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Galen in Syriac: Rethinking Old Assumptions

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Abstract

This article challenges a series of common assumptions regarding the Syriac translations of Galen: first, about the quality of the sixth-century Syriac translations; second, about the status and role of Syriac as a scientific language; and, third, about economic forces and the motivation for excellence in translation. Finally, the circumstances that produced so many incorrect assumptions, and permitted them to persist for so long, are briefly discussed.

Keywords

Galen – Graeco-Arabic – Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq – Sergius of Resh ‘Aina

1 Introduction

In an important article on the crucial role of Syriac in medical history, the late Michael Dols wrote that ‘the Syriac translations of Greek medical works were the vital, although usually forgotten, links in the transmission of the texts into Arabic and, subsequently, their dissemination in Islamic society’.¹ The neglect of the Syriac sources, as highlighted by Dols, has been a consistent feature of modern scholarship.² Indeed, it has been essential to the establishing of the myth of the ‘Graeco-Arabic translation movement’. Unfortunately, the reasons for the comparative neglect of the role of Syriac in the study of medical history go beyond the circumstantial (e.g. the lack of manuscripts) and venture into the prejudicial.

Thus, for example, the relative dearth of both manuscripts and analyses of the few manuscripts that have survived has not impeded the entrenchment of a number of assumptions that could only legitimately be established through the proper study of a great number of manuscripts. The fact that these assumptions have been so readily accepted, while the relatively few surviving manuscripts remain largely untouched, should immediately indicate that there is a problem.

In what follows, I will highlight three assumptions and attempt to demonstrate how they arose and why they should be rejected. In the process of doing this, a sorry tale emerges, not only of a neglect of the Syriac sources, but also of an attempt to diminish their value and significance.

2 Assumption 1: The Quality of the Sixth-Century Syriac Translations

According to this assumption, the early Syriac medical translators, especially Sergius of Resh ‘Aina, took a literal or mechanical word-by-word approach, rather than trying to produce sensible, reader-orientated translations that reflected the overall sense, thus producing translations that were inferior to the Syriac and Arabic translations of the Abbasid period.

This is perhaps the most common assumption. For example, Lenn Goodman wrote the following about Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq:³

Recognizing that earlier translations into Syriac by Sergius of Ra's al- 'Ayn and Ayyūb of Edessa were flawed, sometimes unintelligible, he redid these as well. As al-Şafadī long after pointed out, the old translators tended to proceed word by word ... Often the early workers would simply set down transliterations; their attempts to mimic dead metaphors and preserve Greek syntax made their translations opaque. Ḥunayn recognized the sentence as the unit of meaning and translated *ad sensum* ... He struggled to create an Arabic and Syriac technical vocabulary.

And, in the same volume, Haskell Isaacs wrote:⁴

To evaluate briefly the importance of Ḥunayn's role as a transmitter of knowledge, it is important to know that Arabic scientific knowledge, until Ḥunayn's time, was not only meagre but also lacked the terminology which is so essential for the transmission of thought. Although the translation of Greek material into Syriac began in the first half of the sixth Christian century, most of such translations were of inferior quality.

This, of course, raises one very important question—how could they have reached such conclusions?

The Syriac Galen Palimpsest is one of the most extensive surviving Syriac medical texts. It has been known about since the 1920s,⁵ but remains unpublished—indeed, its contents are still in the process of being identified, although it appears to contain Sergius's translation of Galen's *Book of Simple Drugs*.⁶ Another extensive surviving manuscript is bl Add. 14,661, again containing books 6–8 of Galen's *Book of Simple Drugs*, part of which was published in 1885⁷—this still awaits a full edition and modern translation.⁸ The text of the other British Library leaves (bl Add 17,156, ff. 13–15) were published in 1870,⁹ but nothing further appeared until John Wilkins and I published an analysis of bl Add 17,156, f. 15 in 2013.¹⁰ The Galenic fragments identified by Schleifer in Budge's Syriac *Book of Medicines* have not been subjected to a systematic analysis, although I have published one important example.¹¹ I could go on and adduce further examples, but the point is clear enough—virtually no one has actually read the sources, most of which remain unpublished.¹²

Until the surviving Syriac medical manuscripts have been published and properly analysed, we cannot know whether the translations of Sergius were more mechanical or idiomatic, and how they compared to the later Abbasid period translations (but see below for some preliminary observations). It is clear, therefore, that it was simply impossible for the line of argument epitomised by the above statements of Goodman and Isaacs to have been made on a sound basis. How could anyone make such pronouncements about the relative quality of Sergius's medical translations, when the Syriac texts themselves have not been analysed?

More work has been done on Sergius's non-medical translation activity.¹³ Interestingly, in his analysis of Sergius's translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On the Universe*, Adam McCollum explains how Sergius avoids a 'formal equivalence between individual Greek and Syriac words, as well as Syriac word order mimicking the Greek'—indeed, 'Sergius is more concerned with the content and the sense of the Greek text and, therefore, offers (his translation)

in good Syriac form'.¹⁴ It is not unreasonable to suggest that Sergius was as competent a medical translator as he was a philosophical translator.

This raises another question—where did the very commonly-held negative assumptions about Sergius come from, if not from actually reading the texts? It is clear that Goodman derived his argument from a review written by Franz Rosenthal, in which Rosenthal cites the fourteenth-century historian al-Ṣafadī's observations on the contrast between Ḥunayn and his predecessors. The problem here is that al-Ṣafadī is referring to contrasts with the early ninth-century Arabic translations, not the sixth-century Syriac ones.¹⁵ And, incidentally, in the one case where we can test al-Ṣafadī's assertion, it turns out that he was not correct in ascribing a literal method to the earlier Arabic translators (in this case, al-Biṭrīq).¹⁶

It is well known that Ḥunayn himself was not shy in promoting his own translations at the expense of previous efforts. Regarding Sergius, Ḥunayn takes a rather dim view of most of his translations, but concedes that he improved over time—particularly following his education in Alexandria.¹⁷ A typical example, drawn from Ḥunayn's *Risāla*,¹⁸ is this assessment regarding Sergius's translation of Galen's *Uses of the Parts of the Body*: 'Sergius al-Ra'sī has translated it into Syriac, but 'الراسي الى السريانية ترجمة رديئة' poorly'.¹⁹ Such statements may be sincere on Ḥunayn's part, and may result from the changes Syriac experienced in the three and a half centuries that separated Sergius and Ḥunayn (on which, see below). But it is also likely that self-promotion, with its accompanying financial benefits, was a significant motivation for such remarks.

