

I would recommend this book as much to scholars of romance in all its guises as to students seeking ways into the scholarship of this vital, enduring literary form.

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Lying in Early Modern English Culture: From the Oath of Supremacy to the Oath of Allegiance. Andrew Hadfield.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xvi + 368 pp. \$80.

The historical frame for Andrew Hadfield's new book on lying is 1535, the Oath of Supremacy, to 1606, the Oath of Allegiance. The importance of oaths to early modern England makes the case for the importance of lying, as world-changing assertions of truthful language will in practice imply a proliferation of qualifications to such language. By devoting the first two chapters to each oath, respectively, Hadfield avoids a narrative of progression and instead makes space for the mapping of a wide field of cultural and literary texts, taken on as case studies. The result is an excellent, and impressively various, study of the culture of lying, revealing a period in which lying became "central to the imagination" (309).

A predecessor to this book, which many readers will know, is Perez Zagorin's *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*. Zagorin focuses on religious controversy, and Hadfield picks up on several key ideas, overlapping in discussions of Nicodemism and equivocation, for example. But Hadfield develops a broader perspective. One chapter is on "The Religious Culture of Lying," but subsequent chapters are titled: "Rhetoric, Commonplacings, and Poetics"; "Courtesy, Lying, and Politics"; "Testimony"; and "Othello and the Culture of Lies between Conscience and Reputation." Among the literary figures handled are Thomas More, William Baldwin, Erasmus, Montaigne, Spenser, Nashe, Sidney, Marlowe, Jonson, and in the final chapter devoted to *Othello*, Shakespeare.

Early modern accounts of lying and truth can be located relative to two patristic theories. On one side is Augustine, who developed a taxonomy of lies but maintained that all kinds are always a sin. On the other side is Jerome, who admitted the useful lie, possible in certain circumstances and to be evaluated according to the intentions of its speaker. Based on challenging stories in scripture (e.g., the Hebrew midwives in Egypt or Paul's rebuke of Peter for not eating with the Gentiles), these two theories shape how England thinks about oaths, as well as the speaking of religious and political truth. They form poles in the confrontations between Tyndale, who takes Jerome's position that dissembling is not always a sin, and More, who takes the Augustinian position, aligning himself with a more rigorous approach to oaths and temporal religious authority. The theoretical laxity of the useful lie, set against the imperative to swear

in wholly truthful language, similarly lies behind the trial of Father Garnet, who made the casuistic argument for equivocation and mental reservation during the Gunpowder Plot.

As Protestants and Catholics shift between these theories, it becomes clear that lying must be understood as a very situated practice, or as Hadfield puts it, “an analysis of lying is most meaningful through a series of examples rather than precepts” (179). These are supplied in abundance, through readings of diaries, letters, plays, trials, travel literature, murder pamphlets, and more. And they are applied to a broad set of issues, from defenses of poetry, to military culture, to reports of miraculous fish. The book’s greatest strength is its remarkable detail. Hadfield’s expansive approach is the wealth of many years as one of the most productive scholars in the early modern period. Frequently he cites a single page or a short section in a book that is for the most part on another topic—such references demonstrate a remarkable synthesis of his extensive reading in early modern culture and criticism.

The context of the Oath of Allegiance yields a very good reading of *Volpone*, though it is brief. The same could be said of a reading of Machiavelli and Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*. There is the sense that this book touches lightly on major literary works and then moves on too quickly—something especially felt in the reading of courtesy in book 6 of *The Faerie Queene*. There are so many more lies and deceptions in Faerie Land, which, like early modern England, seems to breed untruths like loaches. This study could push further into the literary, as it does with *Othello*; it could, though it would require another volume, continue on to the Oath of Engagement. But the desire for more is itself a strong recommendation of what the book does provide—a flowing and erudite tour through the period’s influential culture of lying.

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Indecorous Thinking: Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics.

Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld.

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Colleen Rosenfeld’s *Indecorous Thinking* is a book about poetics, in the sense both of the literary and rhetorical theory of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England and of the practical acts of *poiēsis* to which that theory corresponds or fails to correspond. Its specific concern is with figures of speech, here understood as *formulae* of poetic making that indecorously parade their own artifice on the surface of the literary text, and as constitutive elements of the worlds poets make.

The book’s two parts roughly correspond to the theoretical and practical sides of Rosenfeld’s topic, although one of its most notable and laudable features is its refusal