

enthusiasm for his subject is just as evident as is his erudition. This is particularly true of the chapters on Galen, on whom the author is a leading authority. Vivian Nutton has done the worlds of classical scholarship and medical history a true service in providing this detailed and comprehensive account of Greek and Roman medicine.

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Jennifer Clarke Kosak, *Heroic measures: Hippocratic medicine in the making of Euripidean tragedy*, Studies in Ancient Medicine vol. 30, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2004, pp. x, 229, €90.00, US\$121.00 (hardback 90-04-13993-1).

This monograph begins with the contention that medical themes are “more integrated into the work of Euripides than scholars have hitherto noticed” and states the aim to “foreground” some of the “shared cultural assumptions in . . . the medical and tragic genres” (pp. 11, 14); it is concluded that these writings “reveal . . . two sides of the same coin” (p. 197). Eight plays are discussed in some detail: seven of Euripides (*Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Medea*, *Orestes*, *Heracles*, *Phoenissae* and *Bacchae*) and one of Aeschylus (*Prometheus Bound*). The arrangement is in two parts, the first entitled ‘Healers and the heroics of medical *technê*’ and the second ‘From cause to cure’; in each part an exposition of Hippocratic ideas is followed by a play by play analysis, tracing the presentation of the same or similar concepts. In all this there are many insights. However, although the general thrust of the argument—that there is common ground between the genres—is clearly correct, much in the detailed analysis is open to question. It is amply demonstrated that medical and tragic texts share a common stock of ideas, expressed in a common language; but there are different ways of viewing this apparent overlap. There are problems at all levels. For example: in broad terms, the label “healer”—which is only loosely

apposite to the very different dramatic characters Prometheus (described as philanthropist or culture-bringer), Phaedra’s nurse in *Hippolytus* (seen as charlatan) and Medea (designated healer who harms)—is pushed to the limits when not one but two unsuccessful “healers”, Jocasta and Polyneices, are isolated in *Phoenissae*; more narrowly, we may see Phaedra’s nurse as a proponent of the bromide *meden agan* “nothing to excess” rather than as “a believer in the balanced mixture school of health” (p. 54); more narrowly still the verb *antlein* “drain” is an extremely common nautical, rather than medical, metaphor (p. 79, n. 71) and the verb *semainein* “reveal” is too ordinary to be given a definite medical connotation (p. 69; cf. *asema* “without signs”, p. 36). Such problems are intrinsic to a comparative study of this kind. Uncertainties of chronology compound the difficulties of comparison. Perhaps the title of the book ought to be *Hippocratic medicine AND the making of Euripidean tragedy* to allow for mutual interaction, rather than a one-way process of influence. (The date of the introduction of Asclepius worship to Athens, relevant at p. 24, is uncertain also.)

Many Hippocratic works are adduced for purposes of comparison and the summary of their content in the two short introductory chapters is sensible and thorough. The choice of the Hippocratic treatise *Breaths* as a starting point (p. 5, cf. 38) might have been more fully justified in terms of apparent Hippocratic attribution in *Anonymus Londinensis*, a papyrus relevant also to medical content in Plato (discussed pp. 27–9, but oddly without reference to the dialogue *Timaeus*). The usefulness of the book is enhanced by the addition of an *index nominum et rerum* and an *index locorum*. Proof-reading has been thorough and I noted very few misprints, except in the Greek quotations, where there are many errors (not all minor). There are occasional lapses in transliteration also: *phlebs* should be *phleps* (p. 70 and n. 52), *Cratos* if not *Kratos* should at least be *Cratos* (p. 44) and *parados* should be *parodos* (p. 183).

In sum, this is a meritorious work. Though much of the literary analysis should carry a health warning, the author’s wide reach in the

Book Reviews

Hippocratic Corpus is matched by evident familiarity with the full tragic canon and by impressive command of an extensive bibliography.

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Martha L Rose, *The staff of Oedipus: transforming disability in ancient Greece*, Corporealities: Discourses of Disability, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003, pp. xiii, 154, illus., £26.00, US\$42.50 (paperback 0-472-11339).

Martha Rose presents a well-researched study of physical disability in ancient Greece. Not only does the book further our awareness of issues related to the body and its care, but it also helps to dispel misunderstood perceptions of disability in the past. It is often assumed the Greeks had strict definitions of disability that were used to separate people into distinct groups. This misconception is used today to validate attitudes and understandings towards those classified as disabled, and it is this naïve application of medical history to modern disability studies that is the main issue of Rose's book. The principal argument against making direct analogies between the two periods is that disability is a cultural construct determined by the inherent beliefs of a particular society. On the basis of cultural and temporal variation, Rose confidently asserts that modern conceptions of ancient disability are based on false premises that should not be employed to comprehend disability today.

The book's focus is limited to physical impairments because teratology and mental illness, for example, were more distinctly classified than physical variations. Although people were known to have physical disabilities, the terms used to describe them were often nebulous such as "lame", "incomplete" or "imperfect". Furthermore, there is little mention in the Greek medical literature of physical variations, suggesting it was society, not the doctor, that determined whether a person was

disabled. If a person with a physical limitation was able to support him or herself or had someone to care for them they remained integrated in their community and were not medically classified as being different.

The book has five main chapters, each with a comparative discussion of ancient and modern perspectives of the topics considered. Chapter one is used to examine the evidence for disability in classical texts and the tenuous nature of disability classification in ancient Greece. The evidence demonstrates that people of varied body types were fully integrated into Greek society, which is in opposition to a society consisting of people with ideally proportioned bodies, as Victorian scholarship would have us believe. In chapter two, Rose argues against the common misunderstanding that infants regarded as disabled were exposed at birth for being a potential burden to their family and community. Reasons against the presumption of exposure are that many congenital defects are not apparent at birth, and with reference to the first chapter many had survived childhood with physical differences.

More specifically defined disabilities—speech impairments, deafness and blindness—are the focus of the next three chapters. Speech impairments were discussed in both historical and medical texts, but understood to be a problem related to the tongue. It is noted by Rose that modern support networks for people with speech impediments do not account for these interpretations of speech difficulties. Rather they uncritically use people in the past, such as Demosthenes, as heroic symbols, who overcame speaking difficulties in spite of the fact these individuals were not noted as being important by their contemporaries for overcoming such problems.

Deafness and blindness are discussed to demonstrate that disability was dependent on context rather than physical limitations. Deafness, for example, was considered an impairment of reasoning and a sign of inferior intelligence, which were grounds for excluding people from political life. It is suggested that agricultural workers did not suffer social ostracism because there was no need to