THE FIVE SENSES IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND
RENAISSANCE ART

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The theme of the Five Senses made its first appearance in the Early Middle Ages. From the outset, with the extraordinary Fuller brooch in the British Museum, which dates from the ninth century, its monuments practically all belong to secular imagery. There are scattered instances in Romanesque art, but only from the thirteenth century do the Senses become more frequently depicted. There were two ways of representing them. One was to show them symbolized by five different animals according to the belief, first systematically laid down by the early Gothic encyclopaedists, that the senses are developed more keenly in certain animals than in man, an idea expressed in the well-known mnemotechnic verses, first quoted by Thomas de Cantimpré in his Liber de naturis rerum (4, 1, 194):

Nos aper auditu, lynx visu, simia gustu,
Vultur odoratu praecellit, aranea tactu.

Taken over and illustrated by Richard de Furnival in his Bestiari d’amors, this tradition also came to belong to the type of didactic imagery concerning man and his place in the

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2. Rupert Bruce-Mitford, ‘The Fuller Brooch’, British Museum Quarterly, xvi, 1952, pp. 75-76, and again more fully treated in Dark Age Britain: Studies presented to E.T. Liddell, London 1959, pp. 171-201; a paper repeated in an appendix to D. M. Wilson, Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, London 1964. To my own interpretation of the brooch as a token of love in the article quoted above (n. 1) should be added that the brooch is also likely to have had a magical function as a talisman, similar to that intended for the Loria of Gildas whose inscription runs ‘Cover all of me with my five senses... that in no member, without or within, may I be sick’. (Charles Singer, From Magic to Science, London 1958, p. 111.)

The appearance in 9th-century England of a work of art treating the Five Senses is not so strange as it might at first seem, if we consider the cultural situation of the period. During the first half of the century the English church suffered a great setback with the Viking invasion. Manifestly unable to provide by prayer alone an effective protection against the pagan pirates, it must temporarily have ceded a part of its prestige as a patron of the arts to secular forces. As a result, a certain ‘worldliness’ remained an underlying tendency of Anglo-Saxon art, even after the Church had reassessed itself as the dominant leader of cultural development. This manifested itself in the folklore elements of the unconventional illustrations of vernacular texts and in a general note of ‘gaiety’ in Late Anglo-Saxon book illumination that has no parallel in Ottonian art.

3. H. Walther, Carmina mediæ seculi posterioris latina, Göttingen 1959, i, no. 12943 and ii, no. 187729. Louise Vinge, The Five Senses, Studies in a Literary Tradition (Regiae Societatis Humanorum Litterarum Lundensis, lxxii), Lund 1975, pp. 59-61. See also the critical edition by H. Boese (Thomas Cantimpratensis, Liber de naturis rerum, Berlin 1973, p. 106). H. W. Janson, ‘Apis and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages’ (Studies of the Warburg Institute, xx), London 1952, pp. 239-40, has suggested that Thomas took the complete set of zoomorphic symbols and the mnemotechnic verses from a lost encyclopedia, the author of which he calls the Experiminator. In the prologue, however, Thomas says that he mentions this predecessor of his whenever he relies on him, which he fails to do in speaking about the animals as champions of the Senses. Thus Janson’s hypothesis loses much of its probability. The idea of the Senses being represented by five animals was apparently much in vogue at the beginning of the 13th century. They are the subject of a poem in the Frauen-Ehren-Ton cycle by the Minnesinger Reiner von Zweeter (G. Roethe, Die Gedichte Reimers von Zweter, Leipzig 1887, reprint 1987, p. 498).

universe to which Fritz Saxl called attention in his pioneering article on medieval pictorial encyclopaedias. Its most spectacular manifestations are found in two sets of wall paintings — one in the monastery of Tre Fontane in Rome, the other in Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough. These should be added a hitherto unpublished drawing in a Vatican manuscript from Bamberg, dating from the early fifteenth century (Pal.lat.871, fol 21) in which the Five Senses, as in the two fresco cycles, are combined with the Seven Ages of Man (Pl. 1a).

The translation into Latin of Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* gave rise to another type of representation of the Five Senses, found in historiated initials to his *De sensu et sensato*, chiefly in the Corpus vetustissim adition. Although Aristotle himself was in fact acquainted with the belief in the superiority of certain animals in their sensory endowments (though not the entire set of correpsonondences), this imagery was little suited to his psychological treatment of the Senses in man. Aristotle's text required rather that each Sense should be depicted as a human figure acting in a charade by holding a significant object — a mirror for Sight, a musical instrument for Hearing, a flower for Smell, a fruit for Taste, and for Touch a harp — the plucking of this instrument being in French *touchez*. This developed one aspect of the Fuller brooch, which already showed the Senses personified by young men, but made their behaviour more explicit by the addition of suggestive attributes.

Given the popularity of these secular iconographic traditions, it is remarkable that ecclesiastical art, which after all was predominant in the Middle Ages, so seldom included the theme of the Five Senses in its pictorial teaching. This is all the more surprising as the Five Senses occur quite frequently in Christian texts — in commentaries on the Bible, in sermons and other educational material — mostly with a moralizing cast, as dangerous gateways to the Vices:

Sensus sunt quinque quo custodire debemus  
Visus et auditus, contactus, gustus odorique

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5 F. Saxl, 'A Spiritual Encyclopedia of the Late Middle Ages', this Journal, v, 1942, pp. 82 ff.
8 The miniature was kindly brought to my attention by Dr. Lothar von Wiellens.
9 Nordenfalk, op. cit. n. 1 above, pp. 21–22. Misled by the old catalogue of the manuscripts at Geneva, G. Lacombé in his *Ars ite latein*, Rome 1939, failed to recognize the true thirteenth-century date of cod.lat.76 in Geneva University Library, which has a particularly important representation of the Five Senses in the initial on fol 245, referred to in the text above. It was first published by B. Gagnebin, *L'initière de Charlemagne à François Ier*, exh. cat. Geneva 1976, p. 59, in colour. A fixed iconographic tradition, like that for the symbolizing of the Senses by animals, was never established in the case of the Gothic Aristotle manuscripts. The initial in Ambrosiana MS S 70 sup, fol. 292 is does [sic] only two young men, one for Sight, Smell and Taste; the other for Hearing and Touch (here the harp serves as emblem for both Senses). London, British Library, Harl. 3487, fol. 216 has also two figures, one blowing a trumpet (Hearing), the other smelling a flower (Smell), the other three Senses are only implied. Similarly Escorial, MS 14, fol. 181, has two men flanking a tree, one holding a mirror and a comb (Sight), the other eating fruit (Taste). New Haven, Yale Medical Library MS 12, fol. 180, shows all the Five Senses as young men at table; and Vatican Library, Barb.lat.165, fol. 330 has only one figure smelling a flower, in conformity with the double meaning in French of *sentir* as referring both to Smell and to all the Senses in general.
10 It is significant that none of the volumes in Emile Male's extensive survey of the religious art of the Middle Ages deals with the Five Senses.
11 H. Walther, *Carmina medii aevi posteriores latina*, Göttingen 1959 ff., i. no. 175213, ii. nos. 30893, 358199.
FIVE SENSES

The tone was first struck by the Fathers of the Church in their allegorical interpretations of the parables in the Gospels; it continued to sound all through the Middle Ages. Typical examples are the Versus de quinque sensibus by Notker of St Gall in which the Senses are referred to as instruments of carnal love, and the Laudas by Jacopone da Todi entitled 'How to keep watch over the Senses', in which every stanza ends with the exhortation: Guarda. The distrustful attitude of the Church towards the Senses is perhaps most strikingly expressed in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. This consisted in anointing the sense organs by which the dying man may have sinned, so that, to quote a Sacramentary from Oignies, described by the Benedictine travellers Martène and Durand, 'the stains which through the Five Senses and weakness of mind and body might adhere to them, thanks to this spiritual medicine and the grace of God might be purged'.

