

# SOME COSMETIC RECIPES IN MEDICAL TEXTS OF LATE ANTIQUITY: TREATMENTS FOR THE FACE IN THE *LIBRI MEDICINALES* OF AETIUS AMIDENUS

ALGUNAS RECETAS COSMÉTICAS EN TEXTOS MÉDICOS DE LA ANTIGÜEDAD  
TARDÍA: TRATAMIENTOS PARA LA CARA EN LOS *LIBRI MEDICINALES* DE AETIUS  
AMIDENUS

IRENE CALÀ<sup>1</sup>  
*University of Munich*

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## ABSTRACT

According to Galen, cosmetics is a part of medicine and for this reason, his medical works deal with many cosmetic recipes. In this paper, I discuss some cosmetic recipes of Late Antiquity in the *Libri medicinales* of Aetius Amidenus, a doctor lived during the sixth century. I give for the first time a translation of a long passage discussing treatments for the face; I then discuss some interesting points, especially concerning ingredients and sources.

## KEYWORDS

Recipes; Cosmetics; Medicine; Late Antiquity; Aetius Amidenus.

## RESUMEN

Según Galeno, los cosméticos son parte de la medicina y, por esta razón, su trabajo médico se ocupa de muchas recetas cosméticas. En este artículo, discuto algunas recetas cosméticas de la Antigüedad tardía en los *Libri medicinales* de Aecio de Amida, un médico que vivió durante el siglo VI. Doy por primera vez una traducción de un largo pasaje sobre tratamientos para la cara; después discuto algunos puntos interesantes, especialmente sobre los ingredientes y las fuentes.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Recetas; Cosmética; Medicina; Antigüedad Tardía; Aetius Amidenus.

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Medizinische Fakultät Institut für Ethik, Geschichte und Theorie der Medizin. E-mail: [annadalassena@gmail.com](mailto:annadalassena@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8647-5389>.

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

While scholars have written about cosmetics in Galen's medical works,<sup>3</sup> only recently has the study of cosmetics in Late Antiquity started. This paper is connected to a study by Serena Buzzi and me<sup>4</sup> on cosmetic recipes in Late antiquity, especially on recipes against wrinkles and suntan, in the medical works of Oribasius of Pergamon, the famous doctor of the emperor Julian, and, in the medical work of Aetius Amidenus,<sup>5</sup> a doctor lived in the first half of the sixth century. I will give for the first time a translation of a long passage from the *Libri medicinales* of Aetius Amidenus, which is devoted to facial soaps and cosmetics; I will then go on to discuss some interesting points concerning ingredients, preparations, weights and, lastly, the sources used, especially the female ones.

### 1.1. Cosmetics and Medicine

In his pharmacological treatise entitled *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, Galen explains the difference between «cosmetics» and «commotics». Cosmetics, he says, is a part of medicine:<sup>6</sup> «The purpose of commotics is to produce artificial beauty, but the purpose of cosmetics, which is a part of the medicine, is to preserve anything natural in the body, and for this reason the result is natural beauty».<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I am very grateful to my colleague Sean Coughlin for correcting my English.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Gourevitch, D., «L'estétique médicale de Galien», *Les Études Classiques*, 55 (1987), pp. 267-290; Gourevitch, D., «Introduction. Les nouveaux sentiers pour la connassance philologique et archéologique des médicaments antiques (composition, fabrication, contenants)», in Pardon-Labonne, M. (ed.), *La coupe d'Hygie. Médecine et chimie dans l'Antiquité*, Editions Universitaires de Dijon, Dijon, 2013, pp. 17-31 ; Boudon-Millot, V., «Galien de Pergame face au mirage de la beauté parfaite», *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, 2006, pp. 127-141;

Boudon-Millot, V., «Le médecin et la courtisane: la Phryné de Galien», in Boudon-Millot, V., Dasen, V. and Maire, B. (eds.), *Femmes en médecine* [Actes de la Journée internationale d'étude organisée à l'Université René Descartes-Paris V, le 17 mars 2006, en l'honneur de Danielle Gourevitch], De Boccard, Paris, 2008, pp. 13-27, Boudon-Millot, V., «Fard et teintures capillaires: la médecine galénique entre cosmétique et commotique», in Pardon-Labonne, M. (ed.), *La coupe d'Hygie. Médecine et chimie dans l'Antiquité*, Editions Universitaires de Dijon, Dijon, 2013, pp. 17-31.

<sup>4</sup> See Buzzi, S., Calà, I., «Le ricette cosmetiche nelle enciclopedie mediche tardoantiche», in Lehmhaus, L. and Martelli, M. (eds.) *Collecting recipes. Byzantine and Jewish pharmacology in Dialogue*, De Gruyter, Boston/Berlin, 2017, pp. 123-146.

<sup>5</sup> On Aetius Amidenus see Calà, I., «Il medico Andreas nei Libri medicinales di Aezio Amideno», *Galenos*, 6 (2012), pp. 53-63; Calà, I., «La fortuna dei Libri medicinales di Aezio Amideno nell'Europa rinascimentale: le Annotationes di Cristobal de Horozco», *Les Études Classiques*, 80 (2012), pp. 187-205; Calà, I., «Terapie tra magia e religione. La gravidanza e il parto nei testi medici della tarda Antichità», in Santamaría Hernández, M. T. (ed.), *Traducción y Transmisión doctrinal de la medicina grecolatina desde la Antigüedad hasta el mundo moderno: nuevas aportaciones sobre autores y textos*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca, 2016, pp. 11-24.

<sup>6</sup> Galen, *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, 1.2 = ed. K. G. Kühn, *Galeni Opera omnia*, Car. Cnoblochii, Leipzig, 1821-1833, vol. 12, p. 434,4-7: «Τῷ μὲν κομιστικῷ σκοπός ἔστι κάλλος ἐπίκτητον ἐργάσασθαι, τῷ δὲ τῆς ιατρικῆς μέρει τῷ κοσμητικῷ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἄπαν ἐν τῷ σώματι φυλάπτειν, φὴ καὶ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἔπειται κάλλος».

