

Physician Turned Mother: Privileging the Doctor-Parenting Expertise in Greco-Roman Antiquity

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*In the Greco-Roman world, doctors held significant authority in the areas of infant care, childcare and paediatric diseases. In the second book of his *Gynaecia*, the Greek physician Soranus discusses everything from the recommended method of feeding an infant to their emotional well-being. The physicians Galen, Rufus of Ephesus (cited by the Byzantine author Oribasius) and Cornelius Celsus provide further expertise about childrearing through case studies and descriptions of paediatric diseases. This paper will discuss how the mothering expertise of male doctors was privileged by both parents and other male doctors in Greco Roman antiquity and how doctors were often essential members of elite children's circles of care. It will examine Galen's parenting expertise through his case studies involving Cyrillus, the son of the consul Boethus, and the emperor's son Commodus. Comparisons will then be drawn to the privilege that Soranus places on his own expertise of maternal and infant care, the authority that Rufus gives to himself in the area of childrearing and that Celsus places on his knowledge of pediatric disease.*

Introduction

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, the rearing of both elite and common children involved not only parents but an entire circle of care. Doctors held significant authority in the areas of infant care, childcare and pediatric disease. Other members of a child's circle of care might include a wet-nurse, midwife, *nutritor* (male nurse), *educator* (tutor), *paedagogus* (pedagogue). After Hellenistic territories were annexed to the Roman Republic, breastfeeding became unfashionable, and wet-nurses became a popular alternative among the Roman elite.¹ During this time, however, lower classes might have also preferred the use of wet-nurses to breastfeeding. Conservatives initially condemned the practice particularly when there was no practical need of a wet-nurse, and the mother could feasibly feed her own infant. Wet-nurses either worked independently (assembling for hire at the *columna lactaria*) or could be retained as part of an aristocratic Roman household.² Later medical authorities (such as the physician Soranus) promoted breastfeeding to prevent milk depletion and allow the child to thrive. Wet-nurses were significant members of a child's circle of care and Quintilian notes that they are the first voice

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1. Margaret Trenchard-Smith, "Unfit to Nurse: Women, Infants and Breastfeeding Ideals and Prohibitions in Greek Gynecology," *Medicina Nei Secoli: Journal of the History of Medicine and Medical Humanities* 32, no. 3 (2020): 894.

2. *Ibid*, 893-895.

a child will hear – so they ought to speak properly (Quint.1.1.4). They would also suckle the child until weaning, which began when the infant was eighteen months old and ended when the child was two or three years old.³ Thus, they were closely involved in the child's first few years of life and were even responsible for a child's care until they became adults.⁴ They held a high status within the household but were either slaves or freedwomen.⁵

Midwives were the initial carers of mothers and newborn infants in the Greco-Roman world, as both usually remained in their care several days after the delivery.⁶ Midwifery was either passed down from mother to daughter or slave girls were apprenticed to the household's midwife.⁷ Midwives announced the sex of the infant, cleaned it, cared for the health of newborn and gave upbringing advice to mothers.⁸ Most importantly, they would determine whether an infant was worth rearing through a brief physical examination (Soranus, *Gynaecia (Gyn.)* 2.10 [62]).⁹ Midwives were generally either freedwomen or slaves, but percentages of each varied depending on geographical location. While discussing a Latin dossier of inscriptions for midwives, Christian Laes mentions that 42% of the inscriptions name midwives who were freedwomen and 29% of inscriptions name women of servile status.¹⁰

Men were also a part of both upper class and enslaved children's circle of care in Imperial Rome.¹¹ They worked as *nutritores* (male nurses), *educators* (tutors), and *paedagogi* (pedagogues).¹² These male carers were usually freedmen or slaves.¹³ The position of *nutritor* was roughly equivalent to the title of *tropheus*,¹⁴ which originated

3. Ibid, 895.

4. Kelly L Baumgartel, Larissa Sneeringer, and Susan M Cohen, "From royal wetnurses to Facebook: the evolution of breastmilk sharing," *Breastfeed Rev.* 24, no. 3 (2016): 3.

5. Trenchard-Smith, "Unfit to Nurse: Women, Infants and Breastfeeding Ideals and Prohibitions in Greek Gynecology," 2020, 898.

6. Valerie French, "Midwives and Maternity Care in the Roman World," in *Midwifery and the Medicalization of Childbirth: Comparative Perspectives* (eds.) Edwin R. Van Teijlingen, et al. (Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2004), 58.

