

## Reviews

Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography*, Routledge, 1997, pp. xvii + 997, £100.

There are some very good essays here. At over one thousand pages, with forty two authors writing thirty-nine essays plus four sectional introductions, and at £100, that is just as well. However, this was an unwieldy enterprise, and its problems have not always been satisfactorily resolved by Michael Bentley and his editorial board and consultants.

A brief general introduction by Bentley suggests that the study of historiography has moved on from the days when it consisted of disconnected histories of the historiography of specific topics; but a few of the contributors seem not to have noticed. Bentley also wants this book to 'be read rather than pulled from the shelf sporadically'. Despite this ambition, one wonders if anybody, apart from the unwary reviewer, is likely to do this. Some authors have interpreted their task as providing a commentary upon recent historiography; others have gone back even to the origins of their branch of the discipline. Some, even in the 'Approaches' sub-section, have attempted well-referenced overviews – S. H. Rigby's 'Marxist Historiography' has a useful and remarkable twelve-and-a-half page bibliography plus extensive footnotes; others have provided briefer polemics (like Peter Munz on 'The Historical Narrative'), often lightly-referenced (noticeably George Huppert on 'The *Annales* Experiment'). A particular oddity, out of step with the other sectional introductions, is a lengthy introduction to Part IV, 'Reflecting on the Modern Age', by Bentley himself. At a hundred pages plus eleven pages of references, it is the size of a small book in its own right. Though Bentley is clearly expert on the subject of Western historiography since the Enlightenment, his chosen way to introduce the modern section, and is particularly good on Ranke (being one of surprisingly few people, including some of these contributors, to take on board Iggers' work), one cannot escape the impression that this essay has been extended and marred by the editorial responsibility to fill in gaps left by other contributors. For example, postmodernism gets a useful, but very brief, mention. He sees the 1960s as 'the terminus of modernism' rather than as a new beginning; and claims that his contributors, 'often saying little explicitly about postmodernism', nevertheless imply 'volumes between their lines about its impact', suggesting that historians have never been so self-aware about methodological issues. Well, maybe, but not all the contributors seem to measure up in this respect, and by the editor's admission some pieces had been lying around for a bit

awaiting late contributions so perhaps that explains the inconsistency. Love it or loathe it, postmodernism needs a critical consideration, and it was odd not to find it in the 'Approaches' section.

The risk of confusion of purpose was obviously greater in those sections that dealt with the pre-modern era. Were contributors supposed to be reviewing modern (as in 'recent') historiography, were they taking a postmodern perspective, or were they surveying the long historiographical traditions of their subjects? Part 1, 'Beginnings – East and West', seemed to be particularly prey to confusion of purpose. Julia M. H. Smith's brief introduction to 'The Medieval World' looks at the impact of schools of history such as *Annales*, Marxism, and postmodernism, in a necessarily brief way. A 'Schools of History' section before the chronological sections might have made more sense. Two essays in particular lived up to the expectation that they would be more than mere surveys of literature: Timothy Reuter's 'The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-century Historiography' relates re-interpretations to the historians' own intellectual environment; and Janet L. Nelson's 'Family, Gender and Sexuality in the Middle Ages' was particularly informative and related medieval history to modern feminism and concepts of gender. Many later essays touch on gender, but it is not till Olwen Hufton's lively, highly-personalised account under the 'Approaches' sub-heading at the end of the book that we are returned to the issue in a major way.

Gerald Aylmer interprets his role, introducing the early modern section, as providing a guide to the historiography written in that period. The standard of the essays is generally high, providing expert analyses in the wider intellectual context, and all quite clear about their task in hand: Wolfgang Reinhard on the concept of an early modern period, Stephen Pumfrey on the Scientific Revolution, D. R. Woolf on Intellectual History (slight overlap with Pumfrey here, which indicates perhaps that tighter editorial control could have been exercised), Patrick Collinson on the English Reformation, and James Sharpe on popular culture. Ronald Hutton on 'Revisionism in Britain' is sketchier, too uncritical of revisionism for some tastes, ignoring its ideological associations, and sets up a monolithic Whiggism as an Aunt Sally by extending its influence up to very recent times (even placing Butterfield's critique in 1941).

When we come to the modern age, the problem of selectivity is most evident. In the first sub-section headed 'Revolution and Ideology' we have 'The Historiography of the French Revolution', 'The Soviet Revolution', 'The Historiography of National Socialism' and 'Modern Italy', alongside the conceptually different 'Critique of Orientalism'. All important, no doubt, but even with the 'Area Studies' section on China, Japan, India, Africa, and North and Latin America, it is difficult to see a rationale for what is in and what is out. Not that there aren't good essays here: personal favourites would be Jane Caplan on the Nazis and Catherine Merridale on the Soviet Revolution. The 'Area Studies' contributors appear to have had different briefs, some only dealing with the modern history of their subject, whereas David Birmingham on Africa beats all by going back with the Leakeys for over a million years!

