

appreciate knowing that those poets are also devotees whose work was both consciously and unconsciously shaped by Donne and Herbert. The emphasis on determining whether the influences from any of the older poets were intentional or not seems not to serve the otherwise excellent analysis of the contemporary poetry.

Initially, McDowell adopts Judith Scherer Herz's idea of a "voiceprint," which he describes as "a profound, more substantial engagement of one poet with the 'psychology' and 'linguistic system' of another" (21, 129). He creates a useful distinction between this kind of generous relationship of voices in harmony or concert and Bloom's anxiety of influence, which stresses the prerogative of originality and the fear of being "weak" as opposed to "strong." McDowell wants to take the bad taste out of our mouths left by Bloom's politicization of style and what often is an oppressive worship of writers (male, in the distant past) whom he considers strong and unreachable. Seventeenth-century "metaphysical" poets are also in the distant past and McDowell only talks about male ones, but the relationships he wants to pose are those of gratitude, respect, and inspiration that use past work as a steppingstone, reflection, or reverberation to something new. McDowell only mentions it briefly until the chapter on Herbert and Kimberly Johnson, but the flexibility and generosity of the "voiceprint" when talking about influence might lend itself to create a more comprehensible framework for the entire book and the wide variety of past and present poets whom he discusses. In McDowell's correspondence with Corn, they discuss a parallel between Herbert's "Love and Corn's "Source" that was not intentional, but Corn admits "I have read Herbert so many times that I suppose he must now be part of the fabric of consciousness, the text of the composing self" (135). This may have been the best description in the book of the connections that McDowell wishes to reveal.

Victor Stater, *Hoax: The Popish Plot That Never Was*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022. xii + 313 pp. + 13 illus. \$35.00. Review by NATHAN MARTIN, CHARLESTON SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY.

In *Hoax: The Popish Plot That Never Was*, Victor Stater provides a brilliantly detailed and thoroughly examined account of the famous

Popish Plot, the alleged Jesuit and Catholic plot to assassinate Charles II and install his Catholic brother James to the English throne in 1678. Stater's contention in this work is that while the plot was a fabricated and imagined work of fiction by Titus Oates and Israel Tonge, it nonetheless had an enduring impact on the political and social conditions of the time.

Such a view hardly breaks historical orthodoxy, but the intent of this work is not mainly to argue, but rather to inform. Stater himself states, "it was conceived and written as a narrative history ..." (p. 303). Further, the author makes a strong point that the Popish Plot holds important lessons for us today by stating "we credit the preposterous because it often confirms our own bias" (p. ix). Indeed, in our own day, with the ubiquity of media with different voices and perspectives, it is true that we often gravitate toward the sources that align with our own views. And, as Stater points out, the consequences can be significant. In regard to the Popish Plot, "it threatened the renewal of civil war in Britain, but in the end, it ushered in a new political model instead of war: two political parties competing, more or less peacefully, for power" (p. ix).

In Stater's account of the Popish Plot, there is little space for revision, or even mitigation, of the reputations of Titus Oates and Israel Tonge, the developers of the story of a Jesuit plot. From the beginning of the work, Oates and Tonge emerge as the key villains in this story. Stater states, "it all started because of the squalid ambitions of one very bad man: Titus Oates" (p. xii). But why? Stater argues that "the two of them concocted a story intended to gain them notoriety, and, with luck, a living" (p. ix). Though the defamatory nature of Oates and Tonge's portrayal may require a historical reassessment, generally, in the future, in this work, it serves as a key theme that drives the narrative account.

Oates's early life is shown by Stater to be erratic and unstable. Oates's father, being a Baptist chaplain, had been associated with the radicalism of Thomas Pride, whose well-known purge effected the execution of Charles I. Being educated at a number of schools, and never remaining at any for an extended length of time, Oates often lied and engaged in trickery in order to advance his position. For example, according to Stater, after ending up at St. John's College at Cambridge

University, Oates was accused of cheating a tailor out of a payment and left the university, though he claimed he had completed a degree there (38). After his conversion to Catholicism, and his subsequent stint at an English-founded Jesuit school at Valladolid in Spain, Oates also fraudulently claimed that he had acquired a doctoral degree from the prestigious University of Salamanca (43).

Also, the key actions of Oates and Tonge's criminal intrigues are interestingly presented by Stater. Oates is seen as the instigator of the drawing up of a list of forty-three points of charge in a work detailing a Jesuit conspiracy against the English monarchy going back to the time of Charles I (44). In another example, the author identifies the motivations of William Bedloe, a former Catholic whose accusations and reports of the murder of Justice Edmund Berry Godfrey have been viewed as a piggy-back to Oates's charges, as being financial: "he boasted to a woman that he would have the reward, promising her a diamond ring if he won it" (86). Though the major source Stater lists as being the basis of this information comes from Sir Roger L'Estrange's works and investigations; L'Estrange served as the Surveyor of the Press, and though by no means does his view represent an unbiased portrayal, it does represent the royalist perspective on the issue and has become the dominant perspective in the recounting of the Popish Plot.

