



Open Library of Humanities



Part of the Ubiquity
Partner Network

MARVELL *Studies*

Review

How to Cite: McGrath, Patrick, George Klawitter and Dustin Griffin. 2018. Book Reviews. *Marvell Studies*, 3(2):4, pp.1–12, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ms.32>

Published: 11 October 2018

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the double-blind process of *Marvell Studies*, which is a journal published by the Open Library of Humanities.

Copyright:

© 2018 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Open Access:

Marvell Studies is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

Digital Preservation:

The Open Library of Humanities and all its journals are digitally preserved in the CLOCKSS scholarly archive service.

REVIEW

Book Reviews

Patrick McGrath¹, George Klawitter² and Dustin Griffin³¹ Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, US² Holy Cross College, Notre Dame, US³ New York University, USCorrespondence: Ryan Netzley, Editor, *Marvell Studies* (rnetzley@siu.edu)

- 1) George Klawitter, *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry*, reviewed by Patrick McGrath
- 2) A.D. Cousins, *Andrew Marvell: Loss and Aspiration, Home and Homeland in Miscellaneous Poems*, reviewed by George Klawitter
- 3) Matthew C. Augustine and Steven N. Zwicker, eds., *Lord Rochester in the Restoration World*, reviewed by Dustin Griffin

Keywords: Marvell; Rochester; Calvinism; sexuality

George Klawitter. *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 267. Hardback, \$100

What can we conclude about past sexualities on the basis of imaginative literature? That seems to me the central question, problem, and opportunity that occupies George Klawitter's engaging and insightful study *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. The book's six chapters—'The Heteronormative Paradigm', 'The Indeterminacy of Voice', 'The Homoerotic Marvell', 'Andrew Marvell and Autoeroticism', 'The Celibate Marvell', and 'The Devotional Marvell'—explore the various possibilities of sexuality as reflected in Marvell's poetry, not with the hope of settling the question of was he or wasn't he this or that, but rather opening up for readers the rich reach of his creative charm and genius as he plays with sexual innuendo' (22). Klawitter's work represents a valuable contribution to our understanding of early modern sexuality in general and Marvell's sexual proclivities in particular. Those who wish to apprehend the suggestive vagaries of Marvellian sexuality would do well to read this book.

To the question of what we can conclude about past sexualities on the basis of imaginative literature, Klawitter offers a measured (though at times slightly

inconsistent) answer. While he demurs from settling the question of Marvell's sexual orientation, the relation he posits between author and text could—hypothetically—decide it. For example, the book insists on a direct relation between the biographical Marvell and his work: 'It is not then difficult to recognize that a poet of perceived indeterminate (or fluctuating) sexuality would use characters of indeterminate sexuality in his poems' (78). The one-to-one correspondence between poet and poetic creation resists not just poststructuralist decentering of the author, but also the authorial fallacy. While discussing this fallacy and 'The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers', Klawitter contends, 'there is no way to divorce the poet Marvell from the emotional vigor of his narrator in this poem. They are one and the same. So anything I say about the narrator's emotional state of mind I can safely attach to Marvell's' (149).

In no small part, the faith that this book places in a direct relation between author and text arises from its theory of poetry: 'When we study the past, we can research legal documents and private correspondence to understand the effects of sexualities on societies, but if we really want to appreciate a people's feelings about sex, we must read their poetry, where emotion best rises into language with an economy of words' (1). Poetry's capacity to represent an authentic emotional interiority, one that corresponds to actual sexual practices, challenges a frequent perception of Renaissance verse as performing desire, as adopting a rhetorical posture that ventriloquizes—rather than faithfully represents—erotic viewpoints. This is an interesting and provocative claim that could benefit from further development. When discussing *An Account of the Growth of Popery*, Klawitter observes, 'Marvell was, in fact a dilettante, adapting his linguistic talents to whatever current was in the wind' (215). What is it about poetry that safeguards it from the mercenary intentions to which prose is subject?

