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Geoffrey Sill. *The Cure of the Passions and the Origins of the English Novel.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ix + 261pp. £40. ISBN 0-521-80805-7.

The Cure of the Passions and the Origins of the English Novel is filled with interesting information about eighteenth-century culture and the history of the novel. The book's thesis links the perennially studied origins of the English novel to revolutions in medicine and morals from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. In a nutshell, Geoffrey Sill argues that the English novel came about in order to address a crisis in the philosophy of human nature, not only as "product" or passive "response" to the crisis, but as an active force in the field of culture and the quality of individual lives. Accepting Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood—itself related to the earlier even more radical natural philosophy and theology of Michael Servetus, who emerges as the hero of the study—eighteenth-century writers such as Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, and Burney create narratives that embrace and enact the idea that the passions, which complexly determine human behaviour, can be "cured" through narrative means. The eighteenth-century novel therefore performs a version of "art therapy" upon the diseased minds of characters, readers, and modern British culture. Reflection redeems mankind; religion and morality can triumph even in a world of modern medicine.

The book's thesis will challenge scholars and teachers to rethink their approaches to the eigh-teenth-century novel, as Sill clearly hopes. Citing Michael McKeon's *Origins of the English Novel*, Sill argues that "Questions of truth, questions of virtue, and *perhaps especially the question of the passions* dominated all fields of discourse through the eighteenth century" (p. 12, emphasis added). The "question of the passions" involves medicine and theology equally, as the book's argument sets out. With the discovery of the circulation of blood and the real role of the heart in human physiology, the old theory of the humours was fully exploded. This opened space for a fuller understanding of the complex interplay between body and mind in any number of ailments. It also led directly to challenges to the nature and even existence of the Holy Trinity. *The Cure of the Passions and the Origins of the English Novel* includes an analysis spread over several chapters of the cultural importance of Servetus, the Spanish theologian and physician. Servetus predated Britain's William Harvey by a century, but this was only known (and became an issue) in the late seventeenth century, when William Wotton "resurrected" the "ghost" of Servetus "as the spirit of modern learning" (p. 47) in *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, his riposte to Temple's "Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning." Thus Servetus—and the nature of the passions—became a central element in the Battle of the Books. It was the work of novelists such as Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, and Burney (the four primarily addressed in the book) to reconcile the modern understanding of human physiology with Christian theology. (Sill points out that although Servetus was burned as a heretic by his sometime correspondent John Calvin, he was no atheist; the eighteenth-century novelists were, in a significant sense, catching up with Servetus.)

The individual chapters include a curious mix of cultural history and literary criticism. The first chapter, "The Physician of the Mind from Zeno to Arbuthnot," moves back and forth between the history of medicine and Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* to introduce the "physicians of the mind," who understood the psychological basis for ailments concerning the passions but saw

the human being as more complicated than the mechanistic version put forward by Hobbes or Mandeville. Chapter 2 discusses the "ghost" of Servetus. Chapter 3 concerns Alexander Monro (the son, although the father's importance is cited as well) and the eighteenth-century understanding of the nervous system in order to lay the groundwork for sensibility in culture and the novel. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 address Defoe, both his uncategorizable works such as *The Consolidator*, *The Natural History of the Devil*, and *A Journal of the Plague Year*, and what we now consider "novels"—*Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*. The Devil works by manipulating the passions; the genre of the novel cures the passions in the way that Dr Arbuthnot tended to spirit as well as body. Chapter 7 contains fascinating scholarship on the Reverend John Lewis, a bitter opponent of Quakerism whose third-person autobiography is linked with his defence of the Church of England. Lewis's object, like Defoe's, Fielding's, Richardson's, and Burney's (although these writers used different means), is simultaneously to acknowledge and contain the passions and to defend the established order. (It is a weakness of the book that the chapter on Lewis seems more subtle than the hurried readings of the novels.) Chapter 8 looks at *Tom Jones*; Sill argues that the "Somewhat" in Tom's breast that prevents him from abandoning Molly Seagrim is not, as the Wesleyan editors annotate it, conscience, but is instead an involuntary and innate benevolence. The cultural role of the novel is to cure those individuals who allow base self-interest to obstruct this benevolence. In contrast, Richardson and Burney effect an "extirpation" rather than a cure of the passions that is simultaneously bleak and interesting. Sill provides an epilogue on Edgeworth's *Belinda* that sets out the nineteenth-century replacement of the passions by "emotion." Finally, three appendices deal with some of the scholarly problems in understanding the documents concerning John Lewis. The appendices are fascinating and provide a real contribution to scholarship.

This slender volume (two hundred pages without notes) needs to support its strong statement on the importance of the passions in culture and as a generator of fiction. It must also provide support for its analysis of eighteenth-century fiction. That is too much to ask. The sections of the book that address novels take second position and often seem like outlines rather than fully realized critical readings. Still, Sill's study, along with other recently published works including Scott Paul Gordon's *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640–1770*, Blakey Vermeule's *The Party of Humanity: Writing Moral Psychology in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, and Barbara M. Benedict's *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry*, lays a foundation for further studies on the relationships among fiction, moral philosophy, psychology, and science in the eighteenth century. The emphasis on the *origins* of the novel might have been a mistake, although an understandable one in light of Sill's talent for unearthing interesting but unusual aspects of cultural history. The book's argument is ultimately asserted rather than proved, but scholars will find much of this study provocative and useful.

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