Recent research by Joshua Olsson has demonstrated that this negative view of Sergius was not ubiquitous among Ḥunayn's contemporaries. Charting the development of the legend of Ḥunayn, Olsson assembled the relevant sources, beginning around a century after Ḥunayn with Ibn Juljul (944–c. 994ce) and ending with the thirteenth-century biographers.²⁰ Interestingly, it is not until the account of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah (1203–1270ce) that we read explicit exaltations of Ḥunayn in which the efforts of Sergius are denigrated. For example:²¹

سرجس الراسي من اهل مدينة راس العين نقل كتباً كثيرة وكان متوسطاً في النقل وكان حنين يصلح نقله لما وجد باصلاح حنين فهو الجيد وما وجد غير مصلح فهو وسط

Sergius al-Ra'siy, from the people of the city of Ra's al-'Ayn, translated many books and he was mediocre in translation. And Ḥunayn used to improve his translation. When it is found with the improvement of Ḥunayn, then it is the good one, and what is found unimproved is mediocre.

Significantly, previous accounts tended to assert that Ḥunayn was preeminent amongst his own generation.²² Moreover, in terms of accounts that, according to Olsson, can be said to be more or less contemporary with Ḥunayn, the emphasis is again on Ḥunayn as preeminent amongst the early Abbasid translators,²³ and especially expert in the works of Galen.²⁴ Sergius is conspicuous by his absence.

The exception is a first-hand report by Yūsuf b. Ibrāhim b. al-Dāya, which is preserved by three thirteenth-century writers: Ibn al-Qiftī (c. 1172–1248ce), Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, and Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286ce). In this account, Ḥunayn initially falls out of favour with the medical

establishment in Baghdad, only to later win them over with his brilliance as a translator of Galen.²⁵ The Syriac version, preserved in Bar Hebraeus's *Chronography*, reads:²⁶

And he (i.e. Ḥunayn) departed weeping. And he went to the land of the 'Romans'.²⁷ And he was there until he had learnt the Greek language thoroughly. And he was able to translate texts from Greek into Syriac, and from Syriac into Saracen (i.e. Arabic). And he returned again to Baghdad in the appearance of a Greek.²⁸ And he entered before Gabriel, the head of the physicians, son of Bokhtīshō. And when he (i.e. Gabriel) had tested his (i.e. Ḥunayn's) knowledge, he greatly honoured him and he named him 'Our master Ḥunayn'. And he said to those at hand, 'If this one lives, the world will not leave any memorial for Sergius of Resh 'Aina'.

Crucially, although Jibrā'īl b. Bukhtīshū' exalts Ḥunayn and states that he will eclipse Sergius, his exaltation of Ḥunayn contains no criticism of Sergius. Indeed, for the passage to have its intended effect, Sergius's own reputation must have remained intact and of significance. Given this, the negative view of Sergius presented by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah would seem to be an exception rather than the rule in medieval medical historiography.²⁹ Unfortunately, it appears that the combination of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's negative comparison and Ḥunayn's own statements in his *Risāla* has led to the predominantly negative view of Sergius among modern scholars described above.

Even though our knowledge of the Syriac medical texts at this time is still primitive, there are already a number of reasons to suppose that Sergius was a much better medical translator than is often assumed—I will mention now, briefly, four of the more pertinent reasons.

First, there is the testimony of Sergius himself, who discusses his approach to the translation of Galen's works in his introductory work on the Purpose of Aristotle's *Categories*, addressed to Theodore:³⁰

When, therefore, we were translating certain books of the doctor Galen from Greek into Syriac, I, on the one hand, was translating, you, on the other hand, were writing after me while you were amending the Syriac words in accordance with the requirements of the idiom of this language.

In his discussion of this passage, Henri Hugonnard-Roche rejects the notion that this refers to problems with Sergius's style or linguistic abilities. Rather, it reflects a two-stage translation process, the first of which was oral and concerned with properly reflecting the Greek text, while the second improved the style of the Syriac in the process of committing the oral stage to writing.³¹ For McCollum, therefore, this places Sergius's translation method in the continuum between the free translations of the fourth and fifth centuries and the more literal translations of the seventh century. Sergius's approach thus reflects the status of Greek as a language of prestige while still showing a concern for Syriac idiom.³² This would go some way in accounting for Ḥunayn's usual negative perception of Sergius's translations. While both Sergius and Ḥunayn would have shared a concern for Syriac idiom, only Sergius would have worked in a context in which Greek was a prestige language, and thus aimed, through his translations, to facilitate a better engagement with the Greek text among his target audience—something no longer necessary by the Abbasid period (see below, on the differing socio-linguistic contexts).

It is clear, therefore, that, contrary to what is often assumed, Sergius did indeed use a two-stage translation process, with the aim of producing a reader-orientated translation that took Syriac idiom into account, hence the phrase ‘in accordance with the requirements of the idiom of this language’. At the same time, however, he still wanted to accurately reflect the Greek text. It is this approach, which McCollum describes as a ‘mixture of the two well-known methods of Greek-Syriac translation’, that renders the contrast of free versus literal translation a false dichotomy in Sergius’s case.³³

That Sergius was not so mechanical in his approach to translation is further confirmed by the little work that has been done to date on the Syriac medical texts. For example, in Galen’s discussion of various types of asparagus, from *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* 57–59, the term γένος ‘kind’ occurs twice: ἕτερον δ’ ἐστὶ γένος ἀσπαράγων ... καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον γένος ... ‘There is another kind of asparagoi ... and all that is of such a kind ...’. These phrases were translated as follows by Sergius: ‘There is another kind of asparagus ... and all those that are like these ...’. Thus, Sergius only used the loanword for the first occurrence, and opted to translate the second occurrence using a demonstrative pronoun.³⁴