<sup>7</sup> In this case and when there is no indication the translation is mine.

Indeed, Galen includes cosmetics as one of the various parts of the medicine, because of the importance of preserving the good condition of the body.

It is worth remembering the famous example of Phrine's beauty,<sup>8</sup> in which Galen celebrates the beauty of Phrine because this beauty is authentic and natural, contrary to the other courtesans who used too much makeup.<sup>9</sup> The commotic, on other hand, appears to be excluded from medicine not only in Galen's medical work, but also in the medical works of Late Antiquity. Instead, we find some cosmetic recipes useful preserving the natural beauty of the body.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. COSMETIC RECIPES IN THE *LIBRI MEDICINALES* OF AETIUS AMIDENUS

The medical work of Aetius Amidenus called *Libri medicinales* deals with many branches of medicine, from pharmacology, book 1, to gynaecology, book 16. We can read the recipes that we call cosmetic in various part of *Libri medicinales*: some remedies for the hair are in book 6 and in book 7; remedies for the teeth in book 8, remedies for the face in book 8 and 16, as follows:

**Table 1.** Cosmetics recipes in Aetius Amidenus

Book	Hair	Teeth	Face and Body
6	<b>54:</b> Soaps and powders able to reinforce the head <b>55:</b> On alopecia <b>56:</b> On hair loss <b>57:</b> For loss of hair on the eyebrows <b>58:</b> From the books of Galen, hair dye <b>59:</b> To make blond hair <b>60:</b> To make white hair <b>61:</b> To make curly hair <b>62:</b> About damaged hair <b>63:</b> Remedies able to destroy hair <b>64:</b> Remedies able to remove hair <b>65:</b> Remedies able to make thin hair <sup>11</sup>		
7	<b>69:</b> Remedies against the growth of fresh cut hair <b>70:</b> Cosmetics for the hair <b>80:</b> Against the loss of eyebrows or ptosis <sup>12</sup>		
8		<b>37:</b> Different kind of soaps for teeth that are black, livid	<b>1:</b> For adorning the eyebrows

<sup>8</sup> See, for a comment on this passage, Boudon-Millot, V., «Le médecin et la courtisane...», pp. 13-27 and Boudon-Millot, V., «Fard et teintures ...», pp. 17-31.

<sup>9</sup> Galen, *Adhortatio ad artes addiscendas*, 10 = ed. K. G. Kühn, *Galeni Opera omnia*, Car. Cnoblochii, Leipzig, 1821-1833, vol. 1, pp. 23,1-26,16.

<sup>10</sup> See Buzzi-Calà 2017 Buzzi, S., Calà, I., «Le ricette cosmetiche ...», pp. 123-146.

<sup>11</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 6.54-65 = ed. A. Olivieri, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in Aedibus Academiae Litterarum, Berlin, 1950, pp. 196,28-213,9: «νδ' Σμήγματα καὶ πάσματα πυκνωτικὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς: νε' Περὶ ἀλωπεκίας; νς' Περὶ ρέονσῶν τριχῶν; νζ' Πρὸς ὄφρίας λειποτριχούσας; νη' Ἐκ τῶν Γαληνοῦ μέλασμα; νθ' Πυρρὰς ποιῆσαι τρίχας; ξ' Λευκὰς ποιῆσαι τρίχας; ξα' Οὐλὰς ποιῆσαι τρίχας; ξβ' Περὶ τῶν φθειρόντων τὰς τρίχας; ξγ' Άφανιστικὰ τριχῶν; ξδ' Ψίλωθρα τριχῶν; ξε' Λεπτυντικὰ τριχῶν»

<sup>12</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 7.69-70, 80 = ed. A. Olivieri, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in Aedibus Academiae Litterarum, Berlin, 1950, pp. 318,21-320,17 and 328,6-329,10): «Ξθ' Φάρμακα πρὸς τὸ τὰς ἐκτιλλομένας τρίχας μὴ φύειν; ο' Άνακολλήματα τριχῶν; π' Πρὸς μαδάρωσιν βλεφάρων ἡ πτίλωσιν».

		and porous, from Galen <sup>13</sup>	<b>2:</b> On dark circles under the eyes <b>3:</b> On unguents for the face <b>4:</b> Against facial wrinkles <b>5:</b> Against dark spots of the face <b>6:</b> Soaps for the face <b>7:</b> Plasters for entire body <b>8:</b> Drinks against bad smell of the skin <b>9:</b> Against the roughness of the chin <sup>14</sup>
<b>16</b>			<b>124:</b> Against chaps and black spots on the belly provoked by childbirth, from Aspasia <b>125:</b> Extraordinary cleanser, cleansing the face and giving brightness <sup>15</sup>

## 2.1. Soap for the Face and Cosmetics: Aetius *Libri Medicinales* 8.6

Aetius gives many treatments that we can call cosmetic at the beginning of book 8. The contents of the book were summarized by Photius, as follows:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 8.37 = ed. A. Olivieri, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in *Aedibus Academiae Litterarum*, Berlin, 1950, pp. 451,16-454,19): «Αζ' Σμήματα διάφορα ὁδόντων μελαινομένων καὶ πελιδνομένων καὶ ἡραιωμένων Γαλῆνοῦ»

<sup>14</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 8.1-9 = ed. A. Olivieri, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in *Aedibus Academiae Litterarum*, Berlin, 1950, pp. 403,2-413,21: «α' Πρὸς τὰς τῶν ὄφρύων διακοσμήσεις; β' Περὶ ύπωπτίων; γ' Περὶ ἐπιχρισμάτων προσώπων; δ' Πρὸς τὸ μὴ ρύντιδονθαι τὸ πρόσωπον; ε' Πρὸς τὰς τῆς ὅψεως μελανίας; σ' Σμήματα προσώπων; ζ' Καταπλάκατα παντὶ τῷ σώματι; η' Πόματα πρὸς τοὺς δυνάδῃ ἔχοντας τὸν χρῶτα; θ' Πρὸς τὰς τοῦ γενείου τραχύτητας».

