

Book Reviews

The *Book* is first and foremost a remedy book, with virtually no theory of causation. As such, it is probably of most interest as evidence for the sociology of the body and will rightly attract a broad audience of historians of women's medicine and sexuality. Such readers will no doubt find this edition and its accompanying commentary a bit obscure not simply because of the unusual nature of the text but also because of certain editorial decisions. Instead of merely stating that the works of the Arabic authorities al-Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Zahrāwī, all of whom are cited in the text, were translated into Hebrew at such and such a date, Caballero-Navas might have confirmed whether the references can be traced or if the author was simply name-dropping. Greater engagement with Latin medical traditions might have also shown that this Hebrew tradition is not as directly derivative of Arabic medicine as it seems. Caballero assumes (pp. 28–9) direct use of the North African Arabic writer Ibn al-Jazzār, ignoring the more obvious parallels with the Latin *Liber de sinthomatibus mulierum*, a twelfth-century Salernitan treatise that drew heavily upon Ibn al-Jazzār and was available in Hebrew translation. And most readers are likely to miss the passing clarification on p. 81 that the Catalan cosmetic and gynaecological treatise, which has already been referred to over a dozen times as the *Trotula*, has no direct relation to the Latin treatise that circulated under that name; they will find no explanation at all that this is actually a rendering of a Latin treatise on cosmetics usually attributed to Arnau of Vilanova.

Caballero-Navas is least persuasive in her arguments about the book's intended audience. As the original author himself declares, this book is about "what women like and need for themselves; for this reason it has been called *Book of women's love*, for you will find in this book what women, and those who are able to have intercourse with them, ask from the art of medicine" (p. 116). Caballero-Navas fails to engage with the significance of that penultimate phrase and with items such as "A love formula . . . that is so strong that she will run after you" or a concoction which the reader is to make from his own semen (p. 108). Male use of cosmetic and

gynaecological texts, whether to treat female patients, to inform themselves about sexuality and generation, or to woo women through knowledge of cosmetics, has now been well documented for other medieval gynaecological and cosmetic literature. The one extant manuscript copy of the *Book* situates it alongside works of Kabbalah, medicine, and natural philosophy; despite Caballero-Navas's citation of evidence for Jewish women's book ownership, the character of this codex suggests interests more typical of learned males. The present study does not supersede Barkai's 1998 survey of a larger body of Hebrew gynaecological literature, which addressed important questions of the motives for translation and the relation of Jewish learning to that of the majority Christian culture (Ron Barkai, *A history of Jewish gynaecological texts in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, 1998). Nevertheless, this handsomely produced edition contributes significantly to the recovery of medieval Hebrew learning and, one hopes, will serve as the basis for future analyses of how knowledge of sexuality and medicine was shared or contested between men and women, and who was actually reading books such as this.

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Marguerite Hirt Raj, *Médecins et malades de l'Égypte romaine. Étude socio-légale de la profession médicale et de ses praticiens du I^{er} au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.*, Studies in Ancient Medicine, vol. 32, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2006, pp. xx, 386, €139.00, \$181.00 (hardback 978-90-04-14846-8).

This thirty-second volume in the series Studies in Ancient Medicine (Brill) presents the revised and updated version of a PhD thesis defended at the University of Geneva in 1996 by Marguerite Hirt Raj. A classicist, Raj's objective in this book is to propound "une étude approfondie de la position sociale et du statut des médecins et de leur profession en Égypte romaine" (p. 5). The study is divided into six chapters: the introduction and the conclusion aside, chapters 2 to 4 encompass the definition of

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the physician's profession (training, specialization and particular cases, and remuneration), the fields of medical activities (public sector, army, private sector), and the physician's social and legal status. Chapter 5, entitled 'De l'étiologie à la thérapie: le choix offert au malade', proposes a general reflection on the kinds of medicine practised in Antiquity.

The subject of this work is very promising, for it considers ancient medicine as a social practice, with the intention of improving our knowledge not of medical theories and therapeutics, but of the social and legal status of doctors and their art in Antiquity. However, Raj does not fully attain her objective, because of an incomplete understanding of medical history. In fact, she does not seem to have had any specific training in the history of medicine, and thus makes some mistakes in the interpretation of evidence. On several occasions, Raj's remarks betray her misreading of Greek and Latin medical literature, notably the Hippocratic Corpus. For example, concerning the medical knowledge of Philo of Alexandria, Raj points out that he had studied the Hippocratic authors, in particular "Hippocrate, dont il cite par deux fois le début des Aphorismes . . . ainsi qu'un long passage tiré du traité des Semaines" (p. 70). The wording here implies that these two treatises, the *Aphorisms* and the *Weeks*, are still attributed to Hippocrates today, a view at variance with modern Hippocratic studies. The author's lack of familiarity with the medical evidence also appears in the choice of editions. For instance, Raj quotes (p. 245) a long extract from the Hippocratic treatise *Sacred disease* in the French translation of Emile Littre, published in 1849, without taking into account the more recent editions, particularly the translation and commentary of Jacques Jouanna (2003).

Some inaccuracies also appear in the pages on the *archiatroi*. With regard to the oldest mention of the term, Raj cites the inscription discovered at Iulia Gordos (Lydia), in honour of Apollophanes of Seleucia, doctor of Antiochos III. She, of course, states that on the damaged original the word *archiatros* was restored, but she still seems to believe this to be the correct word, only indicating in a footnote

that Louis Robert rejected this "restoration". Today, it is admitted, after new reading of the stone, that the word *archiatros* was never inscribed on the chiselled area (P Herrmann, 'Ehrendekret von Iulia Gordos', in *AAWW*, 1974, 111, p. 439, n. 2; E Samama, *Les médecins dans le monde grec*, Genève, 2003, p. 355, n.50). Furthermore, Raj asserts that the title of *archiatros* seems not to have been given to the doctors of the Ptolemaic kings, nor to the imperial doctors in Rome (pp. 55–6). Yet, in the following lines, she rightly mentions some instances of the title being used during the reigns of Claudius (C. Stert. Xenophon) and Nero (Andromachos). Moreover, other examples of *archiatroi*, imperial doctors in Rome, appear in ancient evidence (T. Stat. Crito under Trajan, Marcios Hermogenes under Hadrian, Stat. Attalos under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, L. Gellios Maximos under Caracalla). The word *archiatros* did not always designate the imperial doctor in Rome, but it could be employed with this meaning.

In addition, Raj sometimes bases her argument on evidence which is not chronologically relevant to her subject. For instance, among the types of medical men, she refers to the *pepaideumenos* or the cultured man (pp. 67–70), a word borrowed from Aristotle. She quotes some examples of this enlightened medical amateur throughout Antiquity, from Plato to Apuleius, including Philo of Alexandria in Roman Egypt. But she is unable to identify any in the papyrological evidence, because they do not practise medicine as such. However, this kind of *pepaideumenos*, defined by Aristotle, is the result of theoretical considerations, which cannot be transposed to the reality of medical practice under the Empire. It is one of the misuses of evidence which detracts from the quality of this work.

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M S Valiathan, *The legacy of Suśruta*,
Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2007, pp. xxxiv,
830, Rs 895 (hardback 978-81-250-3150-5).