

Chapter 4, “Sororities,” focuses upon sororal chronotopes by discussing the communities of convents and academies that provided women utopian worlds. Examination of liturgical chronotopes produced by nuns and priests at Wilton and Barking Abbeys is followed by a study of Antonia Pulci’s *Play of Saint Domitilla* and *Play of Saint Guglielma*, a move that accounts for the religious displacement taking place in England in the period. The sororal tradition in women’s drama is shown to reemerge in England in secularized form with the performance of *Cupid’s Banishment* and to persist with the production of plays by Margaret Cavendish, including *The Female Academy* and *The Convent of Pleasure*.

In the final chapter of *Playing Spaces*, “Cities,” women’s drama meets city stages. Findlay examines the ways that women playwrights and actors interrogate traditional contrasting attitudes toward the city—the masculine *polis* and the feminine, “mysterious city, full of secret passageways and unexpected openings” (182). Women’s drama, especially post-Restoration theatre, is shown to take new risks as it questions and seeks to reform boundaries between the city and court, the city and town, and the public and private realms. In these spaces women playwrights and actors “change the way female identity is constituted” (183). As with the discussions in earlier chapters, numerous plays are surveyed. Here, analyses of Elizabeth Polwhele’s *The Frolics*, Susannah Centlivre’s *The Basset-Table*, and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* and *Sir Patient Fancy* are especially noteworthy.

*Playing Spaces in Early Modern Women’s Drama* is a remarkable study for its depth, density, and range. The treatments of arguments about the spaces of composition and performance that are made by Findlay are sophisticated and complex. This book provides highly stimulating and rewarding reading for students and scholars of women’s drama.

John N. King. *Faxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xviii + 351 pp. \$110.00. Review by JACOB BLEVINS, MCNEESE STATE UNIVERSITY.

Somewhere between old-style bibliographical studies that focus on the physicality of the printed book and post-modern inquires into material culture lies a new balanced, sophisticated class of research that looks into what

physical books mean to ideologically-rooted cultures and how those cultures influence the production of texts. John N. King searches for such a balance in his *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*. King focuses on the genesis, history, and reception of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the influential Protestant text of the sixteenth century, and he provides us with a book that is a real scholarly achievement. Tracing the original conception, compilation, and production of *Book of Martyrs* as well as the subsequent editions of the work (with all their various amendations and alterations), King narrates the complete early modern history of this important text. But the book attempts to be more than just a book about Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*; King provides what promises to be a case study that provides detailed insight into early modern print culture itself.

King divides his book into four major sections, the first of which deals with Foxe's collaboration and compilation of the material found in the *Book of Martyrs*. He argues against the negative label of Foxe as a plagiarist, but rather looks at the book for what it is: a true compilation. King highlights the interaction Foxe had with other collaborators, such as John Aylmer, Henry Bull, and others. The fact was that Foxe was part of a large community of writers, printers, and religious thinkers, many of whom had a hand in the "composition" of the *Book of Martyrs*. King also discusses various models for *Book of Martyrs*, and especially addresses the association the book had with John Bale's *Image of Both Churches*.

Chapter 2, perhaps the most in-depth chapter of the book, addresses *Book of Martyrs* "in the printing house," that is the actual production of the text itself. King discusses early modern printing houses, in which Foxe himself was always immersed. An entire section is devoted to the *Book of Martyrs*' printer, John Day, whose work with Reformation printing—Protestant printing—was immensely influential and ultimately affected the overall impact of Foxe's work. King thoughtfully describes the first nine editions of the work, as well as the abridgements by Dr. Timothy Bright, Clement Cotton, Thomas Mason, and John Taylor. Discussing everything from font type to printing techniques, to religious context, King argues that such an overview reflects "the shifting expectations of editors and readers with different social positions and ideological beliefs" (161).

Chapter 3 looks at the vast iconography of *Book of Martyrs*. King makes a strong case that Foxe did not exert heavy serious control over the printers' inclusions of images. Both the technical and ideological elements of the images in the various editions are discussed in detail, and many illustrations of the woodcuts are provided. King offers an interesting assertion that the manner in which woodcuts are arranged in the text influences the very activity of "reading," and in fact looking at the woodcuts becomes a kind of reading in itself.

Finally, in Chapter 4 King discusses the actual reading, readership, and reception of *Book of Martyrs*. Apparently, Foxe specifically intended his book to be read by different classes of "readership," from the more casual Renaissance reader to the real scholar; Foxe even wrote different prefaces to address these different readerships. King also generally discusses the nature of book ownership and private libraries during the period as well as how the book was, of course, received differently by Protestant and Catholic readers. The book ends with a glossary of printing terms (some terms in that glossary, like "gloss" or "pagination," I must admit, seem a bit unnecessary), a good bibliography, and a strong index.

Is this book significant scholarship and done well? Absolutely. Do we understand the cultural context, the printing trade, and the genesis of this great early modern work by Foxe? Again, yes. But is this a "must read" for any Renaissance scholar or critic? Maybe not. Despite the fact this truly is a great achievement and very impressive, I do wonder whether or not this would only be of primary importance to other scholars working specifically on the *production* of Foxe's book. Again, there are certainly places that argue for bigger ideological relevances (I am particularly drawn to the idea of "looking as reading" with regards to the woodcuts), but the bottom line is this is a book that really is about the making of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. If that's not your primary interest, then King's book serves best as a kind of reference work, something to sit on the shelf until you need a name of, let's say, some prominent Protestant printer whose name you just cannot quite recall. Of course, every Foxe scholar and critic should have the book, consult it often, and know what is in there, but I am not sure we are getting a truly new approach to early modern book making or reading, which is what the author suggests and what would make this a book for all Renaissance scholars.

Still, I must emphasize that for what it is—and it *is* a lot—this is a superb study of Foxe's famous and influential work.

Steve Mentz. *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. x + 261 pp. + 1 illus. \$89.95. Review by ROBERT C. EVANS, AUBURN UNIVERSITY MONTGOMERY.

In this clearly written, substantive, and well-researched book, Steve Mentz makes a strong case for the importance of prose fiction in the literary and social culture of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England. He argues, for instance, that “[a]s we come to realize that our sense of Shakespeare’s disinterest in print publication may have been overstated, we should also remember that the common practice of playwrights who were not also shareholders seems to have been to write prose pamphlets along with plays, as did Greene, Lodge, Nashe, Chettle, Munday, and others” (6). Writing for print publication (in other words) may have been a far more important aspect of the literary environment of Shakespeare’s days than we commonly assume, and Mentz persuasively contends that the voluminous prose fiction produced during this time has been neglected for far too long. Fortunately, his own book is one of many signs lately that this neglect is diminishing, and indeed one great value of this volume is the over-view it provides of recent developments in the field. Mentz seems to have read everything relevant to his various topics, and his often lengthy footnotes (which are, thankfully, indeed at the foot of each page) are well worth reading in their own rights. He provides brief but judicious assessments of the scholarship he cites, often indicating the main points of critical controversy so that readers will have a clear sense of the many issues under debate. He will, usually, indicate his own position on contested matters, but he can also be trusted to summarize lucidly and fairly any points of contention. His highly detailed notes, almost by themselves, make this book worth owning.

But there is more, of course, to this book than its notes and the guides to scholarship they provide. There is, above all, Mentz’s own effort to describe the nature, origins, and significance of the rapidly increasing number of texts that helped shape the genre of prose fiction (and especially prose romance) in the late 1500s. Mentz contends that