

## Book Reviews

generally workmanlike, the translation of technical terms, and the presentation of classical names in particular, is rather less satisfactory, and the text thus contains a number of errors and infelicities which could easily have been avoided.

These points aside, this publication still has a lot to offer Anglophone readers. The original enterprise, as its editor, Mirko Grmek, explained in his introduction, was intended as a large-scale synthesis: a collective effort to produce a series of pieces that would, between them, cover the entire course of medical thought in the ancient and medieval West in a historically integrated fashion. The generation, transmission, adaptation, and assimilation of medical knowledge over the period were all to be related to the various other cultural, social, economic, environmental and biological factors with which they are bound up. Inevitably, some aspects of this synthesis receive more attention than others, but a combination of considerable breadth of approach with sufficient unity of purpose is maintained across all the chapters, so that the book provides an overview of the subject which is both coherent and complex. Moreover, Grmek mustered an impressive list of contributors, mostly leading scholars from continental Europe, making many of the essays authoritative summaries in their own right.

Coverage is initially chronological—or at least mainly so, as chapters on Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman medicine (by Jacques Jouanna, Mario Vegetti, and Danielle Gourevitch respectively), are followed by pieces on the ‘Byzantine and Arab world’ (Gotthard Strohmaier), ‘Charity and aid in medieval Christian civilization’ (Jole Agrimi and Chiara Crisciani), and ‘Medical scholasticism’ (Danielle Jacquart)—and then more clearly thematic—with chapters on the concept of disease (Grmek again), drugs (Alain Touwaide), surgery (Michael McVaugh), regimen (Pedro Gil Sotres), and the ancient and medieval European “pathocenosis”

(Jean-Noël Biraben). This last term refers to the community of pathological conditions which may be present in a given population at a given time, and it was introduced into the history of medicine by Grmek himself, which serves to emphasize that his influence extended far beyond the editorship of this volume, and the sense in which it can be said to articulate, at least in part, a shared scholarly view present prior to the actual inception of the publication project itself.

This view, or approach, has its limits and biases—the “West” of this book, for instance, is predominantly Mediterranean, rarely reaching more northerly climes—but it also has a number of strengths, in particular the breadth of its methodological vision, which suffuses the volume. Thus this translation makes more readily accessible to an English-speaking audience, a summary of current (mostly) continental European scholarship on the history of medical thought in the ancient and medieval West; a summary of impressive scope and a distinctive flavour. That is where its real value lies.

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**Helen King,** *Hippocrates' woman: reading the female body in ancient Greece*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, pp. xvi, 322, £50.00 (hardback 0-415-13894-9), £16.99 (paperback 0-415-13895-7).

The subtitle is, perhaps intentionally, slightly misleading: while the bulk of the book deals with how women were seen in ancient Greek medicine, parts of it look also at what later (especially Victorian) doctors did with this medical tradition. Chapter 1 is an outline of Hippocratic gynaecology, using the myth of Pandora as an explanatory model for the concept of woman's “dangerous insides”; the following two chapters deal with questions of

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“reading” the body as well as the texts. Helen King examines how the healer could read the body and avoid being deceived by it, and what made reading a female body different. In Chapter 3, it is the case histories in the Hippocratic *Epidemics* that are subjected to scrutiny, with particular focus on one specific case of a girl who died after a nosebleed.

In Chapters 4 and 5, the author turns to Greek religion and myth again. In the former, she looks especially at the place of female puberty and of the *parthenos* in Hippocratic medicine, the importance of menarche and comparisons between menstruation and sacrificial bloodshed, as well as at the cult of Artemis. The fifth chapter discusses temple medicine as it appears to have been practised at the temples of Asclepius, and attempts to work out in what ways the female experience of this healing was different. (References to non-European cultures have become practically obligatory in classical scholarship. While, for example, Amazonian or Yoruba customs are fascinating in themselves, it is questionable whether they are a great help in understanding ancient beliefs.)

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with drug therapy, focusing on pain and “contraception”, and 8 and 9 with the gender of those providing treatment and care for women. These last two chapters address the apparent absence of midwives and nurses in the Hippocratic texts and later attempts of these two professions to claim ancient origins. The two final chapters investigate the use—based on misuse or misunderstanding—of Hippocratic texts in later centuries for the construction of the disease entities chlorosis and hysteria.

If there is the occasional sense of *déjà vu*, this is not only because some of the material has been covered by Lesley Dean-Jones and Ann Ellis Hanson, but also because several chapters are updated versions of previously published material. This may explain the fact that the quote by

Seymour Haden about women patients being at the mercy of male doctors appears as an epigraph to the introduction as well as three more times in the text. It may, on the other hand, be a marker for the author’s programme, for this is a book with an axe to grind. Much of its argument is constructed on the framework of the use of medical theories and tradition by male doctors as a means of controlling their female patients. It seems a pity that the considerable scholarship that has gone into this monograph should not have resulted in a more even-handed account. (To give an example, to what extent was later misinterpretation of ancient texts the result of deliberate manipulation rather than insufficient scholarship?) Classicists will find the absence of any original texts and the use of the Loeb translations disappointing, but this appears to be a deliberate move in order to make *Hippocrates’ woman* accessible to a larger audience. It will nevertheless appeal to some medical historians and in particular to those with an interest in Women’s Studies.

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**Heikki Mikkeli**, *Hygiene in the early modern medical tradition*, Humaniora series no. 305, Helsinki, Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1999, pp. 195 (951-41-0869-8). Distributor: Bookstore Tiedekirja, Kirkkokatu 14, 00170 Helsinki, Finland. Fax: +358 9 637.

This book surveys the status of hygiene in learned medicine in the period from the sixteenth-century rediscovery of the texts of the classical period until the emergence of public hygiene in the late eighteenth century. The main focus of hygienic literature was the management of the Galenic six things non-natural (air, exercise, diet, sleep, excretion and retention, passions