Introduction
Reappraising Early Modern Radicals and Radicalisms

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'The errours of Definitions multiply themselves, according as the reckoning proceeds; and lead men into absurdities, which at last they see, but cannot avoyd, without reckoning anew from the beginning; in which lyes the foundation of their errours'

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), p. 15

The Meaning of Words and the Problem of Anachronism

Radical was originally a word relating to a root or roots which, by the early modern period, was used particularly in philosophy, astrology and philology. Hence radical moisture ('humidum radicale') was understood to be the 'natural moysture' or 'fundamental juyce of the body, whereby the natural heat is nourished and preserved, as the flame in a Lamp is preserved by oyle'. In astrology a radical question was one put forward when 'the Lord of the ascendent, and Lord of the hour are of one nature and triplicitie'. Similarly, philologists divided the letters that made up Hebrew words into root and functional letters, the radical or radix being the essential and permanent part of the word form. By extension, radical also signified origin and hence fundamental qualities inherent in the nature or essence of a person or thing.[1] As Conal Condren has observed, however, radical only became a political term associated with thorough or far-reaching political and social reform towards the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, it was apparently not until autumn 1819 – shortly before Lord Byron thought radical might mean uprooting – that 'radicalism' was coined by Jeremy Bentham. Nor was it a univocal word for within a decade radicalism meant not only the political views characteristic of radicals but thoroughness of method as well. Condren's point was that historians aim to know the past as it really was, whereas anachronism manifestly 'specifies the past as it really wasn't'. Accordingly, he stressed that 'we

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[1] *Oxford English Dictionary*; I. Lancashire (ed.), *LEME: Lexicons of Early Modern English*, http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/.

need to be particularly fastidious about our interpretive vocabulary'.[2] Jonathan Clark goes further, regarding radicalism as an early nineteenth-century neologism applicable to 'a fusion of universal suffrage, Ricardian economics and programmatic atheism'.[3] As Glen Burgess notes in a recent debate on radicalism and the English Revolution, the work of both Condren and Clark may be characterised as a sceptical or nominalist approach: radicalism did not exist until it was named.[4]

This is not something we agree with. If we remove anachronisms from our discourses we should be consistent – though to be fair to Condren he seems primarily and almost invariably concerned with purging the language historians use to explain early modern politics.[5] By this reasoning, if one were to write about the world depicted in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, using words that came into the English language after 1400 would be out of the question. Likewise, in discussing seventeenth-century England we could not speak of 'angelology' (unrecorded before 1753), 'anti-Semitism' (unrecorded before 1882), a 'homosexual' (unrecorded before 1892), a 'Neoplatonist' (unrecorded before 1837), 'numerology' (unrecorded before 1907), a 'pantheist' (unrecorded before 1705), a 'vegetarian' (unrecorded before 1839) or, significantly, the 'English Revolution' (popularised during the 1820s).[6] The period's neologisms such as Milton's 'pandemonium' would only complicate matters. It seems that in their desire to expurgate anachronism from our texts nominalists would have us ignore the lesson of Jorge Luis Borges's short story 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*': we cannot become early moderns bereft of hindsight; living imitations of our subjects, capable of replicating their language and forgetting all that we know about the exceedingly complex events that followed their deaths. Yet that is not to say, as Condren highlighted with his caveat against bad practice, that radical and its –ism(s) are not problematic terms.

Whatever else may be said about the linguistic turn, the merits and deficiencies of post-structuralism, and its impact on historical and literary studies, it is an

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[2] Jeremy Bentham, 'Radical Reform Bill' and 'Radicalism not dangerous', in J. Bowring (ed.), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (11 vols, Edinburgh, 1838–43), 3, pp. 559, 560, 599; C. Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates in early modern political thought: a case of Sandwich Islands syndrome', *History of Political Thought*, 10 (1989): pp. 526–33; C. Condren, *The Politics of Language in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 155–8.

[3] J.C.D. Clark, 'Religion and the origins of radicalism in nineteenth-century Britain', in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 241.

[4] Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 2; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 8–9; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', p. 63.

[5] C. Condren, 'Afterword: Radicalism Revisited', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 311–13; cf. J. Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger. Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London and New York, 2002), pp. 22–4.

[6] *OED*.

inescapable conclusion that words are signifiers and what they signify can only be interpreted in relation to both the signified and other signifiers. Accordingly, words depend upon each other to provide meaning – whether they are present or missing in texts. As context shifts so can the sense of a word. Furthermore, because the meaning of certain English words has changed over time, something that as historians and literary scholars we are (or should be) attuned to, it is worth comparing the present political, social, philosophical and cultural meaning of radical with contemporary alternatives.

In an exploration of late Stuart radicals and their manifestos, Richard Greaves repeated a case – which had its trenchant critics – for the usefulness of the anachronistic term radical in discussing various groups of an otherwise disparate nature (Baptists, Covenanters, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, rebels and republicans). Nor, as he pointed out, was 'the contemporary lexicon ... lacking in words and phrases' to portray those in opposition to the post-Restoration Stuart regimes or the Church of England. Thus terms with unmistakable pejorative connotations were bandied about: the disaffected, ill-affected and fanatics; factious, seditious, restless and rebellious kind of people; and disloyal dissenters, nonconformists and sectaries.[7] The same holds true for the English Revolution and earlier still in the seventeenth century. Hence there was a profusion of generally derogatory and often new words applied to both religious communities and political movements – even when these groups lacked an identifiable and cohesive leadership capable of imposing internal discipline and adherence to a unified set of agreed principles. To take one set of examples, there were those distinguished by their real or attributed activities: Diggers, Dippers, Levellers, Quakers, Ranters and Seekers. Diggers were described as 'new fangled', 'distracted, crack brained', 'disorderly and tumultuous sort of people'.[8] Dippers or Anabaptists were blasphemous, confused, confuted or erring in doctrine. Levellers were accused of seeking to abolish social distinctions and private ownership of property, of levelling men's estates and introducing anarchy. They were also defamed as atheists, devils, mutineers, rebels and villains. Quakers were mocked for trembling before the secular authority of magistrates, disparaging accounts of their assemblies conveying chaotic scenes of ecstatic posturing attributed to either diabolic pacts or epilepsy. Ranters – those who declaimed vehemently – were associated with revelling, roaring, drinking, whoring, swearing and all manner of wickedness. And Seekers or Expecters were likened to libertines who had scandalously defected from the bosom of the Church.

None of this is to suggest that these pejorative contemporary words, commonly employed in a polemical context, must necessarily be synonymous with what we now call radicalism. After all, anti-Catholic stereotypes and pamphlets targeting

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[7]   R.L. Greaves, '"That Kind of People": Late Stuart Radicals and their Manifestoes, a Functional Approach', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 87–94.

[8]   A. Hessayon, 'Restoring the Garden of Eden in England's Green and Pleasant Land: The Diggers and the Fruits of the Earth', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 2, no. 2 (2008): p. 2.

bishops, barbarous, bloodthirsty, cruel and cussing Cavaliers, as well as evil counsellors remind us of the ubiquity of propaganda. It does, however, alert us to the fact that just because certain signifiers did not exist during the seventeenth century it does not necessarily follow that the phenomena were also absent.[9] Indeed, effacing the term radical from our analyses does not seem a practicable solution. In its absence there would be silence, while finding a universally agreed substitute would be equally problematic. Moreover, for more than a century – at least since George Gooch's pioneering *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1898) – and especially since the 1930s, radical and radicalism have been used with ever increasing regularity to ascribe particular characteristics to individuals and the ideas they espoused during our period.[10] That is long enough for them to have become part of the discourse even if the various and occasionally conflicting ways in which scholars have used the words to talk about the past have yet to be fully documented. And it is a point conceded by Burgess who acknowledges, despite his nominalist leanings, that 'doing without the category of radicalism' is a forlorn hope.[11]

As for how we should understand radical and radicalism, we would do well both to provide a brief history of usage (which has not been attempted before), and to take Hobbes's advice (cited above) that anyone aspiring to true knowledge must examine the definitions of their predecessors – and if necessary either correct or at least critique them. Thus to begin with the first issue of a journal called *The Radical* (1831), a Radical must prescribe not a partial or moderate dose of political medicine but radical treatment for the ills afflicting the body politic:

> which will go to the *radix*, or root of the national disease. He will physic, purge, bleed, – he will ERADICATE, – he will be a RADICAL.

This resonates with John Stuart Mill's 1836 depiction of Philosophic Radicalism as:

> A radicalism ... which is only to be called radicalism inasmuch as it does not palter nor compromise with evils, but cuts at their roots.[12]

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[9]   Cf. C. Hill, *The Experience of Defeat. Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1984), p. 26; N. McDowell, 'Writing the Literary and Cultural History of Radicalism in the English Revolution', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds) *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/mcdowell.html; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 13–14.

[10]   G. Gooch, *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 123–38, 150, 157.