7. Ibid, 55.

8. G. Tsoucalas, M. Karamanou, and M. Sgantzou, "Midwifery in ancient Greece, midwife or gynaecologist-obstetrician?" *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 34, no. 6 (2014): 547.

9. Soranus, *Gyneciorum libri IV* (Leipzig & Berlin: 1927).

10. Christian Laes, "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 176 (2011): 156.

11. Keith R. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men," *Historical Reflections/Reflections Historiques* 12, no. 3 (1985): 487-496.

12. Ibid, 486.

13. Ibid, 497.

14. Werner Eck, "The Emperor and His Advisors," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 11 (eds.) Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, Dominic Rathbone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 209.

as a position of high status in the court of Philip II of Macedon.¹⁵ During the Roman Empire, the proximity of the *tropheus* to the imperial heir could also lead to higher offices, as in the case of Cleander, who eventually rose to become the *de facto* praetorian prefect during the reign of his charge Commodus.¹⁶ The *nutritor* may have assisted the wetnurse with bathing and changing the infant, or possibly even bottle fed the infant.¹⁷ Bradley references a list of *nutritores*, *educatores* and *paedagogi* from the inscriptions of Rome in *CIL IV* (which date from the early Imperial period).¹⁸ One of these lists contains the name of a certain Gaius Mussius Chrysonicus who is listed as a *nutritor lactaneus*.¹⁹ Notably, the inscriptions referenced by Bradley indicate that these male carers took care of both upper class and servile children. For example, a probable imperial slave named Epictetus was reared by Tiberius Claudius Symmachus.²⁰

The male physicians Galen, Rufus of Ephesus and Cornelius Celsus provide parenting expertise through case studies and descriptions of pediatric diseases in their literary works. Soranus of Ephesus discusses everything from the recommended method of feeding an infant (*Gyn.* 2.17[86]) to caring for its emotional well-being (*Gyn.* 2.40 [109]). How was the mothering expertise of male doctors privileged by both themselves, parents and other members of a child's circle of care? How were doctors essential members of children's circles of care? This paper will answer these questions first by examining Galen's parenting expertise through his case studies involving Cyrillus, the son of the consul Flavius Boethus, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius' son, Commodus. It will then discuss the privilege that Soranus places on his own parenting expertise over that of parents and professional child carers, the authority that Oribasius gives to Rufus in the area of childrearing and the authority that Celsus places on his own knowledge of pediatric disease. Finally, it will draw comparisons between these different authors.

15. Rolf Strootman, "Royal Pages," in *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires: The Near East After the Achaemenids, c. 330-30BC* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2014), 146.

16. Eck, "The Emperor and His Advisors," 1982, 209.

17. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 501-502; Bradley, "Wetnursing at Rome: A Study in Social Relations," in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (ed.) Beryl Rawson (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 214.

18. *Ibid.*, 487-496.

19. *Ibid.*, 490-491.

20. *Ibid.*, 492.

Literature Review

Some significant studies in child-rearing and on the members of a child's circle of care in the ancient Greco-Roman world include Keith Bradley's "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men", Margaret-Smith Trenchard's "Unfit to Nurse: Women, Infants and Breastfeeding Ideals and Prohibitions in Greek Gynecology", Christian Laes' "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity" and Baumgartel, Sneeringer and Cohen's "From royal wetnurses to facebook: the evolution of breastmilk sharing".

Bradley's "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men" discusses the literary and epigraphical evidence for male child minders (*nutritores*, *educatores* and *paedagogi*) in the Roman world (focusing particularly on their status, titles and the status and the identification of the infants that they cared for).²¹ First, Bradley focuses on an examination of tombstone inscriptions (found in *CIL* IV) of male child minders for members of the imperial family focusing on their status and the children they cared for.²² This group includes individuals like M. Livius Prytanis, a *libertus* who cared for a Drusus Caesar (either the son of the emperor Tiberius or the son of Germanicus). The male child minders in this category are of servile or freed origin but could see social advancement (as in the case of Nicomedes, who reached the rank of equestrian under the emperor Verus). Then, Bradley discusses the status of male carers who cared for children from the senatorial and equestrian classes and examines inscriptions associated with male child minders of the servile classes.²³ This last category is made up of both servile children associated with the *familia Caesaris* and unassociated servile children. Bradley states that inscriptions in this category sometimes noted the names of the child's parents, indicating that there was still some connection between child and birthparents, despite the involvement of male child minders (as in the case of the child Hylocharis Aemilianus who was commemorated by his parents [Secundus and Successa] and his *nutritores* [Suitus and Suita]).²⁴ Finally, he delves into a category of male child minders associated with children whose social status (enslaved or free) is difficult to determine.²⁵ In this section of his study, Bradley also discusses the role of *tata* which is associated with the names of twenty-one men²⁶. Although he notes that *tata* was not a strictly functional term (like *nutritor*, *educator* and *paedagogus*), he suggests that there was a dependant relationship between the *tata* and a child's family/owner with only two *tatae* being freedmen in these inscriptions (C. Apsius C.I. Felix and Anthus). Regarding the inscriptional evidence, Bradley concludes that the majority of male

