

very nature of the subject and the necessity for particular thoroughness perhaps preclude that. Nevertheless, assiduous work yields particular benefits, and this book should be on the list of anyone interested in the history, the politics, or even, indeed, the literature of the time.

Frances Harris. *Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. x + 330 pp. + 8 illus. \$35.00. Review by JOANNE VAN DER WOUDE, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

In *Transformations of Love*, Frances Harris reconsiders the notorious friendship between John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin “in the context of the post-Reformation debate concerning marriage and the much longer and less studied tradition of intense friendships between men and women in religious settings” (3). Harris, senior curator at the British Library, relies on extensive manuscript evidence, including the courtship letters of Margaret Blagge and Sidney Godolphin. Contrary to earlier sensationalist accounts of the relationship between Evelyn and Godolphin, in particular the publications of W. G. Hisock in the 1950s, *Transformations of Love* presents a more moderate view of their connection. In light of Restoration customs of neo-platonic friendship and spiritual tutelage, Harris argues that the friendship of Evelyn and Godolphin was neither romantic nor particularly unusual in nature. Her easy narrative style and thematic discussions make *Transformations of Love* a supremely readable book.

John Evelyn is introduced first, as the gardener *par excellence*. Seeking to reconcile the virtues of the contemplative life with the humanist ideals of public usefulness, Evelyn found the perfect outlet for his professional anxieties in forestry, on which he published his most famous book *Sylva* (1664). He designed his own garden at Sayes Court with an ‘elaboratory’ for semi-scientific experiments, while preserving an enclosed space to resemble the Biblical ‘hortus conclusus’. True to Evelyn’s platonic philosophy, the entire garden

was meant to reflect a higher, more perfect, reality. Into this garden, he brought his wife, a mere child of thirteen at the time of their marriage, whom he could similarly shape according to his wishes. After the birth of their three sons, Evelyn took his children's education to hand, but, when two boys died within weeks of each other, he sunk into an abyss of despair and depression. Disillusioned with the moral laxity of the Restoration court and no longer inspired by his beloved Royal Society, Evelyn proposed founding a monastic community of theological, political, and scientific thinkers. Though the plan never got off the ground, it reveals Evelyn's distaste for politics and public life and his increased resignation to rural retirement and solitude.

At this point, Margaret Blagge entered his life. Witty, pretty, and pious, she seemed the perfect candidate for Evelyn's project of an ideal spiritualized friendship. According to Harris, Evelyn "had never expected a wife to satisfy his desire for romance and idealism. For this he turned to his friendships" (75). Harris's brief discussion of neo-platonic and Puritan theories of marriage does not, however, explain why Evelyn was on such an extra-marital quest for friendship, or why he would seek the companionship of a woman who was more than thirty years younger than himself. At seventeen, Margaret was engaged to Sidney Godolphin and was living away from the court, where she had served as a maid of honor to the Duchess of York. Harris describes the customs of the Restoration court in great detail, though at times in an overly anecdotal fashion that tends to distract from the larger argument. During her lengthy engagement to Godolphin, Margaret experienced a religious conversion that led her to doubt her desire for marriage. She, too, considered a life of spiritual seclusion, for which there was no institutional basis at the time. Evelyn, in whom she confided, urged her to "Marry, in Gods name, Electra, Marry" (173). Though this advice initially led to a rift in their friendship, Margaret did marry Godolphin after several more years of hesitation. By this time, her relationship with Evelyn had developed into a "passionate, spiritualized" connection (155), regarded by both as singular and salvific.

Harris's lengthy treatment of the relationship between Margaret Blagge and Evelyn is thoughtful and persuasive. Her readings of Evelyn's drawing of the Altar of their Friendship (motto: *Un Dieu Un Amy*), and of Margaret's portrait, painted at his request, are especially insightful. Although the correspondence perhaps suggests a greater emotional attachment on Evelyn's part, conclusions with regards to the exact nature of his affection must remain speculative. When compared to other "spiritual friendships" of the time, Harris convincingly shows that there is no reason to assume Evelyn and Margaret were romantically involved. Most letters concern Margaret's religiosity, which at times took on excessive proportions, and Evelyn's spiritual advice to her. Self-composed prayers, devotions, and manuals for meditation abound, some of which obviously derive from Catholic sources like Francis de Sales and the *devotio moderna* movement. Margaret's motivations, however, remain somewhat mysterious. It is unclear, for example, why she chooses to continue their intimate correspondence despite feeling "browbeaten, manipulated, and confused" by Evelyn's "oppressive and demanding" interest in her at the beginning of their relationship (174-5). Also, Harris hardly discusses the social and political function of (female) religious performance in post-Reformation England, though this seems central to Margaret's dilemma.

With her marriage to Godolphin fast approaching, Margaret asked Evelyn to return her letters, most of which she destroyed. Her secret wedding, which she concealed even from her "faithfull Friend" (150), increased the distance between them. Yet when Margaret and Sidney publicly announced their marriage, Evelyn happily renewed the connection by composing a nearly 100-page treatise with marital and domestic advice for Margaret. Harris helpfully contextualizes Evelyn's thought in contemporary debates about marriage and friendship, showing his insistence upon the special and inviolable nature of their spiritual friendship. After only two years of marriage, Margaret died shortly after giving birth to her first child. The gripping descriptions of Margaret's final illness as well as Evelyn's and Godolphin's ensuing despair beautifully round out Harris's narrative. Ultimately, *Transformations*

of Love successfully recasts the infamous relationship between Evelyn and Godolphin, as well as presenting a rich and intriguing study of spiritual friendship and Restoration marriage.

Raymond Gillespie, ed. *Scholar Bishop: The Recollections and Diary of Narcissus Marsh, 1638-1696*. Cork: Cork University Press, 2003. vi + 100 pp. Paper £17.60. Irish Narratives Series, edited by David Fitzpatrick. Review by MAUREEN E. MULVIHILL, PRINCETON RESEARCH FORUM, NEW JERSEY.

A broadly published scholar on religious beliefs and the material literary culture of early-modern Ireland, Dr. Raymond Gillespie (Senior Lecturer, Department of Modern History, National University of Ireland, Maynooth) now has given Irish Studies an important, if modestly slim, new work on arguably the premier bookman of seventeenth-century Ireland: Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713). An English cleric from Hannington, Wiltshire, Marsh became Provost of Trinity College Dublin, founder of Marsh's Library in Dublin, Archbishop of Dublin, and Archbishop of Armagh. The legacy of Narcissus Marsh and his valuable contributions to Irish education and book culture are preserved today, in large part, by the faithful Keeper of Marsh's Library, Muriel McCarthy, who herself has written superbly on the history and holdings of Marsh's Library, a unique eighteenth-century building to which she has given the best of her time and talents (*All Graduates and Gentlemen: Marsh's Library* [Dublin, 1980]). McCarthy's remarkable dedication, generosity, and knowledge have won her the affection and respect of scholars worldwide; they know that Marsh's Library is a major centre of seventeenth-century studies.

Gillespie's newest offering is an old-spelling, modern edition of the Reverend Marsh's recollections and diary (1690-1696). The autograph manuscript of the diary has not survived or has yet to