

repressed “sexuality” between men. In the final moments of the poem, Milton describes how Diodati’s virginity is rewarded in heaven with eternal joyful *communal* consummations. Milton, Guy-Bray argues, does so only to defend himself against charges that his friendship had been “sexual” (I’d say “sodomitical”). Ultimately, Milton, like Spenser, is said to turn to the epic to celebrate “heterosexuality” (131). In both his epic and “Epitaphium,” however, Milton seems to open up a sacred space for multiple eroticisms, including those we would call homoerotic. Anticipating the lavish descriptions of angelic consummation in *Paradise Lost*, “Epitaphium” offers its own heavenly erotic space, one in which love is not limited to any two bodies.

Despite these reservations, Guy-Bray has offered a very important book to the subject at hand. It will be of great interest to all scholars interested in the subject.

N. H. Keeble, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xxii + 296 pp. + 7 illus. \$59.95/\$21.95. Review by JASON PEACEY, HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT TRUST.

This collection of fifteen short essays by leading scholars of seventeenth-century literature introduces undergraduate and non-specialized readers to the broad range of literary forms which existed, and emerged, in the English ‘revolution’. It treats not just the canonical authors with whom every school-child is familiar, but rather a broad range of less well known figures, and its understanding of ‘literature’ incorporates more

than just grand works of imaginative prose and poetry, and complex political treatises. It also involves more ephemeral works, and those new forms, such as radical religious texts and newspapers, which emerged during a period of intense political upheaval, and which reflected the emergence of a new, non-elite reading audience. In seeking to recognize 'the centrality of literary engagement with the revolutionary times' (7), this work is clearly to be welcomed. But like all such collections it is something of a mixed bag.

The first section, on 'contexts', arguably proves the strongest. John Morrill provides a brief introduction to the 'causes and course' of the civil wars. Written with his usual panache, it nevertheless focuses on the period before 1649, and is rather aggressively 'revisionist' in tone. Stressing that the period before 1640 witnessed no oppressive censorship, Morrill's 'context' is one of a problematic king, rather than profound political breakdown. There was no desire for civil war, let alone for resistance or regicide, and war was unexpected, and the result of a 'British' crisis. Martin Dzelzainis' assessment of the political thought of the revolutionary period is a marvelous brief introduction to key theoretical concepts and practical ideas. He breaks down dualistic pictures which link 'absolutism' with royalism, and 'ancient constitutionalism' with parliamentarianism. He also demonstrates that while 'republicanism', strictly conceived, was absent before 1649, the desire for a mixed constitution was prevalent. And he recognizes that neither royalism nor parliamentarianism was a unified theory. Equally valuable is Sharon Achinstein's chapter on the press and print culture, and the impact of civil war 'literature' on the people. As well as providing a balanced assessment of the state of censorship

in the 1640s and 1650s, she also explores how print spread down the social spectrum, and across the gender divide, in terms of both authors and readers, not least through newspapers and the radical popular press. Ultimately, she demonstrates convincingly how print drew the people into conflict.

Unfortunately, much of the rest of the book is less successful, and many of the authors seem caught between the competing demands of introductory and analytical coverage. Thomas Corns opens the section on 'Radical voices' by introducing the work of radical groups who were fascinated by print as means of engaging with a new audience, but in addressing the Levellers, the Diggers, the Ranters and the Quakers, few themes are explored. The introductions to the political prose of John Milton (by David Loewenstein) and the political poems of Andrew Marvell (by Annabel Patterson) are clear and concise, but both are hampered by having insufficient space to undertake the kind of contextual analysis which these scholars rightly value. Moreover, while it is hard to argue with the inclusion of studies of either Milton or Marvell, it is mystifying that the editor chose to classify either author as a 'radical' voice. Equally problematic is the equation of 'conservative voices' with royalism. Alan Rudrum considers the variety of lyric poetry, but while he stresses the need to contextualize the likes of Robert Herrick, John Cleveland, Abraham Cowley, and Henry Vaughan, because they were far from being retired neutrals writing timeless masterpieces, his attempts at contextualization are somewhat weak. Isabel Rivers' analysis of 'prayer-book devotion' introduces not just the *Eikon Basilike*, but also the works of less famous interregnum Anglicans, such as Anthony Sparrow and James Harwood. Paul Salzman's chapter on the 'royalist epic and romance' of Abraham Cowley, Sir William Davenant, John Barclay, and Sir Percy Herbert, reveals how the civil war transformed the way in which political criticism could be expressed in literature, as well as the variety of political opinions within 'royalism'.

