

Forsyth, the epic's closing lines, with their likening of God's sword to Satan, may be read as a "Satanic triumph," or very close to it (340).

Despite this nearly melodramatic plea for a "Satanic triumph," Forsyth succeeds far more often than not in *The Satanic Epic*. Unlike earlier devil's advocates such as Empson, Forsyth proves versatile and extremely resourceful as a critic, assembling discrete but related support from several sources, even if he sometimes lapses into overabundant detail to do so. Most of his evidence proves fresh and all of it challenging. His claims add up to substantially more than attempts to launch several pro-Satan balloons in the hope that one might reach a far shore. His colloquy of rebuttal with Fish, Barker, Shawcross and others seems astute. *The Satanic Epic* even takes a Quixotic turn. Like Milton as an early pamphleteer, Forsyth hopes to reach an "interested, but nonexpert, reader" (ix) who is not a Miltonist by trade. Despite its clarity and intelligibility, however, the book's necessary references to the history of literary controversies such as the Satan debate, the positions of particular critics such as Georgia Christopher, and the intricacies of post-1950's Milton scholarship as a whole limit the access of non-specialists. Unfortunately, *The Satanic Epic* should prepare for a brief shelf life at Barnes and Noble, and even less at Walmart.

John Barnard and Donald F. McKenzie, eds. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. IV, 1557-1695*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 891 pp. + 31 illus. \$140.00. Review by RANDY ROBERTSON, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY.

This rich, polyphonic volume is a timely contribution to the "history of the book," a field of inquiry that has flourished in recent years. The work is a fitting tribute to Donald McKenzie, whose "textual sociology" has continued to open up vistas in bibliographical studies even after his death in 1999. The story begins in 1557, the year that Queen Mary granted the Stationers' guild its charter, and ends in 1695, the year that preventive censorship lapsed for good in Britain. In his very fine introduction, John

Barnard offers a compendious history of the Stationers' Company, a body that held a virtual monopoly in print during this period: the Stationers' charter restricted printing to Company members, effectively confining printing to London (later the Universities received printing privileges, as did the Archbishop of York). Barnard traces the Company's battles with royal patentees, the shift in power from printers to booksellers, the consolidation of certain patents in the English stock, and the rising output of the London presses.

The remainder of the book is broken down into eight sections: Religion and Politics; Oral Traditions and Scribal Culture; Literature of the Learned; Literary Canons; Vernacular Traditions; The Business of Print and the Space of Reading; Beyond London: Production, Distribution, Reception; and Disruption and Restructuring: The Late Seventeenth-Century Book Trade. The topics naturally bleed into one another: as Patrick Collinson and others point out, religion "permeated much . . . of what is now secularized" (29), canons and business intermingled, and London trafficked with the provinces.

The number of religious titles produced in early modern England dwarfs that on other topics, and confessional writing encompassed myriad genres, from solemn treatises to jouncy ballads. Even Puritans did not frown on the theater or the ale-house song as vehicles of reform until the 1580s, and the godly never abandoned satire as a weapon (32-33). Collinson and company chart the religious controversies that gave rise to several print wars in this period. Nonconformist ministers deprived of their livings thrust themselves into print (30, 32), and dissidents pelted orthodoxy from the margins. Sects ramified, but there was continuity as well as change: Martin Marprelate of the late sixteenth century was lineal ancestor to Richard Overton's Martin Mar-priest of the civil wars. Neither Martin, however, succeeded in his aim of a more thoroughgoing reformation: the acrid style of the polemicists alienated more of the public than it converted (42-44).

The Quakers, who started off militant in the 1640s and 1650s and softened into pacifism at the Restoration, proved more successful. Although they often published their writings anonymously

and without official license, even diffusing the risk of publishing their work by parceling print jobs among different printing houses, the “Friends” devised internal systems of authorization and copy-right and developed sophisticated methods of book distribution (70-75). On the opposite end of the religious spectrum, Roman Catholics, like Puritans, were persecuted ceaselessly, but the Catholic church’s well-organized network disseminated Roman Catholic writings surreptitiously with a fair degree of success. Indeed, Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham challenge the “conventional wisdom” that Protestants relied on the printing press to a markedly greater extent than did Catholics (44-55). In addition to discussing Britain’s sundry denominations and their relationship with the book trade, the two chapters on religion provide a store of information on individual and group reading habits.