21. Ibid, 485-516.

22. Ibid, 487-488.

23. Ibid, 489-494.

24. Ibid, 493.

25. Ibid, 494-496.

26. Ibid, 496.

child minders were from servile backgrounds, male child minders cared for children from both upper and lower classes, both girls and boys were cared for/educated by male child minders (with a ration of two boys to one girl cared for/educated by a male child minder), and that the bond between child minder and child continued well into adulthood in some instances.²⁷ Bradley also found that there was a high manumission rate for enslaved child minders, with most of the male child minders in the inscriptions being *liberti* (freedmen). This manumission rate also provides good evidence for the fact that many male child minders had strong bonds with their charges. Next, he places his findings into a historical and social context, by examining the literary evidence for the titles of *nutritor*, *educator* and *paedagogus*.²⁸ He briefly outlines a Roman childhood through the lens of male child minders by discussing the age at which a child would be under the care of one type of child minder (and how long they would stay under their care).²⁹ He utilizes both epigraphical (in the form of the aforementioned tombstones) and literary evidence to do this. Through this lens, he also explores what duties the different types of male child minders were expected to perform and the ideal qualities for each type of minder. The final section of this paper deals with the social factors that caused Roman parents to depend upon male child minders.³⁰

Trenchard-Smith's "Unfit to Nurse: Women, Infants and Breastfeeding Ideals and Prohibitions in Greek Gynecology" (2020) focuses on how Greek medical doctrine effected late Republican and Early Imperial Roman ideas about infant-rearing and wet-nurses.³¹ It is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with independent wet-nurses, household wet-nurses and Roman attitudes towards maternal breastfeeding as well as the promotion of wet-nursing by Greek medical authorities (such as Soranus and Galen).³² In particular, Trenchard-Smith explores the settings in which wet-nurses worked, the status of the children they would suckle, the legal structure that wet-nurses would have to adhere to (most often giving up the nurturing of their own child), the status that retaining a wet-nurse would give to a household, the honour awarded to breastfeeding mothers, the negative attitudes and beliefs held by traditionalists towards wet nursing and the authority held by midwives over reproductive matters. The second part of the study discusses which infants would be exposed (human *prodigia* and the medically unfit), the medical examinations and evaluations that a midwife would perform to determine if a child was worth rearing (according to Soranus), the procedures that would follow the birth of a healthy infant (the cutting of the umbilical cord, rubbing down of the infant with salt), the rejection of infants (who would make the decision

27. Ibid, 497-498.

28. Ibid, 498-514.

29. Ibid, 498-506.

30. Ibid, 506-514.

31. Trenchard-Smith, "Unfit to Nurse", 2020, 891-909.

32. Ibid, 896-900.

to reject an infant, what physical problems/congenital disorders might cause an infant to be rejected), and infant exposure (locations, tokens left with the exposed, and the condition the newborn was left in (whether they had been bathed/swaddled)).³³

In his “Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity”, Laes examines all instances of midwives being mentioned in Greek inscriptions from both the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods.³⁴ This article is a follow up to a series of others, focusing on midwives, pedagogues and schoolteachers. From the inscriptions, Laes uncovers the age of midwives during these periods, their social status (and whether this differed from Classical Greece), whether they were itinerant/immigrants or from the community that they served, the functions of their jobs, their connection to the profession of physician. Overall, this study gives a good overview of everyday realities of midwives found in epigraphy.