It is also possible that Sergius felt able to make changes for more ideological reasons. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the Syriac *Book of Medicines* contains a ‘thematic abridgement’ of the part of Galen’s *Art of Medicine* (vi 3–10) that discusses how the size of the head is an indication of intelligence, mental aptitude and memory. The Syriac text, however, speaks of ‘virtue’ and ‘evil’ where the Greek text speaks of ἀγχίνοια ‘quick wittedness’ and βραδυτῆς διανοίας ‘slowness of thought’, thus replacing intelligence with morality.³⁵ Of course, we cannot be certain that it was Sergius’s translation that was abridged in the Syriac *Book of Medicines*, although there are good reasons for thinking that it was.³⁶ Nevertheless, regardless of whose translation was used, it is clear that the text has, to a certain extent, been ‘Christianised’.

More examples could be adduced, but the above is sufficient to demonstrate that to label Sergius as mechanical in his translation activities, and as a poor translator who was insensitive to the needs of his audience, would not do justice to the complexity of the situation. Second, there is the testimony of Sergius’s contemporaries and near contemporaries, principally the anonymous source used by the sixth-century Pseudo-Zachariah, which states:³⁷

And this man was eloquent, and he was practised in the study of many books of the Greeks and in the learning of Origen. And for a certain time, in Alexandria, he had studied for himself the interpretation of the books of other teachers—and he knew Syriac, both reading and speaking—and traditions of medicine. And, of his own accord, he was a believer, as both the Prologue and the very fitting Translation of Dionysius that he made, and the discourse that was made by him concerning faith in the days of the renowned faithful bishop Peter, bear witness.

The context in Pseudo-Zachariah, in which this excerpt occurs, is very antagonistic towards Sergius (see below). A careful analysis makes it clear that this passage was excerpted from another source, which was much more positive towards Sergius.³⁸ This would suggest that, in his own lifetime, Sergius’s learning, scholarly abilities, and prowess as a translator, were very much appreciated and acknowledged, to such an extent that the hostile Pseudo-Zachariah was unable to deny them—thus his attack against Sergius had to focus elsewhere (see below). It is

highly unlikely, therefore, that Sergius's contemporaries shared Ḥunayn's opinion of the quality of Sergius's work.

Third, the criticism that Sergius relied too much on transliteration (*pace* Goodman) fails to grasp the specific socio-linguistic context in which he lived. Sebastian Brock has discussed the changes that occurred between the age of Sergius, in the sixth century, and the age of Ḥunayn, in the ninth century, by which time Greek 'no longer enjoyed the importance and prestige that it had formerly had'.³⁹ Using transliterations would have made sense in Sergius's day, when the Greek language was still highly esteemed and Sergius's readers would have wanted to be able to engage with the Greek text. In this sense, the purpose of Sergius's translations very much differed from that of Ḥunayn, as the latter's readers would have had much less interest, if any, in Greek.⁴⁰ Furthermore, for technical terminology, especially botanical terms and such like, retaining a working knowledge of the Greek terminology would have been more important for Sergius's readers than for Ḥunayn's, for whom Greek was probably unintelligible. Also, as Brock observes, it is worth keeping in mind that, in the period between Sergius and Ḥunayn, 'the Syriac lexicon had been hugely enriched by a vast number of new word formations and neologisms'.⁴¹ In other words, Ḥunayn simply had more lexical tools at his disposal.

Fourth, it is likely that Ḥunayn was more dependent on Sergius than he admitted. This is in respect of both his general approach and the extent to which he relied on Sergius's translations. In terms of general approach, Brock notes that 'Ḥunayn's own ideal of translation practice in fact had more in common with that of Sergius than with that of the seventh-century translators and revisers'.⁴² In terms of his use of Sergius's work, Peter Pormann has noted that, while 'Ḥunayn grasped the nuances of the Greek source text much better than Sergius and expressed them with a greater level of differentiation', he is still 'far more indebted to Sergius' efforts than one would guess from Ḥunayn's own account of how he rendered Galen into Syriac and Arabic'.⁴³

In view of the above, we can correct the first assumption thus: the early Syriac medical translators took an approach to translation that satisfied the demands of the context in which they worked, seeking a balance between the high status afforded to the Greek texts and the demands of the Syriac language, and with a pragmatic use of Greek loanwords; their translations proved to be immensely useful for the later Syriac and Arabic translations produced in the Abbasid period.⁴⁴

3 Assumption 2: The Status and Role of Syriac as a Scientific Language

According to this assumption, Syriac was superseded by Arabic as the language of science and only functioned, in the Abbasid period, as a link between Greek and Arabic.

The latter point is perhaps most easily observable in the work of Dimitri Gutas. The following quotation is instructive for establishing the general tone of his analysis:⁴⁵

The Graeco-Syriac translations ... were not subjected to keen criticism and demand for precision. This is best indicated by Ḥunayn's sharp criticism of earlier Syriac translations in his *Risāla*, something which is clearly not self-promotion. It is therefore inaccurate to say or infer that Greek culture "flourished" in the monasteries and Christian centers before and during the first century of Islam, and that the Graeco-Arabic translation movement simply drew upon the pre-existing knowledge of Greek of the Christians.

The translators were forced to improve their knowledge of Greek beyond the level of previous Syriac scholarship ... The Greek of the Syriac schools was not sufficient for the new standards required by the rich sponsors of the translations, and translators accordingly invested time and effort into learning Greek well because by then it had become a lucrative profession.

