Catherine Bates and Patrick Cheney, eds. *The Oxford History of Poetry in English, Vol. 4: Sixteenth-Century British Poetry.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2022. 656 pp. ISBN 9780198830696. $150.00 hardback.**

Over the course of thirty-three chapters—each of which blends capacious, cutting-edge expertise with both graceful prose and scholarly generosity—*The Oxford History of Poetry in English, Vol. 4*: *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* illuminates the many distinctive ways poetry developed during a pivotal period in English literary history. Edited with palpable expertise by Catherine Bates and Patrick Cheney, the volume convenes scholars working at the forefront of the study of Renaissance poetry in an organized, coherent, and accessible manner. *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* is divided into six subsections. The first two ("Transitions and Contexts" and "Practices") and sixth ("Transitions") offer broad pictures of the period and how literary production changed over the sixteenth century. The third ("Forms") and fourth ("Poets") sections, which

comprise the bulk of the book's roughly 650 pages, feature narrowly focused chapters that each nevertheless cover a great deal of scholarly terrain. Each chapter is an up-to-date resource for readers hoping to become quickly situated; I can easily recommend, especially, the chapters within the "Forms" subsection as accessible portals into invigorating and robust scholarly discussions. When read collectively, the chapters across the book speak to one another in ways that render some of what I regard as crucially important lines of thought animating current scholarship.

Rather than summarizing the book chapter by chapter, in this review I will attempt to limn three of the lines of thought that I perceive as central to the collection's approach. These lines of thought roughly map on to the three core subsections ("Practices," "Forms," and "Poets") but also reemerge when chapters from different subsections are juxtaposed. I identify these lines of thought as engaging with:

- How poetic composition amplifies the distinctiveness of sixteenth-century practices of writing and reading;
- Poetic forms and genres as sites of conversation, contestation, and competition;
- Literary careers and poetic decisions as similarly reflective of historical, political, and biographical pressures.

Describing Bates's own chapter on Sir Philip Sidney, the editors identify "the underlying theme of the volume as a whole, namely that formalist analysis is inseparable from historicist study and central to understanding the history of poetry" (8). *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* resoundingly affirms this framing, with nearly every chapter demonstrating the ways in which individual lines, stanzas, or images may become avenues for accessing a complex and changing world.

After unpacking the volume in terms of the pathways I perceive running through it, I will close with a reflection on what I believe *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry*, as a disciplinary bellwether, tells us about the state of scholarship on English Renaissance poetry. In redescribing early modern poetic production with scrupulous attention to its historical embeddedness, the volume also unearths some productive and generative tensions within our disciplinary field as currently constituted.

How poetic composition amplifies the distinctiveness of early modern practices of writing and reading

Sixteenth-Century British Poetry appropriately opens and closes with the theme of transitions. The first chapter after the introduction, by Seth Lerer, encourages readers to probe deeper than the familiar undergraduate course's trajectory from Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey to Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Lerer proposes that there was a "range of literary productivity" in the early sixteenth century that was, if not in itself indicative of a wholesale transition in aesthetic commitments, at least "fascinated by the theme" of transition (20). In what will become a motif throughout the volume, Lerer describes poets as in conversation with classical poets like Ovid and with one another by tracking three ubiquitous Ovidian myths concerned with "transition"—namely, Pyramus and Thisbe, Morpheus, and Midas—as they appear in little-read texts. Lerer insists that while perhaps overlooked by literary history, the diverse texts of this era nevertheless generate, via their attention to their perception of social and cultural transition, modes of literary productivity that were "brilliantly imaginative, formally experimental, and socially self-aware" (21). Like Lerer and thirty chapters that intervene between their two entries, Michael Schoenfeldt points to how different social and political factors—such as the passing of Elizabeth I, the rise of theatrical culture, and developments in scientific knowledge—changed the course of poetry at the dawn of the seventeenth century. "As the centuries turn," Schoenfeld explains, "we move from a poetry that adapts convention with striking ingenuity to a poetry that makes a point of chafing against convention" (598). The "ingenuity" Schoenfeldt attributes retrospectively to sixteenth-century writers might be embraced proleptically from Lerer's encouragement to us to read widely and attend to experimentation and literary self-awareness in relation to strategies for adapting convention. This ingenuity named an inventiveness evaluated not in terms of ostentatiousness or radical creativity but by the resourceful, decorous, subtly audacious balancing of imitation with deviation.

