

Les cinq sens entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance: Enjeux épistémologiques et esthétiques.
Olga Anna Duhl and Jean-Marie Fritz, eds.

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In their prefatory reflections, Jean-Marie Fritz and Olga Anna Duhl usefully caution the reader that while sensory hierarchies may well be promoted and theorized to the tiniest nuances, the actual nature of sensory experience is one of fluidity and shifting perspective. This evanescence of experience is explored primarily through the French literary lens in *Les cinq sens entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*, a relatively short volume full of rich detail, including generous images and extracts of the texts under discussion. Works of Christine de Pizan and Francesco Colonna (read against Jean Gerson, for one), and Jehan Drouyn's extension of the *Stultiferae Naves* of Badius Ascensius obtain the fullest intertextual analysis, followed by chapters on the comedic treatment of the medical senses and Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamento*.

Fritz also wonders to what degree developments in France “correspond to a decisive rupture” (7) in the way the senses are represented: one goal is to ask, and to answer, in part, at least, whether it is possible that literature is innovative in this regard and can “account for a continuous and clear development of the five senses from the late middle ages through the Renaissance” (9)—thus entertaining the fullest sense of “entre” in the book's title. These concerns figure in a broader discussion of the shift in the gendering of the senses (from male to female personation) that includes a centrally positioned essay by Anne-Marie De Gendt, who argues that Carl Nordenfalk's work does not account sufficiently for this precipitous change around 1500, and points rather toward the “reappearance of Dame Volupté” (80) at the end of the fifteenth century. De Gendt sets up two chapters describing misogynistic prescriptions for women's sensory governance by Jehan Drouyn aimed at broader bourgeois feminine consumption (well-considered contributions from Yona Pinson, who points to Drouyn's editor and his market-based concerns in obtaining the widest possible distribution as a key factor in its vernacular presentation, and Anne-Laure Metzger-Rambach).

The question of innovative representation is also addressed broadly as the essays consistently elaborate the growing focus on, and concerns about, the positive roles that sensory experience plays in the formation of knowledge (excellent and convincing readings of poetic and autobiographical reflection on the possibilities and limitations of women's acquisition of knowledge in Christine de Pisan by Ana Pairet and Gabriela

Tanase), and a new autonomy of the senses that arises in the early sixteenth century with the proliferation of theoretical argumentation and popularization of sensory themes in comedy, instructional texts, and imagery. Sensory choices are a common thread that bind together the journeys of self-knowledge in de Pisan, Colonna, and Aretino; the reader is reminded that they come with ethical dimensions that resonate not just for the moral well-being or peril of the individual, but for society and the body politic more widely. Giuseppe Sangirardi acknowledges the oft-noted place of the sexualized body, human and animal, in Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, as part of the social satire engaged; but, he argues, what is more often overlooked is that the sense of touch is mediated through a vision that is voyeuristic and unmasking, a "radical oralization of literature" that escapes the traditional genres borrowed, and the turning of desire into a monstrous lens on a hypocritical elite society.

Carl Havelange's conclusion first summarizes the passage of the sensible through the French historical tradition since Lucien Febvre and the successive turns to agency and habitus engaged, then reiterates the necessity of situating the sensible in time and place and acknowledging, in reviewing the cultural and knowledge shifts in play, the "Renaissance as a transitional period": both the humanistic and scientific bases that collaborate in this position (165) and "thought, action, and passion" (166) are all necessary to understanding the multivalent nature of the sensescape and its process of enactment, and of discovery.

The excellent topical and theoretical connection between a number of the essays will be especially appealing to those exploring the relationships of Pisan's work to that of Jean Gerson or, as is traced in the essay by Fabre and Polizzi, those that thread their way from Gerson through Colonna to Rabelais (who is unfortunately not mentioned in the essay title). The volume is also particularly good in keeping the examination of gender in focus, as it is a core concern for a number of the works considered. Given its length and focus around a few key works, it cannot possibly arrive at a definitive answer to the questions Fritz initially poses, but it makes a good attempt at posting some signs along the way. Certainly the editors worked very carefully to deliver a well-integrated text that offers substantive food for thought.

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