

Cyndia Susan Clegg. *Press Censorship in Caroline England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. vii + 289 pp. \$99.00. Review by ELIZABETH SKERPAN-WHEELER, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY-SAN MARCOS.

In *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (1997), *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (2002), and now this volume, Cyndia Susan Clegg turns away from grand narratives on freedom of speech, notably that of F. S. Siebert in his *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476-1776* (1952), still the standard reference on the subject, to offer a much more complex appreciation of the nature of censorship and its relations to contemporary understanding of property rights, the business of printing, authorship and personal expression, in the contentious climate of early modern England. Following the practice of her previous studies, Clegg at once extensively engages previous scholarship while presenting meticulous original research into the English book trade and its intersections with the political and religious concerns of the day, as well as sensitive analysis of both the contents and reception of noteworthy controversial books. What Clegg's research shows is a marked change in both the understanding and practice of censorship during the reign of Charles I. Before 1625, censorship principally concerned obedience to the Elizabethan religious settlement and maintenance of the property rights of the Stationers' Company, that is, the regulation of the book trade. Under Charles, however, there developed a broad "cultural awareness of censorship" (42) that ultimately involved Parliament as well as the wider political public. *Press Censorship in Caroline England* thus demonstrates that our own comprehension of the controversial literature of the period must depend on our awareness of the political and legal contexts that governed its authors, printers, and readers.

At the heart of the matter of Caroline censorship, Clegg argues in her second chapter, was the impact of religious controversy in 1625-29, provoked by changes within the Church of England urged by Arminian clergy. While acknowledging that historians disagree about the particulars and extent of the debate, notably that over predestination, Clegg rightly notes that contemporaries *perceived* serious and radical departures from what they saw as established church doctrine. Thus, Calvinist clergy, self-characterized as the "godly" party, began

to write in the “spirit of political counsel” (58), opposing Arminian innovations to what had been Anglican orthodoxy. As Clegg describes them, godly writers felt that they represented the majority of clergy and saw themselves as being persecuted by a minority favored by the Crown. While godly clergy were indeed affected by new policies promulgated between 1625 and 1629, their perception of persecution did not correspond to the actual practice of censorship in the period. Clegg shows that there continued to be an extensive market for godly books, that in fact most books published in England in the late 1620s were godly, and that “few books were actually suppressed, and those that were differed little from those that were not” (78).

However, godly feelings did have some foundation in fact. First, censorship was now explicitly directed at writers. Charles’s censorship proclamation of 1626, for example, “criminalize[d] theological disputation—a practice long established in the Church of England—and turn[ed] its practitioners into opponents of Church and State” (62). Thus, Anglican clergymen who saw themselves as upholders of the Articles of Religion were now officially associated with the most virulent opponents of the Church of England itself. Second, this practice of guilt by association signaled a significant increase in official interest in disputatious writing: the beginnings of an emerging “culture of censorship” (95). Such a climate polarized debate in ways that many participants had not expected.

In her subsequent four chapters, Clegg traces the consequences of this polarization. Chapter three explores the changes Charles and Archbishop Laud made to the institutions of the Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber. Employing what Clegg calls “transformational literalism,” an “innovation upon former precedents” (103) that enabled a radical departure from the practice but not the letter of the law, Charles and Laud turned both courts into instruments for controlling religious opposition. In the case of Star Chamber, this meant, among other matters, a change in the definition of “sedition” that greatly expanded the number of books that were considered illegal. In Chapter four, Clegg presents an engaging re-examination of the well known “show trials” of the 1630s, those of William Prynne in 1634 and of Prynne, Henry Burton, and John Bastwick in 1637. Held in a climate of increasing restriction on the

printing of godly books, the trials illustrated to contemporaries the growing rigor of licensing. Because the restrictions on printing were largely successful, Clegg sees the trials as “anomalous and desperate efforts to contain religious opposition” (181) indicating that Laud and Charles had woefully misread their opponents, failing to understand that even moderate clergy did see Laud’s changes in the Church as innovations. As Chapter five demonstrates, their efforts to restrain all theological disputation radically increased demand for such books, and that demand prompted further expansion of both governmental concepts of sedition and writers’ ingenuity in circumventing censorship by, for example, employing “paratextual materials to alter a text’s original intention” (203).

This climate of governmental suspicion of any and all oppositional writing led Charles to misjudge seriously the nature of the political and religious problems erupting in Scotland in the late ‘30s. In Chapter six Clegg notes that “Scottish writing fed government anxieties about English Puritanism,” to the point where both Charles and Laud may have been “driven” (211) by fears of English Puritan plots. We may infer that their inability to comprehend the nature of their religious opposition—perceiving all criticism as radical and dangerous—contributed to the political blunders that led to the civil wars. And yet Clegg’s account reminds us that some of their difficulties may have arisen simply because they failed to grasp the fact that fundamental changes were happening to print culture. By 1640, print was regarded as another form of public speaking that could not be entirely repressed. In concluding with a brief account of parliamentary censorship in the 1640s and Milton’s *Areopagitica*, Clegg reminds us that, while they decried the abuses of the Crown, most public officials shared Charles’s belief in the need to hold authors accountable for their words and the responsibility of government to retain control over public expression of all kinds. Fundamental changes in censorship laws would happen only with a widespread appreciation of cultural changes forced by practice within print culture.

*Press Censorship in Caroline England* should be essential to any scholar seriously interested in the interrelationship of politics and media. It offers a sound education in the scholarship on censorship as well as a thorough explanation of the book trade and the practice

of controversial writing during the reign of Charles I. Moreover, it provides a reminder to scholars and critics of the importance of the audience's perceptions and authors' intents. Because of the extent of Clegg's engagement with previous scholarship, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish Clegg's own arguments. In this densely written book, more summarization would have been welcome. This criticism aside, this book is necessary reading for anyone attempting to interpret the political and religious discourse of early seventeenth-century England.

Robert J. Wickenheiser. *The Robert J. Wickenheiser Collection of John Milton at the University of South Carolina*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008. xvi + 928 pp. + 294 illus. \$90.00. Review by PAUL A. PARRISH, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

Robert J. Wickenheiser's engaging account of the Wickenheiser Collection in the University of South Carolina library is several books within one very large one. It begins with a review of Wickenheiser's life as a book collector, told with considerable detail and with consistent appreciation to fellow book collectors, booksellers, and others who enabled the collection to grow to more than six thousand volumes. It is substantively (over 640 pages) a Descriptive Listing of Editions in the collection, with more than sixty seventeenth-century editions and numerous illustrated editions, making this surely the most inclusive collection of illustrated Milton found anywhere. The book also includes a Descriptive Listing of Miltoniana (over 70 pages) in the collection, arranged alphabetically within each century and beginning with a first edition of Giovanni Batista Andreini's *L'Adamo Sacra Representatione* (1617), a work scholars have associated with *Paradise Lost*. Wickenheiser's collection includes 375 anthologies, and the book offers a selection of anthologies arranged chronologically, from *The English Parnassus* (1677) to a number of anthologies from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Because Wickenheiser's interest in collecting Milton began with an emphasis on illustrated editions, it is especially appropriate and aesthetically illuminating to see a further section of the book devoted to Original Drawings, Illustrations, Engravings, and Other, including some of the most