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John Miller. *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II.* London: Pearson Education Limited, 2000. ix + 318 pp. $79.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-582-29898-9.

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Restoration England Reconsidered

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The political history of the reign of Charles II, King of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1660 to 1685, constitutes a challenging subject for an author. Any interpretation of politics in the British Isles in the second half of the seventeenth century must incorporate an understanding of religious belief and ecclesiastical organization, and a knowledge of seventeenth-century law and local government. A wide range of analytical themes needs to be pursued through a sequence of rapidly changing political situations over a period of twenty-five years. The relationships between the King, his ministers, Parliament, and the people altered during Charles II's reign, partly because of the adjustments necessary after the radical upheavals in those relationships in the 1640s, and partly because of the difficulties encountered in fashioning a stable settlement after the Restoration in 1660. One earlier problem appears, superficially and with hindsight, to have resolved itself; Puritanism, so dynamic within the Church of England in the previous generation, was running out of steam. This was not immediately apparent to contemporaries, however, and in any case the change in the character of Puritanism owed as much to determined persecution as to any diminution in its intellectual or emotional appeal. Puritanism in its new shape–Dissent–retained much influence, especially in urban communities. Meanwhile, European Catholicism was recovering from the distractions of the Thirty Years War in Central Europe in the first half of the century, so that by the 1670s it had become a renewed and urgent reason for apprehension among Charles's Protestant subjects. At the level of ministerial politics, a succession of prominent figures–Clarendon, Arlington, Clifford, Danby, Shaftesbury, Halifax, Rochester–rose and fell at the English court. Each embodied a different set of attitudes and principles, and commanded different allegiances. The King himself exercised substantial constitutional and political powers, yet his personality remained (and remains) elusive. Was he good-natured and lazy; cunning and ruthless; self-indulgent and careless; or experienced and far-sighted? Or did he exhibit all of these characteristics in different proportions at different times?

Among historians specializing in British history in the second half of the seventeenth century, Miller is emi-

nently qualified for the task of elucidating these complexities. Over a period of nearly thirty years, he has written admired biographies of Charles II and of Charles's successor James VII and II, an important monograph on Catholicism in politics and society, and a string of influential articles and essays. He has also edited collections of documents on Restoration England and on the "Glorious" Revolution, with extended commentaries.[1] *After the Civil Wars* attempts something new. It is a comprehensive study of English politics in Charles's reign, which extends to the localities as well as the center, and which incorporates a great deal of research in county and municipal archive offices as well as in the British Library, the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and the Public Record Office. The book expresses an interpretation of Charles's reign that elaborates Miller's earlier published work, with only a little (inevitable) overlap. The blend of local case studies with the development of national politics at court and in parliament is successfully achieved. Miller's judgements are based on copious evidence, and are presented to the reader with a measured solidity that is throughout reassuring and persuasive.

Among these judgements, several may be singled out. There was, Miller observes, a perceived danger of "arbitrary government" from above, but this was balanced by an equally clearly perceived threat of resistance and rebellion from below. The prospect either of the strengthening of monarchical authority or of a revived civil war might at different times provoke quarrels in the localities or in Parliament. However, in his "Prologue" (pp. 2-3), Miller quotes with approval an insight by another scholar, C. Muldrew, that seventeenth-century social and legal culture embodied conciliation and problem-solving as much as contention and division[2]; and Miller sustains, in the detailed chapters that follow, the argument that this was also the case with regard to the culture of politics. He remarks on, and describes, the politicization of legal processes (most notably, the empanelling of juries) to serve the fluctuating requirements of adversarial politics, especially in the latter part of Charles's reign. In a valuable chapter on "popular politics," Miller builds on the work of T. Harris and M. Knights[3] to demonstrate that political activity in the widest sense was not confined to the wealthy. He also joins in the vigorous debate on the character of seventeenth-century parliamentary representation by discussing the transition from parliamentary "selection" (when local elites in the constituencies determined the names of the members beforehand) to genuine parliamentary "election" (when more candidates than there were seats presented themselves to the electorate, which then decided by voting who was to sit at Westminster). He suggests that this transition was more gradual, and took longer, than might have been supposed. In support of this contention, Miller draws attention to the long period from 1661 to the winter of 1678-9 without a general election, and to the evidence for the survival of old-fashioned attitudes in some constituencies even in the three hotly-contested general elections which followed in 1679-81. On the Church of England, Miller expounds in some detail the development from the moderate, hesitant Church restored in 1660 to "a formidably powerful popular 'Anglicanism', which by the reign of Queen Anne was labeled 'High Church' " (p. 141). These analytical interpretations are interspersed with a number of descriptive chapters designed to impart information derived from Miller's research. The chapter entitled simply "News" and divided into sections headed "The demand for news," "Print," "Handwritten news," and "Word of mouth" is especially interesting, and it contains some unfamiliar material. Less obviously original, but still informative and perceptive, are the passages on local government and on the politics of patronage and reward.

