

Book Reviews

controllers were not alone in seeking to end such traditional ideas and practices. Women were informed by magistrates and medical men that life did exist before quickening and that any interference—not that just carried out by a third party with a sharp instrument—could be described as an attempt at abortion.

But by the 1920s lawyers and doctors were expressing their own unhappiness with the 1861 law on abortion. The statute was obviously an embarrassment to the police who recognized that abortion was largely condoned and prosecutions unpopular. Eugenically-minded judges in the 1930s wondered aloud why impoverished mothers should be punished for seeking to avoid the birth of unhealthy children. And doctors—who for the most part believed that abortion was “wrong” but sometimes “necessary”—worry that their freedom to provide or withhold therapeutic abortions would be jeopardized if they were subjected to the dictates of either their patients or the courts. It was in this context that feminists began the long march toward the liberalization of the abortion statute with the creation, in 1936, of the Abortion Law Reform Association.

This book is a mine of interesting information. Although the treatment in separate chapters of legal, medical, and feminist responses to abortion leads to a certain amount of repetition and occasional chronological vagueness, the reader cannot miss the essential point that women demonstrated enormous tenacity in taking whatever measures were necessary to control their fertility. More could perhaps have been said of the changing types of women who had recourse to abortion, and their attitudes towards the activists in the ALRA. The author's sympathies obviously lie with the organization's best known activists, Stella Browne and Dora Russell, and it is accordingly disappointing that there was not space in this slim book to say more about them. Would they have been pleased, one wonders, with the 1967 Steele Bill which liberalized abortion, but placed the process firmly in the hands of the medical profession? The line of argument advanced in this study implies that the feminists lost and the doctors won. What is not made clear is what other solutions were or might have been envisaged.

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JACQUES ANDRÉ, *Être médecin à Rome*, Realia series, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1987, 8vo, pp. 184, illus., 90.00 fr., (paperback); JUKKA KORPELA, *Das Medizinpersonal im antiken Rom, eine sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, *Annales academiae scientiarum Fennicae* 45, Helsinki, Finnish Academy of Sciences, 1987, 8vo, pp. 235, [no price stated], (paperback).

What was Roman medicine? The ambiguities in this apparently simple question are well revealed in these two contrasting books. For Dr Korpela, it is the medicine practised in Classical and Early Christian Antiquity within the City of Rome itself. Although he is forced occasionally to turn his gaze further afield, his interests are firmly focused on the city itself. Even its port of Ostia is excluded when Korpela draws up his list of 315 practitioners assumed to have practised within the city limits. Professor André takes the more traditional line that Roman medicine is what was in fashion in Italy from the second century BC onwards. Yet this interpretation leaves out much of the medical life of Italy, that in existence in Etruria, among the Marsi or in such Greek cities as Elea and Tarentum, in favour of a reconstruction based on such major Latin sources as Pliny, Celsus, and Scribonius Largus. But Largus himself represents the problem of definition: bilingual in Greek and Latin, he at least studied in Sicily, and later was connected with the court of the Emperor Claudius, directly or indirectly. He even came to Britain in AD 43 with the Roman invaders. In what ways can he be classified as a Roman physician?

Professor André's answer to this question is an elegant and readable synthesis. He is rightly sceptical about stories of the first “doctors” to come to Rome, as well as about attempts to assess the acceptability of doctors in general from literary evidence. As befits an editor of Pliny, he relies more on the Latin than on the Greek sources, and Galen and Soranus get less than their due. Factual errors are few, although not everyone will agree with his belief in a “Port doctor” (p.109) if they have read Louis Robert's alternative explanation for the curious Latin of the relevant law. But, in general this is a valuable introduction to a far from easy topic.

Its Finnish counterpart is more for the scholar. Its strength lies in its use of the inscriptions of doctors, written in both Greek and Latin, to give some idea of their social position, a favourite Finnish theme that goes back to Gummerus. Its conclusion modifies the optimistic conclusions of Kudlien, confirming that there is little evidence for great wealth among physicians, and, equally, none for grinding poverty. There are few novelties here, and, in general, there is little of André's sparkle. But what there is is thorough, even if undue attention is paid to the execrable Pfeffer. The heart of the thesis is the list of physicians, which incorporates one new inscription (no. 31), of a "medicus oculusarius". Its range is impressive, from Archagathus in the second century BC to the time of Gregory the Great, even if some of the names are open to question: I doubt that Epigenes (225) was a doctor, or that Magnus (237) came to Rome. I miss the story in Galen, XIV 623–4, of the young boy who came to Rome, c. AD 150, with brilliant prospects and was murdered by his jealous medical competitors. I also append two unnoticed inscriptions. The first, of Sosicrates Sosicratis f. of Nicaea (see my *From Democedes to Harvey*, VII, p. 53), shows a Greek immigrant to Rome, the second a family of ex-slaves. A large stele in the archaeological store at the Via della Ferratella, measuring 138cm × 51 × 16, and dating to the late Republic or early Empire, bears the following inscription: L. Naevius C.I. Philippus/medicus chirurgus/Naevia C.I. Clara/medica philologa/in fron. ped. XIV/in agr. ped. XVII. Not only are the "job descriptions" of the deceased worth noting, but the size of the plot, 14 × 17 feet, is some indication of their respectable wealth.

As a collection of primary material, Dr Korpela's study is to be welcomed, and one can only admire his persistence in revising it during a diplomatic career in two continents and four capitals. Its narrowness of focus, however, and a patchy awareness of the very latest discoveries make it a less satisfactory answer than André's to the question posed at the beginning of this review.

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M. J. VAN LIEBURG, *Het Coolsingelziekenhuis te Rotterdam (1839–1900): de ontwikkeling van een stedelijk ziekenhuis in de 19e eeuw* [The Coolsingel Hospital Rotterdam (1839–1900): the development of a city hospital in the nineteenth century], *Nieuwe Nederlandse Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde en der Natuurwetenschappen* [New Netherlands Contributions to the History of Medicine and the Natural Sciences], edited by M. J. van Lieburg and others, no. 21. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1986, 4to, pp. xviii, 770, Dfl. 160.00.

This substantial work chronicles sixty years in the history of a famous Dutch hospital, in a period when it was held to be a "model hospital" for the rest of the Netherlands. The 770 pages (in A4 format) cover the development of Dutch hospitals in the last century, the medical history of Rotterdam, the building and numerous extensions of the Coolsingel Hospital, its administration, the hospital as 'medico-social institution', and a great deal of detailed information about the development of the medical and surgical departments, the dispensary and laboratories, and the auxiliary and technical services. There are copious appendices, eighty pages of notes, a huge bibliography and an index of personal names. The book is well produced, with many fine black and white illustrations, particularly of architectural drawings and early photographs of Dutch hospitals, most aptly placed in the text. There is an English summary of the book, and with the help of the very detailed list of contents, it should be possible to locate just about any aspect of the hospital's history in the course of these sixty years. The author has put twelve years of work into his research, and it can hardly be doubted that there has been a stone left unturned in the course of his labours in the archives and contemporary literature. He has laid it all out for us in easily digestible form.

This is the commercial edition of Van Lieburg's doctoral thesis for Rotterdam University, where he also received his medical training. Since 1972 he has been a professional medical historian, and has published extensively on the medical history of Rotterdam and the Netherlands in general. But in the case of this book, as a social historian I cannot help feeling that all this effort and diligence has been rather underused. There are virtually no comparisons (as the author freely