The least impressive section considers 'female voices'. Susan Wiseman studies the poetry of Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Bradstreet, and Lucy Hutchinson, while Helen

Wilcox and Sheila Ottway consider 'women's histories', and the texts generated by Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, Lady Anne Fanshaw, Brilliana Harley, and Anne Clifford. Elaine Hobby analyses the prophecies and religious enthusiasm of Elizabeth Poole, Anna Trapnel, Anne Venn, and Anne Wentworth. Such chapters display the wide variety of texts which need to be considered by students of literature, from published verse, autobiographies, memoirs, and popular tracts, to diaries and letters, but the authors considered are so various, and their circumstances so different, that there is little to unite them beyond their gender. There is too little analysis of why they need to be studied as female authors, and what was distinctive about female literature. Furthermore, while their variety is recognized, there remains a tendency to try and distill a female message. Some women may indeed have been empowered by the revolutionary events to participate in history and literature, and some may consciously have been carving out new roles for themselves. But it is somewhat strange to interpret Lucy Hutchinson as being 'anti-feminist', or to suggest that she wrote about her husband because she was uneasy writing about herself, and it is hard to accept that Brilliana Harley spoke for all women caught up in war. While it is almost certainly true that female prophetesses, pamphleteers, and petitioners were challenging accepted gender roles, and that this provoked unease in some quarters, it is less easy to demonstrate gender consciousness, let alone that a link between kingly and masculine power meant that questioning the monarch's power involved challenging male power. The final section of the book contains three studies of writers who were engaged in 'rethinking the war' after the Restoration. David Norbrook examines the contemporary historiography of the civil war, in terms of Thomas May, John Milton, and Edmund Ludlow, as well as the more familiar works of Hobbes, Hutchinson, and Clarendon. Sensitive to context as well as content, Norbrook offers intriguing insight into the way in which humanism, puritanism, and a widened public sphere combined to transform seventeenth-century historiography, not least by encouraging writers to consider the immediate as well as the distant past, and by broadening

interest beyond monarchs' reigns into works on nations and identity. Nigel Smith grapples with the complexity of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in an attempt to grasp what contemporaries made of a work which demanded more thoughtful engagement than any other text of the period. Finally, Richard Greaves provides a skilful contextual study of the works of John Bunyan.

This book ably demonstrates the range of literary forms during the mid-seventeenth century, from the ephemeral to the canonical, and from the published to the unpublished. It reveals the variety of authors, and demonstrates the need to contextualize both works and writers, and to recognize that literary forms were transformed by political upheaval, as well as the way in which the emergence of new forms reflected the appearance of new kinds of author and sought to address new audiences. Its coverage is somewhat biased towards conventional 'literature', and this reviewer would have welcomed more on political writers such as William Prynne, Henry Parker, and Henry Ferne, as well as journalists such as Marchamont Nedham and Sir John Berkenhead. Not to mention Hobbes, author of one of the few literary masterpieces of the period. Moreover, the book will arguably do little to break down disciplinary boundaries between literature and history, much less break down old fashioned and anachronistic notions of radicalism and conservatism. The book is hampered by the editor's attachment to the notion that the civil wars represented a revolutionary and ideological conflict. Useful though the editorial apparatus may prove, with guides to further reading, a political and literary chronology, and a brief glossary, closer attention might have been paid to individual chapters, which contain occasional factual errors and interpretative howlers. Ultimately, the book works less well as a 'companion' than as an introduction, whose greatest achievement might be to arouse curiosity, and to entice readers into the marvelously varied world of seventeenth-century literature.