Finally, we come to Part V, 'Contexts for the Writing of History', subdivided into 'Hinterlands' and 'Approaches'. Under 'Hinterlands' we have: the philosophy of history (by William Dray, a doyen of the subject), Anthropology, Archaeology, and Western Art History. All worthy subjects, but why not Economics, Sociology or Psychology? Social Sciences seem to get rather short shrift. Dray's short piece concludes with a very good common-sense passage on why historians should take note of the philosophy of history at least in its 'critical' form; but, as is evident from the bibliography, the essay

looks a bit dated. Nigel Llewellyn's *Art History* takes the historiographical survey back to antiquity itself, a time-scale beaten only by David Birmingham. For my money, the most stimulating piece was the last, 'Archives, the Historian and the Future' by Michael Moss, which despite the total absence of a bibliography or references (amusing enough in a piece about archives), raises questions about the relationship between archivists and users, and the computerization of archives. He relates issues of principle to contemporary practicalities in a thought-provoking way.

In summary, this is a valuable compilation, but was an ambitious project that was bound to fail in some respects.

*Edge Hill University College*

Christopher Parker

Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, Routledge, 1997, pp. xviii + 215, £14.99 pb.

On first thought, a feminist analysis of Shakespeare's English histories requires a stretch of the imagination. In these eight plays, perhaps a dozen female characters are set against a cast of virtually thousands of male warriors. On second thought, what marvellous women! They include some of the most interesting and provocative female personalities in the canon: Margaret of Anjou (who appears in all four plays), Joan of Arc (AKA Joan de Pucelle), Countess of Auvergne and Constance, an assortment of widowed queens and duchesses, and a number of young maidens, apt for plucking.

In this feminist reading of Shakespeare's English history plays, Howard and Rackin, who are widely published scholars in the field of Renaissance studies, postulate that the understanding of culture and gender in Shakespeare's history plays reflects a transition from the dynastic authority of late medieval England towards an emerging modern nation in which women play an increasingly important role. Howard and Rackin are thorough in their scholarship, combining early modern chronicle history with modern critical theory. The argument is well researched and effectively documented, with reference to historical chronicles as well as critical insights by a variety of contemporary scholars.

Part I considers gender in theatre history, beginning with films of *Henry V* by Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh which have significantly popularized Shakespeare with modern audiences. In these films, spectacular battle scenes have revitalized a 'male fantasy of cross-class brotherhood', in which women seldom appear, although they are certainly present, sheltered from battle but vulnerable to rape. Their bodies become the terrain in which the struggle for power is played out. These films, we are told, reflect a public longing for heroic masculinity and affirm women as sexual and domestic beings.

Having acknowledged that, in the popular imagination today, Shakespeare is the leading historian of England's past, Howard and Rackin proceed with a re-examination of gender in the history plays. Part II contrasts weak kings with warrior women in the first tetralogy and *King John* which, Howard and Rackin postulate, becomes an assault on dynastic authority. In the Middle Ages, marriages were dynastic, as the state was closely linked to the body of the monarch, and hierarchical, as the concept

of the Great Chain of Being persists up to the second tetralogy. The women in these history plays have more to do than talk; they actually participate in heroic action – none more spectacularly than Joan de Pucelle, who dresses as a woman-warrior and battles vigorously against the English. Queen Margaret is the most articulate of the group, and her unfettered sexual passion, according to these authors, represents the danger of uncontrolled femininity. Margaret, regrettably, is often ignored by critics and her part is heavily cut by Colley Cibber and the directors of films of *Richard III*

If the first tetralogy is concerned with the ‘nearly universal disintegration of male bonds’, Henry V’s victory at Agincourt, in the second tetralogy, represents a restoration of male dominance. In Part III, gender and national identity become the focus of a unit on the second tetralogy which traces anticipations of modernity. However, women’s roles are constricted and they seldom appear on stage. The charming French lesson with Princess Katherine and Alice, her lady in waiting, is viewed as an obscene recital of body parts, and the wooing scene between Katherine and Henry becomes a kind of politically sanctioned rape, leading to a royal marriage that is analogous to a military conquest.

Contemporary critical analysis of gender and feminist issues in studies like Howard’s and Rackin’s *Engendering a Nation* introduce a new perspective through which to view a distant age and encourage new insights into history and literature.

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Elizabeth Truax

R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* 3rd ed., Manchester University Press, 1998, pp.x + 262, £14.99.

The third edition of Roger Richardson’s admirable survey of the historiography of the English revolution has prompted Manchester University Press to inaugurate a new series, ‘Issues in Historiography’, under the general editorship of (who else?) Roger Richardson. (*The Debate on the Holocaust* is a promising early title). *The English Revolution* first appeared in 1977, with a second version in 1988. That a third should be called for is a tribute to the powerful inherent appeal of the period and theme, to the quantity and quality of the work done and to the analytical skills and indefatigable enthusiasm of the author, a practitioner as well as historiographer. The new volume is at once a revision and an extension. Earlier chapters (up to about 1900) remain much as they were, but notice is taken of fresh assessments of the historians under review – e.g., of S.R. Gardiner, whom Timothy Lang sees as ‘presenting an image of the past that was neither Anglican nor Puritan but an amalgam of these two antagonistic traditions’. Gardiner’s seventeen volumes on 1603–56 have always been under fire, but have proved indispensable even to those who impugn his approach and methodology. Richardson does not hesitate to endorse his own earlier assessment of them as ‘a great history’.

