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## Preface

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## Preface

It is the greatest pleasure to introduce these papers, the work of scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, who presented versions of them at the second Literature and History conference at the University of Reading, in July 1992, under the title "Politics in English Culture, 1520-1660." This selection is only a sample of the event, comprising eight of the sixty-five papers given, and for many reasons the selection has had to be arbitrary. Also, as will be seen quickly from the title of the conference, these articles do not represent its full subject range, either in terms of period—some mid-Tudor papers, for example, are being published elsewhere—or in terms of its interdisciplinary character—they do not, sadly, include the work of any of the historians.

The papers in this issue of *Criticism* cover the period from the last years of Elizabeth through to the last years of Milton, with a cluster of three concerning the first half of the reign of James I and another the middle years of the seventeenth century. Reflecting the emphasis of the conference series on the relationship of "Literature and History," the majority of pieces deal with the specific historical placement of texts, but several, especially in the closing parts of the collection, offer broader cultural and ideological readings, and it might be said of some that historical and cultural analyses are in combination or contention. A variety of kinds of writing is represented: history, court drama, poems to patrons and of royal celebration, texts about colonization. All the articles are about political negotiations, in some sense. Two authors are also given special attention: Jonson, who appears in Lewalski, Butler and Coiro; and Milton, in Brown, Stevens and Radzinowicz. The latter may serve to mark the fact that "Politics in English Culture" hosted sessions of the British Milton Society.

True to the spirit of the conferences, which foster much co-operation and interchange between delegates, some subjects in this number are in common between contributions: for example, censorship is Dutton's main topic and the subtext of Revard's reading of Cowley; Lewalski and Coiro write about texts which challenge male power from female perspectives; Lewalski and Butler are concerned with negotiations within the Jacobean court; queens of catholic tendency or who proselytized for Catholicism are at the center of two of the articles; and the last three share an interest in biblical rhetoric, especially of separation and exclusion, and two, Stevens and Radzinow-

icz, interrogate biblical hermeneutics that span the early modern and modern periods. In more detail, the articles may be summarized as follows.

In the first long essay Richard Dutton writes the most comprehensive account of the well-documented case of the licensing in 1599 by Samuel Harsnett, chaplain to the Bishop of London, independent-minded man of anti-puritan tendencies, and an author himself, of the history of Henry IV by John Hayward, who had been a fellow student with Harsnett at Cambridge. As everyone knows, this was a book (like Shakespeare's *Richard II*, telling of the deposition of a king) which came under suspicion for treasonous matter in connection with the Essex rebellion, but the records of the investigations of author, bookseller and licenser tell a far larger story of the sometimes informal, often personal, and possibly collusive workings of censorship under the decree of 1586, of the way nervousness in the administration in the last years of Elizabeth produced acts of censorship which could be violently sudden, at one moment, and completely forgetful at the next, and how historical matter could be interpreted as encoding the present.

In the next paper Barbara Lewalski analyzes the way in which, in the early parts of his English reign, the court of James' queen, Anne of Denmark, created masques which were the "site for contestation about gender, power and status." Not only was the relationship between king and queen a rocky one, but the queen was prone to poke fun at her husband and to advertize her pro-Spanish and Catholic sympathies. In the masques of Daniel and Jonson which Anne sponsored Lewalski traces celebrations of female power, of a neo-Elizabethan kind, until with *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* in 1611 male power was re-established, and a new phase of the king's masquing began. Thereafter the queen could only find expressive freedoms with dramatic entertainments at her own palace.

Ann Coiro takes up the questions of female authorship and female patronage with Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), not simply to re-iterate its by now familiar status as feminist text, but rather to broaden the categories from discussions of the politics of gender to include matters of social position and justice. Thus the poem is seen not only to assert the proper position of women, but also to challenge the values of aristocratic women. Lanyer's engagement with social causes, especially in her country-house poem "To Cooke-ham," is pointed up by comparison and contrast with Jonson's "To Penshurst," and there are further reflections about gendered attitudes to manuscript and print publication.

While recognizing with others Jonson's massive self-fashioning in the 1616 Folio and the importance of this book in the story of the growing empowerment of authors in print, Martin Butler wonders whether its recent canonization in the history of cultural change has not neglected how far the volume was bound up in the "old economies and politics of patronage." He locates the Folio in the difficult changing situation of court faction in 1615–1616, when several notable poets fell, whereas Jonson survived to reorder his writings so as to suggest a developing patronage network which would culminate in Pembroke and his circle. Things were left out, materials were re-arranged, and the detached timelessness was an effect of art. The dedications of the Folio plays show a writer advertising affiliations and carefully balancing patronage interests. As Butler demonstrates in convincing detail, this is in fact an author who pre-eminently manipulates the patronage system.