<sup>15</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 16.124-125 = ed. S. Zervos, *Aetii Sermo sextidecimus et ultimus*, Verlag von Anton. Mangos, Leipzig, 1901, pp. 159,1-161,6: «Ρκδ' Πρὸς τὸ μὴ ποιεῖν κοιλίαν ράγαδας καὶ μελανίας ἐκ τοκέτου, Άσπασιας; Ρκε' Νίμμα θαυμάσιον ἀποκαθαῖρον τὴν ὅψιν καὶ λαμπρύνον»

<sup>16</sup> Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 221 = ed. R. Henry, *Photius. Bibliothéque. Codices 186-222*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2003, pp. 145-146: «Ἐν δὲ τῷ η' λέγει μέν τι κατ' ὄρχας περὶ διακοσμήσεως ὄφρύων, τί τέ ἔστι καὶ ὥπως γίνεται τὰ ύπώπτια, καὶ ὥπως αὐτὰ θεραπευτέον, ὥπως τε ύπὸ ἥλιον ἡ ἀνέμον μὴ ἐπικάοιτο τὸ πρόσωπον, καὶ δι' ὃν ἔστιν ἀρρυτίδωτον αὐτὸ συντηρεῖν καὶ μελανίας ἀπαλλάττειν καὶ ἄλλως ἐπικοσμεῖν, καὶ τὸν τοῦ σώματος χρῶτα πρὸς εὐώδιαν μεταβάλλειν. Εντεῦθεν περὶ πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ στόμα καὶ παρίσθιμα συνισταμένων διαλαμβάνει παθῶν, ὅσα τε πρόεισι τὴν αἰτίαν ἔσωθεν λαβόντα, καὶ ὅσα ἐκ τῶν ἐκτὸς ἐπισυμβαίνει, οἷον ὁδόντων τε περιέχεται ποικίλα πάθη καὶ θεραπεία, καὶ γλώσσης καὶ

«In the eight book, at the beginning he discusses the manner of adorning the eyebrows; what dark circles under the eyes are, how they are formed, and how to treat them; how to prevent the deterioration of the face from tanning in the sun or wind; and how to prevent it from getting wrinkles, remove its dark colour, and embellish it in other ways; and to alter the skin of the body so that it smells sweetly. In this book, he deals with all the complaints which involve the face, mouth, and tonsils that are produced by an internal cause or arrive from an external cause; for example various afflictions located on the teeth and their treatment, those of the tongue and uvula, and in general the organs contained in the mouth; among these complaints are sore throat and pain, and complaints affecting the throat; inflammations of the tonsils are also part of these afflictions. He comments that the hanged can be resuscitated if they are still not dead; he describes subsequently arterial complaints, catarrh, and cough and prescribes soothing remedies for cough, fumigations and plasters. He deals with comfortable respiration, that of asthmatic, dyspnea, cardiac palpitation, afflictions of the lung and the chest, true and false pleurisy, and what is done to treat them».<sup>17</sup>

As we can see from the titles of the first chapters, there are many kinds of treatments, plasters, soaps, unguents and drinks, for different problems (e.g., spots, wrinkles and bad smells). These treatments are not only for the face, but also for the chin and other parts of the body as well. I have selected to discuss in this paper only chapter 6: on soaps. First, I give my own translation and then I will discuss some interest points:<sup>18</sup>

#### **«Soaps for the face and cosmetics.**

When removing the makeup they are preparing to wash the face with the soap, they have to use the described preparations.

##### **1. Soap to give brightness to the face.**

Frankincense, saltpetre, gum, of each 4 drachms, 40 peeled almonds, 24 drachms of the finest wheaten flour, 12 drachms of flour of fava beans, take up the white of egg and shape some trochisks and use with water in the bath or in a different way.

**2. Famous and extraordinary cleanser for the face,** it makes the face bright and polished, smooth any roughness, and it is useful for those who have elephantiasis at an early stage. Certainly use it with other remedies and on the entire body.

Mastich, frankincense, ammoniac gum, iris, of each 1 ounce, 1 ½ of tragacanth, 9 ounces of juice of unripe grapes, 10 ounces of melon seed with the moist inner parts, 29 whites of egg, 5 sextarii of the finest wheaten flour, grinding all ingredients and mixing with egg and the

γαργαρεῶνος, καὶ ἀπλῶς ὅσα τῇ περιγραφῇ συμπαραλαμβάνεται τοῦ στόματος· ὃν ἔστι καὶ ἡ κυνάγχη καὶ συνάγχη, περὶ τὸν φάρυγγα συνιστάμενα πάθη. Καὶ αἱ ἀντιάδες δὲ τοῖς εἰρημένοις συμπεριέχονται. Πῶς τέ ἔστι δυνατὸν ἀνακαλέσασθαι τοὺς ἀπαγχομένους, μήπω τῷ θανάτῳ παραδεδομένους. Περὶ τε ἀρτηριακῶν παθῶν καὶ φαρμάκων ἀναγραφὴν ποιεῖται, καὶ περὶ κατάρρου καὶ βῃχός· καὶ ἀνάδυνα βῃχικὰ φάρμακα γράφει, ὑποκαπνισμούς τε καὶ ἐπιθέματα. Περὶ ὄρθοπνοικῶν τε καὶ ἀσθματικῶν καὶ δυσπνοϊκῶν διαλαμβάνει, περὶ τε παλμῶν τῶν κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν· καὶ ἔτι περὶ τῶν τοῦ πνεύμονος καὶ θώρακος παθῶν διεξιῶν συμπεραίνει τὸν λόγον εἰς τὴν διδασκαλίαν τῆς πλευρίτιδος, τῆς τε οὖσης καὶ τῆς νομιζομένης, τίς τε ἐκατέρα τούτων, ὑπογράφων καὶ ὅσα εἰς θεραπείαν αὐτῶν συντελεῖ».

<sup>17</sup> Translation by Waugh, R.L., *The ophthalmology of Aetius of Amida*, J. P. Wayenborgh, Oostende, 2000, pp. 138-139, with modifications.