In addition to intervening in debates about authorial fallacy and poetic authenticity, this book makes a timely contribution to how we read the relation between text and context. In general, Klawitter expresses dissatisfaction with the ability of historicist readings to elucidate Marvell's poetry. About a particular historicist interpretation of 'The Definition of Love', Klawitter writes, 'Such musings are more

distracting than helpful. Any reading of political allegory into a Renaissance poem should always be carefully hedged' (74). That is a major claim, one that could perform the salutary intervention of troubling the historicist consensus that currently reigns in Marvell scholarship. Certain moments of ahistoricity in *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry* might also trouble it. For example, Klawitter agrees that we should not try 'to read Marvell's poetry through twenty-first-century sexual expectations' (23). He later writes, 'I see no need to rationalize or defend a homoerotic reading of "Young Love." If we have learned anything from the past century, we have learned that same-sex love is as valuable and credible as opposite-sex love' (129). In this interpretation, valuing twentieth-century same-sex partnerships becomes the condition for substantiating homoeroticism in a seventeenth-century poem. Rather than bristle at this anachronism, perhaps it reveals how certain modes of positivist inquiry produce critical objects that further justify and constitute those modes. Is a gay Marvell possible with historicism? Is the unease that this book feels with our historicist moment related to queer theory's sense (à la Lee Edelman) of certain historical narratives as inherently heteronormative, tending towards teleology, completion, and futurism? Is there a more forceful case to be made against heteronormative historicism in favor of queer anachronism?

Finally, in addition to the exigent theoretical questions Klawitter raises, his vast knowledge of Renaissance verse recommends this study. The book often explicates sexual themes in Marvell by illuminating reference to other poets. Readings of Robert Herrick, John Donne, William Habington, Richard Crashaw, Thomas Campion, Thomas Traherne, Edmund Waller, George Herbert, and Richard Barnfield (among others) generously supplement the focus on Marvell. The advantages of this comparative approach are obvious, and Klawitter's erudition on full display, in his judicious remarks about opposite sex love in Marvell's poetry:

There is in Marvell's love lyrics, what few there are, a kind of clinical coldness that marks him far from the best of his contemporary love poets: Herrick with his fictive harem of muses, Carew bubbling over with erotic delight (e.g., 'A Rapture'), even Nashe in the bouncy silliness of 'The Choice of Valentines'. (49)

At times, an intertextual approach causes this study to wander from its focus on Marvell a bit widely (I found this true especially of Chapter 6, 'The Devotional Marvell'). But the results, as is the case in Chapter 3, can be impressive. The first portion of the chapter focuses on 'Young Love' and 'The Unfortunate Lover' (95–109). The rest of the chapter (109–129) moves from Richard Crashaw, Thomas Traherne, the epistolary Erasmus, to the Damon and Pithias myth via Richard Edwards. The chapter concludes by considering modern retellings (and bowdlerizations) of the story by John Banim and Albert Terhune. The sheer scope of the intertextual comparisons is remarkable, and the suggestive link between the Damon of the mower poems and the Damon of Greek myth guides them.

Klawitter's work is, ultimately, an apt guide in determining what can be said about early modern sexuality on the basis of its literary sources. To that end, *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry* represents the most comprehensive account of the sexual complexities, connotations, and contradictions of Andrew Marvell's verse.

Patrick J. McGrath

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

A. D. Cousins. *Andrew Marvell: Loss and Aspiration, Home and Homeland in Miscellaneous Poems*. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. Pp. 246. Hardback, \$165 (£95)

Why is A. D. Cousins' excellent new book on Andrew Marvell valuable? Why will I return to it often? I will return for Cousins' beautiful and sustained readings of certain poems: the Villiers elegy, 'To His Coy Mistress', 'The Resolved Soul', 'An Horatian Ode'. His is a fine reading of the poet's major lyrics, but the book does have some flaws in continuity of purpose. Cousins' chapter on the Mower poems promises early on to read these poems as exemplars of three pastoral motifs: inscription, reflection, and renewal (16). Would that he had stuck to this arrangement—we could easily imagine a wonderful progress from 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bilbrough' to the last of the Damon quartet. Cousins does touch nicely upon inscription and reflection, but we are pretty much left on our own to puzzle out renewal through the gauge of Calvin's pleasure and displeasure.

