Introduction

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'The first Nouell' of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, translated into English in 1620, takes as its theme the problem 'that virginity is very hardly to be kept, in all places'. Addressing an audience of 'Most woorthy Ladies', the narrator declares that 'there wantes no store of men and women, that are so simple, as to credit for a certainty, that so soon as a yong virgin hath the veile put on hir head (after it is once shorn and filletted) & the blacke Cowle giuen to couer her withall: shee is no longer a woman, nor more sensible of feminine affections, then as if in turning Nun, shee became conuerted to a stone'.[1] Boccaccio suggests that in the popular imagination the formal conversion of the maiden to a nun (her entry into conventual life) sets her outside the categories of both sex and gender. No longer 'a woman', she is also no longer subject to 'affections' stereotyped and construed as feminine. In this brief, satirical assertion, Boccaccio encapsulates the twin concerns of this volume: the shifts in social, professional, and personal identity that accompanied changes in religious affiliation, and the ways in which those changes were not simply refracted through but reshaped gendered experiences and ideologies.

In post-Reformation Europe (*c.*1550–1700), religious conversion took place on a scale that had not been seen since the official Christianisation of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Under the combined effects of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations within and pressure from the Ottoman Empire without, early modern Europe became a site in which an unprecedented number of people were confronted by new beliefs, and collective and individual religious identities were broken

down and reconfigured. Rival churches, supported by secular rulers, attempted to raise the bar regarding what it meant to be a practising Christian (of either Catholic or reformed persuasions), using the tools of social and ecclesiastical discipline to create distinct confessional identities. Even in the Protestant church, conversion continued to be used in the (traditional) *intra*-faith sense to refer to an intensification of religious life as much or more than in the *inter*-faith sense of a change from one creed to another. The renewed evangelical vigour of the Counter-Reformation Catholic church, observed and vigorously emulated by Protestant governments, ensured that questions of conversion, and of the nature of the true convert, occupied both church authorities and the popular imagination.

The experience of taking Christianity to the New World, Africa, South-East Asia, China, and Japan not only forced missionaries to reflect on how conversion could be best achieved, but also – thanks to the tsunami of written and printed reports that flooded west European libraries and the book market, providing edifying tales of derring-do to encourage generous donations to the missions or prayers for their success – stimulated Europeans into recalibrating what it meant to be a Christian. Central to this process was the 'invention of the indigenous', to borrow the phrase of the historian of science, Alix Cooper, who describes the role of New World flora and fauna in sensitising Old World observers to the unique 'indigeneity' of their own local natural world.[2] Realisation that 'what these New World barbarians now are, we once were' reverberated throughout the Old World, since tales of the missions crossed confessional lines and were read out in Protestant taverns as well as monastery refectories.[3] The Jesuit missionary to Peru, José de Acosta (1540–1600), told readers of his influential manual *On procuring the salvation of the Indians* (1588) that if they thought the Indians whose customs he was describing were wild, they should go and read Bede's account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons in his eighth-century *Ecclesiastical history*![4]

The effects of these religious changes on women have been widely debated. In 1989, Lyndal Roper reframed Joan Kelly-Gadol's famous question 'Did women have a Renaissance?' to ask whether women had a Reformation.[5] Like Kelly-Gadol, Roper concluded that the social and political changes seen by historians to constitute one of the major events of European history served to exclude women from religious and political life.[6] Luther's advocacy of the closing of convents and the marriage

of priests, advice he himself took up with enthusiasm by marrying the former Benedictine nun, Katharina von Bora, led to the re-creation of 'the Holy Household' in which patriarchy was reinforced and women's already restricted options were limited still further. Roper's vision of a narrowing female sphere in Protestant Europe has been paralleled by research into the life of Roman Catholic religious women after the reaffirmation of monastic enclosure at the Council of Trent (1545–63). Yet our understanding of the early modern saying 'aut murus, aut maritus' (either enclosure in a nunnery or subjection in marriage) has been nuanced to the extent that we can now appreciate that, for some, convents provided a space for social action, if not self-determination.[7] Recent work on early modern women's writing has similarly contested the view that religion was an uncontroversial and limiting space for women, insisting upon the urgency of devotional, meditative, and polemical writing within a charged confessional economy, and arguing that 'the history of the Christian West is replete with stories of women who combined an exploitation of the liberating texts already available in the scripture with an imaginative response to potentially oppressive traditions'.[8]

