

virtue of natural ease, emotional spontaneity, and ‘true enthusiasm’” (134) through the work of the publisher, John Newbery, and two of his ambivalent hack writers, Oliver Goldsmith and Christopher Smart. Branch concludes: “If the great authorial portraits of Bunyan or Shaftesbury can be taken to represent the modern secularized subject’s fantasy of narrative or rational wholeness, Smart was the icon of its fragmentation, its religious constructedness, and the Vicar an attempt to exorcise his ghost” (174). Newbery stands as a lasting icon of “desired moral value and aesthetic appeal” fused to “guarantee market success” (174). In Chapter Five, Branch moves from the literary margins of Smart’s “outbursts of prayer” (175) to Wordsworth’s canonical *Lyrical Ballads*, arguing for a more holistic interpretation of his corpus of works, including the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. She postulates that the question his poems should raise “is the extent to which spiritual practice in the formation of persons and identities might be the basis not necessarily of escapism . . . but of a constructive politics and of a powerful yet vulnerable, nonviolent resistance to coercive societal and economic forces” (209).

As this observation indicates, Branch does more than tell a fascinating historical narrative. Her analyses incorporate a stringent critique of the authors and texts she considers, with the purpose of sketching a vision of literary critical discourse that moves beyond the “evasion of faith” with “its potentially intellectual and existential rigor, in which our scholarship has too long indulged” (209). This is outlined in her conclusion. Drawing upon John Caputo’s work she asks what a scholarship that “acknowledged its thin film of uncertainty” (220) and “the religiousness of all intellectual endeavor” (221) might look like. Branch notes that it would require humility, the recognition that we are inevitably “speaking ourselves” when we write. Further, “we might imagine scholarship and criticism as radical acts of construction, and even acts of love, for those whose works we read, and for those for whom we write and teach” (222–23). Her argument is perhaps more persuasive in its incisive critique of current scholarly practice, than in its rather utopian imagining of what argument and discussion within the academy should be. However, she does offer a tangible and appealing definition of what a self-critical and religiously conscious scholarship could aspire to be.

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MICHAEL BRYDON: *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600–1714*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; pp. 232.

Michael Brydon offers a fascinating, nuanced, and richly detailed account of the reception of Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. It reveals as much, if not more, about subsequent readers of Hooker and the varied fortunes of Reformation theology in England, as it does about the content of the *Polity* itself. Brydon traces the reputation of Hooker’s key work from one of relative neglect to an exalted, if contested, status as the defining text of Anglicanism. Isaac Walton’s life of the divine was a key element in this transformation. One of the strengths of Brydon’s account is the way in which he interweaves his analysis of interpretations of the text, with various representations of Hooker’s life, character, and posthumous identity.

Brydon’s narrative provides an unusual and informative angle from which to view the multiple, complex ecclesiastical, political, and ideological transitions that distinguished the Church of England throughout the seventeenth century. He begins by outlining the “muted” Jacobean response to Hooker, which, he suggests, nevertheless “helped to

prepare the way for the eventual public transformation of Hooker, the conformist Calvinist champion, into Hooker the ceremonialist and theologian of a distinctive *via media*" (21, 44). This is followed by an assessment of the ways in which Hooker emerged as an Anglican icon through the vigorous ecclesiastical and political debates of the Laudian and Commonwealth periods. Hooker was positioned "as a leading 'father' of the English church" (80); this perspective became firmly entrenched with the political triumph of the Anglican Church at the Restoration. The success of Walton's *Life* confirmed this view of Hooker as foundational to the Establishment — "unquestioning obedience to authority was portrayed as the only sure foundation for religious and political stability" (122).

The turning point in Brydon's account of Hooker's pivotal role in validating the Anglican *status quo* centred upon "the accession of an openly Catholic king, who was unable to maintain the ecclesiastical side of the equation" (123). The tensions precipitated by the exclusion crisis produced a renewed interest in Hooker as a political thinker — with the emergence of the Whigs and Tories, and an increasingly engaged polemic on the part of Catholic writers. Brydon comments: "Whig usage of Hooker was able to fashion an image of a proponent of legitimate political action in Parliament" (175); the ambivalence of the *Polity* enabled readings which authorised a succession of very different forms of government. "The rhetoric of Hooker's doctrine of consent" thus "achieved the dual task of rebutting arbitrary power" (which it had previously been used to support) "whilst constructing a convincing portrayal of an established power structure" (175). The Tory revival under Queen Anne challenged this Whig appropriation of Hooker and aptly demonstrates Brydon's central contention that "Hooker had become a widely respected authority whose support was considered to strengthen any cause in which it was cited." This resulted from "many rival interpretations of the *Polity*. . . the most successful claimants for Hooker, however, were usually those who enjoyed the strongest political backing" (176).

Brydon concludes by observing that the fortunes of the *Polity* throughout the seventeenth century justified Hooker's hope that it would "provide a focus for reflection upon the theological and political outlook of English life" (199). He suggests that it has continued to play this role within the Anglican community to the present day. This has resulted from "the belief that Hooker was an authority that carried intellectual weight across disputes and was part of a common, if contentious vocabulary" (203). While any interpretation of Hooker, or deployment of his reputation, depends "upon the discreet marginalization of some sections of the *Polity*, as well as the explicit citation of others" (203), Brydon argues that Hooker himself invited such a response. It was this ambivalence and the consequent multiplicity of interpretations that enabled Hooker's *Polity* to be "transformed into the public iconic expression of a unique seventeenth-century Anglican tradition" (204). Brydon offers an informative and rewarding account of how this came about.

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DENNIS C. BUSTIN: *Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006; pp. xvi + 380.

Denis C. Bustin's study of the Particular Baptist pastor Hanserd Knollys (1609–91) is a thoroughly researched and well-written biography. Though little-known in the