

*Religion around John Donne.* Joshua Eckhardt.

Religion Around 4. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. xii + 196 pp. \$49.95.

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Joshua Eckhardt's *Religion around John Donne* is the fourth entry in Penn State's Religion Around series, founded by Peter Iver Kaufman. The series offers readings of a mix of canonical literary figures and pop-culture icons (Bono, Billie Holliday) that specifically highlight their religious affiliations, influences, and milieux. The series seems to aim at a readership somewhat broader than scholarly, which may also explain the charming, intelligent, but also puzzling features of Eckhardt's slim volume. This book-history study examines the manuscripts, books, libraries, and provenances of religious texts around Donne's, especially the physical proximity of his works to others in bookshops, private libraries, *Sammelbände*, and manuscript miscellanies. This deductive methodology aims to open up a few of the complex webs of religious allegiances, alliances, patronage, disagreement, and political networks in which Donne's works were enmeshed. Taking extremely literally the concept of "religion around," Eckhardt samples the books owned and annotated by Donne; the works he may have juxtaposed in the same bindings; the subsequent homes of books Donne once owned; and the physical contexts in which some of Donne's writings were subsequently placed.

This approach, leaning on the work of Zachary Lesser as well as on the *Donne Variorum* editors and the work of Geoffrey Keynes, Hugh Adlington, Dennis Flynn, and other Donne scholars, is often extremely productive. Eckhardt connects Donne's satirical critique of Elizabethan pursuivants with Ellesmere's records of religious trials in the Bridgewater Library; he traces the fascinating travels of *Deaths Duell* from Royalist to Puritan collections; he notes suggestive market connections between Donne and Henry Valentine, his successor at St. Dunstan's. Eckhardt's associative threads provide many such insights into Donne's religious England.

Eckhardt's is also, of course, a very contingent study. Eckhardt is limited at almost every turn by a lack of evidence: did Donne stitch these tracts together, or did someone else? Are those Donne's pencil markings? Eckhardt is compelled therefore to preface many of his claims with "could have," "might have been," "perhaps," "possibly." Likewise, Eckhardt is constantly dancing around intentionality and causation: can we really draw meaningful conclusions from the fact that certain volumes all appeared in a large library? Can we conclude that collectors read or managed their own collections? Is one physical juxtaposition of items meaningful, while another juxtaposition is not? Eckhardt is acutely sensitive to these difficulties, often preferring to pull back to culture and cultural debates rather than attributing individual purpose, and this is both necessary and strategic of him. But these questions do linger.

The semipopular tone of the volume is likewise both delightful and somewhat odd. It's certainly possible to imagine that a general reader might pick up a volume on *Religion around Shakespeare* or *Religion around Bono*, but it is difficult to conceive of a popular reader who would want to spend some hours not reading Donne's poetry but rather hearing accounts of the sermons with which Cotton Mather chose to bind Donne's *Deaths Duell*. Eckhardt does a wonderful job of making his narratives come alive, and his openhearted prose is definitely a pleasure for a scholarly reader as well. I just wonder whether these efforts to warm up and draw in a popular reader are a little wasted in this case.

The book's intellectual aim also raises a question about audience. Scholarly readers do not need to be told the basics of Donne's religious allegiances or alliances; nor do we need a thumbnail sketch of the Book of Common Prayer or definitions of recusancy. Again, Eckhardt handles these topics extremely deftly, so the work never really feels patronizing; it is just difficult to place. The volume is also extremely selective: only a tiny handful of Donne's works are discussed, and the conclusions drawn are likewise fairly *annaliste* in flavor. Most threads here are rich in color and insight, but the shifts from micro-detail to claims can feel somewhat arbitrary. This volume is informative, deftly written, and clearly deeply knowledgeable. One might like one less remove from the author and authorial voice at the heart of the title, but Eckhardt has certainly taken his series editor at his word. *Around Donne* is in this case literally accurate.

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*The Works of Henry Vaughan*. Henry Vaughan.

Ed. Donald R. Dickson, Alan Rudrum, and Robert Wilcher. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. cii + 1,444 pp. \$350.

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In 1995, the Vaughan Association was established by the late Anne Cluysenaar and Peter Thomas. Two years later, *Scintilla*, the association's annual journal, was founded, with the goals of expanding our knowledge of the lives and works of Henry Vaughan and his twin brother Thomas, and of publishing contemporary creative works on Vaughanian themes. The new three-volume Oxford University Press edition of *The Works of Henry Vaughan* (hereafter *Works*), edited by Donald R. Dickson, Alan Rudrum, and Robert Wilcher is, in part, the fruit of such early labors to restore Henry Vaughan to his rightful place in the cultural imagination, revealing the significance and relevance of his art and thought. It brings together for the first time in one edition—which should now be considered the definitive scholarly edition—every known text by Henry Vaughan, including his handwritten notes in books in his personal library.