

*Appendix: Roffensis* of works which for one reason or another are associated with Rochester. Despite Johnson's devotion to his subject, this is not the clear-headed, demythologizing biography of Rochester that is urgently needed.

Erica Longfellow. *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ix + 241 pp. \$75.00. Review by FRANCES M. MALPEZZI, ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY.

Erica Longfellow's *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* is not a quick read; rather, it is a complex, densely written, and ultimately rewarding study of the use of the mystical marriage metaphor by five women writers—Aemilia Lanyer, Lady Anne Southwell, the anonymous author of *Elizabeth's babes*, Anna Trapnel, and Lucy Hutchinson. Interwoven with the focus on mystical marriage is Longfellow's concern with the production of the texts, whether print or manuscript, and with basic assumptions about the gendering of public and private modes. Much in the same way Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff has previously argued that divine visions empowered medieval women, so Longfellow looks at the way a belief in an intimate relationship with the deity authorized and legitimized early modern women's writings, providing for some a moral standard beyond gender and for others a way to address the operation of divine providence in human institutions.

Longfellow's introduction and first chapter set the groundwork for the study of the individual authors. Her introduction clearly articulates not only the book's subject but also its feminist critical framework and the biographical, bibliographical, and literary historical modes of inquiry through which Longfellow pursues her subject. Her first chapter examines scriptural sources for the mystical marriage metaphor and the history of the commentaries on those sources. She then considers the way in which seventeenth-century Puritan male writers dealt with the metaphor. And while one might expect her to deal with earlier women who made use of the metaphor—Margery Kempe, Catherine of Siena, Mechthild of Magdeburg, or Angela of Foligno, for instance—Longfellow argues any connections between the holy women of the middle ages and these early modern women writers is tenuous since the works of medieval mystics largely disappeared as a result of the Reformation. Thus, the foundation she examines is biblical, patristic, Puritan, and male.

By presenting in chapters 2 through 6 “case studies” of five women writers who used the mystical marriage metaphor, Longfellow provides “a cross-section of early modern women’s experience of authorship” (4). She begins with Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, emphasizing the elements the poem has in common with the mystical marriage tradition, including the erotic blazons of Christ’s body and the fluidity of Christ’s gender. For Lanyer the spectacle of Christ’s death is transformative, empowering women deemed inferior by some in their society. By representing Christ as the epitome of ungendered virtue, Lanyer depicts a model which both men and women may follow. Next Longfellow examines the variety of genres in *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*. Through the mystical marriage metaphor Southwell comments not only upon the individual’s relationship to God but also on the institution of marriage. As Southwell contrasts the masculinity of Adam and Christ, she concludes men must follow the example of Christ-as-husband and not rule by dominance and power but by sacrificial love and gentleness. Much as Milton re-defined heroism in *Paradise Lost*, Southwell was re-defining masculinity for her time, using the mystical marriage between Christ and the individual as a paradigm. Chapter 4 focuses on *Eliza’s babes*, poems and prose meditations that are the offspring of the anonymous author’s marriage to Christ. While Eliza’s personal and religious identity have been variously ascribed, Longfellow sees her as a moderate Protestant royalist gentlewoman, who has modelled her works on those of Herbert and his imitators. Moreover, she views the volume as a “printed act of prayer” (135), thus an addition to the long debate about private versus public prayer. Eliza’s private, intimate, devotional relationship with Christ authorizes the public presentation of her literary works. In chapter 5 Longfellow turns her attention to the Fifth Monarchist prophet Anna Trapnel. She contextualizes Trapnel’s prophesying within the debate on women’s religious speech in the 1640s and 1650s and then addresses the role of mystical marriage in Trapnel’s prophetic writings. In the last of the studies, Longfellow examines Lucy Hutchinson’s biography of her husband and her elegies on his death. The parliamentarian John Hutchinson, who had signed the death warrant of Charles I, died after being imprisoned in the Tower during the Restoration. Longfellow argues that in depicting her husband’s physical and spiritual union with God, Lucy Hutchinson equates the political cause she and her husband fought for with God’s cause. In elegiacally mourning her husband and biographically preserving his life,

Hutchinson moves beyond private grief and has a clear public and political motivation. In addition to the *Life* and the elegies, Longfellow also deals with Hutchinson's epic, *Order and Disorder*, frequently drawing comparisons to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and focusing especially on Hutchinson's metaphoric use of the Edenic sexuality of Adam and Eve to suggest the union between God and humanity.

In her concluding chapter, Longfellow deftly ties her material together. She establishes the way in which issues of gender were essentially related to Christian virtue, the way in which the standard of femininity was dependent upon the perception of Christ's masculinity. Ultimately, she asserts, women were not passive victims in defining the standard of the feminine; rather, they "participated in defining what is meant to be a woman and how a woman ought to behave" (212). Moreover, in the concluding pages of her text, she suggests an insightful parallel between the use of scripture by early modern women and modern feminist Biblical criticism. Her argument here is so compelling one can only hope it is a premise for another book. She quickly details some of the common ground shared by modern writers like Phyllis Trible, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Eleanor McLaughlin and the early modern religious writers she has treated here. This important material needs to be fully explored.

While the paucity of material on many of these writers would in itself make *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* a valuable addition to one's library, there is much more to recommend it. Certainly one of the strengths of the book is Longfellow's attention to detail both as she carefully historicizes the works considered here and as she presents literary analysis of those works. Longfellow's bibliography of primary and secondary materials is thorough, and she includes an index to the text and one to the scriptural passages with which she is concerned. Longfellow's book is an important contribution both to the study of early modern women writers and to religious writing in the period.