

fully convincing, including the provocative but underdeveloped ideas that the indecorous thinking performed by figurative language “provided poetry with a means of distinguishing itself from the world and its dominant ideologies” (7), or that its “artifice . . . takes on the project of world making while deviating from the moral imperative of what should be” (93).

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Conflicts of Devotion: Liturgical Poetics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England. Daniel R. Gibbons.

Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017. x + 332 pp. \$60.

In *Conflicts of Devotion*, Daniel R. Gibbons examines the relationship between liturgy and the poetics of spiritual community in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. This thoughtful study describes the tensions in Reformation-era England over who was in and who was out of the spiritual community, tensions articulated most importantly in the Book of Common Prayer. Gibbons argues that poets from Spenser to Crashaw responded to these tensions by working out the liturgical potential of poetry, its “capacity to make spiritual communities out of its audiences” (4). The book articulates a compelling and complex narrative about the “communitarian” aim of many early modern poets, both Catholic and Protestant.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, a single chapter, begins with Cranmer’s need to accommodate a wide range of believers, but also exclude those beliefs and practices that Reformers found most problematic. Through a careful reading of the Book of Common Prayer, Gibbons locates accommodation primarily in the Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, and exclusion in the Order for the Burial of the Dead. The language that accompanied the Lord’s Supper, he argues, includes “numerous instances of semantic multiplicity that correspond to the theological multiplicity of opinion dividing the heart of England’s spiritual identity” (46). Such multiplicity reflects not only theological ambiguity, but more importantly a “super-rational mystic[ism]” designed to help each communicant enter “most fully into the mystery of Christian community by joining a common physical or spiritual contact with God himself” (57). The Order for the Burial of the Dead, by contrast, resisted the sense of spiritual community with the dead that earlier burial rites afforded by pointing mourners away from those who had died back toward themselves and their moral obligations to the living. The tensions between the accommodating and exclusionary models, Gibbons argues, created questions of community that poets would wrestle with for the next century and longer.

The second section examines two very different early responses to the rhetoric of exclusion, those of Spenser and Southwell. Chapter 2 traces Spenser’s developing

sense of the way that the Order for the Burial of the Dead failed to create necessary conditions for mourning and consolation. Gibbons argues that Spenser ultimately sees poetry as a communal and “para-liturgical” way to engage in communal forms of mourning and consolation that were no longer provided by liturgy itself (120). Chapter 3 suggests that Southwell’s poetry covertly undermines the attitudes toward predestination and salvation inherent in the Order for the Burial of the Dead that provided the foundation for the rhetoric of exclusion. Like Spenser, Southwell’s poetry provides an alternative to the now proscribed acts of mourning, but Southwell subversively points readers back to the affective practices of mourning and intercessory prayer rather than substituting for them.

The third section takes up the rhetoric of accommodation in Donne, Herbert, and Crashaw. Chapter 4 suggests that Donne imagines poetry as a way to create a mystical communion that can bridge the divide between Catholic and Reformed communities; his ambiguities and semantic excess function as a *via negativa* with the potential to lead to each reader’s “communal participation in the divine,” parallel or similar to the work of the Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper (201). In chapter 5, Gibbons identifies in Herbert’s poetry a desire to maintain clear boundaries between the British church and other groups, defined especially by adherence to the Book of Common Prayer. However, Herbert also offers a form of pastoral accommodation for the sake of spiritual community within those boundaries. Chapter 6 describes the great optimism of Crashaw’s poetry, “a hope for poetic reunification of Christian worship,” though that hope would be ultimately overshadowed by the social and religious forces at work in the Civil Wars (249).

Over the course of the book, Gibbons intervenes in numerous important debates: the relationship between Protestant and Catholic poetics, the role of mysticism in early modern religion, the effects of liturgy on early modern culture, and the cultural responses to ongoing social and religious fractures. *Conflicts of Devotion* should be a welcome addition to the religious turn in Renaissance studies, for it offers a generous yet critical examination of the spiritual and literary goals that linked liturgy, poetics, and community from Cranmer to Crashaw.

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Edmund Spenser in Context. Andrew Escobedo, ed.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xx + 384 pp. \$120.

Edmund Spenser has been well served by the age of handbooks. *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (1990), now almost thirty years old, is still an excellent resource for the poet and the literary culture of the period; there is a fine *Cambridge Companion*