

Book Reviews

Cambridge University Press has done the authors proud. The book is superbly produced: beautiful print, high-grade paper, and seventy-six illustrations of outstanding quality which are an essential, an integral, part of the work as a whole. By today's standards £40 is a moderate price for an academic book of such high quality.

Irvine Loudon, Wantage

WILLEM F. DAEMS, *Nomina simplicium medicinarum ex synonymariis medii aevi collecta. Semantische Untersuchungen zum Fachwortschatz hoch- und spätmittelalterlicher Drogenkunde*, Studies in Ancient Medicine, vol. 6, Leiden and New York, E. J. Brill, 1993, pp. 563, Gld. 250.00, \$143.00 (90-04-09672-8).

Here is a book that gives both more and less than its title suggests. This is neither a study of medieval plant names (the introduction, pp. 1-23, reprinted with slight changes from *Ber. Physico-Medica* 1981/83, is a sketch of the difficulties involved in identifying medieval herbs) nor a proper semantic and lexicographical investigation of the ways in which plants were named. Nor is it a complete listing of medieval plant names, with all their variants, an almost impossible task, although one now facilitated by Daems' comprehensive indexes of Latin and vernacular names that form part III of the book.

Instead, Daems has chosen to use as his base two largely complementary manuscript lists of synonyms, Basel, Universitätsbibliothek D II 13, fols 2r-9r, 1402, and Kassel, Landesbibliothek 4° med. 10, fols 81r-83r, early fifteenth century, the first with 488 plant names, the second 270. Each plant name is followed by a list of the synonyms found in a variety of other manuscripts and editions, and concludes with modern plant identifications. An appendix of 61 pages adds a further series of synonyms for the plants listed earlier, a confusing procedure for which it is hard to see a convincing justification in an age of computer typesetting. Access to the material is helped by a good index of sources and of modern botanical names.

Checking Daem's listings of Wellcome manuscripts 332, 625, 642, and 708 confirms the general accuracy of the transcriptions (p. 91 has a rare error: *artemisia* in Wellcome 642 is glossed as *biboß vel buck*), but throws up other problems. Not all the synonyms in these manuscripts are included by Daems, e.g., p. 101, s.v. *aristologia*, add Wellcome 708, 43r, and many of them are included in the Wellcome glossaries under different headings, e.g., p. 109, WMS 708 glosses the word "urtica", not "acantum" as the reader might expect; p. 113, WMS 708, 43v has a variety of synonyms but divided between *ambrosia minor* and *maior*. The editor's silence should thus not be taken to indicate that a particular plant is not included in a named manuscript or that there may not be other synonyms used for the plant. But, equally, the full indexes make cross-checking from an entry in a Wellcome glossary to a series of other entries very easy indeed. No longer will an editor have to puzzle out what a synonym or word might mean, and whether this is a unique attestation. This book will be of considerable utility for medieval scholars, and for historians of botany, keen to end the confusion of centuries in botanical nomenclature.

Vivian Nutton, Wellcome Institute

IRENE and WALTER JACOB (eds), *The healing past: pharmaceuticals in the Biblical and Rabbinic World*, Studies in Ancient Medicine, vol. 7, Leiden and New York, E. J. Brill, 1993, pp. xv, 126, illus., Gld. 84.00, \$48.75 (90-01-09643-4).

This publication comprises six papers presented at an international symposium, organized by the Rodef Shalom Biblical Botanical Garden in the autumn of 1989, devoted to medicaments used in the Biblical and Rabbinical world and the civilizations that impinged upon it. A further paper delivered the following year is also included. The collection of essays is prefaced by an introduction by Professor John Riddle, in which he describes the hitherto accepted view of Jewish medicine of the Biblical period as a "valley of humility between the two mountains of conceit, Egyptian and Mesopotamian medicine" with later Jewish medicine overshadowed by "the Olympian tower of