Erlau described quacks selling heal-all unguents alongside ointments guarding against nagging wives and abusive husbands, potions to restore hair, and medicines to recover virginity. Tracing the development of such scenes in sixteenth-century Italian drama, Katritzky makes the intriguing suggestion that *commedia dell'arte* actresses were trained through the improvisational theatrical techniques they had learnt as quacks. Her summary of theatrical representations of mountebanks extends into the drama of Ben Jonson, Thomas Killigrew, Aphra Behn and Christian Weise, providing a useful digest of contemporary references but offering little in the way of synthesis.

Women, medicine and theatre draws on sources ranging over more than two centuries, relating to mountebank troupes speaking Italian, English or German. The work is richly illustrated with engravings, handbills, and images from friendship books. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to impose a narrative on such diverse materials; certainly Katritzky's method is accumulative and discursive rather than analytical. Offering a compendium of examples rather than a fully realized discussion, her book nevertheless makes newly available a wealth of material from the archives. There is much work still to do on this fascinating and neglected subject.

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James Robert Allard, *Romanticism, medicine, and the poet's body*, The Nineteenth Century Series, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, pp. viii, 166, £50.00 (hardback 978-0-7546-5891-7).

"I would to Heaven that I were so much Clay— / As I am blood—bone—marrow, passion—feeling". Byron's headpiece to the 1832 edition of *Don Juan* captures a distinctively Romantic bodily sensibility, both delight in and frustration with the limits of human flesh. Byron's response was to get "exceeding drunk to day / So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling". In *Romanticism, medicine and the poet's body* Allard, a professor of English literature and language at Brock University, Canada, takes a more sober approach to the history of the Romantic body. Following Roy Porter's injunction that "to talk about the body is to talk about the body *in*", Allard builds his argument around the figure of the "Poet-Physician", embodied in the historical figures of John Keats, Thomas Lovell Beddoes and John Thelwall. This interdisciplinary study of an interdisciplinary character stands at the intersection of literary Romanticism and medical discourse. Allard explores both the ways in which Romantic medicine construed the body as a professional and practical space, and the ways in which this body became the subject and object of Romantic literature.

In doing so he maps the political, cultural and intellectual transformations of Paris medicine—both new notions of sickness and new forms of clinical authority—on to the Romantic body. He is at pains to point out that he is not studying representations of an objective, ahistorical body, but rather the construction of different bodies through the sometimes complementary, sometimes competing discursive practices of literature and medicine. The Romantic body provided an amphitheatre in which interpretative communities of poets and physicians (and Poet-Physicians) could explore the central Romantic idea of unmediated experience, either through a personal journey through the world or direct (often visual) experience of the body in health and sickness. These two ways of mapping the embodied self came together in the Poet-Physician. Allard sees poetry as an activity which takes place not in the abstract dimensions of the mind but in the messy space of the cultural and material world: the hand which plied the scalpel might also bear the pen. But the Poet-Physician also reminds us of the tragic falls inherent in the Romantic *Weltanschauung*. Romantic poets discovered that to be embodied was to be trapped in a

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world of irreducible disharmony, while Romantic physicians found that new anatomical knowledge, even when gained by personal experience, did not transform their power to cure. In this sense the Poet-Physicians were called upon to confront the limits of their world and their own mortality, an encounter epitomized by Beddoes' *Death's jest-book*, published only after his suicide in 1849.

Allard's work is not without its difficulties. This is a dense text, composed of long paragraphs and sentences, often fashioned from equally long quotes. It raises, but does not settle, old questions over whether "body studies" is anything more than a convenient and fashionable hook on which historians and critics can hang their work. By focusing on a small number of writers, not much read in their own lifetimes, Allard might make his readers wonder whether it is possible to over-problematize the body. To put it bluntly, how many Romantic bodies or Poet-Physicians were wandering around England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? Despite these minor criticisms, *Romanticism, medicine and the poet's body* offers an inspiring and original take on the history of the body. Allard has put the Romantic ghost back in the corporeal machine, reminding us that poetic voices find their roots in poetic bodies. How about a companion volume on the Gothic body in nineteenth-century life science?

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Christopher E Forth and **Bertrand Taithe** (eds), *French masculinities: history, culture and politics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. xi, 249, illus., £50.00 (hardback 978-0-230-00661-4).

Christopher E Forth and Bertrand Taithe's edited volume is a welcome addition to a growing corpus of collected articles on the history of masculinity. What this selection does especially well is provide an overview of the history. Though there are a few essays in the collection that have a very limited research focus, most authors attempt to give an overview of their period and topic. This is especially useful as a starting point for discussing both the scope of the history as well as seeing what still needs to be done.

The volume covers only modern history, starting with the late eighteenth century elite and ending with a contemporary piece on the suburbs, the veil and recent rioting by disaffected youths. The majority of the essays focus on the post-1870 period, when both imperialism and the Third Republic redefined and solidified the French male, only to have him questioned and perverted after 1940. The first three chapters cover the Old Regime, the Revolution and the Napoleonic period. What we see here is the shift away from the Old Regime masculine emphasis on civility and refinement (traits which were made fun of by the Germans and the British as effeminate) towards a militarization of society. By the height of the Revolution all able-bodied men were to be treated as property of the state through military service.

As Christopher Forth shows, by the late nineteenth century, physicians and anthropologists worried about the softening of the physical body in modern society. The imperial project and the Franco-Prussian war were key moments in defining an unstable and highly criticized version of French masculinity. The French male was weak and overly intellectual and some even suggested that African colonials be recruited into the French army to reinvigorate it. Robert Aldrich's chapter on colonial masculinities reinforces this idea by arguing that colonial domination made up for masculine weakness in France. The First World War did not help quell the sense of threat to the men of the metropole. Judith Surkis uses the example of venereal disease between the wars to illustrate both the precariousness of the French male's ability to protect the family as well as the menace of foreign men who were blamed for spreading the infections. Michael Sibalis, in his masterful overview of French homosexuality and

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