[11]   Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 4; cf. T. Cooper, 'Reassessing the Radicals', *HJ*, 50 (2007): pp. 247–52.

[12]   Quoted in Clark, 'Religion and origins of radicalism', p. 267; John Stuart Mill, quoted in F. Rosen, 'Jeremy Bentham's Radicalism', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds),

In the same vein, Karl Marx maintained that 'to be radical is to grasp the root of the matter', though according to Marx, for man, that radix was man himself.[13] The author and politician John Mackinnon Robertson likewise declared that 'radicalism means going to the *root* of things in political action', to the real causes of social unrest.[14] While these etymologically faithful definitions remained fairly constant there was also a moderating impulse, the expectation that radicalism's objective was not extirpation, but pruning and renewal:

> Radicalism is not tearing things up by the roots, but getting down to the roots of things and planting institutions anew on just principles.[15]

Added to this was the belief that nineteenth-century English political Radicals were 'pioneers of progress ... alive to the necessities of the future'.[16] This led to what Condren has rightly – at least in an early modern context – recognised as a 'whole penumbra of unstable associations' of the term radical with 'democratic, laudable, edifying, progressive and worthy'.[17]

Turning to exponents from other disciplines, since they tended to precede historians in their theorising about rather than application of the term, the American philosopher Horace Kallen defined radicalism in the 1930s as:

> a distinct philosophy and program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated, and its replacement by an art, a faith, a science or a society logically demonstrated as true and good and beautiful and just.[18]

Drawing on Max Weber's work, the sociologist Egon Bittner updated this view, explaining that radicalism's function was to transform a normal, common-sense outlook into a radical, doctrinaire attitude that underpinned conduct. Furthermore, in Bittner's opinion, ensuring an individual's ideological purity and continued membership in an organised radical movement was achieved by the group's

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English Radicalism, p. 218.

[13]   Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844), introduction <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>; N. Rotenstreich, 'On Radicalism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 4 (1974): pp. 171, 172–5.

[14]   J.M. Robertson, *Practical Radicalism* (London, 1892), p. 1.

[15]   P. Brooks, quoted in J.E. Shea, 'Radicalism and Reform', *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, 3 (1906): p. 167.

[16]   The Functions of Radicalism (London, 1879), p. 5; cf. C. Kent, *The English Radicals, an Historical Sketch* (London, 1899), p. 4.

[17]   Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 144, 149; cf. Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', p. 64.

[18]   H. Kallen, 'Radicalism', in E. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (15 vols, New York, 1930–34),13, pp. 51–4.

charismatic leadership employing a combination of mystification, gratification, discipline, isolation, deception and manipulation.[19] More recently, radicalism has been understood variously as 'a system of thought that seeks to tear down old institutions and reconstruct new ones', and as 'any stance, practical, intellectual, or both, that goes to the root of existing practices, beliefs, or values'. In addition, 'since the term is relative, any fundamental criticism of or assault on existing practices can be reasonably termed radical'. Indeed:

> Radicalism is, like conservatism, a relationship term not a content term, and its particular character is, therefore, dependent on the historical circumstances in which it is used.[20]

The sociologist Dennis Wrong has also emphasised the connection between radicalism and historical circumstances, arguing that it 'lacks any specific substantive content' and is therefore more indicative of disposition: an 'extreme, absolute, uncompromising commitment'. Given its 'abstract and formal nature' as well as its changeable ideological characteristics that are inextricably bound up with the passage of major historical events, the meaning of radicalism is 'likely always to be relative and context-bound'.[21]

These philosophical and sociological perspectives offer an interesting and under-utilised sidelight on comparable concerns in the field of early modern studies. For sixteenth-century Europe the most important contribution was George Huntston Williams's distinction, developed in the late 1950s, between the 'Magisterial Reformation' and a 'Radical Reformation'. The latter was 'a loosely interrelated congeries of reformations and restitutions' which grouped together the various types of Anabaptists, Spiritualists and Evangelical Rationalists all of whom, despite their many differences, were nonetheless united by their desire to cut back to the root of Christian faith and free 'church and creed of what they regarded as the suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition and magisterial prerogative'. Williams's etymologically precise construction had grown out of an earlier terminology favoured by Roland Bainton that discerned a 'left wing of the Reformation', and Ernst Troeltsch's older still application of sociology to the

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[19]   E. Bittner, 'Radicalism and the Organization of Radical Movements', *American Sociological Review*, 28 (1963): pp. 928–40; E. Bittner, 'Radicalism', in D. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (17 vols, New York, 1968), 13, pp. 294–300.

[20]   D. Anthony, *Rethinking Radicalism* (Victoria, Canada, 2003), p. 17; R. Barker, 'Radicalism', in N. Smelser and P. Bates (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (26 vols, Amsterdam and Oxford, 2001), pp. 12723–5.

[21]   D.H. Wrong, 'radicalism', in W. Outhwaite (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2002), Blackwell Reference Online, <http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631221647_chunk_g978063122164721_ss1-3>

study of Christian thought that identified two main patterns – the Church-type and the Sect-type.[22] His critics, however, maintained that the supposed unifying forces underpinning this vision of an 'extremely capacious' Radical Reformation were undercut by sectarian subdivisions and inconsistencies, by heterogeneity as well as by a 'highly fissiparous tendency'.[23] Then during the mid-1980s Adolf Laube, an East German Marxist historian who, in common with his compatriots, sought to legitimate the German Democratic Republic by emphasising bourgeois and popular revolutionary antecedents together with the wider European significance of events in German lands (the *Reich*) between the beginning of the Reformation and the German Peasants' War, questioned the appropriateness of the term radical to encompass disparate sixteenth-century phenomena, arguing that it referred not so much 'to a substantive content as to an adjectival quality'. He also noted that radical was a 'relative term', subject during revolutionary periods to 'rapid change': what was radical at one instance could quickly become the norm and hence moderated.[24] Agreeing with Laube that the meaning of radical is 'always defined by circumstances at a given time', that 'what is radical at one time may cease to be so a short time later', Hans Hillerbrand defined radical reformers during the Reformation as 'only those who undertook to alter the existing societal order on the basis of religion'. Having outlined common denominators as well as essential points of divergence, Hillerbrand concluded that a Radical – or as he preferred, 'alternate' – Reformation occurred because of 'a general yearning for change and a desire for renewal'.[25] Yet, despite all these objections and qualifications, the Radical Reformation remains part of the vocabulary of early modern historians even though it has since undergone an evolution from its basis in Church history and concomitant theological and denominational concerns to accommodate growing historical awareness of the social and cultural impact of religion.[26]

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[22]   G. Williams and A. Mergal (eds), *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation* (London, 1957), pp. 19–22, 27–8; G.H. Williams, 'Studies in the Radical Reformation (1517–1618): A Bibliographical survey of research since 1939', *CH*, 27 (1958): pp. 46–7; G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. xxix–xxx, 1, 7, 9–10; cf. R.H. Bainton, 'The Left Wing of the Reformation', *Journal of Religion*, 21 (1941): pp. 124–34.

[23]   A.G. Dickens, review of *The Radical Reformation*, in *P&P*, 27 (1964): p. 123.

[24]   P. Peachey, 'Marxist Historiography of the Radical Reformation: Causality or Covariation?', *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, 1 (1970): pp. 1–16; A. Laube, 'Radicalism as a Research Problem in the History of the Early Reformation', in H. Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives*, special issue of *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, 9 (Kirksville, MO, 1988): pp. 10–11, 15; cf. Williams, *Radical Reformation*, pp. 1280 n. 69, 1303; Clark, 'Religion and origins of radicalism', pp. 241–2.

[25]   H. Hillerbrand, 'Radicalism in the Early Reformation: Varieties of Reformation in Church and Society', in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies*, pp. 28–30, 40–41.

[26]   J. Roth, 'Recent Currents in the Historiography of the Radical Reformation', *CH*, 71 (2002): pp. 523–35.

Regarding the extensive literature on seventeenth-century England, it is noteworthy that there are parallels with trends in Reformation historiography. Here too a typology with unmistakable modern-day political connotations was developed and employed in conjunction with the term radical. This was the anachronistic ascription of a centre with left and right wings to Protestantism in general and Puritanism in particular. Used since at least 1900, but not fashionable until the later 1930s, the categories were most fully elaborated by A.S.P. Woodhouse in his introduction to the Putney and Whitehall debates, supplemented with other important contemporary texts, entitled *Puritanism and Liberty* (1938). On the Right, where the Puritan Church-type was dominant, were the Presbyterians; the composite party of the Centre were the Independents; while the Parties of the Left, where the Puritan sect-type prevailed, consisted of the Levellers – the 'one genuinely democratic party' of the 'Puritan revolution' – together with a 'heterogeneous company' of religious and political sectaries that included the millenarian Fifth Monarchists and the Diggers.[27] Remaining in vogue, albeit with occasional modifications, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, even during part of the 1960s, left-wing puritanism sometimes became interchangeable as a category with radical sectarianism. Hence L.J. Trinterud claimed that:

> The radical left-wing Puritan groups, the Fifth Monarchy men, the Levellers, the Diggers, the Baptists, and the other left-wing religious and political groups took the road of radical revolution through the destruction of all old authorities, and a return to the state of nature.[28]

Thereafter, however, this typology largely fell out favour except in the eyes of a handful of Marxist historians (to whom we shall return) and several students of Puritanism and Quakerism.

