

Book Reviews

Sabrina Grimaudo, *Difendere la salute: igiene e disciplina del soggetto nel De sanitatetuenda di Galeno*, Elenchos series (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2008), pp. 280, €30.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-88-7088-543-9.

Sabrina Grimaudo's book is a study of Galen's *Precepts of Health Care*, a treatise in six books that gives advice on how individuals should live in order to stay in good health. As the author shows in her introduction, the text's target audience includes both professional doctors and the more general, educated public. The book is divided into eight chapters, each discussing a particular aspect of the work. The first chapter draws a parallel between contemporary attention for the physical, mental, and social aspects of health on the one hand, and the ancient battle for authority in matters of healthcare between doctors and philosophers on the other. The second chapter discusses Galen's double definition of health, accommodating both the Hippocratic/pre-Socratic theory of the four humours/elements and the Alexandrian emphasis on organs based on new anatomical–physiological discoveries. In addition, Galen is innovative in his adoption of a functional, inclusive concept of health as a (temporary) state in which an individual can carry out his usual activities unimpeded.

Following on from this, the next chapter shows that Galen, as opposed to other doctors such as Asclepiades and Erasistratus, believes in various degrees of health and in a continuum ranging from complete disease over temporary and imperfect health to perfect and continuous well-being. The fourth chapter sets out how Galen measures health by individual rather than general standards. Although medicine must therefore be dependent upon relative perception rather than absolute knowledge, the doctor will acquire an almost perfect knowledge of his patients by

observing them over time. Chapter 5 sketches the evolution from Hippocrates' focus on illness to Galen's emphasis that health comes chronologically first, largely driven by the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle on the one hand, and Hellenistic medicine's interest in anatomy and physiology on the other. In the next chapter, Galen's *Precepts of Health Care* causes Grimaudo to question Foucault's concept of the care of the self: Galen is not talking so much about self-care as about the control over the whole of the patient's existence by a professional specialised in regimen. Chapter 7 points out the contradiction that exists between Galen's inclusive concept of health as set out in Chapter 2 and the overarching focus on men not only of perfect constitution but also spending all their time at the care of their health. The most important reason for this focus, according to Grimaudo, is Galen's will to claim the field of healthcare for medicine which, as a science, tends to study health independently of individual circumstances. The final chapter shows Galen's dialogues with medical predecessors and polemics with gymnastic and medical competitors, and thereby, in passing, gives the reader a survey of previous works on the topic.

Taken together, these chapters, which are followed by a bibliography and various indices, present a fine study of one of Galen's most important works. Grimaudo's book is clearly intended for specialists: no introduction to Galen or ancient views on healthcare is offered, the focus is on the text rather than on context, and footnotes regularly occupy half a page or more. Grimaudo therefore does not give one a survey of how Galen's text works or of all the topics included in it, but she certainly offers a well-researched analysis of various key aspects, underwritten by a good understanding of the history and

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evolutions of ancient medicine; as such, her book will be a must-read for anybody studying Galen's *Precepts of Health Care*.

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Cathy McClive and Nicole Pellegrin (eds),
Femmes en fleurs, femmes en corps: sang, santé, sexualité âge aux lumières (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2010), pp. 368, €23.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-2-86272-539-0.

While reading the collection of articles *Femmes en fleurs, Femmes en corps*, the mediaeval *Roman de la Rose* almost inevitably comes to mind. This allegorical poem describes a lover's quest for the Rose, which not only symbolises the love of a lady but also the lady embodied – 'en corps' to quote the title of this book – who is the living object of his desire. In Jean de Meun's continuation of the poem, the quest for sexual satisfaction is unmistakable. At the very end, Amor conquers the tower that houses the beautiful red Rose, Shame and Dread flee and the flower is plucked. None of the authors in *Femmes en fleurs* mention the poem, which was tremendously popular far into the Early Modern Period, but all its possible pre-modern connotations come up for discussion in this beautifully edited book.

The editors must have asked the individual authors to read each other's work over and again in order to incorporate each other's conclusions into their own argumentation. As a result, the general picture of an ongoing curtailment of the female body and its freedom of movement from the fifteenth century onwards could be refined and justifiably readjusted. It is of equal importance that Anglo-Saxon and French scholarship met in the joint project that produced this book – half of the authors are English/American and half

are French. This resulted in fruitful new insights and pointed to new types of sources for research that may also be available for countries other than pre-modern France. Those who want to use this book should be proficient in French. It took me a while to realise that 'l'histoiregenrée' meant gender history, to mention one of the less difficult language intricacies. An English translation would therefore appear worthwhile, particularly because although all of the articles discuss female body issues, not to say women's complaints, figuring within the present French borders, its conclusions bear a far wider purport.

The agents of this book are the various connotations of 'Fleur', such as menstruation (blood), virginity, rape, female bloom and beauty, the sexual act, conception, pregnancy, giving birth, barrenness and menopause, and each phase or event, including the physical details, is discussed together with its consequences and implications. This poses the question of whether the metaphorical reminiscences of 'fleurs' did not determine the content of the book too much. The answer would seem to be negative: I carried out a quick investigation and it turned out that in my own mother tongue, Dutch, the same implications of rose, bloom, flower etc were current. Twelve case studies are presented under the headings of, I. 'Preserver sa fleur' (keeping her bloom), II. 'Fleurir' (flowering) and III. 'Perdresa fleur' (losing her bloom), which combine a thorough study of many original sources with a sophisticated handling of gender concepts and an in-depth knowledge of past political, scientific and literary developments; for example, Laurence Moulinier-Brogi shows that uroscopy availed itself of detailed gender differences. Nicole Pellegrin surprisingly deals with the bleeding of nuns as a variation on stigmata. Helen King shows the ideas the learned physician Jacques Dubois and royal mistress Diane de Poitiers shared on getting pregnant, whereas Eugénie Pascal has combed through the letters of princesses and found out that they dreaded giving birth.