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cities reveals a community of expectation, and her exploitation of jokes and epigrams can be taken even further to show the widespread penetration of medical ideas and medical theories. She looks at the evidence from the writings of famous patients, including Cicero, Seneca, and Aristides (where she underestimates Weinreich's contributions), as well as exemplary tales of great or infamous doctors. With her, we examine again gout, women's diseases and conditions, and the ethics of suicide, although her pull-out sheet of famous suicides reminds one of the lists compiled by the renaissance physician from Basle, Theodore Zwinger.

Indeed, lists are what Mme Gourevitch excels in. She has a great range of information, which she sets down elegantly and lucidly, and there will be no one who will fail to profit from it. Yet in both books, the accumulation of fact tends to weigh down the argument, and to prevent any vigorous criticism of the sources, or of the methodology to be adopted in using such a great variety of primary texts. She is at times perhaps too eager to offer modern medical explanations and translations for the classical originals, e.g. Aristides is a sufferer from "phthisie", Seneca from asthma, but neither condition can be proved beyond doubt. The evidence of Galen, which is in general well exploited, is, however, often far more complex than Mme Gourevitch suspects, and is rarely a straightforward statement of fact. Galen's overt hostility to his fellow-doctors could lead him into the wildest of allegations, even to his own detriment, and a text like the 'Simulantenschrift' needs careful contextualization. The commentary on the Oath she refuses to ascribe to Galen, despite Strohmaier's arguments in favour of an author very well acquainted with the shrine of Asclepius at Pergamum.

Above all, these two volumes are models of antiquarian scholarship, not history. The recent studies of G.E.R. Lloyd and Helen King on ancient gynaecology show how much more can be done to integrate medical ideas on women into a broader social and intellectual context, and the larger book never addresses itself to such major problems as what healers were available and how one came to be thought of as a *medicus*. The oft-told tale of Archagathus, the Greek surgeon first welcomed at Rome and then regarded with abomination, is here repeated in the context of the arrival of Greek medicine in Rome and of xenophobia, but the work of Cohn-Haft (1956) and Astin (*Cato the censor*, 1978) relates it more convincingly to political and social developments of the time, and in particular to the aspirations of Cato and his like. The great social divide between the average physician in Greece and that in Rome must also be examined far more closely than it is here.

These two volumes have many merits; indeed, they are the first for many years to treat Roman and later Greek medicine seriously and at length. Scholars will be long in Mme Gourevitch's debt for introducing them to new pieces of evidence, but, at least to this reviewer, both books go only a little way towards a proper history of graeco-roman medicine.

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ISTVAN BENEDEK, *Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis 1818–65*, Vienna and Cologne, Böhlau, 1983, 8vo, pp. 398, Ös.530.00/DM.70.00.

ISTVAN BENEDEK, *Semmelweis' Krankheit*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kaidó, 1983, 8vo, pp. 110, illus., £4.40.

Benedek's two books are intimately related; *Semmelweis' Krankheit* presents in detail the same view contained in one of the four parts of the complete biography. Both books are interesting, informative, and well written.

Much of Benedek's work is directed against claims that have recently been advanced by Erna Lesky and by Georg Silló-Seidl. Benedek argues against Lesky's view that Semmelweis's work was largely a product of what he learned from Skoda and Rokitansky. Benedek is certainly correct; Skoda's methodology did not give rise to Semmelweis's discovery. Indeed, a careful review of Skoda's subsequent publications on childbed fever suggests that he may never have accepted the basic insight on which Semmelweis's work rested.

In both books Benedek argues against Silló-Seidl's recent publications maintaining that Semmelweis's death resulted from a conspiracy between Semmelweis's in-laws and members of the Viennese and Hungarian medical establishments. According to Silló-Seidl, Semmelweis

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was sane when he was committed to an Austrian asylum, and he died from wounds inflicted there. Benedek argues that Semmelweis was suffering from progressive syphilitic paralysis and that he was insane when committed. Syphilis was, of course, an occupational hazard for nineteenth-century obstetricians; a high percentage of patients in maternity clinics were syphilitic and no one knew how to avoid infection. Yet Benedek's view does not explain all the facts. First, none of the recently published official documents relating to Semmelweis's disease mention that he had syphilis. This is hard to explain if, as Benedek argues, all of his colleagues understood the nature of his illness. Second, as both Benedek and Silló-Seidl point out, Semmelweis's illness and death were almost totally ignored by the medical establishments of Vienna and especially Budapest. Benedek claims that this was an effort to save the reputation of Semmelweis's family and of the University of Pest. But this is doubtful, especially given that the disease was fairly common among obstetricians.

Benedek's view is plausible but, from the available facts, Silló-Seidl's interpretation probably cannot be refuted. All Silló-Seidl's circumstantial evidence leads one to suspect that Semmelweis's relatives and colleagues were glad to put him away, whether or not they had good cause.

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FRANÇOIS LASSERRE and PHILLIPPE MUDRY (editors), *Formes de pensée dans la collection hippocratique*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1983, 8vo, pp. 541, [no price stated] (paperback).

Hippocratic studies are apparently flourishing. The latest volume of the proceedings of the fourth Colloque Hippocratique (Lausanne, 21–26 September 1981) contains forty-four papers, by authors from Dakar to Newcastle and from Kentucky to Romania. The decision of the organizers to restrict the theme has produced a more coherent volume, yet one that still reveals a refreshing variety of approaches to the investigation of methods of thinking in the Hippocratic writers. Three main lines of attack can be seen, the confrontation of Hippocratic writers with pre-Socratic philosophers, astronomers, historians, and even poets; philological investigation of the precise meaning of certain key terms, especially when looked at from the point of view of their linguistic development; and, finally, the use of parallels from anthropology and folk medicine. It is the last which is potentially the most fruitful, as well as the most dangerous, and not all who have essayed this enterprise are equally convincing in their conclusions. But where the anthropology and the philology are set in a firm historical context, then the results can be impressive, and Lonie's speculations on the impact of literacy on early Greek medicine are the most challenging of the whole volume. Here, a non-specialist can see the wood as well as the trees.

Yet some doubts still remain about the function of such congresses and the aim of these published papers, and it is a mark of the honesty of the organizers that the final paper is a substantial critique of many of the "formes de pensée" of the Colloque Hippocratique itself. Future conference planners should take note, if such international meetings are not to turn into introverted discussions over inessential details or the repetitive restatement of long-maintained positions. This volume is a valuable contribution to Hippocratic studies, yet it bears also the signs of an impending crisis.

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HARTMUT FÄHNDRICH (editor and translator), *Treatise to Salah ad-Din on the revival of the art of medicine by Ibn Jumay*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1983, 8vo, pp. viii, 49 + facsimile, DM. 75.00 (paperback).

In 1943, Dr Max Meyerhof, an eminent historian of Arabic medicine and a practising ophthalmologist, purchased in Cairo an old and nearly complete Arabic manuscript containing an unknown treatise composed by Ibn Jumay. Meyerhof had hoped to publish the Arabic text of the whole manuscript with a translation and commentary, but the untimely death of his collaborator Dr Paul Kraus, lecturer in Semitic languages at Cairo University, prevented the completion of the project. Meyerhof published an English translation of a section of the second chapter (*Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1945, 18: 169–178), in which he tells us that the manuscript, no mention of which has been found in printed catalogues and lists, was