (*Simpl.Med.* 6, proem., p. XI 798 Kühn) mentions that Pamphilus relied on a Hermetic work concerning the association of plants with the thirty-six decans, namely the thirty-six fixed stars of Egyptian astronomy. This treatise, though similar to the *Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius*

a compilation mostly of earlier written and oral data. Lacking coherence, this vast material was organized and systematized through alphabetization and schematic (re)arrangement (Gordon, 1997a: 131; idem, 1999: 235; idem, 2010: 268; idem, 2011: 51).

The medical prescription Thessalos unsuccessfully attempted to apply included the solar lozenge (*trochiskos hēliakos*), a remedy admired by Nechepsos himself (*DVH*, proem. 7, p. 47 Friedrich = fr. 35 Riess). A fragment from Nechepsos' manual, quoted by the physician Aëtius of Amida (1.38, p. I 40 Olivieri = fr. 30 Riess), provides instructions for the making of lozenges composed of the plant anthemis, alias chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla* L.),¹³ for the treatment of fever. When a fever occurs, a lozenge is to be pulverized, mixed with oil and then applied as an ointment throughout the whole body. Likewise, Dioscorides (*Mat.Med.* 3.137.3, p. II 147 Wellmann) notes that some use chamomile as a salve mixed with oil to cure intermittent fevers. The hot and dry properties of the plant in Aëtius' excerpt (see also Gal., *Simpl.Med.* 6.1.47, p. XI 833 Kühn; cf. Dsc., *Mat.Med.* 3.137.2, p. II 146 Wellmann; Gal., *Simpl.Med.* 3.10, p. XI 562 Kühn) intrinsically relate it to the Sun in view of the fact that the Sun in antiquity was thought to have exactly the same

(ed. Ruelle, 1908; cf. the papyrus fragment in Andorlini, 2003), is by no means identical to it, since it listed a plant named *aetos* that is not attested in the latter. What makes Pamphilus' work interesting in this context is that his glossary, preserved by the redactor of Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* (Wellmann, 1898: 369–71, 373; cf. idem, 1914: III 327–58), has links to the Pharaonic Egyptian herbal lore. See Wellmann (1914: III 349–50); Dieleman (2005: 189–203). With the decanal medicine was engaged another figure of Egypt and Hermeticism, Nechepsos. If we take at face value the testimony of the astrologer Hephæstion of Thebes (2.18.74, p. I 167 Pingree), the king relied on the *Salmeschiniaka* (c. 200 BCE?), an astrological calendar of the seventy-two fixed stars (decans and horoscopes) which included the ailments these stars were responsible for as well as their treatment. Although the calendar is now lost, some insight into its content can be gained from *P.Oxy.* 465 (eds. Grenfell and Hunt, 1903: 126–37; see further Neugebauer and Van Hoesen, 1964: 61–2) (2nd cent. CE). On the *Salmeschiniaka* and their relation to *P.Oxy.* 465 see now Adamson (2013: 62–7). On Nechepsos' decanal medicine see also Firm., *Math.* 4.22.2, p. II 202 Monat = fr. 28 Riess, and the excerpt in Gal., *Simpl.Med.* 9.2.19, p. XII 207 Kühn = fr. 29 Riess ~ Aët., 2.18, p. I 162 Olivieri = fr. 29 Riess. Cf. a papyrus from Egypt exhibited at Munich (ed. Boll, 1901: 493–4).

¹³ In the texts of antiquity identical plants were frequently transcribed under various names, whereas different plants were addressed under the same name. See the listings of plant names in André (1985), and also Ducourthial (2003: 26–35).

qualities as chamomile (Ptol., *Tetr.* 1.4.1, p. 22 Hübner ~ Heph.Astr., 1.2.2, p. I 31 Pingree). This association is explicitly stated by Galen (*Simpl.Med.* 3.10, p. XI 562 Kühn), according to whom the wisest of the Egyptians had consecrated chamomile to the Sun and considered it to be a remedy for every kind of fever. That the solar lozenge in Thessalos' narrative was part of Nechepsos' prescriptions is further suggested by pseudo-Apuleius (*Herb.* 23, p. 62 Howald and Sigerist), who used the synonym 'solar lozenge' (*trociscos eliacos*) for chamomile. In light of this information, it can be assumed that Thessalos was familiar with the content of the treatise ascribed to Nechepsos.

Nechepsos' solar lozenge introduces us to the ways in which ancient astrologers selected and organized the vast and varied rhizotomic material in literary schemes. The Hermetic discourses of pharmacopoeia press into service plants that are thought to be associated with their corresponding stars or planets through *sympatheia*.¹⁴ Such systematization quantitatively distinguishes the properties of the plant material according to the geographical region from which it was picked. This organizing principle is expounded and summed up in the epilogue of the *DVH* (6–7, pp. 267/268 Friedrich). Healing plants that grew in cold regions are less effective than the plants of hotter regions, since the pores of the latter are looser than the ones of the former and are thus able to absorb to a larger degree the vital air. Consequently, these plants should be picked from hot regions, especially in Egypt, Arabia and Syria.¹⁵ A similar view is expressed in the Hermetic treatise *De paeonia* (CCAG 8.1 188,4–8 ~ CCAG 8.2 167,6–11),¹⁶ in which the lunar peony (*Paeonia* L.) is regarded as particularly potent when picked from the region of Mount Haemus and the mountains of

¹⁴ On the theoretical principle of *sympatheia* (like cures like) and its opposite, *antipatheia* (opposite cures opposite), regarding astrological medicine see Bouché-Leclercq (1899: 534–5); Festugière (1944: 131–3); Barton (1994a: 190–1); Lancellotti (2001: 441–3); Ducourthial (2003: 262–3).