The labor of poetic composition during the sixteenth century was entangled with revisions and refractions of what was understood by authority, and, consequently, authorship. Helen Smith's chapter on the contexts of poetic publication and circulation demonstrates an encyclopedic range of expertise, illuminating for readers the ways poetry

moved around the early modern world and especially within contexts including both men and women. From details pertaining to the jargon of compositors' labors in the printshop, to the circulation contexts of handwritten texts like the Devonshire manuscript, to printed and manuscript libels and epigrams, Smith encourages readers to "think flexibly about authorship and the creation of literary effects" (58). Pointing out how layers of mediation, varied contexts for production and transmission, and fluid professional networks shaped the words on a given page, Smith makes clear that "sixteenth-century poetry was multiple-authored, inventive, alert to its material incarnations, and mobile in its meanings" (58). Though it appears later in the volume, Willy Maley's and Theo Van Heijnsbergen's chapter on "Scots Poetry" serves as an interesting companion to and amplification of Smith's recommendations for thinking about the range of poetic activity and production in the sixteenth century as situated in material and social contexts. Maley and Van Heijnsbergen note how the different social dynamics of sixteenth-century Scotland—such as how "Scots lyricists tend not to be aristocrats [...] but men of the cloth, lawyer-poets, academics, professional musicians"—led to "diverse kinds of lyrical self-fashioning" and different conceptions of artfulness. Scots poetry, for example, "had ignored the mid-century generation of 'Italianising' sonneteers in England" (402) and so the topics and function of sonnets in Scotland became more aligned with rhetorical argumentation. The relationship between the uses to which poetry could be put and the traditions and forms poets enlisted toward their various ends recurs throughout the volume as a theme, reaffirming how any given poem from the period must be read as always capable both of intense personal expression and impersonal performances of social participation.

This dynamic is robustly explored in one of the volume's finest chapters: Claire McEachern's offering, "Devotional Poetry." McEachern recognizes a structural similarity between how modern expectations for authorial originality conflict with humanist modes of composition and debates within the Reformation itself regarding the appropriateness of originality and poetic license to devotional poetry. "Originality of expression has become the mark of what we now define as devotional poetry, which is why the seventeenth-century poets [like John Donne and George Herbert] stand as its exemplars," McEachern acknowledges, before cautioning that "in the earliest decades of the Reformation the taxonomies of both devotion and poetry were not as they would become"

(352). Acknowledging some continuities between the ways earlier poets like Wyatt and Surrey offered "detailed and unique expressions of interior life" in their renderings of the psalms and the work of the seventeenth-century poets, McEachern points to the proliferation in the earlier century of verse paraphrases, which involved "introducing metre and rhyme and (occasionally) grafting additional figures of speech onto the prose or scriptural precedent" (355). Transforming scripture into verse was "considered a way to make it more portable and easily remembered" (357). With a centerpiece comparison of Thomas Sternhold's version of Psalm 32 to Wyatt's more "intellectually knotty" version of the same—which notes that "Sternhold's verse is to sing, and live by; Wyatt's, to think about, and through"—McEachern affords modern readers capacious context for reflecting upon "what verse is *for*—and hence what it does, and should sound like" (359).

Joseph Campana's and Catherine Bates's chapter, "Lyric Poetry," exemplifies how taking into consideration the different factors poets considered during composition—how a poem reads, what it sounds like—gives us greater purchase on how these poets navigated the terrain between formal obedience and pleasurable deviation. Rather than locating the sonnet as central to the early modern conception of lyric, Campana and Bates study "forms such as the epigram, riddle, ode, song, and Psalm" (197). Generally underacknowledged elsewhere in the volume, despite their widespread proliferation, these alternative lyric forms allow Campana and Bates to refocus attention on how the musical and inscriptively visual dimensions of the short lyric poem became important aspects of their capacity to make meaning. In her later chapter on Sidney, Bates situates the poet as concerned, on the one hand, with poetry's ability to navigate within and across social and class distinctions, and on the other, with poetry's access to the sublime. While many critics have read Sidney's poetry as negotiating his own complex class position, Bates also explores how Sidney experimented with "extending language beyond its purely referential function" such that his poetry "expands the medium into a synaesthetic experience that, at its best, is the more stunning—and more sublime—because it surpasses the ratiocinative mind" (454). Bates's turn to the sublimity of Sidney's poetic effects builds upon her co-editor Patrick Cheney's chapter, "Poetics," which redescribes the way Elizabethan critics theorized the making of poetry by moving beyond Aristotle and Horace, rhetoric and poetics, to underscore how the sublime infiltrated the era's conception of poetry. The rhetorical training students received as a matter of emulation

and obedience was augmented and complicated by an increasingly sophisticated aesthetic philosophy. This philosophy undergirded Elizabethan conceptions of figuration and its relationship to efficacy and poetic action, and, in her chapter, for example, Hannah Crawforth sensitively attends to writings by Fulke Greville to demonstrate how figures like metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony afforded poets opportunities to generate richly self-contradictory and complex poetic effects.

