

much longer book. But by failing to discuss even briefly the many ways in which honor values became entangled with beliefs about religion, royal and legal authority and other contentious issues, her book fosters an impression that we can fully understand the meaning of honor without reference to political and religious institutions and controversies. Plainly this was not always the case. In this, as in many other fields, Patrick Collinson's call for a "social history with the politics put back in" remains as relevant today as when first voiced in the 1990s. Nevertheless, Thomas's book remains a subtle, sophisticated and valuable study that deserves to be read by all students of early modern English social and cultural history.

Janine Rivière. *Dreams in Early Modern England: "Visions of the Night."* London: Routledge, 2017. x + 195 pp. + 8 illus. \$140.00. Review by DANIEL L. KEEGAN, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH.

In *Dreams in Early Modern England*, Janine Rivière explores the frames through which early modern people experienced and conceptualized their dreams. Through these frames, she aims to resist the anachronistic psychological and psychoanalytic approaches that, for her, have characterized studies of early modern dreaming. The book is at its best when canvassing the broad archive of dream texts from the period and when it is highlighting "commonplace dreams" that did not fall into the "more rare, contested and ambiguous category of visions" (4). Its discussion of dreams as a means of spiritual instruction is especially illuminating.

Rivière breaks down early modern understandings of dreams into three categories: natural, divinatory, and spiritual. These categories, which organize the first three chapters of the book, indicate the uses to which early moderns put dreams and dream discourse: to understand the health, both spiritual and physical, of the dreamer and to grasp the shape of things to come. A fourth chapter on the history of the "nightmare"—which in the period named the phenomenon of sleep paralysis—concludes the book.

"Seasons of Sleep: Natural dreams, health, and the physiology of sleep," the book's first chapter, sketches the "longstanding and largely

uncontested" (17) practice of explaining dreams in terms of humoral physiology and psychology. Drawing on and Christianizing the Galenic system, doctors and medical writers came to think of sleep as a process of rebalancing and "equaliz[ing]" (24) the body's humoral complexion. Dreams registered a nocturnal process of digestion and concoction: bad dreams in particular could serve as a diagnostic tool. This theory of humoral rebalancing—in which the senses are closed as though in death (29–32)—was complicated by a conception of the sleeping body as vulnerable to environmental factors ranging from the position of the bed and the quality of the mattress to the influence of planets and of spiritual beings.

This chapter is one of the book's most satisfying, not least because it is first. It works through an impressive range of sources, including medical generalists like Thomas Elyot, Thomas Wright, and Robert Burton as well as more specialized studies on dreams like Thomas Tryon's *Treatise of Dreams & Visions* (1689) and Thomas Branch's *Thoughts on Dreaming* (1738). Rivière sketches the normative understanding of sleep and dreams that obtains until the decline of humoral medicine. As throughout the book, the archive here convened will help to sustain further studies of the place of sleep and dreams in early modern spiritual and emotional life. One area for further study is the frontier between early modern and medieval ideas of sleep and dreams: Rivière's focus in this chapter is on filling in cultural conceptions prior to the "significant transitional period in the history of sleep" marked by the eighteenth century (18); what concepts predominated before the sixteenth century popularization of Galenic medicine? A more material history of sleep and dreams would also be of interest: Rivière's history is an intellectual and conceptual one; gestures towards the "unhealthiness of . . . beds and bedrooms" (41) and the noises of the night (42) invite more practical questions. How was sleep's quality differentiated by social rank? How was it influenced by the phases of the moon or the cost of candles, torches, or firewood?

The "natural" framework of the first chapter dovetails nicely with the "spiritual" framework of the third. Both concern dreams as an index of health, and the former's discussion of sleep as an image of death strongly anticipates the latter. "Nocturnal whispers of the Almighty": Spiritual dreams and the discernment of spirits" begins by situating

dreaming in the context of post-Reformation polemic, especially in this polemic's rejection of classical authors and its critiques of the "false prophecies and visions" (89) that proliferated in the wake of the Radical Reformation and in the runup to the English Civil War. Luther, followed by Calvin, worked to respect the Biblical heritage of prophetic dreams while inoculating his dream theology against both pagan influence and religious enthusiasm. These arguments were, in the century before the Civil War, taken up by a range of English writers, concerned "with the spread of witchcraft, astrology, superstition and irreligion" (103). Such projects, Rivière argues, "fundamentally reinscribe[d] the dream within a thoroughly Protestant discourse" (126), albeit one that coexisted with Galenic naturalism and divinatory practices