The context of the later chapters is one of a growing ‘professionalization of history’, a shift when ‘the polemical elements, the party political flavour, receded’ and since when ‘the debate, for the most part, has been predominantly academic in tone’. The tentative phraseology is well chosen. It would be hard to argue that all the historiography of the twentieth century – and particularly of the Thatcher and post-Thatcher years – has been devoid of politics. For some historians the collapse of the Soviet

Union happily clinched the discrediting of any trace of Marxist historiography, and with it of any appreciation of the value of 'history from below'. Mark Kishlansky's language about 'cranks, crackpots, screwballs and fanatics, the nutters and kooks' who appeared in the mid 1600s puts an accomplished historian into the company of A. L. Rowse, aptly characterised by Richardson as 'arch snob and opponent of "the idiot people"'. If everything has a history – and it has – then everybody has one, too. Historians should always look up and down and round about themselves. For his part, Richardson is scrupulous in contemplating social interpretations. What can be said for and against Tawney, Stone, Trevor-Roper and their diverse company is said and well said here. The conclusion that J. H. Hexter's notorious assault on Christopher Hill's method '*as such*' (Richardson's italics) as 'surely unreasonable' is as surely just. He notes, too, John Morrill 'highlighting Hill's weaknesses' but admitting without embarrassment that 'because of him I know many vital things about the English revolution; but for him I might never have wanted to know anything about it'. To that the contributors to the Hill *estschrift*, a wide swathe across generations and attitudes, would, twenty years on, still say *Amen*.

The 1988 *Debate* welcomed among newcomers Ronald Hutton, Kevin Sharpe, Barry Reay, Ann Hughes, Stephen Roberts and Jonathan Clark who have turned out to be a nice mixture of revisionists, burgeoning post revisionists and mavericks, all productive, though Clark has gone elsewhere physically and thematically. 1998 brings in John Adamson, Jacqueline Eales, Anne Duffin, Sean Kelsey, Julian Davies and Peter Gaunt, who will become familiar as members of another heterogeneous lot. Richardson shows how, standing, a little wobbly, on the shoulders of their predecessors, they are scanning wider horizons of the discipline and of the period, glimpsing worlds elsewhere. Women's history, which has more to offer than the pioneers of feminism could have dreamed of, is merging into gender studies open to both sexes, capable of lifting even Lady Eleanor Davies out of a narrowing 'lunatic fringe'. Psycho-history may yet be able to tell us just what kind of man and monarch Charles I really was, and whether Oliver Cromwell was a manic depressive, and if he was what does that tell us? 'Cultural history' is bursting the boundaries of court and country. Richardson notes as particularly intense exploration of 'the interface between literature, and history', not so much nowadays a pursuit dominated by the peculiar requirements of English Literature specialists, though they, too, can ask hard questions which historians ought to be thinking up for themselves. Drama, including masques (many-layered), has been productive of light, but where there is light there is as always heat. Kevin Sharpe gets his due here, though his concerns are set more in the halcyon years of the unrevolutionary England of Conrad Russell, with whom he is, naturally, not in complete accord. Richardson observes that Sharpe has been 'unfairly dismissive of Christopher Hill's long-standing efforts to address literature as history'. He has, but fairness has never been a *sine qua non* of historical talent. One proliferating area of interpretation – the British dimension – is only lightly touched upon here, but one may suspect that, together with attempts to bring the 1640s and 1650s into Europe and to bring Europe into them, it will play a bigger part in the historiography coming along in the new millennium. One thing is certain – as Richardson remarks in the concluding lines of an outgoing last chapter on 'Reverberations' – 'historians' attempts to explain and make sense of the English Revolution', or the Great Rebellion or whatever they like to call it, 'show no sign of losing momentum'. Why this should be so is set out with clarity, vigour and engaging enjoyment in Richardson's masterly survey.

*The English Revolution*<sup>3</sup> is, as in their time 1 and 2 were, too, an essential *vademecum* for aficionados of the civil wars and interregnum, a motley crew, to be sure, but one united in fascination for those hurling times.

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Ivan Roots

Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–49*, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. xii + 379, £45.

This is a useful and important book. Far from describing a single ‘invention’ of the newspaper, Raymond traces a gradual evolution from news pamphlets, corantos and almanacs until something which we can recognize as a newspaper emerged. Charles I thought that foreign news was ‘unfit for popular view and decision’, and in 1632 printing of overseas news was prohibited. But already newspaper-like periodicals were on sale in France, and in the 1630s – when there were no Parliaments in England – the public was starved of news. ‘Controversial subjects’ were, of course, being discussed verbally.

