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**Smith, Matthew J. Performance and Religion in Early Modern England: Stage, Cathedral, Wagon, Street**

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

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

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unexpected detour into Euclidean space may have put a study of eighteenth-century clocks to a standstill, but the outcome is the *Spatial Revolution*—a welcome new approach to the social issues to which both individuals and entire societies were subjected as early modern thinkers mathematized space in ever more intricate ways.

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**Smith, Matthew J.**

***Performance and Religion in Early Modern England: Stage, Cathedral, Wagon, Street.***

Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. Pp. xiii, 388 + 19 ill. ISBN 978-0-268-10466-5 (paperback) US\$45.

It is easy to forget how much noise and commotion surrounded early modern performances. In a scholarly culture generally focused on the written text, it is useful to be reminded that Shakespeare's plays were interspersed with other forms of entertainment, including songs and jigs, or that dogs and other animals were likely in the audience during many of John Donne's sermons. In this refreshingly broad study of early modern performance culture, Matthew J. Smith attends to this noise, and to the lively contexts in which different dramatic genres were performed, to produce a rich history of the relationship between religion and drama. Following up on several key themes of the "religious turn" in literary studies, Smith adds to ongoing debates about the interaction between religion and theatre in early modern England both by examining a more expansive range of performances in the period and by considering the temporal, spatial, and experiential overlap between these different modes of performance. In addition to a chapter each on *Henry V* and *Doctor Faustus*, Smith also considers boy bishop festivals, Elizabeth I's coronation procession, the Chester cycle plays, Donne's sermons, broadside ballads, and jigs. Smith argues that there is an essential continuity across these different genres. Specifically, he claims these performances all draw attention, in different ways, to their own theatricality in order to invite their audiences to a self-conscious reflection on their active role in creating and interpreting the dramatic action

as an event. For Smith, this collective engagement of the audience with the conspicuously dramatic aspects of performance has its roots in the shared performance of pre-Reformation sacramental liturgy, though it takes new shapes under the influence of the Protestant concern to distinguish authentic piety from mere religious show.

Smith's first full chapter sets up his argument, but it also usefully exemplifies the methodology of the book as a whole. Borrowing key ideas from phenomenological thinkers to provide his theoretical framework, Smith sets four very different performative moments alongside each other: a boy bishop sermon, the pageants and "devices" put on during Elizabeth's coronation progress, Viola's speeches in *Twelfth Night*, and Hamlet's soliloquies. A key point of reference for this and subsequent chapters is the liturgy of the Eucharist and its rather vexed status during the English Reformation. Smith repeatedly draws on the sacrament's "vocabulary of mediation" to explain his account of early modern performance culture, and the different ways each genre he considers conjures or creates a sense of presence. This Eucharistic terminology can occasionally be confusing since, rather like the theologians he is consciously echoing, Smith's use of the word "presence" can sometimes be imprecise. His continual reference to the wider culture of religious practice in early modern England, however, enables a robust and convincing critique of the secularization narratives that are still surprisingly common, especially in Shakespeare studies. The book thus deliberately weaves back and forth between the apparently secular and the purportedly religious, identifying a common strategy in which performances point up their own performativity as a way of eliciting self-conscious reflection.

Smith's subsequent chapters present an exploration of the post-Reformation life of the Chester cycle, a consideration of King Henry's ambivalent attitude to ceremony in *Henry V*, an analysis of how John Donne harnessed the distractions in the venues where he preached, and a re-evaluation of the conventionality of religious ballads. The comparative study culminates in a reappraisal of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, a chapter that makes fascinating use of the play's B-text and the popular ballads inspired by the play to argue that Marlowe's most famous work might have been more in line with religious orthodoxy than it is usually considered to be. A brief "postlude" on early modern jigs reiterates one of Smith's key claims, that the overlapping presence of different modes of performance in early modernity, particularly in the professional

theatres, indicates an important aspect of continuity with the “medieval religious world of festival” (318).

*Performance and Religion in Early Modern England* is a wide-ranging monograph that provides a valuable window into the performance culture of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. By mapping the mutual interactions and influences of so many different dramatic forms, and by demonstrating their connections with the religious life of the period, Smith helpfully debunks the notion that public theatre was a largely autonomous, secular, and proto-modern artistic mode. As a work of scholarship that aims primarily to identify affinities and chart continuities, the book is stronger on similarities than it is on differences, and its conclusions can seem to elide some important distinctions between genres and periods. Nonetheless, this monograph makes important contributions to our understanding of English performance culture, the relationship between early modern religion and theatre, and the broader history of secularization.

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**Stephens, Walter, and Earle A. Havens, eds., assisted by Janet E. Gomez.**

***Literary Forgery in Early Modern Europe, 1450–1800.***

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. Pp. ix, 285 + 9 ill. ISBN 978-1-4214-26877-7 (hardcover) US\$54.95.

This collection that Walter Stephens and Earle A. Havens have edited with the assistance of Janet E. Gomez examines the connection between forgery and scholarship and also treats forgery as a form of literary production in Europe from 1450 to 1800. Stephens and Havens consciously take up what Anthony Grafton discussed in *Forgers and Critics* (1990), that is, creativity and duplicity in the scholarship of the West. As Stephens and Havens explain, a collection, the Bibliotheca Fictiva, acquired by the Johns Hopkins University in 2011, prompted this volume: “This remarkable gathering of learned lies, formidable fakes, and resourceful forgeries was carefully assembled over nearly half a century, and the many fresh discoveries and refinements to the historical record proposed in the present volume will surely enhance the collection’s permanent