

B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969) abandons the traditional format of a book completely, as it is unbound and placed in a box. Not only does this foreground the material form of the text, but it also rejects any linearity whatsoever as it is the reader has to establish the order in which to read given elements.

In the final chapter, Maziarczyk focuses on the books that combine the experimental elements already discussed with the use of other semiotic resources, such as photos. The graphic elements are blended into the text creating "total books", where the visual elements cannot be interpreted separately from the text as they become a part of it. Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) includes numerous elements, creating a multimodal formation that seems to wish to compete with the dynamic electronic media. The novel about a house becomes a house—a mystical labyrinth of clashing narrations, academic digressions, and metareferentiality. Steve Tomasula in his *VAS* (2004) explores the connection between the body and the book, and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) involves multiple media to better convey the post-WTC world and its inadequate means of communication. In these novels, as the author claims, the graphic elements serve a more significant role than simply illustrating the fictive universe. They rather tend to undermine the stories, and to foreground the materiality of the book to draw attention to the artificiality of mimetic representation.

Maziarczyk's *The Novel as Book: Textual Materiality in Contemporary Fiction in English* traces the development of experimentation with form. As the author discusses most contemporary fictive endeavors alongside novels marking the beginning of postmodernist experimentation with form in the sixties and seventies, this study is an insightful analysis of the changing attitude to the semiotics of materiality. The book is logically organized and well-informed. The only drawback of the study is that only one illustration of each novel is included.

Małgorzata Olsza and Zuzanna Ludwa-Śmigielska  
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Carmen Birkle and Johanna Heil, eds. *Communicating Disease: Cultural Representations of American Medicine*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013. 465 pages.

The immensely popular "Literature, Arts, and Medicine Database," created in 1993 at New York University School of Medicine, was designed to provide scholars, educators, students and patients with resources in the field of "medical humanities" which, according to the founders, "include an interdisciplinary field of humanities

(literature, philosophy, ethics, history and religion), social science (anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, sociology), and the arts (literature, theater, film, and visual arts)" (<http://medhum.med.nyu.edu>). The database was not, however, the first to attest to the interdisciplinary connections between medicine and the humanities. These connections were brought to light with the introduction of humanities programs in medical school curricula, the rise of literature and medicine as an academic discipline in 1972 when Joanne Trautmann started teaching literature at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, the works of Rita Charon in narrative medicine and the founding of the academic journal *Literature and Medicine* at John Hopkins University (Hawkins and McEntyre 3–4).

Carmen Birkle and Johanna Heil's collection, *Communicating Disease: Cultural Representations of American Medicine*, provides an excellent example of how medicine and the humanities meet to produce innovative discourses and insightful comments which effectively challenge reductive dichotomies between the humanities and natural sciences, with the position of privilege often allocated to the latter. In an attempt to draw attention to the interdisciplinary underpinnings of the discipline, the editors have selected texts that consciously address the question of how medicine and literature/cultural studies comment on the same phenomena and how their discourses complement rather than exclude each other. In the words of Birke and Heil, the aim of this volume is to show "that literature and other cultural products do not stage gigantic monologues addressed to one in particular, but rather offer the opportunity for dialogue between the humanities and the natural sciences, between literary studies and medicine as two sides of the same life-science coin" (xvii–xviii).

The collection is divided into four sections, each addressing various aspects of the "interfaces of literature and medicine," emphasizing different positions of gaze: those of the doctors as well as those of the patients. The first part, entitled, "Negotiating Medical Practice," reveals the multifaceted nature of medicine and its involvement in such diverse agendas as ethnic and class issues as well as globalization. For instance, Marcel Hartwig in "Some with their fear th' Infection bring, And only shun the Doctor's Skill": Medical Practice and the Paper War during Boston's Smallpox Epidemic of 1721," traces the birth of knowledge about inoculation against smallpox that took place at the intersection of two professions, physicians and clergymen, and consequently the evolution of the discourses used by its opponents and supporters (Cotton Mather among them). A brilliant example of an interdisciplinary reading bringing together literary studies, medicine and postcolonial studies is offered by Stephanie Browner, author of *Profound Science and Elegant Literature: Imagining Doctors in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005), in her chapter titled "Resocializing Literature and Medicine: Poverty, Health, and Medical Science in Postcolonial Literature." Analyzing two recent novels, Aravind

Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1995), Browner calls for a resocialization of medicine, which remains blind to the fact that the suffering of those who live in extreme poverty is often preventable, thus emphasizing the ethical dimension of medical practices. In the analyzed texts, medicine participates in the socioeconomic structures that generate power and wealth and consistently deprive the poor of access to decent health care.

