

Under the umbrella of this broader structure, each chapter makes several subtle turns that are occasionally hard to track. The clearest and most pointed of these readings, from my perspective, is her meditation on political theology and political imagination in *Edward II*, which also contains some of her most exciting insights about performance. In response to the puzzle of what to do with an absence of information about early modern staging, she offers an intriguing solution—two possible stagings of the hearse supposedly containing Edward's dead body, including a detailed explanation of the implications of each one. Does the stage object hide the body (the actor feigning death), or should the actor lie on top, as in a tomb effigy? Although performance is, for the most part, not the focus of Vinter's book, this struck me as a model worth pursuing, and I would have liked to see her treatment of theatrical materiality more fully integrated into the book as a whole.

In keeping with the compendious approach that characterizes the rest of the book, Vinter eschews the typical coda containing a single point of contemporary relevance. Instead, her epilogue tackles a multitude of cultural artifacts: *The Duchess of Malfi*, Elizabeth Jocelin's 1624 *Mother's Legacie*, *Clarissa*, a David Bowie video, the famous Droeshout engraving of John Donne in his winding sheet, and photos by Hannah Wilke and David Wojnarowicz. Although Vinter finds several compelling parallels—especially between the visual pieces—on the whole this large assortment of texts does a disservice to her individual readings. It does a particular disservice to the Black Lives Matter movement by including a mere three sentences on activists' ongoing attempts to give meaning to unbearably brutal deaths.

On the whole, however, this book is deeply researched and skillfully put together. It offers a valuable contribution to the scholarship on death and dying in post-Reformation England.

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Unknowing Fanaticism: Reformation Literatures of Self-Annihilation. Ross Lerner. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. 232 pp. \$30.

The title of Ross Lerner's book captures its intertwined imperatives: we must "unknow" postsecular notions of fanaticism in order to appreciate the "unknowing" or ambiguous quality of fanaticism in Reformation literature. Rejecting the binary of fanatical religion and rational politics, Lerner aims to show how early modern poets "participate in or resist Reformation polemics about religious fanaticism" (2). By distinguishing his key term from *enthusiasm* (the Platonic notion of possession by a God), Lerner is able to analyze fanaticism as a child of the Reformation central to the birth of modern politics, rooted in the thought of Thomas Müntzer and the 1520s German Peasants Revolt.

Whereas theologians like Luther and Calvin and political philosophers like Hobbes differently assert definitive knowledge of fanaticism to contain its revolutionary potential, poets like Spenser, Donne, and Milton are keener on exploring the irreconcilable tension fanaticism poses between divine will and human agency through creative manipulations of form.

The book begins with discussions of two poetic forms in relation to fanaticism: allegorical epic and sacred lyric. In his chapter on Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Lerner focuses on two of the poem's figures—the “organ” and the “swarm”—to investigate individual and collective fanaticism, respectively. Whereas the poem attempts to depict Redcrosse as an authentic instrument of God, it struggles to divinize Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss. Lerner cleverly links the swarm of flies unleashed upon the Giant's defeat in book 5 to the poem's inability to contain all its elements within the explanatory framework of allegory. Similarly, the chapter on Donne details a poet assiduously working, but self-consciously failing, to contain destructive impulses within the lyric form. In “I am a little World” and “Batter my hart,” speakers defer self-annihilation for as long as possible, so that their songs can become “completed artifact[s]” (60). In another clever turn, Lerner connects these poetic experiments to Donne's unique theorization of martyrdom as self-annihilation that approaches, but never quite reaches, divine will.

The chapter on Hobbes's political philosophy is a productive detour from the book's focus on poetry, one that highlights the equivocal nature of the poems in its demonstration of Hobbes's definition of fanaticism as madness. Lerner unpacks *Leviathan*'s curious reference to biblical texts as “outworks”: public-private hybrids where the civil sovereign and religious fanatics wage discursive war. It is Christ, however, defined as the ultimate sovereign, who haunts Hobbes's philosophy; not only does he come dangerously close to equating the Son of God with the mad fanatics of the Civil War era, Jesus's willing sacrifice utterly shatters Hobbes's natural theory of self-preservation. In our postsecular present, in which fanatics are largely construed as inhuman madmen advancing impossible claims to divine inspiration, Hobbes's political philosophy is eerily relevant, despite its paradoxical treatment of Christ.

Returning to and concluding with poetry, the book's final chapter on Milton's *Samson Agonistes* explores the titular protagonist's violent act of fanaticism and the problem of “tragic recognition” (143) it poses. Lerner makes a sharp critical move in focusing on the witnesses (or lack thereof) to Samson's destruction of the Temple of Dagon, both within the text and among its readers. Seeming to join the New Milton Criticism, Lerner unfolds an argument for the ambiguity of Samson's rousing motions and their telos as a pile of rubble and bodies. In Lerner's treatment, the tragedy of Milton's closet drama resides less in Samson's personal trajectory and more in communal responses to fanatical violence; by occluding the report of direct witnesses to Samson's violent act, Milton puts the onus on his readers to meditate on the unknowability of fanaticism's relation to divine order. While this reader tends to see Milton as fairly definitive in his portrayal of Samson as a hero of faith, Lerner's minutely detailed

and uniquely contextualized close reading does open up provocative trails to be explored in this long-standing conversation about the poem.

In the absence of a conclusion or epilogue reconnecting to the book's larger goal of articulating a Reformation genealogy of modern politics, one wonders what critical insights might have been gained were the author to have pressed harder on the dynamic between inner faith and state obedience in the thought and practice of the book's poets. This criticism notwithstanding, *Unknowing Fanaticism* demonstrates dense learning while advancing deft arguments, illustrating the subtlety with which three of early modern England's most sensitive poetic minds grappled with the problems engendered by claims to religious fanaticism through experiments with form. As conveyed by Lerner's supple analyses, it is precisely this formal experimentation that makes these poems compulsively readable in a postsecular present committed to thinking religious fanaticism afresh.

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Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling: Theater in Post-Reformation London.

Musa Gurnis.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. x + 258 pp. \$59.95.

Antitheatricalist writers of the Tudor-Stuart period have had far more traction in our understanding of the cultural location of the early modern theater than they could ever have hoped for. In *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling*, Musa Gurnis challenges the polemic-infused portrait of Tudor religion that has proved the starting point of many discussions of theater and religion over the last several decades. She argues not only for the far subtler and more nuanced understanding of early modern confessional identities, but also for the professional theater's power to "involve mixed-faith audiences in shared, imaginative processes that allowed playgoers to engage with the always-changing tangle of religious life from emotional and cognitive vantage points not elsewhere available to them" (1). Beginning with an examination of the documented presence of theatergoing Puritans, she goes on to examine the sites in which belief systems mingled with each other as the Reformation took root—for instance, in families, in individual conversions, in encounters with foreigners, in playwriting, and ultimately, within theater audiences. Central to her argument is an attractive picture of the cultural work of theater as a process and place that encourages "the imaginative elasticity of audiences" (39)—even when, as she discusses in her analysis of *A Game at Chess*, such encouragement can urge collective invigilation against religious minorities.

Gurnis complements her argument about any given play's imaginative restructuring of religious valence with an account of the ways in which plays were produced through