<sup>18</sup> I am adding the number to each recipe only because it is easy to referer to these in this way.

moist part of the melon and with the juice of unripe grapes, shape some flat artisks and dry, then grinding and sifting and store in a glass vase and use.

**3. Cosmetic for the face. It also gives a reddish colour.**

Flour of vetches, fava beans, lupines, barley, chick-pea and bulbs of narcissus, of each 1 half of Italian sextarius, 1 sextarius of the finest wheaten flour, grinding, sifting with a very fine sieve and mixing with egg white, shape some trochisks and dry in the shade. For use, take just enough, dissolve with water and use after the bath.

**4. Other remedy to make bright the face and entire body, it makes polished and clean the skin.**

Scraping the bark of the root of bryony, dry the rest of the root under the summer sun, then grinding, sifting, take from this  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an Italian choenix, the same quantity of grinded iris, the same quantity of dried peeled perfumed frankincense, 1 choenix of flour of fava beans, mixing it with white, old and fragrant wine, shape some fine trochisks and dry in the shade. For use, grind, sift and use with water.

**5. Another valuable and fragrant soap of queen Cleopatra.**

Costus, myrrh of troglis, iris, spikenard, amomum, mercurialis, cassia, flower of reed, of each 1 ounce, 4 pounds of perfumed frankincense; use after grinding and sifting; it is useful for entire body.

**6. Another soap effective and fragrant.**

Flower of reed, iris, of each 2 drachms, 1 drachm of mastich, smoothing take up thick juice of barley and make some artisks and dry in the shade; for use, dissolve with the water, and anoint at regular intervals, and wash with cold water.

**7. To make bright and polished the face and the entire body.**

1 Italian modius of flour of fava beans, 4 Italian sextarii of the finest wheaten flour, 4 sextarii of triturated clover, the same quantity of perfumed frankincense, the same quantity of triturated iris, ammoniac gum, costus, of each 1 pound, 1 sextarius of whites of raw fresh eggs, 2 sextarii of seed of melon with its moist part, 2 sextarii of juice of unripe grapes, mixing all the ingredients, shape some trochisks and dry in the shade. For use, dissolve with just enough water, anoint after the bath. It is useful for the dark spots that are on the neck and on other parts of the body.

**8. Soap that the patrician Pelagia used to make bright the face.**

6 ounces of Gallic soap, 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of starch, 1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of white lead, 1 half of ounce of mastich, 1 ounce of marrow of deer, 4 trockisks of white saltpetre, 3 ounces of bleached wax; soak the soap in the water in a glass vase for 5 days, changing the rain water every day and filter the soap. And then putting the soap in a new pot for half a day with new rain water, place on the embers, with slow fire, until the soap is dissolved. Then sprinkle the wax and the marrow onto it, and when both are dissolved, taking the pan, turn it continuously with a spatula, while sprinkling the mastich and the triturate starch on it; then add the white lead just pulverized with a little bit of water in a shell and grind with the hand vigorously. Put in a glass vase use liberally.

**9. Soap; another in the bath.**

5 pounds of Gallic soap of the first quality, 5 pounds of nitron, 1 pound of tick ammonite fumigation, 1 pound of white lead, 1 pound of burned oysters, 1 pound of burned wax, 6 ounces if mastich, 6 ounces of starch.

**10. Another for black spots of the face experimented many times.**

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of frankincense, white lead carefully cleaned, litharge cleaned very often under the sun in a decoction of white chick-peas, fresh starch, powder of very white marble, pure mastich, white

saltpetre, of each 1 ounce, 12 ounces of Gallic soap, 10 white of eggs, prepare and use, as has been said.

### **11. Another extraordinary cleansing very well the face and gives the brightness.**

Flour of fenugreek, earth aster, ammoniac gum, of each 3 ounces, 4 ounces of starch, 6 ounces of mastich, 6 ounces of fresh marrow of deer, 4 ounces of tragachant; soak the tragachant in milk of women or ass and smoothing put on it other ingredients just triturate and shape some trochisks and dry in the shade and use, as has been said.

### **12. Another soap for the face and for other parts of the body.**

The internal part of castor seed, dried peeled bulbs of narcissus, of each 8 drachms, 4 drachms of the finest wheaten flour, 2 drachms of frankincense, 2 white of eggs, prepare and use, as has been said. [that is to say mixing shape some trochisks and dry in the shade. For the use solving just enough, oint after the bath.]

### **13. Against the wrinkling of entire body, soap from the books of Rufus.**

In fact, by continually washing the wrinkled body with soap, it becomes smooth. Very fatty figs, dried peeled root of bryony, burned cuttlefish, flour of vetches, grind each separately, then also grinding drop upon enough honey and use.

