

scholars cannot write about the Enlightenment without seriously grappling with Reill's argument and evidence. Though there is much here that they will debate—especially the interpretations of figures like Lavoisier, Herder, and the Humboldt brothers—Reill has thrown down the gauntlet and presents the Enlightenment in a startling new way: a world not of brute matter and mathematical abstractions but one ruled by a vital, dynamic, and ever-changing nature.

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Clark Lawlor. *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006. viii + 243 pp. \$65.00 (ISBN-10: 0-230-02003-8; ISBN-13: 978-0-230-02003-0).

Consumption and Literature fulfills what its title promises. This is an interdisciplinary study of medical and literary history, not just the history of a motif in literature. In his introduction Lawlor gives a considered account of the relationship between the body and language and between medicine and literature. Consumption, he makes clear, is not a biologically fixed phenomenon or the invention of discourse. Instead it “has certain biological patterns that impose themselves on, and give rise to, cultural meanings of the disease” (p. 4), meanings that in turn shape the way it is experienced in real life. Medical, literary, and other writers have influenced one another in their understanding of the illness.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, a gulf seemed to arise between fiction and fact (p. 3): consumption came to be seen in the literary and popular consciousness as a romantic disease, its painful and ugly biological aspects elided. Lawlor takes this well-known fact and looks more closely and with greater historical range than critics have done hitherto at its causes, asking what it was about consumption that lent itself to such aestheticization, how this “killer disease” became “the object of glamorous representations” (p. 3). With a variety of sources—including medical texts, literary works, reviews, and diaries—Lawlor, after identifying the origins of the process with the Ancients, traces its development beginning with the Renaissance. Here, two traditions are identified: the humoral concept of consumptive love melancholy and the religious “good death,” to which consumption, because it typically progresses slowly and because it is not supposed to derange the mind, is particularly suited. Next Lawlor considers eighteenth-century consumption in the context of the Enlightenment's medicine of the nerves: the consumptive becomes a refined individual, whose suffering is a result of his extreme sensitivity to the world around him. Women and female characters such as Richardson's Clarissa are prone to consumption as well as men, but it makes them passive, aesthetic, spiritualized objects, whereas it endows their male



counterparts with creativity. This eighteenth-century interpretation of consumption underpins that of the Romantic period, the study of which forms the heart of Lawlor's study. Influenced also by Brunonianism—John Brown's concept that the body has a fixed amount of "excitability," which must be neither under- nor overstimulated—writers and critics of this era constructed "the myth of consumptive diseased tubercular genius" (p. 152) whose life-flame burned too brightly. Keats is the central figure here, but some minor consumptive poets—Michael Bruce, Henry Kirke White, and Robert Pollok—also prove the point and illustrate its class associations. Via a discussion of some American works, including Evangelical consolatory poetry and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which gives rise to a fascinating discussion of the racial implications of the consumptive myth, Lawlor pursues the consumptive trend into the Victorian era. In the industrializing age, consumption is understood as an expenditure of vital energies: the consumptive body becomes "a manic steam engine which devoured its fuel too quickly" (p. 177). The book then ends with a brief conclusion, linking the beginning of the end of the consumptive myth to Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882 and following some lingering traces into the twentieth century.

The failings of this study are to some extent a consequence of its breadth: Lawlor has a tendency to skip from one period, author, or theme to the next, treating some in summary fashion and drawing broad conclusions from few examples. Literary scholars may also regret that literary consumptions are sometimes discussed in their historical context at the expense of the context of the works in which they appear. The author's occasionally colloquial, vogueish style ("pining maidens made good copy—they were sexy" [p. 166], he writes) will appeal to some but not all readers. But this is a valuable study. Lawlor's juggling of a range of sources, fictional, medical, and biographical, illuminating their mutual influence while remaining sensitive to their differences, is impressive. His study is the most comprehensive cultural history of consumption we have to date, and it goes a long way to explaining a trend which has long been taken for granted but not entirely understood.

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Martin Dinges, ed. *Männlichkeit und Gesundheit im historischen Wandel ca. 1800–ca. 2000*. Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte, no. 27. Yearbook of the Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007. 398 pp. Ill. €54.00 (paperbound, 978-3-515-08920-3).

In the last decade, masculinity has emerged as a trendy specialty both in the history of gender and in the health sciences. These two fields are not easily reconciled.



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