

Book Reviews

The first section—pluralism in the knowledge and practices of women healers, twelfth to seventeenth centuries—comprises five chapters by Monica Green, Montserrat Cabré and Fernando Salmón, Alison Klairmont-Lingo, Jennifer Hellwarth and Gianna Pomata. The second section—midwives' strategies and conflicts, seventeenth to twentieth centuries—consists of three chapters by Bridgette Sheridan, Teresa Ortiz, and Maxine Rhodes. The third and last section—professional trajectories and intellectual concerns of university female doctors—contains three chapters by Consuelo Flecha, Paulette Meyer, and Michelle DenBeste-Barnett. In addition, a comprehensive bibliography contributes significantly to the book's usefulness.

The editors' major achievement is that they have succeeded in integrating in one volume the most representative research lines on the history of women's knowledge and practices regarding healthcare. The different approaches and the profusion, sometimes disparity, of categories of analysis are witnesses to the richness and pluralism of current research on the subject.

In general, the authors of the essays provide a range of useful and innovative conceptual tools to interpret and reinterpret sources and records. Among the most valuable contributions are the acknowledgement of the role that philological studies have in textual reconstruction and, therefore, in the understanding of women's textual production and transmission; the concept of textual feminine communities that explains the creation and use of a text by a group of women from different generations; the study of female strategies of learning and transmission of medical knowledge through the ages; the analysis of the notions of power and authority regarding medical knowledge and practice, which enlightens our understanding of the acknowledgement of the authority of women whose healing practice was at the periphery of the legitimated system; the evaluation of the historical lack of acknowledgement of women's medical practice by male professionals; and the recognition of the relation between women's

medical practice and the body: curing bodies, and curing with the body, etc.

All the eleven chapters of the book are high quality pieces of research. Obviously, as the book articulates different lines of investigation, readers may favour some proposals more than others and, may even have some minor reservations about, or disagreements with, some of the approaches. I find, for example, that the centrality conceded to the pair of opposing concepts public/private in one of the articles narrows somewhat the analysis, since it presents a dual reality where there is little room left for anything else between the spheres of the masculine/public and feminine/private.

Finally, the editors are to be congratulated on the excellence of their translation into Spanish. In my view, the painstakingly accurate translation of contents and concepts is part of the conceptual strategy of the editors and their commitment to the understanding of the historical experience of women. This is evident in the special care that they have taken in rendering apparently neutral English nouns and adjectives into a gender-specific language such as Spanish, managing to avoid the exclusion of the feminine from the discourse, and giving presence to women's voices.

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José Kany-Turpin (ed.), *Jean Fernel, Corpus. Revue de philosophie, no. 41*, Corpus des oeuvres de philosophie en langue française, Paris, Centre d'Études d'Histoire de la Philosophie Moderne et Contemporaine, Université Paris X, 2002, pp. 197, €16.00 (paperback, ISSN 0296-8916).

This volume follows the publication of the French translation by Kany-Turpin in 2001 of Jean Fernel's *Physiologie*, a translation which first appeared in 1655, almost a century after the death of the author. Up to his death in 1558 and for the rest of the sixteenth century, Fernel was known throughout Europe as a Latin author writing for the medical profession; as such he does not really qualify as a writer of French

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philosophy at all, but the patriotic general editors of this series have decided to overlook this fact. His wide dissemination after his death is due to his daughter's marriage into the Wechel family, who were prominent humanist printers and publishers; when André Wechel fled from Paris to Frankfurt after the St Bartholomew's day massacre of 1572, the first book he chose to publish with an imperial privilege (in 1574) was his father-in-law's *Universa medicina*; in the following forty years, at least six editions of this work appeared, together with many others of his dialogue *De abditis rerum causis* and his consultations. In his own lifetime, his *De naturali parte medicinae* (the predecessor of his physiology, which appeared in 1542) had also been published in Venice (in 1548), a rare compliment to a Parisian medical professor in a partisan Northern Italian market. His *De abditis rerum causis* was also much republished after its first appearance in 1548; two articles in this volume (by Hiroshi Hirai and Sylvain Matton) are devoted to aspects of it. He is therefore best seen as a writer of European significance, whose tardy appearance in the French language has little to do with his influence and posterity. The articles in this volume concentrate on a limited number of themes, omitting any discussion of the novel feature of his nosology (he was notorious in his own day for his account of "diseases of the whole substance", which are mentioned only in passing here), but addressing his quite traditional view of hysteria (Paul Mengal). Vincent Aucante, Danielle Jacquart and Jean Céard all discuss Fernel's theories of

mind and soul. They correctly stress the neoplatonist model which Fernel adopts from Ficino, show his rejection of Avicenna and the Arab tradition, and scrupulously set out his account of faculty psychology, the relationship he postulates between matter and soul through the astral body, and the links established between the superlunary and the sublunary. Céard's very lucid account of Fernel's theory of memory claims that is the most elaborate synthesis attempted in the Renaissance; I am not sure that this is true, as there are very full discussions of the same topic in the various contributions to the debate about the immortality of the soul. Hirai looks at the role of seminaria in Fernel's writings, which he persuasively links to Ficino; Jacquart discusses his rejection of the Avicennan view of temperament; Robert Poma assesses the role of empirical information as opposed to theory in his physiology.

The best documented study is that of Matton on the reception of his alchemical views as these are equivocally expressed in book two of his dialogue; he supplies a very useful appendix of relevant citations in alchemical texts. It is a pity that not all of the contributors refer (as well as to the French) to Fernel's Latin text and its terminology, through which he was best known. But for all that, this is a very useful collection of articles which should stimulate more work on this subtle and wide-ranging physician.

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