

In many ways, this collection is useful in the same way. Regardless of the flaws in argumentation, each chapter has extensive notes and a bibliography of several pages. The essays explore many different pageants in many different ways. Each essay provokes thinking on material that, in Early Modern literature classes, is generally not deemed canonical. And each scholar engages with his or her material seriously, lending the study of civic performance, whether Lord Mayors' Shows or Joyous Entries, a *gravitas* that the material may not have enjoyed before. The strength of the collection is that it offers grist for further analysis all in one place. In that way, *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern England* constitutes a welcome contribution to the field.

Chanita Goodblatt. *Jewish and Christian Voices in English Reformation Drama: Enacting Family and Monarchy*. London: Routledge, 2018. xiii + 256 pp. \$155.00. Review by DARRYL TIPPENS, ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY.

Professor Goodblatt's study is an exercise in intertextuality in which the author considers the "reciprocal illumination" of the Bible, various "exegetical" and political texts, and three biblically based dramas written and performed in sixteenth-century England. These plays, according to Goodblatt, are rich in political and religious meanings when read within the elaborate sign systems involving a variety of Jewish and Christian "voices" that include sixteenth-century translations of the Bible, Bible commentaries, sermons, political documents, diaries, biblical epic, and Medieval and Early Modern plays. This intertextual approach to the drama of the English Reformation raises important questions about family, gender, and monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The expansive range of texts considered in the study is its signature feature and its central challenge.

The book focuses on three dramas: *The Enterlude of Godly Queene Hester* (1561), *The Historie of Jacob and Esau* (1568), and George Peele's *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, with the Tragedie of Absalon* (1599). Viewing these three plays as "exegetical and performative response[s] to the Bible," Goodblatt aims to answer these questions:

“what are the particular gaps in the biblical text, to which the play is responding? what are the specific concerns (or preconceptions) that have guided the playwright in the choice of the biblical text to be dramatized—and in the choice of performative decisions (e.g., the dramatization of particular scenes, the inclusion of extra-biblical characters, the addition of stage directions)? and how do contemporaneous political events and texts impact these performative (ultimately interpretive) decisions?” (9).

The decision to study Reformation biblical drama in dialogue with Jewish and Christian “voices” is a promising one since England and Protestant Europe were a fertile home for Jewish and Christian biblical scholarship in the sixteenth century. Goodblatt observes, “From the beginning of early modern biblical scholarship, Jewish and Christian voices have been intermingled” (9). Almost all the English translations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bibles—beginning with Tyndale’s unfinished translation of the Hebrew Bible and running through the Authorized (King James) Version—benefited from the labors of devoted Christian Hebraists. Like Luther, they studied Hebrew, knew Jewish commentaries, and translated directly from the Hebrew text, no longer limited to the Latin Vulgate as the primary source. Not unlike those Early Modern students of Hebrew, Goodblatt’s knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, midrash, Talmud, and other Jewish sources brings a richness to her readings of Reformation plays based upon classic Bible narratives.

The book is arranged in three parts, each part devoted to a particular play. Part I concerns *The Enterlude of Godly Queene Hester* (first performed in 1529–1530). Goodblatt maintains that this early Tudor play, in retelling the story of Esther, raises questions about women’s place in an androcentric monarchy. In particular, the play addresses “the Queen’s relations with family and religion/nation” and interrogates “the function and boundaries of a woman’s authority” (29). “Played out within the context of family and monarch . . . this narrative struggles (both in the biblical and dramatic texts) with various issues,” including the questions of how “knowledge is revealed and implemented, law and justice are stabilized, and identity as both woman and God’s chosen (Jew, Christian) is questioned and (somewhat) defined” (70).

