Zenón Luis-Martínez, editor. *Poetic Theory and Practice in Early Modern Verse: Unwritten Arts*. Edinburgh UP, 2023. Pp. 352. Hardback £95.00, ebook £0.00 ISBN: 9781399507844.

This excellent collection of eleven original essays on the interconnections of early modern theory and practice evolved from presentations at the University of Huelva's 2019 international symposium "Unwritten Arts: Keywords in English Sixteenth-Century Poetry and Poetics." Its contributors, editor Zenón Luis-Martínez states, "shared an assumption that the creative impulse that animates Renaissance writing of and about poetry grew out of Renaissance poetics but also outgrew the scope of what came to be systematised in the form of norms and precepts" (1).

Rosalie L. Colie's phrase in the subtitle suggests that it's the makers' take they endeavour to unpick while "explor[ing] ways in which texts of various kinds emerge as *unwritten arts* complementing and/or contesting the period's formally written poetics" (2). The focus may well be on the implicit but it is not to the detriment of the normative. This distinction is relevant as, besides an official-canon-building poetics, the term "normative" may also denote the fundamental problems individual writers face and must ultimately resolve to produce a text, that is, the kind of "active thinking about matter, forms, and functions of poetry as that thinking is generated in practical writing" (2). This is not negligible when considering vernacular literature against the humanist curriculum and classroom strategy, namely the prevalence of imitation, whether as interpretation, translation, or invention—ultimately, the selection and reworking of given models as resources of style and subject-matter. Examining how these models, which chiefly emerged from classical discourses, were essayed and assumed, also means assessing the vitality of poetry in one's own tongue and, in turn, its potential to generate new models that are appropriate for the concerns of a common quotidian experience and memory—lenses to perceive (and act upon) the world.

The classification of poetry among the arts, made it both permeable to and a vehicle for other disciplines' discourses and aims. Stemming from traditional teachings on oratory, as in Quintilian and Cicero, infused with Horatian instructive and sweet decorum, and adopted to serve Christian

tenets, the triad that came to define the period's ways of poetry—to delight, to teach, to move—was on a par with "the culture of teaching that was English humanism [and had] moved poetry and pedagogy to new prominence in intellectual life and pressed them closer together than ever before" (Dolven 2). Conversely, the stress on the importance of poetry's effects upon the reader occasioned changes in the figure of the poet, prolonging further age-old debates, amongst them, the nature of "poetic inspiration" and the recognition of the performative dimension of the poetic voice. Philip Sidney attended to these matters and acknowledged the need to nourish a given talent by patiently exercising learnt skills according to the poet's true conscience and discernment, as the passage, reminiscent of Ramus, from *An Apology for Poetry* indicates:

> Marry, they that delight in Poesy itself should seek to know what they do, and how they do; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it . . . Yet I confess I always that as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest-flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him. That Daedalus they say, both in this and in other, hath three wings to bear itself into the air of commendation: that is, Art, Imitation, and Exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we must cumber ourselves withal. Exercise indeed we do, but that very fore-backwardly: for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known; and so is our brain delivered of much matter which was never begotten by knowledge. For there being two principal parts—matter to be expressed by words and words to express—in neither we use Art or Imitation rightly. (Sidney 132–33)

The essays in *Poetic Theory and Practice* address these issues, steering close to the poems and their umpiring texts—comprehending the differences between and the occasions for that which is derivative, competent, and revolutionary. They raise questions involving memory and learning, the pressures of instruction and of civil duties, the difficulties in reconciling dignity and gratification, transmission of knowledge (coterie or broader readership)—and thus, the place of poetry and poets in Reformation England. The vast number of coeval critical sources drawn upon include Philip Sydney's *Defence*, George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*, Thomas Wilson's, *Rule of Reason*, William Scott's *Model*, William Webbe's *A Discourse of English Poetry*, and Abraham Fraunce's *Shepherd's Logic*. The generous Introduction contextualises the project

and includes two distinct stances of poetry assuming art's role: the poems of James VI and Aemilia Lanyer, closely read by the editor.

The intriguing pair, "unwritten arts," at the core of the collection encompasses aims, methodology, and materialisation of this project. The "inherent polysemy" of the word "unwritten"[1] points toward "unformulated critical assumptions outside official theory." Luis-Martínez notes its frequent occurrence in sixteenth-century

> legal and religious contexts, mostly in reference to the oral traditions of the English common law and Catholic Doctrine. Phrases such as "unwritten verities" and "unwritten traditions" . . . repeatedly signalling the distrust towards what is admitted by mere consensus against the authority of the scriptures and underlying the "new literalism" of Protestant culture. (10)

One is also reminded of "the blank surface that admits—palimpsest-like—unexplained, marginalised or novel meanings" (10). The word "art" encapsulates both poetry and poetics—the activity and the precepts that govern it—blurring the lines between theory and practice. Throughout the volume, besides "art," selected words—such as "grace," "blood," "habit," "atom," "sublime," "eloquence," "Muse"—acquire the status of keywords conceived "primarily as windows into the critical discourse on poetry in early modern England . . . their relevance is gauged by their capacity to identify, contextualise or explain a specific question in relation to early modern poetry" (16).

