

In *Dramatic Difference*, Raber ultimately provides readers with a broad overview of the history of the closet drama in England, as well as a series of in-depth looks at authors and specific plays. Her interrogation of the domestic and political circumstances surrounding authorship, performance, and circulation of manuscripts or editions often rewards the reader with new insights into the issues of gender, class, and genre that she sets out to explore.

Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds. *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000. ix + 243 pp. + 5 illus. \$39.95. Review by MARLIN E. BLAINE, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON.

Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England presents twelve essays selected from the thirteenth biennial Renaissance conference at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, 15-17 October, 1998. Collections from past Dearborn conferences have been staples of seventeenth-century criticism since the late 1970s and have focused on individual authors such as Robert Herrick, John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, as well as on more general topics such as desire, wit, representations of women, and the English Civil Wars. Like previous collections from Dearborn, this one focuses mostly seventeenth-century writers, despite the use of the word "Renaissance" in its title. The book does have an article on Donne's poetry of the 1590s and brief treatments of sixteenth-century groups such as the Sidney circle and the Areopagus, but its predominant interest lies in the later Renaissance. It will be valuable reading for anyone interested in the question of how social relations—coteries, patronage networks, religious communities, and various other alliances and groupings of authors and readers—shaped literary production and consumption in the seventeenth-century.

It is hard to resist applying the model of the literary circle to this book; many names have appeared in earlier Summers-Pebworth collections. We might speak of a Dearborn Circle. But the existence of such a circle need not be taken as circumscribing the critical imaginations of its members. As the editors observe in their introduction, "The aim of this volume is not to propagate a single view of the function of literary circles in Renaissance culture, but to explore the various ways in which Renaissance literature may be fruitfully approached via literary circles and cultural communities" (2). While most of the articles assess the historical legacy of a specific individual or group, the collection as a whole embodies the spirit of diverse inquiry noted by the editors, as some contributors explore problems of definition, others address issues of groups' self-identification, some show how authors vainly attempted to create certain kinds of literary communities, and one or two question the historical existence of certain circles that scholars have taken for granted.

The collection offers fresh insight into the history of some communities that readers will be quite familiar with, such as the Great Tew group (the subject of two articles) and the Tribe of Ben, as well as less well-known groups such as the one centered on the young Thomas Stanley. Stella P. Revard subtly explores the political and aesthetic valences of the poetry of this last-named group, which included mostly Royalist poets such as Lovelace, Herrick, Sherburne, and Shirley, but also counted among its number the Parliamentarian John Hall. Just as Stanley's group could encompass diverse opinions, so could the Tribe of Ben, according to Robert C. Evans, though he distinguishes the aesthetic issues that were debated in this coterie from the "macropolitical" focus that he finds in recent criticism; Evans polemically calls for the development of a "historical formalist" approach to texts that would offer a corrective to what he considers overly ideological readings. In his article on Great Tew, M. L. Donnelly masterfully explains how a Hobbesian concept of history influenced the aesthetics of this circle, which in turn helped shape the development of the neoclassical aesthetics of late-seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English litera-

ture. Paul G. Stanwood's contribution on the same group examines the ways in which various Tevians carried on the tenets and spirit of Richard Hooker's rationalist theology—another important legacy of Great Tew. Since this piece is devoted to exploring Hooker's influence, more discussion of Hooker's ideas than is given here would be welcome; spatial constraints were undoubtedly to blame.

Among the articles that critique the theoretical construct of the circle, Judith Scherer Herz's is the most wide-ranging. Arguing that the circle often must be understood not as a stable reality but as "a cataloging mechanism and as a heuristic" (15), Herz surveys a number of "circles," such as those associated with the Sidney family, Grey's Inn, the Caroline court, and Great Tew, as well as the enigmatic Society of Friendship centered on Katherine Philips. Herz usefully observes that some of these "circles" might be better identified as patronage groups, while others, notably the Society of Friendship, might exist more as a textual fiction than as anything else. Timothy Raylor's article reinforces one of Herz's points: the need to redefine certain "circles." Raylor convincingly argues that the so-called Cavendish Circle would more accurately be labeled a patronage network. Paul A. Parrish revises the circle metaphor to provide a more accurate geometrical model of the degrees of proximity of several figures (Nicholas Ferrar, Joseph Beaumont, and Abraham Cowley) to the two foci of a Cambridge literary "ellipse": George Herbert and Richard Crashaw. This article is especially valuable in demonstrating Crashaw's influence on his associates and in sorting out a range of conceptions about devotional writing and devotional practices amongst the non-Puritan crowd at Cambridge. John Considine does not so much critique the critical notion of the circle but debunk the idea that the Thomas Overbury circle even existed. Analyzing the printing history and manuscript evidence pertaining to Overbury's *A Wife*, Considine demonstrates the falsehood of publisher Lawrence Lisle's claims that the verses and the prose "characters" with which he repeatedly augmented editions of the book were composed by Overbury's friends. Considine compellingly argues that Lisle com-

