

Anna Linton. *Poetry and Parental Bereavement in Early Modern Lutheran Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. xvi + 319 pp. \$110.00. Review by SUSAN R. BOETTCHER, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

Anna Linton's book, the revision of her doctoral dissertation, concerns itself with the problem of the high child mortality of the early modern period as it is reflected in literature, or more specifically, the issue of poetic responses to the death of a child among Lutheran authors in early modern Germany. As sources, she uses sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commemorative poetry, books of consolation, and funeral publications found at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel and the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha. In six well-written and compact chapters, Linton covers the history of Lutheran consolation; the rhetorical purposes and goals of poetry; the models that were influential on poem authors and the different metaphors these authors used to express their grief or their sympathy; the pedagogical aims of Lutheran discussions of death; several particular sorts of imagery employed by poem authors; and, finally, the oeuvre of two notable authors of consolation poetry, Paul Fleming and Margarethe Susanne von Kuntsch (who wrote in response to the deaths of thirteen of her fourteen children and seven grandchildren). In addition to footnotes, bibliography and an index, Linton provides brief biographies for the authors of the works she cites. Two chapters reproduce material from article-length publications elsewhere. Source texts are presented only in German. The main programmatic goal of the work is to rehabilitate occasional poetry as a subject for literary scholarship, but the book delivers a great deal of interesting information and context about the culture of later Lutheranism along the way.

Pointing to the high frequency of memorial poems about deceased children published by both parents and family friends of the deceased, Linton adds to the abundant evidence against the charge by scholars such as Philippe Ariès and Lawrence Stone that early modern parents lacked emotional attachment to their children. The models for such poetry are laid out in the early chapters of the book; Linton is particularly concerned with the classical background, and notes the repeated scheme of praise, mourning, and comfort (in that order) in

the poems she analyzes, a structure that she relates to the aims early modern authors assigned to their poetry. As she notes, biblical consolation that drew on the New Testament and Hellenizing portions of the Old Testament was closely related to the mood in the works of many authors of classical antiquity. Lutheran consolation books are treated primarily as successors to the classical heritage and humanist works that many of their authors must have known. The affective rhetoric of these poems was not only classicizing, but also a tool for creating and maintaining social ties between the literate producers and consumers of such works, although this later theme is treated rather cursorily, with scant evidence of the local or social circulation of such texts offered to deepen the author's claims about social networks. Turning again to rhetoric, the author examines the formal devices for expressing grief and for executing the different tasks of the poetry she is reading. Particularly interesting is her display of a number of different visual forms in which consolation poetry was published, including hearts and crosses. In other regards, as well, this poetry frequently resorted to the formal devices of the age, including chronograms, anagrams, and paragrams. Consolation literature in general was didactic, and these poems were no exception, as they were supposed to teach their readers in particular not only about the appropriateness of grief but also about the potential danger of excessive mourning. Linton notes a few divergences of the poetry from orthodox Lutheran theology—such as the reappearance of a dead child—that she interprets as devices in support of the didactic and normative goals of the poetry. Chapter five presents two particularly frequent strands of imagery in such poems: children as plants, death as predator, life as a journey, a dead girl as a “bride of Christ” or a dead boy as a “heavenly soldier,” the latter, images that allow the reader to think of the deceased as continuing his or her life at the stage of its end, only in a heavenly rather than in an earthly home. Examples of particular authors are treated in the final chapter. The comparison of Fleming and Kuntsch in the final chapter in light of Lutheran cultural values is particularly effective given Fleming's status as poet laureate and student of that eminent versifier, Martin Opitz, versus that of Kuntsch as a typical, perhaps especially well-educated, woman of the

upper middle class. Linton uses this chapter to draw Fleming's alleged neo-Stoicism under her gaze as well.

In sum, Linton sees this Lutheran poetry as prioritizing soul over body, the group over the individual, and the living over the dead. Given the frequency with which the author makes pronouncements about the character of Lutheran consolation as a theological outcome, besides obvious audiences in the area of German literature and early modern literature more generally, this book should find readers among scholars interested in orthodox Lutheran theology and its outcomes in the cultural sphere. In these regards, however, readers may occasionally find that the analysis does not offer answers to all of the important questions it raises about some of its terms. Perhaps the most quickly apparent of these problems is the characterization of "bride of Christ" imagery as Lutheran; given the equal prevalence of this metaphor in Catholic writing of all kinds, more discussion of what makes a particular piece of cultural production "Lutheran" beyond the confessional commitments of its author would have been helpful. The discussion of Lutheran ideas on consolation in light of the classical heritage is enlightening, given how seldom this subject is discussed in much secondary literature, and Linton's discussion of moderation or "appropriate" versus disordered mourning is an important intervention in a field that often conceives of Lutheran authors as fervent polemicists who eschewed a *via media* of any kind. Occasionally, however, Linton seems to take sixteenth-century Lutheranism's rhetoric about itself at face value: the discussion of moderation (as located in the sixteenth-century treatment of appropriate mourning against disordered mourning) has been identified by scholars such as John B. Henderson as a key characteristic of orthodoxy as a religious pattern and, as Ethan Shagan has noted, was a typical claim of other confessions of the period. From time to time, the book's analysis points to ideas in Lutheran poetry that are not entirely consistent with Lutheran theological claims, but this pattern is less surprising if one considers the context of Lutheranism's emergence in late medieval *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, a connection that receives scant consideration in Linton's genealogy of ideas of consolation, which are related primarily to humanist appropriations from the classical antique (Bernard of Clairvaux does, however, make an occasional appearance). Finally,

readers who come to this book out of interest in the question with which Linton opens the work (the quality of family sentiment) may also find themselves asking questions about the social components of this consolatory activity that are not taken up in the book. It would have been particularly interesting to have learned more about the educational mechanisms by which the skill of poetry writing was transmitted.

The list of questions one may have while reading Linton's book should not detract from the scholars' impression of the quality of the analysis regarding questions that are actually targeted in the book; indeed, that one can develop so many areas of inquiry based on her research suggests the centrality of the topic and precisely the ways that Linton has opened up its discussion for future researchers.

John Whenham and Richard Wistreich, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xxi + 358 pp. + 23 illus. \$36.99. Review by STEVEN SAUNDERS, COLBY COLLEGE.

The patrimony of this outstanding collection of essays on the seventeenth-century's most renowned composer is clear: the dedication to Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, editors of the venerable *Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber, 1968) and its revised version, *The New Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), signals that this "companion to the companions" will consist of equal measures of emulation, competition, and homage. *The Cambridge Companion* is similar to its forerunners in one respect: its authors form an impressive cadre from the A-list of Monteverdi scholars. Yet the Cambridge volume is at once more comprehensive and accessible than the earlier Monteverdi companions. That the resulting book can be read with profit by both lay readers and specialists is a tribute both to the contributors' considerable acumen and to the editors' thoughtful design.

That overarching structure consists of three intertwining strands, the first chronological: chapters on Mantua (Roger Bowers) and Venice (Ian Fenlon) introduce the social, political, and economic conditions under which Monteverdi worked during the two primary phases of his career. These two articles serve loosely as introductions to seven