

THE

Volume XLI, No. 2

Summer 2010

# SIXTEENTH CENTURY JOURNAL

*The Journal of Early Modern Studies*



0361-0160 (201022) 41:2;1-O

Elizabeth I's supposed dreams and dreams about Elizabeth reported by her subjects reflected cultural anxieties about royalty and rule.

As Levin shows, interpretations of Renaissance dreaming found in contemporary texts and popular discourse were numerous and often contradictory. Thus, it makes sense that the text does not attempt to draw generalized conclusions about early modern dreaming. Like dreams, the book defies exact definitions and raises more questions than it answers, but its value is in how Levin's work, as a combination of archival research, historiography, literary criticism, and cultural studies, takes part in a broad spectrum of scholarly conversations. The collection of historical material offered in this book will be useful in itself and will lead researchers to explore further the records of dreams available in archival sources. Scholars from many disciplines will find it offers guidance and raises questions about subjects ranging from how to interpret dreaming in literary texts to how to understand: the royal power of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots; religion; motherhood; medicine; James I and the Gunpowder Plot; witchcraft and occultism; and Renaissance medievalism. At only about two hundred pages, with modernized spelling, a readable style, and an engaging collection of anecdotes, the text is as approachable for general readers and undergraduates as it is interesting for more advanced scholars; it would be a particularly useful teaching tool for graduate and undergraduate courses introducing students to Renaissance literature, culture, and politics.

But the same characteristics that make Levin's book helpful to a broad spectrum of readers will doubtless frustrate many scholars; the text surveys a wealth of previously undiscovered information from which to work rather than offering a precise, focused argument about the role of dreaming in early modern culture. Levin's broad definition of dream-related discourse—which here includes witchcraft, visions, ciphers, nightmarish language or images, and other such experiences—and the way in which the text follows tangents in order to connect ideas about culture and dreaming will delight some readers and perplex others. The close readings of literary texts are insightful but all too brief. I would encourage readers, however, to see these characteristics as admirable features rather than problems.



**Lay Bibles in Europe 1450–1800.** Ed. M. Lamberigts, and A. A. Den Hollander. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006. 360 pp. €79.00. ISBN 978-90-429-1785-9.

REVIEWED BY: Youri Desplenter, Ghent University, Belgium

As stated in the preface, this study does not seek to offer a survey of vernacular Bibles in Europe from the late Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century. Rather, the sixteen contributions present the results of an international conference, organized in Amsterdam (2004) by *Biblia Sacra*, a joint Dutch-Flemish research group. The articles address some important evolutions and key figures in the history of the vernacular Bible. At first sight, the volume looks quite heterogeneous, with its contributions arranged in chronological order in three languages: English (13), German (2) and French (1). And these essays offer various and sundry approaches, including the history of culture, the history of books, art history, and church history. Nevertheless, the articles contribute to the dual aim that also characterized the conference; they stimulate the cooperation between several projects on Bible bibliography and present the results of recent historical research on Bibles.

The first contribution, by Nikolaus Staubach, is an updated summary of an article he published in 1997, but it nevertheless opens the volume in an excellent way. The Bible for laypeople—a Bible in vernacular—had been a *desideratum* for several medieval religious reform movements. One of them was the *Devotio moderna*, which wanted to encourage

Bible reading by laypeople. At the end of the fourteenth century, however, when the *Devotio moderna* began to take shape in the Netherlands, not everyone was in favor of Bible reading by nonreligious people. Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen († 1398), one of the intellectual designers of the *Devotio moderna*, wrote a strong plea in favor of Bible reading by laypeople, as Staubach discusses in this first contribution.

Several articles pay attention to Bible reading by laypeople in different periods in the Netherlands. Piet Visser for instance, discusses the importance of the printed vernacular Bible for the Radical Reformation, in particular for the Dutch Anabaptists. To them, every member of the congregation could and had to interpret the Word of God. This was of course only possible if people had a (vernacular) Bible at their disposal. The public and the intentions of Bible translations are also central topics in the contribution by Frits G. M. Broeyer on the so-called *Statenvertaling* (1637), the first Bible translation prescribed by the Protestant government in the Northern Netherlands. Other groups of Christians who were in favor of Bible reading were the Dutch pietists, especially from the seventeenth century, and the Dutch Walloon churches, especially in the eighteenth.

The volume not only proffers articles on the Bible *strictu sensu*, but also on related topics such as the late medieval *Lives of Jesus*. In her contribution, Hinke Bakker discusses the relationship between the illustrations in a printed *Life of Jesus* and those in a manuscript prayer book. Other art historical contributions shed a light on the illustrations of the unpublished Italian Giolito Bible (sixteenth century); on the visual biblical culture of Jean Mès (Lille; ca. 1590), a man who collected more than 450 Old Testament prints; and on the seventeenth-century biblical images and their audience.