The first newsbooks appeared in 1641 when what was to be the Long Parliament had been sitting for just a year. They ‘represented the discussion of fraught, controversial subjects and were intimately bound into developing political conflict’. By mid January 1642 seven or eight newsbooks were being published (p. 21). They were novel in that they were numbered consecutively, and in their continuous pagination from one issue to the next. The outbreak of civil war turned them into polemical and literary media (p. 184). Rival partisan newspapers were published in London by Parliamentarians, in Oxford by Royalists. By August 1643 ‘one who was to have the greatest impact on seventeenth-century journalism’, Marchamont Nedham, was co-editor of *Mercurius Britannicus: Communicating the Affaires of Great Britain for the Better Information of the People*. Newspapers remained ‘a central constituent of culture’ (pp. 31–32).

Newspapers influenced opinion in the Army. Richard Baxter tells us that ‘when the court newsbooks told the world of the swarms of Anabaptists in our armies, we thought it had been a mere lie, because it was not so with us in any of the garrison or county forces about us. But when I came to the army among Cromwell’s soldiers I found a new face of things which I never dreamt of. I heard the plotting heads very hot upon that, which intimated their intention to subvert both Church and State’ (quoted on p. 254). Lay preaching, central to the culture of the ‘praying Army’, encouraged the spread of religious toleration among the rank and file (p. 260). In 1645 the majority of London’s newsbooks swung in favour of the Army and away from Parliament. *The Moderate Intelligencer* was pro-Army from the start, though it passed through a royalist phase in the summer of 1648 (pp. 198, 261).

Thomas Edwards drew on newsbooks for hostile accounts of sectarian behaviour in his *Gangraena* (February 1646). He described *The Moderate Intelligencer* as ‘the great Historian and Chronicler of the sectaries’. Edwards was accused of swallowing whole the sensationalism of some of the newsbooks, and himself suggested that Presbyterians saw newsbooks as their enemies (pp. 261–62). In Rushworth’s *Historical Collections* newsbooks became pure history. Their ‘functional, sober text was slowly transformed into vociferous, instrumental satire, fraught with the power to open and

close politics, the power to inculcate virtue; even if it did not always look that way' (pp. 310, 313).

By 1648 there were around sixty seven newsbooks, some forty five lasting for five issues or less (pp. 59-60). None of those which started in that year saw its end, but there were some thirty newcomers. Parliament in March 1648 ordered that no proceedings or debates in either House could be printed except by special order of one or both houses. *The Man in the Moon* edited by John Crouch, first appeared in April 1649; ten days later a warrant was issued for the arrest of its author and publisher. Five months later another act forbidding unlicensed and scandalous books or pamphlets was effectively enforced (pp. 72-5).

Raymond argues that this act of September 1649 'proved that it was possible to control newsbooks', and influenced their development. 'Several publishers, printers and editors spent time in prison ... Yet attempts to license newsbooks were profoundly limited in their impact' (p. 72). The main effect of the act, he suggests, was to precipitate 'a return to predominantly cautious journalism, resulting in reliable reporting with a minimum of scurrility' (pp. 78-9). The act was also intended, Raymond insists, to eradicate competition and to prepare for two official newspapers. These appeared at the beginning of October 1649 - prototypes for *Mercurius Politicus* (edited by Nedham from June 1650 onwards) and *The Publick Intelligence*, which Richard Baxter later referred to as a reliable source. They were dull but accurate: Gardiner found them 'among our most valuable sources of information' (pp. 75-6).

The short-lived *Mercurius Vapulans* (two issues in November 1647) complained that it was not becoming for the 'mongrel' Parliamentarian *Britanicus* to try to be witty. 'Wit in a Roundhead' was a contradiction in terms (pp. 55, 59, 244-45). On paper the Civil War could have been fought out over questions of style. Effectiveness and eloquence were what mattered. 'Newsbooks were fully integrated into the democratic life of the mid-seventeenth-century print culture', a point which Raymond thinks is missed by many twentieth-century commentators (p. 225).

Style was indeed a class issue. For 'Roundheads' to aspire to wit was absurdly presumptuous (pp. 59, 224-25). Royalists linked newsbook writers with tub preachers, pulpiteers, and pamphleteers (p. 188). There was significantly large potential audience for newspapers among those who could 'neither write nor read written hand' but who could read print (p. 242). Anyway newsbooks were read aloud. Women were said to be among those most eager to receive or listen to newsbooks (p. 251).

Royalists endeavoured to maintain that wit in writing was an aristocratic preserve but radicals had the advantage of promoting daringly novel ideas. The Earl of Leicester complained that the Leveller paper *The Moderate* endeavours to invite the people to overthrow all propriety [property] as the original cause of sin; and by that to destroy all government, magistracy, honesty, civility and humanity' (p. 67). He quoted passages 'such as would not be permitted in any Christian State, nor even among the Heathen' (p. 255).

Modern critics have sympathized with royalist complaints of Nedham's 'rough billingsgate' in *Mercurius Britanicus* (p. 150): 'every railing rogue thou hast out rail'd' was how Sir Francis Wortley put it in 1647 (p. 153). But what was to be done? King Charles had admitted that 'people are governed by the pulpit more than the sword in time of peace' (p. 198), but Raymond emphasizes the monarch's failure positively to use the press' (p. 95) 'Every man is now become a statesman', declared the Earl of Newcastle: 'This doth give your Majestie much hurt'. He thought that 'either Dome-

sticke or forayne news' should be forbidden (p. 96). But *The Moderate* continued to be licensed, as did *The Moderate Intelligencer*. A royalist rival, *Anti Mercurius* said that it consisted of lies pure and simple, 'the epitome of nothing' (p. 156). By contrast the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus* and *Mercurius Rusticus* adopted self-consciously well spoken though abusive voices' (pp. 158, 167).

