

Book Reviews

health, and exerting social control. Over the centuries, legislators the world over have oscillated between, on the one hand, condemnation and proscription, and, on the other, promotion, exploitation and monopolization. There is much else in this volume to support the generalization that in the drugs context there is nothing new under the sun. For example, John Scarborough's essay on the use of opium in Hellenistic and Roman medicine, as well as establishing that fifth-century BC Greek physicians regarded opium as too dangerous to use, deals with drug fraud, drug addiction and suicide by drug overdose. Similarly, the connection between chocolate and sexual passion, which is not unfamiliar in the late-twentieth-century advertiser's art, excited controversy in sixteenth-century Spain.

Porter and Teich's eleven authors cover both an extensive timespan—some 2500 years—and a wide geographical and cultural sweep, though their main focus is on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and the USA. The quality of the essays, several of which have seen the light of day in only slightly different form elsewhere, is variable. Aside from those already mentioned, Caroline Acker's paper on U.S. physicians' attitudes towards opiates in the period 1890–1940, deserves a wide readership. Yet while many of the essays are to be commended, the overall product is not entirely satisfactory in terms of coherence. Certainly, there are some striking contrasts on offer here ranging from the spread of "exotic substances" between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, to the drinking habits of Indians in the American southwest since the 1960s. The link between such contributions as these and, for example, Judy Slinn's business history of research and development activities in UK drug houses, is tenuous. A fuller introduction might have helped draw the essays together, but while the editors raise several thoughtful points, they provide fewer than three pages, a large part of which comprises quoted extracts.

Peter Bartrip, Nene College

R S Downie (ed.), *The healing arts: an Oxford illustrated anthology*, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. xviii, 334, illus., £18.99 (0–19–262319–2).

Healing, whether medicalized or not, is one of those tantalizing domains of discourse for which no adequate language has yet developed. The healing *arts* all the more so: not only is there no language, but almost everyone feels uncomfortable about the sad fact that it has no respectable home where it can be legitimately and rigorously discussed. Everyone talks about healing and a few brave souls like Robin Downie collect material about it, but no one, not even professional medical historians, seems to know much about its intimate history or fundamental premises or axiomatic corollaries, let alone any so-called higher medical or philosophical pieties that may validly attach to its processes, such as "the wisdom of the doctors". Healing *arts* as a subject is hence particularly appealing because it suggests that verbal and iconographic discourse about healing is best left, for the most part but not exclusively, to artists when broadly constructed. As Downie writes summarily in a headnote: "the idea of healing has never been completely medicalized" (p. 171). I would add, "nor can it be".

Instead of compiling a potted history of healing, or combing the sage doctors for their old saws, Downie, a professor of moral philosophy in Glasgow, culls his own list of favourites through the ages. He recognizes the rudimentary state in which the language of healing hovers and, without throwing up his hands, simply, and to my mind unpretentiously, presents himself and his interests in this anthology without fussing about exhaustibility or pleasing every reader, dedicating the collection to "my friends in the Glasgow Literature and Medicine Group", presumably an informal network of interested parties composed of diverse professional backgrounds. In effect Downie proclaims: I'm here, profoundly interested in healing, and within my broad interests I myself serve analogously

Book Reviews

as a living specimen of the eclectic but sensitive approach being promoted in the anthology.

Eight sections entail: "the way we are, disease and mental illness, doctors and psychiatrists, nurses and patients, healing, last things, research, and ethics and purpose": not all medical categories in their own right and each with sub-sections. There is an advantage to the non-chronological arrangement—George Eliot followed by Robert Burton succeeded by a twentieth-century doctor—which provides a good read (preferably while the reader is ill); and it is a good read more than anything else one craves in an anthology of this necessarily eclectic type. No one peruses an anthology as one does a novel, but rather dips into its parts and prays to become immersed by some essential aspect of illness and health, as I did in the Schubert letters, where the 30-year-old dying Schubert, never to be healed, pleads in his last letter for more novels of the American James Fenimore Cooper. To think that the sublime Schubert tried to distract himself in his final hours from bodily pain and the annihilation of self by Cooper novels in *German translation!*

A wide choice of writers and painters is represented, along with many cartoons about sickness, and a particularly good selection of Rembrandt. Every reader will have, of course, their own list of desiderata and some will plead for restoration or substitution or addition, further proof of the living opulence of the topic. There is enough matter on healing arts for a dozen anthologies. But I doubt anyone would claim that healing arts ought not to be anthologized in this way. This personal, eclectic approach is precisely the way to make a selection—put yourself, your entire life and set of beliefs on line, and let the reader judge—and begin a dialogue among diverse professionals that academics will eventually have to construe seriously.

G S Rousseau,
Thomas Reid Institute, Aberdeen

Ph J van der Eijk, H F J Horstmanshoff, P H Schrijvers (eds), *Ancient medicine in its socio-cultural context: papers read at the congress held at Leiden University 13–15 April 1992*, 2 vols, Clio Medica, Amsterdam, and Atlanta, Rodopi, 1995, pp. xxiii, 637, vol. 1, Hfl. 55.00, \$36.50 (90–5183–572–8); vol. 2, Hfl. 50.00, \$33.00 (90–5183–582–5).

The objective of the 1992 Leiden congress from which this collection of papers derives was, as the editors explain, to promote an integrated approach to problems of health and disease in the ancient world which would try to illuminate the socio-cultural setting of the experience of pain and illness and the varied reactions, both personal and systemic, they provoked, as well as to assess the significance of this experience as expressed in literature, religion and philosophy. The intention was, therefore, to bring together, and encourage deepening dialogue between, scholars from all the various disciplines—philology, history, medicine, philosophy and archaeology—which are implicated in the booming study of ancient medicine and whose greater co-operation is essential to carrying it forward.

These two volumes, containing 36 papers of unparalleled diversity, in terms of the range of their subject matter and their approaches, reflect the extent to which this laudable and ambitious aim was realized. Their arrangement is thematic. The first, and largest, section deals with the "social, institutional and geographical aspects of medical practice" from classical Greece to late antiquity, though the Roman period receives the most attention. Among the many contributions, Vivian Nutton illuminatingly examines physicians in a variety of collective contexts, both within the ranks of the profession and within the wider social and civic networks of which they were a part; Karin Nijhuis makes an interesting first attempt to bring current medical anthropology, in particular Arthur Kleinman's model of health care as a local cultural system, seriously to bear on the apparently problematic initial encounter between Greek doctors and Roman patients; and Ralph Jackson provides a useful summary of the evidence provided by