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Judy Kem, *Pathologies of Love: Medicine and the Woman Question in Early Modern France*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. xiv + 287 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. \$60.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-4962-1520-8; \$60.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-4962-1687-8.

Review by Dorothea Heitsch, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Pathologies of Love is a timely volume exploring the early modern woman question (*querelle des femmes*) with a particular emphasis on early modern medical definitions of women. The texts discussed range from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, with the key authors being Christine de Pizan, Jean Molinet, Symphorien Champier, Jean Lemaire de Belges, and Marguerite de Navarre. The book thus aligns itself broadly with medicine in early modern France, with studies of early modern love melancholy, with discussions of early modern women and their physical make-up, and with the field of literature and medicine or medical humanities.[1] What Kem brings to current research is her awareness that the authors she analyses always react to or write in conversation with their precursors, detractors, mentors, friends, colleagues, or antagonists. Thus, she can show the reader how to reevaluate the *querelle* itself, to reassess early modern representations of women in literary and medical texts, and to explore questions of interpretation across genders and genres.

In her introduction, “Early Modern Medicine and the Querelle des Femmes,” Kem sets up the medico-literary context for her study. It starts with the premise, often discussed in scholarship, that early modern women’s physical imperfections and weaknesses made them vulnerable to moral failings as well as disease. Humoral medicine defined them as inferior, cold, and humid (phlegmatic), Galen described them as unfinished males with an inverted and therefore imperfect anatomy, and they supposedly provided the environment for procreation, an environment deemed hospitable or inhospitable according to the result or lack thereof. Their most common ailments were hysteria as caused by various diseases of the uterus, lovesickness or erotomania and its contrary (frigidity), a need for excessive copulation, and syphilis. Their incontrollable sexual needs were illustrated by loquaciousness, a female vice. Having sketched out these medical ideas, Kem determines her five authors as contemporaries who knew of and read each other, sometimes even worked together, and who all dealt with pathologies of love within the debate on women, thus participating in the *querelle des femmes* and its medico-literary exchanges. Christine de Pizan, the first author in this study, is the one who sets the debate in motion by attacking the misogyny of the *Roman de la rose*, the medical tradition that defined women as inferior, and the use of courtly love(sickness) as a ruse.

Chapter one, “Love or Seduction? Christine de Pizan’s Legacy from the *Querelle de la Rose* to the *Querelle des Femmes*,” examines how the *querelle des femmes* grew out of a literary debate called the *querelle de la rose* (1401-1402), a literary dispute over the thirteenth-century *Roman de la rose*, and analyzes the role Christine de Pizan played or didn’t play in both. She started the debate by writing a poem in defense of women, “L’epistre au dieu d’amours” (1399), in which the god of love issues a royal proclamation in response to the complaint of mistreated women. Kem engages in an attentive reading of this poem, which enables her to trace Christine’s reassessment of the value of divine, royal, textual, and gendered authority. First, Kem outlines the key ideas—the courtly love convention that women should surrender to men who suffer from lovesickness. Then she rehearses the *querelle de la rose*, an epistolary debate between, on one side, Pizan and Jean Gerson (a French theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris) and, on the other side, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier Col, and Pierre Col defending Jean de Meun’s continuation of Guillaume de Lorris’s allegorical romance. Christine eventually chose to stop this debate herself because, as she maintained, it would draw unwanted attention to the work at stake. She continued her defense of women in the *Cité des dames* (1405) in which she not only attacks misogynistic precursors but also a popular medical work discussing women’s physical defects titled *De secretis mulierum*. As Kem shows, Alain Chartier and Martin Le Franc then take up the cause defended by Christine. The chapter ends with a look at Christine’s reception within the *querelle*, commenting her periodic disappearance and rediscovery as a strong proto-feminist voice, and stating that “her absence as an authority within vernacular works by male authors has been largely ignored” (p. 37). The rest of the chapter is dedicated to tracing Christine’s contributions, either in quotation or in name. Kem shows the reader that traces are surprisingly scarce and that much scholarly work remains to be done.