Newsbook writers attacked other newsbooks for presenting manipulative untruths as Intelligence. '*Britanicus* accused [the royalist] *Aulicus* of cozening the kingdom with 'lies and slanders' instead of Intelligence. His writings were 'patcht up with such pittiful Rags of Intelligence, that he shames all his friends' (p.161). These vociferous criticisms helped to create new standards. Newsbooks, Raymond insists, continued to be a central constituent of culture. They had 'a completeness which ... eluded histories'. 'Newsbooks made the history of the civil war, influenced society, and shaped the course of events. Then they made historiography, furnishing a language with which to describe history ... and establishing the content of that history ... There was very little history without newsbooks' (p. 312). Mr Raymond has performed a public service by examining the transformation of the newsbook from 'a plain and non-controversial narrative of parliamentary proceedings into a bitter and aggressive instrument of literary and political faction'. We should, he urges, pay less attention to what contemporaries said about newsbooks and more to what they did with them. All seventeenth-century historians will benefit by reading this book.

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Christopher Hill

Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism*, Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. vii + 264, £35, £14.99 pb.

One of E. P. Thompson's aims in his classic study of *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) was to rescue forgotten or rejected individuals and sub-groups 'from the enormous condescension of posterity'. Hilary Hinds joins a growing band of scholars, mainly women and often feminists, in the ongoing endeavour of doing the same for seventeenth-century women. Dismissively excluded from the literary canon for being of the wrong gender and belonging to a small minority group of writers (less than 1% of published writers in the forty years after 1649 were female), devoting themselves to the wrong genres, and strangely ignored even by feminists until relatively recently (since they wrote before the eighteenth-century feminist dawn), the sectarian women authors discussed in Hinds' book are belatedly attracting a great deal of attention. Editions or anthologies of their writings are coming into print; the Women Writers Project at Brown University in the United States aims to publish through the internet hundreds of such texts by the year 2000. Hinds includes in her appendices a selection of primary materials not otherwise available in print. A spate of publications has appeared in the last decade addressing women's social, religious and economic roles and mental worlds. Individual women like Aphra Behn, Margaret Cavendish, and Lady Eleanor Davies have been brought, belatedly, into sharp focus.

The cast list of Hinds' book is socially different and includes relatively few familiar names. Some of the ground she covers is the same as that in Phyllis Mack's *Visionary Women* (Berkley and Los Angeles, 1992) but her agenda and methodology are

distinctively her own. Unlike Mack she writes as a literary scholar and her concern is with three particular genres of women's writing – prophecy, spiritual autobiography, and conversion narrative. To these she brings to bear some of the contemporary theoretical concerns of her own discipline as well as those specifically connected with feminism. Two levels of discussion are made to intertwine. Bakhtin, Barthes, and Foucault rub shoulders here with Mary Cole, Priscilla Cotton and Anna Trapnel. Feminism permeates the discussion but Hinds critically uses its insights and resists its anachronisms. 'The desire for feminist foremothers', she says, 'is beguiling but fraught with untenable premises of unsubstantiated continuities and of the denial of just the kind of historical location for which this book is arguing'. These women writers, Hinds insists, displayed a challenging 'strangeness' rather than an easily recognisable 'proto-feminism'. Hinds begins by examining contemporary concepts of womanhood in her period and moves on to consider the functions, justifications, strategies, reception and consequences of women's writing, making clear as she proceeds that these women tended to see themselves not as free-standing authors in their own right but as mouthpieces and instruments of God's will. A case study of two women writers and a single text takes the place of a general conclusion.

This is a consistently interesting and suggestive book. But its two levels – text and theory – do not always harmonise seamlessly and its content cries out for more social history. Nor are these voices located in time sufficiently precisely, a vital prerequisite given the speed of change and competing tendencies of these mid-century years. Disconcertingly, too, at times some of Hinds' quotations from seventeenth-century sources are derived secondhand from modern works, unintentionally allowing the concerns of the present to intrude at too early a stage in her evaluation of the past.

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R. C. Richardson

David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 641, £25.00.

This historical survey of English rituals at birth, marriage, and death is an exemplary blend of literature and history, and makes absorbing reading. Its publication is well timed for, in the last half century we have seen so many alterations in our customs, we are well tuned to appreciate similar happenings in the past. Defining his subject generously, the author explores the three major ceremonies in life, as they are made known in contemporary theorisings and in practice. His account brings out with remarkable force the real-life consequences of those two hundred years of religious and social turbulence between 1500 and 1700, for we are brought face-to-face with individuals deciding how they would observe the routine ceremonies of life when every detail was being questioned. The times were positively egging them on to express in public their individuality. Would they conform? Would they adopt a new style? The break with the Catholic church opened the way to a veritable flood of variant, radical, and opinionated views, and it took a century before the momentum of debate and the taste for dissidence wound down after 1660, and, as the author maintains, a different mood of moderation verging on indifference supervened.