¹⁵ The *climata* of Asia and Italia attested in the Greek manuscripts are probably interpolations. See Cumont (1918: 105, n. 2).

¹⁶ The two versions of the text on peony are Byzantine compilations of older Hermetic texts. For further treatises on peony which are more distant from ancient mentality see CCAG 11.2 164–6; CCAG 12 117–9; Thomson (1955: 80–3).

Tauromenium, the Grand Babylon, Thrace, beyond Gadara and the Aegean shores due to the particular astral influences prevailing in these regions.

Nonetheless, in antiquity the abstract concept of *sympatheia* was interchangeable with that of *antipatheia*, which distinguishes qualitatively (and not quantitatively) plant lore according to the geographical location in which it grew. This is illustrated with an example given by Asclepius to Thessalos; hemlock (*Conium maculatum* L.), a plant associated with Mars, is poisonous in Italy, whereas in Crete it is edible (DVH, proem. 29–34, pp. 58/61, 59/62 Friedrich; cf. cod. *Vaticanus gr.* 1144, f. 243, ed. Boudreaux, 1906: 351–2). An analogous testimony is attributed to pseudo-Democritian lore. Bolus of Mendes in his lost book *On Sympathy and Antipathy* (in Schol. Nic., *Th.* 764a, p. 276 Crugnola) mentioned that a deadly plant that grew in Persia, when it was introduced and cultivated in Egypt, produced very sweet fruit due to the benign quality of the Egyptian land.¹⁷ Within this concept of antipatheia, the letter's author incorporates information that draws on the herbal 'encyclopedia.' It is the link of hemlock with Crete, based on the conviction that the hemlock that grew in Crete was considered significantly more potent (Dsc., *Mat.Med.* 4.78.2, p. II 240 Wellmann; Plin., *HN* 25.154).

Such process of recontextualization of 'stored' knowledge is detected in the astrological lore of the letter as well. Asclepius' revelation to Thessalos conveys knowledge that in other texts is ascribed to the compendium of Nechepsos and Petosiris. The god reveals to Thessalos that seasonal produce grows and withers under stellar influence because the divine spirit (*pneuma*), which is composed of the smallest particles, pervades all substance, particularly in those places where the stellar influences are the same as the ones prevailing at the beginning of the cosmos

¹⁷ The phrase 'nature delights in nature and nature conquers nature and nature rules nature' crystallizes the principles of *sympatheia* and *antipatheia* in the pseudo-Democritian tradition (Ps.-Democr., 3, p. I 43,20–1 Berthelot and Ruelle; Syn.Alch., 1, p. I 57,14–5 Berthelot and Ruelle). See also Berthelot and Ruelle (1888: III 395,9–396,2). A similar expression centered merely on the principle of *antipatheia* is related to Nechepsos' decanal medicine; 'one nature is conquered by another nature and often one god by another god' (Firm., *Math.* 4.22.2, p. II 202 Monat = fr. 28 Riess). The above phrase indicates that to Nechepsos cure is the outcome of the use of materials which are opposed to the stars responsible for the diseases.

(*epi tēs kosmikēs katabolēs*)¹⁸ (*DVH*, proem. 28, pp. 58/59 Friedrich). In other words, the divine *pneuma*, equivalent to Stoic nature or god,¹⁹ activates all passive matter, especially in regions allotted to the celestial elements of the *thema mundi*, the nativity of the world (Bouché-Leclercq, 1899: 185–7; Komorowska, 2011). This theory of the chart of the world is also encountered in the example of Asclepius that refers to hemlock, which relies on two astrological theories: namely the system of planetary houses²⁰ and the system of astral geography.²¹ Hemlock is a plant in *sympatheia* with Mars and is considered lethal in Italy because Italy is allotted to Scorpio, a zodiacal sign which is the house of Mars. On the contrary, hemlock is edible in Crete because Crete is allotted to Sagittarius, whose ruler, Jupiter, attenuates Mars' lethal effects (*DVH*, proem. 29–34, pp. 58/61, 59/62 Friedrich; cf. cod. *Vaticanus gr.* 1144, f. 243, ed. Boudreaux, 1906: 351–2). The planetary positions of Mars in Scorpio and Jupiter in Sagittarius correspond to the system of planetary houses and at the same time reflect part of the horoscope of the world.

The earliest known astrologers who referred to the *thema mundi* were Thrasyllus (*Epit.*, *CCAG* 8.3 100,27–30) (1st cent. CE) and Antiochus of Athens (*Isag.*, *CCAG* 8.3 118,29–119,10) (1st/2nd? cent. CE). The latter implicitly acknowledges his sources as Nechepsos and Petosiris (= the old <astrologers>), whereas the former probably reflects their theories too, given that his work draws on their writings. For an explicitly expressed ascription we may turn to a later source, the fourth century CE astrologer Firmicus Maternus (*Math.* 3.1.1, p. II 15 Monat = fr. 25 Riess; 3 proem. 4, p. II 15 Monat = fr. 25 Riess), who remarks that in the *thema mundi* Nechepsos and

¹⁸ The Greek word *katabolē* can be translated either as 'foundation' and 'beginning' or as 'nativity' (see LSJ s.v. καταβολή, II.1/I.1.c). Both interpretations have been brought together in the relevant phrase of the excerpt.

