

Whitney R.D. Jones. *Thomas Rainborowe (c. 1610-1648): Civil War Seaman, Siegemaster and Radical*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005. x + 154 pp. \$75.00. Review by ELLEN J. JENKINS, ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY.

When Thomas Rainborowe argued at the Putney Debates in late 1647 ‘I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under,’ he affiliated himself with the Levellers in the English Civil Wars and earned a position for himself in the history of political theory. His role in the wars and the role of his affiliation to the Levellers are the subjects of Whitney R.D. Jones’s work, *Thomas Rainborowe (c. 1610-1648): Civil War Seaman, Siegemaster and Radical*. Rainborowe (or ‘Rainsborough’) served the Parliamentary side as a naval officer, a colonel in the New Model Army, a recruiter Member of Parliament for Droitwich, and vice-admiral of the navy. He had ties to the New England colonies—one of his sisters was married to Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, while another married Winthrop’s son, Stephen—and his infantry command included a sizable number of colonists who had returned from New England in order to fight for the Parliamentarians.

As a military leader, Rainborowe became an expert at siege warfare. He participated at the battles of Naseby and Langport, fought at the sieges of Bridgwater, Sherborne, Bristol, Colchester, and Worcester, and blockaded Oxford, gaining a level of outspoken prominence that finally put him at odds with Thomas Fairfax, Oliver Cromwell, and Henry Ireton. Jones, a retired lecturer, academic administrator, and author of *The Tree of Commonwealth* (2000), points out that Rainborowe, a prickly and ambitious character in his own right, was part of the delegation that presented Henry Ireton’s *Heads of the Proposals Offered by the Army* to Charles I as the basis for a proposed constitutional monarchy. Along with other radicals, Rainborowe was disgusted by the king’s scornful response and lost patience with Cromwell and Ireton, who continued their unsuccessful negotiations with Charles I for a settlement. Rainborowe sided with the Agitator ‘Freebom John’ Lilburne, one of Cromwell’s enemies, who wrote *Agreement of the People*, which called for Parliament to hold the authority to make laws, conduct domestic and foreign policy, and make appointments.

Rainborowe left no writings, so the accounts of his short career have been, by necessity, cobbled together from the records and testimonies of others. Still, he made a distinctive mark at the Putney Debates in late 1647, when representatives of the New Model Army and the Parliamentary radicals (the latter called “Agitators”) met to discuss proposals for a constitution for England. Rainborowe argued for manhood suffrage, claiming, “For really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he.” The “Grandees,” Cromwell and Ireton, fearing anarchy, took the more conservative point of view that suffrage must be limited to owners of property. The compromise that was reached did not allow for manhood suffrage, but the Levellers had acquired a hero in Rainborowe. Rainborowe’s efforts to push the Levellers’ agenda at the Corkbush Field rendezvous later in November 1647 were a failure, however, and he was shunted aside when he attempted to present a copy of Lilburne’s *Agreement of the People* to the New Model Army’s commander-in-chief, Thomas Fairfax. Rainborowe eventually submitted a formal apology before an army council in order to retain both his seat in Parliament and his naval command, leading some contemporaries, including Cromwell, and recent scholars to doubt the validity of his commitment to radical politics. As vice-admiral, Rainborowe was unpopular with the largely Presbyterian naval officers because of his perceived radical attitudes, however, and so he was removed from his command. He was returned to the army.

Shortly afterward, Rainborowe was sent out of the way by Fairfax to take charge of the siege of Pontefract Castle. He was assassinated by Royalists at his Doncaster headquarters on October 30, 1648, after which event the Levellers turned out in the thousands to mourn and demonstrate, ostensibly wearing sea-green ribbons to honor Rainborowe. Jones points out that contemporaries and historians have continued to debate the accounts of the assassination, some arguing that the murder was engineered by Rainborowe’s opposition from within the army. The Levellers were never able to advance their objectives after Rainborowe’s death, and whether that event made any difference is a matter for debate. At any rate, the movement scarcely outlasted the king, finally losing support and falling apart before the end of 1649.

Jones’s account of the brief and turbulent career of Thomas Rainborowe is well-written and readable, though not for the fainthearted; nor is it suitable for undergraduates. Rainborowe remains a rather flattened persona, since he

did not leave letters and papers that might have given his character greater depth. Still, the reader with some background in the Civil War era will find that Jones's book provides valuable perspective on the factionalism within the ranks of the Parliamentarians.

Marcus Nevitt. *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England, 1640-1660*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006. xii + 218 pp. + 15 illus. \$89.95. Review by ELIZABETH SKERPAN-WHEELER, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY-SAN MARCOS.

For those scholars who fear that historical readings of literature have been drifting away from attention to language, this book should be a welcome discovery. Marcus Nevitt's study of agency in the writings and actions of non-aristocratic Englishwomen truly breaks new ground in the study of political discourse in the revolutionary period. First, Nevitt examines the rhetoric employed in women's pamphleteering, rather than the more feminine-gendered prophecy, as a site of negotiating female agency. Second, and perhaps more important, he challenges the disciplinary limitations of previous scholarship to argue for the importance of material culture as a significant source of evidence of women's participation in the public sphere of political action. Through five focused case studies, or "close-analyses" (19), Nevitt discusses a range of genres and loci of female presence: animadversion, regicide pamphleteering, newsbooks, public demonstration, and petitioning. Arranging his chapters chronologically, he devotes the first, second, and fourth chapters primarily to the study of female rhetorics, the third and fifth to material culture. Such an organization clearly demonstrates the intersection of the two approaches and the importance of setting aside as artifacts of previous methods any assumptions about political or sectarian affiliations of women writers.

Before commencing his case studies, Nevitt devotes part of his introduction to presenting a model of his method in an analysis of the "performances and prophecies" (6) of the Fifth Monarchist Anna Trapnel in 1654. Following the collapse of Barebone's Parliament in January, Trapnel took to bed for twelve days in a trance while uttering "prayers, songs and prophecies" (7). However, this episode was far from the end of the event. As Nevitt shows,