process, but differentiation within the company gave a small number of merchants disproportionate influence in the trade, which sparked significant resentment among the less well-capitalized producers and disrupted production during the 1690s.

Appleby has written a thoughtful, well-organized study of a complex trade network, shining probing light onto an important aspect of North Atlantic social and economic history. In his concluding chapter he invites his reader to reflect on how Thomas Tryon's *The Planter's Speech* (1684) "provided a voice for the complaints of mute animals against the oppression and violence they suffered at the hands of English colonists in North America" (241). Such an observation could seem a bit anachronistic, reflecting as it may our twenty-first-century concerns about the environment, but it is quite appropriate for the story that Appleby has told. From its outset in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the colonial English concern to send animal pelts to the metropolis reflected nothing more substantial than the whims of elite tastes in fashion, and yet it played a major role in the manipulation of the native societies and natural environments of Chesapeake Bay as the English had found them. From that point onwards, traders showed no regard for being stewards of the long-term health of the people and animals they fell upon, which had devasting consequences for both. Appleby is fully justified to conclude that "the self-destructive character of an enterprise exemplified by deep-seated tension between consumption and conservation lay unresolved" (252).

Patrick J. McGrath. *Early Modern Asceticism: Literature, Religion, and Austerity in the English Renaissance*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. 236 pp. + 1 illus. $52.50. Review by P.G. Stanwood, University of British Columbia.

This ambitious study opens with a statement of thesis, "that the tension between spiritual and physical asceticism became a major theme in the literature and religion of the [early modern] period" (8), thus causing authors the need to balance one side against the other. Patrick McGrath argues that asceticism does not disappear with the Reformation, "giving way to a modern world of increased

bodily liberation, or that the internalization of asceticism (à la Max Weber) removes its pre-Reformation monastic ethos and/or severity" (17). And further, "this book argues for a robust asceticism endemic to early modern culture, not one persisting in isolated parts or for ephemeral durations during it" (21). Each of the five succeeding chapters independently argues for this theme, and focuses selectively on Donne, Milton, Marvell, and Bunyan, each chapter standing alone. The concluding chapter very briefly recalls and names these chapters, but principally addresses one work by the hitherto unmentioned Anthony Horneck (1641–1697), who "stands at the end of the cultural moment of asceticism this book has examined" (153). A curious book, *The happy ascetick* (1681) stands as a kind of emblematic fulfillment of McGrath's *Early Modern Asceticism.*

The first chapter reveals marks of "ascetic proclivity" in Donne's three marriage sermons, his decision to remain unmarried after his wife Ann's death in 1617, and his commendation of Tilman's ordination which makes him "a blest Hermaphrodite." The sermon preached at the marriage of Sir Francis Nethersole on Genesis 2:18 seems especially relevant in supporting McGrath's argument. Donne comments on St. Paul's "better to marry than to burn," and says "To be overcome by our concupiscences, that is to burn, but to quench that fire by religious ways, that is a noble, that is a perfect work" (32–33, quoting Donne). Further evidence of ascetic proclivity may be seen in the sonnet "Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt," which Donne wrote in response to his wife's death. The poem may be read as an exhortation to prayer—the better life— against the miseries of worldly life. McGrath reserves his most important "proof " of Donne's asceticism for last, in an unusual reading of the verse epistle, "To Mr. Tilman after hee had taken Orders" (1619). He sees an important link between this poem and the earlier "The Canonization." Mr. Tilman will become "a blest Hermaphrodite," able to bring heaven and earth in a meeting together, even as the two lovers, by uniting the eagle and the dove, become phoenix like. And so "a connection between 'bless'd hermaphodite' and the phoenix proceeds from androgyny, gravidity, and the merging of dissimilarity over and above gender difference. Donne coordinates this connection precisely, so that Tilman's hermaphroditism answers —in every way—the phoenix-like lover" (47–48). This imaginative

construction is fascinating, tendentious, and unconvincing.

The next two chapters turn to Milton, first his mask *Comus,* and then *Lycidas*. An extended discussion invokes or refers to numerous commentators, ancient and contemporary, in an effort to identify "the kind of asceticism *A Mask* advocates" (68). The connection with the Caroline court is then addressed, with a study of the little known Robert Crofts, whose court masque *The Lover* "combines Caroline Neoplatonism and asceticism while evincing several descriptive and mythographic parallels with *A Mask* " (69). McGrath reads closely, perhaps too literally, by finding connections between the actions of *A Mask* and Milton's own beliefs or inclinations. This kind of analysis is more successful in the treatment of *Lycidas* (and more briefly of "Epitaphium Damonis"), such obviously "personal" poems.