Poetic forms and genres as sites of conversation, contestation, and competition

Colin Burrow's chapter, "Allusion," draws on Julia Kristeva's concept of "intertextuality" and thereby allows the volume to bridge between the practices undertaken by poets and the literary forms they would engage. Burrow studies a "rainbow of types of allusion" (132): allusions to specific authors; the repurposing of earlier texts in new contexts; invocations of proverbs; the adoption of recognizable verbal styles; the uses of distinctive poetic forms (such as half-lines in *The Faerie Queene* alluding to Virgilian half-lines); self-allusions to one's own poetic works and career; and instances of parody and plagiarism. Across these readings, allusion becomes representative of the reading and writing practices of early modern authors because it "displays a general tendency to assert authorial agency and distinctiveness at the same time as it establishes an impersonal body of topoi which is independent of particular authors" (135). The concept of allusion affords Burrow remarkable purchase on how authors came to understand themselves by the end of the sixteenth century: "allusion turns," he writes, "in the course of the century, from a friendly meeting of the poets into a method of making parodic reference to the work of an identifiable contemporary" (142).

Burrow's chapter makes clear that sixteenth-century English poems were fundamentally and self-consciously intertextual, which entails that they reward being read in relation to one another. Tom McFaul's chapter, "Miscellany," understands the emergence of this form of poetic publication as developing a "sense of poetic community" that negotiated "a tension between ideas of strict social hierarchy and a socially levelling effect produced by the idea of a republic of letters" (177). The calibration of one's place against and alongside other poets' work is visible in its earliest arch-canonical figures,

Wyatt and Surrey, the latter of whom positioned himself as a poetical heir to the former. Cathy Shrank's chapter on these poets considers them in relation to one another, taking both poets' responses to Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* 189 as a central point of comparison. Shrank reveals how these poets differed in their approaches to their poetic sources: "where Wyatt tends to follow his sources, departing from them at select, strategic moments, Surrey is not averse to bricolage, melding together borrowings from different sources" (417). Wyatt, on the other hand, "frequently intensifies the lyric 'I'" while Surrey is freer in adopting "different personae" (417). Between these two figures, a range of possibilities and themes for poetic engagements becomes visible: poets wrestled with a constellation of source materials, personal affect and impulses, and strategies of affiliation and disaffiliation as they entered into conversations with one another and with literary history.

Many such engagements occurred as ambivalent poetic responses to generic norms. Andrea Brady's chapter, "Elegy," for example, describes how the legacy of Ovid's erotic elegies and their "embrace of softness and eschewal of public life became a means for young poets at the end of the sixteenth century to stage a refusal to cooperate with standards of conduct" while also pointing to how the funerary elegy was also "an important genre for the performance of poetic virtuosity, and the assertion of affective ties that superseded those of class and family" (317). Paul D. Stegner picks up a similar thread in discussing how complaint poetry allowed authors of the time "not only to reimagine literary kinds and forms by transforming the way discontent was expressed, but also [...] to comment on the nature of poetry and authorship" (336). Poets' relationships with generic conventions, in other words, allowed them to sometimes openly chafe against the standards to which they were being held even as they recognized that demonstrating adherence to these standards was one lever by which they could elevate their own authority and social stature.

Chris Stamatakis's chapter on the sonnet expands on this idea, depicting the sixteenth-century sonnet as a labor-intensive form that "contends with competing pulls" as each individual sonnet was, by necessity, in conversation both with the work of other poets across history and with the present occasion prompting it. By requiring poets to negotiate between "tradition and innovation," "the need for closure and the yearning for dilation," "fixity and revision," and "fruitless copy and copious abundance," sonneteering,

emblematic of poetic labor more broadly, "might be understood in terms of a series of dilemmas" (213). Yet, while the sonnet might be understood as the staging ground for a conversation with oneself, other poetic genres openly convened a polyphony of sources and voices. Michelle O'Callaghan's sweeping yet nevertheless detailed chapter, "Satire," offers an account of how authors like John Skelton, Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Donne, Joseph Hall, and John Marston drew influence from classical models—most conspicuously Horace and Persius—but also from native predecessors like William Langland as well as Italian Renaissance models.

