

‘One size to fit them all’: the reader in Galen’s Hippocratic commentaries

EIRIK WELO

Galen was a prolific writer whose texts were read by many readers; but who did Galen himself think his readers were? In this paper, I look at the references to the audience in Galen’s commentaries on several Hippocratic texts.¹ Galen’s voluminous commentaries on selected texts from the *Corpus Hippocraticum* provide important information about Galen’s views on the readers of his writings. This is even more so since the commentary, as a genre, is meant to assist the reader of the text on which it comments. My main argument will be that Galen reflects actively on what it means to write for a broader audience and takes into account a variety of possible readers of his text. Galen realized that he had a varied readership, not all of whom had the same level of preparation or intelligence. Galen’s approach to his readers is, however, more varied than a simple dichotomy. At the same time, he retains the topical fiction of writing for a small group or even for a specific individual, allowing himself to make use of traditional *topoi* of modesty.

1. Galen and his Hippocratic commentaries

Among other works dealing with the medical tradition before him, Galen wrote several commentaries on Hippocratic works.² Some of these texts have prefaces, while others do not (though of course in some cases the prefaces may have been lost). In some of the prefaces, Galen describes how and why he wrote them. These comments throw light upon how Galen thought of the relationships between author and reader and between teacher and student.

Galen’s Hippocratic commentaries are not dedicated to specific persons, like e.g. *On my own books* (dedicated to Bassus), *On the order of my own books* (to Eugenianus) or *The exercise with the small ball* (to Epigenes), but to anonymous friends and followers. Galen’s relationship with this important

1 I will cite Galen’s Hippocratic commentaries from the editions in the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum (CMG)*, except for the commentaries *On fractures* and *On joints*, which are cited from Kühn’s edition. When citing from the *CMG* editions, I give the page numbers in Kühn’s edition which are printed in the margins of the *CMG* texts. A Roman numeral indicates the volume number in Kühn’s edition, which is marked by a capital K after the page number.

2 Ihm 2002, 88–121 conveniently collects the information on Galen’s various works of Hippocratic commentary.

group of readers has been studied recently by Mattern.³ At the same time, Galen explicitly mentions other kinds of readers.

We are lucky that Galen left two short works in which he discusses his own works. These are *On my own books*⁴ and *On the order of my own books*.⁵ In the first of these texts Galen describes how his commentaries fall into two groups: an early group written for friends only and a later group written for wider circulation. The early group of commentaries also differed from the later in that Galen mostly gave his own views on the Hippocratic texts and did not always note the views of earlier commentators. The fact that Galen did not have his library at the start of his stay in Rome would have contributed to this.⁶ The later group of commentaries were, according to Galen, ‘composed with an eye to general publication’.⁷

Unfortunately the section dealing with the Hippocratic commentaries in *On the order of my own books* is partly lost. In the preserved part of the text Galen states that he has written commentaries on some Hippocratic texts and intends to comment on all of them if time permits. In the case of this not happening, Galen recommends some earlier commentaries (those by Pelops, Numisianus, Sabinus and Rufus of Ephesus) and warns against others (those by Quintus, Lycus and Satyrus).⁸

The question of the intended audiences of Galen’s Hippocratic commentaries is complicated by the way Galen presents their genesis. Galen begins the section about Hippocratic commentaries in *On my own books* with the words: ‘As with my other works written for friends, so especially with the works of Hippocratic commentary, I had no expectation that they would reach a wider audience (*pollous hexein*).’⁹ Some were written for friends (*philoï*) or followers (*hetairoi*).¹⁰ Some of the texts written in this way were later distributed more widely against Galen’s own will, or at least without his knowledge, while others were written for publication (*ekdosis*). It is difficult to know to what extent this claim reflects reality or whether it is part of a common prefatory *topos*. Mattern, in the most extended recent discussion of Galen’s relationship with his readers, notes that the scenario described above is extremely frequent

3 Mattern 2008, 14–21.

4 XIX: 8–48K.

5 XIX: 49–61K.

6 Galen assigns the commentaries on *Aphorisms, Fractures, Joints, Prognosis, Regimen in Acute Diseases, Wounds, Injuries to the Head* and book I of the *Epidemics* to this group (XIX: 35K).

7 This group includes the commentaries on books II, III and VI of the *Epidemics, Humours, Nutrition, Prediction, Nature of Man, In the Surgery* and *Places, airs, and waters*.

