

ideological and psychological connections between these two texts requires a more careful consideration of constructions of manliness in a Reformation context as well as of concomitant anxieties concerning Jewishness and homoeroticism.

Such reservations arise not only from my own deep critical interest in the subject of Logan's study, but also from a (perhaps self-interested) desire that the topic not be exhausted. Nevertheless, the soundness of Logan's approach and the convincing nature of the majority of his critical conclusions — even at moments where he speculates on the possible private motives and personal reflections of the two playwrights as they reacted to each other's works — renders this study an authoritative and inescapable context or reference point for any further consideration of the artistic influence of Marlowe on Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic productions.

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Notes

- 1 Harold Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truths* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 53.

Robert Mills. *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Pp 248.

In *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval England*, Robert Mills looks straight on at images of violence — from representations of penal practice and depictions of the torments of hell to the graphic mutilations of hagiographic dramas — in order to view them askance. The book asks us to 'queer' our view of the representational economy of medieval pain and punishment, not only in the sense of sexuality but in the more general sense of opening up our understanding of such representation's hegemonic functions in order to admit alternative, sometimes subversive, identifications

and narratives of subjectivity. Mills suggests that if 'penal spectacle was the symbolic weapon par excellence of sovereign institutions and ideologies, it was not devoid of the capacity to produce meanings outside or in excess of these spaces' (202).

This 'queer' view marks Mills' intervention into the ongoing critical explorations of medieval and early modern embodiment undertaken by critics such as Mitchell B. Merback, Lionello Puppi, and Pieter Spierenburg, as well as in collections such as Florike Egmond's and Robert Zwijnenberg's *Bodily Extremities: Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture* (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003) and David Hillman's and Carla Mazzi's *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Drawing on the work of theorists such as Elaine Scarry, Michele Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze, Mills attempts to construct a methodology for queer cultural history organized by the concept of 'queer touching', 'a mode of ocularity that posits no visual encounter as "authentic", "stable" or predictable in its effects, even in relation to a single viewing subject' (19). This emphasis on 'strategic provisionality' allows Mills to conceptualize the medieval period as a 'product of vigorous and continued performance' and to assert that '*by making a virtue of that very indeterminacy ... we are able to feel the "intensities" of the sources laid before us: experiences of resonance, contingency and touch*' (21).

The queer cultural theorist, Mills argues, is able to posit points of contact between modern and medieval modes of 'construction of selves and communities', bridging the divides of historical remoteness and cultural difference (19). The premise of queer touching allows Mills to invoke and reconceptualize modern categories of analysis (such as masochism and sadism, for example) in order both to challenge traditional critical understandings of medieval sexuality and subjectivity and to consider how medieval representational practices can help to illuminate these categories in modern critical contexts. Thus, the book opens with a discussion of a fourteenth-century woodcarving of a crucified Christ and closes with an analysis of 'Flyer', a 2001 advertisement for a London gay nightclub called 'Heaven' which features the beautiful body of a figuratively crucified man.

These two images of crucifixion provide the book with the central organizing metaphor highlighted in its title. Mills' investigation focuses on images that express an aesthetic of suspension where moments are 'frozen' at points of liminality and potentiality: between heaven and earth (as in representations of hanging); between life and death; between allegory and literalism; and

on the verge of violent dismemberment (as in depictions of the Passion and the torment of martyrs). Where the narrative of the represented scene leans toward a state of future completion, the images ‘take on lives of their own in the minds of viewers and image-makers [and] possess the capacity to touch, move and provoke; their petrified quality simultaneously fixes, or attempts to fix, particular meanings and associations, though this is a process that never entirely succeeds’ (20). The aesthetic of suspension permits a ‘touching’ across time, allowing medieval viewers ‘to incorporate an ancient legend into their particular, historically situated understanding’ and modern viewers ‘to construct their own affective relationships with the painting, “touching” the image with their eyes and experiencing it from within’ (75). This historical suspension enables the religious beholder, for instance, to identify across time with the body of the tormented saint and her spiritual triumph or with the subject of judicial torture in a narrative aimed at encouraging repentance and deterrence.