Although Cousins works hard to establish the first Mower poem ('The Mower against Gardens') as an attack on pleasure by reformed religion, he neglects the more obvious attack of country on city, of hunter-gatherer on hybrid agriculture. He equates Damon with Protestantism and gardens as luxurious (and deformed) Judeo-Catholicism. To establish his case, Cousins invokes Calvin on pleasure, an obvious whip in the headiness of Reformation. We wonder then why Marvell would invoke Calvin in pastoral poems that so obviously enjoy the *otium* of rest and recuperation: I think Marvell's narrator rather enjoys squishing luscious melons beneath his feet and between his naked toes. If Marvell is a crypto-Calvinist, he certainly is not very good at attacking hedonistic pleasures. Marvell does not 'dispraise' gardens as Cousins asserts (25) but rather disdains their artificiality as they have been used to tame nature. The gods and fauns, of course, win out in the end.

In Chapter Two, Cousins successfully reads Marvell's nymph against a backdrop of Ovidian texts. He is excellent, I think, in his explication of various stories from the *Heroides*. Less successful is his reading of the nymph as Marian allegory because Marvell's Catholic readers would have been aghast at such a subtext for the nymph, and his Protestant readers would have had no recent Marian devotion to so temper the aggrieved lady. Cousins strains his Mary-nymph reading and should have stayed with his Ovidian insights, which are superb. What is most wonderful in this chapter is Cousins' analysis of the logic, or rather illogic, of 'Coy Mistress', a poem that has proven a staple of undergraduate literature courses for a century. Beginning with T. S. Eliot's notice of the syllogistic structure of the poem, Cousins weaves in Lucretius to further illuminate the playful (and tortured) conclusion for the mistress. Sadly, Cousins gives a page number for his Eliot quote but no source. Nor is Eliot to be found in the bibliography. Smith in his 2006 edition of Marvell's poems does not note Eliot as a source for syllogistic analysis: Smith's earliest reference is to Leishman (1966). That said, I must add that Cousins' extended explication of 'Coy Mistress' is excellent, in fact a must-read, even though blemished by his transparent attempt to wrest the poem into his 'homeland' motif.

If Cousins strains to get his 'homeland' theme into 'Coy Mistress' and the nymph poem, he has no such trouble seeing the 'home' motif in 'Bermudas' (78–84) and

'The Garden' (84–100). For 'Bermudas' he uses George Sandys' translation of the psalms to very good effect and infuses some very fine Calvin into the analysis. He is, however, a bit tough on Waller's 'Battle of the Summer Islands' poem, a rather charming piece that Cousins belittles for not rising to the religious excellence of Marvell's 'Bermudas'. Cousins' work on 'The Garden' is a happy mélange of Plotinus and Calvin as exemplary of the *via purgativa* and the *via illuminativa*, two of the three segments of a pilgrim's trip to mystical union. Cousins makes no attempt to push the poem into the *via unitiva*, stopping, as he puts it, at the 'threshold' of Christian mysticism (85). Although he cites Henry Vaughn, he does not invoke even a touch of Thomas Traherne, who would be naturally *de rigueur* for any consideration of Marvellian mysticism.

