

In chapter five, Maggi explores the physician Girolamo Cardano's *Metoposcopia*, a work on physiognomical divination. Facial signs become the markers of one's physical as well as spiritual health. Maggi situates his study within the broader contexts of Cardano's philosophy in order to focus on the author's concept of demonology as those manifested in dreams and visions. For Cardano, demonic presence must be understood within the concept of mind. Bad demons induce false and deceptive images in the mind of the possessed. Maggi concludes this chapter by connecting Cardano's concept of demonology to various facial expressions and psychological states, especially melancholy.

Maggi's text is a difficult and complex study involving detailed analyses of works whose vocabularies and contexts are complex. However, such analysis is necessary for Maggi to support his thesis that demonic possession is a linguistic act. His rhetorical analysis of the various verbal systems that devils use in perverting language and invading human minds provides new and important ways in understanding a facet of early modern culture that often seems incomprehensible to us. Similarly, his rhetorical analysis of exorcism texts reveals how the Church attempted to undo Satanic rhetoric.

Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, eds. *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. ix + 363 pp. \$70.00. Review by JEFFREY JOHNSON, NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

This collection of essays takes as its subject the history of reading, and the purpose of the volume, as Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker clarify in their Introduction is "to bring into central focus the critical and historical hermeneutics of early modern reading," as well as to explore the ways "in which reading might fashion us as scholars, students and citizens" (24). Throughout their introductory remarks, the volume editors emphasize the reading communities of early modern England, and while they properly acknowledge that the concept of interpretive communities

is well known from literary theory, they insist that such a theoretical approach “awaits not only historical specificity but a more nuanced, a more finely graded sense of the shifting and contending force of these communities in forming reading habits and hermeneutic principles” (9). To that end, the volume includes eleven essays that are grouped under five headings.

Part I, “The material text,” consists of two essays, the first of which, by Seth Lever, is titled “Errata: print, politics and poetry in early modern England.” Lever’s claim that “we live, in the academy, by blunder,” is his starting point for exploring “the rhetoric of error and editorship and the stories told through prefaces, errata sheets and correspondence about the making (or mismaking) of books” (41, 42). By means of informed discussions of Sir Thomas More’s *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, Sir Thomas Elyot’s *Dictionary*, and an especially insightful reading of Thomas Wyatt’s poetry, Lever examines the possibilities of a humanist pursuit in which “it is the admission of error that stands as the mark of the professional” (65). In the second essay of Part I, “Abandoning the capital in eighteenth-century London,” Richard Wendorf addresses a phenomenon that he describes as “literally minuscule,” namely, “the gradual abandonment of pervasive capital letters (majuscules), as well as italics, in English books published during the middle decades of the eighteenth century” (72). Wendorf presents a range of historical data illustrating the rather sudden shift from the highly mannered appearance of seventeenth-century printed texts to what Wendorf characterizes as “the less emphatic, less cluttered and less distinctive page” (76) that took hold in the eighteenth century and that has continued to the present. He concludes that the “pervasive levelling [sic] of the text, with its less visually and intellectually mediated form of presentation, in turn placed much more emphasis on the discriminating power of the individual reader” (88).

In Part II, “Reading as politics,” Heidi Brayman Hackel begins her essay, “‘Boasting of silence’: women readers in a patriarchal state,” by noting the paucity of marginalia from women readers and then considers “three prescribed forms of female readerly

silence—restraint from public reading, limitations on linguistic proficiency and abstention from vocal criticism” (101). It is these forms, she argues, that inscribed the “trivialization of women’s reading” and that “surely discouraged women from marking in their books” (110). Kevin Sharpe’s “Reading revelations: prophecy, hermeneutics and politics in early modern Britain,” the second essay of Part II, opens by imagining “how books with a continuous history were read, interpreted and deployed in different communities and in a variety of very different and changing circumstances over long historical periods” (122). As a test case, Sharpe provides a history of the reading of the book of Revelation during the early modern period, which for Sharpe illustrates that England’s is “a hermeneutic history, a series of successive, and contested, acts, in particular and changing circumstances, of reading and interpretation” (154).

David Scott Kastan’s “Performances and playbooks: the closing of the theatres and the politics of drama,” the first essay of Part III (“Print, politics and performance”), begins from the assumption that it is too simplistic to see the closing of the English theatres in the 1640s “as the revenge of a precise puritanism over those who would still enjoy their cakes and ale” (168). Noting the proliferation of printed plays after the theatres were closed, Kastan argues that while Parliament was obviously aware of the political dangers of printed materials, he contends that “the official indifference to printed plays stemmed mainly from the fact that their reading was not thought to be of any political consequence” (178). In short, it was not plays but playing that held political risk and, thus, to the extent that “play reading became a private act for ‘refined Soules,’” Kastan concludes, “it was allowed to fall below the radar of an anxious government” (181). Joad Raymond’s “Irrational, impractical and unprofitable: reading the news in seventeenth-century Britain,” the second essay of Part III, seeks to uncover “the underlying significance and perhaps coherence in the aspersions cast upon the judgement of those who read pamphlets and new periodicals in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (188). The public craving for printed news, Raymond asserts, signifies that “reading

the news may have been, as many writers disparagingly suggested, associated with the passions more than with the rational faculties” and, thus, that “this very ordinary reading matter required a [sic] improvisatory and makeshift attitude, and involved expectations and interests divergent from those emphasized in accounts of pragmatic reading” (204).