This emphasis on variety—of seeing generic modes as opportunities to convene and decide between a collection of sources, traditions, and attitudes—also defined, for Helen Cooper, the mode of pastoral. In her chapter, Cooper presents pastoral not as a settled genre but as a way of testing out Elizabethan conceptions of decorum and distinction, from the convention of different traditions of prosody to the mixing of classical and vernacular languages and names. The pressure placed on poetic composition by convention, tradition, and socially centralized forms of authority (and hence expectations for decorum) marks sixteenth-century poetry as distinctive in its conceptions of originality and artificiality. This tension indirectly animates Philip Schwyzer's compelling account of the relationship between poetry and history, which recounts how poets like Samuel Daniel and Michael Drayton, in the wake of the 1595 publication of Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* which opposed poetry to history, "began to seriously interrogate the possibility of a kind of writing that could be simultaneously true to History and to Poetry" (304).

Instead of being stable categories with set expectations, genres functioned more like social arenas wherein implicit bounds created opportunities for more focused deliberation. For Tamsin Badcoe, the stately genre of epic was one through which poets could reckon with how diverse "systems of knowledge" (262) may be held together. Revising David Quint's influential account of epic, Badcoe depicts the genre as not always triumphant or therapeutic but as a means for "wrestling with the prevailing ideologies of the day" (284). Badcoe's interest in the epic as a site of philosophical "wrestling" leads nicely into Daniel Moss's incisive reflections on the "minor epic" as a site of more quotidian professional struggle. Though often associated with a nascent literary career, the minor epic appears in reality less indicative of a stable inheritance from Ovid and

more so of a teeming community of poets positioning themselves against one another: "To embark on a poetic career via the minor epic, then, is not to introduce oneself *ex nihilo* to a non-judgemental readership, nor simply to publish one's reflections on, and disaffections from, school and sex, but to proclaim oneself a *next*-Shakespeare or a *not*-Marlowe" (292).

Rupture, contradiction, polyvocality, and ambiguity emerge when poets trained on imitation and emulation attempt to distinguish themselves from their peers without breaching decorum. Bates's attention to the extra-semantic dimensions of poetic language also informs Dympna Callaghan's smartly conceived chapter on Shakespeare's poetry, which centers upon the concept of "voice," understood both as the poet's "distinctively Ovidian persona" and as "the other speakers and characters who populate his verse" (535). Attention to voice—a crucial dimension in the reception of poetry as silent reading grew more widespread—was a hallmark of a culture of reading and writing governed by imitation. A poet's voice could be emulative in ways that exceeded semantic reference or verbal patterning, and Shakespeare's reputation as a "mellifluous" poet, Callaghan explains, reflects the way readers associated his work with textural, sonic, and rhythmic qualities associated with Ovid. Moreover, in poems like "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," he demonstrates a capacity to imagine and inhabit a range of vocal perspectives through the reproduction and repurposing of rhetorical exercises learned in grammar school.

Literary careers and poetic decisions as reciprocally reflective of historical, political, and biographical pressures

Andrew Hadfield's chapter offers a sweeping and generous account of three of the most important social contexts for Elizabethan poetry: rhetorical education, religion, and the political order. Through efficient yet incisive examples from Mary Sidney Herbert's translations of the psalms, Richard Barnfield's sonnets, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, and *The Faerie Queene*, Hadfield not only introduces readers to several of the major influences and pressures upon sixteenth-century verse, but also indicates the broad scope of the kinds of verse forms and authors who were composing them. Hadfield's chapter paves the way to better understand how poetry fitted into a broader cultural system

characterized by centralized authorities. Reading Hadfield's chapter in conversation with Daniel Juan Gil's account of the changing nature of the poetic career, I feel, would be an effective way to situate students quickly. Gil's chapter presents an account of how poets positioned themselves against cultural and professional currents both in terms of their authorial self-presentation and their poetic products, pointing to Tottel as an inflection point in this trajectory. The publication of *Songs and Sonnets* in 1557, Gil suggests, laid "the groundwork for a cultural system in which 'access' is not a question of membership in courtly social circles but rather a question of the ability to read and enjoy difficult, highly literate poetry as opposed to more accessible forms of entertainment or instruction" (165). The work poets did on the page with respect to imitation, experimentation, allusiveness, and invention reverberated how they tried to position themselves as working writers.

