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GIOVANNI BATTISTA MORGAGNI, *Opera postuma*, Rome, Istituto di Storia della Medicina dell'Università di Roma, 1965–1977, 5 vols., 4to, pp. lviii, 131, ix, 895, vi, 918, L.70,000 (the set).

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It seems incredible that twelve volumes of medical works written in Morgagni's own handwriting should have been completely lost to sight until 1952, when Professor Adalberto Pazzini, combing through the catalogues in the Laurenziana Library in Florence for the names of medieval doctors, should have discovered them by chance. How they came to be there is a story full of interest, a detective story told by Pazzini with verve. The manuscripts had passed through various private libraries in Italy until, in 1842, they were sent, as part of the property of a Veronese nobleman, for sale in Paris. Through this sale the manuscripts came into the hands of the famous bibliophile and thief, Guglielmo Libri, who later, to save his skin, fled to London and disposed of his collection to Lord Ashburnham, the British Museum and the University of Turin having declined to buy it. When Lord Ashburnham died and his son, to pay off his debts, sold the entire library to the Laurenziana, the interest of scholars was focused on the incomparable riches of its medieval section, the illuminated antiphonaries, the Books of Hours, the copies of Vergil, Tacitus, Boethius, and so on, whilst the medical manuscripts hardly merited a glance. So it was that the autographs of Morgagni's published writings and several volumes of his commentaries on Galen, Avicenna, and Hippocrates lay unnoticed for the best part of a century.

Not least among the treasures to be found in these volumes are the four autobiographies, which finally close the door to all the errors, myths, and exaggerations which have slipped into previous accounts of his life. From a psychological point of view these autobiographies, written in the third person, are a revelation. Readers will surely be astonished at their patent egoism, their tone of self-aggrandizement, and their open assumption of superiority. He revelled in his successes, whether in the lecture hall, his medical practice, or in his writings. He positively wallowed in the recognition given to his talents by other scholars and meticulously noted down all the references made to his books in the works of other writers. Every page number, where his name or ideas were mentioned, was scrupulously listed with something akin to glee. Yet he was, in his way, very modest and candid, the proof lying in the fact that he seldom gave offence to others. He was always affable, courteous in manner, dignified, and ever ready to listen to the opinions of those less talented than himself. On the other hand, his aloofness towards his own family was, to say the least, disconcerting. All his eight daughters were put into convents at the early age of five and left there to follow the religious life until they died. The same fate was reserved for his second son, though he made a concession to his eldest boy, who was allowed to marry in order to preserve the family name. His reaction to bereavements was equally unfeeling. After the funeral of one of his fifteen children he went straight home and gave a lecture to his students in his house. When his wife died and he

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was given the news by an attending nurse, he merely quoted a Latin verse and returned to his study to read. He was a curious mixture, a man who subordinated everything to scholarship, but in whose scholarship humanity and urbanity reigned supreme.

The remaining volumes contain two hundred and thirteen lectures on theoretical medicine, the accumulation of three years' work at Padua. If, as Pazzini points out, we have Morgagni's work as anatomist-pathologist in the *De sedibus*, his work as anatomist in the *Adversaria*, his clinical work in the *Consulti*, and his views as a scholar in the *Epistolae Emilianae*, we see him here in these lectures as a teacher of theoretical medicine. The texts, as they have come down to us, do not record what he actually said in the lecture hall, but what he wrote on reflection when he returned to his study. It was his practice always to lecture *extempore*, so that he could see and feel the reaction of his students. When we recall that these lectures mirror the ideas of a man barely thirty years of age and that they antedate the final draft of *De sedibus* by almost fifty years, it is difficult to believe that so little change is discernible between the two extremes. The same maturity, the same extensive knowledge, the same firm handling of his material appears in both. These lectures already contain the seeds of anti-humoral doctrines and the emergent tenets of modern medicine. Whether Morgagni was, at that time, fully aware of his role as precursor to a modern age remains doubtful, but all are agreed that in these lectures are to be found the attitudes, which mark the turning-point at which ancient medicine was left behind and modern medicine took over. His approach to the great figures of the past, Galen and Avicenna, was one of reverence and of criticism. He did not, like some of his contemporaries, dismiss their ideas with contempt, or like his students at Venice, complain that it was a waste of time and energy to study them. He tried to envisage what Galen and Avicenna would have said if they had been privy to all the developments that had occurred since their day, and in order to elicit as much truth as possible from their texts without distorting them, he focused on their ideas all the discoveries of contemporary science. But this did not prevent him from rejecting doctrines which he considered outmoded. He laid them aside gently, like an adult putting away a long-cherished teddy-bear. In this process he scrutinized also the theories of well-established contemporaries and subjected them to minute but well-balanced criticism. In this he appears to have made no enemies and to have acquired many friends. His extraordinary acquaintance with almost all facets of medical literature, his insatiable curiosity in the application of new inventions, his inexhaustible energy and his willingness always to learn something from others put him beyond the reach of envy and made him the object, if not of affection, at least of admiration.

