

It is, of course, this typically Chaucerian ambiguity that makes it possible to argue with Crocker. Readers may well find themselves contesting each of her claims and identifying a Chaucer more historically aligned with the conventions deployed in Harley 7333 than with the postmodern gender fluidity that Crocker champions. Some readers may also question the effectiveness of Crocker's movement between literal and metaphorical vision: she does not always adequately acknowledge their difference or signal when she moves from one to the other. Nevertheless, *Chaucer's Visions of Manhood* is an important, original, and challenging contribution to several current scholarly conversations.

Unfortunately, this thought-provoking book is marred by a significant number of editing errors and oversights. The New Middle Ages is an important series in the dissemination of new critical approaches to medieval literature, and it is a shame that Palgrave Macmillan should not treat the books appearing in its series with greater editorial care.

Robert S. Sturges, Arizona State University

BARBARA DONAGAN. *War in England, 1642–1649*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 400. \$35.00 (paper).

There are many books about the military dimensions of the English civil wars, but most concentrate either on warfare, battles, and strategy or on the “experience” of noncombatants. Barbara Donagan's book is, thankfully, entirely different, and it is supremely rich and rewarding, judicious and erudite. She focuses on war rather than politics and on bridging the gap between soldiers and civilians, with “a kind of environmental study” of the conditions of warfare (10). She is interested in “how brutal, how humane, [and] how restrained” the wars were and in how people managed to live together after violence, enmity, and bloodshed, as well as bitter rhetoric (4), and she suggests that the key lies in the survival of “moral and professional norms and social bonds” (12). She thus addresses contemporary ideas and experiences of war before 1642, both intellectually and practically, stressing that the English were well acquainted with war without really being militarized. She explores the “texture” of war, in terms of the “limitations and peculiarities that shaped the acts, attitudes and expectations of participants” (63). She analyzes the “moral and judicial economy” of civil war and the “etiquette of belligerence” (141). And she examines the strengths and weaknesses of protagonists, from officers to foot soldiers. To this synoptic analysis Donagan then adds two substantial case studies of the sieges at Boarstall House and Colchester, thereby ensuring that the book has both diachronic and synchronic dimensions.

Donagan's greatest strength is the ability to recognize detail and complexity while also producing a comprehensible analysis, to develop arguments without being schematic. Contemporary knowledge of warfare was “literary and intellectual” as well as “practical and professional” (33), and military conduct involved professionalism and pragmatism as well as confessional zeal and providential inspiration. Military fortunes revealed both intentionality and contingency, from weaponry to the weather and from disease to the landscape. Among officers, Donagan detects “faults, fools and bad apples,” while stressing that leadership could be “powerfully effective and its loss devastating” (250). Ordinary soldiers could be “restive, dilatory, spurred on by threat, incentive and occasional inspiration,” rather than “the godly, disciplined New Model Army of legend,” but they were not “uncontrolled ravagers,” and their negligence, destructiveness, and riotousness could be controlled with “luck and effort” (288). Throughout, Donagan has a keen eye for the telling story and an astute ear for contemporary rhetoric, and the analysis is invariably calm and careful, and the conclusions sensible, perceptive, and wise.

Such strengths are particularly obvious in the book's standout elements. One is the chapter on “knowledge and confusion,” dealing with the “information world” of topographical

information and military intelligence and of news, rumor, and ciphers (94). Here, Donagan recognizes that contemporaries faced difficulties and uncertainty and a range of oral, scribal, and printed sources that might be more or less unreliable, but she also demonstrates that individuals found ways of coping and that few sources were regarded as being entirely trustworthy or entirely useless. The other high point involves analysis of “soldiers’ law” and is based on Donagan’s unrivalled expertise on codes of military conduct. This involved the laws of God, nature, and nations, governing the behavior of moral men; the laws of war, which were “professional, specialised and largely customary” (129); and the ordinances of war, only the latter of which were codified and printed. For Donagan, this “system” of mutual restraint was vital but depended heavily on self-interest and utilitarianism rather than merely on moral considerations, and there is a powerful sense that the civil wars might have been significantly more bloody and brutal. Fortunately, contemporaries reached the conclusion that the conflict ought to be treated as a war rather than a rebellion, although this was neither inevitable nor immediate. Donagan also shows that, messily and incompletely, warfare developed over time, as articles of war were amended and as behavior worsened. In analyzing conduct, therefore, she argues that contemporaries were aware of the theory and laws of war but also that quotidian practices reflected social pressures and the fear of chaos and that historians need to recognize the “fluctuating balance between rule and exception” (158) and “the mingled strands of moderation and severity” (397).

Donagan’s great triumph, therefore, is to have produced such a rich and readable book without overstretched and tendentious conclusions, and her account of uneasy balances and fluctuating responses, and of both stability and fragility, is hugely persuasive. It might be argued that too little is said about the treatment of prisoners (both in theory and in practice) and about the processes involved in negotiating and surrendering, although it would be churlish to ask for more after such a lavish feast. It is also tempting to wish that Donagan had been just a little more willing to stick her neck out historiographically. First, one is left wishing for a bolder exposition of the faint but discernible challenge to recent arguments that the conflict was a religious war. Second, there may be scope for pushing further the idea that codes of behavior became strained, that Colchester was a culmination of trends rather than an exceptional episode, and that an explanation lies partly in the role of the media. Here too we find restrained hints about the impact of journalism and polemic, which inflamed rhetoric and spread both solid news and misleading information across the country, with unprecedented speed and social reach. However, this would not be Donagan’s style, and to expect anything of the sort would probably involve falling into traps that she has studiously sought to avoid. It would also be to miss the most pertinent point: that this book is hugely important because it is not just about warfare but also about the mentalities of those who experienced the civil wars. In other words, it is a book whose insights should be considered and absorbed by anyone with an interest in the early modern world and in those who lived in it.

Jason Peacey, University College London

CHRIS EVANS. *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery, 1660–1850*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010. Pp. 159. \$25.00 (paper).

The 2007 commemorations marking the bicentennial of Britain’s abolition of the slave trade reinvigorated discussion about the profits from slavery funneling back to the metropole. Likewise, they reaffirmed Britain’s significant role in the trade of human cargo. Scholars have long understood England, Scotland, and Ireland’s involvement in this story, but as with many topics in British history, Wales has been essentially left out. Chris Evans’s *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery, 1660–1850* places England’s first colony within that