

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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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.458

*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.

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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

fields (drama, literature, history of medicine, religion, politics) as well as different historical periods (medieval and early modern) to create a genuinely interdisciplinary result. Certainly, the central topic lends itself to such breadth of scope. While generously acknowledging the pioneering scholarship of Caroline Bynum and Gail Kern Paster, the editors argue (with justification) that “blood was and is a word whose copious signifying capacities remain desperately underexamined” (1). After completing this book, I can affirm that the interpretive possibilities seem virtually unlimited. One comes away from these fine essays seeing and hearing blood everywhere in life and literature. But is the sum greater than the parts? Do we experience the “interdisciplinary and inter-period conversation” that the authors promise?

The book unquestionably delivers on the commitment to diversity and quality, representing top-notch work by scholars from several disciplines across the traditional boundary between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. That diversity extends to the treatments of blood in the essays, where it can be, paradoxically, both polluting and life-giving, socially unifying and divisive, simultaneously literal and figurative, or even, in the interpretation of Helen Barr, sign without a substance. The challenge of all such collections is to bring those myriad approaches into some semblance of coherence, or at least to establish common themes. The editors attempt to achieve this by distributing their authors into five blood categories: circulation, wounds, corruption, proof, signs, and substance. While admirably mixed in disciplines, these categories (which I did not find especially helpful) do not in themselves generate interdisciplinary discussion or accompanying insights. Undoubtedly, the conversations following the original versions of these papers did, and we get some sense of the logic and potential of these categories in the book’s elegant and insightful twelve-page introduction (which bears reading twice). Otherwise, we must consider *Blood Matters* an initial foray, demonstrating the interdisciplinary potential of this topic, and follow the ensuing contributions on the website of the Blood Project.

This is not to say that the sixteen chapters in themselves remain bound to their own traditional disciplinary categories—in this instance, drama (especially Shakespeare), literature, medicine, and religion. The English stage, particularly Shakespeare, is the most prominent venue, including examinations of the humoral imbalance known as “green sickness” in *Romeo and Juliet* (Bonnie Lander Johnson), the central role of blood in *Cymbeline* (Patricia Parker), and the challenges of staging bloody scenes in *Macbeth* (Elisabeth Dutton) and in Renaissance theater in general (Hester Lees-Jeffries). Each of these chapters considers some of blood’s broader political and social significances, as does Katherine A. Craik in her discussion of *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Authors who concentrate more on medical questions similarly posit greater cultural implications. Tara Nummedal’s intriguing discussion of alchemy and menstruation also touches on gender issues, as does the chapter on spontaneous nosebleeds by Gabriella Zuccolin and Helen King. Ben Parsons ponders the psychological dimensions of blood in the lives of medieval university students, and Eleanor Decamp explores the disputes over

bloodletting both on and off the stage. The most conventional (albeit fascinating) approaches are the literary analyses of Joe Moshenska (on “screaming bleeding trees” in Virgil and Spenser), Heather Webb (on blood in the writings of Dante and Catherine of Siena), and Helen Barr (on “queer blood” in *The Canterbury Interlude*). Dolly Jørgensen takes things in a completely novel direction with her discussion of late medieval pig-slaughter illustrations, and Frances Dolan brilliantly explores the connections between wine and blood (most obviously in relation to the Eucharist). While I learned something from all of the contributions, my personal favorites were Margaret Healy’s refutation of the supposed political commentary of William Harvey’s writings about the heart and blood circulation, and Lesel Dawson’s wide-ranging discussion of the medical, judicial, religious, and social contexts of cruentation.

Such a cursory overview does not do justice to the richness of this collection. There are no weak links here; the scholarship is uniformly thoughtful, adventurous, and lucid. And, as the editors have convincingly demonstrated, the interpretive potential of blood has just begun to be realized. This book provides an outstanding foundation for such future research.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.459

*Tragedy and the Return of the Dead*. John D. Lyons.

Rethinking the Early Modern. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018. xii + 276 pp. \$39.95.

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*Tragedy and the Return of the Dead* makes a valuable contribution to recent reassessments of the tragic tradition. John D. Lyons’s capaciously comparative study brings together a diversity of theories and fictions across periods and media. In doing so, it also charts the shift from a premodern view to contemporary perceptions of tragedy, in particular a dissociation of the tragic from events and feelings.

Lyons begins *Tragedy and the Return of the Dead* in the late eighteenth century, when an idealist view assumed a tight hold on popular and academic understandings of tragedy and the tragic. According to this view, tragedy is rare and defined by abstract and conflicting forces. By contrast, in the ancient and early modern worlds, a “nominalist (or concrete) view of tragedy and the tragic” prevailed (4). Lyons’s introduction draws on the writings of Aristotle, Corneille, and others to flesh out a premodern view of tragedy as pervasive, violent, and profoundly affective. Resuming this critical history in chapter 4, Lyons traces the shift from idealist to nominalist views of tragedy through ideas of the sublime. In what is arguably the book’s most valuable chapter, Lyons unpacks Edmund Burke’s aesthetics of fear as the juncture, if also the turning point, between a classical and neoclassical poetic tradition of tragedy, in which fictional