local or social history of the sort that would convince the reader that the “nation” was indeed transformed. Regardless of what historians might wish for them, the people of Restoration England lived in a society shot through with religion, and obsessed with the events of the Civil War—if anything, this bred a kind of conservatism with which any push for “modernity” would have been obliged to contend. History, memory, hierarchy and order continued to shape perceptions, and scholars forget this at their peril.


For Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith, radicalism is a “lived relation to cultures of fundamental social change,” a way of “inhabiting historical moments,” and—perhaps most intriguingly here—a way of transmitting and interpreting subversive messages, ideologies, and radical personae across a span of time (14). This collection of essays demonstrates how successive generations re-read the English Revolution by appropriating its central figures, theological disputes, and political debates for use in new ideological contexts. With an interdisciplinary approach centered on aspects and methods of cultural criticism, the book questions the commonly held judgment that the period between the English Restoration and the French Revolution was a political lull between two great upheavals. From the regicide in 1649 (it is unclear why the editors list 1650 as their titular beginning point) to the end of the Romantic period, writers interpreted the English Revolution, both praising and condemning, to suit a range of political and religious arguments and a host of radical positions.

The larger project here is to show how political movements appropriate history, and how historical events—or perhaps the re-interpretations of these events—help construct and define new political eras. The contributors are “reading radicals reading other
texts” (14). If “radicalism” seems a somewhat unusual appellation for the reform movements and protests of the long eighteenth century, the contributors demonstrate how the literature of seventeenth-century republicanism and theodicy re-emerges in the discourses of commercialism, language use, taste, political liberty—even diet—that fill the products of an exploding print culture. The past, in short, is up for grabs, a valued set of icons to be marshaled in the service of inspiring reform, a text to be decoded for a new historical moment.

In a chapter that draws its title from a radical pub toast, “May the last king be strangled in the bowels of the last priest,” Justin Champion sees the aftermath of the English Revolution, and especially of the Toleration Act of 1689, as triggering a long-term heterodoxy in public discourse about religion and politics. With the grip of the Church and the monarchy somewhat relaxed, a “new public sphere” emerged in the form of coffee houses and periodicals and clubs, where challenges to orthodoxy flourished. Rather than accepting the early eighteenth century as a period of inertia and theological stability, Champion finds a disruption of traditionally understood authority, including that of the printed word, and an ongoing debate centered primarily on religion rather than political philosophy. In fact, what he calls “politico-religious moments” illustrate the connectedness of the two forms of discourse.

Peter Kitson shows how changing representations of Cromwell have underscored ideological positioning in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He questions the view that Cromwell’s reputation was singularly rescued by Thomas Carlyle, whose 1845 edition of Cromwell’s letters and speeches casts him as a paragon of religious toleration and political liberty. Earlier histories, such as David Hume’s, had cast Cromwell as a fanatical tyrant. The author suggests that pre-Carlyle views were more nuanced and ambiguous towards the Republicans than had been recognized. He finds in the 1790s a religious radicalism that recalled the revolutionary spirit of the 1640s—notably William Godwin’s invocation of the republican tradition. For others, Cromwell became a
sort of measuring stick around which Robespierre and later Napoleon would be judged.

Both Jane Shaw and Charlotte Sussman discuss another sort of radical politico-religious phenomenon: the case of fasting women, particularly Anna Trapnel, perhaps the spiritual heir of Margery Kempe. Trapnel "claimed spiritual and political authority through bodily suffering" (102-103). A part and product of the religious fervor of the Interregnum, Trapnel gained respect as a prophetic figure claiming a political authority that was threatening to some and embraced by others. Shaw argues that the eighteenth-century medicalized the body: fasting became a subject for scientific investigation. By the early nineteenth century, women such as Ann Moore were using fasting for radical protest, in Moore's case against the poverty women faced when their husbands deserted them. Sussman uses Trapnel's fasting not only as an instance of protest against Cromwell's government, but also as a stimulus to a new understanding of sacred text, of reading that is "both active and passive, both a private experience and a publicly visible set of effects" (133).

Timothy Morton finds another manifestation of politico-religious radicalism in the discourse of vegetarianism. Morton, who has contributed substantially to the host of recent studies of food as a cultural phenomenon, shows how seventeenth-century writers such as Thomas Tryon use vegetarianism as a vehicle for espousing non-violence, human rights, and spiritual enlightenment.

Two figures who loom large in the book are John Thelwall and Richard "Citizen" Lee. Thelwall appropriates the writings of Milton and the regicide itself as a focal point for analyzing the French Revolution. Michael Scrivener notes that for late eighteenth-century republicans, Milton became an emblem of republican virtue and a worthy forebear of the likes of Thomas Paine and William Godwin. Lee represents a different radical strain: a blend of republicanism and evangelical enthusiasm. John Mee argues that Lee's belief in "full grace" and his religious fervor generally echo seventeenth-century Puritanism. For his anti-monarchical writ-
ing, Lee was indicted for sedition, but he managed to escape prison dressed in women’s clothing that had been smuggled in.

This collection of essays is uniformly lucid, engaging, and densely documented historical discourse from the English to the French Revolutions. It provides an especially cogent account of how one historical moment re-imagines another for its own ideological purposes. Finally, it offers a rich tapestry representing strains of radical thought, and it forces a reconsideration of the interim between the revolutions as a quiescent, politically dormant period. The subject itself is enormous and awaits further treatment, but this book serves as an exciting stimulus to an ongoing investigation of the kind of historical intertextuality Morton and Smith illustrate in this book.


It is not uncommon for reviews of new books on Puritanism in seventeenth-century New England to begin by registering astonishment that yet another book has been written on the subject. In fields such as Native American history, creativity comes from the paucity of archival sources, but in the case of Puritan New England it is sparked by the very richness of existing historiography, which imposes a tremendous burden to make an original contribution. *Making Heretics* certainly offers an original and important new study. Michael Winship reinterprets the interval between 1636 and 1641, years of intense controversy in colonial Massachusetts and years of escalating crisis in an England on the verge of what would be prolonged civil war. This chronological focus is central to the very mission of *Making Heretics* and underpins the analytical high ground claimed by Winship to justify adding a new book to the groaning library shelves on Puritan New England.