

English thinkers Isaac Newton and John Locke “was both less evident and less universal than is commonly assumed”(526). That is an interesting challenge, but one not entirely substantiated in the pages of this book which ought to be read alongside Roy Porter’s *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (Penguin, 2000).

Part V delineates the clandestine progress of the Radical Enlightenment. An interesting chapter explores Spinozistic novels that were not only “fiercely anticlerical and anti-Christian” but whose “ultimate goal is not just to sweep aside revealed religion and ecclesiastical power but, in the realm of fantasy at least, construct an entirely new society from which monarchy, nobility, and hierarchy are excluded, along with institutionalized inequality of the sexes, and in which the well-being of man comes to be based instead on philosophy, enlightenment, equality, virtue, and justice”(598). Another chapter discusses the circulation of clandestine philosophical manuscripts, such as the *Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, which were “the chief method of propagating radical thought in Europe, laying the intellectual foundations, and opening the way psychologically and culturally, for the printed onslaught”(685) of *philosophes* such as Rousseau.

The book is well constructed with few printers’ errors and is illustrated with twenty-three black-and-white prints. The index is useful but does not exhaustively cover the contents of *Radical Enlightenment*, which in any event ought to be read from cover to cover.

Joshua Scodel. *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. viii + 367 pp. \$55.00. Review by IRA CLARK, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA.

In this exemplary work of historical literary criticism, Joshua Scodel offers readers both old-fashioned scholarly and current theoretical virtues. *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* reminds me both of the monumental and meticulous learning that

informed criticism founded in the history of ideas and as well of interpretations developed from recent theoretical contexts. The book exhibits Scodel's knowledge of classics and philosophy of many strands, acute reading skills in philosophical and scientific writing, poetry, fiction, and drama, plus the examination of his topic's continuing pertinence to thinkers as diverse as Stephen Jay Gould, John Rawls, Charles Taylor, and Jean Beaudrillard.

Scodel argues that Aristotle's proposal of virtue as the balanced mean between extremes of excess and deficiency is fundamental to understanding a range of ethical expressions in early modern England that extends far beyond the well-known positions of the middle way in religion and politics. To make his argument he prudently employs an adaptable and discriminating notion of 'authors' transforming what might seem an outworn ethical commonplace so as to demonstrate how various writers manipulated the ideal of moderation between extremes in supporting highly divergent personal, social, political, and intellectual goals. He finds the ideal itself vital because of its revered heritage, its malleability in application, and its valorization of tensions between means and extremes. Such virtues are particularly prominent in his suggestive observations about contemporary employment of this ethic.

In order to avoid any appearance of a progressive history of the Aristotelian mean from early in Elizabeth's reign until the Glorious Revolution, *Excess and the Mean* describes various, and contested, movements through the historical developments of several genres. Scodel's introduction traces Aristotle's mean through the redactions and revisions by Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Horace, and Augustine that deeply influenced early modern writers. Then his first part describes early modern revisions by John Donne and Francis Bacon. He finds that Donne through satires and epistles developed an idiosyncratic mean whereby to encourage a skeptical quest for a Christian church and a space among established social identities for personal social mobility. Scodel's Bacon ingeniously employed the mean in support of a stable commonwealth at the same time that he advocated a flexible mean and sometimes an outright rejection of the mean in favor of excess to encourage in-

tellectual search and personal political ambition. Scodel's second part tracks the early modern Georgic from Spenser and Milton through Denham to Cowley. Here he applies his mean-extremes paradigm to look at adaptations of Virgil that celebrated England's emulation of Rome and proposed various visions of rural labor as moderate balance between or contention with extremes, with divergent visions of the incipient nation. Then he describes the advocacy of balance for internal stability with the promotion of zeal for imperial expansion. Part three considers ideals that set in opposition balanced and extreme ideas of love and politics from Samuel Daniel's sonnets and Sidney's *Arcadia* through cavalier lyrics into the heroic plays of John Dryden and Aphra Behn. Here he juxtaposes the rational ideals of moderate love and conjugal comfort advocated by English Protestants with the ideals of passion in erotic extremism as a mark of those "truly noble" in early romances. Restoration developments in the epic and in heroic plays could then exalt the consequences for the public or for the private sphere. Part four follows the contours of the symposiastic drinking lyric through moderation and excess from Ben Jonson and Robert Herrick through Richard Lovelace to John Wilmot, earl of Rochester. From the beginnings this poetry participated in the era's conflicts, such as those over tavern norms of conviviality versus exhortations to moderation, or such as those ethnic and religious conflicts in the choice between "rich wine" and "Luther's beer." These became polarized between Milton's republican moderation and Royalist imbibings over defeated loyalty in isolation or close friendship, until they culminated in drunken escapist excess or, in the case of Rochester, transgressive erotic with symposiastic pleasures. Scodel's conclusion looks at John Milton's counter re-imagining of an ideal of moderation in *Paradise Lost*. Here he focuses on the exaltation of Adam and Eve's paradisaic balance of self-respect and conjugal love.

