

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Niayesh, Ladan, ed. *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest: Robert Greene, The Comical History of Alphonsus, Thomas Kyd, The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda, and Thomas Heywood, The Four Prentices of London*

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Volume 42, Number 4, Fall 2019

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068610ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068610ar>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Stanivukovic, G. (2019). Review of [Niayesh, Ladan, ed. *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest: Robert Greene, The Comical History of Alphonsus, Thomas Kyd, The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda, and Thomas Heywood, The Four Prentices of London*]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(4), 248–250. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068610ar>

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Both as a model of Neo-Latin style and an exemplar of early modern historical practice, Neville's writings are well worth revisiting. What Walton, Wilkins-Jones, and Wilson have achieved in their collaboration—more than simply a transcription and translation—is remarkable. Students of Renaissance Latin would find this a valuable text on which to hone their own language skills or as an entry point to the higher levels of Neo-Latin rhetorical achievement. Literary scholars and historians of Tudor England can draw on this to better understand Neville's place in the intellectual firmament of his time. This book also invites consideration of the act and impact of translation, contemporary and historical, particularly visible in subtle conversation with the Latin original and Woods's Jacobean version.

JANICE LIEDL

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**Niayesh, Ladan, ed.**

***Three Romances of Eastern Conquest: Robert Greene, The Comical History of Alphonsus, Thomas Kyd, The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda, and Thomas Heywood, The Four Prentices of London.***

The Revels Plays Companion Library. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018. Pp. 312. ISBN 978-0-7190-7857-6 (hardcover) £80.

In the Introduction to *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest*, Ladan Niayesh makes a strong case for the study of the romance: a kind of imaginary writing that straddles both fiction and drama and that was crucial to the imaginative representations and constructions of the East in the early modern period. The three plays, Niayesh argues, find “their place and significance within the extended family of their early modern stage romances of conquest over a Muslim East” (4). Every critical edition is a selection, and thematically-clustered editions of individual plays are no exception. The three plays, by three once-influential playwrights, are no doubt representative of the “eastern conquest” theme and the early modern theatre's interest in the topic. They were written and staged at the pinnacle of England's burgeoning engagement with the Eastern Mediterranean and the lands and mercantile territories beyond, and of the growing anxiety over the Ottoman conquest of the Christian lands

of Europe—and therefore of an anti-Muslim sentiment in literature. In the expanding golden age of staged drama in London in the 1580s and 1590s, when these plays were written and performed, there were many plays of the “eastern conquest” (the East is everywhere in Greene’s generically miscellaneous opus); indeed, a critical gesture towards explaining why these three dramatic romances in particular were chosen would have added yet another critical point in an otherwise well-researched Introduction that masterfully covers a big territory of literary and cultural criticism with clarity and precision. The editor gives us one reason—i.e., to take the three plays out of the shadow of Shakespeare—yet there must be others, inherent to the plays themselves.

Scholars, students, and (let’s hope) theatre practitioners should rejoice in having this scrupulously edited collection of three major dramatic romances flooded with tropes of “contest and conquest” (7): edited according to the highest standards of modern bibliography and textual editing, helpfully glossed and annotated, and intelligently and knowledgeably contextualized. Scholars of early modern drama have waited a long time to hold in their hands a modern, user-friendly, and authoritative text of three major plays by playwrights whose visibility on the widening horizon of early modern scholarship is clouded by an interest in Shakespeare. But Shakespeare’s romances of the East are of a different kind, and are much more of a hybrid than the three romances found here. This edition should make it possible for scholars to push the boundaries of our knowledge about how early the modern theatre contributed to the revival of nostalgia about the East by staging the conquests of it. This book can nudge scholars to think about what the plays tell us about their original audiences, and, as Niayesh suggests, about what innovations the plays brought to the theatre milieu of late Elizabethan London. Maybe, too, this book will inspire Manchester University Press—well known for its Revels Plays Companion Library, which has saved from oblivion many a play from the early modern period—to bring out other East-themed plays by these playwrights, and thus enable new scholarly conversation about once popular and now forgotten texts and their contexts, and even offer a fresh perspective on Shakespeare.

Each play is introduced in detail, with information about authorship, dating, staging, sources, allusions, and analogies; its contribution and challenge to the compositional elements of romance, or “generic contradictions” (15); and a contextual discussion of the play’s main concerns and the relationship of romance and the classical background. For example, in the case of Greene,

who displays his classical learning both self-consciously and extravagantly, one expects to go back to the classics to gloss his lines. Each introduction gives plenty of evidence of working deeply with the source material in manuscript and print: for example, connecting Heywood to Richard Johnson. The text of each play is meticulously edited; Niayesh has made excellent use of some of the most reliable and influential secondary source criticism to date. Moreover, he writes elegantly and engagingly.

Among many questions raised by this edition, one is whether the East, of the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, is largely a fictional construct in these plays—an exuberant product of these playwrights' learned creative imagination. To what degree is the East in these plays an *aesthetic, literary East* (given also that some of its source is in other literature about the East, like Tasso's epic)? To what degree are these plays informed, as many other scholars (cited by Niayesh) have argued, by various non-literary contexts: travel, religion, commerce, geography, politics, and diplomatic contacts and exchanges with the East? This excellent edition has given critics much material and reason to revisit these questions.

GORAN STANIVUKOVIC

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**Papy, Jean avec Lambert Isebaert et Charles-Henri Nyns, éd.**

***Le Collège des Trois Langues de Louvain, 1517–1797. Érasme, les pratiques pédagogiques humanistes et le nouvel institut des langues.***

Louvain : Peeters Publishers, 2018. xiv, 230 p. ISBN : 978-90-429-3622-5 (relié) 60 €.

*Merito et tempore*, « grâce au mérite et avec le temps » : telle fut la devise de Jérôme de Busleyden (1470–1517), humaniste cultivé qui légua à l'Université de Louvain une somme considérable afin de fonder un centre d'études des trois langues classiques inspiré et orienté par Érasme. Pour célébrer le 500<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la fondation de ce *Collegium Trilingue* en 1517, un très beau volume en langue française vient de paraître aux éditions Peeters de Louvain. Composé d'un avant-propos et de huit contributions, cet ouvrage rappelle le rôle fondamental du Collège dans la naissance d'une tradition d'études des