

David Loewenstein. *Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xiii + 413 pp. \$60.00. Review by JAMEELA LARES, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

This valuable cross-disciplinary study offers an extended look at the various enthusiastic sects and personalities of the Interregnum in order to place Milton's work more securely in its historical context. Loewenstein first demonstrates how mid-century interactions of religion and politics were reflected in the publications of the various enthusiastic sects, and then locates ways in which Milton's later major poems reflect some of the same concerns.

The study is divided into two parts. Part one examines radical religious culture in Milton's time in terms of the careers and especially the polemical writings of their central figures: John Lilburne (Levellers), Gerrard Winstanley (Diggers), Abiezer Coppe (Ranters), Anna Trapnel (Fifth Monarchists), and George Fox (Quakers). In this section, Loewenstein is particularly interested in "the polemical language, rhetorical density, and powerful myths of the dramatic, intensely disputatious revolutionary writings by radical sectarian authors" (5). He shows how radical visionary writers exposed such ambivalent trends within the Revolution as tensions between political conservatism and religious radicalism, between radical social change and traditional social organization.

Lilburne the Leveler, for instance, harshly criticized the perhaps inevitable hypocrisy and conservatism of every successive political regime, identifying his own seven imprisonments with the national plight of the dispossessed, and claiming authority from numerous texts: biblical, theological, or even his own earlier publications. Winstanley the Digger, a religious radical both more apocalyptic and communal, insisted that "kingly power" continued in various subtle, menacing, and anti-Christian forms despite the claims of the new, "free" Commonwealth, and called for a paradisaical return to the land. Loewenstein claims that Winstanley's particular verbal power was "mythopoeic," as demonstrated by the latter's

allegorical retelling of biblical narratives. Abiezer Coppe and Anna Trapnel were both concerned with startling symbolic gestures as well as prophetic language. Coppe the Ranter advocated social leveling in vehement and inventive prose that was matched by the startling and subversive antinomianism of himself and his followers, though most of Coppe's extravagant actions would appear to be recorded—at least in Loewenstein's telling—by Coppe's report of them rather than by objective witnesses.

The Fifth-Monarchist Anna Trapnell delivered her own radical prophecies in a dramatic trance-like state which attracted large crowds, especially during a twelve-day trance at Whitehall in 1654. Her heavily symbolic prophecies attacked Cromwell's ambivalent regime as a spiritual crisis, and did so in language impressive both for its vigorous language and generic variety (songs, exhortations, prayers, and so forth). Most of these writers drew their startling imagery from the more apocalyptic books of the Bible such as Ezekiel or Revelation. One potent image used particularly in this period was the "Lamb's War" of Revelation 17:14: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." Loewenstein shows the particular resonance of this image in the often violent, millenarian writings of Quaker George Fox. A final chapter on Andrew Marvell in this first section shows Marvell attempting to negotiate the tensions between political conservatism and religious radicalism in his own verse propaganda, *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector*.

Having laid this foundation, Loewenstein in part two asserts that Milton, though not a social radical, deserves comparison with other religiously radical writers of the time even though he maintains his own polemical and authorial distance from them. Loewenstein's first chapter in this section considers how Milton's polemical response to the Irish Rebellion both demonstrates Milton's concern with politically motivated religious equivocation and suggests that Milton borrowed elements of Charles I's equivocations in the verbally dexterous Satan in *Paradise Lost*, even while his following chapter on *Paradise Lost* discourages any easy one-on-

one identification with recent political personalities. Rather, Loewenstein encourages careful reading of all ambiguity and equivocation in political language and behavior. Similarly, though Loewenstein draws heavily on Quaker writing to examine the intense inwardness of *Paradise Regained*, he examines not only a wide range of these texts but also radical works by Gerrard Winstanley, George Wither, and others to investigate the brief epic's apocalyptic subversiveness in relation to temporal powers and kingdoms.

Loewenstein's study of *Samson Agonistes* is particularly engaging. He makes the point, for instance, that radical saints are not the only ones in the drama having "inward motions," since Dalila is also claims to be moved, albeit by more secular motives. He also discusses how *Samson* treats the paradoxes and ambiguities of Puritan notions of Providence, and particularly how Milton combines these notions with the necessity of human agency and activism. Particularly good is Loewenstein's suggestion that the ambiguously copublished poems *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are united by their focus on "inward motions" and victorious patience.

Throughout, Loewenstein carefully avoids collapsing differences between cults or between them and the work of Marvell or Milton. For instance, at pages 177-78 he insists on Milton's complex reaction to rebellion and its associated language; Milton engaged a range of contradictory political positions, and supported regicide but discountenanced social instability. Loewenstein's study is more reportorial than analytic, and Miltonists looking for a strong argument may be disappointed. But what Loewenstein has rather produced is a description of radical religious writing and Milton's relation to it that is so extensive as to invite comparison with William Haller's landmark *Rise of Puritanism* (1938). It also valuably focuses on the language itself rather than on merely the ideas framed by that language, as if the specific presentation of concepts made no difference to how they were received. True, Loewenstein might better have employed an explicit lexicon to demonstrate the act of persuasion as Milton and his contemporaries would have understood it rather than claiming that Interregnum texts were

either “literary” or “aesthetic.” His pervasive use of these words suggests a focus that he neither defines nor proves, but perhaps others can build on the considerable foundation he has laid to pursue that topic. In the meantime, he has produced a resource that will not need rewriting for some time to come.

The delay in publishing the following review is the fault of *Seventeenth-Century News*, and we would like to apologize to the author and reviewer:

DRD

Sharon Cadman Seelig. *Generating Texts: The Progeny of Seventeenth-Century Prose*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996. x + 202 pp. Review by MEG LOTA BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA.

Sharon Cadman Seelig’s study of genre is distinguished by remarkably nuanced close readings of three pairs of literary works. Each pair is comprised of one text from the seventeenth century and one from a later period. Seelig allies the texts according to their authors’ shared perspectives. Her concern is with the extent to which “they adopted the same rhetorical strategies, the same mode, the same method; it is the similarity of conception—of the nature of the persona or voice, the nature of the quest, the nature of the inquiry—and of the structure that emerges to which I have tried to turn attention” (155-6). Seelig’s objective in comparing early and later works is less to find resemblances in their topics than to argue that “analogous approaches create analogous rhetorical and syntactic structures” (158). Idea, she maintains, produces form.

Building on the work of Claudio Guillen, Barbara Lewalski, David Radcliffe, Heather Dubrow, and Ann Imbrie, Seelig expands the notion of genre, skillfully demonstrating the flexibility of the category. She offers a valuable account of both genre and literary influence, as she explores how each is produced by a shared conceptual approach to the world and the self. At the same time, she points to defining differences in place, motive, voice, frame of refer-