Professor Cressy weaves his way with subtlety and discerning judgment through a mass of evidence drawn from every corner of the kingdom. Poetry, plays, diaries, letters, sermons, conduct books, court cases, all have something to reveal about ritual practices and attitudes. The author, moreover, is careful to tell us the place (not always correctly spelt, though) as well as the date at which his tell-tale events occurred. Thus, without himself knowing the local circumstances in which tensions erupted, he gives local historians innumerable insights that ask for a deeper probing of the local scene.

Professor Cressy's own generalities are cautious, sober, and convincing. He does not see the aggressive rise of individualism in the controversies surrounding rituals, nor a major gender conflict between men and women. But he does see a sharpening tension between the community and the individual, posing a problem that had to be resolved at the local level. So it is instructive to see the efforts made to mediate, accommodate, and tolerantly accept dissidents. Particularly striking are the many examples, not of dissident laymen refusing to accept the customary rituals, but of clerics with singular precepts and prejudices which they inflicted on their flock. One way and another, people's ingenuity for inventing and maintaining variant practices was a world without end.

A good example is demonstrated in the first ceremony of baptism: conformists in Elizabeth's reign baptised at the font, while rebels threw out the font, in one case using it as a horse trough, and baptising from basins or porringers; others settled for a middle way by using basins resting within fonts. The location of the font in the church was another cause for divided opinion, and resulted, so it was said, in the font at Durham being moved round all points of the compass. If attitudes hardened locally, then those who could not swallow their own parson's prejudices attended church in other parishes, even though it might mean a walk of many miles.

The author is thoroughly successful in bringing to life the vigorous personalities of individuals, whether obediently conformist, or pugnaciously unruly. But, unexpectedly, his book becomes an exciting challenge to local historians, calling them to broaden the significance of his examples, not into generalities with a nationwide purport, but certainly to illuminate the distinctive character of regions. Contemporaries evidently knew which were the lawless churches. For marriages, Risby in Lincolnshire, Brackley in Northamptonshire, and Chadshunt in Warwickshire were names circulating on the grapevine; it is up to others to explain why. Some clues to local clusters of conformists or rebels fall into a pattern that can already be explained. A group of Anabaptists and Quakers lived at South Mimms, in Hertfordshire, refusing to have their children baptized. This will come as no surprise to readers who know the history of Enfield Chase, the battle between commoners and buyers of land in 1659, and the propaganda of William Covell for a Utopian commonwealth there. In short, this book is far more than a satisfying social history of three family rituals. It is a rich quarry for historians construing regional differences.

*Hadlow, Kent*

Joan Thirsk

Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. xii + 264, £45.

This contribution to 'Cambridge Studies in Romanticism' relates sentimental novels to such themes as the abolition of the slave trade, the problems of prostitution and the construction of canals. Such disparate phenomena are skilfully brought together with the concept of the politics of sensibility.

In the first chapter Dr Ellis convincingly demonstrates that the novels participated in disputes which made them, not merely secondary expressions of debates conducted primarily in more serious literature, but contributors to the political discourses in their own right. They were addressed to different audiences than were weightier arguments conducted in treatises and tomes. For example, novels were aimed at women whereas the learned treatise rarely assumed a female readership.

The second chapter draws together passages in Sterne's writings along with the letters of Ignatius Sancho to show how they dealt with issues raised by slavery. Sterne could jerk tears from the eyes of the most hard-hearted about the plight of black slaves, but he did not offer a solution to their sufferings. The next chapter explores the same theme in Sarah Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* and Henry Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigne*. They were less passive in their reaction to slavery, but sought to ameliorate the lot of slaves rather than to attack the system of chattel bondage itself.

In many ways the fourth chapter, on 'canals commerce and virtue', is the most intriguing. Here the central text is Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality*. Ellis develops the thesis that Brooke was positively asserting the benefits of commercial over landed interests in his novel, and demonstrates how he recycled material on canals from an earlier tract. This leads him to engage with the concept of civic humanism developed by John Pocock and others, which they claim saw no virtue in commerce. If this were the prevailing political philosophy then Brooke's singing of commercial virtues was at odds with it. But the Pocockian paradigm has been challenged. The country mentality to which it applied was largely tory. Country whigs like Brooke and other patriots had no problem identifying progress with the growth of trade, while Court whigs like Joseph Addison, Daniel Defoe and Richard Steele had previously given more credit to merchants like Sealand than to landowners like Sir Roger de Coverley for their role in generating a more civilised society.

The fifth chapter on the politics of prostitution goes over more familiar ground with its account of the foundation of the Magdalen hospital for penitent prostitutes. But it takes a fresh look at it in the light of the fictional accounts of magdalens allegedly rescued from a life of sin and shame by the charitable institution.

A final chapter examines the alleged decline of Sentimentalism in the 1790s under the impact of forces unleashed by the French Revolution. Ellis argues that it survived the onslaught, albeit in a modified form.