8 XIX: 57K.

9 XIX: 33K.

10 Mattern 2008, 15 argues that the meanings of these two terms often overlap.

in Galen's writings.¹¹ Galen's 'friends and followers' are clearly important to him, but as I will show below, Galen also openly acknowledges the existence of another group of readers. In order to gain a better understanding of the commentaries as didactic texts, both groups must receive equal attention.

To get a clearer picture of Galen's audience, we should turn to his actual practices. Galen's commentaries contain references to the reader not only in the prefaces, but also in the body of the texts. Galen not infrequently addresses his reader in ways which show that he is present in the mind of the author and the exegete.

2. *The schema isagogicum*

The prefaces and introductory discussions in the Hippocratic commentaries provide us with much of our information about Galen's conception of his public. In his book on the history of the *schema isagogicum* in Antiquity, Jaap Mansfeld has shown how Galen's commentaries may illuminate the form and methods of ancient exegesis and philosophical education.¹² The commentaries are didactic texts which exemplify many of the traits of later exegetical works in the philosophical tradition, although in a less systematic fashion.

The goal of Mansfeld's study is to gain a better understanding of the methods of philosophical education in Late Antiquity, but his conclusions are still relevant to Galen's brand of medical education as well. Even though medicine and philosophy had different sets of canonical texts, he detects pervasive parallels between the two fields. Thus, Mansfeld places Galen squarely in the mainstream of ancient exegesis. The broadness of Galen's own educational background is well known,¹³ and this lends credibility to Mansfeld's claim about the inspiration for Galen's didactic practices:

Likely enough, his hermeneutical reflections and his ideas on the proper qualifications and aims of the exegete as well as on the qualities and preparation to be required of one's students were much more stimulated by the classes in philosophy he had attended in his youth and the philosophical exegetical literature he had seen than by his medical education or the commentaries on Hippocrates he knew.¹⁴

11 Mattern 2008, 15.

12 Mansfeld 1994.

13 See e.g. Nutton 2004, 216–29.

14 Mansfeld 1994, 175.

The *schema isagogicum* consists of points to be discussed at the outset of the study of a text. They include the following:¹⁵

- the theme, aim, and purpose of the text (*prothesis, skopos, operis intentio*);
- the text's position within a corpus;
- its utility (*khrêsimon, utilitas*);
- an explanation of its title;
- its authenticity;
- the division of the text into chapters, sections, and parts.

Mansfeld demonstrates convincingly how elements of the *schema isagogicum* can be found in Galen.¹⁶ Although Galen never uses an explicit introductory schema, he touches upon most of its contents in various places in his exegetical works. Galen discusses the authenticity of Hippocratic texts in the preface to the first commentary on book VI of the *Epidemics*, for example.¹⁷ He explains titles, as for example in the preface to the commentary on the *In the Surgery*¹⁸ and in the commentary on *Prorrhetic*.¹⁹ As we will see below, he also comments frequently on the utility of the texts of the Corpus Hippocraticum.

The *schema isagogicum* presupposes a reader who is interested in approaching a text in a specific, (educational) context and in a specific (methodical) way. The fact that Galen touches on so many of the same points indicates that Galen himself has this kind of reader in mind even though his commentaries are not written as part of a formal curriculum.²⁰

3. Readers in the Hippocratic commentaries

Let us first take a look at how Galen refers to different types of readers in his prefaces. Galen's typical way of presenting them can be seen in the following example:

ἔμοι μὲν οὐδ' ἄλλο τι βιβλίον ἐγράφη χωρὶς τοῦ δεηθῆναί τινας ἢ φίλους ἢ ἐταίρους καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς εἰς ἀποδημίαν μακροτέραν στελλομένους, ἀξιώσαντας ἔχειν ὑπόμνημα τῶν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ρηθέντων αὐτοῖς ἢ δειχθέντων ἐν ταῖς τῶν ζώων ἀνατομαῖς κατὰ <ταῖς

¹⁵ Mansfeld 1994, 10–11.

¹⁶ Mansfeld 1994, 131–47.

¹⁷ XVII/1: 793–7K.

¹⁸ XVIII/2: 629K.

¹⁹ XVI: 490K.

²⁰ As noted by Nutton 2004, 228f., Galen and his works were known throughout the Roman Empire shortly after his death. For the use of Galenic texts in the medical curriculum in Alexandria in Late Antiquity, see Iskandar 1976.