Baumgartel, Sneeringer and Cohen’s “From royal wetnurses to facebook: the evolution of breastmilk sharing” investigates the social views of wet-nurses, breastmilk evaluation and the ideal wet-nurse through a historical perspective (from Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Rome, 19th and 20th century America to the present day).³⁵ The aim of this study is to provide clinicians and breastfeeding advocates with an understanding of how modern views and trends are formed and how a historical viewpoint has influenced milk banks, milk sharing and other social practices.

Although these previous studies focus on the often-overlooked figures of the midwife, wet-nurse and the various types of male child minders, they do not examine or engage with the literary evidence which suggests that parents privileged the parenting expertise of physicians over their own or the privilege that doctors placed on their own parenting expertise over that of parents and professional child carers. They also do not focus on the authority that doctors give to other physicians in early infant care/childrearing. This study aims to investigate the literary evidence which indicates that physicians’ parenting expertise was privileged and the evidence that doctors held significant authority in this area through an examination of Galenic case studies and treatises focusing on early infant care and childrearing.

33. *Ibid*, 900-907.

34. Laes, “Midwives in Greek Inscriptions,” 2011, 154-162.

35. Baumgartel, Sneeringer, and Cohen, “From royal wetnurses to Facebook,” 2016, 25-32.

Methodology

The research approach utilized in this study consists of a close reading and analysis of Galenic case studies, Soranus' *Gynaecia*, Oribasius' *Collectiones Medicae* and Celsus' *On Medicine*. I closely analyzed language, particularly the words that Galen uses to describe his interactions with Peitholaus (Commodus' *tropheus*) in Galen's case study about Commodus' illness (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665K). I made an examination of the interactions between Galen and parental figures (such as Peitholaus, Boethus and Cyrillus' mother [*On Prognosis*, 14.635-41K]) and investigated details of these interactions in order to determine whether these parental figures privileged Galen's parenting expertise over their own. This research approach builds on the research approaches found in Bradley's "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men" and Laes' "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Roman and Hellenistic Antiquity" which focus on the examination and analysis of specific details (taken from inscriptions) to make sense of the status and roles of child-minders in the Greco-Roman world and provide information about the children that they cared for.³⁶ Unlike these previous studies which have mainly focused on the inscriptionary evidence for child-minders like midwives, *educators* and *nutrices*, I have chosen to focus on the literary evidence which supports doctor's authority in the area of child-rearing.

I chose to focus on the literary evidence for the parenting expertise of doctors being privileged in the Greco-Roman world, because previous studies like Bradley's "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men" and Laes' "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Roman and Hellenistic Antiquity" have focused primarily on the epigraphical evidence focusing on the lives and roles of child-minders.³⁷ Few studies have focused on the authority that doctors had in the area of child rearing in ancient medical literature and how their knowledge was privileged by both parents and professional child carers.

I examined the language and specific details about the interactions between Galen and child minders and parents in both the case studies which pertained to this study (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-41K) (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665). I examined Soranus' recommendations for midwives, wet-nurses and parents,³⁸ Rufus of Ephesus' recommendations for bathing infants³⁹ and Celsus' identification and treatment of pediatric diseases⁴⁰ and drew connections to the duties of professional child carers as outlined in ancient texts and modern sources. Finally, I made a comparison between the authority given to Galen in the area of child rearing in the case studies

36. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 487-496; Laes, "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions," 2011, 155-158.

37. *Ibid*, 487-496; *Ibid*, 155-158.

38. *Gyn.* 2.14 [83], 2.37[106], 2.39 [108], 2.31[100], 2.19 [88], 1.36.

39. *Collectiones Medicae* 4.136-138.

40. *On Medicine* 2.1.18, 6.11.3-5.

pertaining to Commodus (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665K) and Cyrillus (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-41K) and the privilege that doctors like Celsus place on their knowledge of infant care and pediatric disease.

There were a couple of limitations to this study, including the fact that a few of the sources used in this study were fragmentary. The Greek Kühn edition of Galen's case study about Commodus contains one notable section of corrupted text (the part of the story where Peitholaus defends Galen's proposed method of treatment [*On Prognosis*, 14.663K]). In his 1979 republication and translation of Galen's *On Prognosis*, Vivian Nutton provides the corresponding Latin section (from the *Nicolai versio codice Parisino* 6865) in the apparatus criticus to help fill the gap in the Greek version of the text.⁴¹ The corrupted Greek text makes it difficult to definitively determine if Peitholaus defends Galen's course of treatment (thereby placing Galen's expertise over his own). The other fragmentary text used in this study was Rufus of Ephesus' "Concerning the Care of Children" (περὶ κομιδῆς παιδίου) which is cited extensively by Oribasius in his *Collectiones Medicae* but working with this text was less problematic as it had no large sections of corruptions.⁴²

