

## Book Reviews

Savage-Smith deals with references to Galen's lost writings on ophthalmology as testified in the Arabic versions of Alexandrian summaries, and Gotthard Strohmaier gives a more general account of the reception of Galen's works in Arabic literature. Gerrit Bos covers the reception of Galen in Maimonides' *Medical aphorisms*, while Michael McVaugh examines references (mostly in Guy de Chauliac) to lost parts of the Latin tradition of Galenic works (especially the *Method of healing*). Somewhat apart from this stands Diethard Nickel's critical (and largely negative) discussion of C J Larrain's attempts (published in 1992) to identify hitherto unknown parts of Galen's lost commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*.

The volume concludes with an appendix listing scholarly editions of Galenic works not printed in Kühn (though unfortunately the principles of selection on which this is based are not sufficiently clearly explained to account for the absence of, for example, Lyons' edition of *In Hippocratis de officina medici commentarii*, and Stroppiana's edition of *De dissectione vocalium instrumentorum*, or Jelinek's translation of *De anima*). There is also an index of names and topics and an index of Galenic passages quoted. The latter is symptomatic of the somewhat restricted scope of the volume, most contributions providing a rather descriptive account of the texts in question and their relationship to other Galenic works, although some contextualization is not wholly absent: thus von Staden sets the divisions of medicine as made in Galen's text against the historical background of medical specialization and urbanization in later antiquity, Bobzien discusses the Peripatetic background of Galen's treatise on logic, and Flemming draws parallels with other gynaecological literature such as Soranus.

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**Burghart Wachinger**, *Erzählen für die Gesundheit. Diätetik und Literatur im Mittelalter*, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen

Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 23, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag C Winter, 2001, pp. 44, illus., €9.00, SFr 16.50 (paperback 3-8253-1243-7).

Late medieval *Regimina sanitatis*, wide-ranging guidelines for a healthy life, contain much more than just advices concerning food and drink. In accordance with contemporary medical conceptions, they also, for example, deal with sleep and insomnia or ways of stirring the mind in order to maintain or restore the balance of the four humours. Story-telling as well was thought to promote health and thus assigned a small place in the *Regimina sanitatis*.

Burghart Wachinger's erudite and well written study focuses on just this "story-telling for health" and its function within the medieval literature in general and the German medieval literature (so far neglected in this context) in particular. The subject occupied the author for several years. His small booklet is the excellent result of long reflection. A first version of Wachinger's study was presented to Gerhard Fichtner in honour of his sixtieth birthday in 1992. Critically revised and several times modified, the paper was delivered to the Philosophisch-historische Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften on 25 November 2000.

After a short introduction, the study is divided into three main chapters. The first refers to the place story-telling occupied in the medical tradition. Several contemporary authors such as the physician and author Heinrich Steinhöwel in 1473 and the surgeon and printer Hans Folz in 1482 underlined in their medical works the positive influence of story-telling on the mind and thus on health. In particular, the so called *Tacuinum sanitatis*, based on an Arabic medical text composed by the physician and Christian theologian Ibn Butlān in the eleventh century, emphasizes the important role of story-telling in the restoration of health.

The second chapter deals with the introduction of the *Regiminas'* recommendations in literary discourse. Wachinger describes how medieval authors, by drawing on the *Regiminas'* advice concerning story-telling, managed to legitimate

literary works that otherwise did not conform to moral or religious standards, particularly certain kinds of merry and frivolous tales. Within the German-speaking areas such patterns of legitimation developed much later than in western and southern Europe. While the so-called *Mensa philosophica* published in Cologne around 1479 seems to be the first example employing these patterns, earlier attempts to legitimize similar works can be observed at the court of the Emperor Charles IV at the time of the Black Death.

That leads Wachinger to the subject of the third chapter of his booklet, Boccaccio's well-known *Decamerone*, which more than any other contemporary work reveals the relation between health, disease and literary freedom. Well-chosen illustrations complete the exquisite text. Without any doubt, the booklet is worth reading. This interesting subject offers various possibilities for further investigation in a number of fields.

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**Marie-Louise Thomsen and Frederick H Cryer,** *Witchcraft and magic in Europe: biblical and pagan societies*, The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe series, vol. 1, London, Athlone Press, 2001, pp. xvii, 168, illus., £50.00 (hardback 0-485-89001-1), £17.99 (paperback 0-485-89101-8).

The concept of a series on witchcraft and magic in Europe beginning with a treatment of Mesopotamia and the Bible has much to commend it. The cultural impact of Mesopotamia and the Bible on Europe was crucial, and incidentally much greater than that of Egypt, although systems of magic were roughly contemporary. The present book is a useful starting point, providing a general survey of witchcraft and magic with good examples of magical texts in translation. Although not actually stated *per se*, the implicit assumption of the book is that Mesopotamian magic and witchcraft influenced biblical literature,

reflecting a wider cultural Near Eastern context of the Bible, and the Bible later influenced European culture after the spread of Christianity (and to a lesser extent Judaism) to Europe.

The book covers a wide range of relevant topics, with particular attention being paid to the art of witchcraft, followed by examples of protective magic, amulets, exorcisms, and use of figurines, and other ritual forms of magic from Mesopotamia. Biblical evidence is less well attested, with relatively few examples from the Old Testament for healing or exorcism, but these are treated comparatively with the Mesopotamian material. So far so good.

There is a general problem with this work, which arises from the particular expertise of the two authors, both of whom have previously written intelligent books on related subjects. Thomsen's book on *Zauberdiagnose und Schwarze Magie in Mesopotamien* (Copenhagen, 1987) broke new ground in discussing many aspects of Mesopotamian witchcraft, with numerous examples from previously untranslated texts, both from the magic and medical corpus, and with technical discussions of the system of witchcraft. Cryer's book on *Divination in ancient Israel and its Near Eastern environment* (Sheffield, 1994) was a sensible treatment of the subject in both Mesopotamia and the Bible, which is somewhat unusual these days. Unfortunately, the present book is an attempt to cover the larger field of "magic" by presenting a less technical and more general discussion for a popular audience, but depending predominantly upon their previous respective works in related fields. The result is predictable. Thomsen's bibliography, for instance, hardly includes any work published after 1987, although the present book was published in 2001, and she gives too much prominence to witchcraft within the context of magic; witchcraft was only a sub-category of ancient magic, and not even the most important component. Cryer, on the other hand, confuses divination and magic and assumes divination to be part of magic, without considering the possibility that divination in antiquity was treated as a separate discipline and endeavour. Divination was the responsibility of the *barû* priest in Mesopotamia, while magic was