

## Book Reviews

does neither. The twelve essays that make up the book range randomly over more than 2,500 years and are in no sense a comparative study. Each of the essays—whether on the healing power of medieval women, or the role of the blues in African-American women's literature, or on women doctors in Virginia Woolf's writing—is discrete and unrelated to every other essay. It is an example of a burgeoning genre of books that comprise independent articles on a very broad theme that are not peer-reviewed and are not closely directed or controlled by the editor. Although this practice has become a growth industry in Great Britain's medical-historical community, this volume is from an American press.

Most of the contributors are specialists in literature—ancient, medieval, Spanish, English, American, German, African-American—and come at the subject through a handful of examples in their fields of interest. A number break new ground, notably the excellent survey of women doctors in the ancient world by the classicist Holt Parker and the description of the use of the blues in healing among African-American women by the writer and poet Gunilla Kester. Some of the others add new insights and speculation about the complex interrelationships between women doctors and national environments in particular periods of history. Others report findings that have been explored elsewhere, such as Paulette Meyer's essay on women medical students in Zurich, and Regina Morantz-Sanchez's study of the controversial nineteenth-century gynaecologist Mary Dixon Jones.

The collection raises hard questions about how to advance our understanding of women's past role in medicine and healing. What is the "healing" depicted in the book's title if it omits midwifery, nursing, and many types of domestic medicine? Surely the boundaries between medicine, midwifery, nursing, and other healing need to be defined if such terms are to have any meaning. The historical evidence for many of the literary insights in the book, moreover, is at best thin and sketchy; the analysis based on such evidence is of necessity highly theoretical and speculative; and many of

the contributors seem to assume (falsely) that the principal purpose of tightened medical regulation in early modern Europe and later was to exclude women from practice. In the period since 1700, especially, where a great deal of archival and public records can be found, the time of scholars interested in women's role in the healing arts might better be spent in hard, empirical research rather than in excessive speculation over a few chosen literary texts.

This book will be of marginal interest to most historians of medicine. Among literary scholars, however, and those interested in the intersection of medicine and literature, it may perhaps find a wider audience.

**Thomas N Bonner**, Wayne State University

**Eileen Crofton**, *The women of Royaumont: a Scottish women's hospital on the western front*, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 1997, pp. xx, 347, illus., £17.99 (1-898410-86-0).

The Scottish Women's Hospitals were conceived at a meeting of the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies just a few days after the outbreak of the First World War. They were the brainchild of Dr Elsie Inglis, who saw the war as an opportunity to demonstrate what women could achieve in medicine unaided by men. Given her associations with the campaign for women's suffrage, it is perhaps, unsurprising that the War Office and the British Red Cross declined her offer of hospitals staffed entirely by women, but the French and the Serbians proved less prejudiced. Acutely conscious of the deficiencies of their medical services, the two countries eagerly accepted offers of a 100-bed hospital funded by voluntary donations.

This book is about one of those hospitals: the Scottish Women's Hospital at Royaumont near Paris, which took over in December 1914 the dilapidated buildings of the town's thirteenth-century Cistercian abbey. After a shaky start, owing to the damp, insanitary condition of the abbey, the French Red Cross

declared that the hospital was fit to take sick and wounded French soldiers. The hospital remained in existence until March 1919, expanding to over 600 beds. Women from Royaumont also managed a specially-constructed casualty clearing station nearer the front, which was established at Villers-Cotterets in 1917.

Eileen Crofton tells the story of the hospital, its staff and its patients with considerable skill, weaving together a narrative of war-work with pen-portraits of some of the key figures associated with the hospital; not least the indomitable Chief Medical Officer, Miss Frances Ivens. Crofton paints a vivid picture of medical work, of daily chores, and of relations between patients and staff. One aspect of wartime medical work which comes through strongly in Crofton's account is the enormous importance of small details in maintaining the morale of both patients and staff. Nothing was more important than the secondment of one former patient—a famous Paris chef—to the hospital kitchens. He remained virtually the only man employed at the hospital during the war, barring a few of the patients during their convalescence.

Rich in detail, and nicely balanced between narrative and personal testimony, this book provides a valuable insight into the nature of medical work during the First World War. Specialists will see the Royaumont hospital as a useful point of contrast to hospitals under military or British Red Cross control, but the book deserves and is likely to achieve a far wider readership.

**Mark Harrison**, Sheffield Hallam University

**Leon Z Saunders**, *A biographical history of veterinary pathology*, Lawrence, Kansas, Allen Press, 1996, pp. xviii, 590, illus., \$83.00 (USA only), \$88.00 (worldwide) (0-935868-84-4).

Leon Z Saunders has spent a lifetime in veterinary pathology, and with a keen and growing interest in the history of his subject. His enviable ability to pick up languages in the

course of his research resulted in 1980 in an authoritative account of *Veterinary pathology in Russia 1860–1930*. Now in his late seventies and retired from his post at SmithKline Beecham he has produced what is obviously a labour of love: a biographical dictionary of veterinary pathologists and their science throughout the Western world (only one, Japanese, representative of the Far East is included). The choice is eclectic, and Saunders makes no claim to comprehensiveness; that would indeed be too much to expect for an initial one-author volume of this kind. He has nevertheless made a laudable effort, with the inclusion of just over 150 authors whose contributions have enriched the literature on and knowledge of veterinary pathology over a century and a half before, during, and after two world wars.

For those interested in veterinary pathology and its history this weighty volume is an invaluable source and reference book, introducing through scientific biographies of distinguished practitioners of the subject a guide to its history and evolution in the later nineteenth and through to our own part of the twentieth century. The choice of personalities included here also reflects the fine balance to be struck between veterinary and comparative pathology: the volume is dedicated to the memory of Osler, and comprises the names of many other “veterinary” pathologists who began their professional lives with medical degrees and interests.

In his introduction Saunders rightly emphasizes the essential role played by Virchow's definition of cellular pathology and by the rise of histology, fuelled by improvements in microscopes, in mid-century, paving the way for the great advances in human, veterinary, and comparative pathology—as also in bacteriology, protozoology, and eventually in virology. Quite a number of the pathologists described in this “biographical history” included tumours and neoplasms in their studies. This makes it perhaps surprising that there is no mention of Peyton Rous, who had to wait fifty-five years for a Nobel Prize recognizing his