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La Renaissance et la nuit (review)

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includes these in his second study. Among the Savoyard documents is the *Registre* of the *Passion* staged in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne in 1573. It is a detailed record of all the preparations made for that play during each phase of the production. Only four other *Registres* are known to have survived, which makes Runnalls's publication of this document an extremely valuable contribution to the study of late medieval theatre. The fourth 'étude' brings together all known archival references to mystery plays in the province of Poitou, as well as all such references in the works of Jean Bouchet, who was an enthusiastic promoter of theatre in Poitou in the early sixteenth century. The fifth essay concerns the *Passion* staged in Amiens in 1500. It has long been known that the city of Mons borrowed that play from Amiens to stage their own *Passion* in 1501, but no-one before now has thoroughly examined the records of the Amiens production. This study, which is an example of archival research at its best, gives us a much fuller picture of the play and its staging. The final study deals with the *Passion* staged in Reims in 1490 and extracts what can be learned about that event from the memoirs of Jean Foulquart. Runnalls here provides us with many previously unedited documents that greatly enrich our knowledge of mystery play production in France. Although the documents contain a profusion of details, Runnalls admits that sometimes 'leur interprétation pose de nombreux problèmes' (p. 147). Throughout the book, however, his interpretations of the archival material seem always to be justified and wholly reliable.

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La Renaissance et la nuit. By DANIEL MÉNAGER. Geneva, Droz, 2005. 270 pp. Pb SFr 80.00.

In this stimulating volume, Ménager applies his vast erudition to a topic clearly under-researched heretofore. When considering his period and theme, night's negative connotations (fear and danger) must be set against its positive associations: starlight and moonlight redeem it in a wide range of contexts (including scientific astronomy) and it is also a time for rest and lovemaking. Moreover one should not simply equate night with darkness. During the Crucifixion the sun was obscured, but in daytime. Conversely, the nativity occurred on a starlit night. Genesis is also revisited in order to dissociate night (created by God on the fourth day) from *l'obscurité primordiale*, whereas classical antiquity, particularly Hesiod, is less approving, which hostility is reinforced by Renaissance humanists, Ficino in particular, given the prestige they afforded the Sun. In response, Ménager emancipates *la nuit*, a feminine time (p. 82), using a broad variety of materials drawn from philosophy, science, literature, fine art and theology. Although the least perfect of the stars, the Moon is an essential counterpart to the Sun. Traditionally infected by temptation, the hours of darkness can also lead one closer to God, for instance via a contemplation of the Agony, the Christian's tragic night par excellence. Although for some night was a time of melancholia inimical to useful study, others, including Erasmus and Aneau, favoured the midnight oil as endorsed by the emblematic figure of the owl and the *in nocte consilium* topos. In the former connection, Dürer's *Melencolia* is subjected to a deep analysis whose (laudable) aim is to refute superficial appearances: is it not less a

study of idleness than of reflexion, and is it not sited in twilight rather than night-time? A similar respect for artistic polysemy accompanies Ménager's interpretation of Michelangelo's *Notte* and his reading of Quixote: driven mad by reading the wrong texts at the wrong time, the latter yet performs nocturnal exploits that are the more admirable for being unobserved and fearless. The final chapter ('Nocturnes') provides a long and stimulating treatment of various Renaissance paintings (by Correggio and Bassano, among others), again refusing simplistic equations whereby, for example, night scenes are viewed systematically as mannerist. Within these different pictures, Ménager particularly investigates the sources of light and the allegorical meanings their implications have incited. Although his enthusiasm in rescuing and redefining *la nuit* may even affect its very gender (p. 22: the fate is shared by [*la*] *ciel* (p. 56) and [*la*] *bal* (p. 201)), hyper-criticism is the less appropriate for the work's being so challenging and so wide-ranging: references to Stendhal, Kafka, Maupassant, for instance, stand alongside readings of an extensive gamut of sixteenth-century European authors, especially Ronsard, but not excluding Shakespeare. Specialists will no doubt pick up points of detail: for instance, Ménager's sense of the discipline and temporality of the *Heptaméron* (p. 226) is, by my reading, a little abrupt. Yet in doing so they will scarcely impair the quality of what is a genuinely new perspective on a most fertile field of study.

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Le Poète architecte en France: constructions d'un imaginaire monarchique. By CYNTHIA SKENAZI. (Études et essais sur la Renaissance, 48). Paris, Champion, 2003. 344 pp. Hb €55.00.

Cynthia Skenazi's exploration of the role of architecture in French Renaissance literature is both a complement to existing work on this topic and a challenge to it. Rejecting what she sees as the essentially literary emphasis of previous studies, Skenazi seeks to focus more consistently on the political function of textual buildings as articulations of a public image of the kingdom. In addition, she emphasizes the often close relationship between such constructions and real buildings. This approach is fruitful insofar as it enables her both to draw attention to the use by successive kings of France of verbal and visual means (most notably actual building projects) to convey their own vision of the state to their contemporaries and posterity, and to trace the attempts by writers, in their dialogue with royal power, to influence this process and, in so doing, to stake a claim for the importance of their own role in the formulation and articulation of images of power. Skenazi's study may therefore be welcomed as a supplement to existing work by Cynthia Brown and David Cowling, which has traced this process back to the writings of the Rhétoriqueurs in the second half of the fifteenth century. Unlike previous scholars, however, Skenazi does not attempt an exhaustive survey of the available material, preferring to analyse a choice of works by Jean Lemaire de Belges, Clément Marot, Gilles Corrozet, Joachim Du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard; although this decision is sensible in the light of the sheer volume of material and its apparent discontinuity (Skenazi declares on page 22 that a linear history of architectural metaphors in the period would not be feasible), readers seeking a full picture of the