Part II, devoted to *The Historie of Jacob and Esau*, first performed at the end of Edward VI's reign (1552–53), opens with a discussion of a key moment in both the biblical narrative and the play when Rebekah, pregnant with twins, “went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her ... ‘Two nations are in your womb, / And two peoples from your inward parts shall be separated. / And one people will be stronger than the other people, / And the older will serve the younger’” (Genesis 25:22–23, Goodblatt's translation). This textual crux was much debated both by rabbinic and Christian exegetes: did Rebekah engage the Almighty directly or was the divine message mediated by a male figure (perhaps Abraham)? According to Goodblatt, Rebekah's agency is a central issue of the play. In this reading, while certain male characters resist the matriarch's assertion of agency, Rebekah asserts her direct, unmediated communication with Almighty. “[T]he Lorde spake not these wordes to me in vaine,” she declares (78). The play reveals “continued attempts, both by the Poet in his prologue and the characters within the play, to divest authority from Rebecca's [Rebekah's] prayers and her knowledge of divine revelation” (88). The argument that various characters undermine Rebekah's initiative is compelling, but not incontrovertible, as the conclusion depends in part on which biblical text one chooses to read alongside the dramatic text. As discussed below, if one selects a different text or context, a different interpretation may result. Other topics addressed in this section include the doctrine of divine election, “the legitimacy of divine and familial law,” and the play's political allegory (Esau as English Catholics; Jacob as the Protestant elect) (122).

Part III turns to George Peele's political and “juridical parable,” *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, with the Tragedie of Absalon*, published in 1599. Goodblatt asserts “the strong intertextuality between [the play] and literary genres of the Bible, as well as between the play and contemporaneous French biblical poetry and drama” (176). The play echoes contemporary issues related to “the Elizabethan family and monarchy,” which Goodblatt finds addressed in the retelling of two parables of “judgment and justice”—Nathan's parable of the rich man who seized the poor man's ewe lamb (2 Samuel 12) and the parable of the Tekoite woman (2 Samuel 14) (176). In the playwright's treatment of these and other biblical episodes, “Peele exploits the

narrative of the Davidic monarchy to transform biblical voices into echoes of contemporaneous English affairs" (176).

If a text is a tissue of past citations, if there is always language before and around the text as Kristeva and Barthes argue, if the text always bears the traces of (or is "haunted" by) prior and neighboring texts, then *Jewish and Christian Voices in English Reformation Biblical Drama* stands on firm ground when it locates meaning in the dialogue of antecedent and contemporaneous citations, sources, and analogues. However, given "the virtual cornucopia" of available literary and exegetical texts, contexts, and literary traditions (160), it is fair to ask when reading intertextually: why this particular "voice," source, or analogue, but not another? This is especially challenging when selecting one Bible translation among the many circulating in the Tudor period. If translation is in fact an act of interpretation, as Goodblatt notes (citing Roland H. Bainton's dictum "translation was itself exegesis"), then one might wonder why the study gives space to the Catholic Douay-Rheims translation, unfriendly towards Protestantism through its glosses attacking Protestant heresies. Is this translation as relevant to aims of the playwright or the biases of a Protestant audience as the Geneva Bible or other Bibles in the Tyndale-to-KJV lineage?

There may be reasons to ignore the Authorized Version (KJV—King James Version), but its exclusion ought to be explained. One could argue that the KJV arrived too late for consideration, appearing anachronistically in 1611 after the plays had been published, yet Goodblatt's intertextual method relies on various works and historical events that come after the publication of the plays. Furthermore, the Douay-Rheims Old Testament, which the author does employ (published in 1609–1610), is no less "anachronistic" than the KJV. Furthermore, the KJV, deeply dependent upon earlier Protestant Bibles (about 60% of its language borrowed directly from Tyndale tradition of Bibles), seems a particularly apt work for intertextual analysis. Goodblatt's hermeneutical method means casting a wide net to encompass works and events that follow the composition or early performance of the plays. It is hard to account for the study's omission of the most influential of all English Bibles.