Discussion

Background & Summary of First Galenic Case Study

Galen describes two case studies in which his parenting expertise was privileged over the parenting expertise of parents and child minders within the child's circle of care. The first case study (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-41K) involves Cyrillus the son of Flavius Boethus who was an ex-consul, senator and governor of the province of Syria Palestina.⁴³ Boethus was an influential friend of Galen's and brought him into Roman high society as well as the circle of Marcus Aurelius. Boethus inspired Galen's work *On the Usefulness of the Parts* and a sequence of anatomical handbooks.

In the first case study, Cyrillus is suffering from a fever and has not recovered after four days. Galen suspects that this may be due to Cyrillus eating food outside of his regular meals (*On Prognosis*, 14.335-336K). Boethus has placed his son in the care of his mother (who remains unnamed) to make sure that his son does not eat anything he should not (*On Prognosis*, 14.336K). When Cyrillus appears to spike a fever in the night, Boethus goes to find Galen himself (he does not send a slave or messenger) and brings Galen back to his house with a crowd following behind him. Boethus tells his wife that he brought Galen home to make sure that it was really a

41. Galen, *On Prognosis* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1979), see *apparatus criticus* on page 132.

42. J. Raeder (Ed.), *Oribasii Collectionum medicarum reliquae, libri XLIX-L, libri incerti, eclogae medicamentorum* (Leipzig & Berlin: 1933).

43. Susan Mattern, "Anatomy and Boethus," in *The Prince of Medicine, Galen in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141.

fever and not his wife's anxiety over her son simply being warm (*On Prognosis*, 14.337K). When Galen takes Cyrillus' pulse twice (*On Prognosis*, 14.337-338K), it is revealed that Cyrillus is anxious and is thus not feverish. Boethus and Galen search Cyrillus' room (*On Prognosis*, 14.638-639K) and Galen discovers food hidden in the headscarf of Cyrillus' mother.

Galen's Parenting Expertise in the First Case Study

Although Boethus states that he brought Galen to his home just to reassure Cyrillus' mother (*On Prognosis*, 14.637K). By simply fetching Galen, Boethus was placing Galen's expertise over his own and over that of the boy's mother. Furthermore, neither Boethus nor Cyrillus' mother knew that Cyrillus had food stashed away in the room or where he had stashed the extra food (even though Cyrillus' mother kept watch over him and leaves the room only to go to the bath [*On Prognosis*, 14. 639K]) but Galen knows immediately from Cyrillus' pulse that he is concerned about something and suspects that he has hidden food (*On Prognosis*, 14.637-638K). Galen knows Cyrillus' behaviour better than his parents. Another interesting part of this case study is Galen's extensive oversight and control over Cyrillus' diet. Galen suspects that Cyrillus' illness was due to the consumption of hidden food, because he notes that (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-636K):

Τὰ γὰρ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ διδόμενα πρὸς τῷ ταῖς ποιότησιν ἐπιτήδεια καὶ τῇ ποσότητι σύμμετρα εἶναι

"For that (the food) which was openly given to him was clearly suitable in qualities and was proportionable in quantity."⁴⁴

This and another comment made by Boethus about why he brought Galen to the house (Galen was to instruct Boethus' wife on Cyrillus' diet [*On Prognosis*, 14.636K]) indicate that Galen had contact with Cyrillus' food (he could have inspected it before it was served) and that he controlled Cyrillus' diet. Although ancient doctors were concerned with their patient's diets (with Hippocratic doctors considering food, drink, exercise and even sexual activities to be part of a patient's diet⁴⁵) and exerted a great deal of control over a patient's diet, child minders like the *nutritor*, *nutrix* and even *educator* were also responsible for feeding the child they cared for.⁴⁶ In his *Annales* (13.15), Tacitus⁴⁷ notes that the first dose of poison used to kill Emperor Claudius' son Britannicus was administered by the boy's

44. All translations are my own.

45. Jacques Jouanna, "Dietetics in Hippocratic Medicine: Definition, Main Problems, Discussion," in *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 139-140.

46. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 501-502, Bradley, "Wet-nursing at Rome," 1992, 214.

47. Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals, Books 13-16* (Loeb Classical Library Series, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

educators indicating that they too had close contact with his food. Younger children would be fed by their *nutrix* (and/or *nutritor*) as well as the *educator*. Thus, Boethus is not only privileging Galen's own parenting expertise over his own and that of Cyrillus' mother, but Galen also asserts his authority and privileges his parenting expertise in an area that would have somewhat been the purview of the *nutrix*, *nutritor* and *educator*.

Summary of Second Galenic Case Study

The second case study in which Galen's parenting expertise is privileged over the parenting expertise of others, involves Commodus, the son of Marcus Aurelius (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665K). At the eight hour, Commodus suffers from a fever after coming back from the palaestra (*On Prognosis*, 14.661K). Galen deduces (from taking Commodus' pulse) that he has inflammation somewhere in his body. He discovers that Commodus has inflamed tonsils, because Peitholaus (Commodus' *tropheus*, equivalent to the Latin *nutritor*)⁴⁸ administered a harsh medication of honey and sumac (*On Prognosis*, 14.662K). Peitholaus was also the head of Marcus Aurelius' domestic staff and the imperial chamberlain (*koitonites*).⁴⁹ Galen orders a softer medication to be administered (consisting of rose water and honey) and persuades Peitholaus to bathe and feed the patient after two days. Annia Faustina arrives on the day which Peitholaus bathes Commodus, trailed by a group of Methodist doctors (*On Prognosis*, 14.663K). She theorizes that he will wait until after the eight hour had passed on the third day to feed or bathe Commodus. Peitholaus tells her that Galen has already had Commodus bathed and fed and plans to do so again in the forthcoming evening. The case study ends with a speech Annia Faustina makes acclaiming Galen's treatment plan and her departure (*On Prognosis*, 14.663-664K).

Galen's Parenting Expertise in Second Case Study

Galen clearly places his own parenting expertise over that of Peitholaus, Commodus' professional child minder. This is at first, very evident from the language Galen uses to describe his interactions with Peitholaus. He "commanded/ordered" (ἐκέλευσα) Peitholaus to change the medicament from the one containing honey and sumac to the other containing honey and rose oil (*On Prognosis*, 14.662). He also "persuades" (ἐπεισα) Peitholaus to bring Commodus to the bath. Galen gives Peitholaus specific bathing instructions, telling him to soak Commodus' body parts except for his head, which would be sprinkled after he had eaten a meal (*On Prognosis*, 14.662). Again, it is likely that one of the duties of the *nutritor* involved

48. Eck, "The Emperor and His Advisors," 1982, 209.

49. Mattern, "Marcus Aurelius and the Plague," 2013, 206.

helping the *nutrix* to bathe and change the infant.⁵⁰ As the infant grew into a child, it is probable that the *nutritor* would have continued to have this responsibility. It is not clear whether these male “nurses” would have continued to work with their female counterparts after a child was weaned, Galen does not mention any female child-minders who work with Peitholaus. By instructing Peitholaus on bathing Commodus (*On Prognosis*, 14.662). Galen is thus privileging his parenting expertise over that of a professional child-minder. Peitholaus notably also privileges Galen’s parenting expertise over his own. He follows Galen’s bathing instructions. He also defends Galen’s decision about bathing and feeding Commodus, in the presence of Annia Faustina and her group of Methodist doctors (*On Prognosis*, 14.663K).

Soranus and Infant Care

Soranus privileges his own parenting expertise over that of wet-nurses, parents and midwives in his *Gynaecia*. He discusses the correct way to breastfeed the infant (2.39[108]) and to swaddle it (2.14 [83]). According to Bradley, these responsibilities would fall under the purview of the *nutrix*.⁵¹ Midwives were also responsible for initially swaddling infants. He instructs parents on finding the correct wet-nurse (2.19 [88]) and warns mothers not to drink wine during conception (1.36). Soranus advises midwives on the bathing and massage of a newborn (2.31[100]), the initial bathing and massage of an infant appears to have been some of the duties of a midwife. Soranus may somewhat be forgiven in asserting his parental expertise over that of child minders like the midwife and *nutrix* as he was attempting to set up an ethical standard for midwives to adhere to.⁵²

