

decades, and through this collection and extension of his work, has shed a very great deal of light on these authors. I am sure that the *manes* of Pierre Grimal, to whose memory the book is dedicated, will have appreciated this gift.

University of Birmingham

KEN DOWDEN

MEDICAL LATIN

D. R. LANGSLOW: *Medical Latin in the Roman Empire*. Pp. xv + 517. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Cased, £65.00. ISBN: 0-19-815279-5.

In setting out the project undertaken in this book (a very substantial revision of his 1991 Oxford doctoral thesis), David Langslow nicely mixes modesty with ambition. On the one hand, it is a 'pilot study' for a full account of medical Latin; on the other hand, such an account is vital to an adequate understanding of the Latin language in antiquity, and has wider ramifications, not only of a more general linguistic kind, but also for historians of ancient medicine, society, and culture. It is 'just a beginning', but a beginning which intends to provide a descriptive framework for future studies, and which is certainly not afraid to come to some firm conclusions alongside the more tentative working hypotheses proposed.

L.'s modesty derives, in part, from the fact that the bulk of the book consists of a clearly focused, detailed linguistic analysis of just four Latin medical texts by four authors: Aulus Cornelius Celsus and Scribonius Largus, both writing in first-century A.D. Rome (though from divergent social, if not linguistic, positions), and Theodorus Priscianus and Cassius Felix, both writing in late antique North Africa, and probably more similarly socially (but not linguistically) located. This, of course, leaves out a very large amount of Latin medical literature (though other texts are certainly not entirely excluded from view), but the choice of pairs of authors situated at either end of the Roman imperial period allows for chronological comparison and suggestions about intervening change. Moreover, even in the computer age, the kind of thorough and painstaking analysis which L. has performed here is still only possible on a reasonably circumscribed body of material.

As for L.'s ambition, that I will address in the rough outline of the contents and main arguments of the volume which follows. My emphasis, I readily confess, will be less on matters of linguistic technicality than on the claims for broader historical significance. This partly reflects my own interests and competences, but also my feeling that, while the definitive qualities of this book will be immediately obvious to philologists (who are clearly the intended audience), its wider import is more likely to be missed.

The first chapter introduces both the four authors at the heart of this study, placed against the background of almost the entire corpus of surviving Latin medical literature up to the end of the sixth century A.D., and the notions of the technical term, terminology, and language which also play a central rôle in the whole enterprise. L. understands the essence of the latter—the technical language—to reside in the former—in its special lexicon—and the subsequent chapters are organized on this basis. They examine the different ways in which terms have been created for, or acquired by, this specialist vocabulary in the case of medical Latin in the Roman Empire; only the final chapter ventures beyond the lexical domain into the related

areas of syntax and style. These means of term-formation do, however, constitute part of the distinctiveness of the medical lexicon itself, and they also contribute to L.'s ongoing argument that medical Latin is comparable, in a structural sense, with, say, medical English: that there is at least one ancient technical language which broadly conforms with patterns already established for modern ones.

So, for L., 'medical Latin' denotes something more than simply the sum of medical texts devoted to medicine. It signifies, rather, a distinct variety of Latin used by those with special technical knowledge in articulating that knowledge. It has particular linguistic features, and a definite social base and cultural milieu. This L. argues from an analysis of the language of the medical texts themselves, and despite what he acknowledges to be the dominant current view of Roman imperial medical practitioners as a diverse and fractious lot, defying classification as a single 'profession' in any meaningful sense. Clearly, then, this is a point which does have wider ramifications, and needs to be integrated into more sociological discussions of Roman medicine, and, indeed, into thinking about social groups in the Roman world more broadly.

Nor is the concrete support for this proposition the only issue of wider interest to emerge from the more detailed chapters on borrowing (of Greek words), semantic extension, phrasal terms, and compounding and affixal derivation which follow: all means of term-formation, it should be said, which also play prominent rôles in the construction of modern technical vocabularies. Perhaps most striking is the fact that the amount of Greek in Latin medical discourse rises over time (appearing and presented, of course, in a variety of ways), indicating that authors, rather than being especially reliant on existing Greek words in the initial stages of forming a Latin medical terminology, and then increasingly replacing them with Latin equivalents, were most eager at the beginning to avoid Greek terms and find Latin alternatives, a concern which then evaporated. Strategies of avoidance are manifest too in the more frequent use of phrasal terms (often in place of a single Greek noun) in the first-century writers; though issues of personal preference, different cultural codes, and intended audiences are also involved in determining the overall qualities of the medical prose produced.

In the final chapter, L. particularly contrasts the 'diffuse', and often elaborate, style of Celsus with the consistently 'compact' style of Cassius Felix, but denies a linear progression between the two, as Scribonius and Theodorus Priscianus both combine, to different degrees, the two approaches within their works; and Celsus' more gentlemanly and encyclopaedic literary project also stands out clearly from the rest, firmly grounded as they are in the world of the practitioner. Of course, compactness, and the 'nominal style' which forms an important aspect of it, is a feature strongly associated with modern technical writing, and though it was not so hegemonic then, L. does establish it as an important presence on the literary medical scene in antiquity.

This brings out what is perhaps the most impressive feature of this book, its ability to deal methodically and rigorously with complexity. The multiplicity of factors involved in the phenomena under investigation is fully recognized, and analytical methods applied accordingly. The downside of this is the length and technicality of the volume, which make it very daunting for the non-philologically inclined. However, I do very much hope that it, or at least its main conclusions and concerns, reach the audience they deserve. There is much to debate here, and many debates that stand to gain from such a solidly sophisticated linguistic intervention as this.

King's College London

REBECCA FLEMMING