Of great importance for the study of early modern Bible translations are not only the prologues to the Bibles themselves, but also the prologues that accompany Latin Bible commentaries. In the writings of Desiderius Erasmus († 1536) or Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples († 1536), for example, views on the vernacular Bible can be discerned, as the French contribution of Guy Bedouelle demonstrates. A very interesting article, which complements that of Bedouelle, is the one by Wim François ("Vernacular Bible Reading and Censorship in Early Sixteenth Century: The Position of the Louvain Theologians"). From his contribution, it becomes clear that the theologians of the University of Leuven in the early sixteenth century, when it was still the only university in the Low Countries, were not stubbornly against Bible reading in vernacular, as is often thought. They only stipulated that the vernacular Bibles had to be orthodox.

The *Statenvertaling* as it was printed in the eighteenth century is central in the article by August den Hollander. On the basis of the correspondence between the Dutch printer and a copperplate engraver from Basel, Den Hollander paints a picture of the eighteenth-century book trade.

The volume closes with three contributions on Bible bibliography. The first one provides a manual for the Web site <http://www.bibliasacra.nl> (last accessed 12 October 2009), where a bibliography is being composed of all Bibles printed in Belgium and the Netherlands. In the second contribution, Bettye Chambers reflects upon her printed bibliography of French Bibles. Just like the first two, the last article—on the collecting and cataloguing of Bibles in the *Württembergische Landesbibliothek* (Stuttgart)—argues in favor of digital Bible bibliographies like the one on <http://www.bibliasacra.nl>; last accessed on 6 April 2010. However, the author is even more ambitious and wants to see the creation of an international Bible cataloguing project.

One of the major shortcomings of the volume is the discrepancy between its general design and intention—it discusses a large period and is meant for academics with any kind of interest in the Bible—and its specialist topics and contributions. The authors should have

been urged to write for readers who are not necessarily specialists in their own particular field of Bible study. Furthermore, not every author succeeded in defining his purpose and in formulating the results of his research in a clear and concise way (e.g., the contribution on Casiodoro de Reina's vision of the Christian ministry, reconstructed through paratextual material in the 1569 Spanish text of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians). Nevertheless, this volume makes it possible, by bringing together results of research on medieval, early modern, and modern vernacular Bibles, to view the research on Bibles of one period in a broader context and to see the big picture.



### **Censorship and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England: The Subtle Art of Division.**

Randy Robertson. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. 272 pp. \$75.00. ISBN 978-0-271-03466-9.

REVIEWED BY: Calvin Lane, University of Iowa

In recent years historians and literary scholars have been highly concerned with the notion of the "public sphere." Driven by varying reads of the work of Jürgen Habermas, papers, articles, and books are appearing on the scene to consider social and political interaction in early modern England, how ideas were communicated, perceptions shaped, and identities negotiated. The issue of conflict, however, seems to be center stage. In this book, Randy Robertson tells us that the revisionists and the new historicists have both offered models for understanding conflict in seventeenth-century England that are ultimately inadequate. Both schools have asserted in their different ways that conflict was, as Robertson puts it, more apparent than real. He argues instead that the appearance of consensus often masked deeper conflicts, that political "parties" were usually not chasing after consensus, and that writers were inclined to divide their opponents under the illusion of seeking harmony. This work is principally an examination of a series of authors whose works evince a particular political and aesthetic method. From William Prynne in the 1630s to Jonathan Swift at the turn of the century, these authors employed what Robertson calls the subtle art of division. He defines this as "the artful insinuation of divisive polemic into a discourse ruled by the rhetoric of consensus" (27–28). In short, the language of consensus cannot be trusted beneath the surface of the political waters. The entry point for really seeing this, Robertson argues, is the contest over censorship. The author, quite soberly, wishes to recognize the very real power of censorship, but at the same time to see that this layered process hardly produced meaningful consensus. What it did help to produce, Robertson argues, was a thriving public sphere.

After a helpful introduction, complete with an explanation of the process of censorship, Robertson considers William Prynne's criticisms of the stage in his *Histrion-mastix* (1633). Despite all the Caroline pretensions to peace in the 1630s, Prynne got his message out, and an audience did hear him. Robertson argues that at the center of the Prynne controversy (one which included ear-croppings and face-branding) stood censorship and that this episode foreshadowed the midcentury crisis. He then moves to the cavalier poet Richard Lovelace whose poem *Lucasta* (1649) deftly eluded the Puritan censors that had replaced the Caroline ones. More artful than Prynne, Lovelace produced a text with a galvanizing partisan message: one visible if the reader saw the clues. Robertson writes: "censorship, like surgery, leaves marks, scars, traces; it also creates a curious beauty, a bittersweet, unheard melody, so long as our ears are sensitive enough to hear it" (99). Switching from the cavalier Lovelace to John Milton's critiques of the 1643 printing ordinance, Robertson argues that the author of *Areopagitica* (1644) exhibited polite tact only to