In light of this it is remarkable how few scholars who have regularly used the terms radical and radicalism in a seventeenth-century English context have provided us with a definition – with the notable exception, that is, of some participants in a heated debate about the appropriateness of certain labels to describe political factions in the Long Parliament. Whether this was simply because the majority assumed their readers knew what they meant, and therefore felt it unnecessary, is difficult to determine. Taking Christopher Hill first (in chronological order), he identified as radicals:

> those who rejected any state church: both separatist sectaries, who opposed a national church on religious principles, and others – Levellers, Diggers, Fifth

[27]   A.S.P. Woodhouse, 'Puritanism and Democracy', *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 4 (1938): pp. 4, 5, 6, 7, 13; A.S.P. Woodhouse (ed.), *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647–49) from the Clarke Manuscripts* (1938; 3rd edn, London, 1992), pp. [15–18, 20, 29, 30, 31, 36–9, 75, 81, 83].

[28]   L.J. Trinterud, 'The origins of Puritanism', *CH*, 20 (1951), p. 52.

Monarchists, Ranters, etc. – whose opposition was part of a more general political, social and economic programme.[29]

By contrast, J.C. Davis initially preferred a broad, vague definition of radicalism in keeping with his suggested approach for evaluating it – 'the attempt, in theory or practice, to subvert the status quo and replace it, rather than simply to improve or amend it'.[30] Again, drawing on the word's original relationship with roots and fundamental qualities, the editors of the *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* considered radicals to be:

> those who sought fundamental change by striking at the very root of contemporary assumptions and institutions, often in order to revert to what they judged to be the proper historic roots.

They too grasped the episodic nature of radicalism and its connection with 'changing circumstances', remarking that 'the essence of radicalism is indeed situational, a seizure of the possibilities of the moment for substantive change'.[31] A little later Frances Dow equated radicals with those who 'sought to transform the political and social order' during the English Civil War. Linking radicalism with social class, she distinguished between assorted types of radicals including certain Parliamentarians, classical republicans, Levellers, Diggers and religious radicals (Particular and General Baptists, Quakers, Ranters, Seekers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchists, assorted separatists).[32] More specifically, for J.F. McGregor and Barry Reay radical religion during the English Revolution consisted of 'religious movements and ideas which were fundamentally in conflict with official, institutionalized, established religion and theology'.[33] Taking this further Nigel Smith, following Geoffrey Nuttall's seminal *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1946), singled out three distinguishing features of English 'radical religion' evident to different degrees and in a variety of ways: the 'rejection of

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[29]   C. Hill, 'The Radical Critics of Oxford and Cambridge in the 1650s', in C. Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1974), p. 132; cf. C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1994), pp. 196–7.

[30]   J.C. Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660', *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): p. 203.

[31]   R. Greaves and R. Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (3 vols, Brighton, 1982–84), 1, pp. viii, x; cf. J.C. Davis, 'Radical Lives', *Political Science*, 37 (1985): pp. 166–72.

[32]   F.D. Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1985), p. 1, 57.

[33]   B. Reay and J.F. McGregor, 'Preface', in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. v.

idolatrous "externals"'; 'the assertion that the believer is made perfect through the freely given grace of God'; the 'feeling that the gift of the Holy Spirit ... could fall upon any individual'.[34]

Gerald Aylmer also gave us, in an address on the 'varieties of radicalism', a pragmatic and still widely quoted definition of radical when applied to mid-seventeenth-century England:

> anyone advocating changes in state, church or society which would have gone beyond the official programme of the mainstream puritan-parliamentarians in the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines.[35]

For the post-Restoration period Richard Greaves justified his 'judicious use of anachronistic terms' distinguishing, at least in theory, between a radical and a reformer: 'a radical aims at nothing less than the replacement of the status quo by something new, whereas a reformer seeks its betterment'. All the same, Greaves acknowledged that the radicals' 'greatest weakness' was their inability to formulate a unified and 'commonly accepted vision of what the new order would be'. Consequently, British radicals in the early 1660s were effectively 'a dissident "community" loosely held together by common animosities'.[36] Likewise Gary de Krey preferred the 'somewhat anachronistic and historicist' designation radical to the 'antiquarian danger of transposing seventeenth-century terminology like "fanatic" or "Oliverian" into contemporary analytical categories'. Concentrating on the 'exceptional political community' of London, he suggested that historians of seventeenth-century political ideas needed to 'recognize the existence of a variety of radicalisms'.[37] De Krey subsequently differentiated between the radical ideology, activities and civic experiences of London dissenters – who in upholding freedom of conscience sought to undermine the persecuting Restoration State – and republican principles.[38] Elsewhere he reiterated the point, proposing that London dissenters

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[34]   N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed. Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989), p. 2.

[35]   G.E. Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities in mid Seventeenth-Century England. III. Varieties of Radicalism', *TRHS*, 5th series, 37 (1988): p. 1.

[36]   R. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (New York, 1986), pp. 4–6; T. Harris, 'What's New about the Restoration?', *Albion*, 29 (1997): pp. 195–7.

[37]   G.S. de Krey, 'The London Whigs and the Exclusion Crisis reconsidered', in A.L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. Rosenheim (eds), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English history in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 458, 461, 481; cf. G.S. de Krey, 'Political Radicalism in London after the Glorious Revolution', *Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983): p. 590.

[38]   G.S. de Krey, 'The First Restoration Crisis: Conscience and Coercion in London, 1667–73', *Albion*, 25 (1993): pp. 566–7, 571, 578–80; G.S. de Krey, 'Party Lines: A Reply', *Albion*, 25 (1993): pp. 642–3.

and Whigs were radical because intellectually they 'got to the roots' in a distinctive, innovative and historically significant manner of 'what was at stake in the erection of a persecuting state'. Accordingly, de Krey defined political radicals as:

> those who reject, challenge, or undermine the established political norms or conventions of their day, the intellectual rationales that legitimate those norms or conventions, and the structures of authority that maintain them.[39]

A decade ago Jonathan Scott declared that radicalism was 'the demand for fundamental change'. English radicalism, he suggested, 'came to question customary religious, social, legal, economic and political arrangements'. Such a 'large-scale demand for change' in a pre-modern, traditional society was extraordinary.[40] For Scott, the overarching category here was 'unity-in-variety', the 'concerns the radicals held in common' over time. It was these 'unities within the variety of civil war radicalism', he insisted, that would enable us to apprehend it 'as a single process rather than as a series of discrete groups'. Connections, fluidity and context were keys to understanding the shape of this process. What is more, Scott discerned three phases of the English radical process (complementing his three phases of seventeenth-century England's troubles); Civil War radicalism; English republicanism; and Restoration radicalism.[41] Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith also privileged homogeneity over heterogeneity, stressing the 'common conditions and characteristics' of English history between 1640 and 1832 that gave consistency to the various political and religious visions enunciating 'extreme change' and alternative lifestyles.[42] Finally, in the interests of making 'the past more intelligible to the present', not to mention keeping the attention of a general audience, Philip Baker too believes we should continue using the word 'radicalism' in order to convey:

> the notion of axiomatic political, constitutional, religious, social, economic or cultural change ... encompass[ing] a number of ideologies that challenged existing arrangements for different reasons and ends.

While this exceedingly broad definition allows Baker to argue that English Civil War radicalism was not 'a single process with a specific ideological ambition'

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[39] G.S. de Krey, 'Radicals, reformers, and republicans: academic language and political discourse in Restoration London', in A. Houston and S. Pincus (eds), *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 71–80.

[40] J. Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 35, 229, 231, 233.

[41] Scott, *England's Troubles*, pp. 6, 37–8, 230, 239–42.