This displays the same problems already identified in the writings of Goodman and Isaacs. For example, on what possible basis could Gutas know that the Graeco-Syriac translations were not critiqued, and that precision was not an ideal? This seems extremely unlikely. For example, Sergius's translation of the Dionysian Corpus was certainly subjected to keen criticism and the work was retranslated.⁴⁶ More problematic is Gutas's uncritical acceptance of Hunayn's blatant self-promotion, for which, as Gutas himself recognises, there was a clear financial motivation. Moreover, recent scholarship has forced us to raise, not lower, our appreciation for the flourishing of Greek scholarship in eastern Christian monasticism.⁴⁷

It is in this context that Gutas discusses, briefly, the purpose of Hunayn's Syriac translations:⁴⁸ Hunayn mentions numerous times in his *Risāla* that he prepared some translations for his son, Ishāq, from whom, presumably, he did not take any money. These were all into Syriac, as far as we can tell, and so apparently intended either for instruction or, more plausibly, further translation into Arabic for some other patron. The ultimate purpose was thus again financial.

It is clear, therefore, that, for Gutas, the most likely role of any Syriac translation was as a stepping-stone between the Greek text and a financially valuable Arabic translation.

The problem with this position, of course, is that, over seventy years earlier, Max Meyerhof had already explained that 'the Syriac versions were made for Christian, the Arabic versions for Muslim patrons and friends of the translators'.⁴⁹ More recently, the same point was made by Dols, who stated, 'The Syriac versions of the Galenic texts were invariably made for Christians who were physicians and colleagues. The Arabic versions were made for Muslim patrons and friends of the translators who were usually prominent Muslim statesmen'.⁵⁰ Moreover, John Watt has developed this further, demonstrating that the same applied to philosophical as well as medical translation activity. For Watt, it is clear that 'Syriac was still vibrant as a language of medical science in Hunayn's time', and 'Muslims who wished to take (Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh's medical) instruction presumably knew some Syriac'.⁵¹ This very basic point is immediately obvious when reading Hunayn's *Risāla*. For example, regarding the ninth-century translations of Galen's *Book of Simple Drugs*, the Syriac translations were made for Salmawayh ibn Bunān and Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh, both Christian scholars, while the Arabic translation was made for the Muslim patron Aḥmad ibn Mūsā.⁵²

Furthermore, it is clear that Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Arabic were not the only trajectories of translation activity—Hunayn mentions three instances in which his nephew Ḥubayš translated a text from Arabic into Syriac.⁵³ For example, regarding the Pseudo-Galenic text *Motion of the Chest and Lungs*, Hunayn states:

Later, Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh asked Ḥubaysh to translate it from Arabic into Syriac, which he did.⁵⁴

In this example, it is Ḥunayn's Arabic translation that was translated into Syriac for a Christian client. The fact that an Arabic version existed was clearly not sufficient for Yūḥanna ibn Māsawayh—he wanted a Syriac version.⁵⁵

In other words, to view the sixth-century Syriac translations as inferior, and the ninth-century Syriac translations as simply serving a 'Graeco-Arabic' project, misses the point entirely. Indeed, as Watt points out, 'while in a small minority of cases Ḥunayn indicates that an Arabic version was derived from a Syriac ... in the vast majority he gives no such indication'.⁵⁶ The fact is that the sixth-century translations were used by Ḥunayn and his school for the production of revised Syriac translations as ends in themselves—very occasionally, they were also used for the subsequent production of an Arabic translation. Gutas's position, therefore, is clearly flawed.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the fact that an Arabic text could be translated into Syriac again shows that Syriac retained its prestige and importance as a language of science among Christians.

There is further evidence, moreover, that Syriac retained its prestige and status as a language of science, even into the later medieval period. This comes in the form of several esteem indicators, of which I will mention briefly five.

First, Gerrit Bos and Tzvi Langermann have recently published a Judaeo-Arabic translation of Sergius's introduction to his Syriac translation of a pseudo-Galenic work.⁵⁸ The fact that Sergius's introduction was deemed of sufficient importance to be translated into Arabic is in itself significant. Coupled with its subsequent transmission into Judaeo-Arabic, this demonstrates that Sergius's importance continued to be acknowledged well into the medieval period.

Second, the recently-discovered leaf from a Judaeo-Syriac list of simples, which was preserved in the Cairo Genizah, very much suggests that Jewish medical practitioners valued the Syriac medical tradition well into the later medieval period.⁵⁹

Third, recent studies on the 'Syriac renaissance' (eleventh to thirteenth centuries), which witnessed much scientific translation from Arabic into Syriac,⁶⁰ have demonstrated the persistence of Syriac as a language of science throughout the medieval period. Watt puts it particularly well:⁶¹

The writers of the Syriac Renaissance thus certainly owed much of their instruction in the philosophical sciences to their Arabic guides and teachers. But they also made use of Syriac versions of the Greek works on which the Arabic philosophical tradition was based. According to Ruska (and indeed Baumstark), these versions had been gathering dust in one or more monastic libraries, being for centuries untouched by readers, while secular studies among the Syrians lay dormant, like a sleeping princess awakened only by a kiss from an Arab prince. Such a scenario is possible, but it does seem on the face of it rather improbable.

Fourth, as mentioned above, the first part of the Syriac *Book of Medicines* contains numerous quotations from the works of Galen. Budge's copy, bl Or. 9360, was made from a twelfth-century manuscript. We also now know that this manuscript was not unique.⁶² This testifies to the persistence of the Syriac Galen tradition from its inception in the sixth century until at least the Syriac renaissance. There is also the possibility that these texts continued to be copied and

consulted until the modern period, which would mean that the Syriac Galen tradition did not diminish until the advent of western medicine in the near east.⁶³

Fifth, as Dols rightly observed:⁶⁴

There is a general consensus that Hunayn was highly skilled in creating a new and appropriate Arabic technical vocabulary for medicine; at the same time, the adoption of Syriac words into Arabic was considerable.

Thus, I would argue that, just as the use of Greek loanwords in the sixth-century Syriac translations of Sergius and his generation should be seen as an esteem indicator for the Greek sciences and language, so the use of Syriac loanwords in the ninth-century Arabic translations of Hunayn and his generation should be seen as an esteem indicator for the Syriac sciences and language.

In view of the above, we can correct the second assumption thus: the translator's choice of language was not determined by the 'stage' of the translation but by the creed of the client for whom the translation was made; thus Syriac retained its status and prestige as a language of science throughout the medieval period.