The study of conversion lends an added urgency to the question of how women negotiated and responded to shifts in religious doctrine and practice. Eric Dursteler has suggested that for some women conversion provided a means to address or escape their existing social, political, and economic situation. In 'manipulating the [Mediterranean] regions' intertwined geographical, political, and cultural boundaries', Dursteler argues, 'women on the margin exerted "shaping power" over their own lives'.[9] Kim Siebenhüner, too, in a detailed case study of Mariana di Fiori, a Polish Jewish woman who emigrated to Italy, converted to Christianity, and was subsequently denounced to the Holy Office in Rome by her husband, who suspected her of apostasy, notes that both men and women crossed cultural and religious borders during their travels, and that, 'with the advent of the Reformation, a wholly new problem emerged within Catholic Europe, for now migrants traversed territories belonging to different confessions'.[10] Siebenhüner demonstrates how differences in faith disrupted the gendered order of the household, and (especially for a Jewish woman) raised unsettling questions about the religious complexion of children; Mariana's religious decisions and identity, she concludes, 'were strongly influenced by her personal relationships and her identity as a woman'.[11]

Such a conclusion, whilst insightful, might seem to take the category of 'womanhood' for granted. Recent work on the ways in which religious difference was imagined in gendered and sexualised terms, and in which sexual 'deviancy' was tied to ideas of erring or heretical religion, however, has shed new light on how religious belief and community shaped not only ideas about but the experience of sex and gender. Frances Dolan, for example, has shown how English Catholic priests were stereotyped by Protestant polemicists as both effeminate and sexually predatory, whilst recent work on the English vogue for 'Turk plays' has increasingly paid attention to what Jane Hwang Degenhardt describes as 'the stage's unique tendency to link Christian-Muslim conversion to interfaith sexual attraction and intercourse',[12] leading, as Chloë Houston points out in Chapter 10, to a pervasive 'association between religious conversion and unstable gender identity'. The process of 'Turning Turk' was associated not only with lust but with sodomy: in Robert Daborne's *A christian turn'd Turk* (1612), discussed by Daniel Vitkus in Chapter 11, Ward (a fictionalised version of the real-life pirate and convert John Ward), is mocked by the Jewish Rabshake after his conversion, prompted by his passion for the Ottoman princess Voada: 'You Turke, I haue nothing to say to you: Ha, ha, ha, poore fellow, how hee lookes since *Mahomet* had the handling of him? hee hath had a sore night at *Whose that Knockes at the backe-doore?*'[13] In a study of how 'eros and ethnos intersected during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', Carmen Nocentelli argues that the European–Asian encounter (and, by extension, cultural encounters across the Mediterranean and in the New World), 'inflected the ways in which the West came to define what was acceptable in matters of eros', as particular forms of domestic and sexual activity became identified with racial – and religious – otherness.[14] Missionaries and settlers sought to regulate domestic and erotic practices as part of the process of religious conversion.

The study of the relationship between gender, sex, and conversion thus takes in not only the question of women's religious experience, but the gendered identity of men, and both the fantasy and the reality of sexed encounters across domains ranging from the household to the inquisitorial court, the local parish to the far-flung mission. Recent work on early modern masculinity has highlighted the limited and frequently restrictive extension of patriarchal privilege across the social and economic order. As Alexandra Shepard points out: 'To discern the full complexity of the workings of gender in any society we need to be as

aware of the gender differences *within* each sex as of those *between* them. Gender means different things for different men and women, and different things during the different stages of the life course.'[15] The chapters in this volume reveal the complex variety of ways in which men and women expressed and negotiated gendered identity in a range of settings and forms, from published narratives to domestic practice, legal testimony to devotional poetry. Our contributors are alert not only to the shifting and constantly re-determined relationships between men and women, but to the modes of masculinity and femininity produced and performed in religious contexts. In the case of 'the maiden who was made nun' (Lehfeldt, Chapter 6), or the Catholic son who rebuked his Protestant father (Crawforth, Chapter 3), we can see the extent to which religious belief and gendered identity intertwined. Crawforth's example of Robert Southwell in particular reminds us of the complex ways in which religious faith drew upon and remade gendered categories, not least in the performance of a tearful and affective masculine piety, and the repeated feminisation of the Christ figure.[16] Men and women did not simply bring an existing sexed self to the transformations of religion; they interacted with complexly gendered models which offered both patterns of piety and objects of devotion.