¹⁹ On the Stoic *pneuma* see White (2003: 134–6).

²⁰ The system of houses assigns each planet to two zodiacal signs, one nocturnal and one diurnal, where its influence is increased, with the exception of the Moon and the Sun which rule only one sign, Cancer and Leo respectively. See Bouché-Leclercq (1899: 182–92); Neugebauer and Van Hoesen (1959: 7); Barton (1994a: 96); Beck (2007: 85–6).

²¹ This system assigns specific countries or regions and their peoples to the dominion of specific zodiacal signs. See Bouché-Leclercq (1899: 327–47); Barton (1994a: 179–85); Hübner (2000: 71–93); De Callatay (2002); Beck (2007: 69, 114–5).

Petosiris followed Asclepius and Anubis, to whom Hermes Trismegistus confessed the secret, and handed it down to subsequent generations.²² As regards the system of astral geography, the correspondence of Crete to Sagittarius has been appropriated by authors that predate the letter's composition and specifically by the first century CE astrologers Manilius (*Astron.* 4.783–6) and Dorotheus of Sidon (in *Heph.Astr.*, 1.1.160, p. l 21 Pingree; cf. *Paul.Al.*, 2, pp. 6,21, 10,5 Boer). Writers such as Manilius and Dorotheus were only two of the many astrologers, along with Nechepsos and Petosiris, who claimed that their knowledge incorporates a universal truth.

The main corpus of the *DVH* exhibits similar intertextual links with works communicating a legitimized knowledge. Some examples will illustrate them. A spell from the London-Leiden Demotic papyrus (col. XI, eds. Griffith and Thompson, 1904: l 80/87 = *PDM* xiv 309–34) (2nd/3rd cent. CE) preserves instructions for winning favor, which fall within traditional Egyptian ritual practices (Quack, 2011: 68–70). A wax figurine of a baboon (the sacred animal of Thoth) is anointed with oil and other ingredients and is placed in a faience vessel. Then, a wreath is also anointed and an extensive spell is uttered seven times before the Sun at dawn. The practitioner will gain favor and praise after smearing his face with the foregoing ointment and placing the wreath in his hand. The ritual ends with the assurance that this scribe's feat is that of a king whose name unfortunately has not been preserved in the papyrus, except for the final sign š. The papyrus' editors (Griffith and Thompson, 1904: l 86, n. l.26) suggested that the king in question was Darius I. However, Ryholt (2011: 62; see also Quack, 2011: 68–9) argues that the orthography of the Demotic name Nechepsos (*Ny-k3.w p3 šš*) corresponds better to the Egyptian tradition.²³ In light of this argument, a close link between the papyrus London-Leiden and the *DVH* is drawn. Similarly, according to

²² This narrative is linked to Thessalos' letter, since Asclepius is presented in both of them as the agent of the *thema mundi*. In the next passage, Firmicus Maternus (*Math.* 3.1.2, p. ll 16 Monat = fr. 25 Riess) adds that this teaching has been written down in the book of Asclepius called *Myriogenesis*.

²³ The orthography of the royal Egyptian name 'Nechepsos' points to pharaoh Necho II (610–595 BCE) with the addition of the Demotic epithet 'the wise.' See Ryholt (2011: 63–5, 66–7). By contrast, Ray (1974) considers the name to mean 'Necho the Ram' (*N(y)-k3.w p3 sr*), whereas Krauss (1981) 'Necho the King' (*N-k3.w p3 (n)swt*). However, both of these etymologies are wrong on linguistic grounds. See Heilen (2011: 26, n. 26).

the *DVH* (2.1.4, p. 199 Friedrich), the juice of chicory (alias heliotrope),²⁴ a plant associated with the Sun, confers favor if the petitioner, while facing the sunrise, anoints his face with it and summons the Sun god Helios begging him to provide grace. An analogous recipe is displayed in the *Hygromantia Salomonis*, a late antique Hermetic text (*CCAG* 8.2 164,1–4; cf. *CCAG* 12 130,21–3 ~ Delatte, 1949: 169,9–11); the leaves of the Sun's plant sun-spurge (*Euphorbia helioscopia* L.), when pounded and mixed with rose extract, are anointed on the face, thus currying favor. Much closer to the first two formulas is the one found in the first and most ancient book of the *Kyranides* (1.22,7–15, p. 101 Kaimakis); the stamen and flower of chrysanthemum, here identified most probably with immortal (*Helichrysum* L.), mixed with rose oil and spread on the eyes, bring favor, attractiveness and the ability to make friends easily, especially when the ritual is practiced at sunrise.²⁵