[42] T. Morton and N. Smith, 'Introduction', in T. Morton and N. Smith (eds), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650–1830. From Revolution to Revolution* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–2.

but something variegated, complex and in one strand unmistakably secular, it is nonetheless vulnerable to criticism: namely that, in the attempt to facilitate comprehension, a category has been constructed with elastic bounds, one that can be expanded or shrunk according to ever-changing historical circumstances. Indeed, Baker's focus on a 'surprisingly wide spectrum of individuals' who 'fundamentally challenged contemporary arrangements' leaves open the wider question not just of who determines what was fundamental – past actors or present historians – but how one can differentiate between degrees of change; between radicals and reformers; between radicals, moderates and conservatives?[43]

Much of this debate on the validity of radical and radicalisms as descriptors and their continued usage as explanatory categories therefore hinges on several important issues: our ability to accurately comprehend and reconstruct the reality of a past in flux; precise selection of ideologically neutral words to convey the meaning of that past to present-day audiences; and nuances. The strong dependency of radicalism on context has been correctly highlighted by, among others, Wrong, Laube, Hillerbrand, Scott and Burgess. Context is naturally also central to any discussion that seeks to distinguish between, at one extreme, the demand for fundamental, revolutionary transformation and, at the other, gradual, evolutionary change. Yet, contrary to Davis and Greaves, who have both at times insisted on a sharp distinction between radicalism and reform, we think it more helpful to characterise that relationship as flexible and interwoven rather than static and oppositional.[44] Neither term, for example, entirely captures either the disposition or the full agenda of all participants at every moment during the English Revolution.[45] Again, any juxtaposition of radical with moderate, or conservative, must be determined entirely by context, rendering it a situational or relationship term rather than something indicative of content.[46] Indeed, making radicalism synonymous with extremism, moderation with restraint, and conservatism with preservation can at times be unnecessarily restrictive (radicalism's relationship with conservation and innovation will be discussed shortly).[47] Otherwise what are we to make of seemingly oxymoronic yet suggestive couplings such as

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[43]   P. Baker, 'Rhetoric, Reality and the Varieties of Civil War Radicalism', in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War. Conflicts and Contexts, 1640–49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 202–5, 216, 223–4.

[44]   Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', pp. 203–04; Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil*, p. 5; cf. Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 152.

[45]   Cf. Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', pp. 7, 15, 22–4.

[46]   Cf. Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. viii; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', pp. 529, 530, 532, 535–6, 541; Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 141, 147, 152, 155–6, 159–60, 162; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 63, 69–70, 73.

[47]   Cf. Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', p. 537; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 149; Condren, 'Afterword', pp. 314, 317.

Catholic radicals,[48] Royalist radicals,[49] and so-called radical conservatives like the Clubmen?[50] These unusual conjunctions alert us to the interpretative possibilities of recasting radical and radicalism as fluid, situational categories that contravene conventional boundaries in complex ways.

Given these difficulties, not least because the meanings of words are supplied rather than inherent, it might be best therefore to eschew definitions of radical and radicalism. To appropriate a famous quotation, we may not be able to define early modern English radicalism, but we know it when we see it. In sum, what radical and radicalism give us with one hand – comprehensibility, coherence, and homogeneity – they take away with the other – anachronism, inconsistency, and heterogeneity. We turn now to how scholars have approached writing about people considered to be radicals or individuals who were radicalised at moments in their lives and, given its multifarious, context-specific manifestations, what might better be thought of as radicalisms rather than radicalism.

Writing Radicalisms

It is a commonplace that the past is at the mercy of the present and that in every generation there are those who deliberately distort aspects of it to reflect a vision of their own or another's making. Most historical writing about radicalism in early modern England, and particularly during the English Revolution (with which this section is mainly concerned), can be considered fabrication in the sense of both manufacture and invention. There have been several important studies documenting this process,[51] and it exemplifies what Burgess has called a substantive approach: there was 'a continuous radical tradition of definable identity'.[52] All the same, this was a malleable tradition and consequently one readily appropriated for political purposes. Indeed, although the nineteenth century witnessed the piecemeal

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[48] M. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England. Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 159.

[49] C. Hill, 'Two radical royalists', in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume One. Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1985), p. 275; B. Capp, 'The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 184.

[50] Dow, *Radicalism in English Revolution*, p. 80; J. Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces. The People of England and the Tragedies of War 1630–1648* (2nd edn, London and New York, 1999), pp. 122, 136, 198, 204.

[51] R.C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution: Revisited* (1977; 3rd edn, Manchester, 1998); A. MacLachlan, *The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England. An Essay on the Fabrication of Seventeenth-Century History* (Basingstoke, 1996); *M. Caricchio, Popolo e Rivoluzione? La storiografia e i movimenti radicali della Rivoluzione inglese* (Milan, 2005).

[52] Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 2.

rediscovery or recovery of what is now generally called English radicalism, that process was predominantly associated with two broad historiographic currents. One was bourgeois and liberal, essentially concerned with tracing the growth of democratic and republican ideas in response to acute social and economic tensions as well as drawing parallels between the English and French Revolutions. The other was Socialist and Marxist, likewise emphasising secular class struggle but this time under the shadow of capitalism. These trends dominated the field for the first seventy or so years of the twentieth century. Yet both lacked the ability to effectively integrate denominational history – traditions of religious dissent – within their conception of radicalism.[53]

While the former tendency was promoted during the first half of the twentieth century by certain North American-based scholars concerned with the development of individual liberties and constitutional restraints on the authoritarian exercise of power, as well as the intellectual antecedents of the American Revolution, the latter became particularly associated with, among others, Protestant nonconformists, Jewish-born intellectuals, members of the Fabian Society and Communists. For it was one-time English members of the Communist Party and the briefly influential Historians' Group of the Communist Party such as Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, A.L. Morton and E.P. Thompson who were instrumental in creating a 'progressive rationalist tradition' of Marxist history that was severely critical of 'non-Marxist history and its reactionary implications'. Noted for its 'moral exhortation', their passionately debated agenda had an urgent tone because, as Hill remarked, 'History plays an important part in the battle of ideas today'. Furthermore, Hill underlined the political value of a Marxist approach, believing that it alone could 'restore to the English people part of their heritage of which they have been robbed'.[54] Hence, while Morton penned *A People's History of England* (1938), Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and Hilton *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (1973), Hill for his part turned from a doctrinaire Soviet-style class conflict explanation of a supposed 'English bourgeois revolution' during the mid-seventeenth century to a readjusted conception of Marxism that gave greater attention to 'History from below': *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English*

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[53]   A. Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/hessayon2_radical. html>.

[54]   E. Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party', in M. Cornforth (ed.), *Rebels and Their Causes. Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton* (London, 1978), pp. 21–47; R. Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880–1980: Part One', *New Left Review*, 120 (1980): pp. 26–8, 39–42, 51–5, 73–5; H. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 8–22, 99–130; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 79–87, 101–21.

Revolution (1972).[55] The fruit of this largely co-operative venture was what can be termed the canonical English radical tradition: a single, continuous narrative spanning from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to the Chartists and the modern working-class movement.[56] Yet it appears that these histories also had another, self-serving, purpose as Burgess has most recently observed:

> The core historical project lay in the relationship of present to past embedded in the recovering of a radical or revolutionary heritage that could make communism not an alien, foreign and unpatriotic implant into the green and pleasant lands of the sceptred isle but a suppressed, native tradition.[57]

Since this canonical English radical tradition was, as several British Marxist historians believed, a consequence of the class struggles that ensued during the transition from feudalism to a developed form of capitalism, it is instructive to remind ourselves with which social classes particular radical groups were identified – regardless of whether they exhibited class-consciousness in the sense that they were aware of 'shared interests in the process of struggling against common enemies'.[58] According to John Lilburne, Leveller support was drawn not from the dregs of English society but 'the *hobnails*, *clouted shooes*, *the private souldiers*, *the leather and woollen Aprons*, *and the laborious and industrious people*'.[59] In Hill's earliest formulation, therefore, the Levellers were the petty bourgeoisie's mouthpiece, although they 'never represented a sufficiently homogeneous class to be able to achieve their aims'. The most radical and egalitarian 'opponents of the feudal social order', however, were the Diggers who represented a 'small if growing class' that was nonetheless weakened by the pacifism preached by their leaders.[60] In a subsequent essay on 'The Norman Yoke', the Levellers were depicted as the 'most advanced democratic group' on the European political stage, 'appealing to the small proprietors in town and countryside' against the survivals

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[55] C. Hill, 'Soviet Interpretations of the English Interregnum', *Economic History Review*, 8 (1938): pp. 159–67; C. Hill, *The English Revolution 1640. An Essay* (1940; 3rd edn, 1955; reprinted, London, 1979); Richardson, *Debate on the English Revolution*, pp. 112–27, 173–5; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 46–7, 55–63.

[56] C. Hill, 'From Lollards to Levellers', in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume Two. Religion and politics in 17th century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 89–116; A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London, 1970), p. 15.

[57] Burgess, 'Introduction', p. 4; cf. Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians', pp. 51, 55; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 39–40.

[58] Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 126, 232–41.

[59] John Lilburne, *The Upright Mans Vindication* (1653), p. 15.

