

Hacke, Daniela, and Paul Musselwhite, eds, *Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018). ISBN: 9789004340633

This volume, edited by historians Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite, is the eighth in Brill's Early American History Series, *The American Colonies, 1500–1830* and a valuable and stimulating contribution in the dynamic academic field of sensory history. Taking up the title of the weighty reader edited by David Howes over a decade ago (a rich collection that brought together classic contributions and more recent scholarship) Hacke and Musselwhite's publication understands sensory perception as a 'framework for colonialism that could cut across strict imperial boundaries' (29). The book's aim, as stated by the editors in their introduction, is to emphasise the 'interwovenness between European and non-European cultures through sensory practices, language, knowledge, and objects' (13).

The focus of the volume, organised in four thematic sections, lies not on an intellectual history of senses or on a general historicisation and reflection on sensorium as a social construction, but on the practice of sensory historical research, demonstrating its fruitfulness and showing a broad range of methodologies in ten engaging case studies.

The theme of the first section, 'Cultural Encounters', is intercultural contact and communication. The three contributions (by Céline Carayon, Jutta Toelle and Michaela Ann Cameron) all illustrate how distinct sensory systems were charged with social meaning. Michaela Ann Cameron, for instance, through her careful 'remastering' of an early seventeenth-century Jesuit account, offers a nuanced analysis of an episode of Franco-Indian sensory miscommunication. Cameron's close reading of the Eurocentric recording of an encounter of French colonists and Jesuits with Armouchiquois people on the Kennebec river, using acoustic and anthropological methods, reveals momentous sonic conflicts rooted in the fundamentally different acoustemologies of Indigenous and Europeans.

The focus of the second section in the volume, 'Colonial Subjectivity', lies on the sensorial experience of colonisers, on the impact the different environments had on them. In one of the two chapters in this part (by Annika Raapke and Marília dos Santos Lopes), letters from soldiers and colonists in the French Caribbean in the late eighteenth century are analysed. The author, Annika Raapke, interprets descriptions of physical pain and sickness using an experimental historiographical methodology. She reads them as testimonies not merely of failing acclimatisation, but of a much broader sensory

dissonance with the hotter climate, insects and exotic foods. Raapke argues that this disconcertion shaped the perception of the newly arrived Europeans, influencing their coming to terms with physical discomfort and fatigue, with their bodily sensations and health, and shows how such a personal experience and perception, not least of racial difference, was mediated in the correspondence.

The third section, comprised of three essays (by Daniela Hacke, Megan Baumhammer and Claire Kennedy, and Andrew Kettler) and titled 'Structures of Knowledge', discusses the circulation and expansion as well as deep connectedness of knowledge structures to geographical areas and specific sense-scapes. It is maintained that sensory repertoires had an empirical and inductive role in the production, reception and appropriation of knowledge within the Atlantic world. In his analysis of eighteenth-century colonial botanical experiments in the Caribbean, Andrew Kettler reflects on the different value attributed to the sense of smell in England and in the English American colonies, respectively. Challenging what is known as the great divide theory (which claims a prioritisation of vision within a hierarchy of senses in the modern era), Kettler traces an alternative historical trajectory with his case study and persuasively argues that Anglo-American botanists enhanced the status of the 'lower' olfactory sense, because they needed to classify previously unknown flora from the alien environment across the Atlantic. To do this, they relied on local Native American guides and their complex sensory knowledge.

The last section in the book, 'Colonial Projects', consists of two chapters (by Kate Mulry and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt) and discusses political and scientific transatlantic undertakings by means of which Europeans sought to influence and control sensory experiences. In her contribution, Kate Mulry offers an in-depth discussion and analysis of the parallel cultivation of two elaborate gardens, one in London, the other in the royal colony of Jamaica, in the early 1660s. This overarching project was part of the efforts of the English Restoration court of Charles II, which attempted to unify and define an expanding empire. Scent, as Mulry shows, was an integral element of early modern imperial governing strategies. It was perceived to have a power over bodies and minds and thus was employed as a tool of social and political control.

This volume edited by Hacke and Musselwhite presents substantial, thought-provoking research in the blooming field of sensory history of the Americas, allowing for a deeper understanding of early modern European association of specific sensory regimes with imperial authority. Moreover, time and again the

authors, critically reflecting upon their source material, make clear the communicative challenge faced by early modern colonial actors when translating sensory perception and experience into written words in an effort, as Raapke aptly puts it, to 'make sense on paper' (138).

Paola von Wyss-Giacosa
University of Zurich