This being so, it is hardly surprising to find the Senses often mentioned in medieval Penitentials. The subject has been comprehensively dealt with by Morton Bloomfield in his study The Seven Deadly Sins. Through the Five Senses the Capital Sins assail the human soul which yields to their temptations, disobeying the Ten Commandments of God.

There is a hand-coloured single-sheet woodcut from about 1480 in the Cabinet des Estampes of the Bibliothèque Nationale in which we finally find this concept also formulated visually (Pl. 1b). In the lower right corner there appears the coat-of-arms of the monastery of Tegernsee in Bavaria from which the print was distributed, and next to it a little scene with a penitent kneeling before his confessor. The rest of the sheet is taken up with five rows of interlaced rings each with an emblem inside. As explained in the inscriptions, those in the upper two rows refer to the Ten Commandments, those in the fourth and fifth to the Seven Deadly Sins and in between, in the third row, we see the Five Senses: Das seim die fünf Syn.

The limited space evidently dictated a condensed or abbreviated form of imagery. The Sins in the lower registers are all symbolized by animals: Pride by a peacock, Avarice by a

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13 Monumenta Germaniae historica. Poetica latina, iv, 1, Berlin, 1896, pp. 243-44.
15 Voyage littéraire de deux Bénédictins, ii, Paris 1724, p. 121. In some late medieval Books of Hours there are prayers to the Virgin to protect the pious from sinning with eyes, with ears, etc.
wolf which has caught a lamb, Gluttony by a boar or pig, Anger by a lion, Envy by two dogs biting the same bone, Lechery by a cock and Sloth by an ass. The Ten Commandments in the upper rows are illustrated by a rebus-like mixture of objects and human busts or hands; only the Seventh Commandment, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’, is rendered by an animal, a cock, the symbol of Lechery. For the Senses a similar emblematic language has been chosen. Sight is represented by the bust of a man pointing to a mirror, Hearing by a human ear, a flute and a lute, Taste by a head licking a spoon, Smell by a rose and Touch by a hand in the act of grasping something with bent fingers — the only one of the Senses for which no special object seems to have come to the artist’s mind as an attribute.

Like Hercules at the cross-roads, the Five Senses are here placed between Virtue (the Ten Commandments) and Lust (the Seven Deadly Sins). For the owner of the sheet it should serve as a reminder of his duty as a Christian to watch over his Senses or, in case of failure, to confess his guilt as a penitent. The message is effectively that expressed in a confessional formula found in a block-book which may well have been printed in the same Bavarian workshop as the woodcut. It reads:

Ich armer sündiger mensch bekenn mich Gotte meine herr... das ich durch misbrauchung meiner V sinn, sehen, hören, riechen, smacken und tasten, und durch böse neigung der hoffertigkeit, geitigkeit, hass, zorn, unnissigkeit in übersessen und drucken, unkeuschheit und dräghet, schwerlich übertretten habe die gebot Gottes.

Or, as one of the Number Maxims contained in a collection of English verse in Cambridge (University Library, MS Ec.4.37) puts it with unsurpassed laconic precision:

Kepe well x and flee from vii
Rule well v and come to Heaven

II

Besides these allegorical devices for the representation of the Five Senses there was a third way, and that the most obvious — namely the depiction of the actual sensory organs, preferably by isolating each from the human body as a kind of physiological hieroglyph. We have already encountered this method on the Tegernsee Confession chart which has an ear for Hearing and a clenched hand for Touch. There are earlier examples, such as the eyes and ears beside the horses of Sight and Hearing in the drawings of the Five Senses in the illustrated Verona manuscript of Alain de Lille’s Antiochianus, or the illustrations of

19 On the symbolising of the Deadly Sins by animals see Bloomfield, op. cit. n. 17 above, passim and particularly Appendix i. ‘The Association of Animals and Sins’. There are parallels for the emblems shown in the Bavarian woodcut in the (chiefly English) literature quoted by Bloomfield. He has, however, no other example of Luxuria symbolized by a cock.
20 E. Spanier, Confessionals an Brechtsiegel nach den zorn Giesen, reproduziert en facsimile d’après l’unique exemplaire conservé au Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, avec une introduction par J. W. Holrop, The Hague 1861. There is another Confession sheet by the Bavarian woodcutter Hanns Schaur in London, British Library, Dodson Ar 20 (Schreiber, op. cit. n. 18 above, 17, no. 1855. It has no illustration of the Senses, but has formulas for the penitent, enumerating the Seven Deadly Sins, the Five Senses, the Seven Works of Mercy and others.
21 Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Century, ed. Russell Hope Robbins, Oxford 1935, p. 80, no. 85. In this context mention should also be made of an unpublished English prose text contained in MS M. 861 of the Pierpont Morgan Library, entitled A Treatise on the Ten Commandments, in which both outer and inner sense are described on fol 5-7.5.
these same organs as keyholes of the Tower of Memory in an initial to the prologue of Richart de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'amours* in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale (fr. 410). Another copy of Master Richart's *Bestiaire* in the National Library of Vienna (cod.2609) has as a vignette for Touch three hands mysteriously emerging from the ground in a landscape (Pl. 2a) — in the naïve literalness of its realism a typical example of medieval illustration. All these images, however, remain isolated cases. Only in the seventeenth century was a whole series of the Five Senses depicted in this way.

There are, however, medieval examples of all the Senses being represented by their physical organ 'in situ', as integral parts of the human body. In a way the Fuller brooch already suggests this idea by having the figure of Taste point to his mouth, Hearing lift his hand to his ear, Touch rub both hands together and so on. Here, however, the relative obscurity of the gestures explains why the correct interpretation of the brooch was not immediately recognized and indeed still occasionally meets with scepticism.

There was, of course, one unmistakable way of marking out the sensory organs of a human figure as symbols of the Five Senses, and that was with captions. This is what we find in some of those figurative diagrams locating the Inner Senses in the ventricles of the brain which demonstrate how scholastic doctrines about the process of knowledge were taught at universities.

The oldest of these is a rough but forceful pen and ink drawing in an English manuscript of St Augustine's *De spiritu et anima* in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge (MS O. 7.16: Pl 2b). Placed opposite an elaborate table showing the divisions and the subdivisions of the Soul on fol. 46v, it features the half-length figure of a friar, his head turned in profile and one hand emerging from an opening in his cloak. Captions in red ink in a firm thirteenth-century hand mark the location in the ventricles of the Inner Senses and name the Outer Senses on or by the appropriate organ. Labelling is, however, not the only means the artist has used to call attention to the Five Senses. Several organs are enlarged, as if in caricature, notably the nose, mouth and ear, recalling figures of monsters and devils as represented during the Middle Ages, particularly in British art. It leaves no doubt that the author considered the Five Senses as part of man's lower nature.