[60] Hill, *English Revolution 1640*, pp. 49–52; cf. Hill, 'Soviet Interpretations', p. 162.

of feudalism that underpinned their bondage to the ruling class.[61] Class hostility and the propertied class's 'thinly concealed' contempt for the 'rude', 'unruly' and 'giddy-headed' multitude' – that 'rascal company' of the 'meaner sort of people' and masterless men – was the focus of another essay on 'The Many-Headed Monster' and the 'fear of lower-class revolt'.[62] This supposed 'class antagonism', together with a long-standing tradition of 'plebeian anti-clericalism and irreligion', subsequently provided the backdrop for Hill's delineation of a popular revolt that threatened the propertied in *The World Turned Upside Down*.[63] Here, on the 'left wing of radical Puritanism', the Levellers, following Soviet theory, comprised both a 'moderate, constitutional wing' that upheld existing property relationships, and 'a more radical wing in the Army and among the London populace' that defended poor commoners against the rich. Further along the continuum was the untainted communism of the Diggers, seemingly 'only the visible tip of the iceberg of True Levellerism', with Gerrard Winstanley representing the interests of 'those whom the "constitutional" Levellers would have disfranchised – servants, labourers, paupers, the economically unfree'. Antinomianism was regarded as 'Calvinism's lower-class alter ego', Ranter swearing an act of defiance against God and 'Puritan middle class standards', while prophecy was reduced to an attention-seeking tactic by lower-class radicals.[64] In the same vein, Morton had portrayed the 'aggressive radicalism' of the Ranters – which 'formed the extreme left wing of the sects' – as a primarily urban movement appealing to the 'defeated and declassed', drawing support from London's 'impoverished artisans and labourers' as well as 'wage earners and small producers' in numerous towns.[65] So, too, Hill's former pupil Brian Manning, although never a member of the Communist party, likewise understood the bulk of the Levellers as embodying the aspirations of the 'middle sort of people' in a fundamental conflict between 'rich' and 'poor'; as 'advocating the case of the independent small producers' (craftsmen and farmers) against the

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[61]   C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958; Harmondsworth, 1990 edn), pp. 81, 86, 88; Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 120–22.

[62]   C. Hill, 'The Many-Headed Monster', in Hill, *Change and Continuity*, pp. 183, 186, 193, 195, 196, 198, 202; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 135.

[63]   C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 19, 25, 35–6.

[64]   Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 14–16, 97, 114, 121, 138, 162, 202–3, 280, 358; cf. Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 123–6; B. Reay, 'The World Turned Upside Down: A Retrospect', in G. Eley and W. Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution: Reflections and Elaborations on the Work of Christopher Hill* (London, 1988), pp. 57, 64–6; D. Underdown, 'Puritanism, Revolution and Christopher Hill', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 336, 337–8; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 189.

[65]   Morton, *World of the Ranters*, pp. 17–18, 70, 110–12; cf. MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 71.

powerful and privileged on the one hand, and the 'poorer peasants and landless labourers' beloved of the Diggers on the other.[66]

The Marxist preoccupation with class struggle may understandably have found little support among the wider community of historians of seventeenth-century England,[67] but it did raise the associated question of the extent of radicalism's appeal.[68] Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down*, for example, tended in effect if not intent, as Peter Burke and Barry Reay noted, 'to conflate the radical with the popular'.[69] Similarly, although Aylmer accepted that 'popular and radical were not identical', he still insisted that neither were they antithetical or mutually exclusive.[70] Nor did the lack of evidence for widespread radical religious sentiments during the English Revolution prevent Reay and McGregor from claiming that they were nonetheless 'popular in the sense of articulating the hopes and grievances of those outside the ruling groups of English society'.[71] For even Hill eventually conceded that while the radical ideas of the period remained of immense historical significance, the radicals themselves – like the French and Russian revolutionaries – were a minority during the mid-seventeenth century.[72] Indeed, the entire spectrum of those identified as radicals by Hill, Morton and others never exceeded 3.85 per cent of an estimated population ranging from 5.09 to 5.28 million people between 1641 and 1661: perhaps as many as 25,000 Baptists in 1660; at most a few hundred Diggers and their adherents; probably less than 10,000 Fifth Monarchists; reportedly, though possibly exaggeratedly,

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[66] B. Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (1976; 2nd edn, London, 1991), pp. 378–80, 396; cf. Brian Manning, *1649: The Crisis of the English Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 108, 111, 115; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 140–42.

[67] Cf. G.E. Aylmer, 'Gentlemen Levellers?', *P&P*, 49 (1970): p. 121; Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', pp. 9–10; Manning, *English People*, pp. 7–47; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 8, 11; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 64–5; J.C. Davis, 'Afterword: Reassessing Radicalism in a Traditional Society: Two Questions', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 349–50, 354.

[68] MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 140.

[69] Reay, 'World Turned Upside Down', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 61–2; cf. J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), p. 192.

[70] Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', pp. 10, 20.

[71] Reay and McGregor, 'Preface', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. v.

[72] C. Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* (Madison, WI, 1980), pp. 8–9; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, pp. 15–16; Underdown, 'Puritanism, Revolution and Christopher Hill', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, p. 337; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 193; cf. Scott, *England's Troubles*, p. 35.

anything from 10,000 to 98,064 or more backers of major Leveller-orchestrated petitions; several hundred Muggletonians; a maximum of 60,000 Quakers by the early 1660s; a handful of actual Ranters; and an unknown number of republicans and other sectaries.[73] Leaving aside the obvious methodological issues of counting youthful and adult radicals – as if shifting allegiances, signing petitions, supporting political movements, membership of religious communities that had separated from the Church of England, maintaining heterodox and inflammatory beliefs, or some combination thereof at different moments during the turbulent years of rebellion in Ireland, Civil Wars in Britain, regicide and republican rule were straightforwardly indicative of self-conscious radical identities – there is also the question of geographical distribution.[74]

A number of studies – notably David Underdown's pioneering work on Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire; Mark Stoyle's research on the perceived and actual characteristics that made Cornwall's relatively isolated inhabitants distinctive; and Andy Wood's examination of miners in the 'Peak' district of north-west Derbyshire – have explored the interrelated questions of whether environment in combination with other factors such as social structure, economic activities, religious beliefs and literacy rates shaped regional cultures and identities, and whether ecology was therefore a significant determinant of allegiance during the English Revolution. While there were undoubtedly regional contrasts between settlement patterns in arable districts and those in the fens and forests, not to mention a variety of colourful local customs, entertainments and sports, John Morrill has rightly cautioned against placing too much weight on environment in shaping political loyalties.[75] Similarly, although Hill attempted to discern doctrinal

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[73]   E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541– 1871. A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 528; J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 33; J. Gurney, *Brave Community. The Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 128– 37, 184–96; B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), pp. 76–82; Capp, 'Fifth Monarchists', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 174; John Lilburne, *An impeachment of high treason against Oliver Cromwel* (London, 1649), pp. 21–2; Anon., *The Remonstrance Of many Thousands of the Free-People of England* (London, 1649), p. 8; H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (ed.) C. Hill (1961; 2nd edn, Nottingham, 1983), pp. 13, 347, 486–7, 574; Dow, *Radicalism in English Revolution*, pp. 51–2; B. Reay, 'The Muggletonians: An Introductory Survey', in C. Hill, B. Reay and W. Lamont (eds), *The World of the Muggletonians* (London, 1983), pp. 50–55; B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (Hounslow, 1985), pp. 11, 26–9; cf. J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 75, 124.

[74]   Cf. Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', p. 195; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', p. 540; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 162; Condren, 'Afterword', p. 320; Davis, 'Afterword', pp. 343, 365.

[75]   D. Underdown, 'The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War', *TRHS*, 5th series, 31 (1981), pp. 69–94; D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion:*

and geographical continuities between fifteenth- and seventeenth-century radicals, particularly in pastoral, forest, moorland and fen areas where ecclesiastical control was less tight, the argument was difficult to sustain and consequently dismissed by Aylmer as an unsophisticated form of 'geographical determinism'.[76] All the same, manifestations of ideas unquestionably radical in their context occurred, as several historians have pointed out, primarily in urban settings. London, 'the largest protestant city in Europe by 1640', was undoubtedly the most important centre, with parishes like St Stephen Coleman Street a notorious 'hive of religious radicalism'.[77]

London's densely populated intra-mural parishes and burgeoning suburbs, continually depleted by high levels of mortality but swelled by a stream of migrants, provided the conditions conducive for extending pre-existing social networks based in large measure on shared ethnicity, kinship and social status as well as neighbourliness, religious affiliation, economic interests, friendship and love. These interconnections in turn facilitated mustering political support through traditional methods, like petitioning the Crown, Parliament or governing elites for redress of grievances. The transition from passing around handwritten petitions and from disseminating manuscript copies of texts more generally, to circulating printed petitions within the framework of an efficient method of distributing printed literature indicates both the adaptability of the London print trade to changing consumer markets and impressive levels of organisation.[78] Furthermore, following belated engagement with Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962; English translation, 1989) there has been a sustained examination of the variety of other ways through which debates were conducted and opinion mobilised in early modern media; notably broadsides, newsletters, newspapers, pamphlets, plays, proclamations, rumours, scribal publication, sermons, speeches and woodcuts. These are considered fundamental for bringing into being public spheres – envisaged as both modes of and spaces for

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Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660 (Oxford, 1985); M. Stoyle, '"Pagans or Paragons?": Images of the Cornish during the English Civil War', *EHR*, 111 (1996): pp. 299–323; M. Stoyle, 'The Dissidence of Despair: Rebellion and Identity in Early Modern Cornwall', *JBS*, 38 (1999): pp. 423–44; A. Wood, 'Beyond Post-Revisionism? The Civil War Allegiances of the Miners of the Derbyshire "Peak Country"', *HJ*, 40 (1997): pp. 23–40; cf. J. Morrill, 'The Ecology of Allegiance in the English Revolution', *JBS*, 26 (1987): pp. 451–67.