4 Assumption 3: Economic Forces and the Motivation for Excellence in Translation

According to this assumption, the earlier Syriac translators lacked the financial motivation to produce the best quality translations. Again, this line of argument is most easily discernible in the work of Gutas, who, contrasting Hunayn with his predecessors, wrote:⁶⁵

The Greek of the Syriac schools was not sufficient for the new standards required by the rich sponsors of the translations, and translators accordingly invested time and effort into learning Greek well because by then it had become a lucrative profession.

Thus:⁶⁶

The high level of translation technique and philological accuracy achieved by Hunayn, his associates, and other translators early in the fourth/tenth century was due to the incentive provided by the munificence of their sponsors, a munificence which in turn was due to the prestige that Baghdadi society attached to the translated works and the knowledge of their contents.

There was certainly a strong financial imperative to achieve dominance in the ninth-century translation market. But this does not mean that the sixth-century translators were not similarly rewarded. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the potential for rich reward existed even in Sergius's day. For example, in their analysis of the Judaeo-Arabic translation of Sergius's introduction (referred to above), Bos and Langermann raise an interesting point:⁶⁷

Sergius goes on to say that he did not want to undertake the task out of fear of incurring 'the envy of those who are not satisfied by anything other than amassing money.' Apologies of this sort are common in Syriac literature. However, we have not found any other case where the

writer expresses his fear of avaricious envy; does this mean that Sergius was well-paid for this translation, and feared the envy of his rivals?

This would indeed seem to be the case, as the following quotation from Pseudo-Zachariah suggests:⁶⁸

But in his fornications, however, this Sergius was very unrestrained in lust for women, and he was debauched and unashamed. And he was avaricious in respect of the love of money. Although Pseudo-Zachariah is clearly hostile towards Sergius, the last part of his accusation probably reflects the fact that Sergius was richly rewarded for his translations.⁶⁹ Bos and Langermann, therefore, were very astute in their observation.

Whether or not financial reward was Sergius's primary motivation, however, is another issue. Sergius often used phrases like 'the love of learning' when writing about what motivated both him and his colleagues,⁷⁰ and he also translated texts for which the potential market was probably very small indeed.⁷¹ Furthermore, Sergius himself claimed to embrace the ideal of monasticism as the proper seat of learning:⁷²

A saying spoken by the ancients, O brother Theodore, that the bird which is named the stork at that time rejoices and becomes strong when it separates itself from inhabited land and migrates to a desolate place; and it dwells in its ancient lair until the time of the end of its life. And likewise it seems to me that a man is not able to understand the opinions of the ancients and to remain within the mysteries of the knowledge of their books unless he has separated himself from the whole world and its ways and also forsaken the flesh—not (simply) in respect of space but (also) in respect of the mind—and cast off all its desires behind him. For then the mind is emptied in order to turn towards itself and to give heed to its very self, and to see clearly those things that were written, and to judge well those which were rightly said and those which were not thus composed—when there does not exist anything that hinders him in the course of the journey, such as one of those, which are in the carnal inclination, that oppose his swiftness.

Moreover, Sergius embraces more than simply an ideal of learning for learning's sake. For him, all knowledge—theological, philosophical and medical—was part of a coherent system for which a proper grasp of Aristotle was the foundation:⁷³

When, therefore, we were translating certain books of the doctor Galen from Greek into Syriac ... you asked me, 'From where indeed did this man receive the means and beginning of education? And did he acquire an abundance such as this from himself, or from another man—from writers who were before him?' And I, regarding these (words), replied, for the love of learning that is in you, 'The chief of the beginning and means of all education was Aristotle, not only for Galen and his other fellow doctors, but also for all renowned writers and philosophers who were after him'.

It was imperative, therefore, to have proper Syriac translations of Aristotle in order to be an accomplished physician, philosopher, and theologian—something crucial in the context of the intense Christological disputes that raged in Sergius's day.⁷⁴

I would argue that, as a motivation for excellence in translation, this would have been at least equal to financial reward. Given that the consequences were eternal and not just temporal, and that lives rather than just livelihoods were at stake, however, perhaps Sergius had an even greater motivation for excellence. It is not acceptable to suggest that Sergius's more scholarly and devotional motivations mean that the quality of his translations would have been compromised in comparison with the apparently more financially motivated Hunayn.

In view of the above, we can correct the third assumption thus: sufficient financial motivations existed even in Sergius's time; Sergius, however, also possessed what I would consider to be a higher motivation to pursue excellence—a devotion to scholarship for theological, philosophical and medical purposes.

5 Rethinking Old Assumptions

The above discussion has analysed three intertwined and deeply rooted misconceptions that have dominated scholarship on the Syriac medical traditions. To reiterate, we have the following two contrary positions:

False: The sixth-century Syriac medical translators took a literal or mechanical word-by-word approach, rather than trying to produce sensible, reader-orientated translations that reflected the overall sense, thus producing translations that were inferior to the Syriac and Arabic translations of the Abbasid period. In contrast to those working in the later Abbasid period, the earlier Syriac translators lacked the financial motivation to produce the best quality translations. Syriac was superseded by Arabic as the language of science and only functioned, in the Abbasid period, as a link between Greek and Arabic.

True: The sixth-century Syriac medical translators took an approach to translation that well suited the context in which they worked, balancing the high value placed upon Greek with the demands of Syriac, and with a pragmatic use of Greek loanwords. Their translations proved to be immensely useful for the later Syriac and Arabic translations produced in the Abbasid period. Sufficient financial motivations for excellence in translation existed even in Sergius's time. Sergius, however, also possessed a higher motivation to pursue excellence—a devotion to scholarship for theological, philosophical and medical purposes. Syriac retained its status and prestige as a language of science throughout the medieval period. The decision to translate a text into Syriac, therefore, was not taken because it represented a step towards a more valued Arabic translation, but because the client was Christian and, hence, still valued a Syriac translation.

Given how obvious the above true statement appears to be, one is compelled to ask why the contrary voice was the loudest throughout the twentieth century. I think there were several reasons for this.