Each of Scodel's chapters begins with a consideration of the classical context and influence on the Renaissance—of skeptical thought, of Virgilian imperialist georgic, of the Aristotelian and Christian heritage of moderate sexuality and love lyrics and ro-

mances, of Anacreontics and Horatian libation verse. Then he turns to the developments within the genres as early English writers adapted the conventions and exploited often opposed tendencies inherent in them so as to gain new ends. In considering the developments he is particularly intent on the texts and their social and political contexts and implications as writers expanded on or contended with others. Here Scodel is at his most informative as well as his most subtle. The range of texts extends from the well-known, such as Donne's satires and Bacon's essays, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, Denham's *Coopers Hill*, Dryden's and Behn's heroic plays, Lovelace's "Grasse-hopper," and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to the lesser known, such as John Davies of Hereford's *Microcosmos*, Thomas Randolph's *Aristippus, or the Jovial Philosopher*, William Davenant's *Gondibert*, Charles Cotton's "Clepsydra," and Alexander Brome's "A Round." All of the discussions are placed historically amidst discourses on the mean from sermons and polemics and ethical treatises throughout the era. And all along Scodel is attentive to our own critical movements and controversies, taking care to note and qualify agreements and to explain differences.

Among Joshua Scodel's most persuasive interpretations are those of Donne's revision of "mediocrity" so as to further his personal goals and of Bacon's adaptations so as to promote balance in politics and reject balance in the pursuit of knowledge and private ambition. He is compelling as well about Milton's sense of moderation as pleasurable restraint in the senses and as a mean of self-respect in personal integrity and marriage. Some of his most intriguing results come from taking drinking songs seriously. Throughout *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* he offers perceptive ideas about the relationships between the discourses of love and of politics, of balanced moderation and control in internal politics versus expansionist excess in pursuit of empire, and of the commingling of public and private motives. Most of all, he gives us a new appreciation of the human capacity to remake our ideals into servants of our needs and desires. And he offers us a host of subtle readings of literature across an expansive

range of expression in early modern England. Both contributions should prove useful as models.

Stephen Guy-Bray. *Homoerotic Space: The Poetics of Loss in Renaissance Literature*. Buffalo; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. x + 265. Review ELENA LEVY-NAVARRO, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER.

Homoerotic Space represents an important intervention in criticism on the history of "sexuality" in the Renaissance period. Of particular importance is its emphasis on "homoerotic space," a space created from the central classical texts that comprised a humanistic education. In reading classical pastoral and epic texts, Guy-Bray argues, the educated Renaissance male reader could use them to "construct, or at least to adumbrate, an emancipatory sexual discourse" (9). Interestingly, such readers could do so even as male homoeroticism signified only as something temporally "before" and geographically "other." As Guy-Bray explains, homoeroticism in this period is "always elsewhere and usually textual" (15).

This book admirably pays close attention to classical texts and in so doing, describes some of the ways that these texts influenced Renaissance male authors. The story Guy-Bray tells overall is curiously pessimistic, however, especially given his stated goal of uncovering a homoerotic space too frequently ignored by critics. He presents a surprisingly straight story in which space is seen as increasingly colonized and diminished, first in the movement from Greek to Roman texts examined in the first two chapters and subsequently in their Renaissance imitations. In chapter one, Guy-Bray sees the move from Theocritus to Virgil as one in which the homoerotic associated with the pristine landscape of the past becomes increasingly irrecoverable as it is overridden by political and military Rome. In chapter two, he describes the epic as teaching the Renaissance reader that intense affective bonds between two men are destructive to the well-being of the state. As Guy-