Richard Rambuss. *Closet Devotions*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998. Pp. xii, 193.

Closet Devotions is a provocative intervention in the field of early modern literary studies; as well, it exemplifies the best sort of an interdisciplinary approach that partakes of religion, history, art, and sexuality. Rambuss's illumination of the somatic dimension of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian devotion as it informs English poetry of that era is never dull and almost always revelatory, at times even inspirational. In clean, well-wrought language (that almost never falls into the trap of theoretical obfuscation), Rambuss recaptures the relevance of an Incarnational understanding of Christ's body to metaphysical poetry by the likes of George Herbert, Thomas Traherne, John Donne, and Richard Crashaw. Rambuss's work engages with and challenges those scholars (such as Caroline Walker Bynum and Leo Steinberg) who have noted the medieval and early modern corporealization of Christ, but who have then dismissed its erotic connotations. The sacred body, Rambuss contends, is both potentially "libidinal" and "transgressive," two adjectives that could in fact be applied to his own remarkable study. Drawing on theories propounded by Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault, Rambuss registers Christianity's own manifold "transit points" to ecstasy and transgression in order to unpack metaphysical poetry's "polytropic erotics." While I shiver a little at his repeated metaphor of devotion's "mechanisms" (maybe I'm a closet romantic), Rambuss's book explains and legitimizes readings of texts that figure adoration for the Son of God as an embodied and downright sexual phenomenon. Not least amongst Rambuss's contributions in this regard is his argument that many of these poems possess a homoerotic dimension hitherto ignored by critics.

Dismissing compulsory heterosexuality from both Christianity and early modern Christian poetry, Rambuss ups the ante by revealing the ongoing presence of homodevotion to late-twentieth-century avant-garde art and gay male pornography, protest and S&M pleasures. Drawing on Donne's sense of intense sexual appetite and spiritual longing as being "homologous forms of desire," Rambuss pushes the presentist envelope by encouraging us to take stock of the surprising continuities between concupiscence (spiritual and material) then and now. *Closet Devotions* returns religion to the centre of early modern studies. Going beyond pedantic theological citation and cross-referencing, Rambuss opens for us a world of wonder that promises to renovate our understanding of subjectivity and desire, past as well as present.

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