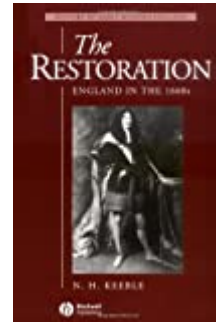


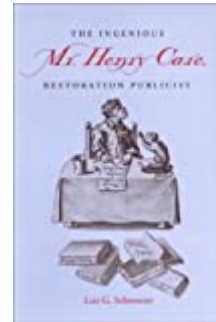
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

N. H. Keeble. *The Restoration: England in the 1660s (History of Early Modern England)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. xvi + 270 pp. \$104.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-631-19574-0; \$54.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-631-23617-7.



Lois G. Schwoerer. *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care, Restoration Publicist*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. xxvii + 349 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-6727-9.



Reviewed by Andrew Barclay (History of Parliament Trust, London)

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There is a neat symmetry between these two, rather different books. Professor Schwoerer, one of the leading political historians of the late Stuart period, has produced a fine study of a Restoration writer, while Professor Keeble, a distinguished literary scholar, has produced a textbook on the Restoration dominated by politics. In both cases, the books benefit from this blurring of the disciplinary boundaries.

Henry Care (1646-88), the subject of Schwoerer's book, is hardly a major name. Few beyond the ranks of the specialists on the print culture of the reign of Charles II would have heard of him before Schwoerer decided to write a whole monograph about him. Between 1670 and 1678 Care earned a living as a professional writer,

producing a series of minor works on subjects ranging from notable women to medical remedies, from letter-writing to the Jewish calendar. One of those books, a eulogy to the French published in 1673, implicitly supported Charles II's pro-French foreign policy. Schwoerer is inclined to accept the theory that during these years he was also the author of the newssheet *Poor Robin's Intelligence* (p. 40). Up to 1678 Care can fairly be described as no more than a hack; the real question is whether he was ever anything more than that. The Popish Plot was certainly the making of him. From 1678 to 1683 he penned the savage anti-Catholic periodical, the *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, which Schwoerer goes so far as to describe as "the most important popular history of the seventeenth century in England" (p. 44). Having established

himself as the most effective voice against the threat of popish tyranny, he then dramatically changed sides. He re-emerged in 1687 as the leading Protestant writer publishing in support of James II's policy of religious toleration. He died in 1688 before that policy had ended in failure.

Given the scholarly neglect of Care, Schwoerer's book is first and foremost a work of biographical recovery. Simply on that level, it ranks as a major achievement. One cannot imagine that Schwoerer has missed much in the archives in her search for information about her hero. The result is that his works can be placed in sharply contextualized focus. There can now be no doubt that Care was indeed one of the leading polemical writers working in London in the ten years preceding the Revolution of 1688. Schwoerer also makes large claims for Care's intellectual impact. To her, Care as an advocate of religious toleration stands comparison with John Locke, with Care anticipating most of the arguments Locke would later make famous. Aware that this would mean that Care made his most lasting contribution while working for James II, Schwoerer is quick to emphasize that Care published his final works on his own terms. She refuses to see him merely as James's journalistic lackey. He was only ever putting forward his own views.

Schwoerer's own sympathies are always clear, which does sometimes mean that she applies subtly varying standards in her judgments. For example, she claims that Care in his *Animadversions on a Late Paper* (1687) "insisted" that "James II had *always* believed in religious toleration" and that Care "must have known this to be false" (emphasis in the original, p. 203). That is not entirely fair to either man. What Care had actually said was that James's support for toleration was "no sudden or occasional Overture to serve a present turn, but the well-weigh'd and long-confirmed Result of his Royal Judgment, which as he had many years ago declared on sundry occasions." [1] Which indeed it was. James had been expressing support for religious toleration for at least as long as Care. [2] Given that Care's comment was thus true, there is no need to accept the insinuation that Care must have knowingly exaggerated James's commitment to toleration.