### **14. Very fragrant soap for the entire body.**

20 ounces of Cimolian earth, fine iris, Celtic nard, of each 24 drachms, turmeric, cardomom, yellow fatty styrax, of each 12 drachms. Solving the stirax with old fragrant wine have it ready, then putting the Cimolian earth in an earthenware vase, place it on the embers and when it is inflamed, add the dissolved stirax. Next, sprinkle onto it the ingredients that are dried and very fine, and mixing adequately, shape some artisks, dry in the shade, and after grinding and sifting, use».<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 8.6 = ed. A. Olivieri, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in *Aedibus Academiae Litterarum*, Berlin, 1950, pp. 407,15-410,22: «**Ϲμήγματα προσώπου καὶ στιλβώματα.** ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ ἀφαιρέσει τῶν ἐπιχρίστων πειρῶνται τὴν ὄψιν εὐήχειν, χρητέον ταῖς ὑπογεγραμμέναις σκενασίαις. **Ϲμῆγμα λαμπρυντικὸν προσώπον.** Λιβάνου, ἀφρονίτρου, κόμμεως, ἀνὰ δραχμᾶς δ', ἀμύγδαλα λελεπιμένα μ', εμιδάλεως δραχμᾶς κδ'; κναμίνον ἀλεύρου δραχμᾶς ιβ', ἀναλάμβανε ὡδῦ τῷ λευκῷ καὶ ἀνάπλασσε τροχίσκους καὶ χρῶ δι' ὕδατος ἀνιών ἐν βαλανείῳ καὶ χωρὶς βαλανείον. **Νήμα προσώπου εὐδόκιμον θαυμάσιον,** ποιεῖ τὸ πρόσωπον λαμπρὸν καὶ τετανόν, ἐκλείνει τὰς τραχύτητας πάσας, ὥφελης καὶ ὀρχῆν ἔχοντας ἐλεφαντίασεως. σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις δηλονότι βοηθήμασι χρῶ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ παντὶ σώματι. **Μαστίχης,** λιβάνου, ἀμμωνιακοῦ θυμιάματος, ἵρεως, ἀνὰ οὐγκίαν α', τραγακάνθης οὐγκίαν ας', ὁμφακίου χυλοῦ οὐγκίας θ', πέπονος σπέρματος σὺν τῷ ἐν αὐτῷ ὑγρῷ οὐγκίας ι', ὡδῶν τὰ λευκὰ κθ', εμιδάλεως ζέστας ε', κόψας πάντα καὶ φυράσας τῷ λευκῷ τῶν ὡδῶν καὶ τῷ ὑγρῷ τοῦ πέπονος καὶ τῷ χυλῷ τῆς ὁμφακος, ἀνάπλαττε ἀρτίσκους πλατεῖς καὶ ξήραινε, ἐπειτα κόψας σήςας φύλαττε ἐν ὑελίνῳ σκεύει καὶ χρῶ. **Ϲτίλβωμα προσώπον.** τὸ δ' αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπερυθραίνει. ὄροβίνου καὶ κναμίνου καὶ θερμίνου καὶ πτισσάνης καὶ ἐρεβίνθων ἀλεύρων καὶ ναρκίσσου βολβῶν, ἀνὰ ζέστην Ιταλικοῦ τὸ ἥμισυ, εμιδάλεως ζέστην α', κόψας σήςας λεπτοτάτῳ κοσκίνῳ καὶ φυράσας ὡδῦ τῷ λευκῷ, ἀνάπλαττε τροχίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρήσεως αἴρων ὅσον ἐξαρκεῖ, διάλυνε ὕδατι καὶ χρῶ μετὰ βαλανείον. **Ἄλλο λαμπρυντικὸν προσώπον καὶ παντὸς τοῦ σώματος, τετανὸν δὲ καὶ καθαρὸν ποιεῖ τὸν χρῶτα.** βρυωνίας ρίζης τὸν φλοιὸν ἀποξύσας, ξήραινε τὸ λοιπὸν τῆς ρίζης ἐν ἡλίῳ θερινῷ, ἐπειτα κόψας σήςας λάμβανε ἐκ ταύτης Ιταλικοῦ χοίνικος τὸ ἥμισυ, ἵρεως κεκομμένης τὸ ἵσον, μυροβαλάνου λελεπιμένης ξηρᾶς τὸ ἵσον, κναμίνου ἀλεύρου χοίνικα α', οἶνῳ λευκῷ παλαιῷ ενώδει φυράσας, ἀνάπλασσε τροχίσκους λεπτοὺς καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ. ἐν δὲ τῇ χρήσει κόπτων σήθων χρῶ μεθ' ὕδατος. **Άλλο υγρόμα Κλεοπάτρας βασιλίσσης πολυτελές εὐδόδες.** Κόστου, σμύρνης τρωγλίτιδος, ἵρεως ναρδοστάχυος, ἀμώμου φύλλου, κασσίας, σχοίνου ἄνθους, ἀνὰ οὐγκίαν α', μυροβαλάνου λίτρας δ', νίτρου ἀφροῦ λίτρας β', κόψας σήςας χρῶ. ποιεῖ εἰς ὅλον τὸ σῶμα. **Άλλο υγρόμα ἐνεργὲς εὐδόδες.** σχοίνου ἄνθους, ἵρεως, ἀνὰ δραχμᾶς β', μαστίχης δραχμῆν α', λεάνας ἀναλάμβανε πτισσάνης χυλῷ παχντάτῳ καὶ ποιεῖ ἀρτίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας ἀνέσας ὕδατι κατάχριε καὶ διαστήσας ὥραν πρόσκλυντες ὕδατι ψυχρῷ. **Πρὸς τὸ λαμπρὸν καὶ τετανὸν ποιεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ τὸ ὄλον σῶμα.** κναμίνου ἀλεύρου

### 3. SOME REMARKS ON AETIUS 8.6

The passage just translated is very interesting, for the technical terms used,<sup>20</sup> for the ingredients and, lastly, also for the sources. I will give only some remarks about the contents of this text devoted to the treatments to clean the face, to keep the correct colourful of the skin and to perfume the body. The text deals with 14 treatments, most of them are called soaps, someone generically cosmetic and some cleanser.

#### 3.1. About the Ingredients

Only one compound ingredient is used in this section: the Gallic soap. It is mentioned three times; in the recipe of Pelagia, that is the number 8, and in the two subsequent recipes; a soap to use during the bath (recipe number 9) and another soap very useful for black spots (recipe number 10). Pliny the Elder gives us our earliest source for information about this soap, its ingredients and its

