Introduction

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There is a sense in which every model of classical reading—and writing—is exceeded by the essays in this Special Issue of *Mosaic*. For these are essays that bring together literature and medicine in ways that do not subsume one to the other: no art/science or science/art dichotomy underpins the essays, no binary opposition (inside/outside, essence/appearance, *logos*/*mythos*) governs them; no oppositional structure as such. Rather, the essays collected in *Hygieia* invite us to think about the convergence of literature and medicine along the lines of what Jacques Derrida, in "Plato's Pharmacy" (in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, 1981) calls the *pharmakon*. My opening comments derive from Derrida's essay, to which I returned first, after reading Dana Medoro's "'Between Two Moons Balanced': Menstruation and Narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*," then again, after reading Robert Tobin's "Prescriptions: The Semiotics of Medicine and Literature," and, for yet a third time, after reading through the page proofs for this issue. According to Derrida, as Medoro reminds us in her essay, the *pharmakon*—as a gift of Thoth, the god of writing, who allows for a passage between oppositions—cannot be assigned to *either* one pole *or* the other within a binary structure of difference. It partakes of both, as does writing, which is called

Mosaic 33/4 0027-1276-00/00v004$02.00©Mosaic

a *pharmakon* in Plato's *Phaedrus*; it (the *pharmakon*, writing) folds one pole into the other and so displaces the oppositional mode. The fundamental ambiguity that results from this situation characterizes all signifying systems, including literature and medicine, and their institutions. In the spirit of *Hygieia*, these essays celebrate such wholeness-in-difference.

Expect some surprises, then, some departures from the "classical" reading of texts. Medoro gives one example. Invoking Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon*, albeit in a poisonous way, she complicates gender construction in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Just as the *pharmakon* is both remedy and poison, so, Medoro contends, Faulkner's novel "takes the concept of Eve's curse and unsettles its terms, illuminating the buried word *cure* within *curse*." Moreover, menstrual blood in the novel is not only the site of a counter-narrative of cultural healing, but it is also "inextricable from the process of writing, from the ink on the page." As *pharmakon*, menstrual blood "actually permeates" the body of the text, transforming our understanding of the "symbolic economy" that writing is. Because medicine and literature share this symbolic economy, Robert Tobin turns to semiotics as a means of exploring the historical and theoretical implication of one in the other for instance, the reliance of medicine on literary narrative: physicians interpret and tell stories, Tobin points out; medicine employs grand narratives to account for the beginning and end of disease, and "the entire model of medico-scientific research can be seen as a classic narrative, with a hero, after enduring trials and tribulations, returning home successfully." For Cynthia Sugars, in "The Anatomy of Influence: Robertson Davies's Psychosomatic Medicine," the links between medicine and literature are both interdisciplinary and intertextual, a point that she demonstrates through a detailed reading of Robertson Davies's *The Cunning Man*, and, by way of outlining an "anatomy of influence" among this novel, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

In David Jarraway's "From Spectacular to Speculative: The Shifting Rhetoric in Recent Gay AIDS Memoirs," the link between medicine and literature is narrative. Jarraway investigates an autobiographical narrative, the gay-AIDS memoir, as a species of "life writing" that, between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, undergoes a discursive shift from a "spectacular" to a "speculative" form of rhetoric, "a transformation of the rhetoric of doom into the rhetoric of doubt." This shift parallels the change (from the "pathological" to the "preventive") in another, epidemiological, narrative that, during the same period, loosens its fixation on AIDS as a gay epidemic calling for punitive modes of control and begins to approach it as a

much more complex, and more ambiguous, epidemiological and socio-cultural event. Given this transition, how do we account for Terry Gilliam's 1996 film *12 Monkeys,* which, as David Lashmet puts it, "predicts an apocalytic plague"? You might be surprised by Lashmet's essay, "'The Future is History': *12 Monkeys* and the Origin of AIDS," for the plague in question here is as much a psychological as a biological phenomenon, and, while it cannot be simply subsumed to the discourse on AIDS, the film, through its recourse to catastrophe, offers a critique of "the power dynamics of modern medical institutions" in the age, and through the experience, of AIDS. Gilliam's film, Lashmet notes, is set in postmodern America; so, surprisingly enough, is the 1939 novel that Tim Blackmore considers in "Lazarus Machine: Body Politics in Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*." Based on the true story of a dismembered World War I soldier, Trumbo's novel, in Blackmore's reading, "sees through modernity's moment to a time beyond even Vietnam," looks ahead all the way to "video war." Accordingly, in his essay, Blackmore, by way of reading Trumbo, "trace[s] an arc through modernity's idea of the body machine, and the way that machine acts in war, to the development of the postmodern body and war."

In Judith Leggatt's "Raven's Plague: Pollution and Disease in Lee Maracle's *Ravensong*," the outbreak of plague provides a site from which to investigate cross-cultural narrative exchange between Salish and European-Canadians and, more broadly, "the problems facing cross-cultural communication in the colonial setting." A plague breaks out again, and occasions another cross-cultural interaction, in Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, "perhaps the most well-known work of American literature focused on medicine," Lisa Lynch suggests. In "*Arrowsmith* Goes Native: Medicine and Empire in Fiction and Film," Lynch reads the novel as a critique of colonial rule and of the American medical practice that serves it; after considering the novel, Lynch shows how the 1931 film based on it was altered so as to make the *Arrowsmith* narrative more palatable to its American viewing audience. Narrative exchange undergoes another analysis, this time as a case study for medical ethics, in "Arthur Conan Doyle as Doctor and Writer," where James Krasner, reading Doyle's work, investigates both narrative control and narrative collaboration as different models of doctor-patient engagement. In an essay that also has implications for ethics, Kirk Melnikoff considers William Faulkner's critique of the modern American medical profession, proffered through his novel *Flags in the Dust*. In "carvin' white folks": Faulkner, Southern Medicine, and *Flags in the Dust*," Melnikoff argues

that Faulkner's novel "demonstrates a pervading concern with the constituting potential of the profession's rationalization of health and the human body." The novel also "underscores the complexity and specificity of medical practice in the South after World War I, suggesting a need for a more regionalized and localized historical study of medicine's social history as a profession in the first half of the twentieth century."

I close my introduction to *Hygieia* by mentioning two remarkable, and surprising, essays that put gender and the female body at the centre of our historical and theoretical study of the link between medicine and literature: Anka Ryall's "Medical Body and Lived Experience: The Case of Harriet Martineau," and Anca Vlasopolos's "Venus Live! Sarah Bartmann, the Hottentot Venus, Re-Membered." Ryall's essay highlights "the slippage between clinical diagnoses, especially of gynaecological illnesses, and cultural authority" in nineteenth-century Britain, and it does so by outlining the medical history of the writer Harriet Martineau, and by juxtaposing some of Martineau's "first-person subjective descriptions of her lived experience" with her surgeon's "biomedical third-person approach to her body." Vlasopolos considers the Venus Hottentot, as an exotic exhibited in early-nineteenth-century London and Paris, also as an ongoing artifact, a figure through which we might—must—read historical and contemporary "discourses" about sexuality and woman.

This is, indeed, a special issue.