Stella Revard writes about the politics of royalist celebration and resistance in Cowley's Pindaric odes, probably composed in Jersey in 1651–1655. Pindar's own patronage connections were a good deal exploited by Renaissance imitators, and thus pindarics often became royalist texts. Despite the disclaimers of author and biographer, Revard assumes that this difficult form of ode encodes a political agenda visible to the reader with special competence; in other words, that these texts were produced under conditions of censorship. The main analysis is of the imitations of Olympia 2 and Nemean 1, in which Charles I and (especially) Charles II are seen to be represented. She sees political subtexts also in the other twelve imitations in the collection of 1656.

Cedric Brown writes about a long-standing Miltonic obsession, visible in his writings from the late 1630s through to the end of his life, the fear of a supposed tendency in wives to fall into idolatry and thus to fail to serve the true religion of their husbands. This highly prejudicial representation of gender, possible to relate to his own first marriage, is given historical contextualization and political analysis. Milton's general assumptions about the duty of wives to support the religion of their husbands is illustrated from *Paradise Lost*, Sonnet IX, and some of the divorce tracts, in which a powerful rhetoric of separation is appropriated from the prophetic books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Then it is shown how Milton shares a common invective with other reformers against Catholic proselytizing in the court of Queen Henrietta Maria, the specific political concern is illustrated mainly from *Eikonoklastes*, and this concern is then suggested as a major re-

ferent in "Lycidas," in the printed masque text of 1637, and again in the divorce tracts of the mid 1640s. Finally, the matter of the dangers of idolatrous wives is shown to be pivotal in the action of *Samson Agonistes*, where domestic and national discipline in religion coincide.

Like Brown and Radzinowicz, Paul Stevens deals in the appropriation of Hebraic ways of thinking, and his wide-ranging polemical article (which even quotes the rhetoric of the Northern Irish Protestant leader, Ian Paisley) also comes to rest in the writings of Milton. Resisting some post-modern ways of interpreting the Bible, in particular the privileging by Regina Schwartz of the Hebrew Bible over the Christian Bible, so as to reject the drive in the latter towards conclusive meaning, he sees the same rhetoric of separation in both testaments. The "new heaven and new earth" of Revelation is a Hebraic remembering, not a preparing of the way for the endless textuality of Derrida. In particular, Stevens analyses the way in which post-modern representations of the Bible occlude the legitimization of colonial expansion in both books, and he sees sexual purity as the test of national identity in the Pentateuch, obedience to the strict Law in this respect authorizing the forced possession of land. He shows how various seventeenth-century reformers—William Bradford, John Rolfe, and Samuel Purchas—deployed this common rhetoric of exclusion, and then illustrates the same of Milton's political writings, especially in connection with the suppression of the Great Irish Uprising of October 1641. Stevens sees Milton as partaking in "a discourse of enormous power, especially apparent in colonial situations, to separate, divide, and exclude . . . to create and disseminate a notion of the other as unholy and physically unclean while claiming to embrace and sanctify all." Like Brown also, he sees a considerable problem in judging how distant Milton might be from such rhetoric of exclusion.

In the final paper Mary Ann Radzinowicz likewise takes her terms of reference from the Old Testament, examining interpretations of parts of Exodus to show how political intentions color them. In doing so, she bridges early modern and modern hermeneutics, using Milton as her "strong" earlier writer, and Freud as the "strong" later writer. (The strong interpreters offer more deeply considered and systematic re-readings.) The special characteristics of Milton's hermeneutic are illustrated by contrast with that of Donne, who is more casuistically opportunist in his use of Exodus; and those of Freud by contrast with that of Michael Walzer, who reads the Law politically in a general account. The chosen "ideo-stories" for these comparative readings are those of the Burning Bush, a vocation story, and the Golden Calf, a

mediation story. The interpretations are indeed very different re-writings. Donne seems to be oblivious to historical relativity, but alert to psychological nuance, and politically, for reasons of personal circumstance, his readings are conservative. Milton, on the other hand, gives thorough re-readings of radical kind, to support the spirit of revolution. Freud deconstructs the Bible in order to pick out different cultural elements of a biography of Moses (whom he treats as Egyptian), and is also interested in the process of moral evolution in a culture. Ultimately, his readings have an ideological basis, seeking to deny reasons for nominating any people as "chosen." Walzer's generalising interpretations, liberal in spirit and concerned with the ups and downs of revolutionary movements in history, nevertheless suppress many other possibilities of Exodus as an authorizing text. This is another scrupulous and richly suggestive contribution to Radziewicz's considerable collection of writings about the varying dynamics of biblical interpretation in seventeenth-century literature.

Those readers who have an interest in such materials might like to note that the third of the triennial Reading Literature and History Conferences will take place in July, 1995, and its probable topic will be "Writing Reformations" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Further details may be obtained from the present editor at The Department of English, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 2AA, UK.

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