It is clear that the study of Syriac literature had a particularly unfortunate start in the west. An indicative example of this is the following quotation by William Wright, from a work purporting to be a sympathetic introduction to Syriac literature:⁷⁵

We must own—and it is well to make the confession at the outset—that the literature of Syria is, on the whole, not an attractive one. As Renan said long ago, the characteristic of the Syrians is a certain mediocrity. They shone neither in war, nor in the arts, nor in science. They altogether lacked the poetic fire of the older—we purposely emphasize the word—the older Hebrews and of the Arabs. But they were apt enough as pupils of the Greeks; they assimilated and reproduced, adding little or nothing of their own.

It is noteworthy that Wright's prejudices were already debunked in the middle of the twentieth century. For example, consider this statement by Manfred Ullmann:⁷⁶

But the Syrians did not confine themselves purely to the role of mediator. Being conversant with the concepts and content of Greek medicine, they had published independent writings in their own language which were then translated in the ninth century into Arabic in the same way as were the Syriac versions of Greek works.

This makes the persistence of such prejudices all the more surprising.

It could be that the reason suggested by Dols, namely the 'eventual dominance of the Arabic texts and Muslim physicians',⁷⁷ accounts for this. It could be that the initial prejudices of Renan and Wright have never fully been cast aside. Or it could be that, in a well-motivated attempt to present certain positive aspects of Islamic civilisation to an often sceptical western public, the Syriac sources have been relegated to being a foil to the glories of the Abbasid period. It is likely a combination of all these factors.

In this respect, as we have seen, the very label 'Graeco-Arabic' is flawed and probably partly responsible. Hunayn was not part of a 'Graeco-Arabic' project—he was part of a 'Graeco-Arabic/Syriac' project, with the choice of target language determined by the creed of the client. Any other approach to his work represents an (often inadvertent, I am sure) airbrushing of an entire culture from our intellectual history—and the addition of academic insult to the physical injury being inflicted on their descendants today.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Franz Rosenthal wrote:⁷⁸

The study of Arabic translation technique and the different schools of translators was initiated by G. Bergsträsser; others, too, have done very valuable research in this direction. But a renewed effort to establish the principles of Graeco-Arabic translation technique, both with regard to the syntax and, especially, with regard to the technical vocabulary, is imperative; the few pertinent Syriac translations which have been preserved should also be taken into consideration.

It is a great shame that, fully seventy years later, we are only now beginning to take his call to consider the Syriac sources seriously, and to approach them without prejudice.⁷⁹

* This article complements another, in which I discuss the scope of the influence of the Syriac sciences on the reception of the Greek sciences in Arabic, and the treatment of the indigenous Syriac and Mesopotamian sciences in the modern scholarly discourse—see S. Bhayro, ‘On the Problem of Syriac “Influence” in the Transmission of Greek Science to the Arabs: the Cases of Astronomy, Philosophy and Medicine’, *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 5(3) (2017), pp. 211–227. The research presented here was read at two conferences: First, *Galen in Translation*, which was organised by Tzvi Langermann and Gerrit Bos and was held at the Bar-Ilan University Faculty of Medicine in the Galilee (Safed, Israel) in 2012; and, second, *Medical Translators at Work: Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Translations in Dialogue*, which was organised by Matteo Martelli, Oliver Overwien and Christina Savino and was held at the Humboldt University (Berlin) in 2014. I would like to thank Matteo Martelli for his kind invitation to contribute to this volume, as well as for his helpful remarks on an earlier draft. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and Aaron M. Butts for their suggestions, which were gratefully received.

- . 1 M.W. Dols, ‘Syriac into Arabic: The Transmission of Greek Medicine’, *aram* 1 (1989), pp. 45–52 (45).
- . 2 On the neglect of the Syriac medical sources, see S. Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology: Sergius and Galen’s Pharmacopia’, *as* 3 (2005), pp. 147–165 (149–152); see also below.
- . 3 L.E. Goodman, ‘The translation of Greek materials into Arabic’, in M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant (eds.), *Religion, Learning and Science in the ‘Abbasid Period* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 477–497 (488).
- . 4 H.D. Isaacs, ‘Arabic medical literature’, in M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant (eds.), *Religion, Learning and Science in the ‘Abbasid Period* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 342–363 (344).
- . 5 See K.W. Hiersemann, *Katalog 500: Orientalische Manuskripte* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1922), p. 14.
- . 6 See S. Bhayro and S. Brock, ‘The Syriac Galen Palimpsest and the Role of Syriac in the Transmission of Greek Medicine in the Orient’, *bjrl* 89 supplement (2012/2013), pp. 25–43. The Syriac Galen Palimpsest is now the object of a five-year ahrc-funded project, organised by Peter Pormann, William Sellers and myself.
- . 7 See A. Merx, ‘Proben der syrischen Uebersetzung von Galenus’ Schrift über die einfachen Heilmittel’, *zdmg* 39 (1885), pp. 237–305.
- . 8 See Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology’, p. 150. This manuscript is being edited and translated, as part of the ERC-funded project *Floriental*, under the auspices of Robert Hawley.
- . 9 See E.C. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca* (Vienna: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1870; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1968) pp