Even after the selection of a Bible translation is settled, another question looms: which passage(s) from the selected translation are

relevant to the intertextual exercise? The Bible contains a massive array of materials, diverse genres, competing narratives, teachings, and even theologies. The passage(s) selected for reading in tandem with the play is inherently interested. Should the intertextual reading rely on a single verse (a kind of “prooftexting”), a full pericope, or a much larger selection from the sacred text? When both the Old and the New Testaments treat the same narrative, should the Christian (re) interpretation—the New Testament “midrash”—be privileged, given the Christian orientation of the playwright and English audience?

A case in point can be seen when deciding how to read *The Historie of Jacob and Esau*. The Jacob and Esau story functions in a particular way in the New Testament. St. Paul’s discourse in Romans 9–11 led Reformed commentators to see the Genesis story as a dramatic illustration of divine initiative and predestination. The Geneva Bible (1640), with its explanatory glosses on Genesis, Romans, and the Book of Hebrews, underscored a Calvinist understanding of divine sovereignty, unconditional election, and so forth. This translation, massively popular in the sixteenth century, provided the tools by which the ordinary lay person made sense of the Bible. It is not too much to say that this Bible shaped the very consciousness of the age. While Goodblatt does cite the Geneva Bible and briefly notes the presence of Calvinist theology (97), the analysis largely misses the Pauline-Protestant-Calvinist cast to the Jacob-and-Esau plot made clear by the Pauline discourse in Romans 9–11.

To read *Jacob and Esau* as being primarily “about” human agency is to miss another, perhaps more historically plausible reading, namely, that the play affirms divine election over human freedom. Seen through the lens of St. Paul as rendered in the Geneva Bible, the play proves to be about the divine, not the human, will (Romans 9:16). It is the Creator, not a human actor, who *chooses* Jacob over Esau. St. Paul quotes the book of Genesis to make the point clear. God says to Moses: “I wil have mercie on him, to whome I will shewe mercie: and wil have compassion on him, on whome I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15; Exodus 33:19). The Geneva Bible gloss on Romans 9:7 underscores the point that the deity prefers Jacob over Esau. Jacob’s election is not due to human merit or maternal cleverness. Rather, the outcome flows from “the secret election of God”: “The Israelites

must not be esteemed by their kinred, but by the secret election of God, which is above the external vocation.” Accordingly, Jacob is not “blurring Rebecca’s immediate authority” (80), but trying to be a good (Calvinist) believer. Goodblatt argues that Rebekah subverts patriarchy, but in the Pauline-Calvinist-Geneva Bible rendering the true subverter is the Almighty, not a mortal. Rebekah *receives* the divine news that the elder son will serve the younger; she witnesses the Providential plan and may be seen as the instrument in effecting the subversion of masculinist structures. The irony runs deep. A profoundly patriarchal deity undermines patriarchy and the law of primogeniture with the assistance of a woman.

The intertextual enterprise raises multiple challenges. The sheer quantity of “voices” is daunting, virtually limitless. What *isn’t* a potential context for these three dramas, especially when the menu of possibilities includes works written after, and events that transpired after, the plays’ composition? The decision to follow one textual echo while leaving another one behind can seem arbitrary. Paying little attention to the popular Geneva Bible (which underwent more than a hundred printings between 1560 and 1611) and completely ignoring the King James Version should at least be explained. How much attention should a text receive that was unknown and unavailable to the playwright or early audience? Should a precursor or contemporaneous text or event carry more interpretive weight than a work written or an event that occurred after the play’s composition?

Despite these questions, Goodblatt’s argument that English religious drama of the sixteenth century, the Bible, and other exegetical texts are mutually illuminating is compelling. In assembling an array of “voices,” especially lesser known Jewish works, Goodblatt implicitly invites listeners to hear something new and interesting in the “imperfectly audible” conversations activated by these plays, “records of lost engagements” (as Greg Walker, author of *Reading Literature Historically*, expressed it). The book serves as a summons to join the colloquy. Chaucer’s Host in the *Canterbury Tales*, after hearing the Knight’s opening tale, comes to mind when he enthusiastically declared: “*unbokeled is the male.*” No doubt others will join Goodblatt in discovering additional Jewish and Christian voices that resonate in English Reformation biblical drama.