The subtitle of the book, *English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II*, describes its content. The title, *After the Civil Wars*, is a little more questionable. When did the civil wars end? The most common answer to this question would be 1651. A possible, but perhaps slightly eccentric, answer might be that the rebellions or military activities associated with Glencairn and Middleton in Scotland in 1653-4, Penruddock in Wiltshire in 1655, Booth in Cheshire in 1659, and Lambert and Monck in Scotland and the North of England in the winter of 1659-60, all somehow kept "the civil wars" alive through the 1650s down to the Restoration in May 1660. Miller appears to be adopting the view that the civil wars did not end until 1660. He does not ignore the events of the 1650s, but these events are described only insofar as they illustrate the arguments he advances with regard to Charles's reign from the Restoration onwards. To this extent, the title (though not the subtitle) might be thought to be a shade misleading; a quite different book, dealing with the history of the British Isles from 1651 to 1660, could be called *After the Civil Wars* without incongruity. Another mild criticism relates to the internal structure of the book and the organization of the chapters. *After the Civil Wars* is divided into two unequal parts: a "Part One" of thematic chapters on different aspects of the political institutions, attitudes and behavior of the period, and a longer "Part Two" headed "Political Division and Conflict" which describes in a sequence of chronological

chapters–1660-4, 1664-73, 1673-8, 1679-81, and 1681-5– the main events of Charles's reign. But "Part Two" also contains two analytical chapters, "The Issues: Popery and Arbitrary Government" and "The Issues: Church and Dissent," which might more naturally have fitted into "Part One"; or (better) have constituted a separate "Part Two," with the narrative chapters following as "Part Three." More serious is the absence of any conclusion, however brief, to balance the short "Prologue" at the beginning. The last chapter of the book, on 1681-5, works its way steadily through the "Tory reaction" of the early 1680s, and rounds itself off with a description of the 1685 general election in the first months of James's reign, which demonstrates how far that reaction had gone and how popular it was. Then comes an abrupt closure. Undergraduate and postgraduate students who use this book to introduce themselves in depth to this period of English history (as, it is to be hoped, they will) may find it disconcerting that the threads of the argument are not pulled together at the end.

Miller meets two other possible criticisms head-on in his "Preface" (pp. vii-viii). He made an early decision, he tells us, not to extend the scope of the book to include the reign of James VII and II from 1685 to 1688 and the Revolution of 1688-9. The period from 1660 to 1685 is, he suggests, coherent and even symmetrical. James's regime changed everything so much that it requires separate treatment. This is fair enough; it is the author's prerogative to determine the point at which the book stops, and there are precedents for finishing on 6 February 1685 with the deathbed of Charles II.[4] However, there were some indications of what was to follow under James, even when Charles was still alive. The Duke of Ormonde recognized this when, on being relieved of the government of Ireland in the autumn of 1684, he enquired what policies could possibly be in prospect that were fit for the King to order, but not for his faithful old Lord-Lieutenant to execute. A short concluding chapter might have served the joint purposes, not only of summarizing Charles's reign, but also of pointing the reader ahead, however laconically, to the implementation after 1685 of the policies indistinctly foreseen by Ormonde and their disastrous culmination in the winter of 1688-9.

The other potential criticism countered in the "Preface" is that the book deals with England (and Wales), but not with Scotland or Ireland. A study of the whole of the British Isles, says Miller, would have been longer, more complicated, and less comprehensible. This is perfectly true. However, the more recent historians of the immediately preceding era of British history, the period covering the 1630s, 1640s and 1650s, have addressed themselves to the connections between the governments of the kingdoms of the British Isles, and to the accompanying tensions set up by conflicting religious, social and cultural conditions and circumstances in the three different countries. These connections and tensions had not significantly diminished by the 1660s and 1670s. The administrations at Edinburgh and Dublin had some degree of independence, but were far from autonomous; individual politicians such as Lauderdale and Ormonde were influential at Whitehall as well as in their regional spheres of activity; events in both Scotland and Ireland could from time to time disrupt the course of affairs in London. One of the more interesting problems of Charles II's reign is not investigated by Miller; why, in 1679-81, did Ireland (in contrast to what had happened in 1641) remain relatively tranquil, when there was an acute political crisis in England, accompanied in 1679 by a rebellion, that of the Covenanters, in Scotland? Miller does not, of course, wholly overlook Scotland and Ireland. He discusses the issue of the Irish cattle bills, a source of contention in the Westminster Parliament in the 1660s, and he remarks on the significance of the Duke of York's enforced exile at Holyrood Palace at Edinburgh in the early 1680s, when the future King James VII and II briefly exercised a kind of viceregal government in Scotland. It would, admittedly, be very difficult for any historian, however industrious, to achieve an equal expertise in the history of each of England and Scotland and Ireland, or an equal familiarity with the archival resources of the respective countries.

These essentially minor reservations apart, it has to be said that Miller has written an admirable book. It is the fruit of many years of research, and it represents the mature deliberations of a distinguished professional historian on his period. One of its strengths is that it does not define the course of political activity in Charles II's reign in terms of a simple continuation of the King-Parliament, Cavalier-Roundhead divisions of the civil wars. Rather, it focuses on the conscious determination to heal these divisions, and on the processes (both in local communities and in central politics) by which this healing was eventually to be attempted, admittedly with only partial success before 1685. This is a controversial interpretation, and there is still room for historians with a revisionist agenda to challenge Miller's conclusions. But Miller has put his case so strongly, and with such authority, that any such challenge will require to be based on a comparable weight of evidence and on a comparable expertise in analysing it. This can only be beneficial for the future historiography of Restoration England.

Notes

[1]. John Miller, *Charles II* (London, 1991); *James II: A Study in Kingship* (Hove, 1978); *Popery and Politics in England 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1973); *Restoration England: The Reign of Charles II*, 2nd ed. (London, 1997); *The Glorious Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London, 1997). Miller's articles and essays are too numerous to be listed here.

[2]. C. Muldrew, "The Culture of Reconciliation and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England," *Historical Journal* 39 (1996).

[3]. T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987); T. Harris, "The Parties and the People: the Press, the Crowd and Politics 'Out-of-doors' in Restoration England," in *The Reigns of Charles II and James VII and II*, ed. L.K.J. Glassey (London, 1997); M. Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-1681* (Cambridge, 1994).

[4]. For example, K.H.D. Haley, *Politics in the Reign of Charles II* (Oxford, 1985) also excludes any consideration of James's reign and the Revolution.

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