Rufus’ Parenting Expertise

In his *Collectiones Medicae*, Oribasius gives significant authority to Rufus of Ephesus in childrearing. Fragments of Rufus’ “Concerning the Care of Children” (περὶ κομιδῆς παιδίου) appear in this text (4.136-138). In these fragments, Rufus discusses the proper way for midwives to bathe a child, how to position a child safely in the bath and the preparation of bathwater. According to Soranus, bathing a newborn was one of the duties of the midwife (*Gyn.*2.31[100]). As mentioned earlier, the *nutritor* and *nutrix* were also responsible for bathing infants⁵³ (inscriptionary evidence proves that they were sometimes husband and wife who

50. Bradley, “Child Care at Rome,” 1985, 501-502; Bradley, “Wet-nursing at Rome,” 1992, 214.

51. Bradley, “Wet-nursing at Rome,” 1992, 214.

52. Giulia Ecca, “Fixing Ethical Rules for Midwives in the Early Roman Imperial Period: Soranus, ‘Gynaecia’ I 3-4,” *Sudhoffs Archiv* 101, no. 2 (2017): 126-127.

53. Bradley, “Wet-nursing at Rome,” 1992, 214.

worked as a child-minding team).⁵⁴ Instead of using midwives as the sources for this information, Oribasius cites Rufus, a physician and medical authority, thereby placing his parenting expertise over the parenting expertise of professional child-minders.

Pediatric Disease in Celsus

With his knowledge of pediatric disease in his *On Medicine*, Cornelius Celsus privileges his parenting expertise over the expertise of children's wet-nurses. He identifies a variety of diseases which are particular to children, or more severe in children including *Apthas* (creeping ulcerations of the mouth), ear discharges, inflammation around the navel, slight fevers and diarrhea (2.1.18) (6.11.3-5). When creeping ulcerations of the mouth are present, Celsus instructs wet-nurses to exercise, have hot water poured over their breasts and to eat bland food (6.11.3-5). The treatment of paediatric disease seems to have been under the purview of the *nutrix* or *nurtritor*, as Commodus' *tropheus* attempts to treat Commodus' sore throat (albeit with an ineffectual medication) (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665K).

Comparisons to Galen's Case Studies of Cyrillus and Commodus

There are some similarities and differences between the Galenic case studies and the texts of Soranus, Oribasius and Celsus regarding the privileging of the physician's authority over childrearing (as seen in Table 1).

Both Galen and Soranus privilege their own expertise above that of midwives, parents and wet-nurses. After Cyrillus (son of Boethus) suffers a period of illness, Galen concurs that it was likely not his diet that caused this (as it had everything required in it) but external supplementation on Cyrillus' part (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-636K). This indicates Galen had close contact with the food, which would again, fall under the purview of an *educator*.⁵⁵ Galen privileges his own expertise over that of Commodus' mother by understanding her son's behaviour better than her, simply by taking Cyrillus' pulse (*On Prognosis*, 14.637-638K). Galen also asserts his authority over Peitholaus, instructing him on the proper way to bathe Commodus (giving him a specific method of doing so) (*On Prognosis*, 14.662K). Bathing fell well within the purview of Peitholaus' job as a *tropheus*,⁵⁶ so by instructing him to do this task in a certain way, Galen is privileging his child rearing knowledge over that of Peitholaus. Soranus privileges his parenting expertise over that of a wet-nurse and midwife, by instructing her on how to properly swaddle (2.14 [83]) and breastfeed an infant (2.39[108]), which were both important aspects of these jobs. His expertise is placed over that of parents when he tells them to find the correct

54. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 501-502.

55. Ibid, 502.

56. Bradley, "Wet-nursing at Rome," 1992, 214.

wet-nurse (2.32.12) and encourages women not to drink during conception (1.38.2-3). However, due to the nature of Soranus' text (as a text highlighting the ethical guidelines and the ideal midwife),⁵⁷ Soranus does not directly assert his expertise over a particular child-minder, like Galen does both with Peitholaus and with Cyrillus' mother.

Table 1. Comparisons to Galenic Case Studies

Physician's Name and Textual Evidence	Similarities	Differences
Soranus' infant care advice in his <i>Gynaecia</i>	Places his own expertise above that of midwives, parents and wetnurses	Does not directly assert expertise over particular child-minders (due to the nature of the text)
Rufus of Ephesus' περὶ κομιδῆς παιδίου in Oribasius	Asserts his authority over the duties traditionally performed by child-minders (midwives and wet-nurses)	Appears like an instruction manual, not agonistic in nature.
Pediatric Disease in Celsus'	Focus on pediatric disease. Asserts his authority over parental duties (treatment of a sick child). Places expertise above both the child's parents and child-minders.	No direct interaction between Celsus and these child-minders/parents. No parents/child-minders privilege his knowledge over their own.

