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Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (ed.), *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. xv, 293, £60.00, hardback, ISBN: 9781843844013.

This book is full of cautionary tales. Albert the Great reported the case of a monk who died having lusted after a beautiful woman seventy times before matins. Because the monk came from a noble family, his relatives arranged for a primitive sort of autopsy. His brain was found to have shrivelled to the size of a pomegranate and his eyes had been destroyed. Coitus, Albert concluded pithily, drains the brain. So too, clearly, do libidinous thoughts: they generate excessive innate heat. The vignette does as much as any discussion of the patristic and medieval notion of Christ as physician to bring out the subtle interaction in the Middle Ages between medical ideas and religious doctrines and practices. It comes from an essay by Joy Hawkins, on the multiple aetiologies of blindness in the period, one of many excellent contributions to the collection edited by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, herself known to readers of this journal for her study of Henry of Lancaster's 'holy medicine' (vol. 53.3, 2009). The collection is timely. It marks the convergence of two powerful currents in recent historiography. One concerns the gendering of medical knowledge and practice largely inspired by the work of Monica Green. The other, for Anglophone scholars presided over by (among others) Carole Rawcliffe, focuses on the hierarchical relations of soul medicine and body medicine, especially since the Fourth Lateran Council, and on the appropriation, by religious writers of all kinds, of medicine as a source of powerful metaphor. Unlike so many volumes of proceedings, the collection is carefully arranged and thoroughly integrated. The contributors write as if, where relevant, they have read each other's work. Eleven chapters, divided into four parts, are topped by an editorial introduction that sets the historiographical scene and tailed by an afterword by Denis Renevey summarising and reflecting on the chapters. The primary area of research is the vernacular culture of later medieval England (seen of course in its Latinate setting) but several contributions look to Europe and move back into the earlier Middle Ages. The range of topics considered is remarkable and, without neglecting the familiar tropes of *Christus medicus*, *medicina sacramentalis*, the health of the soul and similar effusions from the pulpit, the book moves the discussion on beyond them. The Virgin Mary is for obvious reasons a large presence throughout, but especially in Part 1. Here, I feel Diane Watt might strain the evidence in her quest for *Maria medica*, physician as well as intercessor and miraculous healer, as, in a different way, does Roberta Magnani, for whom Mary can be an agent of Foucauldian biopower and Chaucer 'liberates Mary from the [Luce] Irigarayan "envelope"' (56); but these are stimulating essays on any assessment. One would expect much on mystics in a collection such as this one. But Part 2, besides Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, whom Juliette Vuille ably defends from facile medical retro-diagnosis, also affords us the spiritual regimen in the Middle English version of Mechtild of Hackeborn (a study by the editor) and a wide-ranging exploration of blood-letting and blood-bathing in anchoritic devotion from *Ancrene Wisse* onwards (Liz Herbert McAvoy). Part 3, brief and diverse yet equally compelling, takes us to purgatorial cure of the soul in John Audelay's poetry (Takami Matsuda) and a dense and demanding account (by Louise M. Bishop) of the heart as a 'scholastically-legitimised, theologically-appropriate, individual health-oriented centre of understanding' in Reginald Pecock and in the more apparently orthodox *Doctrine of the Hert*. Part 4, finally, includes four essays on religio-medical conceptions of bodies somehow 'gone wrong': Elma Brenner's helpful survey of the latest research, her own included, on leprosy, the disease in which medicine and theodicy most clearly intersect; Patricia Skinner, anticipating an important monograph on facial mutilation, discussing the self-mutilation, imagined or inflicted, by three holy

women as an extreme remedy for 'fatal attraction'; Joy Hawkins on blindness, already mentioned; and Irina Metzler, the leading historian of medieval disability, on the aetiology of congenital defects in children. If gender is only intermittently in question in this final part, it nonetheless brings what is clearly a fruitful collaboration between all contributors to a distinctive and provocative close.

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