circumstances require), the differences of personality that led Walwyn to withdraw from Leveller activity at the crucial revolutionary moment at the end of 1648 suggest that the Levellers appeared to be a more coherent group to their opponents than historians should believe. Their denial of the title 'Levellers' (e.g. *A Manifestation*, p. 158) as a pejorative collective description distorting their message epitomises the problems of all such groups struggling to escape being pigeon-holed and marginalised as anarchists. They shared a doctrine of government operating by free consent of males, but their awareness of the shortcomings of fallen men reminds us of their religious justification for such authority, and no historian of the Early Modern period should ever underestimate the variety of individual religious responses to the world. However, if only because they opposed the tyrannical abuse of power by the established social hierarchy the Levellers still deserve to be read, and this fine edition will assist beginning students in that salutary task.

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Molly Smith explains that her study 'draws its impulse from new historicist revaluations of Renaissance cultures' (p. 5), but she focuses 'specifically on breaking boundaries between literary and cultural zones' (p. 14). This, in her view, can happen in more than one way and more than one direction. In her climactic final chapter she presents a vision of the execution of Charles I in 1649 as a 'cultural text' which offers us a 'final blurring of boundaries' (p. 13) in that 'by representing events as the culmination of a communal desire felt by the nation, the drama [i.e. the execution] negated the sense of distance that separates spectator from spectacle, a criterion absolutely essential for the successful enactment of both theatre and festivity. The social drama thus enacted a destruction of theatre itself' (p. 129).
But do we really have to believe that for the participants—those who enacted this 'drama' as well as those who viewed it—the boundaries were blurred? Some of the evidence Smith offers for this contention is by no means compelling. For example, how can we really tell what went on in Charles's mind when he put on two shirts before he mounted the scaffold? Smith sees him as 'conscious of the dramatic nature of his performance' in this: he did not wish to 'appear to shiver on that frosty morning' (p. 134). But even if the king was driven by a wish to present himself to the onlookers in a certain light, that does not mean that he saw himself as an actor in a play. Smith blurs her boundaries too readily. Similarly, she calls on Marvell's 'Horatian Ode' as evidence: the fact that Marvell supposedly 'cannot resist the theatrical metaphor' (p. 128) when writing about Charles as a 'royal actor' is to be considered as one reason for viewing the execution as 'eliding boundaries between theatre, carnival and punitive practice' (p. 135).

A problem with this whole approach is that it tries to make out that things are to be seen as somehow blurred, merged, etc. even when the very evidence called on for this contention suggests otherwise. A metaphor is indeed what Marvell uses. He does not, in fact, claim that Charles was a royal actor but that, figuratively, he was like one, but was not. And the mere fact that one can in some ways see the execution as staged still does not justify treating drama and life as interchangeable entities.

All in all, I consider this book to be intellectually flawed and lacking in scholarly care. Simple mistakes are by no means infrequent. In one of her discussions of The Changeling, for instance, Smith quotes the complete Epilogue, which consists of eight lines, but refers to it as − "Epilogue" 11.5-8' (p. 110); 'Alibius' (quite an important character in the play) is called 'Alibio' on the next page; and 'George Williams', one of the editors of the play, is referred to as 'William' one page later (an error repeated in the Index). The occurrence of three errors of this kind on as many pages is unacceptable. Only a few pages later we read about The Revenger's Tragedy as 'an early example of drama's engagement with desacralizing patriarchal authority while sanctioning or desacralizing sexual transgression' (p. 117). One fears that the author has allowed herself to become overwhelmed by her excruciating vocabulary and that the second instance of desacralizing is an error for sacralizing, for the quoted matter occurs in Chapter Five, headed: 'Theatre and Transgression:'


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Secularizing the Sacred and Sacralizing the Secular'. I hope it will be illuminating to discuss this chapter with some care as an example of the kind of argument this book seeks to advance.

The key text of the chapter is 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, which, page 103 informs us, 'simultaneously desacralizes the institution of patriarchy which had for so long maintained associations with the divine even as it sacralizes the act of sibling incest which by its very nature constitutes a defiance of patriarchy'. Let me say at the outset that I am potentially sympathetic to this position in that I do believe that the play represents the incestuous relationship of Annabella and Giovanni in a far more favourable light than 'patriarchy', although I do not find that term particularly clear or helpful in defining the tensions within the play and do not see such inevitable connections or divisions as Smith does. But I have great difficulty with Smith's claims about the eleven-year old Princess Elizabeth's translation Glass of the Sinful Soul (1548), 'a translation of Marguerite of Navarre's Le Mirroir de l'ame pecheresse (1533)' (p. 106). Smith views this translation as somehow indicating important sexual preoccupations on the part of the princess rather than what it is, i.e. a translation. Moreover, when Elizabeth speaks in her own preface of the soul as 'mother, daughter, sister, and wife' of God, Smith at first admits that these familial terms are metaphors (p. 108), but soon we are called on to see them as indicating incestuous relations, as evidence of what another scholar, Marc Shell, calls 'Elizabeth's own concerns with incest' (cited on p. 109).

We then move to The Changeling as a play which supposedly provides evidence of the breakdown of patriarchy (we must bear in mind that the rise of incest, as in the eleven-year old Elizabeth's mind, is accompanied by the decline of the evil patriarchal system which would inhibit such admirably subversive conduct). We are told: 'The Changeling, we might recall, stages a metaphoric parricide in which Vermandero, who had begun the play doting on the two items that defined his role as patriarch, his daughter and his castle, is reduced at the end of the play to silence' (p. 110). But if we recall no parricide in this play, metaphoric or otherwise, it is because it does not occur. Vermandero is still firmly in charge as a patriarch at the end, although he does complain that his good name has been damaged by his daughter's behaviour. Smith's schematic, simplistic thinking is resisted by the evidence of the text.
Her reading of 'Tis Pity is similarly inaccurate. Thus she claims that 'Florio even hints at Giovanni's potential future in the Church when he dismisses his son as a candidate for the continuance of the family line' (p. 113), but what Florio in fact says is: 'he is so devoted to his book, / As I must tell you true, I doubt his health' (I.iii.5-6). Smith tries at this point to argue that ultimately, and ironically, 'the very basis of incest lies in the sanctioned vocabulary of devotional love' (p. 112), but she simply does not make her case. Incredibly, she claims that if Giovanni were to pray (etc.) as the Friar instructs him to, a circular path would take him back to his desires for Annabella (pp. 113-14).

On page 15, Smith speaks condescendingly about Brian Vickers's supposedly 'naive call for a return to the text'. But, on the basis of the readings which the author herself produces in her book, I would suggest that she should pay attention to Vickers's call, and that she might avoid misreadings if she studied texts, as texts, more.

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**Sponsler, Claire, Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England** (Medieval Cultures 10), Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1997; pp. xvii, 209; R.R.P. US$54.95 (cloth), US$21.95 (paper), ISBN 0816629269 (cloth), 08166292779 (paper).

This book offers a carefully structured and compelling reading of late medieval drama and cultural practices in relation to techniques of domination and strategies of resistance. It explores the effectiveness of mechanisms aimed at social control, the way they seduced the subject into compliance with his/her own containment, and the extent to which these mechanisms also incorporated, and indeed animated, the conditions of their own 'undoing'. The parameters of the analysis remain evident throughout each of the six chapters, which deal respectively with sumptuary laws and the regulation of social positioning, Robin Hood games and cross-dressing, conduct books, morality plays, Books of Hours, and the flawed symbolism of corporate wholeness in Corpus Christi drama.