Muriel C. McClendon. *The Quiet Reformation: Magistrates and the Emergence of Protestantism in Tudor Norwich*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 340.

This lucid and highly readable account of the Reformation in Tudor Norwich seizes upon an important emerging issue, one which is likely to be the subject of considerable future discussion among scholars of religious change in the sixteenth century: were violent clashes, disruptive controversies, and deep fissures within the community the inevitable accompaniment of the Reformation? For decades, historians have been mesmerized by the movement's less endearing characteristics: bitter enmity and savage destructiveness. More recently, attention has turned to another altogether more peaceful pattern of reform. Accordingly, the results of McClendon's considerable research represent a valuable case study, as scholars go about assessing the innovative notion of a "quiet" reform.

Norwich was the largest, most populous, and most economically active of England's provincial towns during the sixteenth century. It was also an important medieval religious center, which, in turn, found itself deeply affected by the Protestant movement. What it did not experience was the rampant confessional conflict that historians have traced for other English urban centers, such as Bristol or Colchester. Developments at London have been described as even more discordant and tumultuous. Despite some early iconoclastic incidents and later Puritan activity, Norwich remained fairly tranquil. Its municipal magistrates resisted the temptation to impose religious uniformity. In addition, they did not allow their own differing religious positions to foment political factionalism. How can Norfolk's relatively calm experience of religious reform be best explained? McClendon argues that the city's political leaders effectively compartmentalized their religious views, carefully separating private belief from public demeanor and civic allegiance. The developments, moreover, relate closely to a growing secularization and the emergence of toleration.

In her discussion of these and related issues, McClendon turns to the town's rich yet very much under-utilized archives. The manuscript collections include proceedings of the mayor's court and municipal assemblies, financial accounts and guild rolls, diocesan records, and parish registers. With careful scrutiny and keen insight, they have yielded a wealth of information. Coupled with this strong foundation in the primary sources is McClendon's exacting, often challenging assessment of the prevailing historical views regarding the nature, strength, and influence of the English Reformation. Her treatment, for example, of current understandings of sixteenth-century ideas and practices regarding toleration, an extremely slippery subject, is a model of its kind. The larger result of this critical reading of the sources and existing interpretative models is a vigorous and convincing analysis of the Reformation in one of England's prominent cities.

Previous historians have focused, perhaps unduly, on religious belief and comportment; therein they discovered a fractious world. McClendon broadens the scope of the investigation, giving attention to civic rituals, guild associations, and municipal corporations. In the process, she sees impressive evidence of communal solidarity. Pre-Reformation Norwich was no stranger to civic factions and internal discord. The experience apparently proved an important lesson for the later generations that guided the city through turbulent decades of shifting religious position. Municipal leaders strove, in particular, to preserve local autonomy and authority in resolving potentially divisive differences. These mediated settlements avoided potentially destabilizing intervention by outside authorities, whether royal or ecclesiastical. Local magistrates understood the community reasonably well and acted to find ways of reconciling differences, rather than imposing legalistic, bureaucratic decisions, which ran the risk of leaving all parties dissatisfied.

The people of Norwich and the surrounding county of Norfolk were certainly aware of and conversant with the multiplicity of religious views in sixteenth-century England. Some early firebrands in the region apparently drew inspiration from events on the continent. Local magistrates later profited from Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, although their actions may speak more to business acumen than to religious preference. They displayed little zeal in prosecuting those who challenged the Henrician religious order. Their actions suggest restraint and an unwillingness to insist too much upon confessional cohesion. In a similar vein, the Norwich magistrates redirected many popular religious celebrations, transforming them into civic festivals.

The implementation of a more fervent Protestantism during the reign of Edward VI disrupted the harmony and independence that Norwich's civic leaders had painstakingly nurtured. Activists saw an opportunity for further change, while traditionalists were repulsed. An uprising of rural Norfolk people led by Robert Kett even led to armed intervention by external royal forces. Later, with Mary Tudor's accession, the city's magistrates proved more successful in attenuating the excesses associated the reimposition of Catholicism. Few inhabitants suffered the persecution to which Protestants in other parts of England were subjected. Finally, the religious settlement associated with Queen Elizabeth proved an occasion for moral and social discipline in Norwich as elsewhere. A campaign against theft, vagrancy, illicit sexual conduct, and various other transgressions followed. On a more positive note, the municipality established relief programs for the impoverished. Given the nature of these initiatives, it is not surprising that the town had also become a center of Puritanism. Still, the magistrates remained committed to practical toleration and declined to impose religious uniformity. They contained discord and permitted differences.

In the end, McClendon offers much more than a local study. At every turn, she nicely situates events at Norwich within a general framework of national developments. The reader discovers a great deal about the overall thrust of the

English Reformation, as well as its implementation at one locality. One learns much about the reaction of provincial dwellers, as well as the processes by which they filtered and adjusted the changes to suit the needs of their community. Perhaps more important, the analysis addresses a critical issue in Reformation studies and raises several questions. To return to McClendon's thesis, how do we understand the extraordinary skill demonstrated by Norwich's elites in mediating these tortuous religious and cultural shifts? Is this case unique? Why was their constructive sense of civic identity, independence, and responsibility replicated so infrequently within England and throughout western Europe? Were other magistrates in other towns inept, incapable, uninterested in managing events? To pose an obvious counter-factual query, could confessional strife have been avoided? At the very least, McClendon challenges historians to review the evidence and rethink their interpretations.

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Margaret Cavendish. *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*. Ed. Anne Shaver. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 280.

Margaret Cavendish, the first Duchess of Newcastle, claimed to write, not for her contemporaries, but for more appreciative future readers. And although her contemporaries often responded favorably to her works, Cavendish seems to have found especially appreciative readers in the late 1990s, when her poems appeared for the first time in anthologies of British literature and when longer works were published in several editions. In the context of this re-evaluation of Cavendish's work, Anne Shaver's collection of Cavendish's plays may seem almost inevitable, but this collection has been thoughtfully prepared to perpetuate that re-evaluation. Before the publication of Shaver's collection, Cavendish's nineteen plays were available only in her seventeenth-century volumes, *Playes* (1662) and *Plays, Never Before Printed* (1668). *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays* provides students with a good introduction to Cavendish and her plays, and it may inspire some scholars to explore Cavendish's volumes in greater detail.

Within its beautifully designed covers, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays* contains an Introduction, six plays by Cavendish (*The Bridals*, *The Convent of Pleasure*, and two two-part plays, *Loves Adventures* and *Bell in Campo*), and a series of appendices that reproduce the front matter of Cavendish's two volumes of plays and provide excellent lists of primary and secondary sources for "Further Reading." As the phrase "Further Reading" may suggest, the volume's editorial apparatus seems aimed primarily at undergraduates. The sparse annotations, for instance, gloss "Alexander the Great," "bawd," and words that do not appear in the *OED*, such as "deaticall," which is glossed as "like a goddess" (p. 143). These