The most arresting, even affecting, passages of the chapter and the book come in the latter part of the chapter, following the discussion of more polemical authors. Here, Rivière explores three writers who contributed to and exemplified this "thoroughly Protestant discourse" by situating dreams as indices of spiritual health and as a means of spiritual instruction. In *The Mystery of Dreams, Historically Discoursed* (1658), which is "the only extant English Puritan discourse on dreams" (112), Philip Goodwin demonstrates the devotional usefulness even of dreams sent by the devil: all dreams, he argues, can serve as signs of the soul's health or sinfulness. In a series of notebooks that include records of dreams, the London turner Nehemiah Wallington (d. 1658) anticipates Goodwin's understanding of dreams as "a useful source of spiritual edification and insight into the soul" (116); Wallington's pious accounts shed light on the joys and anxieties stimulated by devotional dreams. John Beale, in a manuscript (*A Treatise on the Art of Interpreting Dreams*) circulated among the Hartlib circle in the late 1650s, endorsed the spiritual aspect of dreams while arguing for the persistence of prophetic dreams. These discussions and sources will repay close attention from those interested in histories of spirituality and emotion.

Rivière's second chapter, "Decoding Dreams: Dreambooks and Dream Divination," investigates the phenomenon of predictive dreams. Surveying "all extant English printed works that either featured or included sections of oneiromancy and discussions of prognostic

dreams” (53), Rivière shows that, despite controversies about the persistence of such dreams and the anxiety that the devil might have access to knowledge about the future, dream books enjoyed popularity throughout the period not only in works dedicated to dreams but also in other genres such as almanacs and courtship books. This popularity endured despite the fact that the bulk these texts were recycled and debased versions of a classical text, Artemidorus’ *Oneirocritica*, fused with a medieval one, the *Somniale Danielis*. One author, Thomas Hill, attempted to produce a more sophisticated account of dream interpretation in the tradition of Artemidorus; his *Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1576) provides criteria and techniques for successful interpretation. Rivière also discusses the conjunction of oneiromancy with astrology, a conjunction exemplified by William Lilly’s *Christian Astrology* (1647).

As throughout, the virtue of Rivière’s approach in this chapter is her attention to the breadth of the archive. She provides the reader with a synoptic view of the continuities in divinatory practices across the period, from the formal elements (the repetitive phrasings inherited from the *Somniale*) to the persistent thematic concerns (love, sexuality, death) to the gendered aspects of dream interpretation, in which the “default dreamer” was male (72). As Rivière notes, however, there was “more continuity than change” across the period, with “little original content” being published (51). The wide-ranging survey is welcome, but the chapter’s more interpretive moments feel unfinished, almost like attempts to squeeze an archival stone. A digression on the “universal nature of the human psyche” (64) chimes strangely with the book’s historicizing program and, for a moment, invites back in the psychoanalysis that had been repudiated. The welcome effort to investigate the gendered nature of dream interpretation—which over the period seems to have increasingly catered to female readers—simply counts the references to male and female dreamers in different dream books: a more robust investigation and interpretation would be welcome, if it is possible at all.

The real interpretive interest in the discussion of divinatory dreams is in the Reformation polemics about the persistence of prophetic dreams, a discussion which must wait until Chapter Three. Although this is not an unjustifiable organizational choice, it indicates the central

difficulty of the book: an overinvestment in the tripartite framework of natural, spiritual, and divinatory dreams. Segregating these elements into distinct chapters hobbles attention to what seems to be the subtle, sometimes inscrutable, interplay of these frames in early modern dream experience. If nothing else, this organizational strategy begets a frustrating repetitiveness to the argument. Although this repetitiveness runs throughout the book—as when the argument of Chapter Three is substantially anticipated in the discussion of death in Chapter One—it is particularly in evidence in the final chapter. This chapter, though it provides an interesting history of the phenomenon of the “nightmare,” situates this phenomenon so firmly in the natural and spiritual frameworks that the chapter’s independent existence is questionable.

More significantly, Rivière risks occluding a more nuanced understanding of dreams, a phenomenon which was for early moderns manifestly fragile, shifting, and complex; comforting and anxious; natural, divine, and potentially diabolical. Although she repeatedly acknowledges that these frames were overlapping and interacting, an analysis that focused more on such interactions might have avoided the conceptual rigidity that characterizes the text. It might have more amply attended to the experience of early moderns who, it would seem, shifted often and often unproblematically between frames. The reorganization that I have performed here might point in this direction and even seems latent in the text: dreams were typically understood as indices of natural and spiritual health, although these understandings were haunted by the potentiality for divinatory dreams, whether divine or diabolical. This understanding persisted through the period, even as Reformation polemic “imbued” these prophetic dreams “with an even more problematic status” (126). Not discussed in detail until the third chapter, the concept of “spiritual discernment—how to distinguish between supernatural and natural, divine from diabolic dreams” (90)—would be a promising operative concept for the whole book.

These criticisms should not detract from the goals and accomplishments of *Dreams in Early Modern England*. If anything, they should speak to the book’s generative interest. Rivière’s ambitions are, in any event, more archival than theoretical. In this light, her book succeeds. It will be a very useful aid to students of early modern emotional and spiritual life.