Both Rufus of Ephesus and Galen assert their authority over the duties traditionally performed by child-minders. Galen takes over the role of an *educator* with his supervision of Cyrillus' food in the case study about Cyrillus (*On Prognosis*, 14.635-41K).⁵⁸ In the case study about Commodus (*On Prognosis*, 14.661-665K), Galen asserts his authority over the duties of bathing Commodus and treating Commodus' inflamed tonsils (which would both fall under the purview of the *tropheus/nutritor* role of Peitholaus).⁵⁹ Rufus of Ephesus privileges his own parenting expertise over the expertise of midwives and *nutrices* (whose duties were to bathe infants and children) with his instructions on bathing and positioning infants and children in the bath (*Collectiones Medicae* 4.136-138). However, the extract by Rufus of Ephesus found in Oribasius' *Collectiones Medicae* appears more to be an instruction manual (similar to Soranus *Gynaecia*) and does not appear to be agonistic in nature like Galen's two case studies (which centre around Galen's competitions with his rivals) since it contains a significant number of infinitives.

57. Giulia Ecce, "Fixing Ethical Rules for Midwives," 2017, 126-127.

58. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 502.

59. Bradley, "Wet-nursing at Rome," 1992, 214.

Both Galen's case studies about Cyrillus and Commodus and a section in Celsus *On Medicine* focus on pediatric disease, have authors who assert authority over parental duties and privilege doctors' parenting expertise over a child's parents and child minders. Celsus focuses on several different pediatric diseases and diseases that are worse in children (*Apthas*, ear discharges, inflammation around the navel, slight fevers and diarrhea [2.1.18, 6.11.3-5]) and Galen's case studies both focus on children who initially present with a fever (*Prognostics* 14.661K) or appear to present with a fever (*On Prognosis*, 14.636K). Galen asserts his authority over Cyrillus' mother by inspecting Cyrillus' food (like a *nutritor/nutrix*) and instructing Cyrillus' mother about his diet (as Boethus says he brought Galen over for this [14.637K]).⁶⁰ Since there is not a *nutritor/nutrix* present in this case study, it is possible that Cyrillus' mother took up some duties that would have been assigned to a *nutritor/nutrix*⁶¹ (such as feeding her child). Celsus asserts his authority over the parental duties of a *nutritor* and privileges his own parenting expertise with his knowledge of pediatric disease and the treatment of pediatric disease (as this was a responsibility of the *nutritor* [*On Prognosis*, 14.662K]). Boethus privileges Galen's parenting expertise over his own and that of Cyrillus' mother by allowing him to have oversight of Cyrillus' diet (*On Prognosis*, 14.636K). Unlike the Galenic case studies, Celsus has no interaction with any specific child-minders/parents, so no child-minders/parents privilege his knowledge of pediatric disease over their own.

Conclusion

The physicians Galen, Rufus of Ephesus and Cornelius Celsus held significant authority in the areas of infant care, childcare and pediatric diseases. These doctors privileged their own parenting expertise over that of professional child minders like *nutrices*, midwives, *educatores* and pedagogues. Galen privileges his parenting expertise over the parenting expertise of Cyrillus' parents and the *tropheus* Peitholaus. Soranus privileges his parenting expertise over the expertise of parents, midwives and wet-nurses. Through his knowledge of pediatric disease, Celsus privileges his own parenting expertise over a child's caregiver such as a *nutritor*. Sometimes parents privilege the parenting expertise of these doctors over their own. Boethus privileges Galen's parenting expertise over his own and that of his wife's by consulting him for guidance on Cyrillus' diet. Oribasius privileges Rufus of Ephesus' parenting expertise over that of midwives and *nutrices* by citing from his fragmented text "Concerning the Care of Children" (περὶ κομιδῆς παιδίου). Future directions for this project could include investigating whether the parenting expertise doctors had in the Hippocratic Corpus was privileged over that of child-minders and parents, investigating more fully the role of the *nutritor/tropheus* as it pertains to the

60. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 1985, 502.

61. Bradley, "Wet-nursing at Rome," 1992, 214.

treatment of pediatric disease and exploring whether female physicians had the same or a different amount of authority in the area of child-rearing compared with their male counterparts.

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