

Chanita Goodblatt. *The Christian Hebraism of John Donne: Written with the Fingers of Man's Hand*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2010. xii + 244 pp. \$58.00. Review by MITCHELL M. HARRIS, AUGUSTANA COLLEGE (SIOUX FALLS).

In *The Christian Hebraism of John Donne*, Chanita Goodblatt turns to an often neglected area in Donne studies: Donne's mastery and understanding of the Hebrew language and the role it played in his sacerdotal years. In her introduction, Goodblatt carefully and clearly articulates the organizational framework of the book, and, by extension, the book's scholarly reach. She begins by turning to Donne's 1621 Lenten sermon, where he reads the Book of Daniel "in order to substantiate his argument about the integrity and authority" of the Hebrew text as a means to sufficiently instruct his parishioners on the meaning of the Book of Timothy (1). Needless to say, the very use of a Hebrew (Old Testament) and Jewish text to illuminate the meaning of a Greek (New Testament) and Christian text demonstrates that Donne's exegesis conceives, as Goodblatt suggests, "of the biblical text as one vast interpretive panorama in which each biblical verse bespeaks the meaning of another" (2). Such a conception, however, presents certain problems for today's scholars who are highly aware of its latent bias and prejudice: Christianity as the *telos* of the Jewish religion. How do we come to understand a reading of Hebrew literature that sees it merely as a prefiguration of its Greek descendant?

Goodblatt never asks this question in such an explicit manner. Nevertheless it seems to be the implicit driving force behind much of her thinking. As she points out, from a purely theoretical and methodological position, four distinct habits of thought need to be maintained by any scholar attempting to speak about Donne as a Christian Hebraist. The "discussion of Donne's study of the Hebrew Bible," she suggests first, "must include an investigation into the complex Jewish exegetical tradition, as well as into its direct and indirect Christian transmission" (3). Next, Goodblatt asserts that a proper discussion of Donne's biblical hermeneutics must "also address the textual and religious polemic, both intra-Christian and Jewish-Christian, which is foregrounded in biblical exegesis" (3). Third, she claims that "a flexible understanding of exegetical connections should

be maintained, reflecting the intertwined character of both Jewish and Christian exegetical projects” (3). The fourth point that Goodblatt hopes to maintain throughout the book is that of Mikhail Bakhtin’s “heteroglot conception of the world” (qtd. in Goodblatt 2). She will do this, she claims, by “juxtaposing, confronting and comparing various exegetical and scholarly voices” (3).

If the introduction serves as an explanation of her methodology and theoretical persuasion as well as the scope of the project, then chapter one, “Christian Hebraism: Sources and Strategies,” serves as Goodblatt’s attempt to situate Donne’s Hebraism within its specific historical context. Here, we learn of a Donne who engrosses himself in the Christian Hebraist culture of the early seventeenth century. Much of the tale Goodblatt tells, however, is already known to us by way of scholars such as Judith Herz, Anthony Raspa, and, of course, R. C. Bald, the great Donne biographer (to name just a few). Goodblatt’s more unique contribution, however, is her introduction of scholarship that has remained on the periphery of Donne studies, awakening us to the work of people such as Matt Goldish, Jason Rosenblatt, and Louis Newman, amongst others. Their work helps explain, in part, the contexts of Donne’s own Christian Hebraism. In particular, Goodblatt wants to point out that the work of such scholars, particularly Newman, “undercuts” the foundational work of one of the most recognizable Donne scholars, D. C. Allen. After all, it was Allen who asserted that “the best way to judge the proficiency of a seventeenth-century divine in Hebrew is to see what he does with the rabbinical commentaries” (qtd. in Goodblatt 25). However, Goodblatt demonstrates that the most recent scholarship on Christian Hebraism has demonstrated the “circuitous route” of Hebrew transmission in early modern England (25). Goodblatt concludes, “The most productive strategy ... in the study of Donne’s Christian Hebraism is to realign the debate so as to include the two issues of *linguistic knowledge* and *transmitted knowledge*” (26).

