

## Book Notice

Dawne McCance (ed.), *Hygieia: literature and medicine*, special issue of *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 2000, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. viii, 208, illus., published by University of Manitoba, 208 Tier Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3T 2N2 (fax: (204) 474 7584).

*Mosaic* has a well-deserved reputation for cutting-edge interdisciplinary criticism. It is a quarterly journal that aims to use insights from a variety of fields to illuminate the theoretical, practical and cultural resonances of literary works. Here, under the general editorship of Dawne McCance of the University of Manitoba, comes a special issue devoted to literature and medicine. The body as a construct features largely. Most of the twelve articles address late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction with the full battery of post-Derrida ideas. Especially interesting is the synthesis of themes that are usually regarded as binary oppositions. Faulkner's *The sound and the fury* is reconceived through blood and the menstrual cycle, viewed by Dana Medoro both as curse and cure. Faulkner's *Flags in the dust* is considered by Kirk Melnikoff as a damning critique of the medical profession. Harriet Martineau is given the once-over as a medical body and a lived

experience. So is the Hottentot Venus. Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny got his gun* (1939) allows Tim Blackmore to dwell on the cultural meaning of a man's body once he is armless, legless, sightless, and nearly headless too, a living corpse in whom all categories collapse, a set of organs without a body. Colonial medicine provides an essential element to *Martin Arrowsmith*, and Conan Doyle's non-Holmesian medical stories are given full attention.

The remainder include David Jarraway's interesting studies of the shifting rhetoric in recent Gay AIDS memoirs. These autobiographical accounts have, over a period of some ten years or so, moved from debilitating doom to a "defiant doubt" that brings their authors a renewed sense of being. Similarly, David Lashmet investigates Terry Gilliam's film *12 Monkeys* that reopens the popular theory that the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia distributed polio vaccine contaminated with simian immunodeficiency virus that subsequently mutated to HIV. Rather than predicting a form of nuclear holocaust, the film warns of apocalyptic plague. Plague, indeed, features throughout as an underlying motif. These are essays that bring together literature and medicine in fresh, exciting ways, showing the value of deliberate cultural overlap.