ἐπισκέψεσι τῶν νοσούντων. ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐκπεσόντα τινὰ καὶ ἄλλοις ἔδοξεν ἄξια σπουδῆς εἶναι, προτρεψαμένοις με καὶ αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα τῆς ἰατρικῆς τέχνης τὰ μέρη συμπληρῶσαι, κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὃν ἤδη τισὶν ἔδωκα καὶ τούτοις ἔπραξα. γινώσκων δ’ ἑμαυτὸν ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς ἐγεγράφειν ἐξηγησάμενον αἰεὶ τὴν Ἱπποκράτους γνώμην, ἅμα τῶ καὶ τὰς ἐπικαιροτάτας αὐτοῦ τῶν ῥήσεων παραθεῖσθαι, περιττὸν ἡγούμην εἶναι γράφειν ἐξηγήσεις ἐν ὑπομνήμασι καθ’ ἐκάστην λέξιν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἕως τέλους ἁπάντων αὐτοῦ τῶν βιβλίων.²¹

I haven’t written any other book without some friends or followers asking me and especially those who were going away on a long journey, wanting to have a memory (*hypomnēma*) of things I had told them or things I had demonstrated at animal dissections or visits to the sick. But since some became known and were taken seriously by others, when people turned to me to cover all the parts of the art of medicine, I did this for them in the same way as I have already given (books) to others. Knowing, however, that I myself in everything I had written was always explaining the doctrine of Hippocrates, and at the same time adding the most fitting of his words, I thought it superfluous to write commentaries to every single word from the beginning to the end in all his books.

In this quote from the preface to the second commentary on the third book of the *Epidemics*, Galen presents a typical (and idealized) picture of his readership; he returns to it often. The work in question, he claims, was written for a specific reason. Friends or followers, especially those going away on a trip, have asked him for a *hypomnēma* of things he has already said or demonstrated. Galen mentions different contexts: a) animal dissections and b) visits to patients. Others have asked Galen to cover other aspects of the medical art in written form and some have even asked for commentaries on Hippocratic texts, but Galen initially thought this unnecessary because he had written other, general works on Hippocrates’ views.

We may note some recurring themes here. First, the written text is in a sense secondary: it is a *hypomnēma*, an aid to remembering what Galen has already said or written. The reason why a written text is necessary is purely practical: the reader cannot be present to listen to Galen himself and/or will not have access to his other written works (in the case of Hippocratic exegesis). Secondly, the genesis of the text is presented in an individual context. Galen writes for a specific individual who will take the text that he receives with him on his journey.

Galen then recounts how his writings became known not only to his friends, but also to other doctors who subsequently encouraged him to write commentaries on all the Hippocratic texts. Here, Galen takes up the same point that we met in *On my own books* (XIX: 35K): while his Hippocratic commentaries were originally only meant for himself or for a small circle of

²¹ XVII/1: 576–7K (= Wenkebach 1936).

friends, at some point Galen chose to publish them. Accordingly, the texts from this point on have a twofold nature consisting of both individual instruction and public argumentation.

Further on in the preface to his second commentary on book III of the *Epidemics*, Galen relates that many friends asked him to discuss and refute earlier interpreters of Hippocrates. This leads Galen to defend himself against accusations of exceeding length, a criticism he also touched upon in his introduction to his second commentary on the first book of *Epidemics*. There is a slight discrepancy between Galen's words here and in *On my own books*: in the latter text, the fact that wrong explanations of Hippocrates are praised is given as the reason for explicitly mentioning and criticizing earlier commentators (XIX: 35K). In the commentary on book III of the *Epidemics*, other doctors are said to have asked Galen to do this. The end result, however, was the same, and the different versions indicate that the question of whether commentaries should include discussion of the views of earlier commentators was on Galen's mind.

This preface provides us with a picture of an audience that was steadily growing and gradually becoming more varied. Galen's fame grew as well. His audience consisted not only of friends and students who were eager to learn about Hippocratic medicine but also of Galen's peers, other doctors competing in the same marketplace.

This first group of readers (friends and followers) has a particular function in Galen's texts: they explain why the text was written to begin with (although, as he stresses in *On my own books*, the ultimate origin of the texts was his own personal study notes on the works of Hippocrates). Galen more often talks *about* these model readers than *to* them.²² They are invoked to explain the nature of the text to another kind of reader: the one who is reading it after it was published.

