



Peter Lake, Michael Questier. *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. xxxiv + 731 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-08884-7.

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A Peep 'Round the Twist

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Those of us who regularly work in old libraries, or who have marvelled at the some 5,000 reels of micro-film that comprise the Pollard and Redgrave, Thomason, and Wing collections, already know that early modern England did not lack for something to read. Given this abundance, it is surprising that even now whole genres of this material are still unknown to us; however, an historiographical trend is evident in recent work on "popular" print by Alexandra Walsham, Adam Fox, and Ian Green, while studies by Kevin Sharpe and Daniel Woolf have fleshed out the story as it pertains to the high brow.[1] Common to much of this work is a renewed interest in the nature of English religious culture, whether devotional literature, the workings of Providence, anti-Catholicism, or the varieties of Protestantism.

This book (or is it two?) has its origins in a number of articles published by Lake since 1994, and in a recent essay, co-written with Questier and already published, which appears here slightly altered.[2] Indeed the collaboration represents less than a fourth of the substantial total: Lake has four of five sections entirely to himself. These deal with the relationship between a variety of genres of cheap print and writing for the stage; Lake demonstrates how idioms expressive of the Protestant mind set flowed among murder pamphlets, court sermons, plays, "penny godlies," and were evident too in plays like *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *Measure for Measure*. If a single theme emerges, it is the way in

which print and the stage served as mirrors in which society was shown to itself. Tales of murders, whores, rakes, bounders, profligates, sinners, Catholics, knights—indeed the whole proto-Hogarthian spectrum of late Tudor and early Stuart England—served to promulgate and reinforce "orthodox" social and religious values that these groups were seen to have contravened. This interesting conclusion represents a partial return to E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943), whose theme was the contemporary fascination with, and yearning for, order and stability, hierarchy and degree.

The chapters co-written by Lake and Questier pursue these themes with the all-important dimension of Catholic-Protestant tension put to the fore. Instead of murder pamphlet and stage play, the sources here relate to the state and its religious competitors, namely Catholics. Hence we read of the conditions inside those prisons which held Jesuits and other heretics, all part of a plan to suppress "popery," but by a strange twist aids to its continued vitality, and the site of all manner of "ideological contest" (p. 227). A further site of tension between Catholics and the state was the gallows, where the enforcement of Protestant orthodoxy took on the character of a moralizing spectacle whose message was again complicated by the fact that those in the crowd identified with the religious fervor of the victims. Both sides, argue the authors, had in common their status as "religious *engag  s*" (p. 279). The result is that the neat oppositional categories often applied to the religious groups in this period fail to account for the sheer variety and idiosyn-

crasy of the products of the press, or the public debates and spectacles surrounding prison, gallows, and stage. Here again, we are presented with a world view, common among “protestants and catholics, common lawyers and absolutist apologists” (p. 309), whose defining categories were consensus and unity.

Aside from the light it sheds on the popular literature of the age, perhaps the most important contribution made by this study is the way in which it enhances our picture of the religious and intellectual culture of post-Reformation England. For it should not be forgotten that the Elizabethan and Jacobean “settlements” were not really settlements at all, but merely reiterations of a state-sponsored confession, whose uneasy compromise of Catholic and Reformed elements made it a lasting matter of contention. This terrain is of course familiar to both authors, who have devoted previous work to the complex religious controversies of the Elizabethan period (Lake), and the much-neglected relationship between Catholics and the state (Questier). Here, they have applied this learning to a study of the links between the ideology that underlay the formal processes of religious dispute, with the much more untidy world first captured by Keith Thomas’s *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971). The result is the closing of that gulf often thought to exist between “popular” religion and its loftier counterpart.

And yet, this treatment of the problem is lacking in several crucial areas. First, we are given no indication—beyond allusion to order and unity—of what religious “orthodoxy” really meant. Here, the literature of religious controversy, a more scholarly than popular venue, would have fleshed out the picture; instead, what is meant by “orthodoxy” is taken as given, and to confine it to late Renaissance tropes which described the smooth workings of political structures misses an important part of the story. Puzzling too is the often clumsy intermingling of terms—“the godly,” protestant, puritan, “perfect protestant”—whose precise meaning is never developed,

nor in turn related to “orthodoxy.” In describing a transition from “texts” to “events” (p. 187) the authors owe a debt—both terminological and methodological—to J. G. A. Pocock, which is not acknowledged.[3] This is but one sign that this book could have been more carefully edited: “first” not “frst” (p. xvii); Walsham’s *Providence* was published by Oxford, not Cambridge (p. xvii, n. 8); alliteration and neologism are doubly awful when combined, as in: “a meeting place between the popular and the perfectly, predestinarianly protestant.”

Nevertheless, and these small errors aside, this book will enhance our appreciation of the interactions between a variety of levels of religious and political culture, and has much to offer readers interested in the religious, cultural, and intellectual history of post-Reformation England.

Notes

[1]. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2]. Peter Lake and Michael Questier, “Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric Under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present* 153 (November 1996): 64-107.

[3]. J. G. A. Pocock, “Texts as Events: Reflections on the History of Political Thought,” in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 21-34.

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