

rather than the *fin-de-siècle*, as the violent women spoke to a number of the era's specific ideologies where the destructive woman held particular poignancy. Violent women were given more attention in the media of the period because they related to, supported, and allowed writers to explore a number of established beliefs, ensuring that sensation fiction was a fertile mode of expression by the 1860s.

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M A Katritzky, *Women, medicine and theatre, 1500–1750: literary mountebanks and performing quacks*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, pp. xvi, 367, illus., £55.00 (hardback 978-0-7546-5084-3).

In 1617 the physician John Cotta warned readers of the dangers involved in consulting female medical practitioners: “here therefore are men warned of aduising with women counsellours . . . their authority in learned knowledge cannot be authentically, neither hath God and nature made them commissioners in the sessions of learned reason and vnderstanding” (p. 10). With access neither to university training nor to medical apprenticeships, women might be accused of “busie meddling” with the infirm or even of engaging in heresy or witchcraft. In *Women, medicine and theatre, 1500–1750*, M A Katritzky argues that quackery provided an unofficial route for women to enter the domains of both medical activity and theatrical practice. As scholars have underestimated links between the history of medicine and the history of performance, the medical activity of women is a neglected source with potential to illumine the place of women on the late medieval and early modern stage.

Katritzky uncovers detailed evidence relating to female quackery in travelogues, diaries, letters and physicians' accounts.

Mountebanks are traditionally regarded as a male category of healers, but, Katritzky argues, many in fact performed as husband-and-wife teams. Literally mounting trestle tables or benches in order to attract purchasers, they performed free at both indoor and outdoor venues, especially urban fairs and markets. Women charlatans tailored their services to female patients, providing midwifery and dental care, developing sophisticated placebo treatments, and offering early forms of counselling. Entertainers as much as healers, they often carried exotic or trained animals such as monkeys, snakes, scorpions, lizards—or the “skilfully fettered live fleas” (p. 92) observed by Thomas Platter among a Burgundian troupe in 1597. Sometimes staging full plays, and routinely inviting the interactive participation of their audiences, the real therapy they dispensed was perhaps the *antidotum melancholiae* provided by laughter and music.

Some of Katritzky's most interesting examples deal with off-shoots of mountebank activity. One chilling account by Johann Beer, published in 1683, describes the death of the “flying” doctor Charles Bernoin. Famous for his expertise in lithotomy and cataract surgery, the 58-year-old showman and surgeon offered sensational performances designed to showcase his supernatural medical prowess. Audiences would watch him ingesting hot oil and melted lead, and then treating himself onstage with his patented medicines. Bernoin fell to his death from a tightrope in 1673 onto the paving stones of a square in Regensburg when his firework-powered flying act went tragically wrong. Beer is as critical of Bernoin's spectacular arts as he is of performances by itinerant actresses and singers encountered in the streets, regarding their activities as threats alike to public order and decency.

Katritzky traces the history of mixed-gender mountebank activity alongside the emergence of women on the secular and religious stage. Medieval Easter plays often included a comic interlude caricaturing quack doctors and their wives. One play performed at

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