μόδιον Ἰταλικὸν α΄, σεμιδάλεως Ἰταλικὸν ἔστας δ΄, τριφύλλου κεκομμένου ἔστας δ΄, μυροβαλάνου τὸ ἴσον, ἥρεως κεκομμένης τὸ ἴσον, ἀμμωνιακοῦ θυμιάματος, κόστου, ἀνὰ λίτραν α΄, ὡῶν ὀμῶν προσφάτων ἔστηη τὰ λευκὰ, πέπονος σπέρματος σὺν τῷ ύγρῳ ἔστας β΄, ὄμφακων χυλῶν ἔστας β΄, φυράσας ἀνάπλαττε τροχίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ· ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας ὅδατι διαλύων ὅσον ἔξαρκεῖ ἐπίχριτε μετὰ βαλανείον. ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐν τῷ τραχήλῳ καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ σώματι μελανίας. **Σάπων** φέρεται **Πελαγία πατρικία πρὸς τὸ λαμπρόναι τὸ πρόσωπον.** Σάπων Γαλλικοῦ οὐγκίας ζ΄, ἀμύλου οὐγκίας ας΄, ψιμωθίου οὐγκίαν ας΄, μαστίχης οὐγκίαν τὸ ζ΄, μυελοῦ ἔλαφείου οὐγκίαν α΄, ἀφρονίτρου λευκοῦ τροχίσκους δ΄, κηροῦ τρακτοῦ οὐγκίας γ΄· πρόβρεχε τὸν σάπωνα εἰς ὅδωρ εἰς ὑελοῦν ἀγγεῖον ἡμέρας ε΄, ἀλλάσσον τὸ ὅδωρ τὸ ὅμβριον καθ΄ ἡμέραν καὶ ὅλιε τὸν σάπωνα· καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα βαλάνων εἰς χύτραν καινουργίαν τὸν σάπωνα καὶ τῇ ζ΄ ἡμέρᾳ πάλιν ὕδωρ ὅμβριον, ἐπίθεες ἐπ’ ἀνθράκων, χθαμαλῷ πυρί, ἔως διαλυθῇ ὁ σάπων· εἶτα ἐπίπασσε κηρὸν καὶ τὸν μυελόν, καὶ ὅταν διαλυθῶσι λαβὼν τὴν λοπάδα κίνει συνεχῶς σπάθῃ καὶ πᾶσσον τὴν μαστίχην καὶ τὸ ἀμύλον προλειωθέντα, εἶτα τὸ ψιμωθίον προλειειωμένον ὀλίγῳ ὅδατι βάλλε εἰς κόγχον καὶ ἀνάκοπτε τῇ χειρὶ εὐτόνως καὶ βαλάνων εἰς ὑελοῦν ἀγγεῖον χρῶ καθολικῶς. **Σάπων ἄλλο ἐν λοντρῷ.** σάπωνος Γαλλικοῦ πρωτείου λίτρας ε΄, νίτρου λίτρας ε΄, κρότωνος ἀμμωνίτου θυμιάματος λίτραν α΄, ψιμωθίου λίτραν α΄, ὀστρέων κεκαυμένων λίτραν α΄, κηροῦ κεκαυμένου λίτραν α΄, μαστίχης οὐγκίας ζ΄, ἀμύλου οὐγκίας ζ΄. **Άλλο πρὸς μελανίας προσώπου διὰ πολλῆς πείρας.** λιβάνου οὐγκίαν ας΄, ψιμωθίου πεπλυμένου ἐπιμελῶς, λιθαργύρου πεπλυμένου πλειστάκις ἐν ἥλιῳ ἐν ἀφεψήματι λευκοῦ ἐρεβίνθων, ἀμύλου προσφάτον, μαρμότου λευκοτάτου ρίνικματος, μαστίχης καθαρᾶς, ἀφρονίτρων λευκῶν, εηπίας ὀστράκων, ἀνὰ οὐγκίαν α΄, σάπωνος Γαλλικοῦ οὐγκίας ιβ΄, ὡῶν δέκα τὰ λευκά, σκεύαζε καὶ χρῶ, καθὰ προείρηται. **Άλλο θαυμάσιον πάνω ἀποκαθαῖρον τὴν δψιν καὶ λαμπρύνον.** Τηλίνου ἀλεύρου, γῆς ἀστέρος, ἀμμωνιακοῦ θυμιάματος, ἀνὰ οὐγκίας γ΄, ἀμύλου οὐγκίας δ΄, μαστίχης οὐγκίας ζ΄, μυελοῦ ἔλαφείου προσφάτον οὐγκίας ζ΄, τραγακάνθης οὐγκίας δ΄· γάλακτι γυναικείῳ ἡ ὄνειρ ἀπόβρεχε τὴν τραγάκανθαν καὶ λεάνας ἀναλάμβανε αὐτῇ τὰ λοιπὰ λειότατα γενόμενα καὶ ἀνάπλαττε τροχίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ καὶ χρῶ, καθὰ προείρηται. **Άλλο εμῆγμα δψεως καὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ σώματος.** κικέας κροτώνων τοῦ ἐντὸς, ναρκίσσου βολβῶν ξηρῶν λελεπισμένων, ἀνὰ δραχμὰς η΄, σεμιδάλεως δραχμὰς δ΄, λιβάνου δραχμὰς β΄, ὡῶν β τὰ λευκὰ σκεύαζε καὶ χρῶ, καθὰ προείρηται. Γιουτέστι φυράσας ἀνάπλαττε τροχίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ· ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας διαλύων ὅσον ἔξαρκεῖ, ἐπίχριτε μετὰ βαλανείον.] **Πρὸς ρύτιδων τοῦ παντὸς σώματος, εμῆγμα ἐκ τῶν Ρούφου.** συνεχῶς γάρ εμηχόμενον τοῦτο τὸ ρύσὸν σῶμα περιτείνεται. σῶκα λιπαρώτατα καὶ βρυωνίας ρίζαν λελεπισμένην ξηρὰν, εηπίας ὀστρακον κεκαυμένον, ὄρόβων ἀλευρον, ἔκαστον ἰδίᾳ κόπτε, ἐπειτα καὶ ἀνακόπτων παράσταζε μέλιτος τὸ σύμμετρον καὶ χρῶ. **Εμῆγμα ὅλου τοῦ σώματος εὐῶδες πάνω.** γῆς κιμωλίας οὐγκίας κ΄, ἥρεως λειοτάτης, νάρδου Κελτικής, ἀνὰ δραχμὰς κδ΄, κυπέρων, καρδαμώμου, στύρακος ζανθοῦ λιπαροῦ, ἀνὰ δραχμὰς ιβ΄. τὸν στύρακα οἴνῳ παλαιῷ εὐώδει διαλύσας ἔχε ἐν ἐτοίμῳ, ἐπειτα τὴν κιμωλίαν ἐν ὀστράκῳ βαλάνων τίθει ἐπ’ ἀνθράκων καὶ ὅταν πυρωθῇ ἐμβαλλε εἰς τὸν διαλυθέντα στύρακα, εἶτα ἐπίπασσε τὰ ξηρὰ λειότατα καὶ ἐνώσας ίκανῶς ἀνάπλαττε ἀρτίσκους καὶ ξήραινε ἐν σκιᾷ καὶ κόψας σήςας χρῶ».

