set Turner's ideas in their contemporary context, while the rather Whiggish separation of his various areas of interest militates against a proper understanding of his intellectual development.

The book is particularly weak on medical history, of which its author virtually disavows any firsthand knowledge: even its account of Turner's religious and social ideas, however, is disappointingly pedestrian and old-fashioned. Its intended audience is a puzzle. At one point, the author professes the work to be aimed at "the non-specialist reader", but it is difficult to see how many of these are likely to gain access to it at the very high price at which it has been published. On the other hand, scholars resigned to paying such prices for scholarly monographs might reasonably expect better value for their money than they are offered here.

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PIERO CAMPORESI, *The incorruptible flesh: bodily mutation and mortification in religion and folklore,* trans. Tania Croft-Murray and Helen Elsom, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 286, £25.00/$44.50.

Piero Camporesi, historian of culture and professor of Italian literature at Bologna, here examines cookery books as well as recondite texts, sermons as well as Pharmacopoeias. Instead of investigating the "high culture" of the academies and the great thinkers, he prefers the voices of unknown small-town intellectuals who offer a more accurate reflection of popular mentality and who knew well the hopes and fears of the illiterate plebs. His attention is focused particularly on the seventeenth century, inasmuch as it is the fullest in contradictions. On the one hand, Kepler and Galileo were affirming scientific knowledge, the mathematical reasoning that gave order to the world; on the other, there was the triumph of the baroque and of irrationalism, where the logic of life mastered the logic of theology as well as of science. The object of this book, as in the earlier *Il pane selvaggio* (1980), *Il sugo della vita* (1984), and *Le officine dei sensi* (1985), is the human body, not so much in its social practices (food, dress, hygiene, etc.) as in the collective imagination which, centring on the body, reveals obsessions with life and death, desires for survival on earth and in heaven. The key to this voyage of the imagination, Camporesi suggests, is that of the world turned upside down: society is oppressed with wars, famine, plagues; it thus yearns for a paradise where man can live for ever in peace and plenty, in the full vigour of the body, not just of the spirit.

The reviewer can only agree with Peter Burke's statement in his preface that Camporesi's essays are "almost impossible to summarise because they do not offer arguments so much as images". They do this in a prose rich in citations and overflowing with rhetorical force, attracted by the prodigious and the repulsive. Camporesi himself admits it is a difficult way of telling a story. He demands of his reader an attention and sensitivity greater than those required by a traditionally-structured book: he invites him to follow an approach that is both extraordinarily creative and aware of our own modern ideas on the body and its metaphors.

But we are here talking about an English translation of a book published originally five years ago; and in it the challenge thrown down by Camporesi appears even harder, and more interesting. How will the non-Italian reader, with his own specific cultural background (e.g. non-Catholic, Protestant), react to the "phantasmagoric images" conjured up by the author? The question comes up straight away, even in so valiant and bravura a translation as Tania Croft-Murray's. I wonder why, in the very title, the flesh, which in the Italian was "impassible", should now become "incorruptible" (rightly translated in chapter 2). The two terms are not equivalent in either language. As Camporesi explains, only the person who is aware of the corruption, rather than the incorruptibility, of the flesh can become an "impassible saint", i.e. capable of distancing himself from suffering, but also of enjoying completely the pleasures of the senses. In the impassibility beyond this world promised by the preachers of the seventeenth century there was no rejection, abnegation, or disdain of bodily pleasure: in fact they exalted it. The subtitle, *Bodily mutation and mortification . . .*, is not found in the original. Like other

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phrases on the back cover, it seems to hark back to a stereotype of Catholicism which is, to all appearances, far less complex and contradictory than what Camporesi himself demonstrates here.

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WILLIAM R. PAULSON, *Enlightenment, Romanticism and the blind in France*, Princeton University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. ix, 259, £21.00.

William Paulson has produced an odd sandwich of a book. It opens with an off-putting 'Introduction' which takes many words to inform us, yet again, how the approach to discourse analysis developed by Michel Foucault transcended the blindness of the traditional 'history of ideas', but which also, finally, distances this work from the Foucault of *Madness and civilization* on the grounds that blindness is, after all, something objectively real. This may seem to many readers to make heavy weather of a fairly straightforward matter, particularly as Paulson writes in a prose style laced with the worst Foucaultian affectations. And then the book closes with some rather free-associating chapters, loosely draped around blind characters in French Romantic novels, which inter alia explore, using Freudian literacy criticism, Balzac's and Hugo's theories of infantile sexuality, and so forth. None of this is very auspicious.

The "meat" of Paulson's monograph is, however, first rate. It consists of a succession of lucid, powerful, and original analyses (in a mode surprisingly close to the much maligned old-style "history of ideas") of blindness as it figured in Enlightenment natural philosophy, ethics, accounts of human nature, and practical philanthropy. As Paulson rightly stresses, the *philosophes* were less interested in the blind *per se* than in blindness as the occasion for thought experiments concerning epistemology and ontology. Starting from Locke's discussion of the "Molyneux problem" (can we truly conceptualize that for which we have words but no direct sense of experience?), Paulson shows how Locke's conundrum was developed in different directions by Condillac and Diderot. For Condillac, the reality was rescued by positing "touch" as the primary agency of sense, of which sight was a kind of sophisticated modification. For Diderot, the thought experiment of sensory deprivation (a blind man, a deaf man, and so forth) led to the radically relativistic perception that there was no terra firma world out there, but that our visions of reality were all prejudices grounded upon particular configurations of subjective sensations. Thus for Diderot the blind man would still be a "seer", though not quite in the literally "socialized" sense current from Homer and the Bible to Milton.

Paulson is also highly perceptive upon the moral uses made of blindness in Enlightenment fables and novels. Blindness is a metaphor for superstition and folly; yet he who relieves blindness—the expert oculist—is no less often portrayed as a huckster (especially one exploiting erotic opportunities) or a charlatan than as a true leader of the *Aufklärung*. Sight and insight do not always coincide. In a similar way, Paulson plausibly suggests that the new Enlightenment optimism about educating the blind was at best a mixed blessing. For it led to the blind being set apart in segregated institutions, and the stigmatizing label of the "blind personality" being struck upon them. Here the parallel with Foucault's account of madness seems well grounded, and a useful parallel is suggested for Harlan Lane's recent account of the history of deaf-mutes.

The history of blindness has been curiously neglected. This volume makes an excellent beginning, while showing how much remains to be done. The medical historian will note how sketchy and sometimes inaccurate is Paulson's account of ophthalmology and eye-surgery; there is much scope for integrating philosophical analysis and medical history here.

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MARTHA H. VERBRUGGE, *Able-bodied womanhood: personal health and social change in nineteenth-century Boston*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. viii, 297, illus., £25.00/$29.95.

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