

Book Reviews

G. S. ROUSSEAU (editor), *The letters and papers of Sir John Hill, 1714–1775*, New York, AMS Press, 1982, pp. xlv, 208, illus., \$37.50. (Available in UK from Eurospace Ltd., 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU).

G. S. ROUSSEAU, *Tobias Smollett. Essays of two decades*, Edinburgh, T. & E. Clark, 1982, pp. xii, 207, £7.95.

As these two volumes amply testify, George Rousseau has become, at a remarkably early age, the doyen of scholars illuminating the elective affinities between literature and medicine (and long may he so continue!). His range of interests, expertise, and panache ripple off the pages of his volume of reprinted Smollett essays, where learned discussions about the impact on embryology of the introduction of pineapples into England jostle alongside some very sensible remarks on Smollett's politics (accommodating), and invigorating common sense about the picturesque. His scholarly skills, tact in editorial techniques, and energy in chasing a hare, make his pioneering collection of Hill letters both a valuable new quarry and an entertaining read, whetting the appetite for the full-scale biography to follow.

Rousseau's foible is for the second-rate. It is *Smollett's* novels he writes about, not Fielding's or Sterne's; and he makes no bones about admitting that most are far from masterpieces. Rousseau doesn't puff Smollett out of proportion: a moderately successful doctor and medical writer, who gave up; a talented author – *Roderick Random* was a great success – whose career as a novelist somehow lost its way; an enigma as a human being, soured, irritable, and taciturn, meriting Sterne's epithet, "Dr. Smelfungus". Sir John Hill is, similarly, the Renaissance man *manqué*: apothecary, actor, promoter of patent herbal remedies, playwright, horticulturalist, naturalist, and above all else, a prolific penman, with over eighty book-titles to his credit (or perhaps debit). At the outset, a most brilliant and promising virtuoso, friend of Sir William Watson, Mendes da Costa, and others of the Royal Society circles, noticed by Haller and Gesner, patronized by the Duke of Richmond. But then after a series of reverses, spurned as the innamorato of Peg Woffington, rejected in his bid for membership of the Royal Society, out on a limb for his association with Lord Bute, increasingly a butt of satire and caricature. Rousseau's notes chart Sir John's downhill slide into financial ruin and a figure of ridicule – no longer taken seriously by scientists ("This shrewd man hastens excessively", declared Haller), deemed a "puppy" by Richmond, a "vain coxcomb" by Woffington, an "ungrateful monster" by William Arderon, immortalized by Garrick:

For Physick and Farces, his Equal there scarce is,
His Farces are Physick, his Physick a Farce is.

The key to the ups and downs of Smollett and Hill is that both had had to struggle to survive in the choppy literary waters which stretched from the gutters of Grub Street to the sun-drenched horizons of Patronage Cove (indeed, each author tried to drown the other). It was sink or swim, and swim they both did, even if the margins were fine and their strokes were sometimes unorthodox ("I do not think any mortal has ever written with more impudence or more ignorance", thought Peter Ascanius of Hill, "his only excuse is that he must write in order to exist"). Smollett and Hill are intriguing specimens of the Georgian doctor/writer as proteus of print and manufacturer of knowledge. Thanks to George Rousseau's microscope, we can now see them so much better, wriggling in their pond.

Roy Porter
Wellcome Institute

RONALD FETTES CHAPMAN, *Leonard Wood and leprosy in the Philippines. The Cullion Leper Colony, 1921–1927*, Lanham, Md., University Press of America, 1982, 8vo, pp. xviii, 219, \$20.20 (\$10.25 paperback).

The author, an Englishman who emigrated to the USA after the Second World War and