The *Kyranides* provide further insights into the ways in which the *DVH* contextualizes a malleable body of knowledge. The formula that the root of peony expels demons when fumigated is appropriated by both the *DVH* (2.2.3, p. 207 Friedrich) and the *Kyranides* (1.3,21–2, p. 36 Kaimakis), texts where peony is addressed by the name *aglaophōtis* and *glykisiḗ* respectively, as well as by the treatise *De paeonia* (*CCAG* 8.1 191,11–3 ~ *CCAG* 8.2 170,1–2; cf. *CCAG* 12 118,23–6; Thomson, 1955: 83,13–4). Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.), as described in the *DVH* (1.11.4, pp. 167/171

²⁴ The Greek word *hēliotropion* was used by ancient writers to designate various heliotropic plants. Thus, in the *DVH* chicory (*Cichorium intybus* L.) is regarded as a species of heliotropes (*Heliotropium* L. or *Chrozophora tinctoria* Juss.) and it is thought of as equivalent to plants characterized by the phenomenon of heliotropism. See André (1985: s.v. *hēliotropium* [3]), and also Delatte (1949: 157–8); Ducourthial (2003: 286).

²⁵ This formula adds that the plant's stamen is collected when the Sun is in Aries and afterwards it is deposited in a glass vessel (*Kyr.* 1.22,10, p. 101 Kaimakis). Compare this testimony with the relevant excerpt from the *DVH*, proem. 35–9 (pp. 61/64, 62/65 Friedrich). According to Theophrastus (*HP* 9.19.3), immortal confers fame when someone crowns himself with a chaplet of the plant's flower sprinkled with unguent from a vessel of 'unfired' gold. The same formula is attributed by Pliny (*HN* 21.66) to the Magi. Note that both Dioscorides (*Mat.Med.* 4.57, p. II 211 Wellmann) and Pliny (*HN* 21.168) report that immortal is also called chrysanthemum and that chaplets of it crown the statues of gods. See also Nic., *Georg.*, fr. 74,66–9, pp. 154–5 Gow and Scholfield; Ath., *Deipn.* 15.27; and the London-Leiden Demotic papyrus, v/col. II 4–6, eds. Griffith and Thompson (1904: I 170/173 = *PDM* xiv 900–2).

Friedrich), is taken to be identical with the plant edder-wort (*Arum dracunculus* L.) and its juice is beneficial to the eyes when used as a lotion. The seed of edder-wort yields the same effect when worn as an amulet in the *Kyranides* (1.4,24–5, 66–9, pp. 40, 42 Kaimakis). Other examples of the intertextual analogies between the *DVH* and the late antique Hermetic literature include holy vervain (*Verbena officinalis* L.) as a cure for the callous lumps and the diseases of the mouth and tonsils (*DVH* 1.3.2, pp. 93/94 Friedrich; *CCAG* 7 233,17–20 ~ *CCAG* 8.3 161,30–3; cf. *CCAG* 9.2 134, 8–10) and birthwort (*Aristolochia* L.), which is used as a medicine for eye diseases (*DVH* 1.12.3, 6, pp. 175, 179 Friedrich; *CCAG* 8.2 162,13–4).

Certain prescriptions of the *DVH* are also encountered in Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*, in which they are ascribed not to Asclepius or to Hermes but to the Persian Magi. Pliny (*HN* 20.74, 22.61), drawing on the magian rhizotomic tradition, reports that the juice of chicory mixed with oil and anointed on the body carries favor and praise, and that when worn as an amulet the heliotrope is therapeutic for tertian and quartan fevers. These similarities notwithstanding, in the *DVH* (2.1.2–3, p. 199 Friedrich) chicory, alias heliotrope, cures tertian and quartan fevers when applied as an ointment but not when carried as an amulet (Nechepsos' solar lozenge had an identical application for the treatment of fevers, as has already been mentioned above). In his lost work *Cheirokmēta* (in Plin., *HN* 24.160), Pseudo-Democritus notes that the Magi use *aglaophōtis* to summon the gods and that the plant grows among the marble mines of Arabia (on the Persian side), the same region where peony predominantly grows according to the *DVH* (2.2.1, p. 207 Friedrich). Pliny contrasts the magian rhizotomic tradition with his own elitist understandings of herbal healing methods and efficacy, acknowledging the latter to be far superior to the former (Janowitz, 2013; cf. Gordon, 1987: 74–8; idem, 1999: 229–31). Nevertheless, when integrated in the *DVH* this body of knowledge is transposed into a different synthesis that is ascribed to different authorities with contrasting implications. The *DVH* is a work that lists the marvelous efficacies of the healing astral plants as a revealed knowledge of no less an authority than Asclepius or Hermes Trismegistus.

