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Cefalu, Paul. *The Johannine Renaissance in Early Modern English Literature and Theology*

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closes the volume, further developing discussions of how the physical city offered opportunities for status building. Religious communities, civic institutions, and families seized these opportunities enthusiastically, and through their patronage transformed the city into “a high-profile site of international events and related artistic activity” (592).

Not only does this volume present a thorough vision of Bologna as scholars currently see it, but under Blanshei’s guidance those scholars have opened the doors to new colleagues in a clear and encouraging way. Hopefully this volume will encourage more people to visit and explore the abundant resources and intriguing development of Bologna *la grassa*.

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Cefalu, Paul.

The Johannine Renaissance in Early Modern English Literature and Theology.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xiii, 352 + 7 ill. ISBN 978-0-19-880871-8 (hardcover) \$80.

In this, already his fifth monograph, Paul Cefalu returns to the seventeenth-century religious writing that he mined in his excellent first book, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). While *Moral Identity* explored the post-Reformation survival of prudential ethics and rational self-interest in practical behavioural contexts, *The Johannine Renaissance* dives deep into some of Christianity’s most abstract and challenging topics, including sacramental theology, Trinitarian theology, and the nature of *agape* love. Cefalu’s goal is to trace the influence of John’s evangelical writings—the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John, but not Revelations—as well as of patristic commentaries on John (most importantly St. Augustine) on Reformation and post-Reformation theology and seventeenth-century devotional writing, especially poetry. His central claim is that recognized features of seventeenth-century theology and poetry follow from recognized features of Johannine theology. *The Johannine Renaissance*, then, is fundamentally a study of sources and influences.

The book's first task is to define "Johannine." While conceding that John's writings are "multifaceted" (15n51), "often internally fraught and seemingly contradictory" (37), Cefalu identifies several distinctive features of a Johannine theology. These are a high Christology that places more weight on Christ's divinity than on his humanity; a treatment of the Atonement and the Passion less as the painful penalty of sin than as a triumphant revelation of divine *agape*; a realized eschatology that looks not so much to a future fulfillment as to the "proleptic comfort" of "a full and present 'experience of blessedness'" (19); an enthusiastic embrace of doctrines of assurance and perseverance; and a horizontal dualism that separates believers from non-believers and finds expression in a "deeply sectarian rhetoric" (23). Cefalu also identifies a broader Johannine rhetoric that combines stable irony, "discipleship misunderstanding," and divine accommodation to reproduce in readers "the pedagogical process by which [...] Christ's hearers come to understand his message" (14).

Six chapters investigate these themes in early modern England. The first traces John's influence on Eucharistic theology through Augustine to Thomas Cranmer and others. John is seen as permitting figurative and spiritual understandings of the Last Supper in which the Eucharist is subsumed in a broader sacramentalism rooted in belief in the Incarnation. Cefalu finds versions of this general position in George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw, and Edward Taylor. Chapter 2 challenges readings of Mary Magdalene's encounter with the resurrected Christ as a narrative of loss. In the tradition that Cefalu follows from John to a host of ancient and early modern commentators and poets, Mary's story leads from "productive misunderstanding" (98), to proper hearing, to "an experience of mutual abiding in love through the agency of the Spirit" (130) that allows Mary to "find comfort in her savior's continuing immaterial presence" (118). The third chapter further develops the theme of spiritual comfort. Cefalu excavates the uses of John's understanding of the Paraclete in seventeenth-century debates about faith and assurance, before showing Donne's enthusiastic embrace of the Spirit in some sermons and sonnets and Milton's more cautious treatment of it in *Paradise Lost*. Chapter 4 focuses on what Cefalu considers John's greatest difference from the Synoptic Gospels, his understanding of God as love. Cefalu moves through the theologians to Herbert, Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, arguing that each poet expresses a different version of an identifiably Johannine tradition. The fifth and longest chapter focuses on the "radically sectarian implications" (216) of John's

horizontal dualism. Contending that “the antinomian and separatist worldview was fundamentally shaped by Johannine material” (259), Cefalu examines the use of John by John Trask, John Eaton, John Everard, John Cotton, John Saltmarsh (can the names be a coincidence?), Gerrard Winstanley, George Fox, and others. The final chapter, the shortest, sets out to show how Herbert and Vaughan employ elements of John’s characteristic rhetoric in some of their poems.

This brief summary cannot do justice to the subtlety of Cefalu’s finely-nuanced theological explorations. He commands not only the biblical, Patristic, and early modern texts, but also modern theologians’ understandings of John, and he writes about complicated theological questions with clarity and insight. He never forces his writers into a box, but allows the distinctive concerns and emphases of each to enrich the broader category of Johannine theology. Anyone could learn something from this book. At the same time, this book is not for everyone. “The detailed exegeses that I provide in this chapter might seem tedious to some readers” (217), observes Cefalu early in chapter 5, and those same readers may find themselves skipping sections about unfamiliar theologians throughout to get to the sections on familiar poets. Though he pays relatively little attention to poetic form and texture, Cefalu’s explications are impressive on their own terms, throwing fresh light on the theology of many well-known poems.

Cefalu’s tight focus on John is illuminating, but it is also problematic in that it risks neglecting comparable elements in other biblical books. Cefalu is aware of the risk, and frequently compares John to the other Gospels and to Paul. Indeed, one of this book’s goals is to qualify the consensus views that the Reformation constituted a Pauline turn in theology, and that the poetry it inspired was essentially Pauline, by demonstrating that John’s influence was also important. To this end, Cefalu sometimes draws sharp distinctions between John and Paul (for example, on their views of love); sometimes claims that they differ in emphasis (as on the Paraklete); and sometimes simply points to their agreement—“John follows Paul” (181)—while noting that John, “too” (101), shaped later trends. Cefalu is less careful when it comes to the influence of the Psalms, which is rarely considered and on one occasion too readily dismissed (289).

These hazards of source study aside, Cefalu makes a compelling case that John’s theology played a distinctive role in shaping Christian thought and

expression after the Reformation, and that it should be considered more often as a complement to Paul's theology. This is a significant argument, and deserves a wide audience.

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Celenza, Christopher S.

The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance: Language, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xvi, 438. ISBN 978-1-107-00362-0 (hardcover) US\$137.95.

For historians who study the intellectual world of Italy in the 1400s, the contributions of the long fifteenth century seem stubbornly bookended between Petrarchan thought in the late 1300s, and Machiavelli's political philosophy in the early sixteenth century. While studies of humanists and humanism for the fifteenth century are plentiful, the history and historiography of philosophy seem to skim over the 1400s, as Renaissance humanism still evokes an image of intellectuals turning away from "true" philosophy to privilege the ancient intellectual heritage over their own contributions—in spite of several scholarly voices to the contrary.

One voice that demands we heed the intellectual contributions of the fifteenth century is Christopher Celenza, who has written many works arguing for this point. His latest contribution to why the fifteenth century remains important to the history of philosophy is *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance: Language, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning*. Oriented around several contributions to the language debates in fifteenth-century Italy, his book highlights the many dialogues surrounding the importance of Latin versus Italian, and why the debate between Latin and the vernacular mattered to the individuals who used them. But in covering this broad topic, Celenza delves quite deeply into the formation and importance of intellectual life through the fifteenth century, and into why the debates from the 1400s matter to the reader in today's world.