Harold Love’s contribution is the standout in the section on “Oral Traditions and Scribal Culture.” Love’s essay brims with fascinating details about the relationship between spoken and written language. We learn, for instance, that the radical Robert Overton wrote out anti-government ballads that he heard on the London streets (119); Cromwell’s regime arrested Overton, while the “fidler’s boy” who had sung the lyrics apparently got off scot-free—writing left a tangible record, whereas singing did not. John, Lord Lucas, delivered a speech against Charles II’s Subsidy Bill of 1671, which, he complained, fell heavily on the peerage. The King was present at the Lords’ debate, but in theory at least parliamentary privilege protected Lucas’s right to inveigh against crown policy. When others transcribed the speech and circulated it abroad, however, the House of Lords called it in; indeed, Lucas claimed that the scribal version had gathered accretions that were none of his. As Love observes, the authorship of such manuscripts is highly complex: on the one hand, “the publicly circulated version was the work of an editor who had interpolated a few strokes that had not occurred to the speaker”; on the other hand, “[s]ince Lucas must have realized that so flagrant a confrontation of the King would lead to the circulation of versions of his words in manuscript, the

oral delivery becomes, in one sense, an act of scribal publication by dictation" (99).

"The Literature of the Learned" comprises a tessellate group of chapters: on the Latin trade, patronage, university presses, classical scholarship, maps, travel literature, scientific publications, Samuel Hartlib, public and private libraries, and monastic collections. The essays on patronage and cartography are disappointingly brief; those on the Latin trade, the Oxbridge press, and Hartlib's circle manage an impressive range in a narrow compass. Adrian Johns's paper, "Science and the Book," is superb. Johns reads through the experimentalists' rhetoric of abandoning the library for the natural world: he details the ways in which the Royal Society produced and consumed books. (John Sprat, the Society's historian, "denied that it had a library," but one was later created, "and [Sprat] himself boasted that its members were 'Read', as well as 'Travell'd', 'Experienc'd', and 'Stout'" [275].) The Society exercised an extraordinary control over its own publications, encroaching on territory that was traditionally the Stationers'; but Society fellows also learned to deal with guild printers and booksellers to advance their own interests.

The Royal Society's central aim in imposing such a stringent order on its publications was to preserve the intellectual property of its members. Natural philosophers continually worried the question of "priority": as Johns notes, charges of plagiarism were rife in the scientific community. Members were also concerned to prevent piracy: corrupt redactions of their work lowered their credit at home and on the Continent. The Society therefore licensed its publications and even kept its own book register, analogous to the register at Stationers' Hall.

The following section on "Literary Canons" addresses the twin questions of authorship and "credit" in a somewhat different manner. John Pitcher argues that "the arrival of the recognizably modern author and the beginnings of the formation of the English literary canon" date to "the late Elizabethan period" (359). Chaucer was the first English author to be canonized: not only was he the subject of a spate of literary hagiographies, but several editions of his

“Complete Works” were published in folio. Magistrates of taste, including Gabriel Harvey, soon nominated living authors for the bays: Sidney, Daniel, Shakespeare, and Jonson. (Indeed, Jonson nominated himself, superintending the production of his own *Works* in 1616. That same year, James appointed him laureate.) Many used the touchstone of originality to distinguish these writers from the lesser lights of the period, a decidedly modern impulse.

Elsewhere in this section, Paul Hammond maps the Restoration canon adroitly and thoroughly. Other scholars discuss marginalized groups: Nigel Smith explores the literature of dissenters, and Maureen Bell tracks both the canonization of women writers and the canon of writers whom women read. Milton, naturally, gets his own chapter. “Vernacular Traditions” contains chapters on the Bible trade, law books, ABCs, almanacs, domestic writing, newsbooks, and other popular genres. Baker’s essay on legal publishing and the patents for law books is meticulous—in it, Baker covers nothing less than the tortuous history of who owned the law; Nelson and Seccombe’s piece on periodicals is also very good. “The Business of Print and the Space of Reading” treats the material facets of book making, from “the economic context,” to the minutiae of paper manufacture, bookbinding, letter foundries, and finally, the “*mise-en-page*.” In his valedictory essay, “Printing and publishing 1557-1700: constraints on the London book trades,” Donald McKenzie makes a vitally important point about the survival rates of early modern books. He demonstrates cogently that the further back we go, the higher is the “loss rate” of books and other publications; this leaves the misleading impression that the printing trade expanded in a more dramatic fashion than it did. McKenzie’s conclusion also bears on how we read the extant documentary evidence, providing yet another caveat against Whiggish narratives: what may seem an increasing occurrence of certain ideas and practices may simply be a function of the survival rates of certain documents—salient “trends” may in any particular instance be a scholarly fiction, an epistemological mirage. The penultimate section, “Beyond London, Production, Distribution, Reception,” places the London book trade in a broader context,

including chapters on the provincial trade, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the Continent, and the American colonies.

