

doi:10.1017/mdh.2013.5

Adam Budd (ed.), *John Armstrong's 'The Art of Preserving Health': Eighteenth-Century Sensibility in Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. xxii + 302, £65.00, hardback, ISBN: 9780754663065.

This book is a good idea and a very welcome addition to the burgeoning field of literature and medicine. Adam Budd argues for the importance to our understanding of 'the cultural, social and medical history of the Enlightenment' of John Armstrong's regimen poem *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744) (p. ix). The poem remained in print across Europe and America well into the nineteenth century and was regarded as a means of conveying practical well and moral advice in a digestible form, albeit Miltonic blank verse combined with the georgic genre's impetus to the cultivation of instrumental knowledge via poetry. Structured in four books on traditional classical 'non-natural' themes of air, diet, exercise and the passions, the poem has been neglected in the twentieth century as medical and poetic fashions have dictated that poetry is not the medium for scientific instruction.

There is an excellent general introduction, which usefully contextualises the poem in terms of Armstrong's career and more general cultural discourses, and refines the narrative that over-emphasises the importance of Cheyne and Whytt in the transmission of the 'culture' of sensibility (p. 5). He argues that 'the progressive philosophy [of Armstrong's Edinburgh medical training] ... holds that evocative representations of physical and emotional sensibility should enable readers to attend to their own symptoms before they overwhelm them as disease' (p. 33). This use of sensibility enabled the innovative Armstrong to enter the patient's perspective and engage the sufferer in a literary cure.

The poem itself is heavily annotated, replete with both medical and literary information, and again useful to both literary and historical scholars and their students. One is led to ponder the question of the use of poetry and our post-Romantic concept of literary value, which ceased to favour the didactic purpose of the georgic mode. It is amusing to read a footnote on cheese – 'that which Cestria sends, tenacious paste/Of solid milk (p. 68, line 50–1) – explaining that 'Cheshire was England's leading dairy region', but this laughter is prompted by the modern sense that elevated blank verse should not be applied to such practical subject matter. Contemporary readers had different views, as the enormous popularity of the poem attests.

Budd helpfully supplements the transcribed and annotated main text of the poem with contextual documents, running under the general headings of 'poetry', 'theory of the georgic' and 'medical documents'. He also supplies a 'selected chronology of significant figures, events, and publications', and a 'chronology of classical texts'. The poetry section features: Thomas Creech, *The plague of Athens from the Latin of Lucretius*, 1682; Anne Finch, *A nocturnal reverie*, 1713; James Thomson, *A hymn on solitude*, 1748, and his 'Preface', *Winter. A poem*, 1726; Edward Young, *Night the first*, 1742; and Thomas Warton, *The pleasures of melancholy. A poem*, 1747. The theory of the georgic uses: Joseph Addison, *An essay on the Georgics*, 1697; Virgil, *The Georgicks*, trans. 1741, John Martin; and Joseph Trapp, *Of didactic or perceptive poetry*, 1711. The medical documents are: Richard Bradley, *The plague at Marseilles consider'd*, 1720; George Cheyne, *An essay of health and long life*, 1724; Anonymous, *A letter to George Cheyne*, 1724; John Tristram, *The ill state of physicke in Great Britain*, 1727; and John Armstrong, 'Preface', *A Full View of All the Diseases Incident to Children*, 1742. This contextual information cuts both ways:

it will be helpful to literary scholars who are less familiar with the medical traditions, and to historical scholars who might need more help with the literary contexts.

I have some caveats about the book, however: there are some errors of transcription and interpretation of the primary texts, some persistent typographical errors, and some gaps in the critical scholarship. The first footnotes in the general introduction are bunched together and come out as footnote 12 in the main text, but separate into 1 and 2 when we reach the foot of the page (p. 1). Clifford Siskin comes out as Clifford Siskind. I, apparently, am D. Lawlor rather than 'C'. Herman Boerhaave, one of the most famous physicians of the period, is Hermann Boerhaave in the index, and in G. A. Lindeboom's book cited in the notes becomes *Hermann Hoerhaave* (fn 88, p. 20).

Budd tells us the '*The Art of Preserving Health* largely remains overlooked, even by most students of the eighteenth century, a hardcover edition of 1979 notwithstanding' (p. ix). This is mostly true, but books one and four were published in facsimile with full scholarly apparatus by myself and Akihito Suzuki (eds) in *Sciences of Body and Mind*, Vol. 2 of *Literature and Science 1660–1834* (anthology), Gen. Ed. Judith Hawley, 8 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003). There is no reference to this substantial attempt to raise the profile of the poem. This anthology also included Edward Baynard's *Health: A Poem* (1740), the early-century comical equivalent of Armstrong's poem, and immensely popular in its own right, yet is mentioned only once by Budd, and that as 'doggerel', which is only partly the case. Having said that, Budd's edition is more comprehensive than the two books excerpted in the 2003 edition both in terms of the primary text and of the annotation, introduction and contextual information.

Carolyn Williams' review of this book has pointed out astutely that some mistranscriptions lead to errors in annotation of the contextual documents: "'much Fileing and Finishing" (George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, London: George Strahan; Bath: J. Leake, 1724, p. xviii) becomes "pitch Fileing and Finishing". Confusion ensues.[†] She also notes that flat misinterpretations of the poem occur: 'his note on [book 1] line 169 also says, "Armstrong is warning that dry air dilutes the lymphatic fluid by thinning the blood", yet the passage as a whole says that it forces the lymph to evaporate from the skin, which leads to thickening of the blood'.

Sometimes Budd makes a large claim that is not substantiated entirely by the poem: he tells us that 'by the mid-1740s ... hydraulic language had become a meaningless cliché', yet the poem is packed with examples of such language (see lines 495 onwards of book 2, for an extended elaboration of the hydraulic description of the body). Iatromechanics was not incompatible with the emergent language of sensibility quite yet.

Overall this is a book to be welcomed and used, whether it be by medical historians or literary scholars, but the user needs to be vigilant to the occasional errors that intrude at various levels. A shame, as the general project has a great deal to recommend it, and it would be helpful if other scholars were to produce this type of edition in works of literary-medical interest.

Clark Lawlor

Northumbria University, UK

[†] <http://www.bsls.ac.uk/reviews/early-modern-and-enlightenment/adam-budd-ed-john-armstrongs-the-art-of-preserving-health/>.