Parallels between the ways in which sociological structures shaped poets' professional lives and habits of mind and the ways formal engagements created opportunities and restrictions on poetic composition recur throughout the volume. In "Style," for example, Jeff Dolven offers sensitively rendered examples of different "byways that may have looked, at the time, like royal roads" (101) to poets attempting to negotiate their social and literary standing. These byways included experiments with quantitative meters, different potential accentual verse forms such as poulters' measure, and the poetic rendering of tensions between Anglo-Saxon and classical vocabularies. Re-situating Wyatt, Gascoigne, and Sidney amidst efforts by poets like Richard Stanyhurst, Sidney Herbert, Arthur Golding, Christopher Marlowe, Samuel Daniel, Spenser, and Donne, Dolven renders a robust and complicated view of sixteenth-century stylistic experimentation that reverberates the contradictions inherent to style itself, which names both a "highly technical department of the art of rhetoric" and "the idiosyncratic accomplishment of a particular writer" (101). Experimentation similarly becomes a keyword of Jane Griffiths's chapter on John Skelton, which situates the Skeltonic against his experimentations with rhyme royal. For Skelton, deviations in poetic style refracted the vagaries of his own social standing. As she explains, "the emergence of the Skeltonic as his form of choice corresponds with his departure from the court; the implication is that its emergence marks his freedom from the expectation to write as a laureate poet, allowing him instead to align himself with alternative poetic traditions" (386). The modes

of approach—technical proficiency, affective intensity, rhetorical discipline, subjective recklessness—implicit in Skelton's experimentation appear, later in the century, across the ambiguously delimited corpus attributed to Sir Walter Ralegh. Andrew Hiscock sets aside questions of definitive attribution to find modes of "extravagant amorous turmoil" reflective of Ralegh's own political and personal circumstances as well as a mode of "sobering, sometimes gnomic reflection" (568) that reflects broader cultural scripts regarding the nature of human experience.

Speaking for oneself or in the voice of a collective became an animating problem for many Elizabethan poets. The engendering of a national poetic tradition as a conversation between centrality and marginality—sometimes mapped as a recognition of England's relationship to continental and classical verses—preoccupied Elizabethan poets like Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, and George Chapman, whose endeavors are often overlooked because of Edmund Spenser's ascendance. These poets, discussed and compared to one another by Katharine Cleland, "openly compete[d] with each other—and with Spenser—for the position of English poet laureate" and waged this competition on the grounds of crafting poetic identities "both within and against the Classical and contemporary traditions" (516). Cleland's chapter on poets vying for literary priority pairs compellingly with Danielle Clarke's examination of "Mid-Tudor Poetry," which considers how "participation in poetic production moves down the social scale, engages playfully with questions of authorship, attempts to replicate the intimacy of manuscript circulation in print, and demonstrates poetic co-production, where poets work with printers and patrons" (423). If the "self-crowned laureates" presented themselves as writing "in the service of the nation, rather than as a bid for personal patronage" (495), mid-Tudor poets like Gascoigne, Barnabe Googe, George Turberville, and Isabella Whitney appear more invested and curious about "place, position, and their uncertainty" and applied their humanistic training in rhetoric to "lived experience" (426). Clarke's reading of Whitney's poetry is particularly welcome; it attends to her "deft hybridisation of inherited traditions in service of a unique perspective on the social, economic, and sexual dynamics of Tudor London" (435).

Despite depicting a world thrumming with a multitude of poets engaging in lively literary activity, if *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* centers around any single poet, it is Edmund Spenser. His work is discussed not just across the entire volume but across two

