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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

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orthodox; for Flynn, although language inscribes and revises reality, the body is a fixed term: a formless mass of base material which frustrates inscription and transcendence. Moreover, it has no anatomy or physiology. Although she mentions George Cheyne's *English malady*, she does not consider the implications of the psychosomatic nature of this disease. The only creature in her book which enjoys "a nervous presence, a tremulous emotion sympathetic in its neurological connections" (p. 157), is a parrot shot by Robinson Crusoe (a sign of her bias towards the marginal).

Her book is deficient because Defoe and Swift are not fully represented here; but neither can they be used, as Flynn does, to represent the full range of opinion in the eighteenth century. The eighteenth-century body in her account is never revered as a temple for the soul or enjoyed as an agent of pleasure. It is always coarse, never refined, and neither governed by humours, animated by hydraulics or aetherialized by circulating nervous spirits and vibrating fibres. Bodies past and present are for Flynn "opaque material that obscure any meaning larger than their corporeal presence". (p. 9) They merely "block" the desire for transcendence which she assumes was the primary ideal of the eighteenth century.

Judith Hawley, London

J. WORTH ESTES, *Dictionary of protopharmacology: therapeutic practices, 1700–1850*, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications USA, 1990, pp. xvii, 229, illus., \$49.95 (0–88135–068–0).

Dr Estes has designed this book to fill a long-felt want amongst the reference tools at the command of students of medical history. The *Dictionary of protopharmacology* is attractively produced but unfortunately not entirely satisfactory.

The origins of pharmacology in the modern sense are usually traced to the appointment of the German Rudolf Buchheim (1820–1879) to the University of Dorpat (Tartu, Estonia), in 1847, with a forerunner in France in the person of François Magendie (1783–1855). Today pharmacology is regarded as an experimental science in which the responses and interactions of living tissues to chemical substances are studied. In the first half of the nineteenth century it had a very different meaning, being rather a combination of therapeutics and materia medica. In Jonathan Pereira's day (died 1853), it concerned itself with the traditional therapeutic use of drugs, their preparation, origins, and constituents; the sciences of botany, zoology, chemistry, and pharmacy were brought into play, but not that of physiology. So one may well ask, when the term "proto-pharmacology" is used, which "pharmacology" is meant? The sub-title, *Therapeutic practices*, is in fact the better of the two.

In the introduction, called 'Directions for use', Dr Estes writes that he has "focussed most entries . . . around the botanical nomenclatures and chemical concepts around the 1794 edition of the *Edinburgh Dispensatory*" (New Dispensatory?), and this is apparent. Anyone who has worked on the inventories of the early eighteenth-century apothecaries will find many omissions, as there are from the earlier pharmacopoeias. The *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* of 1721 names twelve animals, of which seven are not listed in this *Dictionary*. Surprisingly, pharmacopoeias are not listed at all, whether from London or Edinburgh or the Continent, such as that of Württemberg which for a time had a considerable vogue.

Cross-referencing is incomplete and inconsistent. Although 'Cerevisiae' are noted, 'Beers' are not; although 'Chloroform' appears, the name by which it was commonly known, "chloric ether" does not; 'Ether' has the note "see Aether Vitriolicus" but proves not to be listed. Quinine is cross-referenced to 'Cinchoma', as is 'Morphine' to 'Opium', but the same cannot be said for emetine and strychnine in respect to ipecacuanha and nux vomica. A brave attempt has been made to discuss the difficult question of weights and measures but has unfortunately not clarified the subject entirely. The well-known and frequently used sign for a pint is omitted, and, in England at least, 'oz' was taken to mean an avoirdupois, not apothecary, ounce. The meaning of the line, "1 lb. Apothecary (or Troy) = 5760/7000 lb. Avoirdupois" is not readily understood when it appears in a section relating American customary measures to international metric terms. Possibly it is a type-setting error, such as has occurred on pp. 34, 35 with the word 'CALIB'.