Indeed, it is this very balance between linguistic knowledge and transmitted knowledge that becomes the hallmark of Goodblatt’s assessment of Donne’s Hebraic knowledge. Opting to bypass breadth of study, however, Goodblatt goes for depth (for very good reasons which are explained in chapter one), restricting her assessment of Donne’s

Hebraism to his sermons on the Penitential Psalms 6 (chapter two) and 32 (chapter three) and the sermons on the Penitential Psalm 38 and the Prebend Psalms (chapters four and five). In these chapters, Goodblatt draws some important, yet not unsurprising, conclusions: Donne's sermons emphasize "an interplay of voices which creates ... a tension between the centrifugal and centripetal forces of reading" (75); assessing Donne along with Archbishop Andrewes "confirms the appropriateness of a move from discussion of linguistic knowledge ... to that of *ways and means*—in other words, issues of transmitted knowledge, discursive systems, sermonic genres, and exegetical agendas" (106-07); "the centrality of grammar ... to the Reformation project" explains Donne's commitment to the literal interpretation of Scripture (137); and Donne uses the "authority" of the exegetical tradition he inherits to speak directly to the political problems of his time (166-67).

For all that the book offers, however, it seems to miss a greater narrative that needs to be made at some point in the history of Donne studies. Exactly where was Donne learning all of his Hebrew (Goodblatt names many texts, but does not go on to examine Donne's teachers)? How sophisticated were the Christian Hebraists with which he was working? How did his interactions with the translators who had worked on the King James translation influence his theological and political formation? How was Donne similar to and different from these people? Did Donne's commitment to the Hebrew language shape (or change) how he identified with Jews (here, I am specifically thinking of his Holy Sonnet, "Spit in my face, ye Jews")? Certainly, we get glimpses of possible answers to such questions in chapter one, but Goodblatt never fully incorporates New Historicist methodologies into her scholarship that would help her better answer these questions. Of course, when reviewing books, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking of the book that we ourselves would like to write. The desire for such a book, however, stems from Goodblatt's own provocation; that is to say that *The Christian Hebraism of John Donne* proves to be a timely and much-needed work in Donne studies. Let us only hope that it inspires future students and scholars to take Goodblatt's cue. Much more work needs to be done with Donne's Christian Hebraism and the Christian Hebraism of all sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

England. Goodblatt offers us a very strong beginning to this project, but we have many miles to go before we sleep.

Sara J. van den Berg and W. Scott Howard, eds. *The Divorce Tracts of John Milton: Texts and Contexts*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2010. xi + 513 pp. \$75.00. Review by ANNA K. NARDO, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY.

The editors of this volume have brought together in a single volume the full texts of Milton's five treatises on divorce:

- *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (August 1, 1643)
- Its greatly expanded second edition (February 2, 1644)
- *The Judgement of Martin Bucer* (August 6, 1644)
- *Tetrachordon* (March 4, 1644/45)
- *Colasterion* (March 4, 1644/45)

Milton's tracts are followed by four documents that responded to his argument, and to which he responded directly in his twin pamphlets, *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion*:

- William Prynne, excerpt from *Twelve Considerable Serious Questions* (September 16, 1644)
- Herbert Palmer, excerpt from *The Glasse of God's Providence* (a sermon delivered August 13, 1644, published November 7, 1644)
- [Anonymous], *An Answer to a book, intituled, The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (November 14, 1644)
- Daniel Featley, excerpt from *The Dippers Dipt* (February 7, 1645)

The goal of this volume is to present Milton's arguments on divorce, along with his first critics, in "an accessible, lightly modernized text for interested readers in a variety of fields within and beyond seventeenth-century literary studies" (2). Teachers of courses in literature, women's studies, history, and law will find this volume useful. It includes a contextual and interpretive introduction, notes aimed at the non-specialist reader, an eleven-page bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and an appendix listing pamphlets in the second wave of responses to Milton's argument (1644-49), as