



Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity)

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Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors* points to the vital connection between metaphors and bodily illnesses, though her analyses deal mainly with modern literary works. This collection of essays examines the vast extent to which rhetorical figures related to sickness and health-metaphor, simile, pun, analogy, symbol, personification, allegory, oxymoron, and metonymy-inform medieval and early modern literature, religion, science, and medicine in England and its surrounding European context. In keeping with the critical trend over the past decade to foreground the matter of the body and the emotions, these essays track the development of sustained, nuanced rhetorics of bodily disease and health ” physical, emotional, and spiritual. The contributors to this collection approach their intriguing subjects from a wide range of timely, theoretical, and interdisciplinary perspectives, including the philosophy of language, semiotics, and linguistics; ecology; women's and gender studies; religion; and the history of medicine. The essays focus on works by Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton among others; the genres of epic, lyric, satire, drama, and the sermon; and cultural history artifacts such as medieval anatomies, the arithmetic of plague bills of mortality, meteorology, and medical guides for healthy regimens.

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Editorial Review

Review

Bringing together scholars from an admirably wide range of disciplines, historical periods, and approaches, this collection repeatedly illuminates the ways that medieval and early modern writers translated bodily experiences into language. By focusing on the inter-related rhetorics of health and illness, the authors underscore how language is the necessary medium through which the pleasures, pains, and anxieties of the body are grudgingly revealed. --Michael Schoenfeldt, University of Michigan

About the Author

Jennifer C. Vaught is Jean-Jacques and Aurore Labbé Fournet / Board of Regents Professor of English at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA.

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