[76]   Hill, 'From Lollards to Levellers', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 89–116; Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', pp. 4–5.

[77]   B. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 12; Manning, *1649*, pp. 36–43; Scott, *England's Troubles*, p. 231; A. Johns, 'Coleman Street', *HLQ*, 71 (2008): pp. 33–54 (at p. 33).

[78]   J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003); D. Hirst, 'Making Contact: Petitions and the English Republic', *JBS*, 45 (2006): pp. 26–50.

communication – such as booksellers' shops, coffee houses, markets, squares and other urban locations.[79] Women too sometimes challenged patriarchal norms by playing visible roles as preachers, messengers, fund-raisers and petitioners, as well as being the authors and publishers of several works competing for attention within the bustling market place of ideas.[80]

As Jason Peacey has shown, propaganda techniques also became more sophisticated, as new relationships developed between polemicists and political patrons keen to exploit print's potential to change attitudes and influence behaviour. Consequently the methods of producing propaganda during what is now termed a 'news revolution' became increasingly 'bureaucratised, centralised and professionalised'.[81] Even so, despite what historians if not bibliographers now refer to as an explosion of print, not to mention Hill's claim that the English Revolution was a short-lived age of 'freedom' when relatively cheap and portable printing equipment may have made it easier than ever before for radical ideas to see the light of day, the desire to censor – as is widely recognised – remained in many quarters.[82] There were three effective ways in which this could be achieved: through pre-publication, post-publication and self-censorship. Yet, with the effective collapse of pre-publication censorship the licensing system upon which it had been built became increasingly used to protect the publisher's copyright rather than to indicate official approbation. Indeed, lack of a universally agreed strategy and inconsistent practice became a characteristic feature of licensing during the later 1640s and 1650s. Without an equivalent to the Papal Index of prohibited books pre-publication censorship appears to have been almost entirely at the licenser's discretion and as such was utterly ineffective. By contrast, post-publication censorship proved most effective when implemented by those with intimate knowledge of the printing trade. And in exceptional circumstances its outcome could be dramatic. For although no one had been burned at the stake for heresy in England since 1612, the published writings of blasphemers and seditionists were still consigned to the flames in public book-burning rituals that resembled Protestant *Autos da Fé* by proxy.[83]

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[79]   P. Lake and S. Pincus (eds), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 2007).

[80]   K.V. Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *P&P*, 13 (1958): pp. 42–62; Manning, *1649*, pp. 135–72; A. Hughes, 'Gender and politics in Leveller literature', in S. Amussen and M. Kishlansky (eds), *Political culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England. Essays presented to David Underdown* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 162–88.

[81]   J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 305.

[82]   C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 1, pp. 34, 40, 51; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 17; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, p. 21.

[83]   A. Hessayon, 'Incendiary texts: book burning in England, *c*.1640–*c*.1660', *Cromohs – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, 12 (2007): 1–25, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/12_2007/hessayon_incendtexts.html>.

Over-dependence on accessible printed sources, however, such as the London bookseller George Thomason's extensive collection of about 24,000 titles now housed in the British Library, meant that Hill, Morton, Manning and others untrained in palaeography neglected a storehouse of archival records. Nor was this point lost on the so-called revisionists, who tended to privilege manuscript materials in the assumption that these enabled the reconstruction of real rather than perceived or supposed events.[84] Stressing consensus and contingency rather than class or ideological conflict in their analyses of political and religious instability, this paradigmatic revisionist shift was accompanied – at least in the hands of some practitioners – by a renewed emphasis on religious beliefs rather than secular thought. One significant outcome was the marginalisation of radicalism. Prominent figures within the canonical English radical tradition were regarded as unrepresentative of the conforming, traditionalist, uncommitted majority; their extreme opinions advocated for only a brief period of their lives ('a mid-life crisis of epic proportions' in Winstanley's case);[85] their impact upon society exaggerated both by panicked political elites and skilled propagandists preying on fears of property damage or cautioning against introducing religious toleration and its corollary, moral dissolution. Similarly, conventional forms of popular protest such as food, enclosure and tax riots were reduced in scale and scope and drained of radical ideological content. Instead these incidents were presented as sporadic, uncoordinated, locally specific, largely bloodless examples of conservative disorder – sometimes richly symbolic – that were played out against the backdrop of what John Walter has called a 'public transcript of commonwealth: neighbourliness and the moral community, the good lord and the good king, and the responsibilities of office'.[86] Indeed, if canonical radicalism was as popular as Marxists and their fellow-travellers maintained, then why did so much of the ancient regime survive the English Revolution, why was there a restoration of the monarchy, what happened afterwards to the defeated radicals, and why did several of the religious communities and political movements of the period vanish almost without trace

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[84] Richardson, *Debate on the English Revolution*, pp. 150–72; G. Burgess, 'On Revisionism: An Analysis of Early Stuart Historiography in the 1970s and 1980s', *HJ*, 33 (1990): pp. 609–27; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 231–51; Caricchio, *Popolo e Rivoluzione?*, pp. 111–51; M. Caricchio, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, 3, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/caricchio_radicalism.html>.

[85] M. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed. Britain 1603–1714* (Harmondsworth, 1996), p. 196.

[86] J.D. Walter and K. Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order in early modern England', *P&P*, 71 (1976): pp. 22–42; J.S. Morrill and J.D. Walter, 'Order and Disorder in the English Revolution', in A. Fletcher and D. Stevenson (eds), *Order and Disorder in early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 137–65; Reay, 'World Turned Upside Down', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 62–3; Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, pp. 1–26, 124–80, 181–95, 196–222 (at p. 206).

until vestiges of their ideologies were rediscovered and refashioned in different contexts during the second half of the eighteenth century?

Hill's answer to the first of these important questions was that 'the revolt within the Revolution' was betrayed by the propertied bourgeoisie, whose Protestant ethic triumphed.[87] According to Davis's method for evaluating radicalism, however, what Burgess has termed the functional approach, canonical English radicalism failed because it did not sufficiently delegitimate the old monarchical order, established Church and traditional basis of society; nor did it adequately legitimate the new republic, alternative forms of Church government or far-reaching social change; nor was there an effective transfer mechanism to get from the displaced system to its replacement.[88] And it must be said that Davis's analysis is persuasive.

Thus the republic's failure to fully legitimate itself can be seen in a missed opportunity: notable events in Protestant English history interpreted as signs of providential favour – the accession of Queen Elizabeth, defeat of the Spanish Armada and discovery of the Gunpowder plot – had been memorialised and commemorated for political purposes (as Charles Stuart's 'martyrdom' and his son's restoration were to be too), yet unlike the foundational dates of the American, French and Russian Revolutions, there was no national holiday celebrating a single Parliamentary military victory, only religiously based public fasting expressing communal solidarity.[89] Again, despite a fresh coat of arms and Parliamentary mace, manufacturing seals, minting coins and medals, commissioning portraits, holding banquets, choreographing triumphal parades, state funerals and foreign ambassadors' visits, not to mention using English in all public documents, the oligarchic republic was supplanted by an uncrowned Lord Protector presiding with the aid of his council and successive Parliaments over a perpetual Reformation implemented by an unsteady alliance of magistracy, ministry and military power.[90] Furthermore, although an estimated 80,000 soldiers were killed or maimed during the first English Civil War, theatres of conflict in England did not quite resemble the horrors experienced by those German-speaking territories devastated during the Thirty Years War. Contrary to its reputation as a benign conflict conducted

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[87]   Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 14–17; cf. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in English Revolution', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 21.

[88]   Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', pp. 202–3; cf. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 5–6; Laube, 'Radicalism as a Research Problem', in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation*, pp. 13, 20, 23; Burgess, 'Introduction', p. 8; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', pp. 62–3, 67–8; Davis, 'Afterword', pp. 338, 341.

[89]   D. Cressy, 'The Protestant Calendar and the Vocabulary of Celebration in Early Modern England', *JBS*, 29 (1990): p. 36.

