

BOOK REVIEW

Hippocrates: Volume X. Edited and translated by PAUL POTTER. Loeb Classical Library 520. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. xxii + 432. Hardcover, \$24.00/£15.95. ISBN 978-0-674-99683-0.

In 1983, after a hiatus of fifty-two years, Potter produced the fifth volume in the Loeb translation of Hippocrates and with the appearance of the present volume he will have made accessible in modern English translations thirty-two treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus.¹ Many of these treatises had no previous English translation and some of them (as is the case with *On Barrenness* in the current volume) had not been edited since the mid-nineteenth century editions and translations of Littré and Ermerins (French and Latin, respectively). For this Potter deserves heartfelt thanks.

Apart from the ready availability of text and translation there is much that is useful in these volumes. Each volume is introduced with a very brief account of the manuscript tradition of and relationship between the treatises translated in the volume and a brief select bibliography. The present volume also has a brief note on technical terms (as did volume VIII). Each treatise has its own brief introduction explaining when it was first associated with the name of Hippocrates, the nature of the treatise, an outline of its organization (very helpful) and a list of the editions, translations and studies that have been done on it. Where previous editions exist Potter bases his edition largely on them. In the case of *Barrenness* he collated the manuscripts that were unavailable to Littré and Ermerins (M & V) from microfilm. This volume also includes Lexicons of the therapeutic agents used in the treatises in both English and Greek. Volume VI had similar indices of foods and drugs and I have found these very helpful. Volume VI also had indices of symptoms and diseases and I could have wished that Volume X did too, at least of symptoms since the illnesses detailed in the treatises in this volume are not given explicit names that often.

There are five treatises in the volume. Four deal with human reproduction: *Generation, Nature of the Child, Nature of Women, Barrenness*. The fifth treatise,

¹ Volume VII (*Epidemics 2 & 4-7*) was translated and edited by Wesley D. Smith.

Diseases IV, is almost certainly written by the author of *Generation and Nature of the Child* and is quite rightly included here. The relationship of this group of three treatises to *Nature of Women* and *Barrenness*—and to the two gynecological treatises yet to appear in a full English translation,² *Diseases of Women I & II*—is a vexed question on which there is no consensus at the moment, but the treatises at the very least share some theories (importantly the existence of *hydrops* as a significant bodily fluid) and the inclusion of all five in one volume is not unwarranted.

With that said, however, I do wonder if the non-specialist reader is well served by this use of space. As my repeated use of the modifier “brief” above indicates, the 400+ pages of the volume are almost entirely given over to the text and translation. There are no introductory essays such as those in the first four volumes of the series. In the Introduction to volume V Potter directed the reader to these essays for an orientation to Hippocrates, but they were already a little out of date in 1983 and a great deal of work has been done since then. Nor are there any notes to the translation to help a reader with the author’s argument and train of thought, which is particularly dense and convoluted in parts of *Diseases IV*.³ David Balme’s 1991 Loeb of Books VI–X of Aristotle’s *Historia Animalium* included some very extended notes, so it is not a concept foreign to the format.

Naturally, with texts so rich and so under-studied no two scholars are going to agree on every reading or interpretation and it would be invidious to raise issues requiring extended debate here. It is to be hoped that now the texts are more readily available their intrinsic interest will also be more widely appreciated. Potter’s deep familiarity with these texts will be invaluable in the close analysis which they deserve.

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² A translation of selected chapters by Ann Ellis Hanson appeared in *Signs* 1 (1975) 567–84. These, along with a few other translated passages, are now available in M. R. Lefkowitz and M. B. Fant’s *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome* (3rd ed., Baltimore and London, 2005).

³ Interested readers can find some help with these passages in Iain M. Lonie, *The Hippocratic Treatises On Generation, On the Nature of the Child, Diseases IV: A Commentary* (Berlin and New York, 1981).