

Book Reviews

here, to the status of medical practitioners they were granted at the time. Sceptical of the claim of doctors to a superior skill, Jones presents the conflict as one of power and gender, rather than as a clash between science and superstition

Beside filling a wide gap in our knowledge of the historical reality of hospitals, the book is a major contribution to the reassessment of prevailing assumptions about the development of medicine in *ancien régime* and Revolutionary France. It shows that the growth of the influence of medical men did not follow a smooth and unbroken path, and it emphasizes, by contrast, the multiple functions embodied in the hospital. As demonstrated in the last part of the book, by the case studies of the institutions for the insane and the prostitute, the hospital was for a long time submitted to the needs of public order, and concerned with the preservation of families' reputations and the obligations of charity. Moreover, views about the status of medical men and state support for the profession did not follow linear trajectories but swung up and down considerably, as the third case study, devoted to military hospital and doctors, clearly indicates. Finally, "external" factors, like the economic crisis of the late eighteenth century and the changing ideas about war, heavily influenced the evolution of the hospital. Jones's ability to link the development of medicine with more general historical trends, and to deal confidently with the changing profile of French society are remarkable features, not always common among historians of medicine, of this book.

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JOHN WILTSHIRE, *Samuel Johnson in the medical world: the doctor and the patient*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. x, 293, £30.00, \$39.50 (0-521-38326-9).

With the current revival of interest in eighteenth-century medicine, and the new accent upon examining medical relations from the sufferer's point of view, one book has clearly demanded to be written—a medical life of that great "dabbler in physick", Samuel Johnson, for surely no Georgian was so deeply immersed in medical matters in such a wide variety of ways. We are fortunate that this task has been undertaken by so shrewd and sympathetic a scholar as the literary historian, John Wiltshire.

Sickness attended the lexicographer from cradle to grave. From the time his mother fetched him to the capital to be touched by Queen Anne for the King's Evil, through his protracted depressions, his gout, his stroke, and the respiratory and dropsical disorders which made his last years so wretched, Johnson's own existence was rarely free of pain and the menace of incapacity, mental or physical. His father's Lichfield home had been full of doctors and medical books. Johnson himself was to install the irregular practitioner, Robert Levet, in his own London household, partly to care for his private hospital of ailing lodgers like the blind Mrs Williams; and he cultivated warm, if not always unruffled, relations with a notable circle of medical friends, early on his fellow Lichfieldian, Robert James (of fever powder fame), and later Thomas Lawrence, William Heberden, and Richard Brocklesby. Johnson moreover published on a wide range of medical subjects, most memorably, as Wiltshire rightly insists, a stinging attack on callous vivisection and a crushing critique of the theodicy advanced by Soame Jenyns that purported to explain why diseases were all for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Johnson energetically diagnosed and prescribed for such friends as Henry and Hester Thrale—and Boswell too!; and he constantly monitored his own health, physical and mental, debated it with his doctors, and frequently bullied them into accepting his own preferred interpretations and therapeutics. Most of these aspects of his preoccupations with maladies and medicine have, of course, already been the subject of specialized studies: Wiltshire's achievement lies in having produced a measured and convincing portrait of Johnson as both a type—the educated Georgian layman who, according to Nicholas Jewson's account, would expect to be a partner to his physicians and not merely a patient—and as a unique individual, fearful of opiates lest they erode the rational will, constantly anxious lest "the physick of charity" numb the awareness of Christian duty, terrified of death, and possessed of a heroic, even superstitious, faith in desperate remedies.

Book Reviews

Did Johnson possess real medical learning and understanding or merely a standard smattering of information? The issue has been much debated. Wiltshire persuasively argues the former. He shows, especially by examination of Johnson's correspondence, that he possessed a clear grasp of Boerhaavian iatromechanism. Johnson's considerable faith in venesection followed from such physiological principles, as well as from personal experience of benefit (he attested that bleeding relieved his bronchial troubles), and a psychological urge for visible action when in pain. His continued experimentation with squills to remedy his dropsy (often going well beyond the advice of his physicians) was likewise based upon careful consideration of his own medical experience (on one occasion, their use provoked a spectacular evacuation of urine). And Johnson could also be a rational sceptic in respect of the received wisdom, for instance discounting the popular notion of gout as a prophylactic (he found his asthma did not remit during bouts of gout). Wiltshire is surely right to suggest that the medical protocols of the eighteenth century afforded room for a respectful partnership between the professional physician such as Heberden, with his unmatched clinical practice, and the active sufferer such as Johnson, possessed of unique insight into his own particular case.

This is a well-written book, free of jargon, but full of perceptive observations ("as is the case with most people who suffer from chronic illness", Wiltshire observes, "friendship and therapy, of various kinds, became deeply intertwined"). No cranky *idées fixes* are pursued, while much light is shed, through exploration of Johnson's attitudes towards sickness and suffering, upon his religion, his moralism, and his fictional world. This volume stands alongside Marjorie Hope Nicolson and G. S. Rousseau's *This Long Disease My Life: Alexander Pope and the sciences* (1968) as our best medical biography of a Georgian patient and writer.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute

CAROL HOULIHAN FLYNN, *The body in Swift and Defoe*, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-century English Literature and Thought 5, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. viii, £27.50, \$39.50.

It is difficult to summarize the complicated arguments in Carol Houlihan Flynn's study of the body in emergent consumer society, and easier to identify the main features of her agenda by spotting the critics she cites in the footnotes of her ambitious attempt at "a revision of the [eighteenth] century's sexual and political considerations" (p. 6): Kristeva, Foucault, Althusser, Derrida. Inspired by but not exclusively governed by these critics, Flynn uses social history to provide a commentary on Daniel Defoe's *Journal of The Plague Year* and conducts a feminist psycho-biographical interpretation of Swift's *Journal to Stella*. She argues persuasively that Swift's "fascination with the condition of being nursed" governs his relationship with Stella and informs "his most fundamental ideas of sexuality" (p. 105). Considering, too, the exacting bargain between writer and reader, Flynn argues that writing paradoxically entails aggressive self-assertion at the same time as submission to the reader's rapacious appetite.

However, her paradoxes frequently prove to be inconsistencies, for her conclusions tend to dismantle her premises. Repeatedly arguing that Defoe's *Journal* is "indeterminate", "blocked by bodies that impede his narrative" (p. 29), she also concludes less radically that "Defoe finds, eventually, a way to exert form" (p. 19). Swift she berates for his patriarchal linguistic appropriation of female bodies ("Swift plays transformational games with the sexuality of a Vanessa or a Stella, contriving and controlling his nauti nauti girls of his own invention" [p. 116]), accusing him of a misogyny characteristic of his age. However, she reads his treatment of the poor not as a distortion, but as a faithful description; here, apparently, he confronts his age with the truth they were unwilling to see.

Flynn's sympathies for the marginal and oppressed (women, Blacks, the poor, animals) are projected onto the body of literature she examines, in order to reflect certain features while shading others which would have been apparent to an eighteenth-century reader. The relation she does not sufficiently explore is that between the body and the soul, or the physical and intellectual self. While she pursues many radical approaches, her central tenet is