Despite his best attempts to read Calvin's theory of 'election' into Marvell's religious poems (e.g., 104), this theory remains distasteful to modern readers who are more apt to accept human judgment and preference over supernatural foreknowledge. Marvell's own take on the theory, as Cousins reads it in the poem 'Dialogue, between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure', is a 'discreet evasiveness or momentary indifference' (126). Maybe that is why we like Marvell so much: if he brushes up against tortured religious theories, he does not preach them in his verses. Similarly problematic is Cousins' efforts to read both 'Eyes and Tears' and 'On a Drop of Dew' as reflecting Counter-Reformation sentiments, chiefly on the basis of the tears in the former (which he likens to those in Crashaw's 'Weeper', of course) and the one line in the latter which compares a drop of dew to a tear. Cousins' tendency to read Counter-Reformation sentiments into Marvell's religious poems is not really convincing. Another problem with this chapter on religious poetry is its selectivity of texts—Cousins accepts Lewalski's 1979 list of Marvell's religious poems without question (107, 108) and ignores Marvell's Latin epitaphs. There is more religious verse in Marvell than appears in the opening pages of the 1681 edition of his poems. Nevertheless, readers will be enriched by Cousins' readings in this chapter, particularly of 'The Coronet' and 'The Resolved Soul'.

Cousins' chapter on the four Royalist poems and 'An Horatian Ode' is an intense look at five lyric poems that deal with government. Cousins' analysis of

the Hastings elegy is scant as is his coverage of the Tom May poem, but his work with the Villiers elegy (148–154) is one of the finest explications of that poem to date. Analysis of the Lovelace dedicatory verses is brought in simply to round out the ‘royalist’ quartet since Lovelace was a Cavalier poet. Cousins orchestrates this entire chapter towards an extensive consideration of the Horatian Ode (158–180), setting the poem against classical authors, particularly Lucan and, naturally, Horace. The Lucan parallels are particularly welcome. Then Cousins uses three Renaissance authors (Machiavelli, Nedham, Hobbes) to tackle the thorny issue of Marvell’s handling of the Cromwellian usurpation. What Cousins concludes is satisfying:

The apotheosizing or, more accurate, quasi-deification of Cromwell and the aestheticizing of Charles, which is sympathetic but points to Marvell’s resolve not to sanctify or to accept deifying of the King, are elemental to Marvell’s creation in *An Horatian Ode* of an unstable mythos of national destiny amid uncertain times. (172)

This is as fine a way of settling debate as can be found on Marvell’s supposedly awkward tone in this ode. Especially happy is Cousins’ word ‘aestheticizing’ to characterize Marvell’s attitude towards the king’s fate. Cousins also uses Nedham to similarly good effect in characterizing Marvell’s Cromwellian allegiance:

So that herein the very voice of the nation, with one consent, seems to speak aloud: That those whose title is supposed unlawful and founded merely upon force, yet being possessed of authority, may lawfully be obeyed. Nor *may* they only, but they *must*. (178, quoting Nedham, *The Case of the Commonwealth of England, Stated*)

Marvellians will welcome this helpful understanding of what has always been the major problem with this ode: did Marvell subtly mask his royalist sentiments in this poem? Cousins helps us see that Marvell was rather on the side of the usurper. Case closed. This chapter is mercifully free of Calvin references and alludes to Cousins’ ‘homeland’ motif only once—in the final sentence of the chapter. I suspect he could

have done much 'homeland' with the deaths of various heroes chronicled in these poems: Tom May, Villiers, Hastings, Charles.

In his final chapter Cousins works on the Nun Appleton poem with careful attention to its departure from the classic country-house pieces of Statius and Horace. He is careful to note Marvell's circumspect reverence for Fairfax, quite unlike the studied homage Marvell affords Cromwell in 'An Horatian Ode'. Cousins could have noted to good effect Fairfax's refusal to sign Charles's death warrant. Cousins rushes to conflate monarchy with Roman Catholicism forgetting that by the time 'Appleton House' was written England had been safely under Tudor and Stuart Protestant rulers (aside from Mary) for a century. The convent farce in the poem, therefore, is more triumphant whimsy than dire warning. Cousins makes some attempt to read 'homeland' into this magnificent poem, but most of his energy is expended on 'home', and he slights the woods episode and does not mention at all the fields episode, two significant sections of the second half of this quasi-epic poem.