Another interesting case is a drawing added as a frontispiece to the blank page at the beginning of the chapter *Des sens* in the copy of Harderwyck's *Epitoma, seu reparationes totius philosophiae naturalis Aristotelis*, printed in Cologne in 1496, which belongs to the Wellcome

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23 Segre, op. cit. n. 4 above, p. 7. Nordenfalk, op. cit., p. 23, fig. 9.
25 E.g. two sets of engravings by G. M. Mitelli. (A. Bertarelli, *Le incisioni di Giuseppe Maria Mitelli*, Milan 1946, nos 152-56 and 569.)
26 See the details published by Bruce-Mitford in his contribution to *Dark Age Britain* (op. cit. n. 2 above).
Institute for the History of Medicine, London (Pl. 2c). Even more than the Cambridge drawing it bears every mark of a non-professional draughtsman who does his best to communicate his knowledge not only in words — of which there are many written in a cursive hand — but also in images.30

The page is divided by a double wavy line into two separate parts, a narrower upper and a broader lower one. In the former are two busts, the one on the left having the Inner Senses inscribed in four compartments in accordance with Galen and Avicenna, the one to the right showing them in five compartments following Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus. Of greater interest for our study however, is, the almost full-length figure of a man in the lower section. Naked apart from the loincloth, he displays the heart, in accordance with Aristotle, as the true seat of the soul.31 The image is exceptional not only in its plethora of explanatory inscriptions, but also in having the stimuli of each sensory organ represented by an attribute. On the upper left is a church bell (oictectum auditus sonus), and to the right a round mirror (oicectum visus). In his left hand the man holds to his nose a flowering sprig (oicectum olfactus odor) and below there is a glass cup into which he dips his tongue (oicectum gustus sapor). At the bottom left there is a stove with an open fire into which the figure puts his right hand (oicectum tactus tangibile propter qualitatem tangibilem). The choice of attributes is largely the same as in the thirteenth century Aristotle manuscripts, the main exception being the fire as stimulus for Touch, the earliest example of Touch rendered as the sense of heat and — by implication — also of pain, since a hand thrust into a fire must get burned. Pain is also indicated in the snake biting the arm close to the elbow, aiming at the nerves inside it which are labelled interiores tactus, in a remarkably modern conception of the nervous system of the human body.32

In spite of its many novelties the Wellcome Institute drawing stands at the end of a development which had its basis in the psychology of Aristotle and his commentators in both East and West. At the time it was made, a fundamentally new approach to the Five Senses had already been proposed by Leonardo, who aimed at a replacement of the speculations of the scholastics with direct knowledge of the human nature from autopsy.33

30 I owe to the palaeographical skill of Dr William Schupbach a complete transcription of the text concerning the Five Senses and their stimuli.
31 The first ventricle of the skull is provided with the caption organum congregatum spierum multiplicitatis a sensatiobius exterioribus ad sensum communem. The nerves from all the sense-organs converge there. At the same time it is connected by a single nerve with the heart, called organum sensum commune. Only the ear has a separate direct connection with the heart as well. Hearing being in Aristotle's words 'more conducive to knowledge'. The heart is also characterized as the seat of the sensum interior and the intellectus, both divided into a first and second part, the second part of intellectus being divided into distinctio and distinctio. On Aristotle's theory of the sensum communis being located in the heart cf. A. F. Chaignet, Essai sur la psychologie d'Aristote, Paris 1889 (repr. 1966), pp. 245 ff. and E. Clarke, 'Aristotelian Concepts of the Form and Functions of the Brain', Bulletin of the History of Medicine, xxxvii. 1933, pp. 1-14.
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FIVE SENSES

This approach did not immediately affect the iconography of the Five Senses, but it laid the ground for a more realistic view of their significance as part of man's mental apparatus.

III

Since the Latin words for the Five Senses are all of masculine gender, it was originally considered natural — indeed inevitable — to have them personified by men. It is as men that they are depicted on the Fuller brooch, in the initials to the Aristotle manuscripts and even on the Confession diagram from Tegernsee in the roundels for Sight and Taste. The same is true of the didactic drawings of the nervous system we have just dealt with, and of the representations of the Senses by symbolic animals when a human figure appears in charge of them, as in the Tre Fontane and the Longthorpe Tower frescoes. In literature a corresponding situation prevails. The lover in the Bestiaire d'amours, the pilgrim in the Pèlerinage de la vie humaine of Guillaume de Deguileville and the naughty boys representing the Senses in Gerson's Moralité du Coeur et les Cinq Sens are all masculine.

A sudden change of sex takes place around 1500. From this time the rule is that the Five Senses should be represented as women. The main reason seems to have been the force of the traditional association of womanhood — for good or for ill — with sensuality. But presumably it would also have been considered appropriate to give the Five Senses the same sex as other mental concepts such as the Virtues and the Vices which in the Latin were of feminine gender and had long been represented accordingly.

The earliest instance of the Senses depicted as women is in the Lady with the Unicorn tapestry series in the Musée de Cluny (Pl. 9a–f). There is no question that the coat-of-arms displayed on the banners or pennants carried by the unicorn and lion in these tapestries belongs to a male member of the Lyonnese family Le Viste, several of whom held important posts in the service of the French monarchy. At the end of the fifteenth century when the tapestries were woven, there were only two members of the family alive who could have commissioned them: the head of the dynasty, Jean IV (c. 1430–1500) and his cousin Aubert's son Antoine (c. 1470–1536).

34 Vinge, op. cit. n. 3 above, pp. 53–60.
35 However, in art history there are no rules without exception. In the collection of illuminated didactic tables called Le Vergier de Sully (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 9270), there is on fol. 15v a table for meditation on the Seven 'Works' of the Passion, related on the one side to the Seven Canonical hours and on the other to the Five Senses, supplemented by Voluntary Consent and Free Will, in which the latter group is represented by seven praying virgins, all alike. The choice of sex in this case is primarily motivated by the emphasis on devotion, for which the personification of the Sense as young men must have been considered inappropriate.

The tapestries have been dated differently: as early as c. 1480, as late as c. 1510. G. Souchal ('Un grand peintre français de la fin du 15e siècle — le Maître de la "Chasse à la licorne"', Revue de l'art, XXI, 1973, pp. 22 ff.) has introduced a new basis for their dating by calling attention to the fact that like Le chasse à la licorne in the Cloisters, the set in the Musée de Cluny has close parallels in the woodcuts of the Books of Hours which were printed in Paris between 1496 and 1507.
Of the latter we know that in 1493 he had followed his father as correcteur et rapporteur at the royal chancellery, which implies that he already had his juridical studies behind him. Unfortunately we have no record of the year in which he married his first wife, Jacqueline Raguer, but nothing prevents us from assuming that it was not too long after the beginning of his political career. Since the tapestries pay homage to a young bride, his marriage could be the occasion of Antoine's ordering them. Jacqueline bore him a daughter Jeanne, and this lady and her husband were direct ancestors of the owners of the Château de Boussac where the tapestries were documented as hanging in 1837, when they were acquired, together with the castle, by the municipality of Boussac, which in 1882 ceded them to the Musée de Cluny.

As for Jean Le Viste, when the tapestries were woven he was already an old man, and he is not recorded as having married for a second time. There is no known occasion in his life with which the tapestries could be connected. The only argument that has been advanced in favour of his patronage is that, having failed to reach the rank of the noblesse d'épée, he wanted in compensation to see his armorial bearings displayed as often as possible on the works of art he possessed. Indeed we know that this was the case, since at his death in 1500 no less than three tapestry sets, not identical with the series in the Musée de Cluny, were inherited by his daughter Claude, eventually to be recorded as the property of the heirs of her second husband, Jean de Chabannes. Had the Lady with the Unicorn tapestries also been made for Jean IV, one would like to know why, having passed to Claude, they did not then share the fate of the others. One would have to suppose that the Unicorn set was retained by Claude until her death in 1547 and was then bequeathed to Jeanne, the daughter of her second cousin — although at that time Claude could hardly have been on very friendly terms with Jeanne, who had recently sued her over other family properties.

Whereas the invocation in the vanities of Jean IV does little to explain why the tapestries feature allegorical representations of the Five Senses, the choice of theme would appear most appropriate for Antoine, if he intended the set as a present for his young bride. The connection of the imagery of the Five Senses with love has, as we have seen, a medieval tradition, and indeed runs as a kind of Leitmotiv through the whole history of the theme. Already in the introductory (or concluding) scene, which shows the Lady standing at the opening of a tent and taking a jewelled chain out of a casket (Pl. 3a), this association is emphatically asserted by its inscription.

