

feminine literacy.” Yet this seems not to fit with the assertion that women’s reading is “circumscribed by legal and cultural injunctions for . . . female readerly silence—restraint from public reading, limitations on linguistic proficiency, and abstention from vocal criticism” (197). Unfortunately, after previous enlightening discussions about the slipperiness of the public/private distinction, the widespread variability of literacy and literate proficiency, and the profound overlap between verbal or vocal discourses and the collaborative dialogue of reading, such discussion seems out of place at best and contradictory at worst. Undoubtedly it compromises the discussions of the remarkable reading material of Clifford and Egerton, and their promotion of reading among their own servants who were, if not “men and women of leisure,” at least men and women both.

Hackel’s book offers a considerable contribution to the emerging fields of New Textualism and the more established theories of reader-response criticism. Her analysis is thoughtful and often inclined to original insights with regard to reading evidence as a genre of literature in itself. Indeed, though exegesis has long been considered a medieval genre of scriptural import, Hackel points to ways in which growing literacy rates in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries contribute to the dissemination of this kind of practice beyond the exclusively monastic or learned arena. At several points in the book, she alludes to “the discourse that sexualized women’s reading” (153 and elsewhere, especially in the fifth chapter), without fully explaining what she means by this and not fully integrating this discussion of gendered reading into the rest of her otherwise cohesive argument. Nevertheless, Hackel’s attention to the traces of “regular” or “ordinary” readers, as well as to non-religious exegesis as with Sidney’s and Greene’s *Armadias*, opens the consideration of reading as an active engagement beyond previously established boundaries.

Kate Peters. *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xiii + 273 pp. \$75.00. Review by SUSANNA CALKINS, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY.

By expressing their ideas in print, Quaker leaders in seventeenth-century England engaged with contemporary political and religious affairs in a way

that challenged those outside the movement, while simultaneously creating a successful national network of contacts that ultimately united and sustained the growing movement. Such is the premise of Kate Peters in her assiduous and well-researched study of several thousand Quaker tracts published in the early 1650s.

Peters divides her work into three parts. In the first section, she focuses on the process of political pamphleteering, emphasizing how the persistent and widespread publication of tracts not only helped spread Quaker ideas to the marketplaces, taverns, churches, courts, and other places where people gathered, but also made the movement seem and actually be more organized. Quaker leaders wrote deliberately, making tracts relevant to their readers by referring to specific audiences and locations. Moreover, the publication of Quaker tracts was carefully orchestrated and controlled by a handful of radical publishers who devoted their time, money, and resources to the movement. To great effect, Peters uses the case of pamphleteering in East Anglia to demonstrate how print “contributed towards the creation of a nationally homogenous and coherent movement” (73), as Quaker leaders like Richard Hubberthorne helped transform the image of Quakers in Cambridge from “passing troublemakers to part of a sustained attack on the town” (79). More debatable is Peters’ contention that the readership of the Quaker tracts was controlled “effectively” by ministers who read the tracts like sermons and passed them out in meetings. While one can agree that ministers were instrumental in disseminating, publicizing, and probably interpreting the content of Quaker tracts, the actual readership can never be ascertained with the accuracy that Peters seems to suggest.

Publication of the tracts not only gave the Quakers coherence and unity but also underscored core ideas of identity and discipline. In the second section, Peter explores how the Quakers deliberately embraced—even exploited—the derisive collective “Quaker” title in order to summarize and make immediately recognizable key Quaker beliefs for far-flung readers. Such active pamphleteering, Peters asserts, enabled Quakers to signify themselves as a “cohesive and elect group of people,” (11) that in turn helped them “assert group authority” (113). In particular, Quaker leaders used the press to justify women preaching publicly, a phenomenon that ran contrary to prevailing patriarchal assumptions of womanhood. Peters treads very carefully here, alluding to the ambivalence displayed towards female Quakers promi-

ment in the early movement but dismissing the larger issues of gender raised by the Quaker doctrine of spiritual equality between the sexes. Nevertheless, her point is still fair: in print, the doctrine of women's public preaching was supported and even endorsed by Quaker leaders, thus demonstrating unity in the sect's beliefs, even though manuscript evidence reveals a great dichotomy in Quaker opinion on this subject.

In the third section, Peters analyzes how Quaker pamphleteers used print to deliberately construct "a national, successful movement and maintain a coherent and effective dialogue with the body politic" (12). According to Peters, Quaker tracts helped stimulate religious debate and universal participation in their repeated challenges to the church and professional ministry, as Quaker leaders published both the virulent attacks from their critics and their own responses. Publishing the tracts added legitimacy to Quaker ideas and promoted greater public engagement, particularly as readers were encouraged to judge the issues—and the ministers—for themselves. Similarly, the tracts served to highlight the problems of the English republic's religious settlement, first at a very local level, later at a more broad national level. Local trials became the impetus to broader challenges to government and calls for significant legislative reform. These challenges were not intended to persuade the government directly, but to direct their readers to consider the implementation of godly rule and the role of the people of England in sustaining the godly reformation. Peters uses the well-documented case of James Nayler, the early Quaker leader accused and convicted of blasphemy, to illustrate how the Quakers wielded an "impressive command of the press" in order to keep the sect together in spite of a very significant internal blow to the movement (234).

Although Peters draws from a considerable breadth of tracts, woodcuts, pamphlets and other contemporary materials, she does not engage with any scholarship published after the mid-1990s, a surprising finding given the vast amount of literature on Quakers and early modern England that has emerged in the last decade. This omission notwithstanding, the book offers a useful and systematic history of how the earliest Quakers used print to sustain their cause. For general scholars and graduate students, this installment in the Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History series will offer a deeper and more nuanced understanding of political and religious participation in mid-seventeenth-century England.