[90]   S. Kelsey, *Inventing a Republic: The Political Culture of the English Commonwealth, 1649–1653* (Manchester, 1997); D. Hirst, 'The Failure of Godly Rule in the English Republic', *P&P*, 132 (1991): pp. 33–66; C. Durston, *Cromwell's Major-Generals: Godly Government during the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001).

within strict honorific codes of conduct, atrocities were committed (including on women) and the accepted professional, religious and moral laws of war occasionally transgressed.[91] Yet in its aftermath there was nothing – at least on English soil – comparable to the brutality of *la Terreur* or the Red Terror. Defeated Royalists were imprisoned, disarmed, placed under surveillance and in exceptional circumstances publicly put to death. As with the State's confiscation of property belonging to the Crown, bishops, dean and chapters, so too a number also had their estates seized and sequestered.[92] There were, however, no mass executions of political prisoners. Similarly, despite longstanding identification of the Pope with Antichrist, stigmatisation of Catholics (accusations of superstition, idolatry, disloyalty, licentiousness), and alarming stories warning of foreign intervention, widespread fear of Popish plots resulted only occasionally in assaults on worshippers departing foreign embassy chapels, some rioting and several executions rather than a Protestant equivalent to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre – again, at least on English soil.[93] Puritan iconoclasm was also usually more than just mindless vandalism borne of Biblicist zeal, reflecting in its sanctioned implementation by local elites and Parliamentary commissioners a legalistic distinction between what were considered superstitious and idolatrous artefacts, images and inscriptions on the one hand, and approved components of funeral monuments such as coats of arms and sepulchral brasses on the other.[94] Even army mutinies over arrears of pay together with arguably pro-Leveller mutinies, had their counterpoint in microcosm with the Diggers' non-resistance. Indeed, if a measure of canonical English radicalism's transformative potential was not merely its ability to turn the

[91]   I. Roy, 'England Turned Germany? The Aftermath of the Civil War in Its European Context', *TRHS*, 5th series, 28 (1978): pp. 127–44; B. Donagan, 'Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War', *P&P*, 118 (1988): pp. 65–95; B. Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War', *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994): pp. 1137–66; M. Stoyle, 'The Road to Farndon Field: Explaining the Massacre of the Royalist Women at Naseby', *EHR*, 123 (2008): pp. 895–923.

[92]   H.J. Habakkuk, 'Public finance and the Sale of Confiscated Property during the Interregnum', *Economic History Review*, n.s., 15 (1962): pp. 70–88.

[93]   R. Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *P&P*, 52 (1971): pp. 23–55; R. Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 144–67; I.Y. Thackray, 'Zion Undermined: The Protestant Belief in a Popish Plot during the English Interregnum', *History Workshop Journal*, 18 (1984): pp. 28–52; P. Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a Prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–42* (London, 1989), pp. 72–106; J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 90, 157–8.

[94]   J. Morrill, 'William Dowsing, the Bureaucratic Puritan', in J. Morrill, P. Slack and D. Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 173–203; J. Walter, 'Popular iconoclasm and the politics of the parish in Eastern England, 1640–1642', *HJ*, 47 (2004): pp. 261–90; Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, pp. 184–6.

old world upside down but to eradicate it, then part of its failure was attributable to moderation, compromise and restraint – the quest for settlement.

Another reason provided for canonical English radicalism's failure was that its modernising agenda was too advanced for a traditional, technologically limited society.[95] Sometimes, however, this has been reframed as criticism: the notion that radicals were ahead of – or before – their time, with its obvious teleological implications, has been frequently and effectively challenged.[96] Linked to this is a further key issue; was radicalism essentially innovatory? Yet if so, unless the proposed changes were cloaked in the language of custom or conservation to dampen down hostility, we are in danger of creating a paradox.[97] For like the preceding Radical Reformation, many of the various ideological manifestations of radicalism during the English Revolution were marked by a desire to return to uncorrupted roots: the prelapsarian purity of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; the primitive Christianity of the Apostles; the unadulterated text of Holy Scripture; the classical republicanism of ancient Rome; the privileges enjoyed by freeborn Anglo-Saxons before the imposition of a Norman Yoke; the fundamental and inalienable provisions of Magna Carta buttressed by precedent, common law and custom. So too millenarian beliefs were based on the expectation of Christ's return in either material or spiritual form; an event preceded by the return of his heralds, the prophets. Again, the legacy of Renaissance Humanism coupled with the effective diffusion of texts by noted Florentine syncretists stimulated interest in a rediscovered ancient theology.

Where a strong case can be made for the innovatory nature of the radicalisms under discussion was in several of the methods adopted by people who were radicalised to achieve their ends, and in the distinctive ways that ideologies which were radical in particular contexts could be expressed. The latter has led to a literary approach, pioneered by Hill's examination of 'radical prose' and exemplified by the rewarding work of Nigel Smith and Nicholas McDowell. Thus Smith has argued that 'the radicals, as churches, sects, and individuals ... created their own distinctive language usages, their own habits of expression and communication,

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[95]   Cf. Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 321; C. Hill (ed.), *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 9–10; C. Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 234–6; Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', p. 12.

[96]   Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', p. 194; Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. ix; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 151; Scott, *England's Troubles*, p. 233; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 64, 66.

[97]   Cf. Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. viii; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', pp. 533, 537; Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 144, 149, 151; Scott, *England's Troubles*, pp. 7, 229, 233–4; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 63, 68; Greaves, '"That Kind of People"', pp. 105–6; Condren, 'Afterword', p. 318; Baker, 'Rhetoric, Reality and Varieties of Civil War Radicalism', p. 204.

their own literature and culture'. Despite Davis's caveat against treating the speech acts and writings of radicals as if they were a category sufficiently homogenous to make valid general statements about, there is still much to be learned from an interdisciplinary approach.[98]

Ultimately, the inescapable conclusion that canonical English radicalism failed in the short term has been glossed over by its advocates, who emphasise instead its long-term achievements: the separation of Church and State; anticlericalism; religious toleration; rationalism; scientific enquiry; the growth of democratic, egalitarian, communist and (lately) environmentalist thought. This too, of course, is teleological. And by overlooking those radicalisms that did not produce these desired outcomes it resembles a form of intellectual natural selection; one privileging only those ideas which were carried through the Enlightenment to our modern age.

Our Contributors' Central Concerns

The essays in this volume originated at a conference held at Goldsmiths, University of London, which invited consideration of individuals, movements, ideologies and events that challenged the fundamental political, religious or social axioms of their day; examined the usefulness of the terms radical and radicalism together with the validity of a radical tradition; and explored the changing nature of radicalism together with the impact of the movement of people, ideas, images and texts across and within geographical boundaries, as well as over time. Addressing these questions in distinct yet interlinked ways, their central concerns include: definitions and how meanings can evolve; context; print culture; language and interpretative techniques; literary forms and rhetorical strategies that conveyed, or deliberately disguised, subversive meanings; and the existence or construction of a single, continuous radical tradition. Naturally, there are no firm conclusions, but we believe there to be an emerging consensus that consolidates recent important work in this field.

Thus one significant outcome is that no contributor denies outright radicalism's usefulness as an explanatory category in scholarly discussions of the early modern period. This suggests that the nominalist approach, for all its thought-provoking scepticism, has found few adherents. Nonetheless, many contributors have emphasised the need for sensitivity to context and consequently the situational, episodic and variegated nature of radicalism. Moreover, by widening the scope of what constituted radicalism our contributors have not only opened

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[98]   C. Hill, 'Radical Prose in 17th Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 1, pp. 75–95; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 3, 341; J.C. Davis, 'Puritanism and Revolution: Themes, Categories, Methods and Conclusions', *HJ*, 34 (1991): pp. 485–7; Burgess, 'Matter of Context', p. 3; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', p. 68.

up unexpected new directions for research but also contributed towards the gradual process that is shattering the canonical English radical tradition and the Marxist foundations upon which it was constructed. For even though vestiges of radicalism recovered in manuscripts and rediscovered in printed texts did (and do) constitute part of perceived (and sometimes romanticised) radical heritages, the substantive approach to the study of radicalism is problematic – and indeed arguably no longer sustainable.[99] So much so, that, of the remaining alternatives, the functional approach seems generally closest to a number of the methodologies adopted here.

Turning from methods to recurrent themes, Sarah Hutton's essay is one of several highlighting the softening effect of the passage of time and the necessity of relocating ideas within their original context. Hence, although the Cambridge Platonists' mild disposition now appears to us as 'divorced from the political sphere, and anything but radical', they were, for all their 'sweet reasonableness', decidedly radical in their detractors' eyes. Although Hutton cautions against reconfiguring all aspects of the Cambridge Platonists' milieu within a radical framework, she notes that while some attention has been paid to the reading habits of prominent autodidactic artisans, the Cambridge Platonists' radicalism was likewise derived mainly from exposure to the spoken and written word – even if theirs developed from higher learning. This accords with Nicholas McDowell's argument in his exploration of how post-Tridentine Catholic poetry influenced the army chaplain John Saltmarsh: rather than equating radical with popular culture, 'radical ideas and texts' need to be situated within 'the context of a continuous interaction between humanist and vernacular, "elite" and "popular", traditions'. He maintains that 'radical ideas' can as easily be found in 'mainstream political, religious and intellectual culture as in its margins'. Similarly, Noam Flinker's chapter on the poetics of biblical prophecy illustrates how a 'radical discourse' could be fashioned from Judaic materials, in this instance Abiezer Coppe's appropriation of the rabbinic exegetical technique known as Midrash. Collating scriptural texts into a millenarian declamation which combined warnings about the consequences of social injustice with autobiographical passages recounting spiritual awakening and provocative sexual imagery, enabled Coppe to speak with 'a prophetic voice simultaneously imitative and radically new'. All of which also chimes with Jason Peacey's claim that 'radical ideas ... proved capable of migrating into unexpected areas of the political nation, and across the political spectrum'. His essay begins with an emphatic reaffirmation that the essence of early modern radicalism was situational since it 'was intrinsically conditioned by factors relating to time, place, author, and context, as well as literary form'. Moreover, by demonstrating that 'what was mundane in one moment and one medium could be dangerous at another time and in a different context', Peacey is able to suggest that 'late 1640s "radicalism" became a phenomenon in some ways

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[99] Cf. Edward Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain. Visionaries, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Men and Women who Fought for Our Freedoms* (London, 2009).

distinct from, and capable of breaking down the barriers' between Royalist and Parliamentarian political affiliations.

