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brave but stupid, those living in hot countries intelligent but cowardly, etc.

The categorization of the same signs in medical theory and practice is investigated in chapter 4: they are used to construct psycho-physical types and observed, especially in the Hippocratic *Epidemics*, in connection with the predisposition to certain illnesses. Sassi makes much of the fact that the famous passage describing the *facies hippocratica* of the critically ill patient shows no concern with diagnosis, but it is precisely the Hippocratic author's point that certain signs are typical whatever the illness, and it would be difficult to sustain that the Hippocratic physician was not interested in providing a diagnosis. Medicine was also one of the contexts for the use of astrology, the topic of chapter 5; the need for prognosis creates a certain intrinsic affinity between the two disciplines, and the arguments used by some Hippocratic authors in defence of their art are echoed in Ptolemy's writings.

Maria Michela Sassi would have been better served if her book had been translated earlier, but even now it is good to have her ground-breaking study made available, in an excellent translation, to those without Italian. It will be greatly appreciated by anyone interested in ancient science or Greek culture in general.

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Hildegard of Bingen, *On natural philosophy and medicine: selections from Cause et cure*, translated with introduction, notes and interpretive essay by Margret Berger, Library of Medieval Women series, Cambridge, D S Brewer, 1999, pp. xvii, 166, £12.95, \$19.95 (paperback 0-85991-551-4).

Margret Berger gives us here a translation of substantial portions of the *Cause et cure* ('On causes and cures [perhaps better

translated, treatment or care]') by the twelfth-century abbess, visionary, theologian, dramatist and poet, artist and musician, Hildegard of Bingen. The translation is based on the single manuscript (thirteenth-century, now in Copenhagen) and an inadequate 1903 edition; it is accompanied by a brief introduction concerning Hildegard and the medical background, and an afterword or "interpretive essay" that comments rather perfunctorily section by section and concludes with questions about the work's "originality and authenticity". It is difficult to say for whom this volume will be useful. It appears in a series, 'The Library of Medieval Women', edited by Jane Chance, that has made available in English for teaching purposes some interesting texts; and the format of a concluding "interpretive essay", which unfortunately serves this particular text badly, is a requirement of the series. If there are serious questions about authenticity (which questions I think Berger exaggerates), it seems odd to introduce the text with an essay on Hildegard. If there are questions about originality (here again I think Berger exaggerates), we need far more careful comparison of Hildegard with her predecessors and contemporaries (especially Constantine the African) than Berger gives us. Moreover Berger's own prose is often convoluted and impenetrable (for example, on p. xi where she refers to Paul Zumthor's idea of *mouvance*, which she does not however subsequently utilize, and on p. 19, where she refers unclearly to "lexical items ... maximally different in meaning").

Although the translation is not particularly felicitous, the text itself is wonderful. It is hard to think Hildegard had completed and polished it, but the early books echo characteristically Hildegardian positions on micro- and macrocosm, male and female, fertility and fragmentation, found in the *Book of life's merits*. The *Cause et cure* is unified by a vision of the universe and of history in which disease results from Adam's fall, but the human being, given

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power over nature, can work with natural means to effect cures. There is much that is theologically remarkable and psychologically astute, such as the description of the soul's desire for, and integral connection to, the body (chapter 4) or the account, which mingles physiological predisposition and psychological dynamic, of how anger rises from black bile (chapters 3.8 and 6.1). As Berger recognizes by her decision to retain the Latin terms *flegmata* and *livores*, Hildegard devises an original classification of the humours into dominant and subordinate that adds dynamism to the account of disease.

Both because the accompanying material is inadequate and because the editor has not made sufficiently clear how much she has omitted in translation, this volume will not be of use to scholars, who will in any case want to wait for the new edition to appear in the series *Corpus christianorum: continuatio mediaevalis*. Those who wish to use this text in courses on medieval women or medieval medicine would do well to assign along with it Florence Eliza Glaze's splendid essay on Hildegard as medical writer in *Voice of the living light: Hildegard of Bingen and her world*, edited by Barbara Newman (Berkeley, 1998).

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Doreen Evenden, *The midwives of seventeenth-century London*, Cambridge History of Medicine series, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. xvii, 260, £40.00, \$64.95 (hardback 0-521-66107-2).

The art of midwifery, one of the most prominent female occupations in the early modern period, has attracted a good deal of attention from historians over the last couple of years. Fascinating material has been discovered, illuminating the lives, the work and the socio-economic standing of

this group of working women. Several studies have challenged long-held beliefs such as, for example, that midwives were all poor, incompetent and ignorant crones. To prove these old and stale prejudices wrong and "redress the injustices created by many centuries of neglect and misunderstanding" (p. 23) is also the principle aim of Doreen Evenden's detailed, archival-based study of seventeenth-century London midwifery.

She shows that, until the 1720s, the time when male-midwives increasingly began to squeeze women out of practice, the ritual of childbirth was the most prominent part of a collective culture of early modern women, and the midwife was one of its central figures. Evenden was able to trace more than 1200 official, Church licensed midwives in the different parishes of the fast growing English capital. By discussing midwives' training in great detail, she proves that this group of working women was far better trained than often assumed, thanks to an "unofficial" system of apprenticeship served under the supervision of a senior midwife. She also investigated midwives' clients, a world which was hardly known. In addition, her archival records reveal that midwives generally originated from the respectable and economically better off part of London's early modern society.

The amount and variety of archival material the author worked through is undoubtedly impressive. And it is precisely her use of archival data as opposed to contemporary accounts and printed sources that makes Evenden's work so original. However, her explicit decision to base her arguments almost exclusively on archive evidence is also problematic. As the material is almost never analysed within the wider context of early modern medical world and female culture, her reconstruction of the lives and practices of London's midwives hardly ever reaches beyond statistical profiles and the enumeration of details. Other sources such as, for example, seventeenth-century obstetric literature that could have "fleshed out" her archival