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Jennifer Summit. Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England

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two chapters have a bearing on her discussion of gender and religion in her final chapter? Does Shylock's conversion from Jew to Christian also threaten to undo the gendered difference Adelman tries to establish by immediately assimilating the now feminized Jew? Perhaps Adelman answers this final question earlier in the book when she notes Shylock's absence following his enforced conversion, but it seems to have particular relevance to her discussion here. Though she doesn't seem to be aware of it, her study relates in interesting ways to Jonathan Gil Harris's book *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) in which he discusses the Jew as one foreign body and uses a central motif of contagion to describe the English fear of being invaded by foreign others when the real threat or sickness is the other within England itself. The fact that Adelman's study raises such questions is a testament, I think, to its careful scholarship and thought-provoking readings. All in all, Adelman's latest book is a fine achievement.

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Jennifer Summit
Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England
Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Pp. x, 343.

Habent sua fata libelli. Books do indeed have their fates, and we sometimes forget that in the interim between original use and preservation in a modern repository (if it makes it that far) a book has a long history of use, and often of misuse and abuse. These interim fates are brought to the fore in Jennifer Summit's book, *Memory's Library,* which takes its title from Book II of *The Faerie Queene.* Summit focuses her discussion on a few late medieval and early modern libraries and their selective creation of the medieval past. After the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s and the spoliation of their libraries, Reformation England had to come to terms with its Catholic past and create an English Protestant past out of it. It is this paradox of history with which Summit's book is largely concerned: "the English Middle Ages that we now study is the product of these Renaissance libraries," where manuscripts were chosen, organized, and discarded depending on the collector's intentions for his library. As Summit constructs her argument, the early modern library was not

merely a passive storehouse of old books but a battleground where the active (re) creation of history transpired.

Memory's Library concerns a roughly 200-year period. Beginning in the fifteenth century, "the age of libraries," Chapter 1 argues that John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes,* written for Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, the donor of books in unprecedented quantities to the University of Oxford, upholds Humphrey's political power against the Lollards, while also fashioning the fifteenth-century library room as the preserve of literacy. Just as monasteries held their rights and privileges through material documentation, so too did Humphrey sustain his own political power through patronizing Lydgate to write *The Fall of Princes.* Summit creates an interesting parallel between the monastic library of Bury St. Edmunds, where Lydgate was a monk, and Humphrey's library, through the intermediacy of Lydgate who brought his monastic *compilatio* training to bear on the Duke's literary ambitions.

The setting of literacy shifted in the sixteenth century from the monastery to the layman's domestic interior—specifically to the learned layman's private library. The second chapter focuses on these English humanist libraries and how the locale of reading shifted, but not necessarily the modes of reading. Summit argues that Thomas More's library and his *Life of Pico* (c1510) and *Utopia* (1516) create the library as crucible between Erasmian humanism and the lay devotional reading practices espoused by the Carthusians and Brigittines which were then in vogue. In contrast with More's approach to reading in the monastic manner, Thomas Cromwell's humanist intentions only spelled ruin for England's medieval patrimony. The devastating effect of the Reformation on English medieval libraries is well established—for example, only two of the 300 books in Duke Humphrey's Oxford library survived the Reformation. Sixteenth-century bibliophiles such as John Bale, John Leland, and especially Matthew Parker have been lauded for their preservation of medieval manuscripts, having searched out choice works in the monasteries and colleges; however, their acts of preservation, as Summit argues, were equally acts of destruction and erasure. Chapter 3, I find, provides the crux of Summit's entire argument as she details the collecting practices of post-Reformation bibliophiles and their construction of a specifically Protestant national identity through the exclusion of certain books from their libraries. Parker endeavoured to separate "monuments of antiquity" from "monuments of superstition," the former being works where historical truth could be gleaned away from content too tainted by Catholic devotion—although depending upon the reader of the text and their own purposes, a given work might be placed in either of these two categories. The Parker library was transferred to Cambridge while Edmund Spenser was a student

there, and Summit suggests that the image of Parker and his collection is reflected in Eumnestes's library in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser allegorizes memory as a library filled with history books (Parker's monuments of antiquity), and thus turns both memory and library-building into similar processes of accumulation and, to an even greater extent, elimination.

Perhaps the most famous collection of medieval manuscripts in England is the library formed by Sir Robert Cotton, famous not only for its contents, but also for the cataclysmic end suffered by part of the collection in 1731. Cotton's collection preserves the largest amount of literary production from the English Middle Ages, yet this preservation came with Cotton's own interpretation of the Middle Ages through his selection and re-organization of the manuscripts. Chapter 4 discusses Cotton's vision of the Middle Ages as he created it in his library, as well as his creation of "new knowledge" through the *compilatio* of Henrician and Reformation documents. Cotton's library became one of the first archives; contemporary writers mined these original sources for historical references, turning Cotton's creation of the medieval past into a historical reality. Sir Francis Bacon used Cotton's library, and was in contact with Sir Thomas Bodley; however, Summit argues that he critiques both the Cottonian and the Bodleian libraries in his own work, championing active, experimental knowledge over what he considered to be passive library-learning. Summit's final chapter argues against Bacon's misrepresentation of libraries, such as the Bodleian, as bastions of tradition that did not produce new learning. Bodley's librarian, Thomas James, negates the notion of Bacon's passive library through his own endeavours at manuscript collation and editing, an activity that Bodley even saw as too active for his librarian. While Bacon's dichotomy between the active sciences and passive humanities is still prevalent today, Summit shows that Bacon misread a library to meet his own needs, just as Parker and Cotton fashioned libraries for their own. Those interested in a deeply theoretical work will not find it in *Memory's Library;* what the reader will find is a very clear and concise argument that remains focused on books, libraries and their users.

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