Lycidas, the argument urges, is based on Rogation, that is, a religious ceremony that traces parish boundaries on foot, and according to McGrath, "hallows nature in a way similar to how virginity purifies Edward King" (74). This extraordinary idea seems untenable, but McGrath elaborates and supports it with considerable subtlety—much more than a review can demonstrate. But several animadversions can be offered. The author correctly notes that the Rogation days are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday that precede Ascension, or Holy Thursday (the liturgical color is white). He says that these days "took place during Lent" (76, and cf. also 82), which of course is certainly not so. Ascension occurs 40 days after Easter, and is thus part of the Easter cycle. The preceding three days are traditionally ones of special prayers of "asking" (=*rogare*), and of penitence (the liturgical color is violet or purple). The extent to which Rogation "feasts" or "ceremonies" were observed or diminished in Archbishop Laud's time is not clear; but they served only as one feature among many others that worried non-conformists. William Prynne, who would become one of the principal pamphleteers in the puritan cause, is cited in this case; but he is also an unreliable and eccentric witness. He wrote *A Briefe Survay and Censure of Mr Cozens His Couzening Devotions* (1628), a fierce, grotesque and absurd attack on John Cosin's *A Collection of Private Devotions* (1627). He is hugely and violently exercised by the very existence of the *Devotions*; his response to commemorative days is only one arrow of a much broader challenge. In this instance,

Cosin has simply recorded a table that gives "The Fasting Daies of the Church … The three *Rogation daies*, which be the *Munday, Tuesday,* and *Wednesday* before *Holy Thursday,* or the *Ascension* of our Lord" (Cosin, *Devotions*, ed. Stanwood, Oxford, 1967, xxxvi, 36, 305). While McGrath seeks to contrast differing times of cultural and religious performance and custom, the quoted passage from Prynne, with its glance at Cosin, and also at the obscure "Laudian" Henry Mason, all need context. Similarly, the extended and complex discussion of Milton's "unexpressive nuptial song" gives pause: an allusion to Revelation 14:4 or 19, or both? McGrath appeals to the Greek text, which allows one to "hear" the song of Revelation 14, but not be confined to "its literal interpretation [which] would seem to support the exclusivity of bodily virginity" (89). Jeremy Taylor is one of the literal interpreters, who is quoted slightly out of context, and ungenerously; for he is considering chastity as only one part of a long chapter "Of Christian Sobriety" (see *Holy Living,* Oxford, 1989, p. 74). With some further consideration of "Epitaphium Damonis," this long chapter ends with a reminder of what lengths have been traversed.

The final two chapters, occupying together only one-third of the book, turn to Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* (1651) and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). McGrath sees Marvell's long and (for this reader) rambling epic poem as a "hostile response to asceticism" (98). His close reading of the poem aims to "show how the serious and the satirical combine … to offer admonitions about, and celebrate the godly triumph over, the Laudian Church and the various corruptions (ceremonial, ascetic, theological) it represents" (99). While *Upon Appleton House* shows that "physical asceticism" is impossible, *Pilgrim*'s *Progress* celebrates a kind of spiritual asceticism that embraces also corporal austerity. The argument is awkwardly defined, but Bunyan evidently reveals further development away from the old asceticism (such as monasticism) but its various reflections in "Laudianism." McGrath, who refers consistently to his own narrative in the third person, writes: "This chapter contests the claim that self-denial in *The Pilgrim's Progress* presages modern subjectivity. It shifts the critical discussion away from the mere fact of subjectivity remaining to what kind remains after the process of self-denial concludes" (123). Later, McGrath explicates at some length Bunyan's prefatory lines, forcing

their meaning into an erotic sense. He studies the implications of this poem and of the allegorical narrative that follows. But he ignores the most familiar and popular sense of the allegory: "Life, Life, Eternal Life" is an exclamatory statement that signals conversion, for some the climax of the Christian life; and whatever follows are challenges to that life. In referring to his own study of *Early Modern Asceticism*, McGrath asserts that "self-denial in *The Pilgrim's Progress* affirms this book's argument about the nature of early modern asceticism" (143). This theme is indeed supported by the preceding chapters, but each one is fully independent of the others and unique, thus making the book into a kind of anthology.

The book is well presented, and almost free of typological error: but see page 144, line 3, where *mean* should read *means*. The huge number of notes occupies over forty pages, representing the heavy reliance on many sources. The bibliography is correspondingly full, combining both primary and secondary sources. Finally, this book, with some reservations, is a useful contribution to the theme of asceticism, and it features a number of original readings of important works.

Paula Hohfi Erichsen. *Artisans, Objects, and Everyday Life in Renaissance Italy. The Material Culture of the Middle Class*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 364 pp. + 114 Illus. $153.86. Review by R. Burr Litchfield, Brown University.

This is a well written, detailed, and profusely illustrated, discussion of middle class Italian Renaissance household possessions mainly at Siena, although there are examples from other parts of Italy, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the period largely before the Siena was conquered by Florence in 1555–57. The illustrations are striking. The author is a professor of the History of Art and Culture at Aato University in Helsinki Finland. By middle class she means the class below patricians who had established surnames and coats of arms, and were habilitated for office in the Monti of the city government, but were above the large class of poor "miserabili" in the suburbs or countryside who had little or no wealth and do not appear in the tax books. Examples of middle class occupations include goldsmiths,