Both conversion and gender raise questions of performance and repetition. Recent work on conversion has emphasised its pragmatic and often prosaic nature, with converts changing faith rather for social, financial, or familial reasons than because of divine inspiration. Natalie Rothman, for example, narrates the case of Abdone, son of Giovanni of Aleppo, who changed faith on multiple occasions: 'When being Christian was inconvenient, he practiced Islam: when it became convenient again, he reembraced Christianity. By his own admission, he switched his allegiance at least five times, always due to contingent and pragmatic considerations.'[17] Arguing that questions of sincerity and motivation are not only necessarily evasive but 'embedded . . . in specifically modern Christian understandings of intentionality, interiority, and authenticity', Rothman suggests that scholars need to turn their attention from the question of *why* people converted to the question of *how*.[18] A separate strand of scholarship has traced how conversion was staged, not only in playhouses but in churches, streets, and other public and devotional spaces.[19] That challenge is taken up by the chapters in this volume, which variously consider how the performance of conversion – whether in the elaborate ritual of a public change of faith,

entry into monastic life, or the mundane repetitions of daily religious practice – might not simply reflect or announce a conversion (whether sincere or not), but inculcate changes in affect, social bonds, bodily experience, and belief.

Questions of the performativity of conversion align with influential arguments relating to gender-as-performance, not least in the work of Judith Butler. Celebrating the ability of drag artists to expose and trouble the artificiality of the apparently natural binary between the sexes, Butler argues that, through the excesses of a caricatured performance, drag reveals 'a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance', revealing the imitative and repetitive performances that constitute both gender and sex.[20] Offering a powerful critique of the sex/gender distinction, Butler argues that this division is predicated upon a body imagined as existing outside of culture and discourse, upon which sexed significance can be inscribed. In contrast, Butler urges us to 'consider that a sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a "natural sex" or a "real woman" or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions'.[21] Sex, in other words, is as much a product of culture as is gender, brought into being by the inescapable repetition of gendered behaviours and discourse.

The work of Thomas Laqueur, though subject to extensive revision and critique, has been influential in demonstrating that early modern concepts – and hence experiences – of the sexed body were very different from our own. Concentrating upon the Galenic tradition, Laqueur argues that early moderns subscribed to a one-sex model, according to which male and female bodies were understood to be inherently similar. Women, colder and wetter in constitution, had their genital organs inside; hotter, dryer men had the same organs on the outside of their bodies. The difference between sexes was, then, a difference 'of degree and not of kind'.[22]

Butler's work is powerful in revealing the formative force of both speech acts and repetition. In the context of early modern conversion, her insights ask us not only to consider how religious beliefs, ideologies, and debates contributed to the performance and internalisation of gendered models, but also to extend our analysis and ask how the rituals and repetitions of religious practice formed the basis of deeply-felt, faith-based identities and experiences, and produced effects of inwardness as well as social bonds.[23] Building on Butler's insights, Elizabeth Grosz goes

so far as to argue that: 'Sex is no longer the label of both sexes in their difference . . . it is now the label and terrain of the production and enactment of sexual difference.'[24] In parallel terms, we might argue that early modern conversion – along with the numerous textual, musical, artistic, and other forms in which conversion was described and debated – was concerned precisely with the production and enactment of religious difference, working not simply as a means of moving between confessions but as the ground upon which the differences between faiths were repeatedly redrawn, and hence brought into being.

For Butler, drawing on the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin and John Searle, linguistic constructions are central to the construction both of gender and of subjectivity. Questions of the relationship between language and conversion have also recently come into view, not least in the work of Molly Murray, who argues, in her study of the 'poetics of conversion', that the ostentatious stylishness and 'dense "literariness"' of devotional, metaphysical poetry is deeply engaged with questions of religious affiliation and change.[25] The relationship between conversion and narrative has become the subject of particular scrutiny in recent years, as scholars move away from the paradigm of the 'conversion narrative' as a fixed genre, emerging from the gathered churches of the mid-seventeenth century, and towards a flexible sense of the various ways in which conversion is plotted, rhetorically performed, and built on (as well as able to reshape) powerful existing narrative models.[26] As the editors of a recent special issue on 'Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World' point out, 'the retelling of the conversion experience was in many ways as important as the religious change itself'.[27] Narratives crossed linguistic and national borders, in spoken, printed, and manuscript forms, and their persuasive effects ranged from the stated desire for further conversions to the confirmation and assurance of believers already securely within the faith.

