

Kristen Poole. *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiii + 272 pp. \$59.95. Review by ELIZABETH SAUER, BROCK UNIVERSITY.

While early modern radical religion has preoccupied historians like B. Reay, Phyllis Mack, Brian Manning, Christopher Hill, and Patrick Collinson for decades, literary scholars, with the exception of critics like Nigel Smith and David Loewenstein, are only now beginning to devote sustained attention to the writings of dissenters. A unique study of some of the intersections between literature and religious and cultural representations, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* is notable for the sophistication with which it brings the satirical figure of the nonconformist into the landscape of early modern scholarship. In this wide-ranging and ambitious book, Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, Thomas Edwards, and Milton unexpectedly share the stage not only with one other but also with nonconformists and their critics.

The historical moment into which *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* is written is the point when the radical puritanism of the sixteenth century, which helped foster national unity, is discredited as perverting the Reformation movement. The result is the fragmentation of the Protestant community in a society increasingly haunted by religious difference. The elusive term "Puritan," which was used as a polemical signifier rather than a strict party label, gained currency in the last decades of the 1500s and provided a convenient cipher for the confusion which erupted through the multiplication of religious identities and sectarian divisions. Poole effectively challenges contemporary stereotypical conceptions of Puritanism that was aligned, she demonstrates, not with sobriety and asceticism but with gluttony, lasciviousness, and transgression. Her aims are to study images of the grotesque puritan and to explore how fictional puritans function as a means of representing the social and discursive repercussions of noncon-

formity. Since the identity of sectarians was largely manufactured by writers who opposed them, Poole concentrates on pejorative representations of Puritans.

The six chapters of *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* balance analyses of popular and canonical texts in which images of Puritans recur. This history of representation is not intended as a social history, though Poole often teases us into thinking about the connection between the two by suggesting that the represented Puritan may have generated the historical Puritan. The nonconformist makes his *début* on the stage as Shakespeare's Falstaff, a hybrid figure who is modeled on a grotesquely depicted Martin Marprelate and on the reformist leader, Sir John Oldcastle, whom Falstaff both mimics and mocks. One of Falstaff's seventeenth-century incarnations is Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, a Puritan bellygod featured in chapter 2, who lends his shape to the dualistic Puritan identity and anticipates the carnivalesque Bakhtinian body. Chapter 3 examines the wildest of radical sects in the seventeenth century through the lens of their critics. Middleton's *The Family of Love* picks up from where the satirists left off, translating Familist doctrines into allegations of verbal and sexual license, embodied in the character Mistress Purge. Purge is an ancestor of Mistress Rump, a mid-century feminized figure of political chaos, not mentioned by Poole.

In chapters 4 and 5, Poole turns to texts of the civil war period—Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena*, which classifies the noise of sectarianism, and Milton's antiprelatical tracts in which the images of monstrosity are deployed to vilify episcopacy. Until chapter 5, Poole features satirical representations of radicalism. If the Puritans write back, it is Milton who champions their cause, despite the "polemical and authorial independence" he at times maintained from them (Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution in Milton and his Contemporaries* [2001], 11). Poole's final chapter reinterprets the portraits of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* in terms of debates about nakedness, fueled by accounts of fictional Adamites and actual Quakers who literally embodied the word. "Nakedness in Milton's prelapsarian Eden is 'troubling' because it refuses to

yield to a postlapsarian binary system of signification in which nakedness and clothing are allied with conditions or qualities of human language" (178), Poole concludes, registering the current distrust of binary oppositions which she consistently dismantles throughout her book.

Religious sectarianism was a considerable cultural force in early modern England, but for (past and present) readers of seventeenth-century texts, Puritanism is also allied with political revolution/rebellion. John Spurr in *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (1998) reminds us that the elusive Puritan movement has been charged (and credited) with everything from igniting the English civil wars to introducing capitalism. Poole comments on the surge in printed materials and the discursive chaos of the 1640s, but says little about the politicizing of radical religion between the time of Shakespeare and Milton. Yet as a Round-head, the nonconformist metamorphosed into yet another series of satirical tropes, which became part of the royalist arsenal, beginning in the 1640s. In their popular writings, royalists, for example, used imagery of grotesque physicality to portray (female) characters who recited false confessions and published their crimes by vomiting or bearing appropriately monstrous offspring. These wide-reaching applications of Poole's rewarding study of the evolution of the grotesque Puritan form will only add to its value for literary critics and historians.

Mary Ellen Henley and W. Speed Hill, eds. *Wrestling with God: Literature & Theology in the English Renaissance. Essays to Honour Paul Grant Stanwood*. Printed privately in Canada, 2001. vi + 336 pp. *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 7 (May, 2001) <http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-07/si-07toc.htm>. Review by DONALD R. DICKSON, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

Wrestling with God is a collection of essays honoring a distinguished scholar of seventeenth-century devotional literature and religious history. Anyone working in this area has learned to rely