One of the reasons for this lacuna is the male attempts at controlling the reception of the *Roman de la rose*, as discussed in chapter two, “From Physical to Spiritual Love: Molinet’s *Romant de la rose moralisé* (1500) and the *Querelle des Femmes*.” The moralized romance of the rose is a little discussed text by the rhétoricien and Burgundian chronicler Jean Molinet, who attempts to defend a popular work that was coming under increasing attack for its vulgarity, questionable moral lessons, and unflattering portrayal of women. Molinet’s *Romant* features gendered views of religion, defines women’s inferior place in society, models the correct process of literary interpretation, and offers a reading of the *Roman de la rose* by elevating it from a depiction of foolish love (*amour fatuelle*) to a portrayal of spiritual love (*amour spirituelle*). Molinet produces an allegorical reading based on a pathology of religions for the benefit of Philippe de Clèves, Lord of Ravenstein, who would eventually lead a crusade with the aim of taking back the Holy Land from the Turks. After setting out the three kinds of love that Molinet explores (*fatuelle*, *naturelle*, and *spirituelle/divine*), Kem moves to a presentation of his humoral theory of religion, in which the Muslim enemies are defined as choleric, dominated by yellow bile, and Islam (in a nod to Ovid, Virgil, and Jean de Meun) as subscribing to an ethos of “virility” and unbridled passion. As Kem maintains, “[t]o my knowledge, no one else has defined religious groups quite so systematically by humoral personality types” (p. 55). Christians, though sanguine, are presented as fainthearted and unwilling to die in a spiritual love quest or crusade. In applying a psychobiological theory of the four humors to textual interpretation for the purpose of propaganda, Molinet offers excuses for the misogynistic elements in the *Roman de la rose* and he makes writing an exclusively masculine domain inextricably tied to male sexual performance.

Unlike Molinet, Symphorien Champier wrote on both sides of the *querelle*, which Kem shows in chapter three titled “Platonic Love, Marriage, and Infertility in Symphorien Champier’s *Nef des*

princes (1502) and *Nef des dames* (1503).” According to Kem, Champier seems to have intended both works as two views on the same issue, visible in the former’s misogyny and the latter’s proto-feminism. That women and men are equal in some ways could be inferred from the *Nef des dames* that is also written in highly rhetorical fashion—a potential clue for early modern readers that they are dealing with an ironic text. By examining the consistent medical advice that Champier gives to both men and women, Kem seeks to elucidate whether the author was indeed proto-feminist. Given that the two works offer advice to ladies on fertility written in the vernacular and by a man, given that Champier upholds the minority opinion that infertility may be due to the couple’s sexual incompatibility and not due to immorality in men, and given that Champier finds potential causes in the woman, the man, or the couple, her point may be valid. Moreover, in a series of Latin works—*Practica Nova* (1517), *Speculum Galeni* (1517) and *Periarchon* (1533)—Champier later hones his specialization of curing male sexual dysfunction and Kem fortifies her point by examining the author’s positions and what he includes or excludes from the contemporary debate. This chapter ends with an analysis of “Le livre de vraye amour” on Platonic love from the *Nef des dames*, which Kem sees as Champier’s most consistently pro-woman and pro-marriage text for those who cannot remain celibate. Champier’s mental acrobatics that emerge from Kem’s attempt to put some order into his positions seem to have paid off, because early modern women readers took to his *Nefs* thanks to a perceived middle ground on the woman question and a lack of polemics that he maintained on the subject throughout his career.

Chapter four, “Love and Death in Lemaire’s *Couronne Margaritique* and the *Trois contes de Cupido et d’Atropos*: Excessive Grief and the Great Pox,” embarks on a reading of one understudied early modern syphilis poem in conjunction with a work written for Margaret of Austria at the death of her husband Philibert II of Savoy. What the consolatory crown and the three-part poem have in common, according to Kem, is that they participate in questions surrounding the *querelle*, reveal the author’s views on love and death, on the fragility of the female sex, on the therapeutic role of literature, and on the power of language; in addition they both feature the figure of death as Atropos. Jean Lemaire de Belges’s consolation inscribes itself in a long list of works in praise of women, such as Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus*, Christine de Pizan’s *Cité des dames*, Molinet’s *Chappelet des dames*, Champier’s *Nef des dames*, but at the same time, Lemaire criticizes the widow for her apparently excessive grief that may give way to temporary insanity. In doing so, he complies with the early modern medical view that women are more affected by an excess of black bile. As a therapy, Lemaire offers a crown of ten famous women or gems, whom Kem attempts to identify as helping or detracting from his cause, both on the historical level and on the medical-therapeutic level as healing gems. Kem dedicates the second part of this chapter to a reading of the *Trois contes*, an allegorical poem on the Great Pox or syphilis that is rarely studied, which may have to do with the doubtful provenance of the work. Upon textual evidence, Kem decides to treat all parts of the poem as of Lemaire’s invention if not necessarily of his pen. Though much of her analysis consists in plot summaries—a rather frequent device throughout the study—in the instance of *Trois contes* they will greatly help the reader follow her argument. Kem determines that the thread of Lemaire’s poem consists largely in a male Cupid and female Atropos exchanging roles and names to depict the sexual chaos that causes the imbalance of the humors leading to the Great Pox, a terrible disease whose symptoms and early modern remedies Kem presents in her introduction.