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18 In her 1988 article just cited, Mme Souchal speculates about the most probable date for the marriage, opting for some time after 1500. But in the absence of documents, it seems futile to draw any conclusions from a calculation of mere probabilities. Granted that the couple's daughter Jeanne was born as late as c. 1522, which is in no way certain, it does not follow that her parents were necessarily married the year before. The marriage might at first have remained childless, or the first child, or children, could have died young without being recorded. But even if Antoine did not marry Jacqueline until 1501, it would not exclude the tapestries being commissioned for that occasion, since their style in no way rules out such a date.

39 In his book on the tapestries, op. cit. p. 36 above, Erlange-Brandenburg publishes drawings, made before 1837, which show the distribution of the tapestries on the walls of the two rooms in the Château de Boussac, where they were on display. It is evident that there was no space left for further panels. The assumption that the set originally consisted of more than the six panels, can therefore be dismissed as highly improbable.

40 The credit for having discovered the presence of these tapestries at the château de Montaigu-le-Blin in 1555 goes to Pierre Verlet, who published the relevant document first in the Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France, 1897, pp. 84-86 and then in the book written in collaboration with F. Salot op. cit., n. 95 above, p. 43.

41 Souchal, op. cit. p. 37 above, p. 246. Claude's will allegedly disappeared between the two World Wars, which creates an embarrassing state of uncertainty about what it actually said about the tapestries.
When the tapestries were shown at the exhibition in Paris and New York in 1973–74, the panel was called 'The Choice of the Jewels'. However, close inspection reveals that no choice is depicted, since the casket contains only one ornament, a long jewelled chain which the Lady takes at one end, using her veil to hold it. It has been said to be a necklace, and it is true that in this tapestry, as distinct from the others, the Lady does not already wear such an ornament. Nevertheless it is obvious that the chain is not quite like the necklaces depicted elsewhere. It is both longer and heavier; indeed, the Lady uses both hands to take possession of it. It therefore seems more reasonable to assume that it is a belt, the attribute of the mistress of a household, a common marriage symbol in art. It is, in other words, a present chosen for its symbolic significance by her fiancé, and in receiving it she makes use of her veil, the mark of her virginity, which she soon will remove for ever. Even clearer is the inscription on top of the tent: A MON SEUL DESIRE, 'To the only one I desire'. This is formulated as a straightforward dedication and the "J" which follows is the initial 'J' of Jacqueline Ragquier. No doubt the pattern of golden tears on the tent also alludes to the bride, although so far nobody has been able to decipher its meaning.

Were it rather Jean IV who commissioned the tapestries, how should we understand the inscription and the scene below, which is obviously connected with it? The answer, which at present is the official version of the Musée de Cluny, is that the Lady, instead of receiving the belt as a present, actually puts it back into the casket as a mark of her wish to renounce such worldly show. The inscription would therefore not be a dedication at all. Instead it must be explained as a motto. The fact that the preposition 'a' in medieval French can stand for sein would allow us to read the sentence as 'According to my only desire'; it would thus express Jean Le Viste's wish to do without the good things in life — a surprising device for a man otherwise known for his love of earthly possessions.

The five other panels show the Lady acting out, as if in a charade, one of the Five Senses (Pl. 3b–f). This she does by taking up different significant attributes. Such personifications normally make use of their objects as 'consumers'. Thus in most allegories of the Five Senses Sight looks at herself in her mirror, Hearing listens attentively to her instrument by playing or tuning it, Smell enjoys the scent of the flowers she has picked, and so on. This is how we would expect the Lady with the Unicorn to perform, were she nothing but an abstract personification.

Instead we are presented with specific and quite particular actions which must have been chosen for reasons other than simply to refer to one or the other of the Senses. In all
five tapestries an additional allusion to love is intended — an allusion very much to the point, if the tapestries were intended as an engagement present. True, the lover is not present in person, but his representatives are the unicorn and the lion, supporters of his coat-of-arms, and particularly the unicorn whose legendary swiftness (in old French visite, visiter) qualified him as the heraldic animal de préférence of the family Le Viste. As for the Lady, she does her best to live up to her role as the ideal loving partner, eager to please her fiancé according to each of his five senses, a veritable amanuensis performed in five different tableaux.

Thus in Sight she does not herself look into the mirror but makes the unicorn, lovingly resting in her lap, admire his own features. In Hearing, as their listening attitudes make clear, it is for the unicorn and the lion that she plays her table-organ. In Smell, instead of inhaling the scent of the flowers herself, she is about to tie them into a love-chaplet with which to crown her fiancé. Nor in Taste does she put any sweetmeats to her own mouth, but rather takes them from the goblet held by her maid to feed the sparrow-hawk she carries on her raised hand which is protected by a hunter's glove, her tender looks indicating that this animal too is a representative of her lover. Finally in Touch she fondles with her delicate fingers the horn of the unicorn who now stands at her side looking up at her with obvious enchantment in a scene of rather blunt erotic significance. If at the same time she firmly grasps the unicorn's pennant, it is because as his betrothed she feels already entitled to make her bridegroom's coat-of-arms her own.

It is hard to see how these ingenious references to love could be accounted for, were the patron an old man who simply delighted in his own heraldry. The choice between Jean IV and Antoine Le Viste can be made without hesitation: only as a commission of the latter can the tapestries be understood as the declaration of love they evidently are.

IV

The invention of printing, perhaps more than any other single event, can be taken to mark the end of the Middle Ages, and nothing is more characteristic of the Renaissance chapter in the history of the Five Senses in art than the fact that from the turn of the fifteenth century we find the theme represented predominantly in the graphic arts. The confession woodcut we have previously considered is a precursor of this development. However, it is modern in technique only, in spirit it remains medieval. Its simple dualistic distinction between right and wrong would hardly have satisfied humanist sophistication. Not everybody guilty of misconduct deserved to be called a sinner. There was a need for a less absolute term, and the Bible itself offered it in calling the godless man a fool. In pagan ethics too, to be foolish meant to be lacking in wisdom, and Humanism recommended that time-honoured maxim of Greek philosophy: 'Know thyself!'

46 The love chaplet is a well known symbol in representations of loving couples in secular Gothic ivories. A particularly interesting parallel exists in the grisaille drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, which have recently been proved to be bas-de-page scenes of a manuscript containing poems by Guillaume de Machaut (Jonal Bynne, 'A 14th century French drawing in Berlin and the Livre du Voir-Dit of Guillaume de Machaut', Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, xlvii, 1984, pp. 70-81, figs. 1 and 2). D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, Princeton 1969, p. 95, calls attention to the existence of the topic in medieval literature as well.

The most popular exposition of this more differentiated sense of morality was *Das Narren-Schiff*, the Ship of Fools, by the Basle Humanist Sebastian Brant. It was published on All Fools' Day 1494—the world's first best-seller.\(^{48}\) In one hundred or so 'songs' it covers an equal number of types of folly, blindness, error and stupidity of all stations and kinds of men', from serious offences against Divine Law to rather harmless weaknesses such as book-collecting by people with little interest in reading, treasure-hunting and bad manners at table.\(^{49}\) In fact, Brant did not draw a clear line between mere fools and grave sinners, for it appears in his verses again and again that at heart he was a Christian of the old sort, considering the whole of mankind liable to God's wrath on the Day of Judgement.\(^{50}\)

In the prologue Brant assures the reader that in writing his satire, he had women in mind no less than men:

That both I mean will follow soon,
For man is not the onlyloon
'Mongst women fools are hardly fewer.

He then goes on to speak of women's foibles for modish dress and coiffure. Yet in the songs the fools portrayed are practically all male. Women act as the cause of men's foolishness, rather than being fools in their own right, so to speak.

