

can be applied in fruitful ways to formal analyses. The book will be valuable to scholars of early modern aesthetics, Christopher Marlowe, and women and sexuality in seventeenth-century tragedies.

Peter Hinds. *'The Horrid Popish Plot': Roger L'Estrange and the Circulation of Political Discourse in Late Seventeenth-Century London*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiv + 457 pp. + 37 illus. £60.00. Review by ADAM SWANN, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

Roger L'Estrange was arguably one of the most prominent figures in the pamphlet wars of Restoration England through both his activities as press licensor and direct participation as a pamphleteer. Peter Hinds recognises that "reaction to L'Estrange has been characterised by a neglect that is out of all proportion to his importance and prolific writing output" (43), as Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch's *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture* (2008) was the first in-depth study since the publication of George Kitchin's *Sir Roger L'Estrange: A Contribution to the History of the Press in the Seventeenth Century* in 1913. Critical attention to The Popish Plot has also been scant until relatively recently, with the two foundational texts being John Pollock's *The Popish Plot* (1903) and John Kenyon's *The Popish Plot* (1972). These works, Hinds argues, exhibit a preoccupation with the development of the Plot at higher levels of Parliament and court. In this period, political discourse was conducted as much in the coffeehouse as the court, and Hinds' book therefore seeks to recover the reception of the Popish Plot on the streets. Roger L'Estrange provides an ideal prism through which to investigate these events, and Hinds uses him "as a narrative anchor to some degree ... to help make sense of the morass of comment on the political events in the period covered" (15). L'Estrange is suited for this because he associated with royal and rude equally as a press licensor who was also willing to wade into the mire of Restoration pamphleteering.

Many of the details advanced as evidence of the Popish Plot seem implausible to modern readers, leaving it difficult to understand how contemporaries believed in its existence. There are two strands in

Hinds' attempt to demonstrate the plausibility of the plot to Restoration Londoners: he explores the background anti-Catholic sentiment of the period and marshals a wealth of contemporary evidence to unpick the development of the Plot. This is achieved by drawing on printed, written, and spoken accounts, but one of the potential problems of attempting to collect such a diverse range of sources is the potential dissolution into diffuseness and incoherency. This is avoided, however, by Hinds' adherence to a strict, methodical structure which is replicated in each chapter.

The first chapter offers an introduction to the central figure of the Popish Plot, Titus Oates, who is succinctly described as L'Estrange's "nemesis throughout the 1680s" (35). This largely biographical chapter presents a wealth of details about Oates' early life, with particular emphasis of his early accusations of perjury, misbehaviour and expulsion from universities. Considerable attention is paid to Oates' apparently disingenuous conversion to Catholicism while abroad and his involvement with Jesuits with whom he quickly fell out of favour. In light of Oates' early experience, Hinds argues that "it is not difficult to find a possible motive in Oates's past for his charges against Catholics" (32).

Hinds devotes a number of chapters to unpicking the complexities of the Popish Plot in a methodical manner, yet his argument really comes alive in the later sections of the book. The chapter concerning the death of Edmund Berry Godfrey is exemplary in this respect, as the pamphlet debate regarding the different theories for Godfrey's death is analysed in incisive detail. This episode is also notable in that it is one of the instances when L'Estrange's opposition to the plot was believed to be unconvincing. L'Estrange was surely one of the most assured and tenacious of Restoration pamphleteers, so it is surprising to see him fail to convince his audience that Godfrey was not in fact murdered by Catholics. Hinds asserts that by this point, anti-Catholic hysteria had reached such a pitch that the notion of Godfrey's murder "fitted into the notion of a grand Catholic plot too neatly for [L'Estrange's] rebuttal, however lengthy and detailed, to be given much credit" (288). An interesting parallel may be drawn between the initial public unwillingness to believe in Oates' claims of a Catholic plot and their unwillingness to now believe L'Estrange's claim that a Catholic plot was not to blame, although such a corre-

spondence is not remarked on by Hinds.

There are a number of points in the text which would have similarly warranted further discussion. Hinds describes coffeehouses as “venues where groups of people gathered to read and discuss foreign and domestic news ... and debate politics and religion” (319), and they are therefore one of the primary locations of quotidian political debate which is the central concern of the book. Moreover, pamphlets were often read aloud in coffeehouses to the illiterate, and so are a crucial instance of the popularisation of political debate which occurred during this period. Yet, coffeehouses are given only the most cursory of mentions, and a chapter devoted to the coffeehouse debates would have been a valuable addition to the book.

There are also some issues with the overall structure of the book. While the structure within each chapter progresses in a methodical fashion, the arrangement of chapter topics sometimes seems rather illogical. For instance, chapters four and five, which explore the widespread anti-Catholic sentiment of Restoration England, are placed after chapter two, a narrative of the plot itself. It seems strange that Hinds would situate the chapters which show “the importance of the representation of Catholics and Catholicism ... and how this representation could work to stimulate and sustain belief in the Popish Plot” (141) long after the chapter which covers “how plot information was represented, received, interpreted, and why it was believed” (71). It would arguably have been more logical to establish the wider anti-Catholic context first, then present the details of the plot, rather than giving the reader the bare facts, then leaving them to read the context back into them afterwards.

These are only minor complaints, however, in an otherwise superb study. Hinds’ densely researched analysis is the ideal tool with which to unravel the sprawling complexity of the Popish Plot. This book offers a vital, lucid insight into the Popish Plot, the career of Roger L’Estrange, and the ideological context which made it seem so plausible.