The insights of the first half of the book — which contains chapters on hanging, flaying and sodomy — are generally in keeping with those advanced by other works in its field. The value of these chapters lies in their close readings of specific texts, which neatly trace the ideological and symbolic functions of representations of pain while giving ‘consideration to the traumatic, unthinkable dimensions’ (65) of physical torment in representative works such as Gerard David’s *Judgment of Cambyses* (1498). The second half of the book, where Mills turns to the issue of ‘pious pornography’ in depictions of female saints and to the queer destabilization of heteronormative identities, offers the most interesting observations. Here, Mills embarks upon an innovative and provocative exploration of the ‘pleasures’ of pain. Such pleasures can be found in the deployment of the mechanisms of masochism in hagiographic drama, where the positive conceptualization of pain brings the saint (and through identification the beholder) closer to the divine presence and incorporates both in an overall narrative of Christian unity and perseverance. At the same time, Mills suggests, the depictions of martyrs provided a site for medieval female viewers to construct positive narratives of embodiment and agency and possibly to engage in queer desires, while the discourse of *sponsalia Christi* queered gender identities by casting both men and women — occasionally in remarkably erotic terms — as brides of Christ.

For all Mills’ assertions of his intention to expose subversive or alternative readings of these motifs and images, most of his emphasis, especially in the sections on hagiography, falls upon readings that represent a deploy-

ment or recuperation of the imagery of violence by hegemonic discourses. For example, Mills raises the possibility of sadistic identifications in response to a painting such as Master Franke's *Martyrdom of St. Barbara* (1410–5). However, his reading exposes instead another layer of the hegemonic narrative of victim-identification, one that activates sadistic modes of viewing in order to enable the figurative marking of disparaged outsiders (pagans, foreigners, the lower classes) as 'anti-bodies' and scapegoats. He assures us that the more disturbing sadism of identification with Barbara's torturers is a minority position in the context of medieval viewing; although he explores it in a brief section at the end of the chapter, a more thoroughgoing theorization of this alternative possibility seems called for in light of the book's explicitly stated goals. In the end, the discussion recapitulates a subversion-containment model that could itself be interrogated and unpacked, and thus tends to retrace ground that has been covered in similar texts while leaving potentially fascinating territory unexplored.

In other instances as well, Mills opens the door to interesting discussions only to sidestep them. For example, he admits in his discussion of blood in *The Judgement of Cambyzes* that 'the Eucharistic connotations of blood in passion iconography made its visual association with Sisamnes' body somewhat problematic' (76) but does not elaborate on this provocative statement. The tricky multivalence of such imagery is often left uninterrogated. Similarly, Mills carefully anatomizes the potential responses of viewers to the pain experienced by Sisamnes as he is flayed and later explores the opposing process of victim identification in hagiographic images, but he does not make systematic connections between the two. Why would spectators read Sisamnes' agony in one way and Barbara's in another? As in the averted exploration of the iconographic polyvalence of blood, Mills explains quite clearly how these images are hegemonically deployed but does not theorize deeply about the mechanisms that account for the antithetical signification of the key images themselves or for the fact that identical acts of violence can and do signify in radically different ways. If context enables the stabilization of this polysemy, how is such context secured within his own paradigm of 'queer touching', which enables the imagery to signify *beyond* its original environment?

In spite of its stated aims, the book does not pursue as fully as I had hoped the seam where contesting meanings — epitomized by the pure and the infamous connotations of blood — come together to do violence on their containing narratives. The deeper and more disturbing implications to Mills' case studies could be exploited to allow greater insight into the fundamental

processes by which meaning is created. Even so, the book does important work. It provides evocative and interesting close readings from a perspective that promises to challenge traditional ways of reading 'the' body in both the past and the present.

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Barbara Ravelhofer. *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp xvi, 318.

The last century has seen a marked increase in the quality of English Renaissance dance scholarship. Recent studies based on archival research have supplanted earlier works shaped by modern aesthetics; Ian Payne's *The Almain in Britain, c.1549–c.1675: A Dance Manual from Manuscript Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) has superseded Mabel Dolmetsch's *Dances of England and France from 1450 to 1600: With their Music and Authentic Manner of Performance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949). However, until now the most valuable explorations of dancing in the court masque have appeared in studies on related topics such as Peter Walls' *Music in the English Courtly Masque, 1604–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), and many scholars continue to rely on old standards like Enid Welsford's *The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship between Poetry and the Revels* (Cambridge: CUP, 1927). Barbara Ravelhofer's *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* fills this gap in scholarship. Ravelhofer makes a convincing argument for the interrelated importance of dance, costume, and music to the creation, performance, and interpretation of English court masques. She also challenges conventional research methods by drawing on evidence from modern-day dance reconstructions.

Ravelhofer divides *The Early Stuart Masque* into three parts: 'Dance', 'Costume', and 'Case Studies'. Part I provides detailed descriptions of English and continental dance sources, offers new research on the choreography and rehearsal of theatre dances, highlights tensions between practical and textual evidence, and examines the controversies surrounding female performance. Part II addresses the creation, circulation, and storage of masque costumes, considers costumes within the context of performance, and compares male