

fined to italic text in brackets. Each document has a header with three fields: the title, which describes the document type, the hand (where relevant), writer, recipient (where relevant), and the language (where other than English); the date (given in New Style usually); and the complete reference to the manuscript.

The electronic edition of *The Hartlib Papers* is an extraordinary resource that all research libraries ought to acquire. Scholars of seventeenth-century studies are much in the debt of those who worked so hard to bring this project to fruition: the directors, Michael Leslie and Mark Greengrass, and to their principals, Michael Hannon, Patrick Collinson and W. J. Hitchens, Judith Crawford and Timothy Raylor.

Hannibal Hamlin. *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xl + 289 pp. \$75.00. Review by ALAN RUDRUM, SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY.

Professor Hamlin's starting point is the fact that the culture of early modern England involved the translation of two ancient literatures, and the perception that less critical attention has been paid to biblical than to classical influences. The ubiquity of psalm translations and paraphrases suggests their study as a natural starting point in correcting this perceived imbalance. Hamlin begins with two apparently simple questions which prove on examination not to have simple answers: what is a psalm and what is a translation? Complexity arises from the facts that most translators did not read Hebrew and that there was universal ignorance regarding the formal workings of Hebrew poetry (3). It is pleasant to be returned, after some discussion of these complexities, to the observation that early modern man was convinced that the psalms were indeed poems and to the assurance that we shall be concerned with what contemporaries thought, rather than with current debates (6). Hamlin sees *use* as pointing to the important distinction between translations of classical texts and translations of psalms: their use in the liturgy, in family devotions, in sermons. This distinction itself becomes complicated by his apparent agree-

ment that early modern translations of Plutarch, Pliny and Montaigne take those authors “deep into the national consciousness.” The conclusion of this part of the discussion is the unassailable assertion that “the formation of culture has thus been typically and fundamentally an act of translation” (8). Later in the book, close readings bring this truism more vividly to life, as in the sixth chapter, where Hamlin shows, in relation to discussion of the fourth verse of Psalm 51, how “one of the central theological cruxes of the Reformation,” that of justification, “hinges on a question of translation.”

The first chapter, on the popularity, absurdities and longevity of the Sternhold and Hopkins psalter, offers an interesting history, much of which came as news to me, while simultaneously evoking familiar memories and sensations. Between the ages of seven and eleven I sang (for want of a more exact word) in the choir of a small village church; the psalms were almost always set to simple tunes and sung antiphonally. Throughout life since then I have always felt disappointed, indeed excluded, when churches put on airs and relegated the congregation to the status of a concert audience. That such experiences have a long history is indicated in Hamlin’s statement that “the congregational singing of psalms became entrenched in parish churches, while in the cathedrals and collegiate chapels the ‘Anglican’ practice of more elaborate music sung by the choir was upheld” (32-3). This chapter ends with three musical examples which can be followed by anybody who has had three or four piano lessons. While noting that Sternhold and Hopkins owes its longevity in part to publishing monopolies, Hamlin concludes that people enjoyed singing from it because of the melodic outline, rhythm and overall structure of the music to which its psalms were set, “well within the vocal range of the average untrained singer” (45). It was not to be supplanted until 1696, and even then the Tate and Brady *New Version of the Psalms* “perpetuated the meters [it had] established as normative for English metrical psalms” (84).

In the meantime, as everyone knows, a great many writers essayed metrical versions of the psalms. These “rival psalters” are

discussed in Hamlin's second chapter, where the versions of George Wither, George Sandys and Henry King are given especially detailed attention. One suspects that many readers have over the years dipped into such writings without feeling drawn to total immersion; it was for one of them a relief that Hamlin's discussion provoked a sense of vindication rather than of guilt. Many of these versions are execrable as verse, and, as Hamlin shows in the case of Wither, their authors were capable of being in a state of conceptual muddle rather resembling that of the many today who employ the vocabulary of theory with no sense of what its usable meaning might be: see the discussion of Wither's distinction between form and matter (56). Hamlin points to the reasons suggested by previous critics for Milton's translation of Psalms 80-88 into common meter, saying that there is "no conclusive evidence" for any of them and confessing to puzzlement as to why Milton should have departed so far from his usual style. He is puzzled too by Milton's sparrow "freed from wrong" (Psalm 84) and, less interestingly, by the swallow's "brooding nest" (75). Milton may have been slightly more anthropocentric in his theology than Henry Vaughan, but Vaughan would I think have understood the sense in which the sparrow was freed from wrong.

The first, and slightly longer, part of the book is concluded by two chapters on the psalms and English poetry, a relationship fuelled presumably by the recent availability of biblical translations and by the Puritan attack on "fictions," as Hamlin's citation of *A Defence of Poetry* and of *Paradise Regained* 4:331-49 serve to remind us. Enthusiasts of metrics will enjoy the section on the quantitative movement; others may want to fast-forward to the more general discussion of the relationship of psalm translation and paraphrase to the development of English verse. The earlier work of Wyatt, Gascoigne and Anne Vaughan Lock is fairly acknowledged, and the Sidney Psalter, seen as the preeminent influence, is discussed in convincing and enjoyable detail.

In the second part of the book, headed *Case studies in psalm translation*, Hamlin deals with Psalms 23, 51, and 137, in relation to pastoral, sin and sacrifice, and exile. In each of these studies

Hamlin employs a verse-by-verse organization, more familiar as he says from biblical commentary than from literary criticism. Given the richness of the three psalms studied, this seems sensible in principle and turns out to be rewarding in practice. Dr. Johnson's failure to appreciate the pastoral of "Lycidas" surely ranks with his failure to appreciate the "agon" of *Samson Agonistes* as marking his lowest point as a literary critic, and seems all the odder given that readers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had "recognized the basic congruence of subject matter between [Psalm 23] and the pastoral of Theocritus and Virgil" (148). Hamlin surveys "the great variety of ways in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers adapted their treatments of Psalm 23 to the conventions of classical pastoral (or to their perception of those conventions)" (149). Interesting discussion is generated from the perception that Psalm 23 marks a modal shift in being "primarily about sheep rather than shepherds" (156), a shift that does not exclude it from consideration as a pastoral because it takes to a further degree the "humbling" which, as Empson had suggested, puts the complex into the simple, or as Alpers had formulated it, represented "some other or all other men and / or women" as simple shepherds. That is, it represents an intensification of pastoral rather than a deviation from it. Early modern English writers, of course, read Psalm 23 as a Christian rather than a Hebrew poem, so that the meal in verse 5 becomes the feast of the Eucharist. By that stage of the psalm the metaphor has shifted, and the Shepherd has become the Lamb of God. Distressing as all these considerations may be to agnostic vegetarians, there is much "added value" when this particular Hebrew poem is read through Christian spectacles.

Hamlin's conclusion points to possibilities for further research, while at the same time suggesting a concern as to how many future scholars are likely to undertake or to profit from it, given the dwindling number of those of us for whom the Coverdale Psalter was both abiding presence and the most intense literary experience of their formative years.