

Danielle Jacquart and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (eds), *La scuola medica salernitana: gli autori e i testi*, Florence, Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007, pp. xiv, 592, €68.00 (paperback 978-88-8450-232-2).

The articles gathered here represent the proceedings of the 2004 International Conference at Salerno and bring to light the major significance of the Salernitan textual tradition in western medical culture.

For the historian of medicine, going to Salerno is a veritable “pilgrimage”, one which commemorates the establishment of rational medicine (p. vii): namely the *practica* of the *magister Salernus*, an expert empirical practice founded on the theoretical precepts of ancient Greek natural philosophy. At the crossroads of Greco-Roman and Arabic medical thought, Salerno did indeed occupy a unique position in the history of European medicine. It was here that, at the start of the first millenium, empirical practice, Hippocratic medicine, and natural philosophy were blended into teachings that ultimately found their way into cathedral schools, monasteries, and universities throughout medieval Europe.

This brief review cannot do justice to the wealth of erudition and critical commentary brought together in this collection. From the codicological biographies of the famous *Liber iste* to those of the *Regimen sanitatis salernitanum*, or the *Circa instans*, ubiquitous in later medieval and early modern Europe, nineteen careful papers reveal the breadth and depth of the rich Salernitan textual tradition, testifying to the existence of an intellectual and professional medical milieu in the south of the Italian peninsula at least as early as the eleventh century.

The majority of these studies are based on philological analysis of sources, tracing trajectories of important texts and often-contested authorship. Appended recensions of extant manuscripts together with scrutiny of style and content are useful aids for specific research. More importantly, the contributors grapple with fundamental questions still to be

answered about the “School of Salerno”. Was this school merely a local, geographic entity, or did it rather embody a school of thought? Was Salernitan medicine the reflection of a particular philosophy, a movement characterizing a type of medical practice? Where and when did this “School of Salerno” take root, and how did it end—and was there truly a “Beccarian” difference between pre-Salernitan, Salernitan, and scholastic medicine (p. ix)? Was the university of Salerno in fact the prototype for the early medieval university? Given the widespread diffusion of Salernitan medical literature and its importance in later medieval academic curricula, what was the role of Salerno in establishing medicine’s position in the early medieval academy—notwithstanding Frederick II’s later magisterial licensing decrees? What was the position of female students, teachers, and practitioners in Salerno?

The following are a few examples of the papers included. The first by Mireille Ausécache delineates the important work of father and son Platearius, exploring the presumptive compiler-authorship of the *Liber iste* and of the canonical *Book of simple medicines*, and tracing the context and lineage of extant manuscripts. The next (by Corina Bottiglieri) contributes valuable notes toward a future critical edition of Mattheus Silvaticus’s important *Pandectae*. This is followed by Charles Burnett’s study outlining possible Hippocratic sources in the *Pantegni*. Faith Wallis’s discussion of Bartholomaeus’s commentaries on the *Articella* highlights the innovative role of this famous twelfth-century Salernitan in the diffusion of one of the most important medieval medical textbooks. This paper also explores Bartholomaeus’s contribution to the elevation of medicine to a true *scientia*, thus laying some of the groundwork for the full integration of medical curricula within the burgeoning academic institutions of the time. The final example by Monica Green painstakingly reconstructs the story of the legendary Trota and her *oeuvre* that bear such important witness to the only

known female writer at Salerno. The prolific works of the enigmatic “dame de Salerne” and of her students attest to the far-reaching impact of Salernitan teachings. Indeed, the wide dissemination of Trota’s writings documents the existence of a “market” for Salernitan medicine, which by the twelfth century had already reached English and Norman consumers.

This valuable book is intended for the expert scholar, not for the novice medievalist or medical historian. Elaborate appendices, indices, and text excerpts supplement the collection. A more detailed introductory synopsis would make the material more accessible to students. None the less, scholars wishing to delve into the medical culture of Salerno and its labyrinth of manuscripts, now have—in addition to the classic studies of Salvatore de Renzi and Paul Oskar Kristeller—a new beacon to help them “navigate this immense sea made up by the Salernitan texts” (p. viii).

We join in the editors’ hope that these studies may inaugurate a renaissance of the history of Salernitan medicine; and that they may, “under the scalpel of philological and codicological analysis” (p. xiv), shed renewed light on a fascinating intellectual milieu, which combined the empiric traditions of local lay practitioners with the basic elements of Greco-Roman, Arabic, and Judeo-Christian scientific cultures, to give birth to the fundamentals of modern western medical thought.

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Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide (eds), *Health and healing from the medieval garden*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2008, pp. xiii, 256, illus., £50.00, \$95.00 (hardback 978-1-84383-363-5).

The connection between medieval gardens and the medicine of the period is firmly fixed in the popular imagination (see especially the works of Ellis Peters), but has received considerably less attention from the scholarly

community. This collection is thus extremely welcome, not only in that it fills what might seem to be a rather obvious gap in the literature, but also for bringing to the task some of the biggest names in medieval medicine, as well as some less usual suspects. As one might expect in such a collection, the contributions vary in how closely they focus on the connection made in the title: some deal with plants in medicine without exploring explicitly how the *materia medica* was supplied, while others are more concerned with gardens than with the specific uses of their products, and some deal with plants which may well have been grown in gardens and used in medicine, but focus on other aspects, such as their names.

The collection opens with a substantial contribution by one of the editors, Alain Touwaide, on the classical background, which will be particularly valuable for non-specialist readers, who may not realize how much medieval medicine (or horticulture) owed to the ancient world, and which sets the scene for the following papers. As an Anglo-Saxonist, I am particularly pleased to see how many of them deal with early medieval England: Peter Dendle (the other editor) on ‘Plants in the early medieval cosmos’, then, narrowing the focus a little, Maria Amalia D’Aronco on ‘Plants and herbs in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts’, Philip G Rusche on ‘The sources for plant names in Anglo-Saxon England’, and Marijane Osborn on ‘Women’s reproductive medicine in *Leechbook III*’. Later medieval England is not neglected either, with Linda Voigts on ‘Linking the vegetable with the celestial in late medieval texts’, Peter Jones on ‘Herbs and the medieval surgeon’ (i.e. John of Arderne), and George R Keiser on the introduction (or perhaps reintroduction—the Anglo-Saxons did at least have a word for it) of rosemary, not to mention Terence Scully on ‘A cook’s therapeutic use of garden herbs’, including England, though mainly focused on France. But the geographical range is as wide as the time-frame, confined neither to western Europe (Touwaide’s second contribution is on ‘The jujube tree in the eastern Mediterranean’)