By the end of the book the distinct impression remains that Schwoerer is still uncomfortable with Care's support for James II, however provisional that support might have been. Yet she is too good an historian not to see that the story must be more complicated than simply Care selling out his principles for court favor. As

she points out, the more convincing charge against him ought to be that he fanned the panic surrounding the Popish Plot as a cynical ploy to deepen the political crisis and to sell more of his newssheets (p. 236). What that experience had revealed was just how far a single journalist of great skill could directly influence events. Care had discovered the power of his own pen. One does wonder whether that might not be the essential clue to understanding the final, most controversial stage of Care's career. In presenting the case for religious toleration, he was not simply towing the court line; he might have been just as concerned to influence the future course of that policy. The stronger that policy was set out in print, the more likely it was that James would stick to it. It was not as if Care was the only Protestant who calculated that it made more sense to back the new king in the hope of gaining some leverage over policy now that James had finally got his chance to prove that he could match his fine words with action.

Keeble's book is the latest addition to Blackwell's History of Early Modern England series. The series itself is something of an oddity. Each volume, written by a different historian, covers only a single decade. The logic of this remains unexplained and the concern must be that, once completed, the multi-volume series will seem fragmented, repetitious, and disjointed. The best that can be said might be that the resulting multiplicity of voices is a positive virtue. One suspects however that this series format had rather more to do with half-baked editorial thinking. Confined to its particular decade, each volume covers too short a span to serve as a general history. The assumption must be that each is intended to stand on its own. Each writer has, in effect, been commissioned to produce a book which is not quite a textbook and yet not quite a monograph either. As it happens, those volumes in the series which have already appeared have transcended the limitations of the brief. However badly flawed the concept, Blackwell has at least been commissioning top-quality scholars. The volumes on the 1670s by John Spurr and on the 1690s by Craig Rose were nothing less than excellent. [3] Keeble has, for the most part, delivered a book which can hold its own in such company.

The title sums up one ambiguity at the heart of Keeble's book. Was "the Restoration" a single event, namely, the Tolkienesque return of Charles II in the spring of 1660? Or was it a process, defined as the consolidation of royal government in the aftermath of that return? Then again, is it a general label for the whole period through to 1688, the next convenient political upheaval? Keeble

implicitly adopts the second of those definitions, even though few historians will think that the process of consolidation neatly coincided with the first ten years of Charles II's reign. The more obvious terminal date would have been 1667. That was the choice preferred by Ronald Hutton in the book which most closely resembles Keeble's.[4] Indeed, Keeble effectively does so as well, as the political narrative more or less peters out at that point. This underlines a larger imbalance in the narrative. Keeble seems to lose interest in high politics as the book progresses. The court and parliamentary politics of the five middle years of the decade (1663-67) are dealt with in fewer than nine pages (pp. 100-108). This is one reason why Keeble cannot be considered to have superseded the more in-depth account provided by Hutton.

This is not to say that Keeble's book does not have its own strengths. As a specialist on the literature of the period, he naturally makes much use of literary sources and his attention to linguistic nuance is exemplary. (On the other hand, unlike Spurr and Rose, he uses only sources in print.) His discussion about government control of the press is particularly strong, although, unsurprisingly, not as definitive as the more detailed chapter on the subject in Schwoerer's book. Sections on Milton and Bunyan, on "porno-politics," and on gender show him at his best. It should also go without saying that Richard Baxter is a

recurrent presence. While this is not a book presenting any major reinterpretation of its decade, it does serve to remind one why the "cultural turn" has had so much to offer to the historians of late-Stuart Britain.

Henry Care once claimed that criticism was irrelevant so long as the critics bought the book. On that score, Schwoerer and Keeble have little to fear. Anyone with an interest in late Stuart Britain will want to have copies of both these books.

Notes

[1]. H[enry] C[are], *Animadversions on A Late Paper* (1687), p. 4.

[2]. *Calendar of State Papers Venetian 1673-5*, pp. 316-317, 324, 327, 330-331, 334, 357-359, 390-391, 401; Historical Manuscript Commission, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland preserved at Welbeck Abbey* 3 (London: HMSO, 1891-1931), p. 348.

[3]. John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: "This Masquerading Age"* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

[4]. Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

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