Edwards L. Ayers, and Bradley C. Mittendorf (eds), *The Oxford Book of the American South: Testimony, Memory and Fiction* Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 597, £30.

In the preface to this bold, ambitious, and estimable attempt to anthologise the various writings on this most complex and fascinating of American regions, the editors wisely, if modestly, concede that 'no honest survey of Southern writing over the last two centuries could steer clear of controversy'. It would, therefore, be expecting too much of any single volume fully to capture the multicultural richness and depth of the South over the course of its often anguished, though never dull, history. However, the breadth and diversity in the selection of extracts here, from the always obvious – Thomas Jefferson, William Faulkner – to the more recently established essentials, such as Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, or Alice Walker, ensure that readers of all types and levels of knowledge are generously afforded a wide and carefully blended range of evocative literary and historical insights into the mind (and soul) of the South.

There has been a conscious and largely successful effort to organise each group of extracts into a coherent section which, whilst allowing each individual offering to be read and enjoyed in its own right, maintains strong thematic connections. On the whole, the composition of these sections is appropriate and well-balanced, although the thinness of the material on the colonial period (compounded perhaps by the omission of commentators such as William Byrd) does present some difficulties by no means entirely of the editors' making. The introductory essays are lucid, pithy, and judicious overviews of the chronological periods in question which work well to contextualise each section for the general reader. The background notes on each extract are concise and digestible – there is no attempt to overwhelm and bombard with unnecessary biographical details – but the reader is never left struggling to make sense of less immediately accessible sources such as Agee's and Evans' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* for example.

The only reservation felt by this reviewer concerns the omission of 'folklore, poetry, and professional history' on the grounds that they would be too difficult to integrate into the book as a whole. Whilst there is clearly considerable justification in such a decision, it does serve to exclude important and powerful testimonies: the colourful memories contained in the WPA ex-slave narratives; Allen Tate's poignant *Ode to the Confederate Dead* and the surely invaluable contributions of C. Vann Woodward to the understanding of the American South. Such material is readily available elsewhere, it is true, but would, perhaps, work well in the context of an anthology which, with good reason, focuses upon the 'imagination and re-imagination' of Southern History.

Overall, this volume constitutes a valuable addition to the shelves of anyone interested in the cultural history of the South, whether general reader, undergraduate student, or teacher. The editors are to be commended for producing such an imaginative and tantalising selection of Southern writings: in this volume at least, Southern History may be considered anything but a burden.

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Neil Curtin

Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, *Capital Cities at War, 1914–1919*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. xviii + 622, £60.

This volume of related essays is just as interesting for its methodology as for its content. The opening essay by Jay Winter, one of its editors, sets both the scene and the issues or what he calls 'premises'. Cities have long served as centres of interdisciplinary studies. So, too, have wars, which long since ceased to be the exclusive concern of military historians. It was an exciting and ambitious idea to bring cities and wars together, particularly the three capital cities covered in this volume, within the context of the 'Great War', which tested most attitudes and institutions. It was an ambitious and exciting idea too to bring together scholars from the three European countries concerned – Britain, France and Germany – with the United States thrown in for good measure.

The various writers have clearly been under starters' orders, for all of them follow without question the same methodology. As they describe it, there is inevitably some repetition. Yet the content of their essays, some of them complete in themselves, varies considerably. Jay Winter's introductory essay is followed by a clear and well organised, if explicitly selective, essay by his co-editor on 'Paris, London, Berlin on the eve of the war' which is of interest to historians of cities who are not expressly concerned with war. Its author, Jean-Louis Robert, professor of History at the University of Orleans, is an authority both on the history of Paris and the French labour movement.

The two editors end the volume with 'conclusions', which centre on the relationship between 'winners' and 'losers' in the war: by that they mean not nations but groups within the three communities. They promise a second volume which will focus on cross-sections of urban life, including women in families and workers in trade unions. Together the two volumes will concentrate on shares of 'sacrifice' or in some cases benefits from war situations. Adrian Gregory sets out the approach clearly, if with a touch of jargon, in an illuminating chapter on 'Lost generations: the impact of military casualties on Paris, London and Berlin'.

For communities at war, military casualties predominate. The fundamental reality is loss of life and limb. All other considerations are secondary. [And here, after such a wonderful start, comes the jargon] If communities are viewed as the sphere in which the distribution of privileges and goods is negotiated through legal and political channels [end of jargon] then no decision is as important as the one which determines who will live and who will die violently. Those who volunteer or who are conscripted and lay down their lives for the common good become the moral touchstone by which others are judged. Death in war stands out as the counterpoint to the pursuit of self-interest, the antithesis of shirking, hoarding and profiteering.

In his introductory essay Winter, who employs the term 'adaptations', puts it this way: in examining sacrifice and survival and in identifying 'winners and 'losers' 'we need to discover not one global measure of well-being, but rather to analyse how the war distorted the way in which ordinary people went about their normal lives.' There was a moral dimension to the sharing of resources and risks. The 'premises' he selects to underwrite his approach are those not of a contemporary but of a distinguished late-twentieth century economist not from Europe but from the Third World, Amartya Sen.