In his preface to the second part of the commentary on book I of the *Epidemics*, Galen again comments on the different kinds of readers who might read his text.

ὡς ἂν οὖν ἐκείνων μεμνημένων ἡμῶν, ὅσα τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἐξηγήσεως δεῖται προσθήσω, στοχαζόμενος οὔτε μόνων τῶν ἐσχάτως ἀμαθῶν οὔτε μόνων τῶν ἰκανῶν ἐχόντων τὴν παρασκευὴν· πρὸς ἅπαντας γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος λόγος ἔξει μετρίως. τῶν δ' ἄλλων ὁ μὲν τοῖς ἐσχάτως ἀμαθέσιν οικεῖος ἀνιάσει τοὺς ἐν ἔξει διὰ τὸ μῆκος, ὁ δὲ τοῦτοις ἐπιτήδειος ἀσαφής

22 Galen addresses his reader(s) using both the second person singular and plural. The second person plural often (though not always) refers to the first group of readers discussed above, namely friends and followers who have asked for the text in question. Searches of the TLG show that Galen uses the second person singular more frequently than the second person plural. The singular may of course be generic in some cases (cf. German 'man').

ἔσται τοῖς ἀμαθέσιν. ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ χρή τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ὑπομνήμασιν ἐντυγχάνειν ἀγαπῶντας, ἀλλ’ ἄλλο παρ’ ἄλλου καὶ ἄλλως ἀκούσαντες πλατύτερον πολλακίς ταῦτ’ ἀν> ἄνευ παρακοῆς ἐκμανθάνειν τι χρηστόν.²³

As regards those things of what is said now that need explanation, I will add it [sc. the explanation], aiming not only at those who are utterly uneducated nor at those who have sufficient preparation. For such a text will be balanced towards everybody. But of the alternatives, the one suited to those who are utterly uneducated will trouble those who are trained because of its length while the one suitable to them will be unclear to the uneducated. But even they should not be content with using commentaries such as these, but hearing the same things from others in other ways time and again more broadly they would be able to learn something useful without mistake.

Galen recognizes that different readers may have different needs. Galen promises to explain what is in need of explanation. His use of the verb *stokhazomai* ‘aim’ is significant. Galen has a clear conception of the diversity of his readers: they have different levels of preparation but will be served by the same text nonetheless. This is the paradox of writing for the masses: one size will have to fit all (*hapantas*). Among potential readers we find at the bottom *hoi eskhatōs amatheis* (‘those who are utterly unlearned’) and at the top the *hoi hikanēn ekhontes tēn paraskeuēn* (‘those who have sufficient preparation’). Galen emphasizes that catering too much to either group will make the text unappealing to the other.

In his short prefaces to the individual parts of his Hippocratic commentaries, Galen addresses his readers in a more direct way. While the function of the audience in the main prefaces is to explain (to a reader who may not be part of this original audience) why Galen has chosen to compose his commentaries the way he has, here Galen speaks to a reader who is actually in the process of reading his text. Before starting on the next part of the commentary, Galen says, we should remember what was said earlier: ‘If anybody doesn’t remember this, he should read it carefully again and only then start on the explanation of the present text’.²⁴ This kind of comment envisages a much more active reader than the one described as the original readership.

In his preface to the first part of the commentary on the sixth book of the *Epidemics*, Galen returns to the question of how to deal with the earlier exegetical tradition. He relates this explicitly to the length and level of detail proper for a commentary. Whenever Galen discusses length, the question is always of the proper length in relation to a group of potential readers. Galen’s usually chooses the middle way, and this shows his understanding of

23 XVII/1: 84–5K (= Wenkebach 1934).

24 <μη> μεμνημένος δὲ τις ὄν εἶπον <αὔθις> ἀναγνοὺς ἐπιμελῶς αὐτὰ πρὸς τὴν τῶν νῦν προκειμένων ἐξήγησιν ἀφικνεῖσθω (XVII/1: 647K = Wenkebach 1936).

the dilemmas facing an author who is writing for a heterogeneous audience. Again, the needs of the reader are central to his argument.