It is also noteworthy that a number of essays tend to focus on individuals – all male – or well-defined social networks. Thus Ariel Hessayon contends that Gerrard Winstanley's heterodox religious views were not an unexpected aberration but the product of a spiritual journey with distinct puritan and Baptist phases. Hessayon argues that 'the imprint of distinctive General Baptist tenets, especially in Winstanley's first five publications, is both unmistakable and crucial for understanding the development of his ideas' and that these are recoverable through reminiscences, citations, allusions, suggestive parallels and circumstantial evidence. Yet if Winstanley's religious radicalism was more deep-rooted and of longer duration than the brief hiatus currently allowed by revisionists, then it must be contrasted with the findings of Sandra Hynes, Giovanni Tarantino and Jason McElligott. For, in their respective chapters on Joseph Boyse (1660–1728) and Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725), Anthony Collins (1676–1729), and William Hone (1780–1842), they demonstrate that people were not always unfailingly radical: rather they could be radicalised or deradicalised by a combination of personal experience and wider political, social, economic, intellectual, cultural and religious factors. In addition, they suggest that, as with the complex, flexible, symbiotic relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy brought out notably in McDowell's discussion of how Saltmarsh 'forged his radical theology', so radicalism was determined as much by hegemonic attitudes and constraints as its situational characteristics. Thus Hynes suggests that, in light of the religiously 'moderate' Boyse's sensitivity to the treatment of dissenters, 'it was often the State and its Established Church as much as the dissenters that defined the limits of radicalism and orthodoxy'. Similarly, although a leading exponent of the 'Radical Enlightenment', Collins repeatedly hid his identity when 'intervening in the theological, philosophical and political controversies of his age' so that to all intents and purposes his public life was largely uneventful. Hone too, once 'a minor figure in London radical circles' with objectives extending beyond political reform (he disapproved of corruption, oppression, tyranny and bigotry), eventually 'rejected progressive politics and embraced reaction'.

Given our contributors' interest in printed texts, it is worth observing that the Cambridge Platonists, Boyse, Thoresby and Collins were bibliophiles, while the bookseller Hone had an 'encyclopaedic knowledge of early-modern print culture'. Another bookseller, Giles Calvert (1615–63), forms the subject of Mario Caricchio's chapter. Calvert issued and sold writings by several figures discussed in this collection, including Coppe, Saltmarsh and Winstanley. According to Caricchio's reckoning, he published 813 titles, which was almost 9 per cent of the published output of London booksellers from 1641 to 1662. Caricchio argues that the core of Calvert's authorial stable can be considered 'an offshoot of the "radical" wing of the Reformation' and that at the height of the English Revolution individuals identified with a cluster of social networks – which had one nexus at Calvert's bookshop – participated in 'the heated debate about Church settlement

and religious toleration from a shared antinomian and spiritualist standpoint'. Moreover, through 'unity and diversity, publicity and political capability', Calvert's bookshop embodied a significant aspect of 'the "radical substance" that struck at the very foundation of the early-modern State and political culture'. Caricchio, however, acknowledges that, as well as being 'a matter of substance', radicalism was 'a matter of context' – a key aspect being the public space provided by bookshops and the printed word.

Recovering those influences that shaped texts which were radical in particular contexts and tracing these texts' intermittent afterlives have together often formed part of the substantive approach to the study of radicalism. Although he thinks that the canonical English radical tradition is no longer viable as an historical enterprise, Hessayon has nonetheless suggested that 'it is fruitful to consider the Diggers as an offshoot from the main branch of the General Baptists, with roots going back to the Radical Reformation'. All the same, he also recognises that for all the resonances and parallels between Winstanley, his contemporaries and their predecessors, what he shows here is not an unbroken lineage but how a rich genealogy of religious and political ideas can with skilful adaptation furnish material for radical discourses in suitable contexts. Similarly, McElligott accepts 'that there was no trans-historical radical party, no fixed, permanent "programme" for which radicals in each and every age struggled against the same, unchanging enemy'. Even so, he stresses 'that radicals of the English Revolution and the early-nineteenth century (and, one suspects, radicals in every other era of human history) looked to the past for inspiration, legitimation and vindication'. What is more, although 'all traditions – whether radical or conservative, left or right – are shaped, moulded and manufactured', that does not in McElligott's view necessarily make them fabrications. Warren Johnston too underscores continuities in his examination of Protestant apocalyptic ideas after the Revolution of 1688–89, arguing that all the main elements of early- and mid-seventeenth century apocalyptic thought were still present. In addition, he notes that apocalyptic convictions were not the preserve of radicals since they were likewise articulated by mainstream Anglicans and moderate dissenters. Consequently, for Johnston as well, context is paramount: 'a belief can be either radical or not depending on the purpose to and the circumstances within which it is used'.

Interpreting signs of God's providence and apocalyptic rhetoric connects Johnston's essay with Jim Smyth's exploration of English republican empire-building. Going beyond the conventional emphasis 'on immediate political and military contingencies as the thrust behind English expansion in 1649–53', Smyth argues that Protestant providentialists, classical republicans and defenders of *de facto* political authority, among others, shared 'an ingrained and impregnable sense of English superiority' that more often than not was underpinned by their 'belief in England's destiny as an elect Nation'. Again, context – the supposed military threat posed by Ireland, anti-popery, the desire to avenge the 1641 massacres and the need to pay off Parliament's war debts with confiscated Irish land – forged something distinctive; and most clearly in James Harrington's effort in his *The*

Commonwealth of Oceana (1656), 'to reconcile the republic for increase with the republic for preservation and found an "immortal commonwealth"'. As Smyth reminds us, it was Machiavelli in his *Discourses on Livy* that distinguished between republics for increase (Rome) and republics for preservation (Venice), clearly favouring the former. Machiavelli brings us to Stefano Villani's chapter on the widespread Italian interest in the English Revolution. Overwhelmingly and unambiguously sympathetic to the defeated Royalists, Italian diplomats and historians tended to interpret the conflict as a political struggle between social elites (the aristocracy) and the mob. Although religious discord was dismissed as a ruse intended to disguise political ambitions, commentators were nonetheless 'astonished by the proliferation of sects in England'. Curious travellers enumerated these with wonder in textual equivalents of curiosity cabinets, while certain heresiographers compiled baroque bestiaries of the spirit that were ultimately derived from Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena* (1646). Yet these Catholic writers also understood that when unleashed, religious heterodoxies could strike axe blows to dismember polities and so, vindicated in their belief that these were the rotten fruits of separation from Rome's spiritual authority, they too warned of the dangers of introducing religious toleration. Furthermore, when confronted by the novelty of Quaker emissaries on the Italian peninsula, inquisitors and wary governing elites frequently dismissed them as extravagant, deluded and ignorant proselytisers.

The 'enormous distance that separated revolutionary England from Counter-Reformation Italy' draws our attention to the question of whether the English experience was exceptional, since the prevailing view is that what mainly distinguished the English Revolution from baronial revolts, religious wars, rebellions and the 'general crisis' destabilising mid-seventeenth-century Ireland, France, Catalonia, Portugal, Naples and elsewhere, was radicalism. We hope that, despite this volume's Anglocentric focus, there are enough indications of transnational contexts – the transmission of texts in their original language or English translations, letters from abroad, emigration and foreign journeys – to stimulate research further afield not only on the comparatively less-explored varieties of Irish and Scottish radicalism, but on continental European variants as well. Likewise, we welcome further contextual studies on radicals and radicalisms both within and beyond the chronological span of this collection. Finally, because the conference from which this volume derives aimed to offer new perspectives on radicals and radicalisms, and because its aspirations are explorative rather than conclusive, no fixed editorial position has been imposed on the contributors in their choice of subject matter, nomenclature, method or the conclusions reached. Although some important commonalties, links and themes have been indicated here, to have enforced any overarching interpretative frameworks would have gone against the spirit of this enterprise. The essays have therefore been presented in chronological order. Taken together they offer a sense of the complexity and variety of the subject as well as making the point that much work remains to be done on radicals and radicalism in early modern England and beyond.