Characteristically, when a Latin edition and a French translation were published in France, this was felt to be a serious deficiency. The French publishers, the brothers de Marnef, thus called upon a scholarly friend, Jodocus Badius Asciensius, to compose a supplement, partly in prose, partly in verse, on foolish women only.\(^{51}\) Good Humanist as he was, Badius wrote it in Latin, leaving it to the publishers to have it translated into French. The Latin edition, *Stultiferae naves*, was printed in Paris by Thielsman Kerver and dated 1500 (n.s. 1501), but the author's *Peroratio* finishes thus: *Ex Lugduno anno MCCXXCVIII quarto idus septembris (10 September 1498).*\(^{52}\)

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In the copy of Brant’s Naves Stultiferae in the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris, pressmark Inc. 572, Badius’s Stultiferae naves is actually bound as a "Postscript".

Like the Ship of Fools by Brant, Badius's supplement is illustrated with woodcuts (Pl. 4, a–f). Although not quite as advanced as those of the German poem, the majority of which were designed by a rising star on the artistic horizon, the young Albrecht Dürer, they are nevertheless by one of the progressive craftsmen in Paris, to whose talent as a story-teller other books printed in the city bear witness.

In Brant's poem, in spite of the title, ships do not have a major role. Most of the fools are landlubbers, acting indoors, in the streets or in the countryside. Ships occur more frequently only towards the end of the cycle, most prominently in Song 108, which features a boat crammed with passengers heading for the land of Cockayne (Schlanaffenland), the illustration of which was also used as a frontispiece to the book. Badius, on the other hand, does full justice to his title, using the navigation motif consistently; a ship therefore appears in every illustration. Moreover, he had the idea of combining the nautical mise-en-scène with the notion of the Five Senses by providing each ship with a crew devoted to one particular Sense. As its captain a woman is standing or seated in the middle; in the verso Shakspeare turns the text she calls her sisters on land to join her for a voyage to Cytherea, the island of Venus:

Quid tantium stupidis pigri osis mente?
Idaiae cives, en Cytherea vocat.

In accordance with the usual order, the ship of Sight opens the series (Pl. 4b). Its captain is an elegantly dressed courtesan holding a comb in one hand and a mirror in the other. A male fool helps a waiting line of foolish women on board. They are greeted by two beaux seated at the oars. At the prow flutters a streamer with a peacock as its emblem, the symbol of Pride.

The second ship has the personification of Hearing standing in the middle, now dressed in fool's costume, with bells attached to her belt (Pl. 4c). Raising her arms in a dancing posture she sings to the accompaniment of two ladies, one playing the harp, the other the mandolin. The women waiting on shore are apparently characterized as tale-mongers.

35 The first to comment upon and publish the illustrations as metaphors of the Five Senses is Samuel Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life, New Haven and London 1929, pp. 192–93, figs. 133–37. Acquainted only with a later edition, he misdates them to 1539.

36 Claudin, op. cit., p. 133, has recognized the same hand at work in the woodcuts of the Comptes et calendrier des bergers, published by Guy Marchant in 1639, whereas A. M. Hind, An Introduction to a History of Woodcuts, II, London 1955, p. 674, identifies the artist with the illustrator of Antoine Verard's Temps. Whatever the case, it is, interestingly enough, the same artist who within which Mme Souchel locates the artist who drew the cartoons for the Lady with the Unicorn tapestries.

37 The ship as a symbol may have different functions, as pointed out by R. Grumier, Das Schiff. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Metaphorik, Tradition und Ursprünglichkeit, Akten des III. Internationalen Germanen-Kongresses 1965 in Amsterdam, Berlin and Munich 1968, pp. 88–101. In the writings of the Fathers of the Church the ship is often a symbol of salvation, like the Ark of Noah (J. Rahner, Symbolik der Kirche, Salzburg 1963, pp. 243f.)

Brant's use of the ship is precisely the opposite in his poem: it is rather an instrument of perdition. With Badius, on the other hand, the sea voyage is a pleasure trip, the danger of which is only implied.

38 Quoted from Renouard, op. cit. n. 51 above, p. 205. In his translation of these verses Jean Ducreux misunderstood the word Italiæ (a mountain city on Cythera) to mean Italiae: 'Italiens trop estes chaby, tresparesse de vuer et de penser'. This led Claudin, op. cit., p. 52 above, II, p. 130, to assume that Badius must have been alluding to the conquest of Milan by Louis XII and the unenthusiastic reception given him on his entry into that city on 12 October 1499. This is, however, out of the question from the point of view of chronology, the French translation in fact being published before that event.

FIVE SENSES

In the next woodcut the shore in the foreground is large enough to make room for two foolish women gathering flowers (Pl. 4d). One of them turns her head towards the boat, which is just about to receive two more passengers. The personification of Smell is standing in the ship welcoming her sisters on board with a flower in her hand. At the same time she turns to sniff a scent-ball which another woman has taken from the open box of a perfume-purveyor standing in the bows with his merchandise— a standard medieval formula of a two-fold action. Somewhat surprisingly the emblem on the banner is an ape, an animal otherwise little known and not really appropriate as a symbol of Smell, but rather one of sinfulness in general.

In the illustration of the sense of Taste the ship is already at sea (Pl. 4e). It is a floating tavern. The table is laid and at it sits the personification of Taste, a fat woman in a tightslaced dress. She raises a goblet in her right hand, while holding the other over her belly as if to indicate that she has feasted too much. She is served by two women also dressed as fools, one of them offering a ham-shank on a plate. The oarsmen seem to have forgotten their duties while carousing; one of them has collapsed, quite drunk. The banner has the emblem of a pig, symbol of Gluttony.

In the allegory of Touch the ship, approaching the shore of Cythera, has seven passengers (Pl. 4f). The dominating central group of three standing figures consists of the personification of Touch attended by two male fools. She has taken the younger one by the hand and is at the same time kissing the other one, who presses his hand against her lap. In the prow a harlot is emptying the purse of her lover, and in the stern a fool approaches a foolish woman, lifting her skirt. The fluttering banner carries the emblem of Lechery, the goat. In his prose Explanatio to this vessel Badius stresses how Touch is the most voluptuous of the Senses and even quotes Donatus's commentary to Terence, Eunuch 4.2, about the gradus amoris conceived as a five-fold sequence: visus-collauquium-conscientius-basia-factum.

The association of the Five Senses with lust leaves no doubt about Badius's basically medieval attitude— that they are instruments of sin. This is equally evident from his placing at the very beginning of the book yet another vessel, dedicated to the first foolish woman in the history of mankind, Eve, who by the Fall brought original sin into the world— certainly the most outstanding example of human folly. In his illustration to this introductory section the artist has wittily transformed the mast into the Tree of Knowledge and placed Eve beside it, about to accept the forbidden fruit from the serpent who, following an old pictorial tradition in this case particularly appropriate, has a woman's head (Pl. 4a). Adam, his nakedness partly concealed by the stern-castle, approaches her expectantly. Two horned fools, no doubt myrmidons of the Evil One, are seated at the oars. A banner with a dragon, the Devil's armorial bearing, flutters from the top of the prow.

58 The Cæsimia olfactionis faustis, the welcome song addressed to the foolish women about to enter the ship of Smell, begins rather thoughtlessly with the words Adest mater viri (30), as if the author had forgotten what sex is at stake.

59 On flowers and perfumes as attributes of Smell see Heinz Ladendorf, 'Der Duft und die Kunsthgeschichte', Festschrift Erich Meyer, Hamburg 1959, pp. 251 ff.

60 Janson, op. cit., n. 3 above, p. 256, n. 15, cites the use of the ape as a symbol of Touch beside the common one for Taste, but never for Smell. It is true that there is a monkey in the background for the Lady with the Unicorn tapestry representing Smell, but probably only as a pet.

