

Drouin and Huw Griffith's readings both depend on queering the gaze, but while Drouin focuses on patriarchal control, ocular excess, and the production of divided subjectivities, Griffith's brilliant close readings draw on the play's performance history in order to identify the conditions that make a text seem homoerotic. Such overlaps demonstrate the value of intersectional and interdisciplinary dialogues while offering multiple ways of approaching the same source texts.

Given that many of these works are actively engaged in constructing and expanding the fields of disability, trans, and environmental criticism, they offer a lot more context for their readings and interventions than may be expected of such short essays. However, this is precisely what makes this collection more accessible to new readers who may otherwise be unaware of some of the stakes of these interventions. As a whole, then, *Shakespeare / Sex* provides some wonderfully succinct and astute readings of important issues surrounding desire, embodiment, and identity politics. The collection succeeds in gesturing towards new directions in Shakespeare criticism, raising a number of tantalizingly open-ended questions that productively leave room for future scholarly engagements. Through their open questions, critical insights, and new disciplinary frameworks, these essays invite readers to reevaluate their own understanding of early modern sex.

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Shakespeare and the Play Scripts of Private Prayer. Ceri Sullivan.
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This book not only offers a fresh historizing of a handful of Shakespeare's history plays but also examines how private prayer opens up new regions of expressive power and theatrical possibility in dramatic dialogues with God, in model prayers, in popular pamphlets on spiritual life, and in many other modes of lay-composed prayer in the 1580s and onwards. As Sullivan contends, "advice texts" on private prayer, which circulated during Shakespeare's working life, show "prayer as a vital force to free social energies through excitement about what should be and could be" (2). The book's central aim is to explore how modes of private prayer and drama move along these edges of dramatic possibility. Through a critical reading of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Henry V*, *Henry VIII*, and *Richard II*, Sullivan "tests" the view that these plays "exploit the dramatic quality of prayer" (5).

The chapters draw on a remarkable number of advice texts on prayer. Chapter 1 describes how techniques and approaches to prayer, gleaned from these handbooks and manuals, helped pray-ers learn how to pray. Chapter 2 notes advice about composing, and reciting prayers, whether ready-made or made up, and issues warnings about the dangers of enthusiasms and emotions in the act of praying. The originality of these

advice texts, Sullivan claims, lies not in their approach to the practice of prayer, but in “their innovative expectation—inspired by increased literacy and the new print technologies” (32). Manuals and books on private prayer supplied readers and playgoers from different social classes and economic backgrounds with scripts, which fostered devotion, of course, but also extended the activity of self-formation through prayer.

In reading these instruction books, as Sullivan shows, prayer “emerges as a technology of the mind” (59) that enables one to confront the rigors of self-formation. These advice books provide opportunities for pray-ers to feel intense emotion, both “self-torment and ecstasy,” but also to spot human folly, achieve self-awareness, endure the practical problems of everyday life, or deal with “skepticism about future behavior” (14). Guided by these advice texts—these scripts—praying petitioners could rehearse complex roles with dramatic effect.

Chapters 3 and 4 expand the argument on private prayer as creative and theatrical possibility. Through prayer, an actor-character might reimagine “options open to their character” (192). Prayer might also prompt an actor-character to “perform a thought experiment on alternative outcomes,” unearth other plot lines, or feel empathy (19). The performative self in private prayer might also discover new perspectives and embody renewed actions. The strength of this book lies in its ability to show how the theatrical and narrative power of prayer, and its performative energies, promote counterfactual thinking: the ability to imagine alternate ways of conceiving of the world.

Private prayers enact this dramatic possibility, what “should be and could be,” even in everyday life, which “shows a resistant micro-politics” (96). Unlike hymns and public prayers, which align with rules and conventions, private prayer is “a mode of expression that the early modern state found it impossible to keep under surveillance” (7). In court politics, as Sullivan shows in chapter 5, private prayer serves as a register for how to negotiate the demands of power, especially in the convergence of politics and religion. Since these advice texts describe prayer as a dialogue with God, the petitioner must reimagine what constitutes human agency in a providentially ordered world. This creative and imaginative act in prayer exacts demands on language, and meaning, because “speaking about an ineffable God requires a language that can carry multiple meanings” (6).

This book argues convincingly that handbooks and manuals on private prayer become a training ground for theatrical possibility, a “form of acting the self” (21). Sullivan’s efforts to show that advice texts on private prayer hold narrative and dramatic possibility in Shakespeare’s history plays make this book an invaluable contribution to early modern literary studies. The book places many prayer scripts in our hands. Not all of them are easy to hold. They do confirm, however, our roles as actors and directors, readers and audience members, who might find, in response to the vital force of prayer in the plays, plenty of reason to say “Amen.”

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