Randy Robertson. *Censorship and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England: The Subtle Art of Division*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. xv + 272 pp. $75.00. Review by NICOLE GREENSPAN, HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE.

In the past thirty years, the study of censorship in seventeenth-century England has undergone dramatic changes. Previous visions of strict government control over the press have given way to models of consensus and conflict-avoidance, inefficiency, and laxity of enforcement. For Annabel Patterson, writers and state officials entered into a "cultural bargain" which encouraged self-censorship and civility, with prosecution reserved for violations of this social contract. According to Sheila Lambert, early Stuart licensing was driven not by the government but by the Stationers' Company, which sought to protect its monopoly on print. More recently, scholars such as Cyndia Clegg, Anthony Milton, and Jason McElligott have argued that censorship was not the sole province of a monolithic state but was a collaborative process capable of manipulation by a variety of political, religious, ideological, personal, and financial interests. With *Censorship and Conflict*, Randy Robertson offers a stimulating and provocative addition to the ongoing study of seventeenth-century licensing laws and practices as well as post-publication censorship measures.

To gauge the effectiveness of press controls and to arrive at a greater understanding of contemporary print culture, Robertson employs a series of case studies. The first centers upon William Prynne's 1633 *Histriomastix* and Prynne's subsequent trial. The second focuses on Richard Lovelace's 1649 poem *Lucasta*, and the third is an examination of John Milton's 1644 *Areopagitica*. Robertson then moves on to the anonymous poems of Andrew Marvell and John Dryden, and ends with Jonathan Swift. Like many post-revisionist scholars during the last decade or so, Robertson finds that the language of consensus and harmony was used as an instrument of conflict and debate. Against the model of a social contract, Robertson posits a "discursive contest" (21) among writers, publishers, and licensing officials. Writers did not strive for consensus, he contends, but sought to win a war of words. Robertson also rejects the vision of a generally lax attitude towards censorship in the seventeenth century, adding his support for the view

that contemporary regimes had the will, if not always the practical ability, to control the press.

Robertson offers nuanced and layered analysis of textual production, publication, and reception. In chapter 2, for example, he examines the skill with which Lovelace crafted a royalist poem with enough ambiguity and artful moderation to secure publication under the republican regime. The inclusion of prefatory poems from Independents allowed, perhaps even encouraged, readers to read the poem in different ways. In chapter 3, Robertson explores the ways in which licensers entered public debates. Imprimaturs, he argues, could function as signatures of co-authorship. Throughout the monograph, Robertson reminds us that censorship was not only repressive but also generative. *Censorship and Conflict* thus provides a dynamic account of the multiple and sometimes competing elements converging to shape the experiences of writers, government officials, and readers.

Case studies afford an excellent opportunity for rich analysis. At the same time, it can prove tempting to generalize beyond evidentiary bounds. From a close reading of *Histriomastix*, for example, Robertson concludes that Prynne launched the first strike in a "continuous chain" (69) leading to the outbreak of civil war the following decade. In the absence of historical contextualization such a bold conclusion is both premature and puzzling. To take another instance, at the very end of a chapter devoted to Milton's anti-censorship treatise *Areopagitica*, Robertson concludes that Milton's acceptance of the position of press licenser in 1651 marks a continuity of principle. Without a more detailed examination of the press during Milton's tenure, however, the argument rests on a shaky foundation.

Another difficulty is that Robertson often reflexively uses fear of censorship as an explanatory tool. For example, despite Milton's regular denunciations of popery and royalism, and doubts that the 'rabble' could arrive at a proper understanding of religious and political matters, Robertson assumes that Milton's refusal to extend greater press freedom to royalists and Catholics in *Areopagitica* reflects, in a simple, clear fashion, a fear of censorship. Robertson also assumes an unproblematic correlation between fear of censorship and anonymity. There were multiple reasons why texts might be published anonymously, however, and Robertson accepts that one quarter of

non-controversial (and hence less likely to be censored) texts were published without the authors' names or initials (24). Such assumptions flatten the analysis and reduce the complexity of contemporary print culture. The monograph also has a tendency to conflate the terms 'censor' and 'censure', which can be confusing and potentially misleading.

Though at times *Censorship and Conflict* raises more questions than answers, Robertson's provocative analyses and conclusions should generate conversation among historians and literary scholars alike. The decision to move beyond the customary chronological boundaries separating the early, middle, and later parts of the century is a welcome one, and Robertson's lively prose and crisp analysis expose intriguing lines of inquiry and add texture to the debates over the aims and achievements of seventeenth-century censorship.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury. *Standard Edition. II. Moral and Political Philosophy. Volume 5. Chartae Socraticae. Design of a Socratick History*, W. Benda, C. Jackson-Holzberg, F. A. Uehlein, and E. Wolff, eds. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: frommann-holzboog Verlag, 2008. 241 pp. € 318. Review by LAWRENCE E. KLEIN, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, lived from 1671 to 1713. He was one of those later seventeenth-century figures, like John Locke, John Dryden and Joseph Addison, who were founders of eighteenth-century British thinking and culture. While his ideas about sociability and moral sensibility became themes of eighteenth-century philosophy, his desire to elevate the culture of ordinary gentlemen helped to establish a public culture organized around the idea of politeness. Addison's periodical, the *Spectator* (1711-1712) took such ideas further although these two writers were also quite different. Addison was a public figure, involved in politics and journalism, while Shaftesbury was at heart a virtuoso. Shaftesbury was committed to the development of public life, but he preferred withdrawal. While he strove to write polite essays for the educated gentleman, he was often scholarly and abstruse and sometimes radical.