Narrative, of course, is not simply subsequent to conversion, a retelling of past events. Existing narrative models exerted a shaping force upon gendered and religious identity. The conversions of Saints Paul and Augustine were the dominant archetypes for Christian conversions, and numerous converts situated their own religious revelations as the result of reading, and reflecting upon, accounts of prior conversions.[28] Jeffrey Shoulson has recently argued that the figure of the converted or converting Jew was central to numerous narratives of conversion and cultural change.[29] Equally, the contributors to this volume recognise

that narratives are brought into being as a result of institutional and bureaucratic, as well as generic, forms. As Natalie Zemon Davis influentially argues, historical subjects were alert to the 'shaping choices of language, detail, and order . . . needed to present an account that seems to both writer and reader true, real, meaningful, and/or explanatory'.[30] Thus we can ask how people told stories, 'what they thought a good story was, how they accounted for motive, and how through narrative they made sense of the unexpected and built coherence into immediate experience'.[31] In various ways, the chapters in this volume reflect upon the constraints which shaped narrative, as well as the ways in which language shaped both religious and gendered experience – forming, asserting, and confirming the gendered convert. David Graizbord (Chapter 2), for example, explores the ways in which one convert shaped her story in an attempt to negotiate the demands of the Spanish Inquisition, whilst Keith Luria (Chapter 9) brings into view the formal and polemical requirements of missionary reports. Kathleen Lynch (Chapter 12) reflects upon narrative absences within the archives, as well as the power of naming in the process of conversion.

Recent scholarship on religion and material culture has also begun to reflect on how belief and religious identity are shaped by the physical environment, by personal relationships with objects of devotion, by clothing and posture, and by the daily repetitions of prayer and devotional gestures. For Boccaccio, in the quotation with which we opened this introduction, it was the act of having 'the veile put on hir head . . . & the blacke Cowle giuen to couer her withall' that both marked and effected a virgin's conversion into a nun. Against the dominant paradigm of seeing religion as a series of propositions to which the believer assents, David Morgan asserts that we should instead consider belief as 'a shared imaginary, a communal set of practices that structure life in powerfully aesthetic terms'.[32] Religion is something heard, felt, tasted, smelt, and seen, a set of repeated practices which shape both body and mind.

In an influential recent study of *The Senses in Religious Communities* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Nicky Hallett explores the relationship between sensory experience and both gendered and religious identities, emphasising the range of sexed positions a nun might adopt and experience: 'Are nuns' sensory reactions cultural manifestations, overlaid (or not) by devotional? Might they (also or instead) be giving a response based on gendered reception; idealising their expres-

siveness to fit the expectations of a (particular kind of) woman, of a nun, of a Carmelite? Which came first in their self-perception, and does this perception coincide with their self-presentation?'[33] Men and women encountered their environments through perceptive faculties already mediated by the ideals of sex and religion; in turn, material encounters disciplined and directed the senses and the body, creating new forms and experiences of gender and faith.