The prevailing motif of section two, entitled "Subverting the Medical Profession," is gender and subversive interventions into typical portraits of physicians as they were painted when the profession was taking shape in the nineteenth century. The essays offered in this part, Carla Bittel's "A Literary Physician? The Paris Writings of Mary Putnam Jacobi," Antje Dallmann's "Doctors Are Never Mistaken: Doctor Romances and Re-Negotiations of the *Nature* of Marriage in Late Nineteenth-Century America," Kirsten Twelbeck's "How Far Could They Go? Imprisoned Nurses, Unsexed Angels, and the Transformation of True Womanhood in Civil War America" and Katja Schmieder's "Do Not Cross"—TV Women Doctors Trespassing on Male Territory," all tell stories of women who enter the (forbidden) spaces—medical universities, examination rooms, hospitals, morgues—entirely dominated by men and how they invade and conquer these spaces on their own terms, significantly redefining the terms of medical practice.

The third section, "Transmitting Disease," takes up the theme of communicating disease and concepts such as the mobility of diseases, infections, epidemics and plagues, their effects on individuals, communities and entire nations as well as their ideological implications. While the first three contributors, Imke Kimpel, Ingrid Gessner and Astrid Haas, concentrate on literary responses to these issues, Rüdiger Kunow, in "The Biology of Community: Contagious Diseases, Old Age, Biotech, and Cultural Studies," discusses the case of Mary Mallon, known as Typhoid Mary, and demonstrates how the topic of contagion can be expanded to comment on the "biotechnicalization" of human life and the production of "failed bodies."

The final section looks into the healing potential of narratives. Narratives dealing with personal experiences of pain, illness, grief and death are now well-established as separate literary genres and valued in patient-doctor communication. The essays in this section draw attention to the complexity of the language which attempts to deal with trauma, its metaphorical nature and, not surprisingly, its limitations when faced with the task of expressing unspeakable pain. The contributors re-examine such classic texts as Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*, Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* and George Lakoff's *Metaphors We Live By* (all in Christine Marks's contribution) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Anna

Thiemann, Peter Schneck) but also offer insightful analyses of more recent texts such as Siri Hustvedt's *The Shaking Woman or a History of My Nerves* (Anna Thiemann), Richard Powers' *The Echo Maker* (Johanna Heil, Birgit Däwes), John Banville's *The Sea* and Richard B. Wright's *October* (Anca-Raluca Radu).

The closing essay in the collection, Dietrich von Engelhardt's "The World of Medicine in the Medium of Literature: Structures, Dimensions, Perspectives," serves as an apt conclusion for the entire collection. Engelhardt, as a medical historian, demonstrates medicine's long history of involvement with literature as well as its transnational character which in turn draws attention to the two fields' common interests in the changing context of globalized cultures.

Many of the remaining essays are no less interesting but the extensive scope of the project does not allow for a detailed presentation here of each of the discussed aspects of how medicine and literature interact to produce interesting dialogues. *Communicating Disease* is indeed an eclectic collection (which, contrary to what its title suggests, does include texts centered on British culture) whose aim is not only to demonstrate the diversity of cultural representations of American medicine but, moreover, to define the premises on which the two fields meet and interact. The collection is strongly recommended for those who already see medicine and literature in dialogue as well as for those eager to adopt the new perspective.

### Work Cited

Anne Hunsaker Hawkins and Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, eds. *Teaching Literature and Medicine*. New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000. Print.

Joanna Ziarkowska  
University of Warsaw

Ewa Antoszek, Katarzyna Czerwiec-Dykiel, and Izabella Kimak, eds. *Inne bębny: różnica i niezgoda w literaturze i kulturze amerykańskiej* (Different Drums: Rebellion and Resistance in American Literature and Culture). Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2013. 199 pages.

*Inne bębny: różnica i niezgoda w literaturze i kulturze amerykańskiej* is a collection of essays by Polish scholars which explore a broadly understood theme of rebellion and resistance in contemporary American literature and culture. The first part of the title refers directly to Henry David Thoreau's classic—*Walden, or*