chapters devoted entirely to his works. The way the volume handles his writings reveals its broader attitude toward contextualizing individual poets. Spenser is presented as a participant in broader cultural projects: the negotiation between humanism and Protestantism, courtly careering and critical commentary, and the collective elevation and legitimization of English poesy. In "Edmund Spenser: Shorter Poetry," Ayesha Ramachandran understands his poetic identity as happening in conversation with a variety of native, continental, and classical traditions—and with itself. The shorter poems, which both anticipate *The Faerie Queene* (by situating themselves along the *rota Virgilii*) and later reflect upon it, are avenues wherein the poet "gleefully flaunts his learning, his humanistic commitments, and the pleasure of poetic play" (458). Ramachandran shows how Spenser continuously situated himself among accomplished poets both from antiquity and among his peers: his *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* (1569) positions him alongside European masters (458) while the often-discussed editorial dynamics between E.K., Immeritô, and Colin Clout in *The Shepheardes Calender* reveal a poet engaging in a "dialogic, polyvalent work, filled with multiple voices and literary games" (461). Later in his career, when his shorter works are in direct conversation with his epic masterpiece, Spenser "reworks and develops earlier experiments and themes" (464) from his own writings.

Richard McCabe's subsequent chapter on *The Faerie Queene* advances this account of Spenser as constantly engaging both with tradition and with the labor of poesy dialogically, noting how the poet's use and abuse of conventional generic markers generates "a radical uncertainty of literary expectation" (477). For example, attending to the epic poem's narrator, McCabe observes how by "infusing a lyric voice into heroic narrative Spenser exposes the difficulties inherent in writing 'modern' epic" (479). The chapter, organized around the publication history and development of *The Faerie Queene* from its 1590 edition to the 1596 expansion and the 1609 addition of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, describes how the narrator's tone shifts from one of "engagement" to "isolation" (486) to a heightened personal involvement and growing sense of "imperfect agency" (494).

The volume implicitly positions Christopher Marlowe in contrast to those who saw their poetry as participating either in a broader national project or a more personal professional endeavor. In a chapter worthy of its subject's eloquent audacity, Rachel

Eisendrath argues that Marlowe's work "resists even end-driven logic itself" (518). Noting how Marlowe has become emblematic of "nonconformity" because of his "reputedly bad-boy life and early, violent death," Eisendrath suggests that he "uses verse to oppose, shirk, delay, deflect, and endlessly complicate the end-directed stories of literary history" (520). The centerpiece reading of the chapter portrays "Hero and Leander" as a "poem where the pull of end-directed stories—especially in the heteronormative erotic sphere—is repeatedly tested against the desire for dallying and play" (529). Moreover, Eisendrath's chapter importantly attempts to revise the too-tidy critical elision of Marlowe with his overreaching, individualistic characters by associating his discomfort with what often befalls end-driven overreachers with his work's "emphasis on the intense sociality of human life—on the ways in which texts and visions and worlds are collaborative, relationships entangled and complex, fantasies of autonomy sad" (532). In its account of a poet frequently identified as singular and subversive, as set apart from his contemporaries both in terms of his renegade lifestyle and outlandish style, the volume locates a resistance to individualism and mono-vocality.

Conclusion

The volume's penultimate chapter, "Mary Sidney Herbert" by Gillian Wright, exemplifies how the book's contributors encourage readers to refresh their thinking about sixteenth-century poetry. Wright begins by questioning why Sidney Herbert is "often treated, even in twenty-first century scholarship, as a case apart, her virtuosity, apparently, serving to separate her from, rather than connect her to, the literature of her own time" (570). As Sidney Herbert's primary poetic contributions consisted of the work of translation, and because her major work—the Sidney Psalter—was completed in collaboration with her brother, her corpus remains difficult to integrate into contexts wherein a broad range of readers might both access and appreciate them. Through careful and sensitive readings, Wright celebrates Sidney Herbert's skills as "the ability to select thoughtfully from a wide range of cultural materials, to inhabit diverse voices, to put traditional forms to innovative purposes, and to take the reader by surprise" (573). This engagement builds upon a critical methodology of comparison, sourcing, and close reading that animates many of the chapters of the volume. All poets of this era, the volume repeatedly shows, benefit

from being understood as in conversation and competition with one another and with their literary forebears. Sidney Herbert translates others' words, and sometimes sounds like her brother, and sometimes sounds like Spenser, but recognizing these affinities makes it easier to understand her poetic process (as emblematic of poetic process more generally across the period) and to appreciate her deviations and distinctiveness. Presumptions rooted in a search for originality and authorial individuality bog down the clear-sighted and subtle accounts of poetic activity that each contributor in this volume offers. As Wright puts it, "Mary Sidney Herbert's poetry represents a powerful challenge to a critical aesthetic that privileges a strong authorial personality at the expense of such other factors as genre, intertextuality, and literary collaboration" (583).

