

concepts (perhaps) foreign to both Marvell and Milton.

Netzley provides many insightful readings of Milton and Marvell, but his anti-historical and polemical tone is rather hard (for this reviewer) to swallow. I, for one, do not apologize for “our modern bourgeois notion of significant historical happenings” (3). If attaching significance to “historical happenings” is a bourgeois mistake, I suppose it would be more acceptable to focus on *insignificant* historical happenings. That way madness lies!

James D. Mardock and Kathryn R. McPherson, eds. *Stages of Engagement: Drama and Religion in Post-Reformation England*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne UP, 2014. vii + 351 pp. \$58.00. Review by DANIEL L. KEEGAN, UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING.

This edited collection seeks to contribute to what editor James D. Mardock describes as the “second wave” in the religious turn in early modern literary studies. In contrast to the “first wave” of the turn to religion, exemplified by claims of Shakespeare’s crypto-Catholicism by critics including Gary Taylor and Richard Wilson, this “second wave” aims to be more sensitive to “post-Reformation England’s often chaotic confessional sea” and to “the blurry spectrum of individual religious experience” (9). The complex, intermingled religiosity of post-Reformation England resists the grand narratives proposed by “first wave” studies of early modern religion and drama. This landscape of theology and belief, one that Mardock writes “had as many confessions as congregants in its parish churches and in its playhouses” (9), calls for detailed attention to the “confessional ambiguity” (6) that characterized the early modern scene. The essays in this collection make persuasive, detailed contributions to our understanding of early modern religion and drama. Several provide profound, even startling, insights and shed new light on neglected texts and topics.

Robert Hornback’s essay on “The *Jacob and Esau* Paradigm: Nicholas Udall’s Predestinarian Problem Comedy” provides a powerful case in point. The majority of the piece is dedicated to examining the authorship and dating of the Tudor drama *Jacob and Esau* and to arguing for Udall’s authorship in the early 1550’s. Hornback’s argument

proceeds by integrating Udall's play into the "controversial milieu of late Edwardian Windsor" (64) and especially by linking the play's predestinarian ethos to the rising influence of Calvinism in that moment. This argument for context and authorship is enormously persuasive. Hornback's most striking contribution is, however, reserved for a coda: here, he argues for a "*Jacob and Esau* paradigm" for subsequent English comedy and especially for *City Comedy*, which Hornback calls "predestinarian problem comedy" (79). In contrast to the Prodigal Son plot typically assumed to be the basis of *City Comedy*, the *Jacob and Esau* paradigm supports a new "Calvinist understanding of economic ethics" (77), one that, Hornback writes, "better reflects the plot, tone, and audience reactions produced in this subgenre" (79).

Elizabeth Pentland's "Martyrdom and Militancy in Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*" provides a similar combination of detailed textual study and compelling intervention. Her essay shifts attention from the well-known English sources for Marlowe's play to the "French and Latin works that also shaped the play and its reception" (107). Attending to these sources, which register the shift in Huguenot writing from a "rhetoric of martyrdom" to a "rhetoric of resistance" (111), helps to explain the apparent structural inconsistency by which Marlowe's protagonist, Henry of Navarre, moves "from a passive victim to a militant defender of the Protestant faith" (114).

Pentland's essay further contributes to our understanding of the English reception of continental resistance theory, including the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*. Adrian Streete's "Conciliarism and Liberty in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*" investigates another neglected topic: "the political role of councils and counsellors" in the political thought and practice of both Henry's reign and the Jacobean moment of Shakespeare and Fletcher's play (84). The complex negotiations at the "nexus of papal authority, monarchical power, and the claims of various councils and counsellors, Privy and ecclesiastical" (90) disclose the self-interested strategies to which this venerable religious theme was put as political actors sought to negotiate, first, "the relative political authority of monarch and pope" (95) and, later, of monarch and Parliament. For Streete, this analysis helps to situate the "fierce anti-French rhetoric" of *Henry VIII* (97), which, he argues, emerges as a claim in favor of James taking the counsel (and the money) of

Parliament instead of cashing in on “an unwanted French union” (102) for Prince Henry.