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FIVE SENSES

combine his censure of women’s foolishness with the concept of the Five Senses. Yet his position is ultimately ambiguous. As much as it is a satire, his text as well as its illustration bears witness to a secret joy in *Wein, Weib und Gesang.* This is a dichotomy that from now on will characterize practically all moralizing representations of the Five Senses.

V

Like Sebastian Brant in his *Narren-Schiff,* Badius in his supplement is revealed as a Humanist with one foot still in the Middle Ages. For a more ‘authentic’ Renaissance view of the Five Senses, we have to turn to a contemporary Italian, Francesco Colonna, author of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili.* Set in antiqua by Aldus Manutius and provided with illustrations of haunting beauty by a follower of Mantegna, this book is one of the most perfect of all products of typography.

A dream novel, it features two terrestrial marvels: love and the relics of the classical past. The two merge in Polia, object of Polifilo’s affection, for besides being adorable in herself her name means in Greek ‘Antiquity.’ In Colonna’s story we encounter for the first time the Five Senses associated with the culture of the ancient world.

In a *locus amoenus,* a pleasure garden of orchards and fountains, Polifilo meets five nymphs, who promise to assist him in his pursuit of his beloved. As indicated by their Greek names they are the Five Senses personified, and in conformity with the chastely economical linear style of the illustrator, their identities are only just revealed by their attributes or gestures (Pl. 5a). First comes *Aphro,* the sense of Touch. She carries no attribute, but reaches out to Polifilo with her hand. Behind her follows, as we have to guess from the (presumably) fragrant bathing-towel which she carries over her arm, *Osfrissa,* Smell. Next to her stands *Achor* holding a musical instrument, representing Hearing. Behind her the fourth girl, pressing a round mirror to her bosom is *Orassia,* Sight. Finally there is a nymph carrying a drinking vessel as an attribute for Taste; her name is *Gussia.*

The nymphs are on their way to a fountain enclosed in an octagonal classical building, seen in the succeeding illustration though only from the outside. They exhort Polifilo to follow them, and entering the monument invite the rather bewildered wanderer to join them in their bath. When the book was translated into French in 1546, the illustrator, who may have been Jean Goujon, could not resist adding a woodcut in which the building is shown from the inside and in which the nymphs take up various graceful positions on the

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64 In certain circles Badius's supplement was felt as an unseemly attack on the honour of the weaker sex which could not be left unanswered. A response came with the publication in 1503 of a pamphlet by Symphorien Champier entitled *Le Nef des femmes vertueuses,* in which however, the allegory of the Five Senses is dropped.


67 According to the text Osfrissa ought to carry boxes with unguents as well, but the artist omitted these.
steps of the basin while Polifilo, seated in the foreground, feasts his eyes on their naked beauty (Pl. 5b). However, having laid aside their attributes, they are no longer individually recognizable.

Clearly, we have to understand Polifilo’s bath with the nymphae as an act of purification of the Senses. Some similar symbolism is likely to underlie Dürer’s Männnerbad, made shortly after the artist’s return from his first visit to Italy (Pl. 5c). Edgar Wind has suggested that the four men surrounding the musicians are at once portraits of the artist himself and of his Humanist friends in Nuremberg, and at the same time representatives of the Four Temperaments. However, it is easier to follow another scholar, Georg Kauffmann, in interpreting the figures as personifying the Five Senses. The two men in the foreground, one holding a scraper, the other a flower, would thus be Touch and Smell, the stout beer-drinker Taste, the two musicians Hearing, and Dürer himself, leaning against the hydrant and looking rather intensely at the others, an image of Sight—appropriately enough for a master of the visual arts. The figure in the background looking at us from a distance would not be part of the allegory.

The characterization of the Five Senses by men instead of women is a throwback to the medieval tradition for which there must have been a special reason that remains to be explained. But for the next hundred years feminine personifications would prevail. One case, the next in line chronologically, is found on a faience stove in the Museo provinciale d’arte di Trento (Pl. 6 a, c). Its upper part is decorated with glazed tiles in four rows, each featuring the bust in three-quarter view or in profile either of a bearded man—a Turk with a turban or a classical warrior—or of a beautiful woman. The five tiles which make up the third row from the top depict female figures of the Five Senses: Sight holding a mirror, Hearing a musical instrument, Smell a flower and Taste a jug, while Touch, lacking an attribute, is being embraced by a Turk—the loving couple motif, already

68 Hypnerotomachia or Discours du songe de Poliphile, Dedieant comme Amour de combat l’occasion de Polia. Traduit de langage italien en françoys par Jean Martin et Jacques Chevry, Paris 1545. Of this book there is a facsimile with notes by Bertrand Guegan, Paris 1926.

69 As shown by Anthony Blunt, ‘The “Hypnerotomachia Poliphili” in 17th Century France’, this Journal, 1, 1937–38, pp. 127 ff., the scene of Polifilo bathing with the nymphs is the subject of a painting by Le Sueur in the Musée Magnin of Dijon which was intended to serve as a model for a tapestry. In this painting the artist has himself added the necessary identifying attributes. A related bathing scene with women only is Ingres’s Bain turque of 1863 which according to J. Connolly (‘Ingres and the Erotic Intelect’, Women as Sex Objects. Studies in Erotic Art 1730–1970, ed. T. Hess and L. Novhim, New York 1972, pp. 7–31) may also be understood as an allegory of the Five Senses.


71 E. Wind, ‘Dürer’s “Männnerbad”, a Dionysian Mystery’, this Journal, ii, 1938–39, pp. 269–71, where he calls it ‘a broadly humorous travesty of the Dionysian mysteries of inspiration and purification’. E. Panofsky, Albrecht Dürer, Princeton 1943, ii, p. 42, refers to Wind’s article approvingly, with the reservation, however, that it is difficult to apply the same interpretation to the Dürer drawing (L. 101) in Bremen, representing a Frauenbad, which he thinks was a counterpart to the woodcut. An attempt to explain the woodcut as an exploration of the unmentionable ‘love’ is Robert Baldwin, ‘Mutual Gazing, a Literary and Artistic Topic in the Renaissance’, to appear in the Acts of the Symposium on ‘The Language of Gestures in Renaissance Art’ at the University of Toronto in 1985. I thank the author for having given me the opportunity to read his paper in typescript.


73 Kauffmann, op. cit., considers him to stand for Sight.”

74 Rosemarie Franz, Der Kechdenf (Forschungen und Berichte des kunsthistorischen Institutes der Universität Graz, i). Graz 1959, pp. 100 ff. and figs. 297, 300–01. I owe the photographs for the illustration of this article to the kind assistance of Dr. Franz.
FIVE SENSES

found in Badius’ Stultiferae naves, which henceforth becomes a standard way of illustrating that Sense. The attribute of Hearing with its unusual shape is something of a puzzle; it is not the usual stringed or wind instrument, but rather some sort of percussive device, possibly a rattle.75

Instead of figures, two of the tiles bear the coat-of-arms of two members of the South Tyrolean nobility.76 Probably taken from a castle owned by one of these families, the stove is representative of a new type of furniture for whose decoration professional faience painters from Italy must have been employed.77 Another stove, possibly by the same craftsman but with another type of decoration, has a shield with the year 1530, which provides some basis for dating the example in Trento.