πότερον μὲν οὖν ἅμεινόν ἐστιν ἀπάντων αὐτῶν ἢ μόνων τῶν εὐλόγως μεταγραφάντων ἢ μηδενὸς ὅλως μεμνήσθαι, σκοπούμενος εὖρον, εἰ μὲν τῷ μήκει τῶν ὑπομνημάτων οὐδεὶς ἔμελλε <τῶν> ἀναγνωσομένων αὐτὰ δυσχεραίνειν, ἀπάντων μεμνήσθαι κάλλιον εἶναι, μεμφομένων δὲ πολλῶν οὐ τούτοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς συμμέτρως ἔχουσι καὶ μόνα σπουδαζόντων τὰ χρήσιμα, μέσην τινὰ τούτων ἀμφοτέρων ποιήσασθαι τὴν ἐξήγησιν καὶ τοῦτο εὐθέως ἐν ἀρχῇ προειπεῖν, ὅπως ἀπαλλάττονται τῶνδε τῶν ὑπομνημάτων οἱ μὴ χαίροντες τούτοις. ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, ὡσπερ καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα πολλοῖς τῶν δεηθέντων ἐταίρων χαριζόμενος ἐποίησα, καὶ τὰς ἐξηγήσεις ταύτας ἐκείνων ἕνεκα συνέθηκα. θεωρῶν δ' εἰς πολλοὺς ἐκπίπτοντα τὰ γραφόμενα προοιμίων τοιούτων ἐδείθην.²⁵

Considering whether it is better to mention all or just the sensible ones or none at all, I have found that if none of the readers would take offence at their length, it would be better to mention everyone. But since many criticize not just these, but also those which are more concise and only care about what is useful, I decided to make my interpretation in the middle between both of them and to say this right at the beginning, so that those who do not like them can stay away from these commentaries. For just like I made all my other writings in order to gratify many of my followers who asked me for it, I have put together these explanations as well for their sake. But seeing that the writings became known among the masses I needed prefaces such as these.

Since readers criticize not only long and detailed commentaries (which provide information on textual criticism and the views of earlier commentators) but also the commentaries which are written more *symmetrōs* ('concisely'), Galen will try and write something which is in between these extremes. He warns those readers who are only interested in what is (practically) useful right from the start, so that they can choose others types of texts. Here, Galen is actually dissociating himself from a group of potential readers. This is necessary because his commentaries are now falling into the hands of many people.

In the first part of his commentary on *Fractures*, Galen again distinguishes between pupils and a more general reading audience, as shown in the following example:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν μὲν παρὼν παρόντι συναγινώσκω τι βιβλίον, ἀκριβῶς στοχάζεσθαι δύναμαι τοῦ μέτρου τῆς ἐξηγήσεως, ἀποβλέπων ἐκάστοτε πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μαθητῆτος ἕξιν. ὅταν δὲ γράφω πᾶσιν, οὔτε τοῦ ἄριστα παρεσκευασμένου οὔτε τοῦ χειρίστα στοχάζομαι. τὸ μὲν γὰρ τοῖς πλείστοις ἀσαφές ἐσται, τὸ δὲ ἀνιάται χρονίζοντας ἐν τοῖς σαφέσιν. ἄριστον οὖν ἡγοῦμαι τῶν μέσην ἕξιν ἐχόντων στοχάζεσθαι· τούτου δὲ ἀποτυγχάνων ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐκτικωτέρους ἐπόπτειν μᾶλλον. οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅλως ὑπομνήμασιν ἐντυγχάνειν ἀξιώ, τοὺς

²⁵ XVII/1: 795–6K (= Wenkebach 1940).

κατωτέρους τῆς μέσης ἕξεως, οἷς ἀγαπητόν ἐστι παρὰ διδασκάλων ἀκούσασαι πολλάκις τὰ αὐτὰ κατ' ἄλλην καὶ ἄλλην λέξιν ἐρμηνευόμενα συνιέναι τῶν λεγομένων.²⁶

For whenever I read a book with someone, I am able to aim precisely at the proper measure of explanation, each time considering the level of training of the learner. When, however, I write for everybody, I aim neither for the best equipped nor for the worst. For the former procedure will be unclear for most people while the other makes trouble for those who must spend a long time with things that are evident. So, I think it best to aim for those who are moderately equipped. And if I miss that, rather to look to those who are a little better equipped. For I don't think those who are below the mean should use commentaries at all. For they prefer to hear the same things many times from their teachers and understand what is being said through various reformulations.