Brian J. Harries, in his essay “Sacral Objects and the Measure of Kingship in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*,” presents a striking revision of our understanding of Henry VI’s weakness in Shakespeare’s first tetralogy. Observing the association between Henry’s piety and “a series of distinctly Catholic devotional and sacred objects” (136), Harries argues that this association “presents [the post-Reformation] audience with a difficult paradox of virtue” (141). Henry—like Richard II before him—mistakenly assigns too much agency to God: while Richard “believes that he functions as an embodiment of God’s power” (143), Henry “uses divine providence as a crutch and repeatedly abdicates his power to a concept of God’s will” (145). Both consequently neglect the practical duties of kingship that Henry V and VII attend to effectively.

Harries sheds new light on how Shakespeare’s early kings “wade into the sea of confusion and uncertainty that defines the religious upheavals of sixteenth century England” (151).

Lisa Hopkins catalogues the uses of color in Philip Massinger, shedding new light on the theatrical artistry of this understudied author. Terri Bourus engages a detailed study of the dimensions and consequences of Thomas Middleton’s (co-)authorship of *Measure for Measure*. Other essays provide insights into the workings of “The Reformed Conscience” (William W. E. Slights) and the works of Fulke Greville (Daniel Cadman), the histories of catechism (Kathryn R. McPherson) and of theatre’s negotiations with antitheatrical attitudes (Katherine A. Gillen), as well as the fate of Catholic ceremony in *Henry VIII* (Jay Zysk).

With its wide range of concerns and its detailed interest in playwrights other than Shakespeare, this collection will be valuable reading to specialists in seventeenth-century literature, especially those with an interest in religion. Although its essays focus on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, its polemical thrust and scholarly accomplishment pose timely challenges to the thought of early modernists of all stripes, asking them to rethink the heterogeneity of early modern religion.

The theoretical framing of the volume—or, more precisely, its aversion to theoretical framing—calls for a more robust conceptualization

of this heterogeneity. In Mardock's introduction, the approach of the contributors is framed mostly in terms of a rejection or avoidance of previous approaches: he writes that "[c]ontributors to this book are uninterested in recovering or reconstructing the specific belief systems of playwrights or their audience" (9), as Taylor and Wilson sought to do, and that they "avoid the first wave's common habit of conflating religion with politics" (10). Similarly, Mardock writes that this volume does not bring "a single theoretical perspective to bear" as did earlier contributions to the "second wave" of the religious turn by, for example, emphasizing the "traces of the traditional cult of Mary" on the early modern stage (Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins's *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*), the dialectics between "early modern and postmodern perspectives" on early modern drama (Arthur F. Mariotti and Ken Jackson's *Shakespeare and Religion: Early Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*), or "the materiality of performance" (Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson's *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England*) (11). *Stages of Engagement*, by contrast, "uses a methodological rather than a theoretical anchor," emphasizing "the experience and assumptions of [early modern] audiences" and "close scrutiny of the texts through the lens of their historical contexts" (12).

Such close scrutiny provides many of the collection's most powerful insights, and the absence of a "single theoretical perspective" speaks to the admirable diversity and specificity of the essays. Both Mardock's introduction and John D. Cox's afterword persuasively argue for the value of attending to early modern religious heterogeneity and "confessional ambivalence" (11) in our current scholarly discourses. But how was this heterogeneity and ambivalence experienced (or not) and theorized (or not) by early modern confessants "in a public religious culture that," as Streete writes, "tended toward polemical extremes" (94)? How did the radical individuality that Mardock diagnoses in early modern theology—where there were "as many confessions as congregants"—interact with religious movements and institutions? In its "methodological" specificity and detail, this volume provides many new insights into the relationship between drama and religion in post-Reformation England. In its broadest framing—or avoidance thereof—it raises potentially fruitful questions.