Almost all of the above recipes exhibit continuities with, and resystematization of, an already formulated intertextual and rhizotomic 'encyclopedia.' Dioscorides

(*Mat.Med.* 3.140.3, p. II 150 Wellmann ~ *CCAG* 11.2 165,28–30; cf. *Dsc.*, *Eup.* 1.22, pp. III 161–2 Wellmann) remarks that when chewed and swallowed with wine or with a mixture of honey and water, peony's black grains relieve those tormented by throttling demons (*ephialtes* = personified nightmares; see also peony as *ephialtia* in *Aët.*, 1.84, p. I 50 Olivieri).²⁶ This prescription is restated by Pliny (*HN* 25.29, 27.87), who writes that peony is a suitable cure for the nightmares that the goatish demon-gods, the Fauni, bring during sleep; it particularly wards off nightmares when its black seeds are taken with wine. Moreover, edder-wort and fennel were widely considered cures for eye diseases (edder-wort: *Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 2.166.4, p. I 233 Wellmann; *idem*, *Eup.* 1.41.3, p. III 165 Wellmann; *Plin.*, *HN* 24.144, 146; *Gal.*, *Simpl.Med.* 6.4.9, p. XI 865 Kühn; fennel: *Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 3.70.2, p. II 81 Wellmann; *idem*, *Eup.* 1.41.2, p. III 165 Wellmann; *Plin.*, *HN* 20.254, 29.119; *Gal.*, *Simpl.Med.* 7.12.5, pp. XII 67–8 Kühn; *Schol. Nic.*, *Th.* 33b, p. 48 Crugnola), holy vervain was regarded as a treatment for mouth ulcers (*Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 4.60.2, p. II 215 Wellmann; *Archig.* in *Aët.*, 1.318, p. I 120 Olivieri) and for problems of the tonsils and throat (*Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 4.60.2, p. II 215 Wellmann; *Plin.*, *HN* 30.35), and heliotropes were recommended as remedies for tertian and quartan fevers (*Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 4.190.2, p. II 339 Wellmann; *idem*, *Eup.* 2.20.2, 2.21.1, p. III 248 Wellmann; *Plin.*, *HN* 22.60).²⁷ Birthwort is the only medicinal plant exempted from this intertextual rhizotomic corpus, taking into account that its properties for curing eye diseases are only attested by Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* (25.143).

While plants' medicinal properties had been noted by ancient scholars, it is mostly their peculiar characteristics that led to their incorporation within miraculous herbalism. The observation that the heliotropes and the sun-spurge follow the Sun in its yearly or daily route (heliotrope: *Nic.*, *Th.* 678–80, p. II 53 Jacques & *Schol. Nic.*, *Th.* 676d, 678a, p. 251 Crugnola; *Dsc.*, *Mat.Med.* 4.190.1, p. II 338 Wellmann;

²⁶ Similarly, in the *De paeonia* (*CCAG* 8.2 170,5–6) the root of peony wards off bad dreams when it is placed on the pillow. Cf. *CCAG* 11.2 165,7–8.

²⁷ Dioscorides attributes these medicinal properties to the first species of heliotrope (*Heliotropium europaeum* L.), whereas Pliny to the second one (*Chrozophora tinctoria* Juss.). See André (1985: s.v. *heliotropium* [1–2]).

Plin., *HN* 2.109, 18.252, 22.57; Plut., *in Hes.*, fr. 101 Sandbach; cf. Thphr., *HP* 7.15.1; sun-spurge: Dsc., *Mat.Med.* 4.164.7, p. II 313 Wellmann; Plin., *HN* 26.69) and that the flower and leaves of immortelle are of golden color²⁸ (Thphr., *HP* 9.19.3; Theoc., 2.78; Dsc., *Mat.Med.* 4.57, p. II 211 Wellmann; Plin., *HN* 21.66, 168; *Kyr.* 1.22,7, p. 101 Kaimakis) determined their association with the Sun. Thus, a particular taxonomy led to the reintegration of these specific plants into discourses that embodied ritual practices in which the Sun god Helios played a certain role (Quack, 2011: 73–4; cf. Faraone, 1999: 139–41). Once the heliotropes were in *sympatheia* with the Sun, they were thought to encompass the star's fiery character and they were regarded as plants allegedly able to cure diseases characterized by the element of fire.

On the other hand, peony was a plant that should be dug up only during the night-time and it was considered dangerous but useful (Thphr., *HP* 9.8.6; Plin., *HN* 25.29, 27.85; cf. Ael., *NA* 14.27), two perceptual anomalies that marked peony's marvelous properties, credited with the ability to expel demons or to summon the gods (cf. Gordon, 1987: 84–5). Presumably, these virtues were conceptually entwined with the lunar physiognomy of peony, whose affinity with the Moon (based on its healing properties) occurs in the *DVH*, as well as in the text *De paeonia*.

Edder-wort was associated with snakes due to the peculiar shape of its stem which resembled serpents (Thphr., *HP* 9.20.3; Dsc., *Mat.Med.* 2.166.1, p. I 231 Wellmann)—a characteristic feature indicated by its Greek name itself, *drakontion*, which is the diminutive of the noun for 'serpent' (LSJ s.v. *δράκων*, I). Since the Greek word *drakōn* originates from a verb that conveys the sense of 'see clearly' (LSJ s.v. *δέρκομαι*, I.1), signifying a link of snakes with eyes/vision (Bodson, 1981: 65), edderwort was included in ancient herbal taxonomies as a remedy for eye problems. In addition, the popular belief that snakes, after their hibernation, taste the fennel or rub themselves against it to improve their eyesight (Nic., *Th.* 31–4, p. II 4 Jacques & Schol. Nic., *Th.* 33b, p. 48 Crugnola; Plin., *HN* 8.99, 20.254; Plut., *Sol.Anim.* 974B; Ael.,

²⁸ In ancient astrology gold/yellow was the color associated with the Sun. See Bouché-Leclercq (1899: 313–5), and the table in Boll (1916: 20).

