profession did those have who asked for his medical opinion? What country did they come from? The database established for the Swiss project (which is also online: http://www.haller.unibe.ch, but in German only) has been prepared for this kind of search. Even if, in the case of the medical correspondents, the sample comprises only 152 letters (70 of which were from doctors or university professors of medicine; 75 of which came from outside Switzerland, etc.), the insight provided by quantitive evaluation is telling. It helps one understand the eighteenth-century culture of producing and exchanging information via letters, which is often overlooked because its traces are hidden away in archives. With the steady progress of the Swiss researchers, at least Haller's net can no longer be overlooked.

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Philip M Soergel (ed.), S*exuality and culture in medieval and renaissance Europe. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd series, vol. II, New York, AMS Press, 2005, pp xv, 287, $89.50 (hardback: ISSN 0081-8244, ISBN 0-404-64552-6).

In this thoughtfully edited volume, Philip Soergel brings together an international group of nine scholars, all historians of pre-modern society and culture. Their essays range from micro-studies of rural and urban women to broad statements about the nature and transmission of the Hippocratic corpus. All provide a fresh perspective on an often misunderstood topic: the history of human sexuality. Here, the topic is taken seriously and addressed with confidence and skill.

Sexuality and culture opens with an engaging survey of medieval women's medicine. Monica Green reviews and discusses recent scholarship on technologies of the body, sexual difference, and the history of childbirth. There are also references to edited texts and on-line databases, the latter allowing for what Green aptly calls the democratization of knowledge. Her concern to elucidate theories of human sexuality is shared by Helen King in an essay that explains how ancient Greek texts re-entered the medical mainstream in the sixteenth century. This Hippocratic revival enhanced the perception that the female body required discrete and distinctive therapies. No longer was it commonplace to infer that women, with genitalia supposedly shrunk inward, were hardly different from men. The scientific thinking of the sixteenth century was more expansive and measured than this.

Of course, people in earlier centuries were no less interested in acquiring knowledge and testing traditional norms. This is evident in three essays on the medieval world. In the first, 'A medieval territory for touch', Fernando Salmón reviews Latin commentaries on the five senses. He argues that touch represented a complex of sensations, surrounding the body like a net, and gradually becoming the locus of self and experience. What ultimately mattered were not simply the sexual overtones associated with touch, but the role it had in forming personal identity. Medieval constructions of personality reflected an interest in natural philosophy and admittedly had a part in Latin physiognomy. This was the art of discerning character and sexual nature by studying genitalia. Rather than dismiss physiognomy as little better than pseudo-science, Joseph Ziegler uses the scholastic commentaries it generated to document alternative ways of perceiving the body. More detailed as to practice is Carol Lansing's essay reconstructing a civic inquiry into female sodomy in 1295. Her story of Guercia of Bologna is so artfully told that it deepens our understanding of an aspect of sexuality seldom glimpsed in medieval texts.

Equally informative are four essays that address the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Using Christian tradition as her starting point, Merry Weisner-Hanks places Martin Luther centre stage, deftly highlighting his ideas about the male libido and how they figured in Reformation theology and social thought. Joel Harrington discusses German society as well. Exploring the plight of an unwed mother

in Nuremberg, he helps us to see that a story such as hers is at the very heart of social history. Mindful of a mother's life, Charlene Villaseñor Black argues on behalf of utilizing images of the Madonna and Child to measure changes in breastfeeding and maternity in early modern Spain. Hers is an eloquent argument, illustrated by reproductions of Spanish painting and altar art. Retha Warnicke's meditation on marriage and female rulers in Britain concludes this volume, leaving no doubt that sexual nature influenced destiny in the arena of politics and power.

The essays collected here obviously differ in method and approach. Yet all are distinguished by rigorous scholarship and historical insight. To read them together is to see that the story of human sexuality was as complex and compelling in medieval and renaissance Europe as it is today.

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Katharine Hodgkin, *Madness in seventeenth-century autobiography*, Early Modern History: Society and Culture Series, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. vi, 266, £50.00 (hardback 978-1-4039-1765-2).

This study on madness in seventeenth-century England is based on three autobiographical accounts. Katherine Hodgkin starts with an exposé of madness in a historical context including a useful discussion of ideas that have developed during the last decades. She stresses not only how blurred the border is between madness and its opposite, but also how closely madness and religious inspiration were connected in the seventeenth century. The discussion on autobiographical writing in the past is less elaborate. This subject is elusive because of changing definitions and blurred borders with other genres, in particular between fiction and described realities. Tales of madness and religious autobiography seem to overlap to a great extent.

Three texts are analysed. The first was written by Dionys Fitzherbert, daughter of an Oxfordshire landowner. Her tale of recovery from mental disorder was written around 1610. Besides the surviving autograph, there are fair copies still kept in libraries. She described a delirious condition lasting several months which is, however, not presented as madness but as spiritual affliction. The second author is Hannah Allen, daughter of a Presbyterian merchant family living in Derbyshire and London. She descended into melancholy in the 1660s, after she was widowed and left with a child. Her life story was published in 1683. She tells her readers about her conviction that she was damned, worthless and monstrous, and how at one point she refused to eat. This is all a familiar part of a conversion story, but her sufferings are not presented as a punishment by God, but as an illness from which she recovered. George Trosse, the third author, also had a mercantile background, and after his spell of madness became a nonconformist minister in Exeter. He wrote his *Life* in 1693, which was published after his death in 1713. He describes his hallucinations, deliriums and violent behaviour, which in this case are all seen as God's punishment for his sinfulness. This text even more resembles a conversion story, especially with the happy outcome.

Besides belonging to the same genre, the three stories have another thing in common: all the authors were cured of their madness. They give some information about the physical and spiritual help they received. In the end, guidance was more important than medicines. Fitzherbert thanks the wife of her doctor for her counsel, without even mentioning his medicines. Hannah Allen was cured by an unnamed minister. A kinsman also proposed to bring her into contact with the nonconformist divine, Richard Baxter. Trosse was cured by a lay woman, maybe also a doctor's wife. The escape from madness was in all three cases through conversation.

How the process of healing should be phrased, is a point of discussion. Hodgkin stresses the metaphor of travel as well as, in