

to contemplate the stars, the seas, nature, magic, ideals of perfect harmony, and other concepts unconsidered that had previously been ignored or simply evaded scrutiny. Naturally, in addition to those mentioned above, names like Erasmus, Lefèvre, Leonardo, Luther, Machiavelli, More, Savonarola, and Valla figure prominently throughout the essays in this rich volume.

Astride two eras, with a Janus-like glance to the medieval past and a gaze oriented toward the new in the nascent Renaissance, *La nouvelle culture (1480–1520)* will stand as a valuable and enlightening reference for generations to come.

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Langues imaginaires et imaginaire de la langue. Olivier Pot, ed.

Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 148. Geneva: Droz, 2018. 840 pp. \$78.

The starting point is a conference held in Geneva in 2008, with a first set of ten participants. The editor later added thirteen written contributions to honor the anniversary of Thomas More's *Utopia*, published in Paris (1517; see Pierre Swiggers, 91–115), and the memory of the poet and scholar Antoine Raybaud. Olivier Pot frames the articles (mostly in French) with two long essays (76 and 155 pages, respectively) that guide his general and personal purpose: to stress the role of imagination, or rather the “imaginative world” (*l'imaginaire* in French contains a psychoanalytic connotation), in very different texts and methods dealing with language (*langage*) or tongues (*langues*). The ambitious introduction (“Language in All Its Ways”) offers long abstracts of the articles, avoiding the contradictions between them and reiterating the Foucauldian misinterpretation that “in the *imaginaire* of the Renaissance, the world is written like an alphabet” (27). The historical approach is allocated in nine sections that try to organize a variety of heterogeneous domains (cryptography, hybrid languages, ethnography, orientalism, linguistic scenes, glossolalia, Armand Gatti, Valère Novarina, and music) into a set of themes.

Fourteen out of the twenty-five articles are devoted to early modern authors or texts, but they are not the best part of the volume, which is nevertheless worth reading for other contributions on Vedic linguistics, imaginary languages in modern Italian literature, and the late conspiracies about the origins of Eastern European languages. To contextualize the topics in a broader perspective, one should read Sylvain Auroux's overview of the language origin question, and Gabriel Bergounioux's historical approach to clinical language pathologies in the nineteenth century. Among the most useful for Renaissance scholars, I would single out Daniel Ménager's essay about German in Rabelais's novels, Paul-Victor Desarbres's detailed and elaborate study of Vigenère's *Annotations on Caesar* (1589), and Gilles Siouffi's cautious presentation of the blurred

border between grammar and linguistic imagination among seventeenth-century French grammarians, with their dreams of combining rule and usage. Pietro U. Dini gives a very informative summary of speculations on the origin of Baltic idioms, so often overlooked. Peter Wunderli studies an intriguing and imaginative French-Italian literary idiom in medieval Northern Italy. Musicology deserves a special mention: Laurence Wuidar describes the cryptologic virtues of canon music and the role of images and schemes in musical scores, and Brenno Boccadoro explains the Neoplatonic origins of Baroque *stylus phantasticus* and its components (*sprezzatura*, dissonance, *phantasia*, automatisms, *discretio*, *kairos*), crowned by overwhelming melancholia. In spite of their intrinsic interest, they diverge from the themes of the volume as they aim for the uncertain target between language-*langage* and language-*langue*.

The remaining papers are either obsolete or rely on previous and well-known publications on linguistic commonplaces (mother tongue, cabala, babelism, universal language). In the lengthy conclusion that Olivier Pot grants is not in any way a conclusion but a kind of learned and poetic essay, language(s) in the Renaissance play a limited part, with a brief and inaccurate analysis (e.g., about the *baragouin*) of the “*écolier limousin*” episode (Rabelais), and the unavoidable reference to Dante’s *Vulgari eloquentia*. Both seem to provide pretexts for the loquacious display of a prolific and surrealist journey among the multiple remnants of inspired readings, namely of Alfred Jarry, Henri Michaux, and Robert Pinget, all implying a noticeable risk of drowning the unadvised reader. This last essay could be considered an actual manifesto in favor of a poetic and phantasmal viewpoint on languages, as though it were imperative to claim that irrationality, in the fields of scientific and literary research, is still prevailing against political, social, aesthetic, and religious issues. The conclusion asserts that only literature, with its fictional bias, is able to transcend any scientific analysis, thus challenging those articles in the book based on textual or historical study. The volume contains some printing and spelling errors, and there is no overall bibliography that would help assess whether the references are relevant and up to date.

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Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400–1700.

Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp, eds.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. x + 354 pp. \$89.95.

This volume, comprised of sixteen essays, is the product of a 2014 conference held at Oxford University. As in the very best of such collections—and this is one of them—the format inevitably yields both achievements and shortcomings (and I write as the co-editor of another such collection). The editors seek to bring together diverse scholarly