

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Huebert, Ronald, and David McNeil, eds. Early Modern Spectatorship: Interpreting English Culture, 1500–1780

Daniel Fischlin

Volume 42, Number 4, Fall 2019

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068603ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068603ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Fischlin, D. (2019). Review of [Huebert, Ronald, and David McNeil, eds. Early Modern Spectatorship: Interpreting English Culture, 1500–1780]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(4), 230–233.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1068603ar>

© All Rights Reserved Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2020

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

may explain why his work was so frequently copied, especially when compared to his peers Cousin and Pellerin.

The catalogue of works is one of Hueber's significant contributions, as it gathers in one location the numerous (re-)attributions that have taken place in the last fifty years. Comprising 173 items—119 autograph drawings and paintings, plus fifty-four works by other artists after his lost designs—the catalogue is organized roughly chronologically and contains a valuable appendix of rejected works. While many of the highlights of Caron's oeuvre are reproduced in two sets of colour plates inserted after chapter 7 and in the catalogue, much of his refined production is reduced to black-and-white illustrations measuring less than 10 cm square. The entries, too, can be anemic, for none contains the comparative illustrations that would have been useful in further contextualizing the artist and his numerous sources. Providing illustrations of the work of his influences, which are as varied as Antoine Lafréry, Maarten van Heemskerck, Andrea Mantegna, and Michelangelo, in the catalogue entries would have been a strong testament to the imaginative and international context in which Caron functioned.

In its comprehensive treatment of historiography and attribution and relevant documents, this monograph adds to the growing number of focused, in-depth studies of artists of the French Renaissance. Our understanding of the effect of the Bellifontaine style upon artists in Paris is greatly enhanced by this study.

JACQUELYN N. COUTRÉ

Queen's University

**Huebert, Ronald, and David McNeil, eds.**

***Early Modern Spectatorship: Interpreting English Culture, 1500–1780.***

Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv, 414 + 44 ill. ISBN 978-0-7735-5677-6 (paperback) \$39.95.

No understanding of the complex dynamics of politics, aesthetics, and lived experience in the early modern period is thinkable without a grasp of spectacle as a critical episteme from the period around which gather structures of power, of entertainment, and of critique. But where spectacle tends to receive the

most scholarly attention, whether in terms of aesthetics or the power dynamics associated with absolute rule, Ronald Huebert's and David McNeil's collection of essays admirably shifts the focus to spectatorship, focusing on the gaze of the spectator observing the spectacle.

The editors of this volume aver that the "keyword [spectatorship] around which we have arranged the essays in this volume was a newcomer in the early modern period," citing Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary*, which "glosses [spectatorship] as the 'Act of beholding'" (3). The word "spectacle" is to be found in the thirteenth-century Old French word *spectacle*, which had the senses of sight, spectacle, and even Roman games, and from the mid-fourteenth century on, the sense of a specially prepared or arranged display. These uses derive from the Latin word *spectaculum*, which had the sense both of a public showing but also of the place from which shows are seen, thus invoking both the object of the gaze and the place from which its vantage is made possible. Viewing, beholding, observing are all captured in the sense of the Latin word *spectare*, which derives from a proto-Indo-European root word "spek-" that carries the general sense of observation, seeing, spying, and watching—all of which is to say that the cultural contexts of the emergent concept of spectatorship on which this book centres displace a rich history of usage associated with the concept of spectacle that predates the 1500–1780 temporal frame that its editors have set.

Early modern England is the focus of this volume, with the editors proposing that their objective is to historicize spectatorship and the forms it took, with the necessary adjustments being made for situations where spectatorship cannot be discussed without reference to other national contexts. Given the intensely intertextual nature of English early modern cultural outputs—whether portraiture influenced by the Flemish school or theatre and music influenced by Italian and other Continental models—the book's allowance for border-crossing is a sensible accommodation. Huebert and McNeil write in their introduction that "spectatorship denotes the natural act of human observation in all its diversity" (5), perhaps a needlessly open-ended definition given that the "natural" is so often a construct in which multiple factors are at play in determining what is seen, how it is seen, and how meaning is created by spectacular relations and power differentials between the object and the viewer.

