

of the most innovative essays of the volume. Maria Elena Gorrini offers an impressive study of the archaeological evidence for healing cults in Attica. She stresses that these cults developed contemporaneously with ‘Hippocratic medicine’, often used the same methods of healing, and were not in strict opposition—she shows how medical doctors made dedications to the God Asclepius. Julie Laskaris also investigates the links between religious and Hippocratic medicine, focusing on the use of excrements and kourotropic milk (the milk of a woman who has borne a male child) in the Hippocratic gynaecological recipes. She suggests that the use of kourotropic milk shows the influence of Egyptian medicine, which made use of the milk of the Goddess Isis feeding her son Horus. In incorporating that ingredient in their pharmacopoeia, the Greeks misunderstood or ignored the Egyptian ritual connotations of kourotropic milk. Finally, in her contribution on the largely unknown treatise *On the organ of sight*, Elizabeth Craik ventures the hypothesis that this text was composed by someone whose first language was not Greek, maybe someone from Egypt.

The third section explores the links between “Hippocratic” and “non-Hippocratic” medicine, that is, the medicine expounded in the writings of *inter alia* Aristotle (Frédéric le Blay), the *Anonymus Londinensis* (Daniela Manetti), and Theophrastus (Armelle Debru).

The fourth section, devoted to the linguistic and rhetorical context of Hippocratic medicine, is—unfortunately—the shortest. Detailed linguistic and literary studies can yield important information on the socio-cultural context in which the Hippocratic texts were produced, as shown most prominently by Tim Stover’s study of discursive practices and structural features exploited in *Prorrhetic 2*. Through the use of particular rhetorical features, the author of *Prorrhetic 2* produced a proreptic text destined to win over a clientele of pupils in the context of competition between medical practitioners.

The final section, focusing on the later reception of Hippocratic medicine, opens with a study of the medical papyri from the Egyptian village of Tebtunis by Ann Hanson, and is

followed by essays on the reception of Hippocratic theories by later medical authors, such as Celsus (Muriel Pardon), Aretaeus (Amneris Roselli), and Galen (Ivan Garofalo).

The division of the proceedings into sections is at times artificial, and it is regrettable that the section on the epistemological context is so centred on *On ancient medicine*; but altogether this volume testifies to the very positive evolution of Hippocratic scholarship in recent years. Hippocratic scholars are no longer afraid to use archaeological and papyrological evidence; they study linguistic features in innovative ways; they do not shy away from neglected texts such as *Prorrhetic 2*, *Internal affections* and *On the organ of sight* (as shown by the index of passages cited); and they fully embrace the possibility that Greek medicine was influenced by Egyptian medicine. In short, Hippocratic scholarship has truly become interdisciplinary.

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**Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus**,  
*De materia medica*, transl. Lily Y Beck,  
introduction by John Scarborough,  
Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien,  
Band 38, Hildesheim, Olms-Weidmann, 2005,  
pp. xxviii, 540, €78.00, US\$90.00  
(paperback 3-487-12881-0).

Finally we Anglophones have a reliable, competent translation of Dioscorides, called by G E R Lloyd perhaps the most important scientist in classical antiquity. In five books, Dioscorides’ *Materia medica* summarizes more than 1,000 drugs of which at least 700 are botanicals. Over the last half century of delving into ancient and medieval medical lore, I often cringed when a modern writer quoted “Dioscorides” from the only previous English translation, that produced by John Goodyer some time between 1652 and 1655, but not published until 1934 (Oxford University Press), lightly edited by Robert T Gunther (reprinted in 1959 and 1971). Goodyer based his translation on a woeful edition

(Frankfurt, 1598), which incorporated chapters not in Dioscorides' Greek text, adding the *notha* (synonym-lists) that had descended into the Renaissance alongside the text itself. Goodyer quite frequently replicated the Latin transliterations of Greek names for plants, thereby increasing confusion, in striking contrast to Dioscorides' careful precision. Now Lily Beck, a professional classicist who also knows her botany, has rendered Dioscorides accessible to anyone who reads good English. John Scarborough's introduction gathers the few biographical data on the talented author of the *De materia medica*, and is a valuable guide to contents, the history of the text, and Dioscorides' sources of information.

Dioscorides' writing style employs a paucity of words and is similar to modern science articles. He tells his readers to disregard style and pay attention to the content. He explains that, for each plant, he first read what the previous authorities had reported (often citing by name), then he travelled widely in a "military-like life", observing the plants in their habitats, talking with the people about their experiences with drugs, and finally "testing" their actions himself. Only then did he have a fact he trusted, which could be related. Beck observes in her introduction that the text is mostly devoid of what we call magic and superstition. Where there were uses that he would not endorse, he prefaced them with words to distance himself, such as, "it is reported", "they say", and "it seems". Even so, occasionally Dioscorides slipped, such as with the plant *scilla*: "ward[s] off evil when hung whole on front doors". Beck's point withstanding, Dioscorides' keen talents were remarkable in observing the effect of natural drugs on humans (and occasionally animals). In our time when alternative medicine is receiving renewed interest, one should keep in mind that natural product drugs are the result of human experiences, mostly intelligent ones.

Each chapter begins with the Greek term in the Greek alphabet and, in the case of plants, followed by the binominal scientific name with the English term. For identifications, Beck used the standard authorities; when authorities disagree, she has notes, although modest in

discussion. Translating ancient Greek medical terms is perilous: for example, is *podagra* exactly our gout?; is *asthma* our asthma? The list is extensive and, for this reason, medical researchers are still advised to consult the Greek terms' lexical ranges. Particularly difficult are Greek terms for dermal lesions. (Beck should be excused from the publisher's unfortunate spelling of "Anarzarbus" on the cover.)

Lily Beck employed Max Wellmann's critical text in three volumes published between 1906 and 1914 (reprinted 1958). Having seen most of the Greek manuscripts, I am of the opinion that, despite Wellmann's erudite scholarship, a new Greek text should be made, but even after it is, Beck will survive as the standard English translation. Before publication, Beck asked me to read her translation but, alas, I was unable to do so at the time and instead gave her a very small modicum of advice. Beck's translation embodies sensitivity to Dioscorides' meaning that even a classicist, who is reading the Greek, would want to consult. So, now the medical historians can toast Beck's work with a cup of herbal tea.

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**Bruce T Moran**, *Distilling knowledge: alchemy, chemistry, and the scientific revolution*, New Histories of Science, Technology, and Medicine, Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 210, \$24.95, £16.95 (hardback 0-674-01495-2).

Moran begins this short, introductory book by asking how alchemy, a seemingly disordered and irrational pseudo-science, fits into a discussion of the scientific revolution. His answer, like that also offered elsewhere by William Newman and Lawrence Principe, is that alchemy is—or rather *was*—chemistry. Moran points out that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century alchemy, "although motivated by assumptions about nature not shared by many today, still occasioned an intense practical involvement with minerals, metals, and the making of medicines" (p. 2). Moran, however, is less interested in the precise nature of this practical involvement than in what its