

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

PETIT (C.), SWAIN (S.) and FISCHER (K.-D.) (eds) **Pseudo-Galenica: The Formation of the Galenic Corpus from Antiquity to the Renaissance**. London: Warburg Institute, 2021. Pp. xv + 207. £46.80. 9781908590572.
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Near the start of this excellent volume of essays, Caroline Petit and Simon Swain share a characteristic anecdote from Galen. Walking through the Sandalarium in Rome one day, the physician overheard two men arguing about the authorship of a work apparently by himself. Galen commended the booklover who spotted the forgery and felt inspired to pen *On My Own Books* in the hopes of deterring future pretenders, a futile objective as the substantial Pseudo-Galenica would prove. But while Galen's concerns foreshadowed centuries of scholarly interest in Galenic authenticity, the editors of this volume make a compelling case for a different approach. There is much to be learned, they show, from the textual tradition that sprung up in Galen's shadow. As several contributors demonstrate, the meaning of 'authorship' shifted over time, and various medical thinkers valued Pseudo-Galenic texts as much for their content as for the name on the cover. The Pseudo-Galenica, then, are shown to be valuable beyond their authorship, and offer unique insights into what mattered to those who transcribed, translated and compiled medical texts.

The essays presented in this volume are the revised proceedings of a conference hosted by the Warburg Institute in London. Its contributions range in time frame from Galen's own day through the late antique, medieval and early modern periods, and consider not only a European context, but the crucial periods of Arabic, Hebraic and Syriac transmission. The chapters take two broad approaches. Several chart the formation of the Galenic Corpus across time and place, while others move beyond the question of authorship to explore the Pseudo-Galenica on their own terms (many do both).

Vivian Nutton begins with a consideration of three pseudonymous works of pharmacology, showing their potential as evidence for the medical milieu of imperial Rome. Véronique Boudon-Millot charts the incorporation of *Theriac to Piso* into the authentic Galenic Corpus, while Laurence Totelin explores the often-neglected *Euporista*, setting them in their broader historical context. Marie Cronier examines the manuscript tradition of the *Medical Definitions*, revealing a complex thread of origins possibly linked to late antique teaching contexts. These compelling hints of a teaching environment continue in Caroline Petit's chapter on the origins of four pseudonymous works on Prognostic. Next, Siam Bhayro explores the shifting meanings of authorship in the Arabic and Syriac traditions, while Petros Bouras-Vallianatos offers a close analysis of the Pseudo-Galenic works in *Wellcomensis* MS.MSL.60, providing the Greek text in a helpful appendix. Mauro Zonta's posthumous chapter makes a case for the medieval Hebrew tradition in reconstructing Galen's authentic *Avoiding Distress*. In the remaining chapters, Stefania Fortuna shows how Galenic and Pseudo-Galenic texts were transmitted together in the 15th to 17th centuries, while R. Allen Shotwell demonstrates how the physician Alessandro Achillini drew upon the Pseudo-Galenica to suit the needs of his practice in 16th-century Bologna. Finally, Christina Savino pieces together the puzzle of Hippocratic Commentary forgeries, while Outi Merisalo concludes the volume by considering the interrelated transmission of the genuine and spurious Galenic *On the Seed*.

This volume is noteworthy for the thematic coherence of its contributions, a unity of purpose sometimes lost in edited collections of this nature. This achievement is especially

notable given the impressive historical and geographical scope. The arguments are most compelling when rigorous close examination of manuscript traditions also reveal echoes of the medical world beyond the text. Nutton's chapter gives us tantalizing hints of Antonine Rome as an up-and-coming centre of medical education, while Totelin's hints at a growing interest in gynaecological questions beyond anything we witness in Galen. Some contributors offer glimpses at medical encounters and teaching contexts; others, like Bhayro, situate debates about authorship in a broader shifting cultural milieu. Approaches like these represent a promising paradigm shift in studies of ancient medicine. Galen has loomed large for so long that scholarship often judges pseudonymous texts by how well they measure up to him, an impulse hard to avoid even for some contributors in the current volume.

While the book may appeal primarily to scholars of Galenic medicine, there is much of value here for students and those who are new to the Corpus. As Petit and Swain note in their introduction, 'reading Galen is still a confusing experience for many' (ix). The book offers many helpful reminders of the complexities inherent in Galenic scholarship, and numerous close readings of the manuscript tradition to help demystify it. In the interests of accessibility, the editors might have provided an index of Galenic and Pseudo-Galenic works in Latin and in translation; while translating Galenic titles is not a scholarly norm, it could make charting the 'muddy waters' of Galenic scholarship a little easier for the uninitiated. More generally, the book is accompanied by helpful indices, but would have benefited from an overarching bibliography to aid further reading.

In short, this compelling volume offers both a helpful road map through the Galenic Corpus, and a timely reconsideration of the Pseudo-Galenica. It challenges us to rethink the meaning of 'authenticity' and reveals the outline of a medical world long lost in Galen's shadow.

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