

heart of their works. Well organized, skillfully written, and amply documented, Martine van Elk's study is an important contribution to the burgeoning field of transnational scholarship.

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ANDREA WALKDEN. *Private Lives Made Public: The Invention of Biography in Early Modern England*. Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2016. Pp. 206. \$70.00 (cloth).
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In this thoughtful and nuanced study, Andrea Walkden departs from the tendency of much recent scholarship on life-writing, as it is frequently called, from the emphasis on little-known, unpublished, and female-authored texts, areas in which a great deal of important work has been done in the past decades. Instead she turns anew to a group of “lives,” to texts well known in their own day and still, setting them in the context of political and cultural events, often pairing them with a contemporary text to show an instructive contrast, and to demonstrate the work they were doing in their historical context. Although biographies “tend to be narratives without closely articulated positions, still less unfettered arguments” (5), Walkden says, they are powerful tools of persuasion, the more so precisely because their argument is implied rather than overt.

Walkden frames her analysis by considering two works published a decade apart: Thomas Fuller's *Abel redevinus* (1651) and his much better-known *History of the Worthies of England* (1662). While both react to the conditions in which they were published, in the Interregnum and the Restoration, Walkden finds in the second not only a shift from a religious to a civic context but also a new kind of biography. She draws a distinction between much of the prose of the period, which was theological or controversial and required a good deal of expertise, and a kind of life writing that, without requiring such knowledge, was carefully constructed to persuade by indirection rather than explicit statement.

Walkden begins with *Eikon Basilike* (February 1649), which purported to represent the thoughts of Charles I before his execution, and Milton's response to it in *Eikonoklastes* (October 1649), contrasting Milton's use of argument, his assertion of the right of the people to depose a sitting monarch, and the use of a personal story and the language of prayer in *Eikon Basilike*. In her analysis, Walkden teases out previously unseen possibilities in material that has already received a great deal of attention, offers a coda on the *de casibus* tales and argues that Milton places the “King's Book” in the category of a romantic but hackneyed story.

Walkden's analysis of Izaak Walton's lives builds on prior work that has demonstrated the agenda underlying his nostalgic presentation of the Anglican good life, his use of the five biographies to fabricate “a primitive English church for his modern Restoration moment” (65) while suppressing more controversial theological issues. For Walkden, Walton is both a servant and a depicter of extraordinary loyal servants, “the bearers of a value system that is out of step with the new social and political order,” representing “a populist defense of hierarchies and traditions” (67); she cites the example of the winding sheet, so famous in the case of John Donne, but present also in the life of Robert Sanderson, as analogous to the biographer's chosen task of preservation.

From Walton's polished performances, Walkden moves to the deliberately elliptical and fragmented brief lives of John Aubrey, pointing to his emphasis on “the overlooked and the commonplace, the objects of a kind of knowledge that had never before been recognizable as

knowledge” (112). She links Aubrey’s method to that of Robert Hooke’s enormously popular *Micrographia* (1665) and sees this delight in minutiae as part of a larger cultural pattern, a fascination with knowledge that “claims no public relevance and seeks no argument” (96). Although quite different from Walton’s lives, Walkden argues, Aubrey’s work, like the previous texts she has considered, protects “familiar knowledge ... from rational examination or critical scrutiny” (96).

Finally, Walkden turns to Daniel Defoe’s *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720), in which she finds both the backstory for *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and an alternative to the Earl of Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion* (1702–4), a counter-narrative to his extraordinarily influential work. Walkden sees in Defoe’s text a far less romantic side of the cavalier and a satirical rewriting of Charles II’s narrow escape from the battle of Worcester. While not every point in this intricate final chapter persuaded me (for example, the assertion that in adding character sketches to the otherwise finished narrative of book 1, Clarendon intended a return to classical epic), it certainly reinforces the overall thesis: that in this period, biographical narratives were used to dull the edges of political disagreement, and that in their appeals to nostalgia for a simpler, more traditional world, they separated beliefs and convictions from actual conflict. In the sequence of texts she considers, Walkden finds a movement toward populism, noting that “biography triumphed in popular political discourse because it was able to resist, despite its often radically conservative leanings, the form or appearance of argument,” and “through its routing of political beliefs through personal life stories, was able to exert a regressive influence over public culture” (130–31).

The benefits of Walkden’s study are clear: well informed by earlier scholarship and moving beyond it, she offers a fresh and careful examination of texts already well known, teasing out nuances in its reading (like the illuminating analysis of the shifting meanings of *descant* in her discussion of *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes*). On the other hand, the very subtlety and nuance of her approach, while providing rich insights, sometimes lessens its drive and forcefulness. One is grateful for the knowledge gained, even if one might wish for a somewhat stronger argumentative line throughout. But that method might run counter to the temperament and talent of Walkden, who places the familiar in a new context, and by examining works that purported to have no argument, makes a useful and illuminating case of her own.

I note, finally, my deep regret at the closing of the very distinguished Duquesne University Press, which has brought us so much thoughtful and important scholarship, of which this is one of the last examples.

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ABIGAIL WILLIAMS. *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home*. Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. Pp. 352. \$40.00 (cloth).
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Abigail Williams’s engaging exploration of eighteenth-century reading creates an admirably coherent map that enables its readers to navigate an otherwise perplexingly diverse terrain. Types of text, reader, and context vary, multiply, and interlock throughout *The Social Life of Books* with startling versatility. Williams adopts a light touch in deploying her rich scholarly knowledge to present, appropriately, a highly readable account of practices that may now be obscure to modern-day readers, whether general or specialist. She aims to create a “history of sociable reading” that thinks about the what, who, when, how, where, and with whom,