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978-0-521-40047-3 - Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol

Mary E. Fissell

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In early modern England, housewives, clergymen, blood-letters, herb women, and patients told authoritative tales about the body. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, medicine had begun to drown out these voices. This book uses patients' perspectives to argue that changes in the relationship between rich and poor underlay this increase in medicine's authority. In a detailed examination of health, healing, and poor relief in eighteenth-century Bristol, Fissell shows how the experiences of the hospitalized urban poor laid the foundations for modern doctor-patient encounters. Within the hospital, charity patients were denied the power to interpret their own illnesses, as control of the institution shifted from lay patrons to surgeons. Outside the hospital, reforms of popular culture stigmatized ordinary people's ideas about their own bodies. Popular medicine became working-class medicine, associated with superstition and political unrest.

This book is of interest not only to historians of medicine, but also to readers interested in poverty, social welfare, popular culture, and the body.

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*Cambridge History of Medicine*

EDITORS: CHARLES WEBSTER AND CHARLES ROSENBERG

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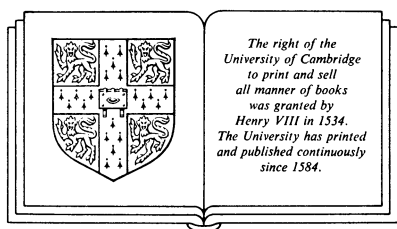
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Mary E. Fissell

*Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine  
Manchester University*



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*For my parents*

*Frederica and William Fissell*

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