connexion with the remainder of the book, and I cannot see what purpose it serves. Chapters two to five comprise the bulk of the book and are by far the best and the most rewarding of study. A good account is given of lead mining in the ancient world, of smelting and of cupellation, and there is also much information on the lead mines of antiquity and an excellent chapter on the production and uses of lead.

The final chapter, which accounts for half the title but only a quarter of the substance, is the weakest. There is an interesting account of occupational and non-occupational exposures, and the dreadful plight of the lead miners of antiquity is brought to notice again. The section on non-occupational exposure discusses in some detail the well-known sources, water, food, wine, cosmetics, and drugs. It is interesting–as the author reiterates–that the Romans were aware of the dangerous potential of water conducted through leaden pipes and that water from such a source was more harmful than water delivered from earthenware pipes, which were to be preferred. This did not stop them from using leaden vessels for preparing *sapa*, however, and there can be no doubt that the Romans were greatly exposed to lead from this source.

Only in the last forty pages or so does the author discuss lead poisoning in antiquity, and he displays an unfortunate tendency to count any description of abdominal symptoms as lead poisoning, he also appears to have been somewhat misled by the notion propounded by some modern writers that almost any symptom may occur in lead poisoning. Nriagu seems to reason that if the disease may produce any symptom, then any symptom may be attributable to it. In fact, lead poisoning is not nearly as difficult to diagnose as some writers would have us believe, and it is not difficult to recognize accounts of true lead poisoning in the ancient literature. I would not accept any of the descriptions in the Hippocratic corpus as being those of lead poisoning, and certainly not that given from the Sanskrit *Sushruta* which is quoted at some length on page 391.

Finally, the author speculates on the role of lead poisoning in the Fall of Rome and falls sadly into error. His statements that "The one incontestable historical fact about the Roman aristocracy is that its ranks declined quite rapidly during the last century of the Republic and during the early centuries of the Empire" (p. 407) and "Ancient historical records leave ample evidence about the common infecundity of the aristocracy. . ." (p. 409) are both astonishingly bald and unsupported. The effects which their exposure to lead may have had on the Roman aristocracy needs much more thoughtful consideration than that given in the present book. Statements such as, "'Aristothanasia' must have been calamitous to Roman civilization" at one point (p. 411), and that, because of lead poisoning, ". . . one would expect the progeny of great men to be mainly imbeciles and underachievers", are those of an author groping for weak straws to support his rapidly drowning hypothesis. The decline of the Roman Empire is a phenomenon of great complexity, as historians have shown, and it is simplistic to a degree to ascribe to it a single cause.

This book is not cheap but I can recommend it if only because it brings together much otherwise scattered material and cites many references which can be followed up by those with a mind to do so; all references to early material are to translations. The middle chapters of the book may be read with advantage, but I would urge those coming to the final chapter to treat it *cum grano salis*.

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DANIELLE GOUREVITCH, *Le triangle hippocratique dans le monde gréco-romain: le malade, sa maladie et son médecin*, Rome, École française de Rome, 1984, 8vo, pp. 569, [no price stated].
DANIELLE GOUREVITCH, *Le mal d'être femme. La femme et la médecine à Rome*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1984, 8vo, pp. 276, illus., Fr. 125.00 (paperback).

With these two books Mme Gourevitch has performed a valuable service for students of ancient medicine by directing their attention to the abundant evidence available from Roman and later Greek sources for the understanding of medicine in the centuries that followed Hippocrates. Her confrontation of medical texts with the praise given to physicians by grateful

cities reveals a community of expectation, and her exploitation of jokes and epigrams can be taken even further to show the widespread penetration of medical ideas and medical theories. She looks at the evidence from the writings of famous patients, including Cicero, Seneca, and Aristides (where she underestimates Weinreich's contributions), as well as exemplary tales of great or infamous doctors. With her, we examine again gout, women's diseases and conditions, and the ethics of suicide, although her pull-out sheet of famous suicides reminds one of the lists compiled by the renaissance physician from Basle, Theodore Zwinger.

Indeed, lists are what Mme Gourevitch excels in. She has a great range of information, which she sets down elegantly and lucidly, and there will be no one who will fail to profit from it. Yet in both books, the accumulation of fact tends to weigh down the argument, and to prevent any vigorous criticism of the sources, or of the methodology to be adopted in using such a great variety of primary texts. She is at times perhaps too eager to offer modern medical explanations and translations for the classical originals, e.g. Aristides is a sufferer from "phthisie", Seneca from asthma, but neither condition can be proved beyond doubt. The evidence of Galen, which is in general well exploited, is, however, often far more complex than Mme Gourevitch suspects, and is rarely a straightforward statement of fact. Galen's overt hostility to his fellow-doctors could lead him into the wildest of allegations, even to his own detriment, and a text like the 'Simulantenschrift' needs careful contextualization. The commentary on the Oath she refuses to ascribe to Galen, despite Strohmaier's arguments in favour of an author very well acquainted with the shrine of Asclepius at Pergamum.

Above all, these two volumes are models of antiquarian scholarship, not history. The recent studies of G.E.R. Lloyd and Helen King on ancient gynaecology show how much more can be done to integrate medical ideas on women into a broader social and intellectual context, and the larger book never addresses itself to such major problems as what healers were available and how one came to be thought of as a *medicus*. The oft-told tale of Archagathus, the Greek surgeon first welcomed at Rome and then regarded with abomination, is here repeated in the context of the arrival of Greek medicine in Rome and of xenophobia, but the work of Cohn-Haft (1956) and Astin (*Cato the censor*, 1978) relates it more convincingly to political and social developments of the time, and in particular to the aspirations of Cato and his like. The great social divide between the average physician in Greece and that in Rome must also be examined far more closely than it is here.

These two volumes have many merits; indeed, they are the first for many years to treat Roman and later Greek medicine seriously and at length. Scholars will be long in Mme Gourevitch's debt for introducing them to new pieces of evidence, but, at least to this reviewer, both books go only a little way towards a proper history of graeco-roman medicine.

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ISTVAN BENEDEK, *Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis 1818–65*, Vienna and Cologne, Böhlaus, 1983, 8vo, pp. 398, Ös.530.00/DM.70.00.
ISTVAN BENEDEK, *Semmelweis' Krankheit*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kaidó, 1983, 8vo, pp. 110, illus., £4.40.

Benedek's two books are intimately related; *Semmelweis' Krankheit* presents in detail the same view contained in one of the four parts of the complete biography. Both books are interesting, informative, and well written.

Much of Benedek's work is directed against claims that have recently been advanced by Erna Lesky and by Georg Silló-Seidl. Benedek argues against Lesky's view that Semmelweis's work was largely a product of what he learned from Skoda and Rokitansky. Benedek is certainly correct; Skoda's methodology did not give rise to Semmelweis's discovery. Indeed, a careful review of Skoda's subsequent publications on childbed fever suggests that he may never have accepted the basic insight on which Semmelweis's work rested.

In both books Benedek argues against Silló-Seidl's recent publications maintaining that Semmelweis's death resulted from a conspiracy between Semmelweis's in-laws and members of the Viennese and Hungarian medical establishments. According to Silló-Seidl, Semmelweis