- . 10 See J. Wilkins and S. Bhayro, 'The Greek and Syriac Traditions of Galen *de alimentorum facultatibus*', *Galenos* 7 (2013), pp. 95–114.
- . 11 See E.A.W. Budge, *Syrian Anatomy, Pathology and Therapeutics or 'the Book of Medicines'* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913); S. Bhayro, 'The Reception of Galen's *Art of Medicine* in the Syriac *Book of Medicines*', in B. Zipsler (ed.), *Medical Books in the Byzantine World* (Bologna: Eikasmos, 2013) pp. 123–144. This article is important because it demonstrates how the earlier prejudices were ill founded, and yet remain very influential.
- . 12 For a fuller discussion, see S. Bhayro, 'The Reception of Galen in the Syriac Tradition', in P. Bouras-Vallianatos and B. Zipsler (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
- . 13 For Sergius's translation of the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus, see E. Fiori, 'Sergius of Reshaina and Pseudo-Dionysius: A Dialectical Fidelity', in J. Lössl and J.W. Watt (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) pp. 179–194; A.C. McCollum, 'Greek Literature in the Christian East: Translations into Syriac, Georgian, and Armenian', *Intellectual History of the Islamic World* 3 (2015), pp. 15–65 (23–27). For Sergius's translation of Aristotle's *Categories*, see H. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d' Aristote du grec au syriaque* (Paris: Vrin, 2004). For Sergius's translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On the Universe*, see A. McCollum, 'Sergius of Reshaina as Translator: The Case of the *De Mundo*', in J. Lössl and J.W. Watt (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) pp. 165–178.
- . 14 McCollum, 'Sergius of Reshaina as Translator', pp. 177–178.
- . 15 See F. Rosenthal, 'Review of R. Walzer, *Galen: On Medical Experience*', *Isis* 36 (1946), pp. 251–254 (255).
- . 16 See the very clear explanation and example in P.E. Pormann and E. Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic medicine* (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) pp. 29–31.
- . 17 J.C. Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq on His Galen Translations* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2016) p. xv.
- . 18 Full title: رسالة حنين بن اسحق الى علي بن يحيى في ذكر ما ترجم من كتب جالينوس بعلمه و بعض ما لم
The Epistle of Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq to 'Ali Ibn Yaḥya concerning those of Galen's books' that have been translated, to his knowledge, and some of those that are not translated'. The most recent edition, with English translation, is Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*. For the previous edition, with German translation, see G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1925).
- . 19 See Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 62–63.

- . 20 J.T. Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq in Contemporaneous and Later Sources’, *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 3 (2016), pp. 29–55.
- . 21 Text according to A. Müller (ed.), *Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a (d. 1270). ‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’ i* (Cairo: al-Matba‘ah al-Wahbīyah, 1882), p. 204; see Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology’, p. 153. See also the quotation given by Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn’, pp. 34–35.
- . 22 See Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn’, pp. 32–36.
- . 23 Thus Abū Ma‘shar (d. 886ce); see Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn’, pp. 37–39.
- . 24 Thus Ibn al-Munajjim (perhaps d. 888–889ce); see Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn’, pp. 42–43.
- . 25 See Olsson, ‘The Reputation of Ḥunayn’, pp. 39–41.
- . 26 Text according to E.A.W. Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l Faraj the son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician commonly known as Bar Hebraeus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), vol. 2, p. 53v; see Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology’, p. 154. It is likely that Bar Hebraeus’s account was based on that of Ibn al-Qiftī.
- . 27 I.e. to the Byzantine Empire, probably an anachronistic reference to Alexandria.
- . 28 I.e. having gained proficiency in Greek.
- . 29 Ḥ: Thus Bar Hebraeus, in another passage probably derived from Ibn al-Qiftī, states ‘And there were also excellent Syrian physicians, such as Sergius of Resh ‘Aina who first translated medical texts from Greek into Syriac’; see Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l Faraj*, vol. 2, p. 21r; Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology’, p. 153.
- . 30 The above excerpt is taken from Birmingham Mingana syr. 606, fol. 52r, a scan of which was kindly sent to me by Daniel King. An English translation was previously published in S.P. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature* (Kottayam: St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1997), p. 202; a French translation was published in Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d’ Aristote*, p. 168. See below for a brief discussion of what follows this excerpt.
- . 31 Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d’ Aristote*, p. 134.
- . 32 McCollum, ‘Greek Literature in the Christian East’, p. 23.
- . 33 McCollum, ‘Greek Literature in the Christian East’, p. 23; see also McCollum’s discussion of the dichotomy of free versus literal translation on pp. 30–31. It is also worth keeping in mind that Ḥunayn himself also employed two different translation styles, one more literary and less literal, and the other more precise but not overly literal. His choice of style was determined by the preferences of his clients, who themselves would sometimes revise his translations—see Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. xvi–xvii.
- . 34 For full details, see Wilkins and Bhayro, ‘The Greek and Syriac Traditions’, p. 97.

- . 35 See Bhayro, ‘The Reception of Galen’s *Art of Medicine*’, pp. 133–134.
- . 36 According to Ḥunayn, Galen’s *Art of Medicine* was translated from Greek into Syriac by Sergius, Ibn Saḥdā, Job of Edessa and himself—see Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 12–13; Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Ishāq*, pp. 5–6. I will discuss the sources of the Galenic excerpts in the Syriac *Book of Medicines* in another paper.
- . 37 For the text of Pseudo-Zachariah’s discussion of Sergius, see E.W. Brooks (ed.), *Historia ecclesiastica: Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta ii* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1921) pp. 135–138. For a recent English translation, which is slightly different from the one I give here, see G. Greatrex, C. Horn and R. Phenix, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011) pp. 368–369.
- . 38 I discuss this point in more detail in a forthcoming biography of Sergius.
- . 39 See S.P. Brock, ‘Changing Fashions in Syriac Translation Technique: the Background to Syriac Translations under the Abbasids’, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 4 (2004), pp. 3–14 (7).
- . 40 See J.W. Watt, ‘Why Did Ḥunayn, the Master Translator into Arabic, Make Translations into Syriac? On the Purpose of the Syriac Translations of Ḥunayn and his Circle’, in J.J. Scheiner and D. Janos (eds.), *The Placeto Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdād, 750–1000 c.e.* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2014) pp. 363–388 (367); J.W. Watt, ‘The Syriac Translations of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq and their Precursors’, in M. Tamcke and S. Grebenstein (eds.), *Geschichte, Theologie und Kultur des syrischen Christentums. Beiträge zum 7. Deutschen Syrologie-Symposium in Göttingen, Dezember 2011* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014) pp. 423–445 (443).
- . 41 Brock, ‘Changing Fashions’, p. 9.
- . 42 Brock, ‘Changing Fashions’, p. 9.
- . 43 See S. Bhayro, R. Hawley, G. Kessel and P.E. Pormann, ‘The Syriac Galen Palimpsest: Progress, Prospects and Problems’, *jss* 58 (2013), pp. 131–148 (143). In reference to the specific example discussed there, Pormann notes ‘Ḥunayn clearly drew on Sergius in quite significant ways, and at times his contribution is limited to shortening and simplifying the diction’.
- . 44 This statement will need to be tested by means of a thorough analysis of the Syriac material—the above examples are the first fruits of this process.
- . 45 D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 138.
- . 46 See the discussion in McCollum, ‘Greek Literature in the Christian East’, pp. 25–27.
- . 47 See, for example, A.H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); more recently,

see H. Takahashi, 'Syriac as the Intermediary in Scientific Graeco-Arabica: Some Historical and Philological Observations', *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3 (2015), pp. 66–97 (83–84).

