

of the brain, resonated with some parts of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Locke's opposition to the reduction of mind to matter led him to argue for a focus on thoughts themselves. Yet his own brief description of madness as a lack of ability to control the association of ideas looked to the brain as matter and relied on the figurative language of animal spirits. In an interesting move that links Cavendish's anti-empiricism to Locke's advocacy for describing only what can be seen, Keiser shows how neuroscience itself is positioned at a conceptual impasse that can only be bridged through the use of nervous fictions.

Locke's refusal to countenance the possibility of ever fully knowing the connection between mind and matter was part of wider epistemological debates over what it was possible to know about the mind and the self. In the final three chapters, Keiser turns to Addison's *Spectator* and the Scriblerians' grappling with questions of the brain, the relationship between matter and meaning, and the limits of scientific knowledge. Like Cavendish earlier, these satirical writings mocked the assumption that dissection of the brain could uncover the truth about neural processes and "witness the mind at work in the nerves" (155). At the same time, Keiser argues that *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus* (1714–27) tells the story of the development of neuroscience from the ancient to the modern, to the Cartesian understanding of the mind-body dualism, to skepticism of their own times. Keiser elaborates on this trajectory in the final two chapters, on Laurence Sterne and James Boswell, showing how Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* and Boswell's "The Hypochondriack" each illustrate the transition in neuroscientific representations from the hierarchical conceptualization of the brain as the commanding center of an army of animal spirits to an emphasis on the harmonious relationship between physiological, as well as social, organisms. More importantly for Keiser's project, the fallacy of the brain as a knowable object that would reveal the inner workings of the mind had been exposed. Boswell's use of the metaphor of the mind as a closed clock both illustrated the impossibility of bridging the gap between matter and mind, but also the reliance of neuroscience on "nervous fictions" that continue to this day.

By the end of the early nineteenth century, the mechanistic ideas of the brain as the control center of the body with the pineal gland at its core had been eclipsed by an idea of the brain as part of a wider network of both body and society. The new vitalist physiology understood the role of the brain as rationalizer of events and actions taking place outside of itself, whether within the body or beyond it, in society. Keiser's detailed mapping of this complex transition is fascinating and the argument for the role of "nervous fictions" compelling. As with all good scholarship, I was left wanting to know more: What is significance of this transition in ideas of the mind and body, and how does it relate to the work of Charles Taylor or Dror Wahrman on selfhood during this period? What do these literary fictions of the brain tell us about changing "values, philosophy, and aesthetics" (26)? How might they elucidate the changing ways in which British elites of the Enlightenment imagined "the human" in an era so fundamentally shaped by colonial encounters with difference?

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JAMES E. KELLY, *English Convents in Catholic Europe, c.1600–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 225. \$99.00 (cloth).

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Perhaps few things show how the historiography of Reformation-era England has moved than James Kelly's excellent monograph, *English Convents in Catholic Europe, c.1600–1800*. It is hard

not to think that forty years ago the subject of English convents in Europe up to the French Revolution would have been regarded as unworthy of study and that the research project the book comes out of might never have been funded. Even twenty years ago, before the “Catholic turn” in early modern English history that was pioneered by Peter Lake and Michael Questier, a book on the topic might have not found a publisher (Kelly reflects on this turn at page 7). But in a world in which #nuntastic is a recognized twitter hashtag (one recognized by early modernists, at any rate), the subject is now almost fashionable; but in this concise, incisive monograph, Kelly draws the reclusive women he studies into wider historical scholarship, showing their significance.

As Kelly shows, it was not that there were no “English women who discerned a religious vocation” on the European mainland before the founding of the Monastery of the Glorious Assumption in Brussels in 1598; they just “had no choice but to enter ‘local’ convents” (3). What changed in 1598 was that women from England could thereafter enter their own discrete national convents. There were twenty-one English foundations in Flanders and northern France alone, with further convents as far afield as Munich and Lisbon. The project *Who Were the Nuns?* and the research network *History of Women Religious in Britain and Ireland* are rather different modern foundations, concerned with uncovering and understanding the history of the convents and of those who entered them. Kelly has co-edited an online calendar of sources for the *Who Were the Nuns?* project, accessible from the Queen Mary’s University of London website (<https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/publications>). This interpretation (which is structured thematically rather than as a narrative) is a welcome addition to the scholarly literature not just of English women religious but also of early modern English Catholicism and of English exiles or other travelers in mainland Europe (a topic on which there is still rather more on expatriate Irish and Scots than on English ones).