Embodied belief, Morgan argues, takes place 'not *in* spaces and performances as indifferent containers, but *as* them, carved out of, overlaid, or running against prevailing modes of place and time'.[34] The same is true of gendered identity, produced as much through habits, patterns, and material practices as through assent (willing or otherwise) to stereotypes of gendered behaviour. As Sara Ahmed argues in *Queer Phenomenology*, that gender 'is an effect of how bodies take up objects, which involves how they occupy space by being occupied in one way or another'.[35] In recent scholarship, conventual space has become a crucial locus for the study of the mutual influence of materiality, gender, and religious identity. Offering a compelling study of seventeenth-century Neapolitan convents, Helen Hills urges scholars to bring together questions of belief, gender, and architecture, insisting that 'space does not merely provide the locus for social relations; it is primary to the construction of gendered and social identity'.[36] Architecture does not simply reflect but produces sexual, social, and religious difference or identity (in the sense of sameness, as well as of identification).[37] Questions of materiality and the environment are taken up in different ways in several of the chapters which follow. Claire Canavan and Helen Smith (Chapter 5) reflect upon women's needlework and domestic furnishings as agents of conversion, whilst Elizabeth Lehfeldt (Chapter 6) further advances our understanding of 'habit' (both repeated practice and clothing) in the process of personal and social identity-formation in Italian convents. Saundra Weddle and Jane Hatter (Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, respectively) extend further our sense of the effects of material 'conversions', reminding us of Boccaccio's blurring of spiritual and physical transformations in the imagined 'conversion' of the young woman to a stone. Where Weddle examines the transformations and permutations of the convent fabric, Hatter asks how the Catholic soundscape of women's churching rituals – crucial occasions for the expression of women's social and maternal identity – was 'converted' in the post-Reformation church.

In various ways, then, the chapters in this volume provide the reader

with provocations for rethinking how gender and conversion interacted in this vital period for the history of religious identity in western Europe. Eric Dursteler's observation, in the opening chapter, that 'conversion was never merely a religious act' is a reminder that it was a process through which one could claim a new social self (or even reassert one's former identity). It was also a process in which it is clear that men and women's religious experiences must not be differentiated according to simplistic binaries that posit that either sex was necessarily 'to piety more prone'. Further comparative work on male and female narratives of conversion on (not only) the Mediterranean borderlands of the Christian world would further nuance this picture.

David Graizbord's chapter nicely complements Dursteler's in its insistence that we need to be alive to the degree to which 'cultural commuters' sought to meet the expectations of their audience. In Graizbord's case, this audience was the tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition, who even in their late-eighteenth-century dotage could elicit consciously 'scripted' performances from those under scrutiny. The socially marginal Carlota Liot used her alleged adoption of Jewish identity to claim the material rewards of conversion to the True Faith. Despite the 'vague quality' of her testimony she was ultimately believed by her questioners and so received no different a treatment from that meted out to the more culturally confident journeyman carpenter Salomón Bergom. The similar outcomes of these contrasting cases should make us more fully alive to the importance of the role played by the questioners not only in shaping conversion narratives but also in determining whether or not they were to be considered credible.

Hannah Crawforth (Chapter 3) treats of the connections between generation, gender, and genre in the writings of the Catholic poet and martyr, Robert Southwell. In tracing the complex and varied masculine positions exploited by Southwell, Crawforth's chapter points to the urgent need for further scholarship on the effects of confessional difference upon family relationships, and the modes of manhood both adopted by and attributed to fervent and suffering believers. Noting the preponderance of women's voices in the *Spirituall experiences, of sundry beleevers* (1653), a mammoth collection of conversion narratives, Abigail Shinn (Chapter 4) examines the interplay between the anonymity created by the use of believer's initials rather than full names, and the kinds of feminised, Christian experience created through repeated references to gendered histories and devotional acts. In exploring how

the printed book creates a distinctive voice and gendered identity to be replicated across the gathered churches, Shinn's chapter poses provocative questions about the ways in which both gender and religious identity are (re)produced in print, and how acts of textual generation might themselves be gendered.

Both Shinn and Crawforth point to the generative logic of conversion, the declared impulse of the convert to effect more conversions, and of the conversion narrative to engender narrative imitation. The question must remain open how far these texts sought to promote conversion, and how far they sought to confirm existing believers in their own faith, through the figure of the errant, and often tormented, would-be convert. Claire Canavan and Helen Smith also take up the theme of the convert who, 'being conuerted her selfe [endeavours] the conuersion of others'. By taking seriously numerous accounts of women's evangelical activity, they reopen the question of women's religious agency, seeing accounts of women's exemplary behaviour not simply as techniques of commoditisation and silencing but as indices of the affective and public nature of women's piety.

