

following chapter, “Milton’s Wedded Love.” Against the “generally accepted” views of John Halket (1970), James Grantham Turner (1987) and Stephen Fallon (1990) that Milton eventually became “prepared not only to speak of sensual matters with a civil tongue, but even to praise and celebrate sexuality as an essential element, even a defining aspect, of ‘wedded Love’” (126), Luxon claims that in *Paradise Lost* Milton praises most highly neither sex nor friendship in heterosexual marriage, but manly eros “that tends away from the body and toward heavenly love” (126). Chapter five, “Heroic Divorce and Heroic Solitude,” accordingly reads *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regain’d* as progressive steps toward a recovery of manly eros (159) and homoerotic, onto-dialogical, higher citizenship (192). Samson achieves what Adam could not do—“divorce his unfit wife” (159)—and the Son of God attains what was far beyond either Adam’s or Samson’s capacity: mankind’s redemption from “effeminate slackness” (192). If real manliness (like heavenly liberty) is hence neither singular nor imperfect, nor fully human, then Luxon’s republicanism ultimately emasculates Milton’s apt and cheerful conversations.

Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins, ed. *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2007. ix +173 pp. \$99.95. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

In this meticulously argued, nine-essay collection, *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, editors Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins bring together investigations of the dynamic and complex relationship between the era’s “religio-political culture” and its theatre (1). Each essay speaks to the importance of on-stage Marian references amidst newly Protestant England and the role of such subversive messages. Arthur F. Marotti’s Forward addresses Catholic resonances such as Queen Elizabeth’s “appropriation of idealized womanhood from the cult of Mary” (xiv) and church members’ yearning for pre-Reformation ritual expressions, which existed alongside overt antagonism to Marian devotion. He also notes the collection’s evidence that early modern women may well have felt empowered by theatrical references to the figure of Mary and devotion to her.

Buccola and Hopkins’s Introduction gives special attention to the Virgin Mary’s changing status from Catholic “touchstone for religious piety to litmus

test of heretical idolatry" (2). Reverence to Mary's "quasi-goddess" position and as "mediatrix" with the God the Father and his Son found new limits although Virgin motherhood remained within Reformed doctrine (2). The range of possible interpretations, direct and indirect dramatic Marian moments, and the culturally inflected theatrical performances mark the era's gendered expectations for women even as they reveal the period's fraught nature.

The volume's first five essays deal with Marian moments in Shakespeare plays. Helen Ostovich reads Isabel's garden scenes in *Richard II* as mirroring Renaissance art depictions of Mary in gardens with fruit and flower motifs. Although she does not become a mother, the young queen metaphorically functions to revive her dying husband's spirit and enables him a peaceful passing. Marian iconography, as Alison Findlay's essay argues, serves as a powerful means to rewrite the relationship between knowledge and sexuality in *All's Well That Ends Well* (11). The treatment of virgin re-birth, female pilgrimage, and the poetry of St. Teresa of Avila are viewed as key contexts for Helen's plot. The "contours of grief manifested in the inverted *pieta*" at the end of *King Lear* constitute Katharine Goodland's examination (12). She studies Shakespeare's inversion of Mary mourning her son as Lear mourns his daughter; her commentary on "natural grief—the idea that sorrow should be something felt and expressed rather than obligatory and performed—emerges out of earlier ritual forms" shows Lear's unmediated agony (11).

Lisa Hopkins argues for reading *Othello* in light of world-wide devotion to Black Madonnas such as Our Lady of Loreto in Italy and its copy in Walsingham, England. Her discussion links the miracle cloth images tradition of Our Lady of Guadalupe with Desdemona's handkerchief, the fabric upon which the plot hinges. Desdemona takes the focus of Greg Malliet's essay as he examines the Mariological motif contrast in the philosophy of will demonstrated by Desdemona and Iago. Not simply reducing her to a Mary figure, Maillet suggests Desdemona, as Othello's Marian intercessor, acquires added valence through her unwavering character and purposed choices.

