

essential qualities of their authors), Harper reminds us that *Areopagitica* “privileges original ideas, not the proliferation of mere copies” (201). For Harper, this means that the 3-D printing of guns (“a revolution in manufacturing rather than a revolution in ‘printing’” [199]) does not fall under the kind of personal freedom that Milton endorses. Harper finds validation for his reading of *Areopagitica* in Milton’s repeated poetic depictions of gunpowder. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s “apparent disdain for modern weaponry” intertwines with his monist cosmology: the satanic invention of gunpowder is a perversion of the vitality inherent in all matter (204). Rogers’s and Harper’s essays conclude this volume by demonstrating how a sustained, scholarly engagement with Milton’s writings can be put into the service of writing with a wider—and more politically urgent—appeal.

All of the essays in this collection originated as papers delivered at the 2013 Conference on John Milton; this conference did not have a more specific topical focus. It is all the more impressive, then, that the editors have been able to organize these essays in a way that demonstrates both eclecticism and coherence (thus recreating a productive tension internal to Milton’s thinking about monism). It would be too much to ask of a single volume to confirm decisively that current theoretical discussions on topics as wide-ranging as ontology, the environment, and animality in relation to the human should be more attuned to single-author literary studies. Yet this volume amply succeeds in showing how Milton scholarship continues to refine its own insights while also advancing our shared understandings of the religious, erotic, and political underpinnings of materialisms, past and present.

Ellen R. Welch. *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 312 pp. + 10 illus. \$75.00. Review by HALL BJØRNSTAD, INDIANA UNIVERSITY.

*A Theater of Diplomacy* is an important and timely book that will reorient the way in which we think about both diplomacy and theater in early modern France and beyond. The book brings sharp scrutiny to

the all-important yet, until now, little-explored, constitutive intersection of the performing arts and international relations, as the subtitle of the book has it, especially as it evolves from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. Drawing on an impressive command of a vast array of archives, disciplines, methodologies and scholarly traditions, Welch explores her materials compellingly, systematically, patiently, as much at ease in the historical archive of early modern diplomacy as when analyzing theatrical texts that stage diplomacy, and maybe at her best while exploring (often while establishing) the archive of the historical reception of diplomatic entertainment. Since the book has already been widely reviewed and celebrated, even consecrated by a H-France Forum in 2017 (vol. 12–13), I will focus here on what I see as two to three particularly important contributions, with special focus on the further inquiry that the book enables and necessitates, while also reflecting on a certain tension between what the book purports to do in its meta-reflective moments and what it actually does.

So how is the title *A Theater of Diplomacy* to be understood? There is an openness to the genitive construction of that title (as discreetly highlighted by the italicized *of* on the book cover), fruitfully exploited by the author throughout. On the one hand, we have the theater that diplomacy itself *is*, as highlighted by François de Callières often-quoted observation that “an ambassador resembles in some way an actor exposed on the stage to the eyes of the public in order to play great roles.” On the other, the book addresses a certain kind of theater that contains, is filled by, maybe even constituted by diplomatic themes and actors. Then, there is the middle ground hinted at above: grandiose court entertainments—allegorical ballets, masquerade balls, chivalric tournaments, operas, and comedies—which were “diplomatic” both in their purpose to honor and impress visiting diplomats and often in their themes (war, peace, and international unity). The eight chapters that make up the book survey some of the most important examples of diplomatic entertainment through the long French seventeenth century, as indicated by chapter titles that all refer to a phenomenon or event situated in time, as in “Chapter 4: Richelieu’s Allegories of War (1639–42)” or what, to this reviewer, was the most compelling among the eight strong chapters: “Chapter 5: Ballet Diplomacy at the Congress of Westphalia (1645–49).” While most of the chapters, like

the ones just referred to, are excellent case studies, others operate in a more synthetic mode, proposing impressive surveys of vast periods, as indicated, for example, by the title of the last chapter: "Chapter 8: Diplomacy on the Public Stage (1697–1714)." Taken together, the chronologically ordered chapters go a long way in delivering on the book's ambitious promise to "trace major evolutions in the theory and practice of diplomacy and court spectacle" (9). The choice of words here is telling: *major* but not *shifts*, rather *evolutions*, which, importantly, is plural. Accordingly, as stated in the last paragraph of the conclusion, the book offers "no grand theory of theater and the performing arts' effectiveness for international politics," but through the contrast it establishes, the inquiry is nevertheless successful in its ambition to "illuminate the unarticulated assumptions that underlie our own, contemporary practices" (212). The case briefly analyzed in the conclusion works beautifully in this respect: the diplomatic entertainments at the 1815 Congress of Utrecht in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars were perceived as empty and irrelevant, as "residual and retrograde" (211), concluding a development that started during the second half of the reign of Louis XIV, in stark contrast to the mid-century abundance of diplomatic entertainments (as analyzed in chapters 3–6), when the Theater of Diplomacy on stage in fact "produced new ideas and concepts for theories of political representation" (69).

