

HIPPOCRATES, *Pseudepigraphic writings: Letters—Embassy—Speech from the Altar—Decree*, ed. and transl. with an Introduction by Wesley D. Smith, *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 2, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1990, pp. x, 133 (90-04-09290-0).

In *The Hippocratic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) Wesley D. Smith investigated the origin both of our image of Hippocrates, Father of Medicine, and of the corpus of works traditionally associated with his name. At the centre of that book was Galen, who created Hippocrates in his own image within the context of the medical debates of second-century AD Rome. In the present volume Smith turns his attention to another strand of the legend of Hippocrates: the *Pseudepigrapha*, comprising twenty-four letters, two speeches and an Athenian decree. Not only does he give the first English translation of these important but deceptive documents, he also discusses their origin, transmission and function in a thorough introduction.

Many other collections of letters attributed to famous figures of antiquity survive. Smith suggests that these *Pseudepigrapha*, in which Hippocrates is asked to cure a plague by the king of Persia, and visits the apparently mad Democritus, should be understood as an attempt, from within a mentality very different from our own, to construct a history of medicine. The letters "are not what they pretend to be," but are rather an alternative way of answering the still-dominant questions, "Who was Hippocrates?" and "What did he write?"

The earliest parts of the collection, Smith argues, are the speeches: the *Epibomios*, allegedly made by Hippocrates at Thessaly, and the *Presbeutikos*, attributed to Thessalos, son of Hippocrates. Smith dates these to the period 350–250 BC, and shows that it was at Alexandria that they were attached to a group of otherwise anonymous Greek medical texts. Thus not only did the anonymous works become "the Hippocratic corpus", but also the characters from Hippocrates' family mentioned in the *Presbeutikos* were used to account for the range of styles in that corpus, different works being attributed to different family members.

Many "baseless claims" in subsequent medical history can be traced back to the *Pseudepigrapha*. For example, although the existence of a "Coan school" in the second century BC can be shown epigraphically, there is no evidence of an exclusive kinship group of Asclepiads controlling the medical profession: "the Asclepiadae were not the whole of the medical profession, even on Cos, nor were they all physicians."

Smith ably unravels the complex manuscript tradition, in which medical and epistolographic collections transmit different selections from the *Pseudepigrapha*. His argument is clear, plausible and often iconoclastic, and this volume deserves a wide readership.

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ANDREAS HILLERT, *Antike Ärztedarstellungen*, Marburger Schriften zur Medizin-geschichte 25, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1990, 8vo, pp. vi, 257, illus., DM 27.00, (paperback).

This is a highly competent and useful dissertation. It collects classical representations of physicians on tomb reliefs, statues, vases, and the like, with appropriate photographs, and discusses their significance for the medical historian. If Dr Hillert had done no more than this, he would have performed a useful service, for many of these representations, e.g. nos 12 and 13, from Portogruaro; 24, from Schloss Seggau near Leibnitz; and 26, from Charchel, were accessible only in local journals and publications. His selection of plates is a reproach to picture editors, who have been long content to reproduce the same small number of illustrations. It is, however, a pity that the overall quality of the reproductions is poor, for much detail is lost in the printing. Equally valuable, though, is Dr Hillert's rejection of ancient paintings or sculptures often claimed as medical, e.g. the "anatomy scene" from the Via Latina catacomb, or the Ravenna and Bar-le-Duc "oculist scenes". He argues strongly that, by contrast with instruments, listed p. 192, the mere presence of a snake, as on a bust from the tomb of the Haterii in Rome, is of itself no proof that the person commemorated was medical. The gullibility of medical historians is nicely revealed in the lucid discussion of the so-called bust of Hippocrates from Ostia; and in the demonstration that, in at least one modern work, a portrait of the Emperor Gallienus masquerades as Galen.