Part IV, “Reading physiologies,” contains both Michael Schoenfeldt’s “Reading bodies” and Adrian Johns’ “Reading and experiment in the early Royal Society.” In his essay, Schoenfeldt proposes “to think about what was imagined to happen in the embodied self of the reader,” “to ask why the quiet hazards of reading were so frequently likened to the metabolic processes of digestion,” and “to use this investigation of the physiological processes underpinning early modern reading to trouble a cliché about political organization” (215), specifically the distortion of thinking about the body politic. In response especially to this final point, Schoenfeldt concludes, “distorting both medicine and politics, the body politic offers an instructive fable in the immense power of metaphor to shape and delimit the imagination” (238). Johns’ article, in highlighting the methods of inquiry practiced during the formative years of the Royal Society, suggests that “what the historian of reading should now be offering the historian of science is therefore an approach to words parallel to those already devoted to things” (245). By means of detailed historical narratives, Johns illustrates that the reading undertaken by members of the early Royal Society was “concerned not with the private act of reading but with reading as a social gesture” (247), the point of which “was not to suppress disputes but to limit and manage them” in an atmosphere of “genteel civility” that did not imply “bland endorsement in one’s readings but limited criticism” (265).

The final three essays of the volume are all contained in Part V, “Reading texts in time.” Joseph Loewenstein, throughout his essay “Martial, Jonson and the assertion of plagiarism,” demonstrates that “almost whenever Jonson seems a particularly astute analyst of early modern book culture, we can find his analyses anticipated

in Martial" (281) so that, in effect, as he concludes, it is "from reading Martial that Jonson learned to observe the modern reader reading invention itself from the printed page" (289). Zwicker, in "The constitution of opinion and the pacification of reading," contemplates "fopland," the late seventeenth-century coffee house, as the space in which "the creation and valorization of opinion might be seen as intimately tied to and dependent on a pacification and mechanization of humanist habits of reading" (295). In particular, the coffee house wit becomes suspect, Zwicker argues, "for habits of reading that make the index central to modern learning, that liberate opinion from knowledge, and that translate wit from the very synonym of learning and wisdom into mere virtuosity" (299). The volume concludes with Kirstie M. McClure's "Cato's retreat: *fabula*, *historia* and the question of constitutionalism in Mr Locke's anonymous *Essay on Government*." Engaging in what she describes as "historically inflected political theory" (321), McClure contends that the narrative of Cato's retreat found in Locke's treatise should be read in terms of Sidney's distinction between *fabula* and *historia*. By doing just that, McClure concludes that she has "tried to unsettle a few of the ideological complacencies and antagonisms that dominate contemporary readings of the *Treatise*," "called into question the *Treatise's* reputation as a philosophical defence of modern constitutionalism," and "suggested that the book's relationship to later Enlightenment accounts of human progress from savagery to civilization bears critical reassessment" (337).

On the whole, the essays in this collection offer learned and sophisticated arguments in an arena of scholarly inquiry that is still developing. However, in situating their analyses in terms of the history of reading, these essays often blur the lines (and in ways that are not always acknowledged) between the history of reading and such critical approaches as the history of the book, hermeneutic practice, and paratextual interpretation. In addition, the volume as a whole suffers from the habit in contemporary scholarship to overemphasize the political to the exclusion of the religious. A quick glance at the table of contents reveals that, in

addition to the volume title, two of the five sub-headings and three of the eleven essay titles (with two others that refer to the “state” and the “government”) contain the word “politics,” while none of the headings or titles, let alone the essays themselves, speak of “Reading as devotion.” This glaring omission is perhaps most notable in Sharpe’s essay, in which the theological and ecclesiastical implications of reading the book of Revelation throughout early modern history are pushed to the side in favor of the political. Nevertheless, there is a great deal one can learn from reading this volume, and if Raymond is correct in his essay that reading provokes writing, then the reading of this collection will certainly provoke a good deal more writing.

Stanton J. Linden, ed. *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 260 pp. \$70.00. Review by EUGENE R. CUNNAR, NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY.

Stanton J. Linden, one of the leading authorities on alchemy and literature, has compiled an extremely useful anthology of primary readings from the history of alchemy. In the past, alchemy could simply be dismissed as an arcane and superstitious body of knowledge that was not worth the effort of scholarly study. Over the past few decades that attitude has changed so that scholars from a variety of disciplines now engage in scholarly explorations of alchemy and its influences. Unlike their predecessors, historians of science now realize just how important alchemy was in formulating the modern scientific mentality, especially in seminal figures like Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton. Cultural scholars have shown the importance of alchemical influences in literature, art, religion, psychology, and politics from antiquity to the present. Although scholars have recently been putting out new scholarly editions of alchemical texts, there has long been a need for an anthology such as this, which puts together selections from key texts that reflect the historical development of alchemy. Linden