From about the same period, or slightly later, are the paintings by the Florentine Francesco Ubertino, better known as Il Bacchiacca, which have been interpreted as allegories of the Senses (Pl. 7a–b).78 One belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts.79 It shows a lady in profile holding a golden jug with a nosegay in much the same way as the personification of Taste on the Trento stove carries her vessel. A further point of resemblance is that both figures have their hair partly covered by a turban. The lady’s concentration on the delicately painted flowers would make her a good candidate for the symbolizing of Smell. At the same time, however, in her general appearance she recalls those much admired testee divina which Vasari tells us that Michelangelo drew for Gherardo Perini and for Tommaso de Cavalieri.80 The other painting, recently in the New York art market, is a similar bust of a lady in three-quarter profile.81 She is holding a cat; being an animal that sees in the dark, it makes an appropriate symbol of Sight.82 The intense gaze of both the woman and the animal would seem to corroborate the assumption that this Sense is intended, rather than that of Touch, as has been suggested.83

However, the absence of similar paintings representing Hearing, Taste and Touch makes it difficult to be certain. The respective measurements of the two pictures do not agree as perfectly as could be expected, were they part of the same set.84 Moreover, in her monograph on Il Bacchiacca Lada Nikolenko proposes to attribute them to different periods in the artist’s career. Ultimately, therefore, we are faced with the question of

75 My appeal to specialists in Renaissance music has so far been without result.
81 See exh. cat. Le triomphe du Maniéréisme, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1955, cat. no. 15.
82 The Springfield painting measures 54.5 x 48 cm., that on the New York market 33.5 x 43.2 cm.
whether an artist of the period would have represented one or two of the Senses separately, without feeling obliged to illustrate all five. In favour of this it might be noted that in the first edition (1593) of his Iconologia Cesare Ripa treated the Senses one at a time, in alphabetical order, each according to its name. But the fact remains that he included all five, and that the theme almost by definition presupposes the representation of the entire set. This being so, the interpretation of the pictures by Il Bacchiacca as allegories of Sight and Smell must be hypothetical.\(^{85}\)

Before leaving the Italian Renaissance and the contributions of its artists to the iconography of the Five Senses, we might consider an engraving by Adam Ghisi after Giulio Romano which represents the theme in a more unusual way (Pl. 6b).\(^{86}\) In front of a river-god a chariot, drawn by five horses, hurtles along at breakneck speed with two struggling Cupids driving it, one giving his horses free rein, the other trying to hold his animals back. The caption Animu imperior sensuum obsequio (With the Soul in command and the Senses in obedience) indicates that the chariot with its charioteers stands for the soul and the horses for the Senses. It derives from Plato’s well-known myth in the Phaedrus (245, 250 and 256) in which, however, the charioteer has but one Eros as driver and only two horses, one of noble, the other of ignoble breed.\(^{87}\) In Giulio’s composition the dichotomy between the higher and the lower form of love is transferred to the two drivers, and the original pair of horses has become a five-in-hand.

The simile of the Five Senses pulling a chariot does not appear in the Ghisi print for the first time. It was used by Alain de Lille in his poem Antichlodius (iv, 95), where each horse is identified with a particular Sense.\(^{88}\) At the beginning of the voyage Sight is the leading horse, but as the carriage reaches the Empyrean sphere the horse of Hearing alone is able to continue. In Ghisi’s engraving the horses are not specifically identified; only that closest to the spectator is to some extent differentiated in that it stumbles and is about to fall. Presumably the artist here had in mind the least reliable of the Senses, Touch.\(^{89}\)

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\(^{87}\) Plato’s fable is illustrated on the cameo of Donatello’s bronze bust of a youth in the Bargello, as was pointed out by R. Wittkower (‘A Symbol of Platonic Love in a Portrait Bust by Donatello’, this Journal, n. 1936, pp. 260-61). See also A. Chastel, ‘Le Jeune homme au camar platonien à Bargello’, Proporzioni, iii, 1956, pp. 73-74. Chastel’s doubts concerning the attribution of the bust to Donatello have been dismissed by H. W. Janson, The Sculpture of Donatello, Princeton 1953, pp. 141-42. On the theme compare also Sander Gilman, ‘The Uncontrollable Steed: A Study of the Metamorphosis of a Literary Image’, Euphorion, lxvi, 1972, pp. 32 ff.

\(^{88}\) Alain de Lille Antichlodius, ed. H. Bossuat (Textes philosophiques du moyen-âge, i), Paris 1953, pp. 199 ff. Its story about the ascent of Prudentius to God in a carriage drawn by the Five Senses is admirably summarized by C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, Oxford 1916, pp. 98 ff. The only illustrated copy of the text, a 13th-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona, was published in this Journal, xlviii, 1935, pp. 440-41 op. cit. n. 22 above by Florentine Mühlerich. It portrays each horse separately, and omits practically all the attributes applied to them in the text. Prudentius’s ascent is more dramatically represented in a 15th-century encyclopedia in images in the Biblioteca Casanatense, cod. 1904, in a drawing reproduced by F. Saxl, ‘Aller Tugenden und Laster Abbildung’, Festschrift für Julius Schlosser, Zürich, Leipzig and Vienna 1927, pp. 194-211, xxii, fig. 48.

\(^{89}\) According to Chi-Tsong Li, The Five Senses in Art, Dass. Iowa 1955, p. 107, n. 22, further representations of the Five Senses as horses occur on a set of tapestries illustrating Prudentius’s Psychomachia after cartoons by Jan Mabuse, which are said to belong to the Prado. However, I am informed that no such works exist in that Museum. The present location of the tapestries has still to be established.
In Giulio Romano's allegory of the inborn dichotomy of the human soul the notion of the Five Senses is only a secondary theme. The same can be said of the Lady with the Unicorn tapestries, which first and foremost express homage to a beloved bride, just as the illustrations to the Stultiferae naves primarily tell the story of woman's foolishness. Similarly the identification with the Five Senses of nymphs who meet Polifilo in the Hypnerotomachia is a subordinate aspect of the plot. Even in the decoration of the faience stove in Trento, the singling out of five of the busts as personifications of the Five Senses is no more than a subsidiary theme.

To find the Five Senses treated in Renaissance art as a subject in its own right, we must turn to a set of five copper engravings by one of the Nuremberg Kleinmeister, Georg Pencz (Pl. 8 a-e). These prints mark a new chapter in the iconography of the Five Senses in another way too. Previously the Senses had been represented either by human figures or by animals; in Pencz's cycle the two appear for the first time in combination. And, most importantly, we find the Five Senses, as it were, elevated to a higher plane. They are now ideal female nudes, after the fashion of the Virtues, Temperaments and Liberal Arts as depicted in Italian Renaissance art.

In each engraving we see a girl seated in the corner of a room with a window-like opening in the wall behind her. The Latin names of the Senses are inscribed in capitals in the open space. At the bottom of each print appears the relevant section of the medieval couplet about the connection of the Senses with particular animals: the lynx with Sight, the boar with Hearing, the vulture with Smell, the ape with Taste and the spider with Touch. The beasts keep the girls company from the floor, except for the spider which is in a corner of the window. It may be noted that for the first time we see the lynx correctly rendered as a spotted cat-like animal.

The women are engaged in appropriate occupations, though not altogether the same as those of the Senses in the Stultiferae naves and on the Trento stove. In the print symbolizing Sight the figure has no mirror but is gazing up at the sky where sun, moon and stars appear, in conformity with the words of Ovid (Metamorphoses 1, 85-87) that his looking upwards distinguishes man from the animals. In Hearing a lute hangs on the

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91 A similar group of personifications was used by Pencz himself in a set of Christian Virtues which he engraved in the period before 1539, when he signed with the letters IB (Bartsch, loc. cit. pp. 307-08, nos 29-33; The Illustrated Bartsch loc. cit. pp. 74-75), as well as in a later set of the Seven Liberal Arts (Bartsch nos 110-17).

92 Pencz mistakenly put the label Olfactus on his print representing Sight before changing it to the correct Vizus. Only the print with the image of Smell has its title (misspelt Olfatus) on a scroll across the window, since in this case the opening was not broad enough for so long a word. Also, unlike the others, the print lacks the artist's monogram.