On the one hand, Galen envisages a situation in which he personally (*parôn paronti*) teaches a certain text (*sunanaginôskô*). In this case, it is possible to aim precisely for the most fitting level of exegesis on the basis of the level of the pupil (*tên tou manthanontos hexin*). When one is writing for everybody (*pasin*), on the other hand, it is impossible to please all readers at the same time. In this case, Galen aims for the middle. Galen considers written commentaries to be more suitable for those who are above average. Still, Galen recognizes that not all of his readers will belong to the group of suitably intelligent learners.

It is striking that when Galen describes his potential readers, the heterogeneity of this group is almost always underlined. Galen's Hippocratic commentaries are not written to function as didactic texts at a specific level of education. Different readers will be interested in reading Galen's explanations, and their reaction to the text will be determined by their background and level of preparation. It is noteworthy that Galen envisages readers of his commentaries on the Hippocratic texts *On joints* and *On fractures* as people who have no experience of anatomy.

πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐξηγήσιν ἴωμεν αὐτοῦ τοσοῦτον προειπόντες ἔτι, ὃ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς περὶ ἀγμῶν ἐξηγήσεως προείπομεν, ὡς ἔστιν ἡ ἐρμηνεία τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους ἰκανῶς σαφῆς ἐλαχίστης ἐξηγήσεως δεομένη τῶ τὰ πρῶτα μαθήματα μεμαθηκότι καὶ εἰθισμένῳ λέξεως ἀκούειν ἀνδρὸς παλαιοῦ· καὶ εἴ τις οὕτως παρεσκευασμένος ἐπ' ἀνθρωπειῶν ὀστέων θεάσασαι τὰς κατὰ τὰς διαρθρώσεις συνθέσεις ἢ πάντως γε ἐπὶ πθηκείων ἔτι μᾶλλον αὐτῷ σαφῆ φανεῖται τὰ κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ βιβλίον. εἰ δὲ καὶ μῶν ἀνατομῆς ἐμπείρως ἔχοι καὶ ἄλλως εἴη φύσει συνετὸς, οἶδ' ὅτι καὶ τούτῳ πολλὰ τῶν ἐν τοῖσδε τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι γεγραμμένων φανεῖται περιττὰ φθάνοντι νοεῖν τὴν λέξιν τοῦ παλαιοῦ καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἐμῶν ἐξηγήσεων. ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ μὴ μόνον τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ὑπομνήματα γράφομεν, ἅμεινον εἶναι μοι δοκεῖ τῶν ἄλλων στοχαζομένῳ, εἰ καὶ βραχεῖά τις ἀσάφεια φαίνοιτο μὴ παρέρχεσθαι ταύτην.²⁷

26 XVIII/2: 318–22K.

27 XVIII/1: 303–04K.

Let us move to the exegesis of it, having said before as much as we said also in regard to the exegesis of fractures, that the interpretation of Hippocrates is sufficiently clear and needs very little explanation for the one who has learned the basics and is used to reading texts of an ancient author. And if someone is prepared and has looked at the compositions of joints in human bones or at least in the bones of apes, the themes of this book will appear even clearer to him. If he also has experience of the anatomy of muscles and in addition is intelligent by nature, then surely for him many things written in these commentaries will appear unnecessary since he has already understood the text of the ancient writer even before my explanations. But since we don't write commentaries only for this kind of person, it seems better to me, as I aim for the others, even if a small unclarity should turn up, not to bypass it.

We have seen above that there are some students who, in Galen's view, will not profit from reading commentaries. In his comments on the beginning of the *Prognostic*, Galen indicates that he does not intend all readers to read the whole text of his commentary. Discussing different types of *exegesis* 'explanation, interpretation', Galen writes:

ἄχρι μὲν οὖν τοῦδε τὴν ἐξήγησιν ἐποιήσαμην τοῦ προοιμίου πλὴν τοῦ κατὰ τὸ θεῖον σημειομένου διὰ βραχυτάτων, ὅπερ εἶδος ἐξηγήσεως λόγων ἀρμόττει τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις μὲν τὰ πρῶτα, σπεύδουσι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ χρήσιμον τοῦ βιβλίου. τοῖς δ' ἤτοι λέξεως Ἑλληνικῆς ἀήθεσιν ἢ καὶ τοῖς <τῆς> ἐν λόγοις ἀκολουθίας ἀμαθέσιν ἢ οἱ τῶν χρησιμωτάτων μὲν ἀμελοῦσι, διατρίβουσι δὲ καὶ νῦν ἐκόντες ἐν τοῖς σοφιστικωτέροις τῶν λόγων, ἕτερος ἴδιος ἐξηγήσεών ἐστι τρόπος ὃ διὰ μακροτέρου περαινόμενος, ὃν ὑπερβαίνειν ὅλον ἔξεστι τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸ χρήσιμον σπεύδουσιν ἐπειλίζασιν τὸ μεταξὺ τοῦ βιβλίου, μέχρι περ ἂν ἐπ' ἐκείνην ἀφίκωνται τὴν ῥῆσιν, ἧς ἡ ἀρχή· 'σκέπτεσθαι δὲ ὧδε χρὴ ἐν τοῖσιν ὀξέσι νοσήμασι'.²⁸

