Emily Senior, *The Caribbean and the Medical Imagination, 1764–1834: Slavery, Disease and Colonial Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xii + 284 pp. (Cloth US\$99.99)

It is well known that empire and slavery in the Caribbean from the sixteenth century onward produced a distinctive and deadly disease regime, bringing smallpox, measles, bubonic plague, malaria, typhoid fever, yellow fever, influenza, yaws, and leprosy from Europe and Africa. This almost wiped out the indigenous population, struck down enslaved men and women weakened by punitive labor demands and insufficient nutrition, and produced a ratio of funerals to baptisms among the White colonists in Kingston, Jamaica of seven to one. Yet this fundamental part of the region's colonial "modernity"—the new institutional arrangements, mobile populations and social and cultural forms brought forth by its plantation societies—is rarely explored in cultural and literary histories of the region. As a necessary corrective, Emily Senior's book aims to put health and disease at the heart of the way the Caribbean was imagined by examining the literary and medical texts of planters, enslavers, Creoles, travelers, soldiers, physicians, and surgeons.

Doing so involves a dual form of interpretation, which together shapes a "medical humanities." First, and perhaps more conventionally, there is an understanding of the way health, illness and death, or cure are represented in literature. Second is the way that "literary form and theme" (p. 14) influence medical discourse itself, shaping what the body, the environment, and their orders and disorders are taken to be. This means that Senior works across many different sorts of texts from the Romantic period (the book appears in the series *Cambridge Studies in Romanticism*)—including poetry, novels, histories, medical treatises, and travelers' accounts—and provides multiple modes of interpretation, including those based on genre, form (including close readings of punctuation and footnotes in poetry), narrative, and content. Together, this gives readers what she calls "a literary history of colonial medical knowledge from the georgic to the gothic" (p. 17).

To succeed, such an endeavor requires close attention to particular texts, and the book is structured both chronologically and thematically across five chapters that deal with both well-known and more obscure works. The first two substantive chapters address the understanding of health and illness in the second half of the eighteenth century through a "medical geography" that associated disease and death with particular sorts of environments and landscapes. Chapter 1 examines the organicism of *The Sugar Cane* (1764), a four-book georgic poem and advice manual for planters by the physician and poet James Grainger who had lived and worked on St. Kitts. Chapter 2 works across a

range of late eighteenth-century medical treatises, poems, and accounts of the islands by George Heriot, Colin Chisholm, William Hillary, William Beckford, John Williamson, James Montgomery, and Matthew “Monk” Lewis to interrogate the construction of a “colonial picturesque” which associated the aesthetics of landscape—as set out through literary description—with healthy and unhealthy places. Chapters 3 and 4 then consider colonial bodies, with the first reading John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1790) as revealing a cultural politics of skin, sentiment, and suffering in a context of racialized violence; and the second focusing on yellow fever in George Pickard’s *Notes on the West Indies* (1806) and the radical reformer John Thelwell’s novel of the revolt on Saint Domingue, *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801), to show how they understand the West Indian creole figure as a bringer of health and restorative order rather than as a signifier of disease. Finally, Chapter 5 reads the gothic fictions of the early nineteenth century—the accounts of Three-Figured Jack in the *Treatise on Sugar* (1799) by the Jamaican surgeon-general Benjamin Moseley and the 1825 melodrama *Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack* by William Murray, and the novel *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827)—as anxious examinations of obeah and revolt as dangerous contagions.

Inevitably, as this listing of authors and texts shows, this is predominantly a White, male “colonial imagination,” although Helena Wells’s *Constantia Neville; or, the West Indian* (1800) and Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda* (1801) and “The Grateful Negro” (1804) are used as brief counterpoints in the later chapters. Yet the focus on illness and death is productive of an argument that builds throughout the book, and toward the end of slavery itself, that all the literary forms, discursive structures, and “epistemological and narrative models” (p. 193) that make up this particular Caribbean medical imagination cannot ever contain the multiple modes of life, death, knowledge, and even hope, that were brought together in what Richard Sheridan called a “Pandora’s box of debilitating and lethal pathogens” (quoted p. 3).

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