

primarily shaped by a language of race and “discrimination.” This is especially true for the chapter on Queen Elizabeth’s orders to deport blacks out of the kingdom. Through minute and precise research Bartels recasts the famous documents not so much as an exercise in English and Elizabethan racism but as a very particular application of Elizabeth’s noted diplomacy and statecraft. I find this chapter the most rewarding chapter of the book, and I am sure scholars of early modern attitudes toward Africans and race will also find it so.

Overall I find Bartels’ focus on multiculturalism interesting, but at times she allows it to lead to somewhat anemic readings of the plays. Underplaying the English native dramatic tradition and the significance of blackness within its conventions weakens her arguments. Although Bartels acknowledges “established dichotomies of light and dark,” her book seems always to be minimizing those dichotomies rather than entangling them (149). While none of the four principal characters is a simple stereotype, all are referenced by their blackness which always signifies. In the conclusion of the chapter on *Othello*, Iago’s genealogy as a villain is traced back to Aaron of *Titus* who “is fashioned on a Jew (Barabas) who resembles a Turk (Ithamore) [both in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*]” (190). Indeed this is a mighty line of villains, but if their ethnicity matters, so do the theatrical traditions that spawned them.

Catharine Gray. *Women Writers and Public Debate in 17th-Century Britain*. New York: Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. x + 262 pp. \$69.95. Review by MAURIZIO FARINA, UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO.

Apparently remote from the open-minded salon debates of the Enlightenment, the seventeenth century seems to confine the extra-parliamentarian discussion upon public issues to private meetings and elitist circulation of manuscript writings. Closed in the spaces of the household, the religious conventicle, and, in some cases, the literary coterie, the role of women found few occasions to clear its way in an epoch of proliferation of print. This book by Catharine Gray illustrates in what manner some women managed to “reproduce and disseminate” (59) their arguments for the reception of several audiences

between the Jacobean period and the Restoration. The “marginality to traditional institutions of church and state” of such personalities, as Gray explains, “made them crucial figures for imagining an expanded public culture beyond these very institutions—and beyond England” (2-3). Although the quantity of women writers remained “statistically marginal” (15) too, the gamut of the ideological stances represented by them appears to be wide, ranging from one extreme to another in England’s fragmented political world both before and after the outbreak of the Civil Wars, with important events or processes looming over the composition and the publication of every single work (such as the crises at Court, the shifting alliances between parties in Parliament, the movements of the New Model Army, and the vicissitudes of the teeming sects). Starting from Nancy Fraser’s criticism of Habermas’s conception of “private sphere” as peculiarity of the eighteenth-century rise of the bourgeois public opinion, Gray sets the activity of several female authors against the dominant political discourses of male hegemony—of Stuart monarchy first, of the Protectorate later. Nevertheless, though in several moments of crisis the works of these authors “also register the temporary loss of religious or royal patriarchal icons” (24), the book often demonstrates that “women’s authorship is not just social, rather than individual, in the early modern period: it is hetero-social. Women perforce write in collaboration, competition, and even cross-gender identification with men, creative counterpublics in which men and women form ideological alliances over political opposition and the revision or transgression of traditional gender norms” (31). Characterized by lively political and religious commitment, restricted groups centered on women became involved in the shaping of counterdiscourses, capable of extending their efficacy over the boundaries of their private environment to a public, often fully international, and even trans-continental context. In her inquiry, Gray—aware of the complex dynamics of this phenomenon—thus focuses on these all but isolated voices in a global background, which includes not only the British Isles but also public opinion overseas, in Europe, and in the American colonies.

The well-documented interaction between women authors and/or writers and male hearers, interlocutors, and supporters (if not self-defining simple mouthpieces, as is the case of Baptist reverend Henry

Jessey, who transcribed Sarah Wight's prophecies) challenges the abused dichotomy public/male—private/female: "One of the aims of this book, then, is to de-domesticate women's writing, resituating it in the public context it engages, without therefore divorcing it from the politicized private spheres in which it is nurtured" (13). Three out of the four chapters outline the religio-political activism of women belonging to the multi-faceted world of radical and independent currents (Diggers, Levellers, Baptists, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, Unitarians, Antinomians, Anglo-Dutch Millenarians) who looked ahead to projects of pan-protestant struggle, showing us "women and (intermittently) feminized men as the shapers and bearers of an oppositional public culture that begins in private spheres of textual dialogue but imparts a complex transnational constellation of Catholic and Anglican publics and sectarian counterpublics" (191). Yet the presence of a Royalist woman writer amid this majority of dissenters shows that Gray has carefully taken into account the significant shift of the dominant public ideology in such a period of dramatic political upheavals, where counterpublics, though "always politically oppositional" (105), may or may not be necessarily located in the recusant field.

The women authors surveyed are Dorothy Leigh, Anglo-Calvinist author of a real best-seller, *The Zealous Mother*, a book of family advice published in 1616, here cogently interpreted as a voice of discreet and yet firm criticism to the patriarchal rhetoric of James I's *Basilicon Doron*, reissued that same year; Baptist Sarah Wight, whose fast and trance in April-July 1647, thoroughly recorded in the pages of Jessey's *The Exceeding Riches of Grace*, offers a significant instance of conversion narrative, where a shifting circle of visitors builds up the core of an oppositional force; the poet Katherine Philips, who by means of her more loosely scattered manuscript production affirms her role as a pivotal figure in a circle of nostalgic Royalists, basing her "oppositional public culture on the intimacy and exclusivity of coterie exchange" (107); and the no less nostalgic New England poet Anne Bradstreet, who, in her anti-Catholic and anti-Laudian writings of the period 1638-1650, conjures up Queen Elizabeth, Sir Philip Sidney and Du Bartas as mythical prototypes of fighters for the sake of true faith, in what Gray defines an "attempt to create a transatlantic version of

the neo-Elizabethan counterpublic” (155). One part of the conclusion of this book is in fact a shorter chapter in its own right, centered on the figures of Quaker women missionaries Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, who in their *Short Relation* (1662) narrate their long journey and the reception of their preaching in distant lands, while at home their co-religionists were already facing the difficult phase of the Restoration.

The thick structuring of these five parts is somehow eased by parallel subdivisions. Each chapter begins with the contextualization of the composition in the wider frame of contemporary events, ranging from the crises of the 1610s to Charles II’s return, keeping an eye on the probable source-texts, before passing on to the analysis of several passages of the works, aiming at the definition of the peculiar relationship between the private sphere where the activity of these women writers began and the wider public sphere they were involved in. The attention then shifts to other texts of the same authors and lastly to coeval or later publications which seem to build up the textual legacy of the works studied, in order to confirm scope and strength of these notable seventeenth-century artifacts, which, beyond occasional gender vindications and apart from any re-definition of literary canons, remain enlightening testimonies “of an active and engaged citizenry who create[d] widespread debate” (19).

Kate Chedgzoy. *Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. viii + 267 pp. \$95.00. Review by LISSA BEAUCHAMP DESROCHES, ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY.

In *Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700*, Kate Chedgzoy sets out to “mak[e] new connections between two important areas of Renaissance studies—the politics of space, place and nation; and memorial and historiographic practices—that, thriving separately, have not been adequately considered in relation to each other” (2). Chedgzoy is rhetorically sophisticated in that she identifies place and memory not only as key components of the methodology she employs but also of the works she considers.