Out of Hours Television

reading of the ebb and flow of novel ideas about how the waters might be therapeutic, it is natural to question why was belief in their powers maintained for so long?

One answer was given by Voltaire who told us that the duty of the physician is to entertain the patient while nature effects the cure. Sufferers from leprosy, gout, paralysis, and a legion of other ailments sought relief at Bath where they, and those who cared for or preyed on them, gathered.

The spa doctors sought to persuade patients that the mineral waters had healing properties. Many reports were written but invariably they failed to include a control group and were thus valueless.

Of course spas would never have had any success if people were not open to being persuaded. If we are tempted to feel superior we should consider the rise from nowhere of the bottled water industry, based to a large degree on the erroneous idea that tap water is somehow less than safe.

Medicine is its worst when it claims too much. Spas offered false solace from an enormous range of remedies, foul drinks, and much prolonged bathing.

Diseased, Douched & Doctored is more than a record of a world we have lost forever. It is a mirror on our own practice today, potentially reprimanding us when we claim too much; reproving us for poorly conducted therapeutic trials, and above all, encouraging people to rely on medicine when health would be likelier to come from a good walk, good company, creativity, and thinking of others above ourselves.

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SEX PIONEERS ADD FUEL TO THE SIXTIES SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Masters of Sex

Michael Sheen and Lizzy Caplan

Sony Pictures Entertainment, 2014

William Masters (no relation) was a feted consultant obstetrician and fertility expert at Washington University in St Louis, US, in the early 1960s. He wanted to become world renowned and decided that he could do this by being the first to meticulously describe the physiology of the normal human sexual response. At the time such research could cause expulsion from the medical world but had the advantage that it was not subject to modern-day ethical approval! Nevertheless, despite all the odds he was determined to succeed but failed to realise that he needed an essential co-worker if he was to achieve his goal: a woman. This partner was Virginia Johnson who, although totally unqualified and a single mother of two children, became his indispensable colleague and research assistant. Based on Thomas Maier's well-received biography, *Masters of Sex* won a Golden Globe for best drama series in 2013.

Masters of Sex has wonderful costumes and sets producing a post-war feeling of American optimism. Yes, it does have plenty of sex (in real life they observed over 10 000 complete sexual cycles in people of all shapes and sizes) but unlike many television offerings there's no violence. The series brims with clever ideas and sometimes one simply cannot believe that this really happened. Virginia Johnson (Lizzy Caplan) is the star of the show: the modern intelligent motivated woman without whom the work wouldn't have been done. The characters are strongly drawn and the hospital setting totally believable

(the overhead operating light purchased via eBay). The talented Martin Sheen plays the driven William Masters.

The trials and tribulations of this unusual research programme are amusing, endearing, and fascinating as it explores a variety of sexual and social issues of its time. The vital two researchers-odd-couple relationship is at the heart of the dramatisation, but for retired doctors like myself it also induced nostalgia for the days of cigarette-smoking doctors, gynaecologists sporting natty bow ties, and the bliss of no bleeps or computers.

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