93 It reads: 'Truxa per audito | linx visus | milvis odore | Simia nos superat gustu | sed aranea tactu.' In mentioning odor before gustus and by replacing apet with truxa and vultus with milvis it deviates from the usual medieval version, quoted above p. 1.

94 In the Barbiere d'amore the lynx was believed to be a white worm which sees through walls and is represented as such in most copies of French origin (Nordenfalk, op. cit., n. 1 above, fig 12). In the Italian copies it was rendered as a nondescript quadruped, as also in our Pl. 1a.

95 Pronaue cum spectent animalia cetera terram Os hominii sublime dedit caelumque videre Lusit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus. The motif has been extensively discussed by Ionello Sozzi, La 'Dignitas hominis' de la littérature française de la Renaissance, Turin, 1979. In Pencz's print the lynx too raises his head, though not to the stars but to his mistress.
wall and other musical instruments are lying on the floor. The girl merely gestures towards them and she may rather be listening to the harmonies of Heaven. In Smell there are again scattered objects including two scent-bottles behind and at the foot of the figure, while she herself puts her nose to a horn of plenty stuffed with leaves and flowers. In Taste she is carefully selecting a morsel of food from a plate, using the two-pronged fork which became a normal eating implement only in the course of the sixteenth century, and which may well be illustrated for the first time here. Finally, for Touch, there is an entirely new symbolic activity. This personification is busy at a ribbon-loom, the work — as a typical handicraft — being an appropriate image for the sense we mostly experience with our hands. Obviously there is also a neat parallel with the spider, the symbolic animal for Touch.

Each figure carries her head quite differently. Sight raises her eyes to Heaven, Hearing faces straight ahead. From Smell onwards the figures incline their heads more and more: Taste further down and Touch right over her work. The sequence is too obvious to be fortuitous and in fact corresponds to the classical ranking of the Senses. However there is a curious contradiction with the medieval verses added as captions, since the latter, which begin with Hearing instead of Sight, impose an order upon the set that partly spoils the artist’s compositional device.

A most conspicuous feature of Pencz’s Five Senses is the near nudity of the figures. With the Renaissance the nude had of course regained its ‘pagan’ positive meaning, although its negative evaluation had already begun to yield in the early fifteenth century when in her Epistre d’Othée Christine de Pisan declared it a sign of ‘something spiritual and elevated above the earth’. In the same spirit, in his representation of the Senses Pencz has used nudity as an ennobling attribute which, at the same time, of course underlines the essential sensuality of his theme.

In style the five prints seem to fit the 1540s, the last decade in Pencz’s life. A generation later they would still be used as models for a set of small oval prints by the French engraver Etienne Delaune, who emigrated to Germany as a Protestant in 1572 (Pl. 9a–e). A goldsmith himself, he probably made the engravings to serve as patterns

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95 Alma Helfrich-Dörner, Messer, Löffel, Gabel, seit wann?, Schwäbisch Hall 1955, pp. 15 ff.
96 Gertrud Benker, Alter Bestecke, Munich 1978, pp. 15 ff. The earliest forks were in fact two-pronged. According to F. Braudel, Continuation matérielle et capitalisme, i: Le possible et l’impossible, Paris 1964, pp. 150–51, one has to wait until 1599 to find a fork represented in a painting of the Last Supper. Maybe, however, this is not the topic one should first consider in order to find the fork depicted on a laid table.
97 Starring with Aristotle, Sight precedes Hearing in the ancient ranking of the Senses (Vinge, op. cit. n 3 above, p. 18). By contrast, medieval thought more often gave precedence to Hearing, as the Sense by which faith is taught, according to the word of St. Paul, fides ex auditu (Rom. x, 14). A striking formulation of this concept is in the two lines of a sacramental hymn, ascribed to Thomas Aquinas:
   Vites, gustus, tactus et te fallitur,
   Sed auditus solus tue creditur.

98 Et pour ce que dévié est chose spirituelle et eslevée de terre, sont les ynjages figurer en nus", quoted from Marc-René Jong, Études sur le poème allégorique en France au moyen-âge (Romanica helvetica, lxxxiii), Bern 1971, p. 12, n. 12.
FIVE SENSES

for the flourishing goldsmithing industry in Augsburg. The Senses are shown as women in classical tunics, standing in a landscape and accompanied by their symbolic animals. Stylistically they are derived from the school of Fontainebleau; in iconography, however, they depend upon Pencz’s series. Evidently it did not matter too much to Delaune that the switch from indoor to outdoor setting and from seated to standing postures prevented the personifications from being engaged in their activities in the same natural way as were their German prototypes, so that they are forced rather to resort to mere gestures. Sight is pointing with outstretched arm towards Heaven, Hearing to her ear and Touch to a loom which stands idle on the ground. Instead of a cornucopia, Smell holds to her nostrils a flower picked from a basket, and Taste’s fork and plate have been replaced by a jug and ladle.

About the same time as Delaune, a German woodcarver, Hans Dreger, made use of the engravings by Pencz for the decoration of the wainscot which he executed between 1572 and 1583 for the house of a wealthy merchant in Lübeck and which is now installed in the so-called Fredenhagen room of the Haus der Kaufmannschaft in that city. Overloaded with a mass of architectural and ornamental motifs, which are interspersed with statuettes and figurative reliefs, it is the most sumptuous Renaissance interior preserved anywhere north of the Alps. Along the principal wall, within arches of multicoloured laminae, are epitaph-like structures, and at the centre of each is a relief of one of the Senses faithfully copied from Pencz (Pl. 9f).

The prominence given in this scheme to the Five Senses suggests that the room was originally conceived as banqueting hall. As if the message needed repeating, the theme is reiterated in a set of alabaster reliefs, imported from Antwerp, Lübeck’s rival as the centre of North European trade. This set of Five Senses is somewhat different in iconography from that of Pencz. Inserted into the upper part of the ‘epitaphs’, these are not the only parts of the decoration in alabaster, for in the zone above them are larger reliefs in this material illustrating scenes from the life of Christ, each chosen to correspond in content to the Sense below in an idea which is likewise paralleled in prints from Antwerp: above Hearing is the Annunciation, above Sight the Adoration of the Shepherds, above Smell the Magi offering frankincense and myrrh, above Taste the Marriage of Cana and above Touch the Deposition of Christ.

103 There are other banqueting halls decorated with representations of the Five Senses, the most important being in Bolsover Castle, Derby (17th century) and Schloss Leisheim, Bavaria (18th century).
104 Similar alabaster reliefs exist in the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseum, Schleswig, Inv. no. 1922/9 (Sight) and 1935/4 (Touch).
105 The combination of the Five Senses with five episodes from the life of Christ was used about the same time by Maarten de Vos in three of his five cycles of the Five Senses published by different Antwerp printers. His choice of themes, however, differs from that in the Fredenhagen room, Sight being combined with Christ healing the blind, Hearing with John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness, Smell with Mary Magdalene anointing the feet of Christ, Taste with the Feeding of the multitude, and Touch with Peter rescued by the hand of Christ when trying to walk on the water.
The duplication of the theme of the Five Senses suggests that the patron wanted his wainscot to look up-to-date. For if the wooden reliefs are the offshoot of a fast vanishing Renaissance tradition, those in alabaster belong to the new 'Mannerist' version of the theme which from 1561 onwards was popularized through prints of different Flemish artists. This new imagery of the Five Senses however, deserves, a treatment of its own.\textsuperscript{106}

National Museum, Stockholm

\textsuperscript{106} A survey of the 16th-century Flemish engravings representing the Five Senses is Nordenfalk, The Five Senses in Flemish Art before 1600, \textit{Nederlandish Mannerism} (Nationalmusei Skriftserie, N.S. iv), Stockholm 1985, pp. 135-54.