

essays refer to other articles within the volume (the first mention of another contributor's work occurs in chapter five, which is the first essay in Section Two). There is some repetition as the contributors allude to the same primary sources and at times make similar comments (e.g., in reference to Smith's map of Virginia or Richard Frethorne's letter). When differences of interpretation do appear, they are not pursued. For example, both Hadfield and Appelbaum discuss the Picts and their similarity and/or difference to the Powhatans but make no reference to the other's article. This lack of intertextual analysis is surprising in a publication dominated by literary scholars. These concerns, however, do not detract from the solid research presented in this volume. *Envisioning an English Empire* includes first-rate scholarship and contributes to the ever-growing pile of publications in the field of Atlantic studies by highlighting the myriad connections between Europe, Africa, and the Americas in the colonial enterprises of the early modern period.

Phil Withington. *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xiv + 298 pp. \$75.00. Review by SIMON KOW, UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE.

In chapter 29 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes characterized "Corporations" as "many lesser Common-wealths in the bowels of a greater, like wormes in the entrayles of a natural man." Phil Withington expands upon the implicit assumption in Hobbes's scathing remark of the importance of urban political culture in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. This book seeks to redress the neglect of urban political culture in historical scholarship on early modern England. It is conventionally assumed that the eighteenth century witnessed a flowering of civil society in England relative to the relation between state and subject in previous centuries. Withington argues for the "sustained urbanisation" in the latter period by charting "the propagation, institutionalisation, and practice of 'civility' and 'good government' within English cities and towns between the Reformation and Glorious Revolution" (7). *The Politics of Commonwealth* is a detailed, well-written study that will appeal mainly to social and cultural historians of early modern England.

Part 1 introduces the context of urbanisation in early modern England. Withington describes the role of commercialisation in the formation of the English corporate system. Urban historians, he notes, have tended to focus only on “the imperatives of regulation and peace” in the corporate towns, whereas he addresses the oft-neglected “symbiotic relationship between civic and economic development” (28). Accordingly, Withington carefully examines apprenticeships, civil litigations, borough courts, and town hall building to identify this correlation and urban growth. In this and other chapters, he draws upon literary sources (particularly Andrew Marvell) to illustrate these points: thus *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is adduced as a “city comedy” in which Windsor is “precisely the kind of civic community around which city commonwealths were built” (47). The incorporated cities and towns, he concludes, were paradoxical: both sites of commerce and of separateness between its members; epitomes of the modernity of urbanisation but also imbued with “essentially retrospective” humanist ideologies (48).

The first chapter in Part 2 discusses the “cultural resource” of ideology in the city commonwealth. Withington brings out the richness of ideological debates among early modern citizens and freemen. More and Bacon represented two opposing tendencies in civic humanism—the commonwealth of virtue as opposed to the kingdom of subjects—but both advocated a meritorious aristocracy. Their visions in turn influenced town clerks, citizens, burgesses, lawyers, and poets as well as King James. The prevalence of civic ideology was demonstrated in the ways in which parliamentarian and royalist propagandists addressed the citizenry. Thus “local commonwealths ... effectively linked the classical humanism of the mid-sixteenth century to the re-emergence of mixed constitutional rhetoric in the 1640s” (78).

The next two chapters focus on the relationship of place and person in the city commonwealth, and on the “politics of company” in civic conversations. Liberty, freedom, and citizenship tended to be tied to place more than to the innate person; and Withington shows the differences of place between and within various city commonwealths. “There was,” he concludes, “an early modern *concept* of place that positioned the person in a variety of structures—institutional, geographical, and architectural—and which was used within a number of political traditions” (122). Despite his detailed account, however, this concept of place remains a vague one by the end of the chapter. This is true also of the “politics of company,” meant to describe sociability in

the urban context but often seeming to amount to nothing more than gossip and brawling. Withington maintains that such civic conversations demonstrate the presence of community discourse among early modern English citizens, in contrast to the Habermasian thesis that “the ideal of rational discourse only emerged with the ‘transformation of the bourgeois public sphere’ during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (150).

The first two chapters in Part 3 address questions of economy and patriarchy. Withington takes a “civic perspective on economic culture” (161) by examining the urban freedom of artisans, tradesmen, and mercantile elites in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These groups constituted a “dynamic civic culture” (170) based on the classical concept of *honestas*, i.e., honesty and civility. The civility associated with the eighteenth century middle classes “bears more than a passing resemblance to the values of urban freedom practised during the previous 150 years” (194). Such values were also applicable to the place of women. In contrast to the view that women only occupied the private sphere, Withington suggests that despite the general patriarchy in early modern English society, the household was itself a political entity in which women were empowered: “the words of women were not distinct from civil society; they were civil society” (199).

Finally, the author turns to the “resonance between Calvinism and citizenship” detected by Hobbes and others: not a “deterministic link between citizenship and militant Protestantism,” but “a process of cultural symbiosis by which ‘puritanism’ became the dominant idiom through which the ideology of city commonwealth was expressed and enacted” (233). Thus puritanism was employed to justify the place of the citizenry as opposed to the established clergy, aristocracy, and monarchy. Withington (somewhat unclearly) identifies a *republicanism* of citizens, distinct from the republicanism of Milton and others; the former was more hesitant about revolution than the latter. In general, however, the civic virtues associated with honesty were foils to the values of “the episcopal party” (260).

Withington claims that *The Politics of Commonwealth* “offers a counterpoint to the narrative of sovereign state and private subjects found in writers like Jonson, Bacon, Hobbes, Baines, Brady, and Barbon” (267), but its chief merit lies in its wealth of historical detail rather than in providing a defence of early modern civic culture as a coherent political and social ideal. Indeed, the abundance of sources serves rather to impress upon the reader the amor-

phous character of the political culture of citizenship in early modern England. Withington's book is a useful reinterpretation of early modern English society for scholars of social and cultural history, but a work of limited interest to historians of ideas.

Michael Losonsky. *Enlightenment and Action from Descartes to Kant: Passionate Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xvii + 221 pp. \$80.00. Review by JOSEPH M. MCCARTHY, SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY.

Immanuel Kant's famed 1784 essay "What is Enlightenment?" presented a notion of human enlightenment as a liberation of the self from a state of immature irresolution by means of the voluntary and public operation of reason. The sources of this view of are rich and complex but, as Losonsky points out, surely include the philosophical thought of seventeenth-century Europe that contains, at least in embryo, the major notions that inform Kant's view. His aim, therefore, "is to show that there is an evolution from Descartes to Leibniz that takes us to the threshold of Kant's conception of human enlightenment as something that requires the public exercise of reason" (ix). To do this, Losonsky focuses on the topic of irresolution in seventeenth-century philosophy. Irresolution, the failure to decide what is true and what it not, renders individuals unable to exercise their reason autonomously and imprisons them in a self-imposed immaturity. Two major approaches to curing irresolution were advanced in seventeenth-century thought. To those who believed in "inspired" thinking, as did such enthusiasts as John Webster and Jakob Boehme (and, despite appearances to the contrary, Henry More), as well as to those who, like Baruch de Spinoza, espoused "resolute" thinking, the key to overcoming irresolution could only be divine inspiration, since for them the mind is primarily an involuntary automaton inclined by nature to reflect the external world truly and accurately. But to those who, like René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, conceived the mind as the creature of human activity, the answer to irresolution is the exercise of the will in making informed judgments and adhering to them.