Reading a wide-ranging scholarly anthology is not unlike attending a Sunday morning hotel brunch. One goes in hungry, admires the elegant presentation of the offerings, and then tries to get the best value from them without suffering indigestion at the end. Cambridge University Press has now produced a series of such literary buffets, on more or less specialized topics, the latest being this cornucopia of short offerings on the literary produce of the mid-seventeenth century. While not every dish on this groaning board is equally satisfactory, and many are best enjoyed at intervals, the result is generally satisfactory.

It used to be that the period under question was largely neglected, save certain canonical authors like Milton (often taught as part of "Restoration and 18th Century" or projected backward to join up with Donne and Jonson), and for political thinkers such as Hobbes. That has certainly not been the case for a generation, and there is now a wealth of secondary literature on a host of "major" and minor authors, and on particular groups (Levellers, Quakers, women). These treat mid-seventeenth century writing for its literary merit as much as its political message. If scholarship still favors the left-hand side of the menu, there is also an increasingly rich selection of studies on the conservative side.

One of the curiosities of literary treatments of the period is that they have been remarkably reluctant to part with the term "English Revolution." A term first coined by the nineteenth-century French historian Guizot (who had a very different and rather personal understanding of what a revolution was), it was in vogue among historians and literary scholars mainly after World War II. It seemed then to offer a more inclusive handle for the collective events of 1640-60 than the slightly older "puritan revolution" (itself problematic given some doubts as to what was or wasn't puritan). In the mid-1980s, after the first wave of revisionist history, "revolution" began to fade from the historian's phrase book (ironically to be reapplied to the much more conservative events of 1688). The thrust of much of this was to demonstrate both that the revolution wasn't inevitable and that in the end it really wasn't very revolutionary, or, in some views, even worth much attention. The
present reviewer became conscious of a drop in the value of this currency in 1991 when very politely asked by the editor of another collected volume to drop "revolution" from an essay because it seemed a bit old-fashioned and no one else in that particular book was using it. Not wishing to be revolutionary, or even an honest dissenter, I obliged.

Our literary colleagues, and some historians, however, have stuck to their guns. Revolution is a rather more durable word when it comes to describing the writing of the period. It is also less of a mouthful than "writing of the English civil wars and interregnum," and not as loaded as "those turbulent and seditious times," as Anthony Wood might have put it. One must also admit that even we have de-fanged the Long Parliament, the Rump, the New Model and even the regicides of revolutionary intent or revolutionary effect, it is hard to get away from the fact that there is a vast collection of poetry and prose that, by any fair comparison with what came before and what came after, is either revolutionary or at least radical (and in the case of Hobbes radically conservative). Christopher Hill knew this better than any historian of the twentieth century, even if he often stretched attributions, vague connections, and casual associations into over-constructed radical networks of admirable ingenuity but silk-thin strength. Hill is cited by the editor in the present volume's introduction, and though he has no essay therein (and is on the whole rather scarce in its authors' various bibliographies), he nonetheless looms like an unspoken presence over the proceedings. And there are indeed other historians at the table, beginning with John Morrill, who offers a marvelously concise summary of the causes of the revolution/civil wars/wars of the three kingdoms, and ending with Richard Greaves on John Bunyan.

N.H. Keeble has assembled a formidable set of companions for this Companion. On the whole the division of material and assortment of subjects works well, and is effectively supplemented by a set of reference "chronologies" at the head of the volume. There is considerable variety of scope, ranging from general essays like Morrill's introduction, and Martin Dzelzains' elegant summary of political and religious thought during the Revolution (a period that never acquires specificity here, and thus uneasily covers the entire period from the calling of the Long Parliament to the Restoration), to more focused essays on particular topics or even individual authors, such as Milton and Bunyan. Most of the essays avoid trying to be all-encompassing encyclopedias and instead select a few specific authors or groups who then make up subsections. Although the book espouses intent to discuss not only the great canonical writers such as Milton or (at the other end of the spectrum) Hobbes, the great majority of the authors cited are in fact well known. David Norbrook's essay on historical writing during the wars and interregnum, for instance, covers heavyweights like Clarendon and Hobbes, but also Lucy Hutchinson, Tom May and Edmund Ludlow. There are dozens of others who could also be mentioned, and the result of such selectivity is that readers get an author's sense of the major themes and the most interesting or perhaps representative authors, rather than a more thorough survey. This is not at all a complaint--there are plenty of compendia out there if one is looking--but readers should be aware that this guide will direct them rather actively in certain directions.

The book is divided into five sections (a favorite device of editors of collections where the pieces don't quite fit together as a whole). The opening "contexts" section includes Morrill's and Dzelzains's pieces, and a useful summary of the printing and censorship situation after 1640 by Sharon Achinstein. Part 2, with individually good essays by Thomas N. Corns, David Loewenstein, and Annabel Patterson, seems more problematic. Entitled "Radical voices," it deals with everyone from minor radical pamphleteers (radical most of the time) to Milton (radical quite a lot of the time)
to Marvell (radical-ish now and again—kind of, maybe). If "radical" is a not very well-defined term, it is at least a meaningful category in the setting. Putting all women writers (including Lucy Hutchinson, studied here as a poet as opposed to a historian) together in a "female voices" section (part 3) is an editorial judgment that some might question, given that the range of their views includes everyone from conservatives like Katherine Phillips and the Duchess of Newcastle to Quaker women and civil war prophetesses. The essays themselves however are well-written introductions to their subjects, respectively by Susan Wiseman (on women's poetry), Elaine Hobby (female prophets and enthusiasts), and, most interestingly, Helen Wilcox and Sheila Ottway, whose jointly authored essay on "Women's histories" contextualizes the less obviously literary work of authoresses like Anne Halkett and Dorothy Osborne, taking them as examples of a distinctive female sense of history. The following section deals with conservative voices, those mainly of royalists and of ex-parliamentarians driven back to the center. Alan Rudrum studies the most significant royalist lyric poets (Lovelace, Herrick, Cowley, Vaughan), while Isabel Rivers, in a piece not subdivided among authors, examines episcopalian devotional literature and the Prayer Book (suppressed through much of the period) itself. Most compelling is Paul Salzman's excellent short treatment of a much-understudied genre, royalist epic and romance. One might also have welcomed an essay on royalist propagandists, for instance Sir John Berkenhead and James Howell, though the former at least pops up here and there.

The final section is entitled "Rethinking the War," somewhat confusingly since its essays do not especially re-think the war (revolution has curiously by now disappeared, save from Norbrook's historiographical piece). If there is a common thread to this part, it is that all of the essays are about types of writing, historical or poetic, constructed in the aftermath of upheaval and in most cases, in the shadow of defeat: they include a second piece on Milton, this time on *Paradise Lost*, by Nigel Smith; and Greaves on Bunyan's "holy war"—a term that has acquired a much less sympathetic resonance in recent years. The miscellaneous character of this section reflects the difficulties of the whole: not every author can be chosen, nor every theme, nor do period or genre always provide sufficiently strong interconnections. Having said this, it would have been impossible to have tackled every conceivable form of writing from the period in a volume of this size, and any selection of subjects is inevitably going to reflect the choices made by individual authors. Leaving such matters aside, there is at the end of this meal a great deal of sustenance, and the reader who wants more of a particular dish will know where to turn.

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