NA 9.16)²⁹ attributed similar properties to this plant. This correlation of edder-wort and fennel with snakes meant that these plants were assigned to the sign of Aquarius in the *DVH* since Aquarius is the house of Saturn, with which snakes were associated (Ducourthial, 2003: 461; Pérez Jiménez, 2010: 216, 217).

For the rest of the cases, the plants' symbolic values continue to shape the way they are appropriated by Hermetic astrologers, even though their properties, as listed above, seem not to be dictated by any semantic causality. Vervain was chosen on account of its Greek name *peristereōn*, which is derived from the noun for the 'pigeon' (LSJ s.v. *περιστερᾶ*). Pigeons were the sacred birds of Aphrodite and therefore vervain developed an analogical relationship with Aphrodite's planet, Venus (Ducourthial, 2003: 346, 396; Pérez Jiménez, 2010: 227).³⁰ With regard to birthwort, its double species, female and male, as described in Nicander's *Theriaka* (514–6, p. II 42 Jacques & Schol. Nic., *Th.* 509a, p. 200 Crugnola) and in the *DVH* (1.12.2, p. 175 Friedrich), determined the plant's correspondence to the analogous 'double' sign of Pisces in the Hermetic texts (Ducourthial, 2003: 468).

2. Recasting the Text: The *DVH* and Authenticity

Once different traditions are fixed in textual units, the textual material is reinvested with a specific cultural meaning, dependent on the authority invoked and the associations evoked. To the extent that the content of the *DVH* was compiled mostly from borrowed material, the author of the letter aims to create a rift with tradition. As a result, Nechepsos is made to stand for an embodiment of received knowledge. Even though Thessalos characterizes Nechepsos as a royal folly (*DVH*, proem. 6, p. 47 Friedrich = fr. 35 Riess), the god Asclepius reveals to him that the king was of an extremely sound mind and gifted with all virtues, managing to perceive the astral *sympatheia* of stones and plants owing to his own good nature. Yet, because he

²⁹ Accordingly, Pliny (*HN* 25.19) states that edder-wort sprouts in spring when serpents wake up from their hibernation and conceals itself in the earth when serpents go into hibernation.

³⁰ In the *DVH* (1.2, pp. 83/88, 84/89 Friedrich) *peristereōn orthos* (*Lycopus europaeus* L.) corresponds to Taurus because Taurus is the house of Venus. Nonetheless, in the same work (1.3, pp. 93/94 Friedrich) the correspondence of the second species of vervain, the *peristereōn hyptios* (*Verbena officinalis* L.), to Gemini lacks an astrological logic. Cf. Ducourthial (2003: 401).

lacked the divine wisdom to know the exact time and place for picking each plant, he was incapable of bringing his project to fulfillment (*DVH*, proem. 27, pp. 55/58, 56/59 Friedrich = frs. 35, 36a Riess). Hence, Thessalos' text aims at supplementing Nechepsos' manual and particularly at providing information about the exact time and place of plant collection, rather than refuting his authority (Fowden, 1993: 164; Gordon, 1997b: 77; Harland, 2011: 133; Moyer, 2011: 229–30; *contra* Smith, 1978: 177; cf. Ní Mheallaigh, 2014). Soon after, the incomplete book of Nechepsos was replaced by the divine book of Thessalos, who brought papyrus and ink with him to the place of the revelation in order to write down Asclepius' words and to create the work for which his letter is the foreword (*DVH*, proem. 21, p. 53 Friedrich). Consequently, the knowledge of the Egyptian astrologer is invested with claims of reworking and updating within the letter itself.

Thessalos' narrative further stresses its authoritative status through its underlying opposition concerning the particular locations with which the manual of Nechepsos, as well as his own book, were linked, since space (whether it is religious or not) is not devoid of meaning; it is, rather, socially represented and invested with cultural memories (Alcock, 2001; Bommas, 2012). Nechepsos' book was found in a library of Alexandria in Lower Egypt, while Thessalos' book was recorded within a temple located in Upper Egypt, in Thebes.³¹ The significance of these two locations (library and temple) is played off against the ways in which Alexandria and Thebes are conceptualized through their symbolic and imaginary representations. The Greeks,

³¹ The letter (*DVH*, proem. 21, 23, p. 53 Friedrich) mentions a room (*oikos*) as the place of Asclepius' revelation. For its identification with a location within a temple area see Festugière (1939: 61–2, n. 21); Ritner (1993: 219, 220, n. 1022); *idem* (1995: 3357); Frankfurter (1998: 168–9); Harland (2011: 135). *Contra* Festugière (1944: 57–8, n. 3); Smith (1978: 181–2); Moyer (2003: 49, n. 45); who suggest a special construction or a specially prepared profane dwelling. Moyer in a later study (2011: 261–2, n. 215) minimizes the difference between temple and secular building, arguing that such structures were functioning as equivalents to sacred spaces in the ritual practices of the Greek and Demotic magical papyri. Additionally, Sauneron (1965: 73–4, n. 7) and Klotz (2012: 27) linked the sanatorium at Deir el-Bahari to the room of Thessalos' narrative, whereas Kákosy (2003) argued that the revelation of Thessalos took place at the temple of Ptah at Karnak. In any case, there is a difficulty in identifying the room as one belonging to any particular temple because locations where Imhotep was venerated can be found in several areas of Upper Egypt. See Moyer (2011: 251).

