

Linda Phyllis Austern, Kari Boyd McBride, and David L. Orvis, eds. *Psalms in the Early Modern World*.

Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011. xxii + 386 pp. \$119.95. ISBN: 978-1-4094-2282-2.

*Psalms in the Early Modern World* begins with the Algonquins and ends in New Spain. The intervening 300 pages explore more familiar terrain in Europe and England, with an eye to the modulations that biblical psalms undergo as regards texts, tunes, translations, and historical transitions. Indeed, the strength

of this collection lies in its transdisciplinary and transnational approach to the psalms, themselves an enduring staple of liturgical, household, and private devotions.

The book contributes to the growing scholarship on the Psalter by drawing our attention to the ways in which musicologists, literary scholars, and historians understand this archive, to the circulation of psalms in the early modern world, to their continuity with medieval forms of worship, and to the performance and uses of psalms in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish communities. In particular, it seeks to bridge the gulf between text-based studies of the psalms and music history that focuses exclusively on style and compositional genre. Most usefully, the collection as a whole offers insight not only into the subject matter, but also the methodology of musicology, literature, and history, and guides its readers to essential primary and secondary sources in a variety of disciplines.

Among the most trenchant essays are those that perform a close reading — musically, textually, or historically — on a single or limited set of texts. Essays that attempt to construct broad theoretical paradigms are generally less successful, as when, for instance, claims are made about the revolutionary potential of the psalms that might equally be made for vernacular Bible reading and translation in general. Richard Freedman's analysis of Simon Goulart's *Cinquante Pseaumes* as "a kind of tabernacle in print" (52) and Linda Phyllis Austern's survey of women's psalm making, both accompanied by transcriptions and/or translations of primary sources, are valuable aids to hearing, as well as seeing, the psalms. Clare Costley King'oo's reading of Thomas Wyatt's *Certaine Psalmes* is a model of meticulous textual and historical scholarship that argues persuasively for the printed edition of 1549 as a publication intended to support John Dudley's Reformist agenda, particularly insofar as the prologues to the paraphrased "Seven Psalmes" move the repentant King David from doing outward, and extravagant, acts of penance to a posture of readiness to receive grace, the goal of a Protestant penitent. Elsewhere, Margaret Hannay looks at the ways Mary Sidney's psalm translations were read and sung by her contemporaries; Anne Lake Prescott compares the work of the Sidney siblings with that of Elisabeth and Louis Chéron; and Penny Granger reads the Virgin Mary reading her psalter in the N-Town Play and other medieval texts, both written and imaged.

As useful as this collection is, it does suffer from being more a collection of individual research interests and less a cohesive account of psalms in the modern world. A few essays are only loosely stitched onto the fabric of psalms before unraveling into the thread the author wishes to pursue. The copyediting is ragged (in a few cases, entire sentences are left unfinished), historical scholarship is occasionally incorrect or out-of-date (Wyclif, for instance, is oddly relocated to the sixteenth century), and the index merely gestures to the rich detail the individual essays afford. I would like to attend a symposium where the authors interact with one another and weave their scholarship together across the various disciplines. For

now, however, the reader must take up her own needle, grateful for the bountiful materials this volume provides.

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