Elizabeth Lehfeldt's insistence that nuns' habits inhabited a 'habitus' that was both more malleable and flexible than surface impressions might suggest is an important reminder that material culture is to be regarded not simply as a product to be described but also as a process to be interpreted in all its nuance and specificity. That this was precisely the age in which all religious – not only nuns, monks, friars, and clerks regular (such as the newly founded Jesuits who lived simultaneously in community and in the world) but also the 'seculars' (those religious who did not live according to a rule in community) – took on the appearance that they still largely exhibit today has not been remarked upon enough. Future research would do well to engage more thoroughly with this sartorial reformation.[38]

Attention to the material reality within which conversion was framed, expressed, lived, and staged – this time of stone and bricks and mortar, rather than fabric and leather – is also a preoccupation of Saundra Weddle's chapter. However, the close attention Weddle pays to the circumstances of the foundation and subsequent development of individual convents serves to remind us not only of the necessarily contingent and reciprocal nature of the relationship between buildings and their environment, but also that we must not overlook the ways in which the spaces within convents encouraged certain movements and

discouraged others. In such a context 'enclosure' was necessarily something which also disclosed certain kinetic proclivities. Future research into the different ways in which male and female religious orders made use of similar spaces – which were sometimes the same spaces, inhabited sequentially – is sorely needed.

Jane Hatter invites us to consider the devotional and domestic soundscapes that surrounded women's churching rituals, identifying new evidence for the particular compositions that accompanied and shaped these important occasions. Her chapter allows us a rare glimpse into lay women's engagement with sacred music, and encourages us to consider not only how music and ritual might be 'converted' to reformed ends in the nascent Protestant church, but also how women might 'convert' public and festive occasions to meet their own needs, even as they were shaped and scripted by the requirements of performance and piety.

Keith Luria makes the important point that missionaries accommodated their conversion strategies not only to local circumstances but also to their audiences at home. Both missionaries and their readers in the Old World were busy and confident interpreters of signs of spiritual possession. In other words, spiritual possession was not only a shared, common language by means of which Old World Roman Catholics consoled, edified, and even entertained themselves with tales of missionary derring-do, but also a way of convincing themselves of the ultimate effectiveness of the Christian conversion of the New World by the Old. Luria's detailed study of the reception of Vietnamese women's conversions suggests the need for further studies of the ways in which such cultural encounters were 'translated' for their Old World audiences.

Chloë Houston explores English authors' efforts to establish early modern Persia as a site ripe for conversion both to Protestant Christianity and to modes of English masculinity, imaginatively countering the lure of Islam and the possibility of English travellers' conversions. Her chapter asks us to consider how tropes of masculinity and effeminacy were used to respond to and negotiate religious difference, and how the comforting fictions of the stage sought to establish both gendered and religious identity as tied to nationality, and as staunchly immutable. In its closing account of women's perceived religious fickleness, Houston's chapter suggests the need for further study of the ways in which relations between men, and between divergent religious traditions, were negotiated and explored through the figure of the female convert.[39]

Daniel Vitkus also asks us to consider the status of woman as

commodity, this time in relation to the bed-trick, a fiction of substitution that became increasingly popular on the early Stuart stage. In a provocative account, Vitkus aligns three forms of trickery, exploring the imaginative and practical ties between economic, erotic, and religious deceit. Concluding with a series of plays in which a Moorish character is substituted for an English bed-fellow, Vitkus explores how, at these moments, fears of racial, commercial, and erotic difference converged on the English stage.

Like Shinn, Kathleen Lynch turns her attention to the gathered churches that constituted such a significant part of Anglo-American religious life in the mid-seventeenth century and have frequently been identified as the site from which the conversion narrative emerged as a specific genre.[40] Exploring Henry Jessey's *Exceeding riches of grace* (1647), an account of the illness and divine inspiration of Sarah Wight, Lynch demonstrates how a young girl, described as an 'empty nothing creature', could become a vehicle for divine grace, widely studied both in person and in print as a model for Christian inspiration. Lynch's focus is on a fleeting moment within Jessey's text: the mention of 'Dinah the Black' in a list of credible witnesses. Lynch tests the relationship between exemplarity and the exceptional, between the apparently ordinary inclusion of a black woman in Jessey's account and her possible role as a trophy convert. This chapter reminds us of the need for further research into not only the identities and experiences of individual converts, but the kinds of work – both in terms of religion and of gender – carried out through rituals of naming, renaming, and textual (including biblical) reproduction.

