

plurality of sources can offer access to the ordinary and informal creativity of women in the Middle Ages. The author repeatedly distances herself from abstract frameworks to assert instead “a concrete bodily act, an act felt sensually and emotionally and not solely intellectually” (12).

Rhetorical strategies with a significant political dimension are also a relevant aspect of the analysis devoted to the aristocratic woman Leonor López de Córdoba (part 2, chapter 5). The discussion on the classification of the written word, between memoirs or *relaciones*, raises the question of truth from the perspective of the female subject. The author considers female discourse in a historical context of propaganda, in a moment marked by the search for royal favor, where writing was a powerful instrument for social advance. The author’s rigorous effort rejects the paradigm of autobiography in order to unravel what it meant for a woman to write about herself in the Middle Ages. Rhetorical strategy stresses the importance of the dialogue of Teresa de Cartagena with Alonso de Cartagena; however, women authors show their subjectivity most strongly when they express the suffering of an afflicted humanity. The retreat into consolation establishes the act of writing not only as a rhetoric defense but also as a form of resistance.

In all, the book follows the path of medieval women in search of a voice of their own, and the interpretation proposed brings them out of their isolation, “trying to share a space with men” (426).

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*Bad Humor: Race and Religious Essentialism in Early Modern England.*

Kimberly Anne Coles.

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This book offers a refreshing new approach to early modern critical race studies by investigating the correspondence of early modern science and religion in the construction of race and its manifestation in colonial practices. Specifically, Coles traces the process whereby wrong religion, caused by excess of melancholy corrupting the body and soul, becomes marked on the skin. She clarifies that in early modern England “the assignation of color is the index of religion—or its absence” (13). By merging early modern science and religion in her study, Coles demonstrates how theories of the body and soul were manipulated to designate people of color and their offspring as non-Christian in order to justify colonial oppression.

Coles weaves together close readings of sonnets, masques, closet drama, epic poems, and stage plays alongside religious history, early modern medical theory, and early American law. In the first three chapters of the book, Coles examines discursive

transactions of body and soul to prove their mutual exchange of corruption, the corrupt soul's manifestation on the skin, and its dissemination to offspring. In each of these chapters, she first analyzes a mainstream literary text and then juxtaposes it with a discourse demonstrating its exploitation for political purposes. Chapter 1 explores the construction of Catholic identity in John Donne's Holy Sonnets in order to reveal the instability of the soul and the resulting correlation of religion and humoral disposition in Christopher Brooke's *Poem on the Late Massacre in Virginia*. Chapter 2 underscores the pervasive idea of the soul's materiality by showing how melancholic bodies of religious others in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blacknesse* and Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* are unworthy of divine love. Chapter 3, which focuses on Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, uncovers how Catholic identity is transmitted through the bloodstream, an ideology used to assert the inherent inferiority of Irish subjects in texts such as John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion*.

The final two chapters delineate the ways in which religious essentialism buttresses the treatment of bodies in colonial contexts. Chapter 4 analyzes Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in order to emphasize Spenser's understanding of body and soul as mutually constituted and his application of these views in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* as a means for suppression of irredeemable Irish subjects. Chapter 5 investigates how religious essentialism attaches to chromatic difference in William Shakespeare's *Othello* and Thomas Southerne's stage adaptation of Aphra Behn's novella *Oroonoko: A Tragedy*.

This fifth and final chapter accomplishes the clearest articulation of Coles's argument, in my view. According to Coles, *Othello* stages a contest between two different kinds of racial thinking, that of rank and religion, in which the latter supplants the former. Coles argues that in spite of his "superior lineage and the evident virtue that it supplies, Othello is unable to overcome defects of nation and inherited paganism" (124). Similarly, Southerne's play addresses questions of lineage in the New World through the status of Oroonoko and Imoinda's child, particularly given that Southerne changed Imoinda's character to a white woman. To cement her literary arguments, Coles usefully outlines the transformation of laws in early America, which justified the proliferation of slave populations through a program of rape in order to increase profits. These laws eventually determined that all children of slaves would be enslaved and thus inherit a pagan identity.

As Coles puts it, the book's project is to "describe a process of color-coding, whereby certain Christians—Irish Catholics, Spanish Catholics, converted Africans, and Indigenous peoples—are marked as pagan for colonial purposes" (1). The book certainly achieves this objective, making an important contribution to early modern critical race studies through its alignment of race, religion, and science. Coles navigates an array of thorny historical and literary material in order to convey multifaceted points in each chapter, and finally, in the coda, she connects these findings to the one-drop

rule, emphasizing that black skin continues to carry moral signifiers in our modern era due to this racist history.

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*Games and Gaming in Early Modern Drama: Stakes and Hazards*. Caroline Baird. Early Modern Literature in History. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. xii + 290 pp. \$54.99.

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In *Games and Gaming in Early Modern Drama: Stakes and Hazards*, Caroline Baird examines the way in which games feature in English drama of the early modern period. With the use of contemporary sources such as Francis Willughby's *Book of Games* and Cotton's *The Complete Gamester*, Baird analyzes descriptions of games in various plays of the period in order to provide new insights into our understanding of these works. While some of the games she analyzes are still popular today, others, such as Noddy, Post and Pair, and Vide-Ruff, will be entirely unfamiliar to the modern reader. In these plays, she argues that "the games are not about games," but rather about "land and wealth acquisition, social climbing, patriarchal supremacy, risk and reward, abdication, war, politics, sexual conquest and congress, love, adultery and even murder" (68).

Baird begins her book with a survey of the different types of games popular during the period as well as an overview of the roles that games play in drama of the day, explaining that at their most basic, games signal "error, wrong-doing, or over-reaching of some kind" and often function as indicators of "an important moment, turning point or crisis" (54). In chapters 3–6, she narrows the scope of her analysis somewhat, focusing on plays that feature one of four games—dice and dicing (chapter 3), cards (chapter 4), tables (chapter 5), and chess (chapter 6). In each chapter, she analyzes a number of plays (three for dicing, four for cards, two for tables, and four for chess) including certain works by Middleton, Heywood, Shakespeare, and Fletcher and Massinger, among others, in which these games are central. Through close reading, she works to support her thesis that these games have an important "role in the dramatic structure in which they are embedded so as to actively facilitate the plotting, in more complex ways than simply through metaphor" (252). Indeed, she finds that the plot action in many cases "mirror[s] the game's features" (252). She completes her study with two useful appendixes in which she compiles references to various games in other plays she was not able to include in her study.

While interest in the role of games in modern drama as well as other genres of literature has grown in recent years, Baird is one of few scholars who has attempted to establish commonalities of usage of a variety of games in drama, Gina Bloom