

Gotthard Strohmaier, *Hellas im Islam. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Ikonographie, Wissenschaft und Religionsgeschichte*, Diskurse der Arabistik, 6, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, pp. viii, 258, €98.00 (hardback 3-447-04637-6).

The author of this volume is a leading authority on the transmission of Greek culture and thought through the prism of Arab Islam, and over a forty-year career he has to a large extent presented his conclusions in the form of scientific articles. He has been an active participant in international scholarly meetings, especially since the reunification of Germany, and many of his studies have appeared in volumes of conference proceedings that may not have been so widely circulated.

One very useful volume republishing some of Strohmaier's studies has already appeared: *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, Olms, 1996). The present volume collects a further thirty-one articles and five book reviews published between 1970 and the present. The following three studies are published here for the first time: 'Das Gedenken an die Urheber der ärztlichen Kunst'; 'Der Kommentar des Johannes Grammaticus zu Galen, De usu partium (Buch 11), in einer unikalenen Gothaer Handschrift'; 'Arabische Astrologie in der Bildwert des europäischen Mittelalters. Das Sternbild des Schützen in Qasr 'Amra und in Gernrode'. The studies are usefully organized under six main rubrics: Europa, die Griechen und der Orient; Das andere Nachleben der Antike (i.e. in medieval Islam); Hippokrates und Galen—die medizinischen Autoritäten; Byzanz und Kalifat; and Außerislamische Religionsgeschichte. Most of the studies are in German, with one each in French and English. The volume ends with a detailed and very useful index and a classified bibliography of Strohmaier's scholarly writings that gives a vivid overview of the astonishing breadth of his scholarship and erudition.

A collection of this kind invites comment on the main pieces that will have caught the fancy of this or that reviewer. In this journal, some special consideration may of course be taken for the

articles on the history of medicine. One must hasten to stress that in such a field each of the studies is in some fundamental way relevant to all the others. That said, and as in the previous *Von Demokrit bis Dante* collection, this one contains numerous studies specifically focused on the history of medicine, or more directly, on the role of Hippocrates and Galen as authorities in the medieval Islamic medical tradition. In his 'Das Gedenken an die Urheber der ärztlichen Kunst' (previously unpublished), the author reflects on the question of why it was that medieval Europe and Islam both regarded the ancient Greek tradition as a paradigm they could learn and elaborate, but not surpass. In 'Der syrische und der arabische Galen', first published in the *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, the author provides a summary account of what he regards as the five phases in the reception of Galenic texts in late antiquity and the early Islamic world. Then we come to a brief study on 'Galen über die Vereinsamung des Menschen in der Großstadt', as this is reflected in the medieval Arabic sources. One then proceeds to Strohmaier's 'Der Kommentar des Johannes Grammaticus zu Galen, De usu partium (Buch 11), in einer unikalenen Gothaer Handschrift', studying this text in the Arabic translation of Ibn Zur'a (d. 1008). Then comes the sole French contribution to the volume: 'La question de l'influence du climat dans la pensée arabe et le nouveau commentaire de Galien sur le traité hippocratique des *Airs, eaux et lieux*', which comprises a study of a Galenic commentary in Arabic translation that Strohmaier was preparing for publication. An interesting study of contagion in Islamic thought: 'Die Ansteckung als theologisches und als medizinisches Problem', which stresses the scientific side of the issue rather than the genuinely religious, is followed by a detailed review of Mauro Zonta's Italian study of how Galen's works were received in the opera of the thirteenth-century Jewish scholar Shemtob ibn Falaquera.

It may also be asked what the collection as a whole contributes to scholarly knowledge in paradigmatic terms. Overall, this volume illustrates and documents a theme that Strohmaier pursues most directly in the first

chapter: 'Die Griechen waren keine Europäer', and then elaborates later when he speaks of 'Was Europa dem Islam verdankt'. Throughout the volume he seeks to integrate the history of the Greek heritage into its proper historical framework by stressing the crucial role of Islamic civilization and culture in preserving Greek learning and elaborating it in new directions. Islam and the Muslims are not "the other": they stand at the very heart of the process by which we have come to understand ourselves as Westerners and Europeans in the twenty-first century. One can see this wherever one turns in the historical record: in thinking about climate, in ideas concerning contagion, in astrology, and throughout the field of medicine itself, where Islamic culture can perhaps point to its greatest scientific accomplishments. Even when medieval Muslims looked at other religions in their own time, religions with which they shared no common ground in monotheism, they took satisfaction in the fact that these faiths did not possess any scholar who came as close to knowledge of the truth as Socrates.

Most of these studies will have been seen at one time or another by colleagues working in the relevant fields. But as a collection they draw attention to several aspects of the author's scholarship. One is surely the element of broad erudition. In an era in which scholarship is increasingly focused on specific narrow fields, it is refreshing to review a volume in which a senior colleague disposes of so many subject areas with equal facility. This perhaps bears on a second consideration. In this volume Strohmaier's essays are reproduced in a small type face that is already suggestive of articles that in their original form were quite brief and concise. That impression is entirely accurate. Strohmaier wastes no time with lengthy introductions and endless citation of authorities, as if a point becomes ten times more certain if ten times as many sources are brought to bear on it (*mea maxima culpa!*). His arguments hit straight to the point in a way that is often breathtaking. Finally, it is worth noting that all this work emanates from a colleague who for decades was denied the most basic access to research resources and

intellectual feedback. As a scholar in the former DDR who refused to join the Communist Party, Strohmaier was obliged to fall back, as Hartmut Bobzin so vividly observes (p. vii), on resources of his own behind the Berlin Wall in "a small flat crammed to the last corner with books".

In his Foreword, Hartmut Bobzin seeks to justify the inclusion of this volume in a series that is dedicated to "Arabistik", which in Germany can mean either Arabic language studies or Arab-Islamic studies more generally. While appreciating his concern, and also his contribution to the volume as a whole, which reflects a considerable investment of work in matters of presentation and editing, one may assert that all this definitely belongs to the field of Arab studies. No cultural or belief system springs in its full and complete form from the teaching or thought of its founder, and the interplay between the various cultural traditions of the late antique and medieval Middle East, though constantly reasserted by Strohmaier and others, still needs to be stressed and highlighted. What we see in this volume illustrates not only the debt of the Arabs to Greek culture, but also the debt of Europe to Islam.

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David S Jones, *Rationalizing epidemics: meanings and uses of American Indian mortality since 1600*, Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. xiii, 294, illus., £32.95 (hardback 0-674-01305-0).

This is a welcome addition to the literature on epidemic disease and American Aboriginal peoples. David Jones covers a lot of territory, from smallpox among the seventeenth-century Massachusetts people, to tuberculosis among the twentieth-century Navajo. But this is not simply another epidemic chronology. Instead it brings together the various explanations that contemporaries and their historians have assigned to the health disparities between Americans and Aboriginal people. This is an ambitious project and Jones has succeeded in