Until now we have given the exegesis of the preface except for the meaning of *theon* concisely. This type of exegesis of the words is fitting to those who are learning the basics and looking for what is useful in the book. But for those who either are unused to Greek expressions or also for those who have not learned about the sequence of arguments or those who are not interested in what is useful, but are already by their own choice spending their time with more sophistic arguments, there is a separate mode of exegesis which is more expansive. The whole of this may be skipped by those who are looking for what is useful if they roll past the part of the book until they come to that lemma which begins 'In this way one must investigate in the acute diseases...'.²⁸

In this passage, Galen addresses two different groups of readers in the same practical manner that we saw earlier. Galen states that his mode of explanation so far has been suitable for those readers who are learning the basics and are interested in the usefulness of the book. As we have seen above, usefulness (*to khrésimon*) is a keyword in the *schema isagogicum*.

²⁸ XVIII/2: 6–7K (= Heeg 1915).

There is, however, another separate type of explanation which is more detailed. Galen's description of the type of reader who might be interested in this form of explanation includes the following: a) those who are unfamiliar with the Greek language (*lexis Hellēnikē*), b) those who do not know logic, and c) those who practise sophistic arguments. It is noteworthy that the second group of readers envisaged here by Galen is again quite varied. They are opposed to readers who only seek practical, useful instruction and are characterized by their apparent willingness to engage with Hippocrates' text in a more detailed way, either through philology or philosophy.

In a final example from the third part of the commentary on the *Prognostic*, Galen returns to his familiar account of the genesis of his Hippocratic commentaries:

δύο πραγματείας ἔχετε (πρὸς ὑμᾶς γὰρ λέγω τοῦτο τοὺς ἐταίρους, ὅσοι καθηναγκάσατέ με μὴ προηρημένον ἐξηγήσεις γράψαι περὶ Ἱπποκράτους συγγραμμάτων), ἐν αἷς ἅπαντα περὶ τε κρισίμων ἡμερῶν εἰρηται καὶ κρίσεων. ἴστε δ' ὅτι καὶ αὐτὰς οὐχ ὡς ἐκδοθησομένης, ἀλλ' ὡς παρ' ὑμῖν μόνοις ἐσομένης ἔγραψα. συνέβη δ' ἐκπεσεῖν αὐτάς καὶ παρὰ πολλοῖς εἶναι, καθάπερ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τῶν ὑμῖν γενομένων. ὅθεν οὐδ' ἐξηγεῖσθαι προηρούμην ἐν ὑπομνήμασιν οὐδὲν τῶν Ἱπποκράτους βιβλίων. ὅσα γὰρ εἰς τὴν τέχνην χρήσιμα παρ' αὐτοῦ μαθεῖν ἔδει, γέγραπται μοι κατὰ πολλὰς πραγματείας ἅμα ταῖς οἰκείαις ἐξηγήσεσιν. ἐπεὶ δ' ἔνιαι τῶν λέξεων ἀσαφέστερον εἰρημέναι μοχθηρὰς ἐξηγήσεως ἔτυχον, ὡς ἀρέσκειν ὑμῖν μηδένα τῶν γραφάντων ὑπομνήματα, βέλτιον δὲ αὐτῶν στοχάσασθαι τῆς Ἱπποκράτους γνώμης ἐδόκουν ὑμῖν ἐγώ, διὰ τοῦτό με καὶ διὰ γραμμάτων ἠξιώσατε, παρασχεῖν ὑμῖν, ἅπερ ἐν ταῖς διὰ λόγων συνουσίαις ἠκούσατε. καὶ γὰρ τοῦτ' αὐτὸ προεῖπον ὑμῖν, ὡς ἀναγκαῖον ἔσται τὰς ἐξηγήσεις ἀνομάλους ἔσεσθαι μὴ πάσας ὁμοίως ἐξηγουμένου μου τὰς λέξεις, ἀλλὰ τελεώτερον μὲν, ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐδαμῶθι τῶν ἐμῶν πραγματειῶν ἐμνημόνευσα, διὰ κεφαλαίων δέ, περὶ ὧν ἤδη τελέως ἐν ἐκείναις διήλθον, ἵνα μὴ πολλὰκις ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτῶν πραγμάτων ἀναγκάζωμαι γράφειν.²⁹

