

investigation has proceeded at a particularly healthy pace over the past two decades, exemplified at its best by Niklaus Largier's *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal* (2001, English translation 2007), Jeffrey Chipps Smith's *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (2002); and Walter S. Melion's *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550–1625* (2009), among many other monographs, articles, and collections of essays. The most important achievements of this growing body of scholarship include the uncovering of long traditions of Christian devotional practice, extending from medieval mystics through the early modern Jesuits and beyond, that presupposed the power of sensory stimulation to arouse affects and thereby effect spiritual edification in a worshipper. The existence of these traditions was never a secret, of course, but a new fascination with them has inspired scholars to produce unprecedentedly detailed, precise accounts of how these practices worked and of the psychological and theological theories by which the well-educated conceptualized them. As a result, it is now beyond question that anyone who wishes to understand early modern European culture — and especially material culture — cannot afford to be ignorant of this research.

This volume of essays underscores that fact. Based mostly on contributions to panels at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in 2010, it contains work by a range of younger and well-established scholars from several disciplines, many of whom have already published or are about to publish monographs on topics related to their contributions here. The editors (Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, with help and encouragement from Herman Roodenburg and Reindert Falkenburg) note that the collection does not »aim at a systematic overview of the subject«, but they point out a number of common themes among the essays and draw two conclusions from them: (1) sensation was regarded in early modern religion as an »interconnected [...] set of experiences«, and (2) the existence of con-

■ Religion and the Senses

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This collection of essays registers the unabating vigor with which an increasing number of scholars from a variety of humanistic disciplines have been investigating the role of sense-perception in the religious practices of medieval and early modern Europe. Such

trovery about the nature and value of these sense-experiences »confirms their centrality as an issue — and hence an explanatory factor — in the religious crisis and transformation of the Reformation era«. These conclusions are of course neither bold nor surprising, and in fact many of the essays do not directly confirm them. What the essays do demonstrate — and this is probably the strongest case for their value as a single collection, above and beyond the aggregate value of the individual essays — is a methodological point: understanding sense-related religious practices and the theories related to them is invaluable for the variety of disciplines encompassed by early modern studies. It can help scholars reinterpret well-known sources and discover new answers to the diverse plethora of questions that concern them.

Nearly a quarter of the contributors demonstrate that knowledge of early modern devotional practices and verbal or visual discourses about the role of the senses in such practices allows us to challenge or enrich the conventional wisdom on a wide variety of general historical questions. Representative of this approach is the essay by Klaus Peitschmann, who shows that looking carefully at fifteenth-century Florentine critiques of polyphonic liturgical music suggests a political-ideological dimension to the emergence of Renaissance polyphony — in contradiction to the tendency of musicological research to see it as »the logical result of an organic evolution«. Other credible views undermined by contributors in similar ways include the conventional wisdom that magic only begins to be disentangled from scientific thinking in the seventeenth century (Yvonne Petry); the hypothesis by Jean Delumeau that the early modern period saw a progressive »interiorization of the vision of God« and a retreat from concrete depictions and imaginings of heaven (Wietse de Boer); and Alfred Rohde's influential 1930s account of a sixteenth-century amber trade »crisis« allegedly brought about by Protestant condemnation of rosaries (Rachel King).

Another quarter of the contributors expose unexpected patterns in more extensive

bodies of sources. These include the surprisingly »multisensory character« of early modern *Noli me tangere* iconography (Barbara Baert); the pervasiveness of anti-sensuality rhetoric in 1530s–50s English condemnations of heresy and idolatry (Matthew Milner); the rehabilitation of the pleasures of taste in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century medical, culinary, and philosophical texts (Laura Gianetti); and the resonances among religious and medical discourses about hearing, in the wake of the sixteenth-century discovery of the Eustachian tube (Jennifer Rae McDermott).

Still another quarter of the contributors illustrate the extent to which considering the devotional and liturgical practices of early modern artists, patrons, and viewers allows art historians to clarify hitherto obscure aspects of particular works of art. Jennifer R. Hammer-schmidt, for example, argues that Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* (1430s) was designed to produce an emotional response in members of the Greater Crossbowmen's Guild of Louvain, whose regular experience of religious processions the *Descent* evoked. Other paintings subjected to reinterpretation include Anthony van Dyck's *Lamentation* (Sarah Joan Moran), El Greco's images of Saint Veronica (Andrew R. Casper), and Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* (Alfred Acres).

The remaining contributors use similar methods to reinterpret places, texts, and events. Iain Fenlon shows, in the case of sixteenth-century Venice's Piazza San Marco, how attention to smells and sounds can expand our understanding of an urban space's »theatricality« beyond the already well-studied effects of static architectural features. Christine Göttler renders the late sixteenth-century renovations of chapels at the Sacro Monte di Varallo comprehensible in light of contemporary interest in the affective power of images. Sven Dupré shows how an understanding of the Jesuits' theory of images allows us to interpret the earliest seventeenth-century Jesuit critiques of Johannes Kepler's optics not as expressions of »gratuitous conservatism«, but rather as attempts to protect a tradition of spiritual

practices that, contra Kepler, presupposed the existence of Aristotelian *species*. Walter S. Melion excavates Theodoor Galle's 1610 publication of illustrations based on Pedro de Ribadeneyra's biography of Ignatius Loyola, discovering within them a visually expressed theory of spiritual imagery corresponding to Ribadeneyra's own. Joseph Imorde, finally, reinterprets an action: the public weeping for which Pope Clement VIII (1592–1605) was notorious. Far from reflecting a pathological condition peculiar to Clement, Imorde argues, it reflected Clement's participation in a devotional tradition of weeping to express the overwhelming feelings of sublimity and sweetness granted to believers by God.

As in many collections of essays, the contributions to this one are not all equally persuasive. For every two essays in which convincingly interpreted evidence is brought soundly to bear on a clearly defined research problem, there is another in which evidence is not convincingly interpreted, is not applied to a compelling problem, or does not support a clearly articulated thesis. Accordingly, the editors feel »bound to stress that these forays remain partial and preliminary«. But the volume also contains several gems, the best of which not only reach convincing conclusions but also, in doing so, present materials easily useable by scholars whose forays proceed in other directions. Exemplary in this regard are the aforementioned essays by Melion and Imorde. From Theodoor Galle's illustrations and Ribadeneyra's biography of Ignatius, Melion extracts a typology of spiritual images that other investigators of Baroque print culture can use to refine their explications of a vast panoply of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century illustrated devotional texts; while Imorde uses the opportunity of explaining Clement's weeping to offer a condensed but detailed synthesis of a centuries-long series of theological and practical devotional discourses about the significance of tears. These two contributions suffice to illustrate the abundant fruitfulness of the interpretative methods employed throughout the volume.

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