No book with such a wide scope can be without mistakes or lacunae. My criticisms of the volume are three. First, most of the contributors slight the issue of censorship (Michael Treadwell and Julian Roberts are notable exceptions). McKenzie, for instance, contends that censorship's impact was nugatory:

the [London] trade's total production for, say, the years 1641 to 1700 was 75,285 titles or editions of them, excluding serials. Allowing a loss rate for the period of something like 25 per cent, the total output of the trade would have been about 100,000 titles or editions of them over those years. For precisely that same period, I have recorded every book mentioned in the journals of the Lords and the Commons, the State Papers (Domestic), and the court books of the Stationers' Company. There are some 800 items, of which 400 are entirely innocent and 400 in some degree suspect. Those 400 represent 0.4 per cent of the output of the trade. Of those 400 the number which led to a charge, let alone a conviction, let alone punishment, was only the tiniest fraction. (566)

He concludes by pronouncing that "fear of the courts had virtually no impact on the economy of the book trade." But despite the surface persuasiveness of the data he presents, there are several glaring flaws in McKenzie's analysis. To start with a relatively minor point, he posits a "loss rate" for books of 25 percent, but he assumes that the loss rate for state papers and Stationers' court records was zero—an unwarranted assumption. He assumes further that the sources he consulted comprehend all cases of censorship during this time, yet we cannot be certain that all of the books to which parliament objected, for instance, are noted in the House journals, or that all of the volumes in a messenger's quarry are recorded in the state papers; indeed, many journal entries and government documents refer to the seizure of "scandalous and

sedition books and pamphlets,” without specifying either number or title. And how many manuscripts did the licensers blot or alter rather than suppress?

To be sure, the licenser’s trawl was not always effective, but in July of 1664 Roger L’Estrange, chief censor during the Restoration, “calculated that government agents had seized approximately 130,000 pamphlets and books in the latest crackdown,” a figure that suggests the extent to which censorship affected “the economy of the book trade” (Richard L. Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain, 1664–1677* [1990]: 169). Perhaps most seriously, McKenzie fails to consider the psychological impact of censorship, the “chilling effect” that licensing and exemplary punishment undoubtedly had. One wants to know what part self-censorship played in the literature of the period. Some writers were willing to write, and some stationers to publish, unlicensable work, yet given the barbaric punishment meted out to the likes of William Prynne, John Twyn, and Stephen College on the public stage, surely many more were loath to do so. To determine whether “fear of the courts” had any effect on the book trade, rather than estimate how many books were produced and how many censored, we would need to reckon how many works *would have been produced* had it *not* been for the censorship. In his account of the “constraints” on the London trade, McKenzie begs this and other questions.

Second, the editors of the volume should have set aside more space for the problem of copyright. References to the Stationers’ register are sprinkled throughout, but there is no one chapter devoted to the intricacies of copy ownership. This is a signal omission, as “copyright” embraces the topics of authorship, intellectual property, possessive individualism, Stationers’ Company custom, and a host of others.

Finally, the book does little to make bibliography sexy. A faint antiquarian air hovers above the volume, and I doubt that it will hook those not already interested in the history of the British book trade. On a similar note, a few of the articles read like annotated bibliographies—a dutiful listing of titles is followed by a handful of

perfunctory remarks. This is nevertheless an indispensable collection of essays for anyone interested in the early modern book trade, and it is to be hoped that Cambridge will soon make it available in a more affordable paperback version. At \$140.00, the vast erudition between its covers is bound to remain the preserve of the literary aristocracy.

H. Neville Davies, ed. *At Vacant Hours: Poems by Thomas St Nicholas and His Family*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2003. xlvii + 492 pp. \$60.00. Review by A. H. DE QUEHEN, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

Thomas St Nicholas was a Kentish man, born in 1602 at Ash, near Sandwich, where his family was long established. He proceeded from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to the Inner Temple but was not called to the bar for some years. In the interim he was married and widowed, his four children also dying. His second wife, who survived him, came from the West Riding; St Nicholas joined her brothers in an ironworking partnership, and his business interests brought him often to Yorkshire. He was there in 1642 and a subscriber to the *Declaration and Protestation* against the Yorkshire commission of array. He was taken prisoner at Rotherham by "great Newcastle's popish legion" and confined for some time in Pontefract Castle (16). Once released, he continued to work for the parliamentary cause, and Fairfax made him receiver-general for the West Riding. Having returned to Kent in 1649 with his wife and two surviving children, he held increasingly important legal posts and was a member of the Barebones Parliament and the Council of State. However, he objected to Cromwell's interference with the Commons, from which he was one of those excluded in 1656. He was active again in the last Parliaments of the Protectorate and justified himself at the Restoration when his wartime accounts were scrutinized and approved. He retired, deeply disillusioned by the ungodliness of the new age, and died in 1668. Throughout his adult life he wrote poetry—"when / Some vacant hours invite, I take my pen / Instead of cards or dice or tavern