To read Marvell poems Cousins needed better motifs than 'home and homeland' – they just do not work as unifying themes, often seeming to be afterthoughts in chapters, nor does he even try, probably sensing the stretch, to read 'home and homeland' into some poems. He might have done better to have given us a book on 'Calvin and Marvell'. He certainly likes Calvin and uses the hectic theologian here and there to good effect in this book provocatively and sensitively. His Calvinistic insights are not always welcome, but Calvin is not always harmonious to the modern ear. We have much to learn from Calvin, and Cousins may very well be the critic to bring Calvin into Marvell with sustained gusto.

Cousins' *Andrew Marvell* will make its mark for intelligent and helpful readings of major Marvell poems. Even though the book's explicit themes are not developed uniformly throughout the book, in particular the 'homeland' motif, his readings are significant, his classical parallels impressive, his Calvinism generally palatable, his line readings flawless. *Andrew Marvell: Loss and Aspiration, Home and Homeland in Miscellaneous Poems* will remain a valuable text in Marvell criticism.

George Klawitter
Holy Cross College, Notre Dame

Matthew C. Augustine and Steven N. Zwicker (eds). *Lord Rochester in the Restoration World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. x + 293. Hardback, \$107 (£70). Paperback (2017), \$30 (£23)

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is the subject of a new collection of critical essays, *Lord Rochester in the Restoration World*. It is the fourth such volume since 1982, this one edited by Steven Zwicker, who has been writing on Restoration poetry and political culture for more than forty years, and Matthew Augustine, a young scholar known primarily for his recent articles on Marvell. The thirteen contributors include some scholars who have previously written on Rochester (Nicholas Fisher, Paul Davis, Christopher Tilmouth, Ros Ballaster) and some whose expertise lies elsewhere, including the historian Tim Harris. Two of the contributors, besides Zwicker, are known for their work on Marvell (Augustine and Nicholas von Maltzahn). About two thirds have academic appointments in the UK. Despite the prominence today of feminist re-readings of Restoration writers, only two of the contributors (both women) write from what might be called a 'feminist' perspective.

The editors and contributors seem to assume that readers of the volume will be relatively unfamiliar with Rochester or with recent Rochester scholarship and criticism. Several of the essays engage in extended and attentive close reading of Rochester's poetry, perhaps a sign that such formal analysis is coming back into fashion. There is much citation of recent (since the '90s) criticism of Rochester—the contributors frequently cite each other's work. Familiar biographical anecdotes are offered. A number of the essays take up topics that have been discussed in Rochester criticism since the 1970s—Rochester's relations with John Dryden, the ambiguities and 'instabilities' of tone and irony in Rochester's satires, his 'ventriloquism' (choosing to speak through a variety of named characters, e.g., Artemiza, Corinna, the 'disabled debauchee', M. G.), Rochester and the theatre, Rochester's skepticism and libertinism. Several of the chapters are chatty in tone, suggesting the orally delivered lecture rather than the polished essay.

The strongest scholarly presence in the collection is the absent Harold Love, the dean of Rochester scholars at the time of his untimely death in 2007 at the age of 70. An Australian by birth, he spent his career at Monash University and is the author

of *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (1993) and *English Clandestine Satire, 1660–1702* (2004) as well as the magisterial edition of Rochester's *Works* (1999). He is cited in this volume by at least nine of the contributors for his work on Restoration 'scribal culture', and as both editor and annotator. He not only provided the text which all Rochester scholars must now cite but 'unsettled' the text that earlier editors had tried to fix, by printing multiple versions of poems, of which no single one is 'best' or 'authorial'. Anyone who now writes on Rochester works in Love's shadow, and it is not too much to say that for the most part Rochester criticism has not moved beyond the ground he has cleared.

Introducing the volume, Augustine and Zwicker acknowledge the importance of Love's scholarship. Jonathan Sawday's 'John Wilmot and the Writing of "Rochester"' provides a breezy survey of Rochester's 'literary afterlife', the 'appropriations' of his writing and his notorious life through the centuries, down to the films and romance novels of today's popular culture. Paul Davis, in 'From Script to Print: Marketing Rochester', treats the 'commercialization of scribal culture' in the 1680s, and argues for the need for a hypertext online edition of Rochester's works. Augustine's 'Trading Places: Lord Rochester, the Laureate and the Making of Literary Reputation' sees Rochester's relationship with Dryden as 'dialogic'. His fellow editor Zwicker in 'Lord Rochester: A Life in Gossip', uses 'gossip' as a lens through which to view Rochester's major poems, an approach that works best with 'A Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Countrey'.

