

his argument 200 years earlier? Did the kinds of communities she identifies already exist in manuscript epistolary circles, or were they connate with print? The work would be richer if it directly addressed such questions, which have been at the forefront of literary study for decades, rather than implicitly adding to the debate.

*Epistolary Community in Print, 1580-1664* provides a welcome extension of the history of the letter in print, and it should prove useful to scholars of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century politics, literacy, and poetry, as well as to those working on the more familiar field of eighteenth-century letter writing. The work ably establishes the importance of a number of non-canonical texts to a larger understanding of the literature and culture of the late Elizabethan period through the Restoration.

Gary A. Schmidt. *Renaissance Hybrids: Culture and Genre in Early Modern England*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013. vii + 246 pp. + 3 illus. \$109.95. Review by ADAM SWANN, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

The connotations of the term “hybrid” have shifted over the past five centuries, moving from an “early incarnation in Renaissance concepts of boundary violation and the nineteenth century discourse of racial ethnography” to a current “largely celebratory” status in “contemporary theoretical parlance” (226-227). Gary A. Schmidt’s *Renaissance Hybrids* investigates three different yet interrelated manifestations of hybridity in the English Renaissance: firstly, the “increasing presence of hybrid creatures such as satyrs, centaurs, giants and changelings” in literature and iconography; secondly, the upsurge of “generic hybridity” evident in the prevalence of satires, tragicomedies, and problem plays; and finally, the use of such hybridity to “mediate between competing forms of political organisation, ... manag[e] social dissent, ... [and] reconceptualis[e] the history of England itself” (1).

Schmidt begins with a discussion of various theories of hybridity, ranging across structuralism, anthropology, and contemporary cultural theory to provide a sound underpinning for his subsequent arguments. He cites Roger Ascham’s warnings in *The Scholemaster*

against travel to Italy as representative of the normative Renaissance attitude to hybridity: “to travel abroad is to open oneself up, literally, to impregnation (and bastardisation) by the Other. The English, in such encounters, will inevitably wind up passive, weak, feminised victims of the strident, masculinised vices of Rome” (41). But while Schmidt recognises that, in the Renaissance, hybridity tended to be associated with evil (226), we can nonetheless find antecedents in the period for the postmodern concept of hybridity, which emphasises “the fertile potentials of marginality, border crossing, and cross-cultural interaction” (227).

*Renaissance Hybrids* finds just such an antecedent in Edmund Spenser. This may seem an unlikely choice, since, as Andrew Hadfield’s *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (2012) reminds us, Spenser believed “savage methods” were necessary for England “to maintain its hold over Ireland” (Hadfield 164). Schmidt astutely recognises “it would be a mistake . . . to refashion Spenser—the man who witnessed, with questionable complicity, the massacre of three hundred Irish and Spanish soldiers, women, and children at Smerwick in 1580—as a kind of postmodern *avant a letter*, one whose work fully articulated a liberal proto-hermeneutics of hybridity and cultural intermingling” (20). With this caveat noted, Schmidt proceeds to demonstrate that Spenser indeed “imagined hybrids as essential to the progress of the nation” (226).

In much the same way as Milton would in his *History of Britain*, Spenser interrogated “encomiastic myths,” recognising their pragmatic value while “rejecting as hyperbolic any account that trumpeted England’s purity and heroic virtue at the expense of the complexity, mixture, and incongruity he knew to be features of the land in the present day” (53). Schmidt’s analysis of the *Faerie Queene* reveals Spenser’s “obsessi[on]” with “the image of hybrid bodies with divided allegiances as ongoing actors in the negotiation of cultural identity” (55). For Schmidt, Orgoglio represents the pride that underlies English sixteenth-century nationalism, and Redcrosse’s battle against the giant is “not only an episode of self-mastery but also a re-enactment of the original colonisation of Brutus” (63).

