

Coram's life, this incident suggests that Coram had a difficulty maintaining cordial relations with people. But Coram's cantankerous nature is still apparent throughout the book, despite the sympathetic treatment by Wagner. This is especially true in the chapter entitled "Trouble in Taunton." In this chapter, Wagner absolves Coram of blame in his dealings with the townspeople of Taunton. She refers to Coram as "Hardworking, energetic and confident" (30). Of the people of Taunton she states, "There seems to have been a concerted move to obstruct Coram" (31). She describes a court case that Coram lost in which "executions were issued against Coram and were immediately levied against the two vessels in his yard," that "it was a coordinated attempt by some of the leading citizens of Taunton to pervert the course of justice" (33). However, despite Wagner's account, the image of Coram that emerges from this chapter is not a favorable one. He appears to be a proud, stubborn man who does not or will not understand the nuances of social interaction.

Gillian Wagner, in *Thomas Coram, Gent. 1668-1751*, has provided a much-needed biography of this early pioneer of children's charity. She highlights the life and inspirations of a man whose efforts helped save many of London's unwanted children. Wagner's efforts provide details of a man who "fits no stereotype and was unique in being a man of integrity in an age of corruption, with a generosity of spirit and a capacity for compassion that has rightly earned him a place in the history of his time" (5).

Andrew McRae. *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ix + 250 pp. \$65.00. Review by MELISSA MOHR.

McRae makes claims for literature that will excite most literary scholars. He argues that writing and reading the unauthorized texts of early Stuart England led to concrete political changes. Libels, pamphlets, formal satires and other texts in the 'satiric mode' provided a means for authors and readers to interrogate existing political structures and to imagine new ones, resulting ultimately in the Revolution. Satire, in McRae's account, is characterized by strategies of discrimination and stigmatization, making it uniquely useful in "a culture becoming increasingly anxious, and undeniably curious, about the phenomena of dissent and division" (4). Satire gave its authors and readers tools

to make sense of this fractious age, but also to intervene in it; by applying satiric strategies, they came to question the role of the subject in a monarchy, the value of consensus, the power of the monarch to authorize speech and writing. They came to question, that is, the ideologies that shored up the Stuart monarchy, and began to consider alternatives.

This is an extremely thorough book. It takes an in-depth look at the different ways satire was written and used from 1603 to 1640, when state censorship of texts collapsed and satires began to appear in new—though related—forms. Although the book contains very interesting discussions of Ben Jonson's and Thomas Carew's epideictic poetry, most of the texts McRae discusses are anonymous, relatively unknown, and not readily available. He is thus planning to publish an edition of them in 2005, at <http://pufl.oclc.org/emls/emlshome.html>.

McRae begins with libel, the most prevalent, and, he argues, most influential form of satire in the early seventeenth century. With the changes in political culture ushered in by James I's reign—the increase of royal largesse, the wide publicity of several court scandals, and especially the greater prominence of royal favorites—formal verse satire lost its charge. The libel, which attacks specific people, often to make broader social points, was the perfect genre to take its place. Then, as is most often the case now, the libel was figured as a “debased mode” (28)—popular and ephemeral, using indigenous verse forms instead of formal satire's iambic pentameter couplets. Much of McRae's first chapter, though, is devoted to showing how the libel might just as well be seen as a *literary* genre, composed by some of the period's finest poets and collected by its most discriminating readers in manuscript miscellanies (though also enjoyed by the general populace).

Libels seek to intervene in “the construction of identities” (51) to determine how individuals are viewed by others. McRae identifies several discursive strategies they employ, but sees the stigmatization of their subjects' bodies as the most common. “Sincere” epideictic poetry seeks to elevate its subjects into realms of moral and spiritual purity; libels, especially mock epitaphs, locate their targets firmly in their corrupt physical bodies, to indicate a corresponding spiritual and moral corruption. Buckingham, Robert Carr, Walter Raleigh, and Robert Cecil were the most frequent targets, but Kings James and Charles were not immune. By drawing attention to the personal faults of these statesmen and kings, libels “also provided occasions for some strikingly

sophisticated analyses of the political system” (82), and thus strengthened a sense of involvement in political processes among their readers.

The next two chapters address satire more broadly, looking at printed poetry, prose pamphlets, and some drama (*A Game at Chess*) to investigate what satire is and how it functioned in the period. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, satire was a mode that allowed subjects outside court circles to offer counsel to their king. It straddled an ill-defined boundary between *liberty*—the satirist’s frank speech is a defining feature of the mode, but is always premised on subjecthood and obedience—and *license*—language unauthorized by the monarch. In 1620, James’s ‘Proclamation against excesse of Lavish and Licentious Speech of matters of State,’ pushed satire firmly over the line into license. After 1620, “political libels and pamphlets increasingly abandon any residual interest in monarchical authorization, as they fashion freshly transgressive strategies of expression and publication” (98). More and more satirists opened up traditional models of counsel to address readers beyond the king and his court, and sought ‘authorization’ not in the monarch but in their own consciences, a radical move that “potentially authorized the views of people from all social levels” (106). As satirists and their readers debate their government and posit improvements, even alternatives, McRae sees the beginnings of a Habermasian public sphere—based, however, not on the principles of reason but on “satiric strategies of indirection and provocation” (111).

There was an outpouring of political satire in the 1620s, which helped the English in “reconceiving political alliances and identities, as well as concepts of conflict and contestation” (114). This decade was particularly full of political troubles—the Spanish Match negotiations, the continued rise of Buckingham, dissatisfaction with England’s role in the Thirty Years’ War—which, publicized and evaluated by satire, prompted the beginnings of opposition movements. Many satirists used the model of Tacitus, with his relentless scrutiny of tyranny and corruption, to anatomize the events of this period. Court favorites, particularly Buckingham, and other “politicians” were the major targets, providing covert and not-so-covert opportunities to criticize the king and even the monarchy itself. Other satires of the 1620s engaged with the on-going debate over Parliament’s role—whether, as James demanded, it should play a subordinate, advisory role, or whether it was (like the new figure of the satirist) “a body freed of courtly, and even monarchical, structures of author-

ity” (137). In this decade, satire’s radical potential thus came to the fore, as it was used to reveal the systemic corruption of the monarchy and locate “political rectitude” (140) among the common people.

The last two chapters present in-depth case studies of Richard Corbett and the satiric writings and trial of John Bastwick, Henry Burton, and William Prynne. Corbett, the second most popular poet in manuscript circulation (losing out only to Donne), shows that satire is not *by nature* an oppositional mode—he used satiric strategies to construct a discourse of royalism. Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne used similar strategies to redefine Puritanism as religious orthodoxy, and to stigmatize Laudianism as Arminianism and thus as popery. This final chapter, however interesting in and of itself, feels tacked on. Though they were charged as “seditious libellers,” the three men did not actually write much satire. (McRae has much recourse to their use of irony in correspondence and in their voluminous prose texts). He argues that their trial helped to politicize religious opposition—religious resistance becomes “sedition”—which is a theme he touches on throughout the book, but he needs to spend more time analyzing the satiric aspects of their writing.

In the epilogue, McRae briefly looks forward to the 1640s and the Revolution, pointing out how early Stuart satire influenced the work of John Taylor, John Cleveland, and Andrew Marvell. For many readers, the book’s primary interest probably lies in this glimpse at the poetic future, or in McRae’s skilled account of the ways in which a literary genre shaped English politics and history. It is a wonderful book about not-so-wonderful poetry.

James Fitzmaurice, ed. *Sociable Letters: Margaret Cavendish*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004. 336 pp. + 6 illus. \$12.95. Review by SARAH R. MOREMAN, SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY RIO GRANDE COLLEGE.

Margaret Cavendish published thirteen books that went through twenty-two editions in her lifetime. She employed a surprisingly wide variety of genres for any seventeenth-century English writer, including poetry, fiction, autobiography, plays, scientific speculation, a biography of her husband, William Cavendish, and letters. Until recently, Cavendish’s works had not been available in modern editions except C. H. Firth’s edition of *The Life of William Cavendish, to which is added the True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life*, which