



PROJECT MUSE®

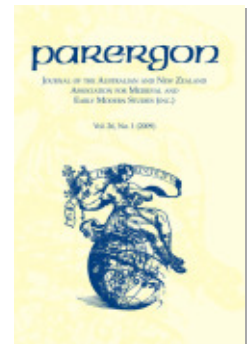
The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582
(review)

Frank Swannack

Parergon, Volume 26, Number 1, 2009, pp. 228-230 (Review)

Published by Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and
Early Modern Studies (Inc.)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/pgn.0.0111>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/362877>

12 ‘Memory as Action’ and chapter 13 ‘Theology and Memory’ because it is here that the whole subject of *midrash* is focussed on. ‘Jewish martyrs,’ we are told at the start of chapter 13, ‘of the Middle Ages used a variety of images in order to transmit and to internalize the message of sanctification of God’s Name’ (p. 325). How is explained at length, with many examples. For it is the process of memorialization, and then of transforming memory into a textualized experience that is understood and felt deeply as part of an ongoing rabbinical project of adjusting history to Judaism and Judaism to history.

Nevertheless, rich and exciting as these two chapters are – and they reverberate throughout the book – they do not tell the whole story. Goldin remains too much the professional historian to step very far outside the protocols of his craft to deal with the unconscious, oblique and implied dimensions of midrashing. Readers therefore should do more than stand in awe of the meticulous scholarship this book evinces. We should be provoked – the term to use is not ‘joyfully’ because of the tragic qualities of the subject – into greater and greater investigations. I cannot recommend this book too highly.

Norman Simms
Department of Humanities/English
University of Waikato

Hamrick, Stephen, *The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. 232; 12 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754665885.

In his fascinating book, Stephen Hamrick offers a chronological analysis of the poetry written in the first 25 years of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign. Hamrick states that this period of poetic history has been much neglected by critics. It is also a time of religious turmoil enabling Hamrick to examine the texts through what he terms ‘*Reformation Petrarchanism*’ (p. 3). Reformation Petrarchanism is a purposefully wide-ranging term that considers both a Protestant and Catholic imaginary within the narrow historical period being examined. It is a term that allows the book to analyse ‘how Elizabethan poets ... combined Catholic and erotic discourses to fashion, refashion, and/or reject the political, religious, and courtly identities crafted for the Queen’ (p. 2). Hamrick achieves this through combining a historicist, formalist and cultural-anthropological approach to examine the underrated poetry. However, the terms a Catholic and Protestant imaginary (that have psychological

implications as Jacques Lacan's notion of the Imaginary springs to mind) are not clearly explained. They simply serve in the book as convenient shorthand to indicate that Catholic and Protestant practices are being used, adopted or alluded to in the poetry and other historical material.

Chapter 1 gives a detailed analysis of how Queen Elizabeth transforms the Catholic imaginary through not properly participating in a 1558 Christmas Mass at Whitehall. Hamrick's original observation is that, before the mass, Elizabeth told the Bishop of Carlisle not to elevate the Host for adoration. Yet, she knew he would disobey her request. Instead of claiming ill-health and simply not attending, Elizabeth left the mass at the critical moment when the Bishop elevated the Host. Hamrick interprets the Queen's sudden departure as having both an 'immediate and long-term political impact' (p. 18). It served as a critique of Catholic religious practice that emphasized Elizabeth's commitment to Protestantism.

In Chapter 2, Hamrick analyses Barnabe Googe's *Eclogues, Epitaphes, and Sonnets* (1563) as a critique of Elizabeth's implied choice of husband. Googe's poetry also denounces her succession through implying it replicates Catholicism's vain dependence on iconic paraphernalia. Hamrick stresses that his reading of Googe's work – as addressing contemporary political concerns – is an approach that has been ignored by critics.

Chapters 3 and 4 mainly concentrate on George Gascoigne's *The Delectable Historie of the Sundrie Adventures Passed by Dan Bartholmew of Bathe* (1573, 1575). Hamrick reconstructs, for the first time, how Gascoigne's role in the Queen's coronation and his early court experiences influenced his work. This leads to Hamrick demonstrating how Gascoigne uses the Catholic imaginary to create a male fantasy of Elizabeth being dependent on her courtiers. In an absorbing account, Hamrick connects Gascoigne's image of a devotional Queen to John Bale's *A Godly Medytacyoun of the Christen Sowle* (1568), which contains an illustration of a young Elizabeth kneeling before Christ. The implication is that Gascoigne emphasizes the Queen's subordination, or the need to protect her through containment, as a reflection of patriarchal domination.

In Chapter 5, Hamrick argues persuasively that Thomas Watson uses the Catholic imaginary in his sonnet sequence *Hekatompathia or Passionate Century of Love* (1582) to defend the reputation of his patron Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. This defence is emphasized by the sonnet sequence's frequent allusions to Oxford, and the fact that *Hekatompathia* is dedicated to

him. Hamrick also discovers in the sonnet sequence's allegory, the use of the 'Catholic imaginary to assert the possibility of being both Catholic and loyal to Queen Elizabeth' (p. 153). This seemingly oxymoronic identity functions as an apology for the Earl of Oxford's apostasy. It indicates that he is only briefly involved in Catholic causes harmful to the Queen. Watson's religio-political allegory maintains that Oxford's conversion to Catholicism does not include violent actions against the Queen. Hamrick's discussion is enhanced by drawing on historical material from the 1570s and early 1580s, including Oxford's own poetry published in *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576).

In conclusion, Hamrick restates the importance of Catholicism to his study of Elizabethan love poetry, and its continual influence on Elizabethan readers. His reflection also identifies the complexities of Elizabethan culture entangled within the competing Catholic and Protestant ideologies. The book ends with an analysis of 'Sonnet 5' of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* to illustrate how the Petrarchan representation of the Elizabethan Catholic imaginary is continually used as a critique of Queen Elizabeth. This is because she adapted the same Catholic language and imagery to create her powerful identity as the Virgin Queen.

Hamrick's book is an important and original contribution to the understanding of early court culture in Elizabeth's reign. It is stronger, however, on reconstructing Elizabethan religious and political history than close reading of the poetry. Despite this, the book is a well-researched, exhaustively argued, highly readable and challenging scholarly work. It is essential to both academics and students interested in early Elizabethan Petrarchan poetry, and the religio-political context of the Reformation.

Frank Swannack

The School of English, Sociology, Politics & Contemporary History
University of Salford

Harris, Jonathan Gil, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009; cloth; pp. 288; 8 illustrations; R.R.P. US\$59.95, £39.00; ISBN 9780812241181.

Jonathan Gil Harris' new book challenges Early Modern scholars to reconsider the temporality of objects and the agency of seemingly inanimate objects. As Harris notes, much New Historicist criticism in the new millennium focuses on material objects, but does not understand those objects in any significantly