The challenge Sidney Herbert poses may well encapsulate the challenge *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* broadly poses to modern presumptions concerning early modern authorship and poetics. I've separated out Wright's chapter on Sidney Herbert's from the body of my summary, however, because it is difficult to pass over it without reproducing the effect generated by the volume's structure: that Sidney Herbert appears as what Wright laments as a "case apart." Hers is the only chapter in the volume focused on poetry by women, and the last chapter before Schoenfeldt's transition to the seventeenth century. In one sense, this effect is flatly superficial. As my summary hopefully captures, multiple contributors discuss writings by women alongside those of men, with Isabella Whitney and Anne Vaughan Lock given at least brief attention in multiple chapters. In another sense, however, this critical volume endeavors to undercut received narratives about how we think about poetry and poetic production in the sixteenth century yet nevertheless gives poetry by women just one seat at the table—a table at which Spenser is granted two whole seats and reserves space in several others. Given how multiple contributors seemed inclined to recognize women's writing throughout the volume, the absence of a chapter devoted to Isabella Whitney, or even to "Women writers" (in the model of the chapter on Scots poetry, or Mid-Tudor poetry), strikes me as conspicuous.

This should not be read as a complaint about the quality or value of any of the chapters that presently exist, nor should it be read as a criticism of how attention is distributed across the chapters of the book. This is a volume that teaches readers to attend to the conditions of production for writerly endeavors, and I can only imagine but nevertheless sympathize with the logistical challenges of coordinating scholarship at this

scale. Contributors will occasionally tread upon similar ground, which may even be a benefit as few readers will read every chapter. Moreover, I know that the full shape of the table of contents may only reveal itself too late in the process for adjustments to be made and gaps to be filled. If I were to present the volume to an undergraduate or early-stage graduate student as representative of the field as it stands, however, I would feel compelled to preventatively instruct those interested in writings by women to consult the index for Whitney, Sidney Herbert, Lock, and the Scots poet Elizabeth Melville. (I would also caution them that in my edition, the indexer seems to have misplaced the entries starting with the letters T and U; alas, poor Elizabeth Tyrwhit, who is discussed by McEachern on pages 360-361).

I would recommend *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry* to anyone wishing to enter the field, but in addition to my advice to chart their own course through via a motivated repurposing of the index, I would also supplement the recommendation with a few other volumes. One would be Jyotsna Singh's *A Companion to The Global Renaissance: Literature and Culture in the Age of Expansion, 2nd ed.* (2021), which would afford readers a more capacious account of British poetry's relationship to cultures and contexts beyond its borders. I might also list books discussing the relationship between sixteenth-century poetry and the historical origins and afterlives of racial formation. I would steer students, for example, to Dennis Britton's *Becoming Christian* (2014), Melissa E. Sanchez's *Queer Faith* (2019) and the work of Kim F. Hall; I'd send them the second chapter of Hall's *Things of Darkness* (1995) as required reading. I'd also direct students towards *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Women's Writing in English, 1540-1700* (2022), edited by Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, Danielle Clarke, and Sarah C. E. Ross.

What these recommendations, read alongside *Sixteenth-Century British Poetry*, may help the aspiring student of Renaissance poetry navigate is a tension they will quickly come to recognize in our field. This tension may be described as existing between *literary work*—a set of materially grounded, historically situated, and contingent practices—and *literature*, understood as a self-reproducing cultural process motivated and influenced by institutions poised to establish how it may be apprehended. While the volume's chapters insist upon how poetry was made, shared, remade, dispersed, abused, repurposed, and debated by a wide variety of people with an investment in it as a means for navigating an increasingly complex social world, the book as a whole also reflects the persistence of our

discipline's commitment to organizing this century of the history of literature around Thomas Wyatt and a series of men with sibilant last names. It cannot really be blamed for this; this is how the field still defines itself. Despite nearly every chapter's challenge to readers to conceive of Renaissance poetry as more capacious than flashes of individual genius—and a whole subsection devoted to "Practices"—this logic (epitomized by the fact that this essay appears in *The Spenser Review*) still plays out in tables of contents, syllabuses, and conference programs as organizing legitimacy around a list of worthy insiders. Perhaps it is their cultural capital that enables us to talk about other poets, and other ways of talking about poetry—but I look forward to the vision laid out throughout this volume of a scholarly mode invested in poetry as an index of imaginative thinking undertaken by communities and pursued on scales larger than that of the individual.

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