Jan Bloemendal and Nigel Smith, eds.

Politics and Aesthetics in European Baroque and Classicist Tragedy. Leiden: Brill, 2017. Pp. vii + 442. Hb, \$215.

Only three out of the fourteen essays in this volume directly concern Jesuit drama. Yet, the Jesuit presence is felt in many of the other chapters as well, suffusing the volume with both the context of the period in which Jesuit drama formed a major presence on European stages and the larger shaping influence of the Jesuits emerging from the volume as a whole.

During the early-modern era, classical drama found new manifestations in the form of both neoclassical and baroque dramas. The introduction by volume editors Bloemendal and Smith notes that neo-Latin tragedy “found a ready audience in universities and, after 1553, in the Jesuit gymnasias and academies” (5). The Jesuits contributed to a “democraticization of culture” by educating all classes, and especially by welcoming the poor to Jesuit schools (25). As a result, Jesuit drama was not a court drama or elite drama but a theatre for all.

Of further importance, “It was the Jesuits who explored the possibility of acting out martyrdom to the full, including the martyrdom of princes and kings” (5). Indeed, one of the debates of the period concerned whether or not Christian tragedy, especially concerning martyrdom, was even possible. Several of the essays in the volume touch upon the debate and the Jesuits’ answer, which was always in the affirmative. Martyrdom forms a major theme in Jesuit drama, and the volume explains both the reasons why and the execution thereof.

The first essay to directly address Jesuit drama is Howard B. Norland’s “Political Martyrdom at the English College in Rome,” which examines three plays that concern recent English political martyrs. *Thomas Morus* (1612) offers a dramatization of the death of Thomas More, *Thomas Cantuariensis* (1613) presents the martyrdom of Thomas Beckett, and *Roffensis* (1617–18) concerns John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, also martyred, like More, by Henry VIII. All three plays were written anonymously, to be performed at Carnival, and “all three are strong indictments of the power of the monarch” (150). Henry VIII is presented in two of the plays as an evil, brutal tyrant, allowing the Jesuits to criticize England at a distance, both spatially and temporally. Norland, however, also notes that the plays actually reflect (then) current concerns for Catholics in the United Kingdom, and the martyrs themselves provide models for virtue, courage and sacrifice for English Catholics living in Rome.

Interestingly, Norland also compares *Thomas Morus* (1612) with *Thomas More* (c.1596–1600), the early seventeenth-century play written by William Shakespeare, Anthony Munday, Henry Chettle, Thomas Heywood, and Thomas

Dekker, noting the latter must walk a very careful line of celebrating More as a tragic figure while avoiding overt criticism of the monarch who martyred him. The Jesuit play need walk no such line, criticizing the use of state power to crush Catholic priests.

For an example of an essay not directly analyzing Jesuit drama, yet displaying a strong Jesuit presence, is James A. Parentis, Jr's chapter on Dutch playwright Nicolas Vernulaeus and the end of Christian humanism. Vernulaeus adapted works from French and Italian Jesuits into Dutch, most notably Bernardo Stefonio's *Crispus* (1597) and *Hermenegildus* (1656) by French Jesuit Nicolas Caussin. Whereas the Jesuits focused on the religious and theological content, Vernulaeus used the material to critique the political milieu of the Netherlands. Similarly, Sarah Knight's essay on Latin tragedy and education in early modern England sees English Latin drama written in response to Jesuit influence. She also discusses Edwards Campion's orations as performance and sees Campion's sole full-length play *Ambrosia* (1578) as embodying his pedagogical theories.

Crispus also features in Blair Hoxby's "The Baroque Tragedy of the Roman Jesuits: *Flavia* and Beyond," although the eponymous play is obviously the focus. Hoxby offers a close reading of *Flavia* (1600), concerning "the martyrdom of three members of the imperial family during the reign of Domitian" (182). *Flavia* was restaged several times and found new life as a published script as well. Hoxby considers the play as "sacred metaphor," defending the doctrine of transubstantiation against Protestants, as "baroque drama," seeing the formal baroque in the structure of the play, and as a tragedy of "tyranny and martyrdom" (205). Hoxby explores the debate over whether or not a martyr can be a tragic hero, noting "*Flavia* asks us to see the passion of Christ as a tragedy, to identify the essence of tragedy with *pathos*, and to interpret the meaning of sacrifice and solemn commemoration through the joint example of the crucifixion and the Eucharist" (216), which represents a very different understanding of tragedy from the baroque and classicist schools.

Lastly, in chapter thirteen, Nienke Tjoelker's "French Classicism in Jesuit Theatre Poetics of the Eighteenth Century" argues that a shift occurs in Jesuits schools in German-speaking areas of Europe in the eighteenth century. Jesuits attempted to save school drama by reforming it in keeping with educational reforms, especially in Maria Theresa's Austria. Neo-Latin Jesuit drama was slowly changed into a new form of drama following the model of French classicism, revealing both "gallophobia" and "gallophilia" an ambivalence towards the French origins of the aesthetics but a recognition that under educational reform policy, the latter was a "much better fit" (396). In particular, the Jesuits changed in order to further the connections between "education,

the art of theatre, and creating good citizens,” the latter in addition to creating good Catholics (393). Interestingly, Pierre Corneille, himself Jesuit-educated, served as the strongest model. Tjoelker finds subtle and nuanced connections between the politics, aesthetics and pedagogy of the period.

The three Jesuit-specific essays I have highlighted here mark a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly literature on early modern Jesuit drama. All three strongly theorize and contextualize Jesuit plays of their respective times, places and politics. Yet many of the other essays, as noted above, while not taking Jesuit drama as the subject of analysis, nevertheless touch upon it in valuable and interesting ways and remind the reader that we take Jesuit drama out of its context(s) at our peril. These plays were produced under specific circumstances and for specific purposes – grouping them together simply because they were “Jesuit” does a disservice to the larger picture of Jesuit interactions *in situ*. This volume is a worthy supplement to the other work happening in the field and gives the reader ideas for how else we might consider Jesuit drama in larger contexts outside of Jesuit Studies.

Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

Loyola Marymount University

Kevin.Wetmore@lmu.edu

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00501008-04