Four essays deal with lesser-studied Jacobean plays and contain Marian moments demonstrating the fluid nature of this dramatic landscape. John Marston's *Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606), names its heroine on the play's title page as "the wonder of women" Exploring female virginity, Thomas Rist notes Sophonisba's wondrousness includes Mary's qualities of "womanhood, ho-

liness, female constancy, and glory” as well as her status as a married virgin (115). The final two acts of George Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears* (1605) often critically overlooked, according to Alice Dailey, prove integral for understanding the play’s moral concerns. In a parodic revision of Christ’s empty tomb on Easter morning, a scene where Mary was believed to be present, Chapman’s Cynthia weeping at the tomb of her husband recalls the Virgin Mary. Dailey compares the play’s intrigue and deceit to Shakespeare’s *A Winter’s Tale*; however, the ideal marriage of Shakespeare is not replicated in Chapman. His play portrays women and humans as “ultimately microscopic representation of God;” Dailey asserts the imposed doctrinal distancing from Mary may have diminished faith in her, and with that, a “cataclysmic loss of faith in all women” (15-16). Regina Buccola explores Thomas Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon* (1607) analyzing cultural conflicts derived from and resolved within fairy lore (142), allegorical links to Queen Elizabeth, and Protestant feminizing of Catholicism that circumscribed the Roman “church as whore” (144). Her argument illuminates the fissures present at a time when dramatic invoking of fairies, once “defense of Protestant righteousness,” were “increasingly becoming associated with the false, Catholic Church” (158), and although marginalized, the figure and resonance of the Virgin Mary continued to captivate audiences.

The Tragedy of Mariam is this collection’s sole play written by a female. The well-rehearsed Catholicism of Elizabeth Cary is not Stephanie Hodgson-Wright’s concentration; rather, she reads the play within dramatic conventions drawing upon the Corpus Christi Cycles and King Herod. The Marian connections include the heroine’s name, Mariamne–Mariam being the Latin form of Mary in the accusative case—to evoke the Virgin Mary; Mariam’s refusal to submit to Herod, her husband and king, cause her execution and the “erasure of the pure Hasmonean dynasty” (171). Her tragedy points to their relationship conflicts as metaphor, and Hodgson-Wright asserts the play refers to “Catholic cultural production suppressed as a result of the Protestant Reformation” (172).

In the first systematic study of its type, *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, analyses will benefit all students and scholars of this period, as they offer glimpses of popular conceptions and attitudes toward the place of woman in the family, the political community, and the religious hierarchy (70). Marian moments, themselves contested rhetoric, contributed to an on-

going discourse interrogating “English Catholicism’s cultural centrality” (xix). Each essay makes clear, through investigation of both obvious and subtle dramatic messages, a sustained affinity for and resonance of the Virgin Mary in the wake of Reformation theology.

Murray Roston. *Tradition and Subversion in Renaissance Literature: Studies in Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson, and Donne*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007. xii + 258 pp. \$60.00. Review by SEAN MCDOWELL, SEATTLE UNIVERSITY.

In this time of “post-theory” (or “post-post-theory,” according to some), one might consider Murray Roston’s *Tradition and Subversion in Renaissance Literature* something of a throwback to earlier attacks on the excesses of literary theory. But such an impression would do an injustice to Roston’s often insightful discussions of Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson, and Donne. The book undertakes contextual readings of each author in an effort to refute the deconstructionist principle of *aporia*, in which the presence of competing voices within a text is seen to create an interpretive impasse beyond which a critic cannot proceed. Rather than show that multivocality results in indeterminacy, or “undecidability,” as J. Hillis Miller called it, Roston demonstrates that the “co-presence” of text and subtext or tradition and innovation creates a complexity of meaning that can be interpreted by the reader sensitive and knowledgeable enough to recover the contexts great writers often bring into tension with one another (x-xiii). He develops this thesis through five in-depth analyses of works in which a tradition (literary, philosophical, or religious) collides with, or is subverted by an innovation. Thus, he investigates the “merger” of the “contemporary acquisitive impulse” and Christian teachings in *The Merchant of Venice* (29); the collision of the Stoic allowance of suicide and Christian strictures against it in *Hamlet*; the resistance to accommodate fully classical materials to Christian themes in *The Faerie Queene*; the “inconsistency between the amusing licentiousness of the opening section” of *Volpone* and its “somber moral conclusion” (169); and the tensions between Anglican theology and Catholic “process of thought” in Donne’s poetic and prose meditations (180). The result is an engaging exploration of specific literary and cultural contexts that also elucidates the processes through which writers