

Book Reviews

Most papers in the second group are concerned with technical questions. Rainer Degen gives an annotated conspectus (pp. 131–166: German) of Syriac translations of Galen known to have existed once, with valuable information on material at present known to be extant (much of it extracts in the *Syriac book of medicines*). Elinor Lieber (pp. 167–186: English) deals with Galen in the Hebrew tradition. Since European Jews preferred to read Galen in abridgements of selected works, a disproportionate amount of her paper is taken up by a not very clear discussion of the selection of his works read in Alexandria and the “sixteen books” referred to by the Arabs, and their relations. For the Arabic tradition, we have Gotthard Strohmaier and Penelope Johnstone. Strohmaier gives an admirably clear introduction to the past, present, and future roles of the Arabic tradition in establishing the Greek text of Galen (pp. 187–196: English). This unassuming paper contains some fresh insights and valuable information: Galen’s unique position in Arab culture, the newly discovered commentary on the Hippocratic *Airs, waters and places*, the probability that the commentary on the Hippocratic *Oath*, of which fragments were published by Rosenthal in 1956, really is by Galen. Penelope Johnstone’s paper (pp. 197–212: English) is on ‘the transformation of Galenic pharmacology’: the Arabs did not receive the Galenic legacy passively but culturally modified it. Pharmacology is always interesting in this respect because of its peculiar problems of language, identification, and geographical differences: contrast anatomy and physiology where, as her brief discussion of Ibn al-Nafis suggests, the scope for divergence from Galen was small. Once again, we are reminded of the overwhelming authority of Galen’s system of medicine. Finally, on the tradition in the Latin West, Gerhard Baader (pp. 213–228: German) discusses the medieval period and Andrew Wear (pp. 229–262: English) the Renaissance. Baader’s survey of a long and complex period is based on a comprehensive grasp of the manuscript material. This material reflects a sharp distinction in character and purpose between the Arabic to Latin and the Greek to Latin translations, the former for pedagogic uses and the latter with more general humanistic intentions. With Andrew Wear’s paper we return from the media to the message: he examines the importance of Galen’s ideas to the Renaissance under three topics prominent in recent research: anatomy, method, and astrology. This topical approach is justified in a final section in which all three are considered in the representative character of Sanctorius. The choice of Sanctorius, hero of positivist histories and yet (fairly) orthodox Galenist, indicates Wear’s sensitivity to the complexities of Galen in the Renaissance. Wear’s judgements are independent, and his discussion of method, though only loosely linked to the main theme, is perhaps the freshest and most provocative contribution to this volume.

The volume itself is well edited, its two indexes and bibliography contributing to its value as a work of reference. It is to be hoped that the Galen conference will now become a regular feast in the scholar’s calendar.

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CLAUDE ALEXANDRE THOMASSET (editor), *Placides et Timéo ou Li secrés as philosophes*, Paris and Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1980, 12mo, pp. cxii, 401, [no price stated], (paperback).

CLAUDE THOMASSET, *Une vision du monde à la fin du XIII^e siècle. Commentaire du dialogue de Placides et Timéo*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1982, 8vo, pp. 341, [no price stated], (paperback).

The dialogue *Placidius and Timaeus* or *The secrets of the philosophers* was written towards the end of the thirteenth century, and was still popular enough to be printed thirteen times before 1538. It is a good representative of the tradition of medieval scientific questions expounded by Brian Lawn in his book *The Salernitan questions* (1963). But the affiliations of this text are, as far as concerns its medicine, with the Arabic tradition as represented in Avicenna and, particularly, with the philosophical and scientific ideas of Albertus Magnus. The long section on gynaecology, which includes the oft-told tale of the girl who killed her lovers through poisons accumulated in her body, has little in common with the more practical *Trotula*

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texts of Salerno, and smacks of the study. A contrast is provided in one manuscript by the inclusion of questions and answers on similar topics by Albert of Trebizond, "the great philosopher", here reproduced as Annexe 3, which show links with Salerno and the writings of Guillaume de Conches. There is also in it a rare reference to a pseudo-Galenic work, *On the secrets of women*.

Professor Thomasset deserves our thanks for bringing these texts again to our attention, and for devoting to them a clear and detailed commentary. His discussion of medieval ideas on contagion, spontaneous generation, the power of semen, and on human physiology in general provides an elegant synopsis which should prove of great assistance and value to all interested in these topics. To his comments on the *mola uteri* (text, paras. 316–319; commentary, pp. 141–143) should be added a reference to Y. V. O'Neill, 'Michele Savonarola and the *fera* or blighted twin phenomenon', *Med. Hist.*, 1974, 18: 222–239; and the whole section on ideas of conception should be compared with M. A. Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the medieval theory of conception* (1975).

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MARIE-HELENE MARGANNE, *Inventaire analytique des papyrus grecs de médecine*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1981, 8vo, pp. x, 409, [no price stated], (paperback).

This valuable book collects details of all the Greek medical texts found on Egyptian papyri, lists them according to the collections from which they come, and provides a detailed bibliography of corrections and secondary references to them. Enough is given of the original Greek and in a French translation to enable the reader to find his way among the fragments of drug recipes and literary texts, especially with the aid of the detailed indexes. It is a pity that the names of authors are not given also in the French list of proper names on p. 354, but are to be found only in the diffuse table of papyri on pp. 391–400.

Dr Marganne specifically excludes magical papyri of medical content as well as documentary papyri referring to the activities of medical men in Egypt. This is unfortunate since no good work has been done on their interpretation, and a similar checklist would be very useful. Her list is otherwise complete up to 1981 (including the important catechism of P. Turner 14), with the possible exception of P. Petersburg 13, a reference in a library catalogue to a work of Theodas of Laodicea, a leading Empiric physician. The secondary bibliography is less satisfactory, since it fails to distinguish adequately between corrections, major discussions, and passing references. This is particularly necessary for n. 102, the famous "Anonymous Londoner", where the three separate sections of this papyrus are put indiscriminately together, and the list of secondary references seems to consist entirely in comments, often *en passant*, on the most famous section of the papyrus, the so-called history of early Greek medicine by Menon, the pupil of Aristotle.

Such minor deficiencies will, I hope, be remedied in a series of supplements in the form of articles, for this project is too valuable to be left to stagnate. To that end, I add three comments: nn. 77–78, P. Catal. Corcoran needs proper bibliographical citation; nn. 30 (P. Johnson) and 138 (P. Oxy. 2547) are both to be found in the library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine; nn. 41–69 (P. Antin.) should not be regarded as forming the products of a "medical school at Antinoopolis", for they could come from the library of a single physician. The presence of doctors does not indicate the existence of either a teaching establishment or of a unified body of doctrine, and medical schools, with their modern implications, should not be multiplied *praeter necessitatem*.

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P. WRIGHT and A. TREACHER (editors), *The problem of medical knowledge. Examining the social construction of medicine*, Edinburgh University Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 232, £12.00 (paperback).

It might be fairest to consider this collection of essays as nothing more than the sum of its parts. From that point of view, the reader gets a pleasing diversity, held together by the