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Gibbons, Daniel R. Conflicts of Devotion: Liturgical Poetics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England

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Listening, after all, cannot be pursued in isolation. Musical listening is often enhanced by musical looking; even in the most non-literate oral cultures, eye-contact is vital (with the leader, or fellow performers, or other worshippers). Likewise with scholarship. This book gives us plenty of examples of how *looking* opens up fresh understandings of early modern music: studying the printed page and appreciating the diversity of approaches among Roman boutique printers, in contrast to the more generic and inflexible Venetians (Jane A. Bernstein), or acknowledging the always-incomplete nature of a score—how much is *not* notated—and thereby registering what is accomplished by performers (Ignazio Macchiarella), or contemplating the Marian statue from Cadiz, violated by Protestant English soldiers, now self-consciously celebrated with solemn music by the Catholic English seminarians in Valladolid, keen to show their integration into Spanish life (Andrew Cichy). Separated by half a millennium, and ever without the benefit of contemporary recordings, we have access to the sound world of early modern Catholicism chiefly through the portal of visual evidence.

This volume does fine service in naming a lacuna in early modern studies, making a substantial contribution to filling it, all the while encouraging dialogue among a variety of scholarly disciplines, and gathering essential resources.

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Gibbons, Daniel R.

Conflicts of Devotion: Liturgical Poetics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England.

Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017. Pp. x, 331. ISBN 978-0-268-10134-3 (hardcover) US\$60.

Daniel R. Gibbons's *Conflicts of Devotion: Liturgical Poetics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* is a valuable addition to the work being done on the intersection of literature and religion in early modern literary studies. The book's approach, in contrast to the somewhat indistinct title, is specific and illuminating. Gibbons examines the poetic responses of five English writers—Edmund Spenser, Robert Southwell, John Donne, George Herbert, and Richard

Crashaw—to the “strategic deployment of accommodation and exclusion” (7) in the liturgical poetics of the Book of Common Prayer. The creation of spiritual community is at the heart of Gibbons’s understanding of liturgy, and accommodation and exclusion are what define the contours of a community. Reading the five poets through a liturgical lens, Gibbons investigates each writer’s own liturgical poetics by focusing on instances and structures of rhetorical accommodation and/or exclusion in their works. Gibbons argues that, in spite of these five poets’ very different literary methods, religious allegiances, and devotional goals, their writings function as efforts to create spiritual communities of readers in response to religious fragmentation and division in post-Reformation England.

Gibbons’s use of the term “liturgical poetics” highlights the overlapping of liturgy and literary creation in two directions: he uses the term first to describe the literary aspects of liturgical texts and second to indicate “the liturgical potential of poetry” (4), which he associates with the formation of spiritual community. Alongside his emphasis on liturgical poetics, Gibbons foregrounds what he terms “rhetorics of accommodation and exclusion,” by which he means the writer’s strategies for organization, uses of language, and approach to the reader/audience. However, in spite of the prominence of poetics and rhetoric in Gibbons’s argument, it is worth pointing out that the book is not occupied with identifying specific poetic techniques and rhetorical figures of speech.

Nevertheless, Gibbons’s study of liturgical poetics is largely convincing and insightful, tightly argued, and elegantly structured. After the cogent standard-format introduction, the book divides into three parts. Part 1 contains a foundational first chapter: “Accommodation and Exclusion: Writing Community in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*.” Gibbons highlights the Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, as exemplifying a rhetoric of accommodation, bringing together the diverse members of the Church of England in a moment of transcendent mysticism. In contrast, the Order for the Burial of the Dead displays a rhetoric of “didactic exclusion,” as it tries to turn the hearts and minds of mourners away from the departed and towards their own moral lives in the community of the living.

