

content. The analysis found in *Cold War Comforts* is important and original, and this study will undoubtedly interest scholars of social movements, of women's activism, and of twentieth-century Canada more broadly.

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CLASSEN, Constance – *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Pp. 227.

In *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, Constance Classen gives readers a “feel” for medieval and early modern Europe while demonstrating the centrality of touch to the social, cultural, and religious formations of premodernity. More broadly, she advocates for sensory history, and for the role that scholars in the social sciences and humanities have to play in our understanding of the senses. Early in the book Classen reminds readers that “to rely on science for a true understanding of perception is both to disregard the ways in which science is itself a social construct and to detract from the significance of culturally specific models of sensation” (p. xv). The sensory practices and symbolism of any period and its cultural values and norms are closely related and indeed mutually constituted. Foregrounding the senses therefore provides an innovative analytical lens for understanding past cultures; Classen argues that such analyses have the potential to make the “dry bones of historical fact...more interesting and more memorable” (p. xii).

Classen defines touch broadly to include not just bodily contact, but also the sensations associated with temperature, corporeal movement, pleasure, pain and other aspects of embodied experience. She also carefully acknowledges the multisensory nature of human experience rather than trying to disentangle touch from the other senses. Drawing such wide boundaries around her subject allows Classen to investigate an eclectic range of ideas and experiences related to touch by exploring “the tactile values that shaped the sensibility and sociality” of medieval and early modern Europe (p. xiii).

The Deepest Sense challenges the common assertion that the transition to modernity can be charted through a straightforward narrative of the rise of the cultural importance of vision – which Enlightenment thinkers came to associate with rationalism – and a corresponding decline in the primacy of touch – which the same thinkers associated with primitivism and base emotion. This is, of course, an embodied version of the equation that allowed the Middle Ages to be characterized and dismissed as “dark.” Classen problematizes these assumptions, arguing that “the sensory patterns of history are too complex” for such a simplified account (p. 159). She writes that “touch does not simply recede from cultural life in modernity, it is re-educated, and while it retreats from some domains, it expands into others” (p. xiv). For example, although Classen would not suggest that one replaced the other, the practice of touching artifacts was newly banished from museums and art galleries in the nineteenth century at the same time that the rise of the department store (regularly cited as representative of the new regime of *vision*) provided a new public venue for handling both precious and profane objects. This shift,

and the persistence of touch in modernity, which Classen uses “in the sociological sense to refer to the period beginning with the eighteenth century” (p. xiii), are detailed in the final two chapters of the book. The majority of the text focuses on the tactile realms of medieval and early modern Europe, providing a compelling account of a fundamentally “hands-on” culture.

Following a short preface, Classen draws the reader into a world of communal living, sleeping, eating, and bathing, where bodies regularly came into contact. The warmth of the hearth, the feel of a soft or hard bed, the physical strains of feudal agriculture, the weighty armour and painful blows of knighthood, and the pleasures of games and fairs are among the sensations that characterized a tactile environment both seemingly familiar and very foreign to our own. The extent to which religion underwrote sensory values is also made clear. Unlike the prioritization of iconography and the written word in later periods, Classen makes the case that touch was the predominant sense of early Christian piety. This is exemplified by the theological interest in the tangible corporeality of Christ, embodied rites of physical penance, the numerous cults of relics for which physical contact was profoundly meaningful, the relationship between bodily suffering and the torments of Hell, and the divinely-ordained curative touch of kings and saints.

Beyond this broader characterization of medieval and early modern culture, Classen also provides sustained discussions of certain specialized topics. Throughout the book she frequently highlights the experiences of women and they are also the subjects of their own chapter, with special attention to the history of the body. Current scholarly interest in the history of animals is represented in a chapter on the ways that humans and animals came into physical contact, including companionship, food, religion, and new philosophies about animal rights. Representations of touch in art are also discussed, as well as the tactile aspects of artworks themselves, especially sculpture and the fine crafts typically dismissed as “ladies’ work” (e.g. embroidery, shell mosaics). Classen begins to illustrate the shift from pre-modern to modern sensibility through a discussion of the culture of touch in early museums, and continues this in a dedicated chapter, restating the common assertion that the rise of vision was part of the rise of modern individualism. A final chapter explores the persistence of touch in the sensuous spaces of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the department store and the comforts of the middle-class Victorian home, a clear contrast with the living spaces and tactile priorities described earlier in the book.

To tell these histories Classen synthesizes a vast array of secondary literature on medieval and early modern Europe, carefully reading these works to highlight the sensory dimensions previously hidden in plain view on their pages. Additionally, Classen draws on a broad range of works on the history of the senses, demonstrating the wealth of scholarship that has emerged in this area, much of it indebted to her own earlier, path-breaking work. She explicitly positions the book in relation to the *Annales* school, with its interest in charting collective beliefs and practices over the *longue durée* (p. xv). The result of this methodological choice is that the book can at times feel anchorless, taking “Europe” as a single entity and drawing anecdotes from across centuries and disparate parts of the continent. This lack of contextual specificity unfortunately undermines, to some extent, the force of the notion that sensory cultures are particular to time and place. Nevertheless, *The Deepest Sense* is an accessible history, illuminated with interesting and wide-ranging

examples, which succeeds in fleshing out, so to speak, our understanding of the meaningful role of touch in medieval and early modern Europe.

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DOUTHWAITE, Julia – *The Frankenstein of 1790 and Other Lost Chapters from Revolutionary France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. 317.

Douthwaite's book deals with literary history. In each of four chapters she explores a major event of the French Revolution, followed by contemporary journalistic and iconographic representations of the event, then literary treatments of it from the last decade of the eighteenth century and early years of the nineteenth, and finally later and more indirect retellings of the event by authors of literary classics. As she herself puts it, each analysis proceeds through a series of concentric circles from the central event outward through layers of literary portrayals.

The first chapter deals with the march on Versailles by the women of Paris in October 1789. Douthwaite studies both the feminist and misogynistic reactions this act provoked. For conservatives and even some radicals, it was considered unnatural for women to play an active role in political events. The *poissardes* and amazons, as they were called, and their leaders, like Théroigne de Méricourt, were held up to ridicule as grotesque anomalies. Differing reactions extended beyond the borders of France. While Edmund Burke decried women protesters as exemplifying the worst excesses of the rabble, Mary Wollstonecraft celebrated them as pioneer combatants for the rights of an unjustly disenfranchised gender. Two novels that closely followed upon events were Roussel's *Le Château des Tuileries* (1802) and Madame de Suremain's *Melchio ardent* (1800). The former presents a sympathetic view of the royal family during their forced residence in Paris and a critical perspective on female political agitators. The latter, possibly but not for sure by a woman author, adopts a more problematical though comic approach to male/female relations and pretensions to dominance over the other on the part of both genders.

Crossing the Atlantic and a century in time, Douthwaite finds a celebration of the spirit of the March on Versailles not only in the American suffragist movement but also in the writings of L. Frank Baum, the author of *The Wizard of Oz*. Son-in-law of pioneer advocate for women's rights Matilda Joslyn Gage, Baum defended the cause of women's suffrage in his journal column *Our Landlady*. In his novel *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), he expresses a more ambiguous opinion on the role of women in society, a combination of anti-amazon satire and a sympathetic recognition of women's potential to make a positive contribution.

Douthwaite's second chapter is about a novel published in 1790 by François-Félix Nogaret titled *Le Miroir des événements actuels, ou La Belle au plus offrant*. In it an inventor named Frankenstein creates an artificial human. The work was written to promote scientific progress and technological advance in a new society governed by talent. The heroine is a symbol of the nation, and the author is proposing a political agenda for