To this reviewer, the most fascinating part of the book, and also the most daring, consists in the exploration of ways in which the earlier diplomatic entertainments may have influenced the conceptual vocabulary for thinking about politics. This also seems to have been the starting point of the whole project, as expressed most forcefully in the first phrase of the acknowledgments: "This project began as a simple thought experiment in taking metaphorS seriously" (301), and rephrased in the opening of chapter 3: "Dramatic metaphors (if metaphor is a sufficient term to describe theorists' reliance on theatrical concepts) did not simply emerge from the ether" (59). But what exactly does it mean to take a metaphor seriously? And how can we be sure we are not just projecting our understanding of the working of a metaphor back on the past? The author is clearly concerned about the risk of over-interpretation and always strives to anchor her own analyses of her corpus from the performing arts (typically based on the

written libretto) with reference to examples from actual reactions to the performances, preferably by diplomatic figures. This leads her deep into the archive of international politics and diplomacy, with impressive and often important results. However, this care also occasionally makes her less comfortable trusting her own bold interpretation of the materials at hand. It will also occasionally lead to the inclusion of slightly awkward disclaimers about her own hermeneutic activity as *speculation*, as in Chapter 1 when it is stated that “the resources of performance theory provide a way to speculate about the entertainment’s effect” on the aristocrats that took part in them, in the absence of “firsthand accounts of their experience” (21). A similar expression of the same discomfort from Chapter 4: “Considering the ballet’s diplomatic uses requires a certain amount of speculation” (114). As if speculation should and could be avoided while making sense of past materials. And as if the archive can liberate the historian from the task of speculation, rather than direct and assist that speculation. On the contrary, this book is at its most compelling when the author allows herself to speculate.

The author’s approach to what it means to take the dramatic metaphors seriously as a conceptual laboratory for political theory is worked out—even modeled—in the context of chapter 3 (“National Actors on the Ballet Stage (1620s–30s),” with a corpus of pieces like the *Ballet du grand bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut* (1626) and the *Ballet des nations* (1622), which staged the complex interaction of actors embodying national characters. As the author observes, at a general level, the “creative work of representation consists in forming concepts, through figures, that in turn shape the way people think and behave” (80). But this remains very abstract. The staging of these ballets literally plays out the shapes, forms, and figures of international political relations; they are fleshed out in front of the audience, at a historic moment where traditional modes of monarchical representation were perceived as inadequate. In a dense subchapter titled “Personifying the Body Politic” (68–74), the author argues forcefully that her corpus makes “available a new way to envision a collective (geographical, political) entity” (69), by providing a “creative supplement” (80) to a contemporary political thinking which was already steeped in a language of representation, impersonation, and incorporation. This

important discussion is rich and rewarding, while also doing important groundwork for the two following chapters on War and Peace (see titles quoted above). It indeed lives up to the ambitious promise of taking the dramatic metaphors seriously.

However, at the same time, the central part of the book is haunted by trends in recent scholarship that has little room for this taking-seriously of a corpus written for and staged for—and sometimes even by—the hegemonic power itself. Is there room for an engagement with this material in a mode that escapes dichotomies such as complacency or critique, propaganda or subversion? Will not these works already, through their proximity to the hegemonic power, by default take a stand either subserviently *for* or subversively *against* it? The methodologically most important part of the book is preoccupied with concerns like these: in chapter 3 by the observation that other scholars, as Mark Franko, have analyzed the same corpus in terms of “the affirmation of pure dissent” (81); and in chapter 4, through the looming suspicion voiced in earlier scholarship that the three allegorical entertainments under scrutiny—and which were all commissioned by Richelieu—present nothing more than propagandistic versions of recent history. The author deals with these concerns through negotiations at two very different levels. First of all, she makes an important distinction, by pointing towards a further richness in the materials, complexities, and ambivalences not necessarily part of the traditional interpretations, and which exposed the audience with the need to negotiate their way through the international interactions they were witnessing. To this reviewer, she thereby very effectively demonstrates a “third way” between propaganda and subversion. Second, however, she risks weakening this important methodological intervention in her own negotiating with prior scholarship, where she seeks to position her more nuanced reading in a way that doesn’t contradict but only adds to the earlier work. In this vein, the traditional view of Richelieu’s personal theater “as a form of propaganda is *convincing to a large degree*”; indeed, the triumphant role of France in this corpus “*justifies to an extent* their traditional characterization as propaganda” (85, 106, my italics). Here, one would have wished that the author were a less good diplomat than those under scrutiny in her corpus. By giving too much ground to prior scholars, the impact of her nuanced

argument is lessened. It is not that the qualification as propaganda is wrong or unfounded, but rather that it brings to the material a framework that is inadequate. It serves to close down the discussion in contrast to what Welch does so beautifully: to open it up, in new and important ways.

George Klawitter. *Marvell, Sexual-Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2017. ix + 269 pp. \$98.77. Review by BRENDAN PRAWDZIK, THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY.

When first taking an interest in Andrew Marvell, I was grateful to read George Klawitter's essay, "Andrew Marvell and the Nymph's Little Foot." Here, Klawitter demonstrated, provocatively, an anatomically precise, autoerotic sexuality in Marvell's lyric, "The Nymph Complaining on the Death of Her Fawn." Published in a collection of *New Perspectives on Andrew Marvell* (Reims: 2008), the essay was well situated. It focused a unique vision upon poetry and produced insight from its niche.

The scholarly monograph does not suit Klawitter. *Andrew Marvell, Sexual Orientation, and Seventeenth-Century Poetry* is a patchwork of meandering prose that, despite repeated stabs at the mysteries of Marvell's verse, remains unthreaded and wasteful. It offers no serious contribution to Marvell studies, in part because it pretends to be an alternative to scholarship that it portrays as pretentious and hypermasculine. Most of Klawitter's use of the existing literature on Marvell, seventeenth-century poetry, and theory of sexuality, gender, and identity is superficial and convenient. It does not demonstrate the intellectual gratitude that comes with digesting knowledge gathered, concocted, and presented in rigorous scholarship.

The book's broadest claims are correct. Marvell's poetry is richly and strangely erotic. The poems show, variously, an ugly heterosexuality, moments of attractive homoeroticism or queerness, scenes of autoeroticism, and suggestions of asexuality. The book's most welcome contribution is its placement of celibacy and asexuality within the spectrum of sexual identity.