first as colonists and later as conquerors, having settled mainly in the Nile Delta and in the area of Faiyum in Lower Egypt, had not developed particular trade networks with the Egyptian mainland and Upper Egypt. The Hellenization that occurred as a consequence of the urbanization in the North is contrasted to the stronger native Egyptian element of the Theban area, which is considered to embrace the true wisdom of Egypt compared with the Hellenized Alexandria (Moyer, 2003: 45–6; idem, 2011: 249–53; cf. Klotz, 2012). As a city and symbol of Hellenization, and later of Romanization, Alexandria is turned by Thessalos into the symbol of the inadequate knowledge of Greeks and Romans alike in contrast to the divine ‘Egyptian’ wisdom of Thebes.

The rhetoric the author employs to construct his discourse is shaped by the intellectual culture and the agonistic context of the era, and is further amplified by the excess production and oversupply of texts. In doing so, he is implicated in the polemics and self-promotion that often permeate various works of Graeco-Roman antiquity in which the author criticizes and departs from received tradition (cf. Lloyd, 1987: 50–108). The use of pre-existing astrological lore by an author like Thessalos, coupled with the claim that he supplements a previous work, is a topos in Graeco-Roman astrological treatises as well as being a useful rhetorical device. It enables astrologers to invent new astrological theories and develop up-to-date theoretical analyses in a competitive display of their art, drawing at the same time on the authoritative foundations of their discipline. Vettius Valens (1.22.16, p. 53 Pingree; 2.37.1, p. 103 Pingree; 3.11.1, p. 146 Pingree = fr. 19 Riess; 6.1.17–9, p. 232 Pingree; 6.8.16, pp. 247–8 Pingree), for instance, presents himself as aiming to elucidate several astrological topics which, as he claims, are treated also by the ancients,³² but in secret and obscure ways.³³ In his seventh book (7.4.1, p. 260 Pingree), he escalates his rhetoric,

³² In 2.37.1 (p. 103 Pingree) and 3.11.1 (p. 146 Pingree = fr. 19 Riess) the word ‘ancients’ refers to Nechepsos and Petosiris.

³³ See the similar attestation of Firmicus Maternus (*Math.* 4.22.1, p. II 201 Monat = fr. 13 Riess; 4.22.20, p. II 208 Monat = fr. 13 Riess), who claims that in his book he explains the secrets of astrology the ancients (= Nechepsos and Petosiris) treated obscurely. See also Firm., *Math.* 8.2.1, p. III 235 Monat = fr. 16 Riess.

wondering whether the ancients, motivated by their envy, concealed their activity of forecasting because of their boastfulness and the difficulty of their art or whether they wrote in an obscure manner because they did not comprehend the secrets of nature.

In several cases Nechepsos, together with Petosiris, form an integral part of this rhetoric.³⁴ Valens (8.5.19–20, p. 288 Pingree) attests that Nechepsos and Petosiris showed that their discipline lacked any foundation because they represented their profession in a dull and abstruse manner. He notes that neither Petosiris nor Nechepsos extensively dealt with the system of the ‘place of travel’ in nativities (2.29.1–2, p. 91 Pingree), while he presents Nechepsos as having wisely admitted to, and amended, the early mistakes he had made (9.1.3, p. 316 Pingree).³⁵ Devoid of any institutional backing, the discipline of astrology legitimated itself by using various rhetorical modes drawn from a vast arsenal of persuasion (Riley, 1987: 250–4; Barton, 1994a: 134–42; eadem, 1994b: 82–90; Gordon, 1997a: 143–6). Rhetorical contest and dispute, didactic devices, theoretical complexities or innovations, and the propensity of inquiry transformed the legendary king’s book into an astrological source bound to be supplemented, or even superseded, by subsequent astrologers.

Thessalos incorporates these tropes into pre-existing narratives. According to two unpublished Demotic papyri from the Tebtunis temple library (*P.CtYBR* 422^v and *P.Lund* 2058^v) (1st/2nd cent. CE), the sage Petesis (= Petosiris)³⁶ deciphered and presented to pharaoh Nechepsos an astrological papyrus of Imhotep which was discovered when part of a wall at the temple of Heliopolis collapsed (Ryholt, 2011: 62;

³⁴ In respect only to Petosiris see Porph., *in Ptol.* 41, *CCAG* 5.4 212,14–9 = frs. 3–4 Riess; Firm., *Math.* 8.2.1, p. III 235 Monat = fr. 16 Riess; Lyd., *Ost.* 2, p. 6,9–22 Wachsmuth = test. 10 Riess.

³⁵ This rhetoric is repeated in several other excerpts. Vettius Valens (9.18.1, p. 346 Pingree) mentions his creation of a more precise table to provide the sign in the ascendant and the hour of birth than the rough one of Nechepsos. In another section (3.3.2, p. 128 Pingree), he even disagrees with the old <astrologer> (= Nechepsos) on the non-existence of nativities which exceed the measure of 90°, especially in signs of short rising times (cf. Plin., *HN* 7.160 = fr. 17 Riess). In the same fashion, Firmicus Maternus (*Math.* 8.5.1, pp. III 246–7 Monat = fr. 26 Riess) argues that Nechepsos and Petosiris were not able to discover the fixed stars that lay near the zodiac, a subject that he is about to present to his patron Mavortius.