- . 48 Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 139.
- . 49 M. Meyerhof, 'New Light on Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq and his Period', *Isis* 8 (1926), pp. 685–724 (711); see also Bhayro and Brock, 'The Syriac Galen Palimpsest', pp. 41–42.
- . 50 Dols, 'Syriac into Arabic', p. 48.
- . 51 Watt, 'Why Did Ḥunayn', p. 367.
- . 52 See Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 68–69. For more information on these personalities, see Meyerhof, 'New Light on Ḥunayn', pp. 715, 717–719; Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 138, 148–149, 151–152.
- . 53 See Dols, 'Syriac into Arabic', p. 48.
- . 54 Text and translation according to Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 52–53; compare Bergsträsser, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, p. 24.
- . 55 See also the remarks in Watt, 'Why Did Ḥunayn', pp. 365–366.
- . 56 Watt, 'Why Did Ḥunayn', pp. 365–366.
- . 57 Watt also explicitly critiques Gutas's position regarding the context and purpose of the Abbasid period Syriac translations—see Watt, 'Why Did Ḥunayn', pp. 382–383.
- . 58 G. Bos and Y.Tz. Langermann, 'The Introduction of Sergius of Rēsh 'ainā to Galen's Commentary on Hippocrates' *On Nutriment*', *jss* 54 (2009), pp. 179–204.
- . 59 See S. Bhayro, 'A Judaeo-Syriac Medical Fragment from the Cairo Genizah', *as* 10 (2012), pp. 153–172; S. Bhayro, 'Remarks on the Genizah Judaeo-Syriac Fragment', *as* 12 (2014), pp. 143–153; S. Bhayro, 'The Judaeo-Syriac Medical Fragment from the Cairo Genizah: A New Edition and Analysis', in L. Lehmhaus and M. Martelli (eds.), *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017) 272–300; S. Bhayro, 'Judeo-Syriac', in L. Khan and A. Rubin (eds.), *Handbook of Jewish Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) pp. 630–633.
- . 60 See Takahashi, 'Syriac as the Intermediary', p. 74.
- . 61 J.W. Watt, 'Graeco-Syriac Tradition and Arabic Philosophy in Bar Hebraeus', in H. Teule, C.F. Tauwinkl, B. ter Haar Romeny and J. van Ginkel (eds.), *The Syriac Renaissance* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010) pp. 123–133 (132); for a general introduction to the Syriac renaissance, see H. Teule, 'The Syriac Renaissance', in H. Teule, C.F. Tauwinkl, B. ter Haar Romeny and J. van Ginkel (eds.), *The Syriac Renaissance* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010) pp. 1–30.
- . 62 See S. Brock, 'The Contributions of Philippe Gignoux to Syriac Studies', in R. Gyselen and C. Jullien (eds.), *Maître pour l'Éternité: Florilège offert à Philippe Gignoux pour son 80e anniversaire* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes,

2011) pp. 97– 108 (101–102). See also the list given by Grigory Kessel in Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq*, pp. 181–183; Bhayro, ‘Syriac Medical Terminology’, p. 151.

- . 63 The survival of a small number of Syriac scientific manuscripts, in comparison with the more numerous Arabic scientific manuscripts, is probably more to do with the contrasting fortunes of the Christian and Islamic communities in the near east than a decline in the prestige of Syriac among eastern Christians.
- . 64 Dols, ‘Syriac into Arabic’, pp. 46–47.
- . 65 Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 138.
- . 66 Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 141.
- . 67 Bos and Langermann, ‘The Introduction of Sergius of Rēsh ‘ainā’, p. 181.
- . 68 Text from Brooks, *Historia ecclesiastica*, p. 136; compare the English translation in Greatrex, Horn and Phenix, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, p. 369.
- . 69 Notwithstanding the fact that such accusations of sexual and financial impropriety are de rigueur.
- . 70 E.g., in his introduction to book six of Galen’s *Book of Simple Drugs*—see Bhayro and Brock, ‘The Syriac Galen Palimpsest’, pp. 38–39; see also below.
- . 71 Hence his plea for his contemporaries not to neglect the first part of Galen’s *Book of Simple Drugs*, which he had almost certainly translated—see Bhayro and Brock, ‘The Syriac Galen Palimpsest’, p. 40.
- . 72 Text according to Mingana syr. 606, fol. 52r; cf. Brock, *A Brief Outline*, p. 202, and Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d’Aristote*, p. 167. I discuss this passage in more detail in S. Bhayro, ‘Sergius of Reš ‘Ayna’s Syriac Translations of Galen: Their Scope, Motivation and Influence’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 26 (2016 [dated 2012]), pp. 121–128.
- . 73 Text according to Mingana syr. 606, fol. 52r-v; cf. Brock, *A Brief Outline*, pp. 202–203, and Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d’Aristote*, p. 168; see also Takahashi, ‘Syriac as the Intermediary’, p. 84.
- . 74 For which, see V.L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- . 75 W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894) pp. 1–2.
- . 76 M. Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), p. 16.
- . 77 Dols, ‘Syriac into Arabic’, p. 51.
- . 78 Rosenthal, Review of R. Walzer, p. 254.
- . 79 There are other incorrect assumptions—for example, that Sergius was seeking to create a Syriac version of the Alexandrian canon, and that Ḥunayn accurately describes the scope of Sergius’s accomplishments—but these are not so prejudicial; I discuss these in Bhayro, ‘Sergius of Reš ‘Ayna’s Syriac Translations of Galen’. The assumptions

discussed in the present paper are clearly intertwined and have been very damaging to the progression of scholarship.