<sup>20</sup> See Buzzi, S., Calà, I., «Le ricette cosmetiche ...», pp. 137-138.

uses:<sup>21</sup> «Soap is also good, an invention of the Gallic provinces for making the hair red. It is made from suet and ash, the best from beech ash and goat suet, in two kinds, thick and liquid, both being used among the Germans, more by men than by women».<sup>22</sup>

Also Aretaeus of Cappadocia gives details about Gallic soap in his work devoted to chronic diseases:<sup>23</sup> «There are many other remedies of Celts, who are now called Gauls, some pills with properties of nitron, that cleanse fine linen cloth, called «soap»; these are very good for cleaning the body in the bath». The Gallic soap is not the only soap known to doctors, but it is very famous in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, like the soap of Constantine.<sup>24</sup>

For the most part, however, the ingredients used are simples and some of the vegetal simples used in these recipes are aromatics, like myrrh, cassia, frankincense and other. But I would like to focus on mineral and animal ingredients that are few in number, but very interesting. Mineral ingredients are contained in the recipes as follows:

**Table 2.** Mineral ingredients in the Cosmetics recipes of Aetius Amidenus

Number of recipe	Saltpetre (salnitron)	Nitron	White lead	White marble	Litharge	Earth aster	Cimoli an Earth
1	X						
8	X		X				
9		X	X				
10	X		X	X	X		
11						X	
14							X

Aetius uses the white marble, actually its powder, also in other recipes;<sup>25</sup> it is very interesting the use of this ingredient in another «cosmetic» recipe in book 16,<sup>26</sup> also this recipe is useful for the black spots on the face.

<sup>21</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.191 = *Natural History, Volume VIII: Books 28-32*, translated by W.H. Jones, Loeb Classical Library, 1963, pp. 129-131: Prodest et sapo, Galliarum hoc inventum rutilandis capillis. Fit ex sebo et cinere, optimus fagino et caprino, duobus modis, spissus ac liquidus, uterque apud Germanos maiore in usu viris quam feminis.

<sup>22</sup> Translation by W.H.S. Jones.

<sup>23</sup> Aretaeus, *De curatione diuturnorum morborum*, 2.13.7 = ed. C. Hude, Aretaeus, in *Aedibus Academiae scientiarum*, Berlin, 1958, p. 169.9-12: «φάρμακα δὲ ἄλλα μυρία τῶν Κελτέων, οἵ νῦν καλέονται Γάλλοι, τὰς λιτράδεις τὰς ποιητὰς σφαιράς, ἣς ρύπτουσι τὰς ὀθόνας, σάπων ἐπικληνῆσθαι ρύπτειν τὸ σκῆνος ἐν λοντρῷ ὅριστον».

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Mazzini, I., «Il sapone di Costantino», in Bonamente, G. and Fusco, F. (eds.), *Costantino il Grande. Dall'Antichità all'Umanesimo. Colloquio sul Cristianesimo nel mondo antico* [Macerata 18-20 Dicembre 1990], Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia. Università di Macerata, Macerata, 1992, vol. II, pp. 693-699; Callu, J.-P., «À nouveau le savon de Costantin», *Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 44.4 (1995), pp. 500-502.

<sup>25</sup> There are only few cases.

<sup>26</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 16.124 = ed. S. Zervos, *Aetii Sermo sextidecimus et ultimus*, Verlag von Anton. Mangos, Leipzig, 1901, p. 160,18-23: «Τρίμα πρὸς μελανίαν προσώπου διὰ πολλῆς πείρας. Λιβάνου οὐγκίαν ας', ἵτοι οὐγκίαν ας' ψιμυνθίου πεπλυμένου, λιθαργύρου πεπλυμένου, ἀμύλου, μαρμάρου ἀπὸ Προκοννήσου λευκοῦ πρίσματος ἡ ρινίσματος, μαστίχης, ἀφρονίτρου λευκοῦ, σηπίας ὀστράκου, ἀνὰ οὐγκίαν α', σάπωνος γαληνικοῦ οὐγκίας β' ὥστην ι' τὰ λευκὰ ἀναλάμβανε τῷ σάπωνι, καὶ διαλυθέντων χρῶ ὡς βούλει.».

**Aetius 8.6.10**

- Another for black spots of the face experimented many times.
- 1 ½ ounce of frankincense,
  - white lead carefully cleaned,
  - litharge cleaned very often under the sun in a decoction of white chick-peas,
  - fresh starch,
  - powder of very white marble,
  - pure mastich,
  - white saltpetre, of each 1 ounce,
  - 12 ounces of **Gallic** soap,
  - 10 white of eggs, prepare and use, as has been said.

**Aetius 16.124**

- A detergent for the black spots of the face, experimented many times.
- 1 ½ ounce of frankincense
  - or 1 ½ ounce cleaned with lead,
  - cleaned litharge,
  - starch,
  - powder of Procannesian marble,
  - mastich,
  - white saltpetre,
  - **cuttlefish**, of each 1 ounce,
  - 2 ounces of **Galenic** soap,
  - 10 white of eggs, mix with the soap and solved use as you like.

