

for grievance that were compatible in significance, if not always identical in substance, to men's" (89).

No exploration of popular culture's influence on early modern England would be complete without some reference to the Levellers. Michael Braddick delivers a focus on the ringleader himself with his essay "John Lilburne and Political Agency in Revolutionary England." While Lilburne gets some attention, Braddick highlights the influence of lesser-known figures who exercised their political agency in ways similar to Lilburne. While Lilburne got more attention because of his bombastic personality and higher status, other figures from the lower classes took advantage of the opportunities offered by the vibrant political and popular cultures of the revolutionary period. Braddick argues that Lilburne was "deeply involved in forms of political mobilisation which did offer opportunities for those normally excluded from political power to exercise political influence" (222). University of Warwick history professor Mark Knights explores the use of the specter of "popery" to mobilize popular agency in his essay "Religion, Anti-Popery, and Corruption."

These four essays are only a sample of the strong offerings in this collection. The authors' best tribute to Walter lies in their ample demonstration of how many doors he has opened for continued exploration. *Popular Culture and Political Agency in Early Modern England and Ireland* provides the highest service a work of serious scholarship can by stimulating curiosity and pointing the way to further frontiers of exploration.

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The Leveller Revolution: Radical Political Organisation in England, 1640–1650.

John Rees.

London: Verso, 2016. xxii + 490 pp. \$34.95.

The dustjacket describes John Rees as "an historian, broadcaster and campaigner," and all three personas are evident in this fine study. It is scholarly, engagingly written, and passionately committed. The Levellers were the most important political movement generated by the English Civil War, and it is astonishing that this is the first full-length study since H. N. Brailsford's account in 1961. Rees makes a valuable contribution in several important respects. Other scholars have explored various aspects of the Levellers' thought, some focusing (perhaps excessively) on the franchise issue, a heated topic at the Putney Debates, others probing their religious background and ideas. Most historians now accept that the Levellers' core principle was the sovereignty of the people and the challenge of how to make this a practical reality. The great strength of this study is the emphasis Rees places on the ever-shifting political context in which the Levellers operated, and their interaction with other players. Sudden changes in the political climate frequently demanded equally sudden shifts in strategy

and tactics, and Rees always places the Levellers' actions and pamphlets within their immediate context.

It has often been noted that while religious radicals, such as Baptists and Congregationalists, had a lengthy prehistory, the Leveller movement appeared to come out of nowhere. Here too Rees makes a valuable contribution. The first third of his text traces the role of many future Levellers in radical political and religious activity, especially in London, during and even before the Civil War. Many were members of radical sectarian churches, and many were involved in the printing trade. They played an active role in aiding the parliamentary cause, championing religious freedom, and supporting the "war party" against those pushing for a settlement with the king. Rees throws light on a large cast of figures, including the separatist Katherine Chidley and the printer William Larnier, who were significant activists during the war and went on to play similarly important, if often overlooked, roles in the Leveller movement. The organizational skills they developed and the alliances forged over several years of large-scale petitioning and pamphleteering proved of enormous value for the Leveller movement itself.

Some historians have questioned whether the Levellers really deserve the attention they have received. The movement was short-lived, after all, and was crushed within a year of the king's execution. Rees provides a spirited and persuasive defense of their significance, especially in countering what he describes as counterrevolutionary pressures after 1646. He traces in detail close links between the Levellers and the army, both before and after the army revolt in spring 1647, and shows how political concerns as well as material grievances over pay and indemnity served to trigger the revolt. In 1648, with the Scots, Presbyterians, and war-weary citizens all pressing for a settlement with the king on almost any terms, the Levellers played a key role in enabling the Independents and army leaders to block a counterrevolution. And if the Levellers failed to achieve their constitutional, social, and economic aims, they played a significant role in bringing the king to account and in blocking an authoritarian church settlement.

Rees acknowledges that the Levellers failed to attract more than a minority of the population, though a substantial one, and that many other groups existed with very different interests and objectives. But this is a partisan history, and the Levellers are its heroes as well as its subject. Rees shows less interest in understanding other political actors, or in according them legitimacy. Like the Levellers themselves, he likes to dismiss the Independents, their sometime allies, as "Silken Independents." His comment that 1647 saw a "political crisis caused by Cromwell, and the majority in Parliament, attempting to arrange a treaty with the king" (206) seems to imply that in some sense the revolution was owned by the Levellers and those they represented. But these are minor quibbles. This is a fine and stimulating study that makes a major contribution to our understanding of the Leveller movement and of the period.

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