The Jacobean masque centred literally on the spectacular positioning of King James in relation both to other observers and to the very stage that the entire audience was viewing, a scheme in which the making visible of

power and its operations was as much an object of the spectator's gaze (so, spectatorship) as were the goings-on onstage. The same might be said of the infamous Rainbow Portrait of Elizabeth I, which literally figures the subject of the portrait as the source of the gaze (her elaborate dress is covered in eyes and ears, the sensible organs that allow for spectatorship), reversing the power dynamics of viewer and viewed and subjecting the viewer to the unrelenting gaze of the monarch.

The thirteen essays in the book are loosely organized around key topoi, including theatrical spectatorship, surveillance, perambulation, the iconography of watching, and rethinking the rules around spectatorship. The latter will be of especial interest to readers curious to understand how a shift occurred between the time of Sir Thomas More and Samuel Johnson, with changes, as argued by the editors, along the lines of "the spectator's authority, the reflexivity of spectatorship, and the angle of vision" (16). All of these show the degree to which observation, watching, and perspective generated new imaginaries and new forms of self-fashioning that entail a complex interplay between those who watch and those being watched. Identity and the rich signifiers that make it ambiguous are tied to how watching public spectacles gives shape to epistemes that connect intimate identity—and the self-reflexive knowledge required to construct it—to public manifestation. Huebert and McNeil's cowritten essay in the volume, "Dying in Earnest: Public Executions and Their Audiences," tellingly cites James VI and I's observation from *Basilikon Doron* that "A King is as one set on a scaffold, whose smallest actions & gestures, al the people gazingly do behold" before going on to discuss Charles I's public execution. The didactics of the execution meant using the powerful conjoined symbolics of place and observability as a way to convey the shift in power that Charles's execution reflected: "One principle that does seem to have been followed [...] was choosing a site of execution that was also that of the original crime. [...] If Cromwell and his party were laying to rest the principle of monarchy along with Charles I, then their selection of the Banqueting House as the place for the execution—the preferred space for English royalty—was most fitting" (136–37).

The book's essayists cover diverse materials, from theatre to poetry to mural painting, the visual arts, and public executions. If anything, the scope of the volume suggests a great deal more work for which it lays the foundation. This new work potentially includes the aesthetics of intimacy associated with court music performances; the anonymity that helped shape the gaze of early modern English portraiture; the use of distortion or anamorphics as a

textual and visual device; the early colonial “discovery” texts that document the unhappy dynamics of encounters with indigenous peoples; or the ways in which street culture and architecture, let alone urban and rural topographies, contributed to early modern sensibilities.

Spectatorship, as this volume convincingly shows, entails identity, agency, aesthetics, and the imaginative spaces in which seeing as a form of knowing became a critical site where interpretative struggles over *how* to see were deeply generative of new forms of expression, political or otherwise.

DANIEL FISCHLIN

University of Guelph

**Puljcan Juric, Lea.**

***Illyria in Shakespeare's England.***

Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2019. Pp. 353 + 12 ill. ISBN 978-1-68393-176-8 (hardcover) US\$115.

Illyria was as much a land of imagination as it was a territory of uncertain boundaries, but it was of much interest to Westerners, as Lea Puljcan Juric convincingly demonstrates in the most documented and detailed book on the subject available in English. Puljcan Juric's compelling *Illyria in Shakespeare's England* is a work of cultural historiography and literary criticism that models a new paradigm for early modern scholarship by advancing a cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, and comparative perspective. The Renaissance in Europe—in which Illyria was integrated—merits this approach. Yet decades of focus on the national Renaissance more generally, and cultural histories of early modern England that rely on Anglophone scholarship specifically, have narrowed our view of England's engagement with the world beyond. Puljcan Juric's book changes this critical landscape. Based on extensive historical research of primary documents and on a deft analysis of a large body of critical literature on the subject in several languages, this book makes a significant contribution to Shakespeare criticism and to the study of the early modern Mediterranean.

Puljcan Juric rethinks Shakespeare's plays—those set in the eastern Adriatic that reimagine Illyria—by locating them in the Croatian Adriatic more broadly but also by explaining how the elasticity of the term “Illyria” contributed to the diversity of meaning with which Illyria resonated in the