very sophisticated. Much of this has to do with the fact that Alan Turing is still alive and is a national hero and, with barely a nod to Francis Crick, has an institute named after him near King's Cross. Mrs Thatcher called a disastrous snap general election after losing the Falklands War, and almost 3000 British lives, and Tony Benn is the leader of the Labour Party. Oh, and the Beatles have re-formed.

Charlie Friend lives alone in a seedy flat in Clapham: his horizons are not exactly broad and he gets by playing the stock markets on his laptop. Miranda, who is beautiful, has a dark secret, and is doing a PhD on the Corn Laws, lives in the flat above. Charlie is in love with Miranda and they develop a close but asymmetrical relationship.

Almost unaccountably, Charlie blows the last £86 000 of an inheritance on a handsome humanoid called Adam, one of only 25 in the world, who possesses phenomenal powers of reasoning, analysis, and memory, and looks, speaks, and behaves exactly like a human being. He goes for walks alone and chats to the proprietor of the corner shop about Rabindranath Tagore. He has other characteristics that lead to what Charlie thinks must be the first cyber-cuckolding on record. We are already in subversive McEwan territory.

The developing plot throws up questions, insights, and paradoxes, about consciousness, love and affection, morality, free will, justice, nature and nurture, and humanity. Some of these may not be new, and the machine-human interface has been the subject of science fiction for a long time, but because McEwan cleverly creates powerful echoes between what was happening in his alternative 1980s and the problems that we face today, and which will challenge us in the near future, the narrative rarely seems dated, and occasionally is remarkably prescient.

I don't know who advised McEwan on the technical content of this book, but it does seem to include a very serious health warning about the potentially adverse effects of machine learning, the dangerously seductive attraction of very high speed 'reasoning', the development of understanding and insight that may be more apparent than real, and the chilling conclusions that hyper-rationalism can come to are brilliantly described.

Roger Jones,
Editor, *BJGP*.

Email: roger.jones@kcl.ac.uk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X704465>

Medieval Bodies. Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages

Jack Hartnell

Profile Books/Wellcome Collection, 2018, HB, 352pp, £12.99, 978-1781256794

A FASCINATING HISTORICAL JOURNEY

Jack Hartnell's *Medieval Bodies* is a book about differences. The author forces us to think about how differently other cultures thought (and think) about the body, health, and illness, from modern medical views. Hartnell, an art historian well versed in the history of medicine, demonstrates that

medicine in the Middle Ages started from an understanding of the body (based in Galenic humoral theory) that bore little relation to our own. But he also connects medieval medical perspectives of anatomy, physiology, and pathology to larger social contexts, by exploring the assumptions about the body that underlay the ways medieval people lived, thought, prayed, ate, and drank. The author discusses, for example, not only views on the heart's physiology pre-dating Harvey's arguments for the circulation of blood, but also its increasing connections with emotions and love (associations that still survive in ideas like heartbreak and the heart as the ubiquitous symbol of love).

Each chapter is devoted to a body part, and provides various perspectives on it. For example, the discussion of bones begins with medieval theories of anatomical structure, and then turns to burial practices, saints' relics, and the Christian and Muslim theology of the resurrection of the body.

Hartnell has gathered a large number of very different sources — medical, literary, visual, religious — in a wonderful mosaic that will challenge, amuse, and occasionally even shock the reader. The book is designed for a general audience, and effortlessly connects a wide range of fascinating topics, from acoustics to sexuality. While there are a few errors in the book (for example, the incorrect conflation of limbo and purgatory on p.117), these are minor missteps and will not affect the general reader's enjoyment of this rich and provocative study of a culture that seems both distant from and familiar to our own.

William F MacLehose,

Lecturer in history and philosophy of science, UCL, London.

Email: w.maclehose@ucl.ac.uk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X704477>