Taken together, these varied chapters pay sustained attention to how discourses and manifestations of gendered identity shaped the experience and actions of the convert. At the same time, they ask how religious change both manifested and reshaped the ideals and realities of sexed identity and behaviour. They demonstrate the intricate and overlapping performances of religious and gendered selfhood, and the difficulties as well as opportunities that this rocky terrain offered not only to converts but to their audiences, readers, and narrators. Shaped by the material environment, by practice and habit, by a host of texts and representations, and by particular contexts, the identity of the convert was at once persistent and malleable, intertwining with the multiple gendered – or de- or re-gendered – positions made available through the negotiation of the post-Reformation landscape.

NOTES

1 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The decameron containing an hundred pleasant nouels* (London, 1620), P1v. This is a relatively faithful translation of the first novel but from the third day, as can be seen by looking at the most literal modern one by J. M. Rigg of 1903: 'Fairest ladies, not a few there are both of men and of women, who are so foolish as blindly to believe that, so soon as a young woman has been veiled in white and cowled in black, she ceases to be a woman, and is no more subject to the cravings proper to her sex, than if, in assuming the garb and profession of a nun, she had put on the nature of a stone'. Cfr. 'Bellissime donne, assai sono di quegli uomini e di quelle femine che sí sono stolti, che credono troppo bene che, come ad una giovane è sopra il capo posta la benda bianca e indosso messale la nera cocolla, che ella piú non sia femina né piú senta de' feminili appetiti se non come se di pietra l'avesse fatta divenire il farla monaca' (*Terza giornata, novella prima*). Both texts, with the Italian prepared by Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), may be easily consulted via Decameron Web at: http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/.

2 Alix Cooper, *Inventing the indigenous: local knowledge and natural history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

3 Book I of the Jesuit missionary Nicolas Trigault's edition of Matteo Ricci's *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu ex Mattaei Riccii eiusdem societatis commentariis libri V* (Augsburg, 1615) was translated into English and included in Samuel Purchas' massive five-volume, 4262-folio page *Hakluytus posthumus* (*Purchas his pilgrimes . . . The Second Part* (London, 1625), Cccccccc3r–Cccccccc4r). For an example of the way Jesuit missionary accounts were followed with interest beyond refectory walls of convents and monasteries see the manuscript writings of the Luzern chronicler and apothecary, Renward Cysat (1545?–1614) as discussed in Dominik Sieber, *Jesuitische Missionierung, priesterliche Liebe, sakramentale magie: Volkskulturen in Luzern, 1563–1614* (Schwabe: Basel, 2005), p. 28 n. 79.

4 'Legat qui volet antiquos anglorum mores, duriores nostris indis inveniet'; J. De Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute*, ed. L. Pareña, 2 vols (Madrid: CSIC, 1984–87), II.40.

5 Joan Kelly-Gadol, 'Did women have a Renaissance?' in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koon (eds), *Becoming visible: women in European history* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 137–64.

6 Lyndal Roper, *Holy household: women and morals in Renaissance Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

7 See Elizabeth Lehfeldt, *Religious women in Golden Age Spain: the permeable cloister* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005); Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns: a history*

of convent life, 1450–1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Cordula van Wyhe (ed.), *Female monasticism in early modern Europe: an interdisciplinary view* (Farnham & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). Ulrike Strasser, *State of virginity: gender, religion and politics in an early modern Catholic state* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004) offers a less optimistic take on the position of women religious post-Trent.

8 Erica Longfellow, *Women and religious writing in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 13.

9 Eric Dursteler, *Renegade women: gender, identity, and boundaries in the early modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 118.

10 Kim Siebenhüner, 'Conversion, mobility and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600', *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), 6.

11 Siebenhüner, 'Conversion', 29.

12 Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: gender and seventeenth-century print culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jane Hwang Degenhardt, *Islamic conversion and Christian resistance on the early modern stage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 15. Such a connection was far from being unique to the stage; it was repeated in pamphlets, polemic, ballads, and numerous other genres.

13 Robert Daborne, *A Christian turn'd Turke: or, the tragical liues and deaths of the two famous pyrates, Ward and Dansiker* (London, 1612), G2^{v}–G3^{r}.

14 Carmen Nocentelli, *Empires of love: Europe, Asia, and the making of early modern identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 5.

15 Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of manhood in early modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 2.