You have two treatises; I am saying this to all you followers who have forced me against my will to write explanations of Hippocratic writings. In these everything concerning critical days and crises has been said. But know that these too I wrote not for publication, but for you only. They happened to come out and be in the hands of many, just like many others which were made for you. For this reason I did not choose to explain in the form of commentaries any of the books of Hippocrates. For what one should learn from him that is useful for the art of medicine, has been included by me in many treatises together with the relevant explanations. But since some of the words which had been expressed rather unclearly received bad explanations, so that none of the texts of those who have written already were sufficient for you, and since you thought that I could hit the target of Hippocrates' opinion better than them, for this reason you asked me to provide you in writing too with those things you had heard in discussion when we were together. And I have told you before exactly this, that it is necessary that the explanations will be uneven since I will not explain

²⁹ XVIII/2: 229–31K (= Heeg 1915).

all passages in the same way, but more completely those things which I haven't mentioned in any of my treatises, more concisely those things which I have gone through thoroughly in those books, so I won't be forced to write many times about the same topics.

In this passage Galen returns to themes which we have already met in other prefaces to commentaries. He addresses directly the followers (*hetairoi*) who have made him write explanations of Hippocratic texts and points them to two other works which are relevant to the *Prognostic*. He insists again that his writings were not originally meant for a wider audience and that he himself did not choose to write them. The faulty interpretations of other writers have forced him to put into writing the teaching which originated in an oral context (*haper en tais dia logôn sunousiais êkousate*). The present commentary will supplement his earlier writings and will therefore go into more detail on some points and less detail on others.

The two groups of readers are kept strictly separate. In the passage just discussed, Galen remarks that his comments will differ depending on whether or not he has already treated the questions in other works. There is, however, no mention of the different levels of understanding which different readers bring to the text.

Unfortunately, we do not know much about the specifics of how Galen's texts were studied in his own lifetime or in the century following his death.³⁰ In later times, Galen's texts entered the formal curriculum of medical students.³¹ The references to and discussion of their likely audiences within the texts themselves do, however, provide us with a glimpse of who Galen thought his readers would be. Galen consistently describes two different groups of readers. On the one hand, we find his friends and followers, to whom a written text is a substitute for personal instruction; on the other, we find a surprisingly varied group of readers who are dependent on Galen's written text alone. Galen shows himself to be conscious of the varied needs of this second group of readers and so indirectly provides us with a picture of how his texts were used in his time.

³⁰ It is clear that they were spread widely, cf. Nutton 2004, 228f.

³¹ See Iskandar 1976.

References

- Heeg, Josephus, ed. (1915) *Galenus In Hippocratis Prognosticum commentaria tria* [*Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* V.9.2]. Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner.
- Ihm, Sibylle. (2002) *Clavis Commentariorum der antiken medizinischen Texte*. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill.
- Iskandar, Albert Z. (1976) 'An attempted reconstruction of the late Alexandrian medical curriculum'. *Medical History* 20: 235–58.
- Kühn, Karl Gottlob, ed. (1821–1833) *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*. Leipzig: Cnobloch (reprint: Georg Olms, 2001).
- Mansfeld, Jaap. (1994) *Prolegomena. Questions to be settled before the study of an author, or a text*. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill.
- Mattern, Susan. P. (2008) *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Nutton, Vivian. (2004) *Ancient Medicine*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Wenkebach, Ernst, ed. (1934) *Galenus in Hippocratis epidemiarum librum i commentaria iii* [*Corpus medicorum Graecorum* V.10.1]. Leipzig: Teubner.
- ed. (1936) *Galenus in Hippocratis epidemiarum librum iii commentaria iii* [*Corpus medicorum Graecorum* V.10.2.1]. Leipzig: Teubner.
- ed. (1940) *Galenus in Hippocratis sextum librum epidemiarum commentaria i-vi* [*Corpus medicorum Graecorum* V.10.2.2]. Leipzig: Teubner.