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Mladen Kozul, *Le Corps érotique au XVIIIe siècle: amour, péché, maladie*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011. ix + 232 pp. Notes, bibliography and index. £60. (pb). ISBN 978-0-7294-1013-7.

Review by Dorina Outram, University of Rochester.

Any book of this title stands in the long shadow cast by Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la Sexualité* (3 vols., 1976-1984). Kozul positions his book to fill in several gaps in Foucault's account. He notes a hesitation in Foucault's analysis "concernant la place du roman libertine et érotique dans la reconfiguration des discours sur la sexualité à l'âge classique" (pp. 22-23), as well as a skimpiness in Foucault's account of the eighteenth century as a whole (p. 24). The book, however, takes the unity of *l'âge classique* as a given, even while admitting that the novel itself, one of the major axes of this book, "...n'était pas perçu comme un genre distinct...Durant l'époque où le champ des belles-lettres se désagrège et se recompose pour engendrer celui de la littérature, le statut du roman est flottant" (p. 19). The classical age, then, cannot be defined through genre. Just whether this period exists as a coherent whole, as Foucault argues, should be placed in more doubt. Foucault's view of power, however, comes negatively evaluated: "Ce propos abstrait ne permet pas d'identifier les éléments d'un système à l'intérieur duquel les jeux du pouvoir feraient naître des tensions et déplacements qui définissent ce qui est, à un moment donné, conçu comme une position de force ou de faiblesse" (p. 23).

The major thesis of the book is clearly stated by the author in this well-written book: "A l'âge classique, la représentation du corps érotique—et des aspects de tout ce qu'on appellera plus tard la sexualité—s'élabore au travers des discours religieux et médical...qui contrôlent et codifient cette représentation. En le faisant, ces discours acquièrent ou affirment leur légitimité culturelle...Mais il sont eux-mêmes marqués par ce dont ils font leur objet. Contaminés par l'érotisme, ils sont transformés en véhicules du phénomène qu'ils s'arment à contrôler" (pp. 225-226).

Around the theme of physical love, the religious, the medical and the 'novel' converge: "...les formes de la pathologie érotique analysées et décrites par les médecins portent la trace de la condamnation religieuse du désir corporel" (p. 224). Starting with the possessions at Loudun in the 1630s and their heritage in the autobiography of one of the possessed Sisters, Jeanne Des Anges, Kozul demonstrates this convergence, which also extends not only into libertine novels such as *Thérèse philosophe*, and the works of the Marquis de Sade, but also into Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* and *Le philosophe anglais, ou histoire de M. Cleveland*. A rich account of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* follows, in which the Présidente de Tourvel and the Chevalier de Valmont are shown to be engaged in enterprises of mutual conversion. For medical history, Kozul relies heavily on Rosalyn Rey's *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France*, and François Duchesneau's *La physiologie des lumières* [1], oddly and incorrectly remarking as he does so that that the academic discipline of the history of medicine (excepting Rey and Duchesneau) tends to isolate medical knowledge from other discourses, including literary discourse (p. 9), and, conversely, neglects the manifestation of the literary at the heart of medical thought. For religious thought, interpenetrated with that which it is trying to repress, Kozul uses various manuals of confession, and the well-known 1690 book by Sánchez, *De sancto matrimonii sacramento disputationum*.

All in all, this book, without wasting words, persuasively demonstrates its major thesis. It will be of great interest for historians of literature, medicine and theology in the Enlightenment.

#### NOTE

[1] Rosalyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); François Duchesneau, *La physiologie des lumières* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982).

Dorinda Outram  
University of Rochester  
[d.outram@rochester.edu](mailto:d.outram@rochester.edu)

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