

production and distribution. Current scholarship trends in book history should further illuminate this version of Ireland's novelist heritage in coming years, and may ultimately present a very different portrait of the Irish fictional tradition.

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THE ALCHEMY OF MEDICINE AND PRINT: THE EDWARD WORTH LIBRARY, DUBLIN. Edited by Danielle Westerhof. Pp 224, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2010. €55.

This interdisciplinary collection of essays originated from a conference in 2008, which was hosted by the Royal Society in London to celebrate the 275th anniversary of the foundation of the Edward Worth Library in 1733. The library acquired trust status in the 1990s and is housed in the Health Service Executive building in Dublin, formerly Dr Steevens's hospital. The books in the library remain in their original cases in the room specifically designed for them. The library contains works dedicated to historical, alchemical, astronomical, mathematical, medical and philosophical topics.

In the majority of cases, the essays are concerned either with the founder of the library himself, the noted physician, Edward Worth, or the items he purchased for his collection. Collectively they explore themes such as the connection between medicine and philosophy; the relationship between medicine and the printed word; the foundation and use of private medical libraries; the interaction between author, text and audience; and how medical education was shaped along confessional lines in the early modern period.

Lisa Lambert's piece is a prosopographical study of the membership of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in Dublin during the 1690s. It explores not altogether uncharted territory in its portrayal of the shared political, religious (Protestant) and educational backgrounds of these men, the founding fathers of the college. Davis Coakley's contribution is an intelligent case study of Edward Worth's milieu (as part of Dublin's professional elite), his medical career and book-collecting practices. Using library catalogues of four Irish physicians of the later Stuart era (including Worth himself), Elizabethanne Boran argues that elite members of the Irish medical profession were acutely aware of contemporary debates and developments in continental chemistry. Similarly, Jean-Paul Pittion examines medical developments in Europe through a detailed examination of the medical collection of Marsh's Library, Dublin, founded in 1701 and incorporated in 1707. He argues that the collection contains not only texts indebted to traditional Galenic medicine but is reflective of more 'modern', late seventeenth-century, medical developments. Charles Benson's essay contends that the Protestant professional elite in Ireland (including luminaries such as Samuel Foley, William Molyneux, St George Ashe, and William King) collected books not just as status symbols, or to cater for their own personal interests, but to educate their peers and familiarise them with new scientific ideas.

On quite a different note, Bill McCormack explores the universal language project in seventeenth-century British science and philosophy through a literary critique of Maria Edgeworth's four-volume novel, *Patronage*, published in 1814. Michael Hunter examines Robert Boyle's attitude to print, contending that Boyle, a leading scientist and prolific publisher, believed in the 'crucial yet normative role of print' (p. 110), and as a result sought to control the reception and distribution of his own scientific treatises. Danielle Westerhof's article explores an agricultural treatise written in Latin in 1306, of which Edward Worth bought two copies. Worth's interest in the work is seen here to have been sparked, in common with many before and after him, by its implicit medico-philosophical theme of the maintenance and restoration of health.

Ilham Ibnou-Zahair's 'meditation of the troubled identity of the healer from Hippocrates to Avicenna ... raises the issue of the relationship between medicine and

philosophy' (p. 21), while Magdalena Kozluk's descriptive piece uses single treatises and compilations contained in the Worth collection to explore early eighteenth-century attitudes to syphilis and the search for a cure. Included by Kozluk is a very helpful hand-list of works in the library dedicated to the disease.

Howard Caygill's contribution concerns the role of medicine in the philosophy of René Descartes, while Sachiko Kusakawa's wonderfully-illustrated essay examines Edward Worth's copy of Andreas Vesalius's *De fabrica humani corporis*, a sixteenth-century work reprinted in 1725. Kusakawa argues that Vesalius's book stresses the importance of dissection and bones to medicine and its stylised and detailed illustrations perform the dual role of an anatomical teaching tool and vehicle for artistic expression.

This is a thematically and chronologically disparate collection and some contributions are perhaps not as historiographically grounded as they might have been. However these shortcomings are mitigated by the fact that this is a work produced by largely non-historians from a wide variety of disciplines. More importantly, the book demonstrates the possibilities of further academic study within the fields of early modern 'science', philosophy and medicine using the Worth collection. Furthermore, it comes at a time of increased historical interest in the rise of print culture in the early Irish Enlightenment and in the history of the book in general. The collection should also be commended for the inclusion of a number of excellent black and white illustrations, a particularly welcome addition as the early history of medicine in Ireland is not well provided for in terms of easily available, contemporary imagery.

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THE TWO UNIONS: IRELAND, SCOTLAND, AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1707–2007. By Alvin Jackson. Pp xiii, 467. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2011. £35.

The Scottish National Party (S.N.P.) leader and current First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, is fond of suggesting parallels between himself and Parnell, and of quoting the not unambiguous statement by Parnell in 1890 that no man had the right to block the march of a nation. Indeed the quote adorned the frontispiece of the S.N.P.'s 'National Conversation' document issued soon after it took power in Edinburgh as a minority government in 2007. Now Salmond looks forward to a referendum verdict in favour of breaking a political union that has lasted since 1707.

Salmond's curiosity about Parnell is reason enough to prompt questions about the two Unions, that of Scotland and the Irish one of 1801. How do the two experiences of union compare? Given the current political pre-eminence of Salmond and his party, could what is left of the Irish Union outlast the more illustrious Scottish example?

As Alvin Jackson notes in this distinguished book, there has been little in the way of scholarly comparative appraisals of the two unions. Indeed, as he justifiably observes, modern historians have been reluctant to identify links and points in common, particularly political historians (p. 22). Jackson sets out to provide a rigorous comparative treatment of the Irish and Scottish experience of union, and to explain why both have endured, if only partly in the Irish case.

The result is a richly textured work by a historian at the top of his game. Jackson's command of the historiographical debates pertaining to a daunting range of periods and issues in the history of the two unions, and his lucidly argued judgements and insights combine to put this book in pole position in the area of comparative historical studies concerning these islands. It is a book that could hardly have been timelier given the amount of speculation and conjecture surrounding the possible effects of independence