³⁶ For the identification of Petesis with Petosiris see Gundel and Gundel (1966: 31); Ryholt (2011: 70).

Moyer, 2011: 245–6; see also Ryholt, 2006: 2, 3, 13–6; idem, 2009: 313, n. 30).³⁷ A horoscope for December 4, 137 CE, preserved in *P.Louvre 2342*^{bis} = *P.Paris 19*^{bis} (col. 12–6, eds. Neugebauer and Van Hoesen, 1959: 42 = test. 6 Riess), presents Hermes and Asclepius/Imouthes as instructing both Petosiris and the king Necheus (= Nechepsos). Likewise, Firmicus Maternus (*Math.* 3.1.1, p. II 15 Monat = fr. 25 Riess; 4 proem. 5, p. II 127 Monat = test. 7 Riess) considers Nechepsos and Petosiris to be followers of Asclepius or interpreters of his teachings. This tradition is modified by Thessalos, who replaces Nechepsos with himself and updates the king's manual in order to highlight the inadequacy of the knowledge of Alexandria and the Empire in favor of the divine wisdom of Thebes and Egypt. In other words, such discourse attempts to claim continuity with authentic Egyptian tradition as a means of defending a positive image of Egypt against Graeco-Roman perceptions concerning the worthlessness of Egyptian civilization (Gordon, 1997b: 76–7).

Conclusion

The sophisticated scribal practices of Hellenistic and Roman times invoke a dynamic aspect of the notion of 'tradition.' Tradition is what appears, in the first place, to be a set of knowledge systems inherently fixed as they are transmitted through the written record. Yet, over time written tradition changes: a change that is not completely noticed by those who participate in it on account of its construction by particular rhetorical modes that aim at pointing out their continuity with a presumed 'authentic past.' A legitimization conferred by the appropriation of commonly 'accepted' knowledge was a possible option when someone, such as Thessalos, was about to create a *new* text on the subjects of astrology and 'magic' (the latter term employed by Thessalos himself). In several cases, however, such reliance upon tradition could

³⁷ On the Demotic Egyptian data concerning the astrological knowledge of Imhotep see Ryholt (2009: 313); Moyer (2011: 245 and n. 152, 250 and n. 171). Additionally, a ritual for casting a horoscope contained in the London-Leiden Demotic text (col. IV 1–22, eds. Griffith and Thompson, 1904: I 38/43 = *PDM* xiv 93–114 [*PGM* XIVa 1–11]) is headed 'A casting for inspection which the great god Iymhotep makes.' His Greek equivalent, Asclepius, is presented as an authority of the system of the 'eight places' in an astrological papyrus (*P.Mich.* 149, col. ix 20–7, ed. Robbins, 1936: 74) (2nd cent. CE).

be harmful to one's reputation, especially in an era of intense competition, egotism and novelty. A solution to this literary problem is to use what has been handed down from the past, but to recast its invested authorities.

Thessalos' text is a case in point of this method. In a previous study (Piperakis, 2014: 85–7), I suggested that the letter and the epilogue of the *DVH* were composed by Thessalos for the sake of framing two originally independent (Hermetic?) herbal manuals, which constitute the two sections of the zodiacal and planetary pharmacopoeia of the *DVH*, into one cohesive block of textual data. Thessalos incorporates into his letter elements of Nechepsos' lore and of the rhizotomic and astrological expertise of his times and he also collects and preserves in a converted format the textual material of the two manuals that were drawing upon pre-existing knowledge systems. The limited space of this article does not allow me to discuss this profound dependence in significant detail, but only to provide some examples. Yet, elsewhere (Piperakis, 2014: 69–70, 258–61), I have already indicated that most of the nineteen plant properties have an intrinsic tautology with the ones attested in previous works. What Thessalos aims to do with his narrative is to recast a new identity, a new meaning, to the malleable and common cultural property from which his own writings and the two manuals derive. By replacing the manual of the famous astrologer Nechepsos with the divine revelation of Asclepius/Imhotep that occurred in Upper Egypt, he contextualized his textual corpus as an original commodity of the truly magico-divine Egyptian wisdom and as a means of intellectual response to Roman hegemony. Enshrined in a specific didactic discourse and addressed to the Roman emperor, this corpus is exported to the Graeco-Roman *oecumene*, to a clientele craving the ancient wisdom of Egypt.

Abbreviations

CCAG = F, Cumont et al. (Eds.) 1898–1953 *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. 12 vols. (in 20 parts). Brussels: Lamertin/Aedes Academiarum; LSJ = H G, Liddell and R, Scott (Eds.) 1940 *A Greek-English Lexicon* (rev. by H S, Jones & R, McKenzie, with a rev. supplement of 1996). 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press; PDM = H D, Betz (Ed.) 1986 *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including*

the Demotic Spells. Chicago, IL/London: University of Chicago Press; PGM = K, Preisendanz 1973–4 *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. 2 vols. 2nd ed., Ed. A, Henrichs. Stuttgart: Teubner. The full form of abbreviations used in referring to the rest of the papyri can be consulted from their editions quoted next to them.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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