missioned many of these additions from writers with whom he, not Overbury, had relationships, and passed them off as the work of Overbury's friends to dupe middle-class readers into thinking they were gaining access to the writings of a courtly coterie, while the sales thus generated swelled Lisle's purse.

Several articles explore attempts more legitimate attempts to fashion circles or communities, although these, like Philips' Society of Friendship, tend to remain more fictive than real. Sharon Cadmon Seelig suggests that the socially isolated and marginalized Aemilia Lanyer created, through the dedicatory verses of her book *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and "The Description of Cooke-ham," "a fictive community that functions as an alternative to the patriarchal structure" (50). Anna K. Nardo examines the implications of Milton's unrealized suggestion in *The Reason of Church Government* that England should establish literary academies on the Italian model and traces out Milton's ambivalence toward this kind of institution. And Achsah Guibbory analyzes Margaret Fell's series of pamphlets attempting to engage Menasseh ben Israel in a textual dialogue (which he declined to enter) as she attempted to convert the Jews to Christianity. Guibbory's is a fascinating article, and, even if her claim that Fell implicitly presents herself as the Messiah seems somewhat overstated, the article nevertheless takes a welcome look at an under-examined body of pamphlets in which issues of English religious identity, Jewish-Christian relations, and the rhetorical authority of women converge in complex ways.

The only contribution that I found fully unconvincing was M. Thomas Hester's "Like a spied Spie': Donne's Baiting of Marlowe," which provides an illuminating discussion of the piscatory tropes used in the discourse of Elizabethan religious surveillance, but does not ultimately succeed in its attempt to read Donne's "The Bait" as a critique of this surveillance. According to Hester, Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" stands as the figure for this surveillance because Marlowe served in the Walsingham spy network. Hester, however, can only suggest the possible existence of a literary circle in which the fish of "The Bait"

would resonate as images of Catholics entrapped by the Elizabethan intelligence apparatus. To be fair, Hester himself admits to an ultimate uncertainty about his proposition (42).

Only a few minor errors mark this generally well-edited volume. The most noteworthy are probably the misspellings of two foreign language book titles, one of which is wrong in two articles and the index. On the whole, however, the volume presents an intriguing array of studies on an important topic that has not often enough been addressed directly, despite the number of books and articles in recent years that have taken for granted the importance of coteries and other literary communities in Early Modern England.

Larry F. Norman. *The Public Mirror: Molière and the Social Commerce of Depiction*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999. vii + 226 pp. \$40. Review by KIKI GOUNARIDOU, SMITH COLLEGE.

In *The Public Mirror*, Larry Norman's intention is to uncover the aesthetic and social conditions that made Molière's satires possible. The idea of the "public mirror" was used by Molière in describing his own plays as a means for audience self-recognition through satire. Norman argues that, with satire, there is a fine line that the playwright walks in order to satisfy his audience. Molière must keep his characters and their flaws specific enough to delight audiences with satires of their peers, yet his audiences must not realize that they themselves are also being targeted. In the first two parts of the book, Norman examines Molière's engagement of the audience, "both in the creation and in the reception of his works" (9), before turning to the actual dramatic structure of the plays in the third part.

In Part One, "Creation," Norman explains that, because *L'École des Femmes* was "dangerously triumphant" (13), Molière uses *La Critique de L'École des Femmes* as an apology for the first: the public is depicted on stage criticizing its own stage depiction in Molière's previous play. Of these plays, Norman says, "If we wish