Part 2 explores the response of sixteenth-century poets to the gaps the 1559 Order for the Burial of the Dead generated in the culture. Chapter 2 considers Spenser’s pastoral elegies, and chapter 3 takes up Southwell’s devotional poetry. Gibbons makes a convincing case for how to read ambiguous portions

of the “November” eclogue, and he demonstrates Spenser’s development in regards to issues of mourning and burial. The chapter on Southwell is novel for investigating the English Jesuit’s missionary poetry in response to the English Church’s Prayerbook. Gibbons’s reasoning is persuasive as he sets up Southwell’s rhetorical approaches to not only English Catholics but also a wider reading public.

Part 3 considers seventeenth-century poetic responses to the rhetorical accommodations of the Prayerbook’s Communion rite. Chapter 4 looks at Donne’s accommodation of multiple voices in both his religious and love poetry; chapter 5 examines the dynamics of accommodation and exclusion in the introductory sections of Herbert’s *The Temple*; and chapter 6 reads Richard Crashaw’s poems in light of both his earlier life within the Church of England and after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, identifying a hope for healing through liturgical poetics. I was particularly pleased with Gibbons’s emphasis on Donne’s communitarian aspects, when Donne is so often read as a supreme egotist.

Conflicts of Devotion offers new and insightful ways for scholars to navigate the conflicts that strict denominational categorization of writers has often generated. Gibbons recognizes the complexity of religious identity in the period while not abandoning analytic distinction, and his selection of writers and generous reading of their works show ways to read across divisions of Protestant and Catholic. The five poets make up a diverse slice of Protestants and Catholics, some of them with complicated, changing, and/or multifaceted religious identities. The texts for study are also well chosen, ranging from old standards (such as Donne’s Holy Sonnet “Show me deare Christ”) to the critically maligned (Spenser’s *Daphnaïda*). Likewise, Gibbons’s handling of genre is notable, for he reads not only overtly religious or devotional writings as responding to the Book of Common Prayer but also ostensibly “secular” works such as Donne’s love lyrics. Gibbons’s judicious approach to religious identity is also evident in his deployment of confessional terminology. His note at the end of the introduction reveals thoughtful reflection on scholarly developments over the past three decades, recognizing the fluidity and mutability of early modern religious identities. While the program he outlines in the introduction—a balance of utility and respect for the point of view of the texts being studied, with terms such as “traditionalist,” “reformist,” “Catholic,” and “Protestant” being his most common—seems at turns reasonable and

idiosyncratic, Gibbons's use of terminology in subsequent chapters comes across as clear, appropriate, and helpful.

Gibbons's *Conflicts of Devotion* is significant for offering a broad pattern of how to develop an argument about different poets in relation to a few particular liturgical texts, as well as for its specific insight into how five writers responded to the rhetorics of accommodation and exclusion in the Elizabethan Prayerbook. Gibbons's approach to the complexities of early modern religious identities and to the nuances of the poets' engagements with the religious controversies and subjects of their day is skilful, generous, and, in this reviewer's opinion, exemplary.

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Glixon, Jonathan E.

Mirrors of Heaven or Worldly Theaters? Venetian Nunneries and Their Music.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xvii, 451 + 9 plates, 1 fig., 26 music examples. ISBN 978-0-19-025912-9 (hardcover) US\$55.

The stories of the nuns of Venice are not easy ones to tell. There are few traces of these once thriving communities which, following the suspension of the nunneries in the late eighteenth century and the dissolution of the Venetian republic, were stripped bare, both physically and spiritually. But the daily lives of these women can reveal far more than a liturgical history of uneasy ecclesiastical reform; the nuns participated in civic and social dynamics that reflected the unique inner channels of *La Serenissima*: the virgin city. Venice's history is unlike that of any other Italian city. With an urban landscape essentially unaltered for centuries and a government in place for a millennium, the Venetians retained a remarkable consistency in their practices, even as they embraced a propensity to mythologize almost every aspect of civic and spiritual life. Jonathan Glixon's *Mirrors of Heaven or Worldly Theaters? Venetian Nunneries and Their Music* is a study in historical virtuosity; despite the tragic lack of documentation concerning the Venetian convents, the author has nevertheless succeeded in sketching a rich history for a virgin subject. Through extensive archival research and by his own characteristic astuteness, Glixon