16 Writing of the cross-confessional figure of mystical marriage, Longfellow argues that 'the confusions between male and female, the believer and the Church, open up possibilities for early modern writers to negotiate gendered power relations, whether real or metaphorical' (Longfellow, *Women and religious writing*, p. 3).

17 Natalie Rothman, *Brokering empire: trans-imperial subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 99. See also the cases of itinerant soldiers and mercenaries discussed in Peter Mazur, *Improbable lives: conversion to Catholicism in early modern Italy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 98–115; Brian Pullan, 'A ship with two rudders: Righetto Marrano and the Venetian Inquisition', *The Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), 25–58.

18 Rothman, *Brokering empire*, 88.

19 See, for example, Louise M. Burkhart, 'The destruction of Jerusalem as colonial Nahuatl historical drama', in Susan Schroeder (ed.), *The conquest all over again: Nahuas and Zapotecs thinking, writing, and painting Spanish*

colonialism (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), pp. 74–100; Viviana Díaz Balsera, 'Celebrating the rise of a new sun: the Tlaxcalans conquer Jerusalem in 1539', *Estudios de cultura Náhuatl*, 39 (2008), 311–30; Matthew Dimmock, 'Converting and not converting "strangers" in early modern London', *Journal of Early Modern History*, special issue, 'Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World', ed. Peter Mazur and Abigail Shinn, 17 (2013), 457–78.

20 Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 137. For a discussion of Butler's work in the context of early modern theatricality, see Will Fisher, *Materializing gender in early modern English literature and culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

21 Butler, *Gender trouble*, pp. 139–40.

22 Thomas Laqueur, *Making sex: the body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 25. For subsequent critiques, see especially Joan Cadden, *Meanings of sex difference in the Middle Ages: medicine, science, and culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Helen King, 'The mathematics of sex: one to two, or two to one?', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, special issue on 'Sexuality and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe', 3rd series, II (2005), 47–58.

23 Older paradigms established a direct link between Protestant habits of self-scrutiny, autobiographical writing, and the development of a modern sense of self. See Leopold Damrosch, *God's plot and man's stories* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and utopia: an introduction to the sociology of knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Eward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936). In *Renaissance self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), Stephen Greenblatt argues that the early sixteenth century constituted 'a crucial moment of passage from one mode of interiority to another' (p. 85). This narrative of Protestant interiority has been challenged from several directions.

24 Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 213.

25 Molly Murray, *The poetics of conversion in early modern English literature: verse and change from Donne to Dryden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 4.

26 On the seventeenth-century conversion narrative, see especially Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan conversion narrative: the beginnings of American expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The evangelical conversion narrative: spiritual autobiography in early modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005);

and Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant autobiography in the seventeenth-century Anglophone world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

27 Peter Mazur and Abigail Shinn (eds), 'Introduction: conversion narratives in the early modern world', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 17 (2013), 428.

28 See Helen Smith, '"Wilt thou not read me, Atheist?": the Bible and conversion', in Kevin Killeen, Smith, and Rachel Willie (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 350–64.

29 Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Fictions of conversion: Jews, Christians, and cultures of change in early modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), esp. chapters 1 and 2.

30 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the archives: pardon tales and their tellers in sixteenth-century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 3.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

32 David Morgan, 'Introduction', to Morgan (ed.), *Religion and material culture: the matter of belief* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1, 7.

33 Nicky Hallett, *The senses in religious communities, 1600–1800: early modern 'Convents of Pleasure'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 21.

34 Morgan, 'Introduction', p. 8.

35 Sara Ahmed, *Queer phenomenology: orientations, objects, others* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 59.

36 Helen Hills, *Invisible city: the architecture of devotion in seventeenth century Neapolitan convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 161.

37 For stimulating explorations of this idea, see Helen Hills (ed.), *Architecture and the politics of gender in early modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

38 For a richly suggestive guide to the potential of such a field of enquiry see the exhibition catalogue, Giancarlo Rocca (ed.), *La sostanza dell'effimero: gli abiti degli ordini religiosi in Occidente* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 2000).

39 On women as tokens of homosocial exchange, see Gayle Rubin, 'The traffic in women: notes on the "political economy" of sex', in Rayna Reiter (ed.), *Toward an anthropology of women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210. Rubin's account informs Eve Kosofky Sedgwick's influential *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

40 See especially Hindmarsh, *Evangelical conversion narrative*.