Notwithstanding the indebtedness of this kind of approach to Raymond Williams' work in the field of cultural studies, Roland Greene's critical semantics, or Ita Mac Carthy's new philology,[2] these 'complex words' do not determine the book's structure. Instead, bearing in mind their functions across discursive fields, verse by James VI, Spenser, Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Aemilia Lanyer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Barnabe Barnes, Henry Constable, Lodge, and Chapman is multifariously analysed throughout chapters grouped into three thematic blocks found to be major concerns across contemporaneous treatises: Origin, Style, and Poetry.

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[1] "Not committed to writing; left unrecorded; 'Of laws, etc.: Not formulated in written codes or documents; not reduced to writing; oral.' Not written *of* or about.; 2. Not written upon. Also with *on*" ("Unwritten").

[2] Their work and an array of other scholars' with different approaches, including Catherine Bates, Clark Hulse, S. K. Heninger, Rosemond Tuve, and Lynn Enterline, is, of course, acknowledged throughout the collection.

The first three chapters by Joan Corbet-Soler, Emma Wilson, and Cassandra Gorman, respectively engage grace, logical cause, atom, and Cupid to examine texts that complement or configure alternatives to treatises. Corbet-Soler considers the courtly, political, and theological implications of the term grace in poems by Spenser, Philip Sidney, Greville, and Lanyer, and the tensions that the word generates, both within the poems and in what concerns their reception. Emma Wilson draws on Agricola, Melanchton, Ramus, Thomas Wilson, and Fraunce to trace the "connections between the discursive principles set forth in pedagogical works from the period and the ways in which writers put those ideas to use in creative contexts" (50), especially, how "sixteenth-century poets used logic to inject a new kind of agency into their poetry" (49). She analyses three "love complaints" by Spenser, Philip Sidney, and Marlowe as emerging from this "culture of logical causation and invention" (50). Cassandra Gorman relies on Renaissance mythography (especially Conti) to explore the connection between the atomic particle and the influence of Cupid in poems by Marlowe, Drayton, Philip Sidney, and Chapman. Gorman finds that the "trope of the atomised Cupid develops an aetiology for its own poetics of desire . . . wherein physical elements and Cupids conjoin to create both powerful, multi-layered metaphors (that 'pierce deep') and natural philosophical explanations for love and lust" (76–77).

The following three chapters by Rocío G. Sumillera, David Amelang, and Sonia Hernández-Santano attend to matters of style. Sumillera investigates "the semantics of blood"; Amelang looks for the unpoetic and instances of ineloquence, drawing from treatises, poems, and dramatic texts. Hernández-Santano's interest is the concept of eloquent bodies, connecting eloquence and emotions with a focus on Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis* and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*.

The third part of the book is devoted to individual poets' idiosyncratic voices. Jonathan P. A. Sell focuses on the sublime according to an aestheticised Philip Sidney. María Pérez-Jauregui compares Barnabe Barnes and Henry Constable through grace, following their respective journeys from the secular to religious lyric, one Protestant and the other Catholic, and the outcomes in terms of their careers. Cinta Zunido-Garrido draws on the concept of Muse in Lodge's *Phillis: Honoured with Pastoral Sonnets, Elegies and Amorous Delight* and *The Complaint of Elstred* to address the period's theories of imitation, inspiration, and imagination. Sarah Knight considers Fulke Greville and the idea of difficulty as impairment recurrent in the critical discussions of his work; Knight

perceives the intricacy of his writing as deliberate, thus an aesthetic and didactic category. The chapter by Zenón Luis-Martínez focuses on habit in George Chapman, problematises the idea of obscurity, and distinguishes the point of view of the received critical discourse and the poet's method, a discipline presumed in the reader aspiring to a communion by the text.

This collection fully succeeds in its purpose "to offer full-fledged instances of the habit of experiencing poetry and of thinking the conditions of the early modern poem from writerly and readerly perspectives" (10). It rescues neglected authors from derision and reads their works alongside that of canonical/more popular writers. Moreover, concerning the latter, the sensitive readings informed by unexpected connections, offer plenty of opportunities to realise, beyond established critique, the groundbreaking quality of their writings. It is thrilling to perceive the intricacy of this whole newly written art; although each chapter in its "radically different approach" can be read independently, there is much to profit from attending to the contributors' cross-references and acknowledgments of one another's points of view on overlapping topics. Far from accretions of redundancy, these gestures configure the venture's necessarily collaborative and transdisciplinary nature. This will no doubt elicit many rewarding readings and stimulate further research.[3] There is also detailed referencing and extensive bibliography both of primary and secondary texts could certainly inspire and inform many a project's preparatory work.

That Luis-Martínez' sophisticated edition complete with an elegant afterword by Clark Hulse has been published in Open Access form makes this an occasion for double rejoicing. The proof is in the pudding.

REFERENCES

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[3] The nature and extension of Iberian influence on English literary and philosophical discourse (Juan Luis Vives, Huarte de San Juan, Antonio de Guevara), for example.

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