Chapter five, “Fatal Lovesickness in Marguerite de Navarre’s *Quatre dames et quatre gentilzhommes* and the *Heptaméron*,” also pairs two texts, once again a less studied work and a much anthologized one authored by a member of the French royal family whom contemporaries praised for her

knowledge of medicine. The first work is a response to Alain Chartier's *La belle dame sans mercy*: in several acts, a story unfolds playing on the themes of lovesickness, love-melancholy, and erotomania, told through letters, monologues, and a testament concerning the suffering of lovers. Kem convincingly shows that this work represents an exploration of love in all its facets, a favorite theme of Marguerite. In this study, the theme is then pursued into the novellas nine and twenty-six of the *Heptaméron*, a narrative pair in which erotic melancholy leads to direct death, once in a man and once in a woman, with a partial response and prelude provided by novella twenty. Kem deftly points out parallels and contrasts in the novellas and analyses the participants' metatext with a view to discussions of contemporary ideas on love sickness. Kem concludes that Marguerite takes a feminist stance in the *querelle* by indicating that male and female honor may be different and that male and female lovesickness may require very different cures.

In her conclusion, "From Courtly Love to Fatal Lovesickness," Kem explains that her goal is to explore received medical ideas in the *querelle des femmes* and to "reconstruct an early modern reading of the texts to determine how these authors interpreted the courtly love commonplace of women's pity or mercy on a dying lover. In addition, I have explored where these texts stood in contemporary debates on women's supposed sexual insatiability, its biological effects on men's lives and fertility, and whether erotomania--erotic melancholy--was a fatal illness" (p.168). Two appendices follow, the first featuring works in the *querelle de la rose* and the *querelle des femmes* (1240-1673) and the second containing major early modern medical authorities, translators, and commentators; both are valuable sources.

This is a solid and informed study inviting any reader interested in early modern women to further discuss and explore many of the vistas that Kem opens up in her readings. The chapter on Lemaire would have benefited from Françoise Blattes-Vial's manuscript analysis and from Deborah Losse's recent book on syphilis.[2] The chapter on Marguerite de Navarre might have gained from an engagement with contemporary writer Hélienne de Crenne's *Epistres familières et invectives* (1539) and with Reinier Leushuis's reading of courtly love topoi in the *Heptaméron*. [3] The early modern combination of humoral discourse and religious literature is not as rare as Kem would have us believe, especially whenever a Christianization of medicine is useful for occidental politicians throughout the late Middle Ages. Aligning the texts of her study along the proto- and anti-feminist sides of the *querelle* occasionally necessitates that information on the genre of the works, the early modern authors' intentions, or socio-historical contexts be omitted; that Kem nevertheless succeeds in weaving some of them into her argument at opportune moments is a credit to her skill as a researcher and writer. It is up to the curious reader to explore further and Kem entices us to do so.

NOTES

[1] Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The 'Viaticum' and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Marion A. Wells, *The Secret Wound: Love Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Les femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1990); Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Un corps, un*

destin: La femme dans la médecine de la Renaissance (Paris: Champion, 1993); Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women. Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006); Dorothea Heitsch, *Writing as Medication in Early Modern France: Literary Consciousness and Medical Culture* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2017).

[2] Françoise Blattes-Vial, “Le manuscrit de la ‘Couronne margaritique’ de Jean Lemaire de Belges offert par Marguerite d’Autriche à Philippe le Beau en 1505. La rhétorique et l’image au service d’une princesse assimilée à la paix,” *Le Moyen Âge* 121 (2015): 83-126; Deborah N. Losse, *Syphilis: Medicine, Metaphor, and Religious Conflict in Early Modern France* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).

[3] Reinier Leushuis, *Le Mariage et l’‘amitié courtoise’ dans le dialogue et le récit bref de la Renaissance* (Florence: Olschki, 2003).

Dorothea Heitsch
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
dheitsch@unc.edu

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