In one of the most assured sections of the book, Schmidt traces Guyon’s approach to the Bower of Bliss, and finds that for Spenser

“Guyon-qua-discoverer must reject, as objective correlatives for the true Britain, *both* the images of a desert wilderness *and* that of a superficially paradisaic island” (73). The monstrously hybrid mermaids and harpies that Guyon encounters on the sea “embod[y] the longstanding connection between hybridity, degeneration, and the undomesticated energies of the semi- or sub-human world,” and this confusion is reflected by the “desert” blanketed by a “grosse fog” (74). The Bower of Bliss, by contrast, represents an “‘over-wrought’ art that leads men astray,” and Schmidt explains Guyon’s uncharacteristic destruction of the Bower by suggesting that, “steering the middle path between the barbarous, monstrous figures of British prehistory and the refined, artful culture of ‘gentle blood,’ Guyon’s recourse is to *destroy* all paths that lead to either of these two ‘extremes’” (75).

While Guyon sought to destroy these two extremes, Renaissance tragicomedy attempted to “span both sides of this divide—representing absolutist ideology while giving credence to parliamentary concerns—without simply excluding one of them” (182). Jacobean tragicomedy “steer[ed] the middle path” rather more delicately than Guyon, and Schmidt suggests this hybrid genre arose in part due to James’s difficulties early in his reign. The genre “now seemed ideal for dramatizing the desired progression from calamity (“tragedy”) to a felicitous resolution (“comedy”)” (16), and Schmidt notes the religious connotations of this by reminding us that “the king himself had explicitly encouraged that his survival in 1605 be seen as a dramatization of *felix culpa*, whereby earthly discord could be read as part of a providential plan” (189). Valerie Forman’s *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (2008) also read the genre in soteriological terms, arguing that “tragicomedy finds its narrative and structural basis in Christian redemption (the *felix culpa*), in which the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve produces the coming and sacrifice of Christ” (Forman 7). It is regrettable that Schmidt makes no mention of Forman’s work, as it would have provided a fruitful opportunity to develop contemporary readings of Jacobean tragicomedy.

Marston’s *The Malcontent* has generated polarised critical reactions; Leonard Tennenhouse argues that the play exhibits clear “pro-court, absolutist elements,” while for Albert Tricomi, it reflects the “larger

trend toward anticourt drama in Jacobean England” (191, 190). Schmidt, appropriately enough, steers a middle path between Tennenhouse and Tricomi, proposing that Marston uses *The Malcontent’s* split protagonist to create a dialectic which balances both “the impulse toward resolution and reconciliation via a benevolent monarch, ... [and] a fully articulated and well realised expression of the forces that resist synthesis” (191). Beaumont and Fletcher’s *A King and No King* takes Marston’s dialectic and uses it to enact “not the fusion but the *severance* of the king’s two bodies” (203). The play charts Arbaces’ struggles against the rule of the body natural, and Schmidt observes that the “body politic thrives in spite of [Arbaces], ... so long as judicious nobles and lords are there to pick up the slack” (203, 199). When there is a danger of the body politic being corrupted by the king’s intemperance, a new hybrid can be formed with the “person of loyal retainers and vicereagents,” demonstrating that “the state as an independent entity ... can function indefinitely *without* the true monarch in place” (203, 199).

The chapter on Jacobean tragicomedy, while certainly engaging, attempts to cover too much ground and leaves the reader somewhat dissatisfied with the cursory treatment of some texts. Schmidt’s arguments are at their most compelling in the sections on Spenser, where theoretically informed close readings are given ample space to develop. On the whole, however, Schmidt’s book offers an illuminating exploration of the multifarious manifestations of hybridism in the English Renaissance.

*The Complete Works of John Milton, Volume Three: The Shorter Poems.* Edited by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski and Estelle Haan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. clxxvi + 632 pp. + 8 illus. \$250. “Temporarily unavailable,” according to the publisher. Review by STEPHEN M. BUHLER, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN.

Walter Alexander Raleigh once referred in passing to *Paradise Lost* as “a monument to dead ideas”; the third volume of Oxford University Press’s new *Complete Works of John Milton* might well serve as a *memento mori* to a model of academic publishing. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski and