

communicate in the manner of a politician. Similarly, with blindness, different conditions suggest that each person with visual impairments had to adapt to their own particular situation in Greek society.

The common perceptions of seclusion of disability in ancient Greece are here broken down, demonstrating there was no dichotomy of ability and disability, but a range of conditions defined by the society. Thus, the past should not be used to justify and explain present opinions of a modern disabled lifestyle.

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Véronique Dasen (ed.) in collaboration with **I Villeveygoux** and **S Ducaté-Paarmann**, *Naissance et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité. Actes du colloque de Fribourg 28 novembre—1^{er} décembre 2001*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis vol. 203, Fribourg, Academic Press, and Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, pp. 417, illus., SFr 120.00 (hardback: Academic Press, 3-7278-1453-5; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 3-525-53060-9).

This remarkably coherent collection of papers dealing with birth and early childhood in Antiquity is notable for the range of topics covered, from Egypt and Early Babylonia down to medieval Byzantium. If the four papers on the Ancient Near East appear less rich than those on Greece and Rome, the result of the relative paucity of documentation, they nevertheless offer useful points of comparison with the more familiar Greek evidence. But what is most striking is the variety of approaches here displayed, from the archaeological and palaeopathological evidence for stillbirths and infant burials through to the interpretation of legends of divine conceptions and births in art as well as in literature. The role of birth and young children in religious ritual is considered alongside its obverse, the religious rituals surrounding birth.

Many familiar topics are touched on, but almost always with fresh approaches. Soranus' gynaecology is discussed both as an example of the transmission of texts and ideas, and against a background of practical treatment (dealing with a transverse presentation, or when, and how, to perform an embryotomy, for instance). Embryotomy is here exemplified from archaeological finds, as well as literary texts, and its ubiquity contrasts with the legendary stories about Caesarean section. The relationship of this learned medicine to "folk remedies", amulets and birth charms is neatly brought out in a number of papers. The editor's own contribution presents a fascinating series of small statues that open to reveal a foetus in the womb. The social history of childbirth also finds a place, with discussions of the Roman laws dealing with very young children, and the role of mothers and wet nurses in the suckling of the new-born. The advent of Christianity, and its own ideology of childbirth, can be shown to have brought changes in the provision of such nursing care.

Two other features are particularly welcome. There is a very detailed index of names and topics, with piquant juxtapositions—Orbana (a native Italian deity of childbirth), orgasm, Oribasius and Origen—something not always found in the reports of conference proceedings. Even more valuable, for specialists and non-specialists alike, is a very long, selective bibliography of recent books and articles dealing with birth and early childhood. This will be an extremely valuable resource, for many of its references cannot easily be found in standard bibliographies either of the history of medicine or of classics.

This is an excellent volume that deserves to be the first port of call for anyone interested in childbirth in the ancient world, and we look forward to the publication of the proceedings of other conferences in the same series.

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