Nicholas von Maltzahn, writing on 'Rochester and the Satiric Underground', covers much of the same ground as other contributors, e.g., Rochester and 'Rochester', gossip, and manuscript culture. David Francis Taylor's 'Rochester, the Theatre, and Restoration Theatricality' offers a new perspective on 'the politics of theatricality' in *Lucina's Rape*, the play once more commonly known as *Valentinian*, adapted from the original by John Fletcher, arguing that a Whiggish Rochester demonstrates how 'spectacle' managed by the court can serve to divert the attention of Restoration subjects from troubling political realities. Christopher Tilmouth in 'Rochester and the Play of Values' reviews the old topic of Rochester's ambiguity, arguing that Rochester 'frames assumptions and value-commitments as vulnerable perspectives', exposing them as 'mere stances'. In his view, the only 'certainty' in Rochester's world is pain.

Tim Harris's 'Sexual and Religious Libertinism in Restoration England' revisits Rochester's libertinism, though he cites neither David Foxon or James Grantham Turner, who have both written important books on Restoration libertinism. Melissa Sanchez, discussing 'Sex and Sovereignty in Rochester's Writing', argues, like Taylor, for the political implications of *Lucina's Rape*. She also provides a distinctly present-day take on 'sexual liberty', not as the freedom to act on one's desires (e.g., the 'female libertinism' that Behn and others promote) but the ability 'to withhold or consent to physical intimacy'. Ros Ballaster in 'Rochester, Behn, and Enlightenment Liberty' reargues the received view, claiming that Rochester serves Behn as a 'pretext', allowing her to claim her place as a successor, and to make a case for 'sexual liberation for women'.

Tom Jones's 'Unfit to Print: Rochester and the Poetics of Obscenity' attempts a labored analysis of four different kinds of obscenity in Rochester's poems, but his argument would have been strengthened if he had paid more attention to textual variants and to what a Restoration reader would have found obscene. In 'The Perspective of Rochester's Letters', Nicholas Fisher, an editor of Rochester who has previously worked on dating Rochester's poems and on his letters, challenges Jeremy Treglown's editorial ordering of the letters, most of which are in fact undated. He surveys the range of the letters, distinguishing between Rochester's familiar epistles to Henry Savile and his shorter 'notes' to his mistress and wife, and reviews the classical and vernacular epistolary models with which Rochester would have been familiar. Even though Rochester writes in various styles, Fisher thinks he can detect 'the personality behind his genius', a sign that biographical readings of Rochester persist, in the face of widespread recognition of his 'ventriloquism'. Despite its title, Tom Lockwood's 'Rochester and Rhyme' does not discuss Rochester's rhyming, the opportunities offered by the triplets of 'Upon Nothing', or the frequent use of half-rhyme (as in the opening lines of the 'Satyre Against Reason and Mankind'). After a bold opening review of 'the worst word[s]' for which Rochester finds rhymes—*blunt*, *grunt*, *don[e]* 't—Lockwood turns instead to the loosely related topics of rhyme in the Restoration, Rochester's metrics, and his reworking of ('rhyming' of?) poems by his predecessors.

Dustin Griffin

New York University (emeritus)

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

How to cite this article: McGrath, Patrick, George Klawitter and Dustin Griffin. 2018. Book Reviews. *Marvell Studies*, 3(2): 4, pp. 1–12, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ms.32>

Submitted: 08 September 2018 **Accepted:** 08 September 2018 **Published:** 11 October 2018

Copyright: © 2018 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Marvell Studies is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Open Library of Humanities.

OPEN ACCESS The Open Access icon, a stylized 'A' inside a circle.