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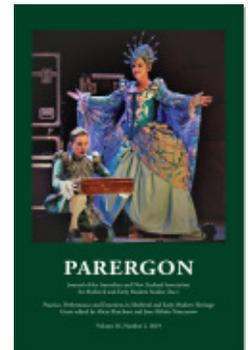
*John Gower: Others and the Self* ed. by Russell A. Peck, and  
R. F. Yeager (review)

Michael Bennett

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The first chapter by Per Cornell and Christina Rosén asks ‘Was there *other* or *Other* in 17th century Sweden? What actually is *Other*?’ (p. 6). Ideally, an exploration of the ‘Other’ should have begun with a comprehensive discussion of what constituted a Swedish identity. Later on, Göran Tagesson reveals how the architectural features in the town of Kalmar reflect the Lutheran concept of *Haustafel* that ordered society into three social hierarchies. Kimmo Katajala notes how the Swedish kingdom’s expansion brought its Lutheran subjects in contact with other Christian denominations. Katajala provides an interesting analysis of intermarriages between Lutheran Swedes and Orthodox Christians who inhabited the easternmost border. Adam Grimshaw focuses on the overlooked English immigrants in early modern Sweden and their notable commercial activities. Carl-Gösta Ojala gives a good overview of the Swedish state and church’s colonial encounters with the Sami people.

The book does not spare enough space to cover Sweden’s encounters with non-European peoples that could shed some light on modern Sweden’s fractured relationship with its African and Muslim immigrants and refugees. In the sixteenth chapter Joachim Östlund offers a thought-provoking conclusion that the enslavement of Swedes in North Africa was ultimately driven by political and economic motivations instead of a clash ‘between Muslim and Christian civilizations’ (p. 320).

The book’s various chapters fall short of providing an arresting or in-depth narrative. But, if read in parts, there is a lot of good material here for the curious minds and for those who wish to develop a more sustained and focused work on Sweden’s relationship with the ‘Others’.

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**Peck, Russell A. and R. F. Yeager**, eds, *John Gower: Others and the Self* (Publications of the John Gower Society), Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2017; hardback; pp. 392; 5 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781843844747.

Since its foundation in 1984, the International John Gower Society has promoted scholarship on John Gower, a major poet in three languages, and a contemporary and rival of Geoffrey Chaucer. This collection, arising from the Society’s third triennial congress in 2014, richly demonstrates the interest of his oeuvre and the intellectual liveliness of Gower studies. Its theme, *Others and the Self*, moves outwards from Gower’s self-awareness as a poet to his representations of otherness. In a short review, it is only possible to offer a sampling of the sixteen papers. In a keynote, Russell Peck expounds medieval ideas of how sense-experience of the world passed into an individual’s ‘thought-processing intellect’ (p. 8), and how Gower’s conception of the materiality of cognition informs his description of characters seeking to meddle with the minds of others. In an elegant study, Carla Taylor reflects on the interest in physiognomy—the art of reading faces or masking them—in manuals of statecraft. In the *Confessio Amantis*, Genius,

Gower's persona, counsels the ruler to maintain a 'good visage', but insists that his word should be 'tokne of that withinne' (p. 78). More generally, he seems to encourage good rulers to sacrifice transparency for effectiveness. In his depiction of domestic tyranny in the *Clerk's Tale*, Chaucer responds to Gower intertextually. The patient Griselda gives no outward sign of resistance while her husband, with his 'carefully schooled countenance', is as 'ungoverned' in his desires as 'any of Gower's tyrants' (p. 88). Although all the authors are literary scholars, most papers have a strong cross-disciplinary interest, including Larry Scanlon's analysis of Gower's views on incest and R. F. Yeager's exploration of Gower's 'comparatively non-judgmental treatment of Jews' (p. 195). For political historians, Matthew Giancarlo offers a major new statement on Gower as a 'constitutionalist thinker and regiminal writer', presenting him as ever probing 'what constitutes legitimate power, and what necessarily happens when it fails—and how that failure can actually be seen as part of the legitimation of justice and, hence, as a legitimate constraint on the king' (pp. 254–55). To conclude a fascinating collection, Ana Sáez-Hidalgo documents Gower's reception in Portugal and Spain, offering the startling revelation that the *Confessio* was in 1430 copied in Ceuta, a recently conquered Portuguese enclave in north Africa.

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**Seifert**, Lewis C., and Rebecca M. Wilkin, eds, *Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Farnham, Ashgate, 2015; hardback; pp.316; 3 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £70.00; ISBN 9781472454096.

*Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France* explores the dynamic nature of early modern friendship as an activity of connection and creation. Edited by Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin, this collection of ten chapters—in addition to the editors' introduction—provides insight into the role of friend-making in the making of the self in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France. Inspired by Ullrich Langer's identification of friendship as a tool of 'imaginative experimentation' in *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Droz, 1994, p. 28), the creative power of friendship is the common theme connecting essays that draw on queer and gender studies in their examination of friend-making in literary, spiritual, and social contexts in early modern France. This focus on creativity distinguishes the collection from narratives of loss and decline in works by Brian McGuire and Alan Bray by offering a more optimistic view of friendship as an activity that allows individuals to engage with and reshape norms of social interaction.

The findings of the volume are loosely organized into three overlapping categories: creative engagement with early modern ideals of gender and sexuality; creation of the gendered self; and friend-making as collaborative production. The first category of findings includes chapters by George Hoffmann, Todd W. Reeser, Marc D. Schachter, and Katherine Crawford that engage with a specific text or