The recipe is essentially the same: in the recipe of book 16 we have an interesting indication about the marble, from Proconnesos, in addition to the ingredients of book 6 in the recipe of book 16 we have also a cuttlefish. The apparent difference between the two kinds of soap, Gallic in the recipe of book 8 and Galenic in the recipe of book 16 is very interesting: it is probably a result of a mistake in the manuscript used by editor of book 16, because if we look, for instance, at the Latin translation by Janus Cornarius<sup>27</sup> we can read also «Gallic soap». There are also few animal ingredients, as follows:

**Table 3.** Animal ingredients in the cosmetic recipes of Aetius Amidenus

Number of recipe	Egg	Deer (marrow)	Oyster	Wax	Milk	Cuttlefish	Honey
1	X						
2	X						
3	X						
7	X						
8		X		X			
9			X				
10	X						
11		X			X		
12	X						
13						X	X

Like the honey, the white egg is also used to mix the ingredients, because it is very useful as a binder. Two ingredients come from the sea: the oyster and the cuttlefish. The marrow of deer is used in two recipes, here I would like to compare the second (number 11), with a same recipe contained in book 16:

<sup>27</sup> About the translations and commentaries of *Libri medicinales* in the Renaissance see Calà, I., «La fortuna dei Libri medicinales ...», pp. 187-205.

**Aetius 8.6.11**

Another extraordinary cleansing very well the face and gives the brightness.

- Flour of fenugreek,
- earth aster,
- ammoniac gum, of each 3 ounces,
- 4 ounces of starch,
- 6 ounces of mastich,
- 6 ounces of fresh marrow of deer,
- 4 ounces of tragacanth; soak the tragacanth in milk **of women or ass** and smoothing put on it other ingredients just triturate and shape some trochisks and dry in the shade and use, as has been said.

**Aetius 16.125**

Cleanser extraordinary cleansing the face and gives the brightness.

- Flour of fenugreek,
- starch,
- tragacanth, of each 4 ounces,
- earth aster\*
- ammoniac gum, of each 3 ounces,
- mastich,
- fresh marrow of deer, of each 4 ounces, soak the tragacanth in milk and smoothing put on it other ingredients just triturate and shape some trochisks and dry in the shade and use. Use also the soaps just described in book 8, in which also you find prescriptions against the smell of the armpits and that of the mouth.<sup>28</sup>

The recipe in book 16 is essentially the same that of in book 8; some difference about the posology and the order of the ingredients. I would like to stress that in book 16 we have a very detailed reference to recipes in book 8.

### 3.2. Two Recipes Ascribed to two Women: The Famous Cleopatra and Unknown Pelagia

**«5. Another valuable and fragrant soap of queen Cleopatra.** Costus, myrrh of troglis, iris, spikenard, amomum, mercurialis, cassia, flower of reed, of each 1 ounce, 4 pounds of perfumed frankincense; use after grinding and sifting; it is useful for entire body».

If the other quotation of a certain Cleopatra in the book 6 in the chapter devoted to the loss of the hair<sup>29</sup> is clearly a quotation from Galen,<sup>30</sup> the recipe here translated is known only through Aetius.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 16.125 = ed. S. Zervos, *Aetii Sermo sextidecimus et ultimus*, Verlag von Anton. Mangos, Leipzig, 1901, pp. 160,24-161,6: «Νίμια θαυμάσιον ἀποκαθαῖρον τὴν ὄψιν καὶ λαμπρύνον. Τηλίνου ἀλεύρου, ἀμύλου, τραγακάνθης, ἀνὰ οὐγκίας δ', γῆς ἀστέρος, ἀμμωνιακοῦ θυμιάματος, ἀνὰ οὐγκίας γ', μαστίχης, μυελοῦ ἐλαφείου προσφάτου, ἀνὰ οὐγκίας δ', γάλακτι ἀπόβρεχε τὴν τραγάκανθαν, καὶ λεάνας ἐπίπασσε τὰ λοιπὰ λειότατα, καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τροχίσκους ξήραινε ἐν σκιῷ καὶ χρῶ. Χρῶ δὲ καὶ τοῖς προγεγραμμένοις σμήγμασιν ἐν τῷ ὄγδῳ λόγῳ, ἐν φ' καὶ πρὸς τὰς τῶν μασχαλῶν δυσωδίας εἰρήσεις γεγραμμένα καὶ πρὸς τὰς τοῦ στόματος δυσωδίας»

<sup>29</sup> Aetius Amidenus, *Libri medicinales*, 6.56 = ed. A. Olivier, *Aetii Amideni Libri medicinales V-VIII*, in Aedibus Academiae Litterarum, Berlin, 1950, p. 205,1-9.

<sup>30</sup> Galen, *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, 1.2 = ed. K. G. Kühn, *Galeni Opera omnia*, Car. Cnoblochii, Leipzig, 1821-1833, vol. 12, pp. 432,12-434,2.

<sup>31</sup> On Cleopatra's recipes see, for instance, Totelin, L., «The third Way. Galen, Pseudo-Galen, Metrodora, Cleopatra and the Gynaecological Pharmacology of Byzantium», in Lehmhaus, L.

**«8. Soap that the patrician Pelagia used to make bright the face.** 6 ounces of Gallic soap, 1 ½ ounce of starch, 1 ½ ounce of white lead, 1 half of ounce of mastich, 1 ounce of marrow of deer, 4 trockisks of white saltpetre, 3 ounces of bleached wax; soak the soap in the water in a glass vase for 5 days, changing the rain water every day and filter the soap. And then putting the soap in a new pot for half a day with new rain water, place on the embers, with slow fire, until the soap is dissolved. Then sprinkle the wax and the marrow onto it, and when both are dissolved, taking the pan, turn it continuously with a spatula, while sprinkling the mastich and the triturate starch on it; then add the white lead just pulverized with a little bit of water in a shell and grind with the hand vigorously. Put in a glass vase use liberally».

Concerning the woman called Pelagia by Aetius, we have no other information. It is very interesting to stress the fact that in Aetius we have some female sources, not only Cleopatra and Pelagia, for instance, a woman called Aspasia is quoted many times in the book 16.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Much work remains to be done, not only concerning cosmetics in Aetius Amidenus, but also in other medical works of Late Antiquity. A comparative study with other authors could very usefully allow us to follow the circulation of these recipes and to clarify what is the role of cosmetics in medicine from antiquity to Late Antiquity. I hope that this paper will contribute to generating interest in the medical works written after Galen of Pergamon and which are vital for understanding the transfer of knowledge in the Europe during the Middle Ages.

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