In some ways this is a strange choice. Insisting as the editors do on the need for a comparative approach to their subject, they compare cities but not wars. The issues they raise could have been stated without jargon had they taken Robert Southey's meditations on war, industrialisation and the 'standard of living' from the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath and had they been prepared to make even the odd *en passant* reference by way of comparison to the Second World War, when phrases like 'fair shares for all' became more than slogans and when caricatures were converted into manifestos.

Another missing element in the study is the comparative study of communications. The Press is used, but not compared. Moreover, despite the occasional references to individuals as well as to groups it is odd to have Edwardian London discussed without G. K. Chesterton or the Great War without Siegfried Sassoon. Both of these writers had something of relevance to contribute to the elucidation of the themes in the volume. The abundant literature of the Great War, so much examined and re-examined by historians and others, deserves more attention than it receives in what, for all its limitations, is (to use a favourite adjective of Robert) a 'robust' and stimulating volume.

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Asa Briggs

Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 307, \$39.50, £27.50.

The period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) remains one of the most interesting in the history of the Soviet Union. It was a time when politics, society, culture, indeed all of Russian life changed greatly. Yet for many revolutionaries NEP seemed a step away from their utopian dreams, a time when much of what they had fought against was now being promoted and encouraged by a government the revolutionaries thought of as their own. NEP was a retreat from communism in many ways, but as it turned out, it was also only a breathing spell before the dramatic changes of the Stalin revolution redirected the country toward an even more fundamental transformation. NEP was also the period during which many of the typical features of Soviet culture and society began to be realized. With his book, *Sex in Public*, Eric Naiman attempts to examine sex and its representation during the NEP era from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives. In doing so, he charts new territories of interpretation and opens new subjects to evaluation.

Naiman stresses early in his study the frustration and disillusionment during NEP of those committed to revolutionary change. For them and for many others, NEP was a time of sensationalism and morbidity, accompanied with appalling doses of sex and violence in the media and in real life. Naiman examines the interesting connections between the ideas of pre-Revolutionary thinkers and writers who addressed issues of sex, and the popular and influential ideologists of the 1920s. He is best in his interpretations of the literary works of the times, and provides some interesting perspectives on such works as Gladkov's *Cement* and the fiction of Pilniak and Kollontai. He is particularly good in evaluating some of the more popular works of the period by authors who are, for justifiable reasons, not well-known or remembered today.

Naiman shows special insight in his chapter devoted to 'Gothic' aspects of NEP cul-

ture, which he sees demonstrated in a range of works from the period. Themes of rape, castration, loneliness, fear were all surprisingly far more widespread during NEP than has been thought, and Naiman's discussion of the general anxieties of the period as depicted in popular works illustrate an aspect of the era that has been in need of the explication he provides.

Much of this book deals with the ways in which Soviet women were presented in the press, literature, and films of the 1920s. From the recurring phallic terminology associated with revolutionary groups such as Proletkult to the repetition of 'penetration' in much of the political discourse of the time, the vocabulary and style of revolutionary society seemed at odds with the traditional attributes of women and their roles in society. Surprisingly anti-female statements appeared in the press, and the depiction of women in the cinema, Naiman finds, was considerably more negative than one might expect (though he sometimes exaggerates the significance of the ways women are depicted in some of the films he discusses). In fact, Naiman argues that, based on analysis of the cultural artifacts of the era, NEP overall was profoundly anti-female, and that much of the formal liberation of women associated with the Revolution merely opened them up to other means of exploitation.

Naiman ends his book with an account of a notorious gang rape in Leningrad. The 'Chubarov Alley Affair' of 1926 caused a scandal and led to a far more active role on the part of the Communist Party in the control of crime and in the lives of Soviet young people than had been the case up until that time. 'Hooliganism', 'sexual depravity', 'cultural corruption' all figured in the incident and its resolution. In the end, the society of uncertainty and irrational fear which produced the events of the Chubarov Alley was replaced by the world of the Five Year Plans; women were tougher and more self-assured than they had been before (at least in so far as they were depicted in literature and the arts), and the subconscious nightmares of the twenties were replaced with the real nightmares of the thirties.

Naiman's conclusion is surprisingly ineffective, considering the substance of his book as a whole. It assumes certain things that have not been proven, and Naiman's attempts to set the stage for Stalinism do not succeed in any meaningful way. One suspects that Naiman himself was not entirely sure how to end this book, and yet this relatively minor weakness should not detract from the study's overall originality and value.

*Sex in Public* is generally well-written, though stylistically Naiman is at times too clever by half. The book is exhaustively researched, and a bibliography would have been a valuable addition to the book. On the other hand, much of the information Naiman relegates to his footnotes could just as readily have been included in the text itself. Finally, it must be said that at times Naiman's work is mired in the kind of literary-philosophical jargon popular among some academics that leads to obfuscation rather than illumination. Still, it is well worth wading through the occasional swamps of Naiman's discourse to uncover the valuable insights he provides in this highly imaginative and provocative study.

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