Still, as Stater adeptly shows, the figures associated with developing the conspiracy theory of the plot are more complex than being mere ruffians. The strongest element to consider with this is the incredible skill of memory that Oates seemed to possess. He was able to present, for example, vividly detailed and exhaustive accounts of the conspiracy in his first meeting with the king's Privy Council, which he did in September 1678. One member, Sir Richard Southwell, was impressed by Oates's recall and his ability to field difficult questions (53). The session apparently took several hours. In his Parliamentary appearances, Oates was able to speak in minute detail about the plot for hours on end (80). That Oates, as Stater does well to relate, was able to not only hold the attention, but to be well-received by a number of learned and educated MPs for such an extended period, speaks to the fact that he must have had some form of charisma—he was able to convince so many.

One of the great strengths of this work is that Stater is able to provide a rich tapestry of colorful descriptions of the city life of London. In his chapter entitled, "The Investigations," the author breaks form the linear narrative and inserts an interesting portrayal of the 'Lord Mayor's Show,' a yearly event dedicated to the installation of the new Lord Mayor of London. The festivities included visual spectacles, musical performances, and food and drink (77). This diversion from the serious political storyline gives one a sense of what else was important and current in London at that same time. Such inclusions make Stater's work even more approachable and warm in connecting with the audience.

Another success of this work is the way in which Stater portrays the myriad characters involved in the elaborate allegations. The king, Charles II, is shown to be ever skeptical of the claims of Oates and Tonge. He is shown to have been a poor orator, reading his speeches in monotone during Parliamentary sessions (19). The Earl of Shaftesbury is viewed as a politically shrewd operator who got his political start in the abortive Short Parliament in 1640. Though supporting Charles I early in the Civil War, he resigned his royalist military commission in 1644 and threw his weight behind the parliamentary cause (17). James, the duke of York, and future king, is shown in human terms, breaking down before the House of Lords, nearly in tears, as he declared that his faith was a personal matter at a time when the allegations were gaining traction (95). With vignettes such as these, Stater is able to provide a proximity to the important characters of this narrative that few historians are able to achieve.

Stater excels at linking micro-historical scenes into the larger macro-historical trends and issues. He is able, for example, to take an event such as the Staley case and link it to the virulent anti-Catholic sentiment in London at the time. This event is included as the beginning point of the narrative in the prologue of the work. William Staley, young London goldsmith who happened to be Catholic, was overheard allegedly by some to have emphatically declared in French his desire to kill the king. Stater's does well to recount the court proceedings—in the English system, deference was given to the prosecution rather than to the defendant, whose advocate was theoretically the judge. In this case, however, as Stater shows, the conviction was a foregone conclusion because of the lack of due process in the trail

and the perceived Catholicism of Staley. Staley was convicted and drawn and quartered for the offense of treason. Stater demonstrates the high-stakes consequences that could result from such perceptions of the Catholic 'other.'

Stater also utilizes several different types of source material, but principally, printed primary sources are the basis of the work, perhaps because it was written during the period of pandemic. Archival sources and various other primary collections supplement the narrative as well. Collectively, these sources allow for a thorough and detailed examination of the Popish Plot. As Stater points out, he has tried to keep the references to a minimum (303). From a scholar's perspective, it would be great to have more, but the narrative format does align better with a minimal use of footnoted citations. Along with this, Stater did not include a historiographical and analytical treatment of the topic, though the author does include a short, but helpful essay on potential avenues of further inquiry associated with the event. This is especially valuable for the novice reading this work.

As this is an informative work, one will encounter a comprehensive account of the relevant seventeenth century political figures associated with Popish Plot, proceedings of Parliament, and social aspects of urban life in London. I would highly recommend this work to anyone interested in the political, religious, or social history of the seventeenth century, but it is also approachable for a general audience who may have a limited background in later Stuart England.

Chris Langley, ed. *The National Covenant in Scotland 1638–1689*. Woodbridge (Suffolk): Boydell Press, 2020. xii + 248 pp. \$115.00. Review by ROBERT LANDRUM, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA BEAUFORT.

The National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant have never lacked for attention. They were enjoined to every parish in the land and subscribed with rapturous enthusiasm in many of them. Events demanded that they be renounced in the Restoration, and they were decried or extolled by polemicists through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until in the 1970s David Stevenson in-