Whilst the first of these volumes dealing with the general introduction and the autobiographies is the work of Pazzini, the transcription, translation, and annotation of the commentaries has been carried out by a number of scholars attached to the Institute of the History of Medicine in the University of Rome. Some parts of these commentaries have been published separately before, but for this edition both the transcriptions and the translations have been revised and controlled by recourse to the manuscripts. Each lecture is preceded by an introduction which sets out the state of the question in Morgagni's day and describes his method of dealing with the old doctrines and of interpreting them in the light of later discoveries. These and the

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annotations are due to the patient and laborious work of Professor Marco Malato, who has been intimately connected with the project from its beginning. One cannot but admire his dedication to so exacting a task, carried out in spite of many difficulties over the years. It must be the fervent hope of everyone interested in and connected with the history of medicine that the final two volumes will appear in time for the tercentenary of Morgagni's birth. Regrettably, it must be recorded, that like all enterprises which rely on the participation of many collaborators, there are several flaws in the printing and proof-reading, particularly in the fifth volume. One lecture has over fifty misprints and another over thirty. A list of *corrigenda*, therefore, is a necessity, in order that this edition, admirable in all other respects, will prove a worthy monument to a truly great man and a fitting tribute from a distinguished body of scholars.

HEIDE GRAPE-ALBERS, *Spätantike Bilder aus der Welt des Arztes. Medizinische Bilderhandschriften der Spätantike und ihre mittelalterliche Überlieferung*, Wiesbaden, Guido Pressler Verlag, 1977, pp. 205, illus., DM.420.

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The purpose of this lavishly illustrated book is to analyse the series of paintings found in two precious medieval copies of the Pseudo-Apuleius *Herbal*. These copies, one from Vienna, the other from Florence, have long been recognized as having a late antique exemplar as their source. The debate has been whether their relationship to this exemplar is direct or through the medium of a medieval Byzantine text. A parallel enquiry concerns the relationship of the two manuscripts to each other and the reasons for deciding whether or not they are independent. In the course of her discussion the author examines every scrap of evidence from the landscapes, architecture, house interiors, dresses, portraits, and so on, depicted in the illustrations, to confirm her argument, and in so doing uses comparative material from other art forms. This aspect of her work is impressive, and deserves high praise. But it may be pertinent to ask why the medical content of the manuscripts has been so lightly passed over. They are, after all, primarily medical texts. It is true that these matters have been dealt with elsewhere, but their incorporation in the present book would have made it more interesting and agreeable to a wider audience. Why, for instance, is there no explanation given for the appearance of Homer as "auctor" in the illustration dealing with the herb, peony? Surely a reference should have been given to *Iliad* V, 401, and to Paeon after whom the herb was named. And later, in dealing with the same herb, is not the illustration, showing a patient with his feet in the stocks and his hands chained, a true delineation of the normal treatment of a madman, from which a peony, if hung about the neck, would deliver him? It was a cure recommended by no less a person than Galen. The author has wholly misunderstood this and placed a completely erroneous interpretation on it. A number of other details have been similarly left without explanation. Where, for example, is "Mount Siracte in Gallia"? Is *Gallia* France? Or is *Siracte* the hill Soracte outside Rome? Do the herbs assigned to Crete and Sicily actually grow there, or are these