

Kasey Evans. *Colonial Virtue: The Mobility of Temperance in Renaissance England*.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. xii + 276 pp. \$60. ISBN: 978-1-4426-4359-8.

The mobility of temperance in this book's title refers to the migration of classical discourses of temperance into writing about English colonialism, and to the mobility of meanings of temperance itself. Kasey Evans demonstrates that arguments about early English colonial experience invoke a wide range of meanings for temperance. The book enacts this mobility in its own wide terrain, which moves from classical concepts of temperance to late medieval and early modern iconographies of the virtue, to the canonical Renaissance authors Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne, and finally to some nonliterary texts that invoke temperance in discussion of New World commodities such as tobacco, chocolate, and coffee. To the idea of temperance as a mean Evans interestingly adds another axis of meaning, its temporal dimension. Temperance, Evans notes, derives from *tempus*, Latin for "time" (1); further, she notes that temperance shares this temporal root with *tempest*. Where temperance is patient time, tempest is sudden time. Evans is interested in why these two words and their attendant temporalities seem to travel together, why temperance is often followed by tempest.

After setting out some of these relationships in her introduction, Evans turns to a fascinating study of the iconography of temperance, which describes how the late medieval and early modern periods added the clock to the virtue's classical attributes. An icon of temperance in its temporal dimension, the clock and associated figures incorporate the classical value of temperance into "a set of Renaissance priorities — mercantile, economic, quantitative, commodified" (43). Likewise, in succeeding chapters *Colonial Virtue* explores how classical temperance serves new colonial interests by embodying these new mercantile priorities and by suggesting that English colonialism was temperate rather than greedy. The book's second chapter takes up this argument in a reading of the *Faerie Queene* that argues that Spenser's allegory of temperance — chiefly in the Cave of Mammon and the Bower of Bliss — both reveals and obscures the blood on English hands in the violence of colonial primitive accumulation. The third chapter turns to *The Tempest*, a play seen as embodying a European fantasy of control over the New World — including over time and historical memory — and figuring, particularly in Caliban, a challenge to that fantasy. The fourth chapter focuses on two texts

written in the aftermath of the 1622 Powhatan attack on the Jamestown colony, Donne's sermon "To the Honorable, the Virginia Colony," and his friend Christopher Brooke's "Poem on the Late Massacre in Virginia." Where Donne, like earlier writers, celebrates English temperance-as-patience in the New World, Brooke provides another example of "temperance's semantic expansion" (149) by redefining the virtue as kind of prudent angry vengeance. A final chapter aims to chart how a nationalist discourse of temperance, in which the national body politic is likened to a body in humoral balance, is reconceived in the late seventeenth century as a global body politic based on colonial labor, primitive accumulation, and cultural exchange.

The book's wide historical terrain presents difficulties. This terrain and Evans's broad claims about it are mainly supported through the close reading of a small number of texts. The choice of texts can also appear idiosyncratic. One example: Evans argues for a change in ideas of the body and body politic by close reading King James's *Counterblaste to Tobacco* against late seventeenth-century writing about coffee and chocolate. Surprisingly, however, she does not consider any early seventeenth-century pro-tobacco work, the blasts that James might have been countering. At least one of these works, Roger Marbecke's *A Defence of Tobacco* (1602), promotes tobacco through a discourse of humoral balance and with openness to foreign commodities that Evans identifies with the later seventeenth century. So one doesn't know whether Evans has discovered a change, or a longer-term debate. Thirty years of historicist literary criticism have made us more aware of these problems of evidence and of too easily reading historical dynamics out of textual ones. Thus while Evans hopes to "model an expansive critical perspective that speaks across scholarly subfields, textual canons, and disciplinary bounds" (7), I do not think the book achieves this ambitious goal. *The Mobility of Temperance* does, however, present locally interesting and useful readings of the texts it considers.

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