In six chapters, plus introduction and brief conclusion, Kelly deals with who became nuns in these convents, why, and the workings of patronage; the theological, spiritual, and logistical question of enclosure; material culture; how the convents were financed; “liturgical life” (Chapter 5) in the convents; and Catholic networks. He does so based on a strong evidential foundation, founded above all on Kelly’s successful exploration of a number of mostly obscure English Catholic institutional archives.

To my mind, three areas stand out. First is Kelly’s argument that English women religious on the European mainland outdid their local counterparts in commitment to full enclosure. Indeed, they “embraced with fervour” the “imposition of enclosure . . . becoming known as standard-bearers of Catholic teaching” in this regard (52). Kelly is clear: “English women religious . . . were not the victims of some draconian rule, nor were they inert objects passively receiving an external act” (76); “commitment to the Tridentine rules relating to enclosure was a defining characteristic of the English convents and one for which they became known in the wider church” (77). One wonders if other kinds of English Catholic émigrés likewise became known for being especially fervent for certain Roman Catholic teachings that others were less enthusiastic about. If so, what might this say about the effects of the process of exile?

Kelly also explores the material culture of the convents and the way they contributed to the “extensive artistic architectural remodelling programme” embarked on by post-Tridentine Catholic Europe (78). This is fascinating, though it is the shortest chapter. In this case, Kelly argues that English convents did *not* stand out; instead, they acted “in the same way as their European conventual neighbours” (98). His consideration of this subject would have been strengthened, I felt, by at least some reference to the considerable and burgeoning literature on Protestant ecclesiastical architecture and material culture. I was surprised to find no reference to the work of Andrew Spicer, for example, who has examined very similar initiatives that are exactly contemporary with, and in some cases in virtually the same areas as, the convents Kelly examines.

The analysis of “Financing the conventual movement” (chapter 4) is welcome in going beyond the subjective and contingent experiences of the enclosed Englishwomen into social and financial structures, but it connects these with spiritual and theological dynamics. “The

strict enclosure of communities of women religions . . . had a huge impact upon the economic running and financial stability” of the convents and in multiple ways (99). While much of their financial prosperity depended “on European Catholic benefactions” (116), and while “English institutions utilized the same fund-raising methods as other convents in Catholic Europe, they were never fully insulated from political and religious developments in England” (124). But Kelly shows that there was no direct correlation between the convents’ financial well-being and the wider health or prosperity of Roman Catholicism in England—just the opposite at times, since “proximity to a significant expatriate English community was . . . advantageous” and, for example, the Stuart exile court in France after 1688/89 “offered significant funding potential for the convents . . . based in or near Paris where the Stuart court was located” (126).

One would now like to see Kelly’s fine study integrated into wider questions about the extent to which nuns’ experience was similar to those of the many English male religious in Catholic Europe in the same period, in foundations, again, in Flanders and Northern France, but also in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. For that matter, are there any comparative insights to draw from the dynamics of religious exiles’ life that could be applied to those of expatriates in general? This would be as true of Protestant expatriates, who in this period were less likely to be exiles (though crime and disgrace also generated exile) but of whom there were many travelers, migrant workers, and soldiers. Such questions go beyond the scope Kelly assigned himself and really are for future historians who should draw on this excellent monograph. It is a model of concision and thematic analysis, and that, together with generally very clear writing, means it could be of use for both undergraduate- and graduate-level courses. It can and certainly should be read by historians of religion and historians of the English experience in Europe.

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MARCIA KUPFER, ADAM S. COHEN, and J. H. CHAJES, eds. *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages 16. Turnout: Brepols, 2020. Pp. 520. \$260.00 (cloth).
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In the rich and diverse *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, editors Marcia Kupfer, Adam Cohen, and J. H. Chajes take as their starting point the question of what medieval society considered worth knowing, and how it transmitted that knowledge in visual terms. More specifically, the essays in this collection investigate what Kupfer terms in her introduction the “knowledge-generating performativity of visual apparatuses” (11). This is an important distinction: the larger contribution of the nineteen essays may be to show that the medieval images and diagrams discussed do not, in fact, merely visualize knowledge. Instead of transmitting the same knowledge in a new and potentially more understandable medium or augmenting or interpreting the knowledge provided in accompanying texts using novel combinations of motifs, images and diagrams are agents or prompts for active memory construction, generating new and different knowledge in the mind of the viewer.

This more complex role is aptly framed by the volume’s first essay, Mary Carruthers’s “Geometries for Thinking Creatively,” which explains how medieval thinkers distinguished rote recall of memories from “rememoration”: creative reimagining or reconstitution of knowledge. Many of the essays that follow demonstrate different ways in which images became agents in this process. For instance, several essays examine the ways in which the