

Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goodblatt, eds. *Religious Diversity and Early Modern English Texts: Catholic, Judaic, Feminist, and Secular Dimensions*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013. 367 pp. \$52.20. Review by GREG BENTLEY, MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY.

Religious Diversity and Early Modern English Texts: Catholic, Judaic, Feminist, and Secular Dimensions edited by Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goodblatt addresses a significant gap in the intellectual and literary history of religion in seventeenth-century England. As the editors state, the rationale behind this eclectic group of essays is that “There is an undeniable emphasis on figures who were on the margins of the dominant religious culture—Catholics, Jews, women, and incipient secularists—but the assumption of all the contributors is that we cannot understand the culture as a whole without attending to the repressed, the marginalized, and the unacknowledged” (2). Without a doubt, this volume of essays goes a long way toward bridging the divide between the dominant religious culture and those on its margins.

The editors divide the text into five parts. Part I is entitled “Minority Catholic Culture,” and it contains three complementary essays. In “Marian Verse as Politically Oppositional Poetry in Elizabethan England” Arthur F. Marotti closely examines a number of Marian verses that extend through the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, King James I, and King Charles I to claim that: “Through the Elizabethan period and beyond, during England’s slow religious transition from Catholicism to Protestantism the figure of Mary could be invoked by Catholic recusants and religious conservatives to proclaim religious resistance to what was officially being imposed on the country and what was anthropologically changing on a grassroots level. It was a losing battle for them, but their voices are still audible in what they wrote” (47). In contrast to Marotti’s focus on a particular figure, in the second essay entitled “Religious Identity and the English Landscape: *William Blundell and the Harkirk Coins*,” Phebe Jensen centers on England. Jensen explores how the life of the Catholic recusant William Blundell, his creation of the Harkirk burial ground on his family estate, and the discovery of Anglo-Saxon coins on that site challenge the project of government. After tracing a fascinating chain of events, Jensen concludes that “Although the Protestant narrative of English land and

nationhood ultimately won the day, it was forged in competition with an alternative, Catholic narrative that continued to see the English landscape through the dual lenses of the English medieval past and the Counter-Reformation present" (71). In the third essay in this section, "Remembering Lot's Wife: The Structure of Testimony in the *Painted Life* of Mary Ward," Lowell Gallagher focuses on *ressourcement* theology to trace the figural history of Lot's wife and its relationship to Mary Ward's career, concluding that "[t]he silent, patient witnesses to [her] legacy are the anonymous hands that invented a pictorial lexicon and grammar for expressing the strange but vital figural kinship between pillar of salt and the red chair in the *Painted Life*" (96).

This opening is followed by four chapters that also contain exemplary essays. Section II: Figuring the Jew contains two excellent essays: Avraham Oz's "Early Mimics: Shylock, Machiavelli, and the Commodification of Nationhood" and Aschshah Guibbory's "Milton, Prophet of Israel." In the four stimulating essays from Section III: Hebraism and the Bible one finds Chanita Goodblatt's "Performance and *Parshanut: The Historie of Jacob and Esau*," Anne Lake Prescott's "Exploiting King Saul in Early Modern England: Good Uses for a Bad King," Elliott M. Simon's "Prophetic Voices: Joachim de Fiore, Moses Maimonides, Philip Sidney, Mary Herbert, and the Psalms," and Noam Flinker's "Biblical and Rabbinic Intertextuality in George Herbert's 'The Collar' and 'The Pearl'." Section IV: Women and Religion contains two important texts: "Yaakov Mascetti's 'This Precious Passeover Feed Upon': Poetic Eurcharist and Feminine Vision in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*" and Jeanne Shami's "Reading Funeral Sermons for Early Modern English Women: Some Literary and Historiographical Challenges."

The two admirable essays that form Section V: Religion and Secularization function as fitting frame to the volume. In "Framing Religion: Marlovian Policy and the Pluralism of Art," Noam Reisner works from Richard Baines' claim that Marlowe allegedly professed that "if he were put to write a new religion, he would undertake both a more excellent and admirable method" to argue that "[i]n England in the late 1580s the line between a cynic who might note that state religion is a matter of policy designed 'only to keep men in awe' and a devout Protestant who insists on reforming the old faith as a matter

of policy was a very fine one. Marlowe, like many of his contemporaries who had to negotiate the violent cross-currents of reform and counterreform, used the art of writing and its theatrical expression to tread this line carefully, even as he exposed the hypocrisies that kept it in place" (312). Finally, in "Shakespeare's Secular Benediction: The Language of Tragic Community in *King Lear*," Sanford Budick starts from the idea that "ethical values continually emerge in the narrative of a community" (330) to claim that a narrative of community and an ethical language are, in fact, made central [in *King Lear*] by enlarging the focus of awareness from the tragic hero to a group of tragic protagonists" (330). From this initial observation, Budick states that he has two "larger contentions." First, "in *King Lear* the collective narrative from which ethical values emerge takes the form of a kind of tragedy in which humiliation and blessing are of central, transformative importance" and, second, "the efficacy of this form depends on structures of representation that are inherited from a religious narrative, yet in *King Lear* these structures are secular, which is to say that they do not require religious belief to achieve what Cordelia terms 'benediction'" (330).

Unfortunately, there is no formal conclusion to the volume, but the last paragraph of the introduction serves well as final comment on the text as a whole:

Religious struggles and crises in early modern England (and it Europe), which were intensified in the new medium of print, brought with them the large-scale cultural changes that produced, finally, the modern world. The blurred boundaries between Catholicism and Protestantism, the sectarian and theological fault lines in the established church, and the development of national and international religious diversity and the debates about the possibility and limits of religious toleration, the renewed examination of the Judaic roots of Christianity and of the importance of the Hebrew scriptures and commentary traditions, the conflict between religious authority and the spiritual autonomy of the individual (male and female) believer, the growing awareness of a space outside religion from which one could critically examine religious belief systems and truth claims—all these

factors were part of a complex and evolving culture. The essays in this collection address such issues, paying special attention to the importance of what was characterized at the time as marginal or peripheral (English Catholic, Jews and Hebraism, religiously active women, secularists or atheists). A master narrative of English religious and cultural history that does not highlight their importance distorts our sense of the past (17-18).

Despite the book's emphasis on diversity, all the essays in this volume have one thing in common: they are all firmly grounded in sound critical theory, yet none suffers from excessive theoretical jargon. In this regard, this text echoes one of the most traditional of religious paradoxes: there is unity in diversity.

Nicky Hallett. *The Senses in Religious Communities, 1600-1800: Early Modern "Convents of Pleasure."* Farnham, Surrey, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. xii+249. \$109.95. Review by ELENA LEVY-NAVARRO, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT WHITEWATER.

In the last thirty years, scholarship of early modern religions has expanded our understanding of religious experiences and traditions by focusing less on a singular monolithic religious tradition, often assumed to be governed by a central official institutions, and more on multiple, more seemingly marginal religious experiences. Nicky Hallett's work has played no small part in this shift as she has immersed herself in the lives of early modern English Catholic nuns who left their Protestant homeland to become nuns in Carmelite convents in northern Europe (especially Antwerp). These nuns, unlike their more dogmatic militant brethren like the Jesuits, pursued a devotional life which seems rather indifferent to the authority of the Church. Hallett's nuns touch each other through their writing and reading lives. The book forms part of a diptych with her previous scholarly edition of their life writing, *Lives of Spirit: English Carmelite Self-Writing of the Early Modern Period* (Ashgate 2007). That edition made their writing broadly available to scholars; this one suggests a method of