

Luc Racaut. *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity During the French Wars of Religion*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2002. 161 pp. Review by ALISA PLANT, TULANE UNIVERSITY.

In this suggestive study, Luc Racaut seeks to recast the traditional interpretation of the Reformation in France by restoring Catholicism to the equation. Despite the tremendous vitality of the early Reformation, he notes that “its eventual achievements were limited, certainly in terms of its original ambitions” (2). On the eve of the Wars of Religion, as many as 10 percent of French men and women were Huguenots; yet just over a century later, Louis XIV was able successfully to revoke the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed religious toleration to the Reformed church in France. Why did France remain Catholic? By looking at a sample of French Catholic polemic published before the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of 1572, Racaut hopes to provide a partial answer to this question. He persuasively argues that, unlike the German Reformation, in which Protestants gained an early and decisive control of printed media, the French Reformation was marked by the dominance of conservative, if not reactionary, forces. Well before Luther’s break with Rome, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris—bastion of orthodoxy in the kingdom—had harnessed the printing press to its purposes. Over time, Catholics were able to parlay this dominance of the printed word into dominance of religious belief. Although Protestant caricatures of Catholicism are now far more familiar, thanks in large part to Whiggish historiography, Racaut contends that “Catholic representations were nonetheless more successful in the short term in fostering distrust and hatred of Protestants” (5). Racaut may overstate his case, however, when he writes that “the French Wars of Religion were lost and won by the ability of Catholics and Huguenots to create and to block competing narratives and representations of each other” (5). Violence, organized or improvised, surely had a role to play as well.

Racaut begins by addressing the role of censorship and of vernacular works in the French Reformation, delineating the ways in

which France deviated from the German experience. A chapter on confessional violence suggests that since Catholic polemic relied heavily on medieval precedents and stereotypes that demonized heresy and heretics, it “contributed to building a mental picture of Huguenots as monsters” (36). For Racaut, this helps to explain Catholic ferocity and lack of regard for human life during outbreaks of urban violence. The savagery of some Catholic polemic also underscores the complex relationship between print and oral culture. In an age that primarily relied not on the printed page but the spoken word for news and information, Racaut argues, written polemic was simultaneously a reflection and an expression of contemporary opinion, even as it actively helped to shape public thought about doctrinal and political differences.

Racaut then discusses some of the predominant themes in mid-sixteenth-century Catholic polemic, which relied not only on a rhetoric of exclusion but also on appeals to the past. In the decade before the civil wars, when Huguenots sought to evade detection by meeting clandestinely (and often at night), Catholic polemic was filled with versions of the “blood libel”—traditionally directed against the Jews—in which Huguenots were accused of participating in secret orgies that often involved ritual murder and cannibalism. After the outbreak of war, Catholic authors moved away from the trope of the blood libel in favor of portraying Huguenots as traitors and rebels—accusations that were fueled by the Conspiracy of Amboise, in which a small Huguenot army tried and failed to gain control of the boy-king Francis II.

Another common theme in Catholic polemic was that of inversion, or the “world turned upside down.” As Racaut himself notes, many scholars have recently explored how metaphors of inversion and disease, cast in terms of gender, religion, and the social order at large, were used by sixteenth-century authors to express profound anxieties about what they perceived to be the unmooring of their world. More interesting is Racaut’s discussion of how the thirteenth-century Albigensian Crusade was used by both Catholic and Protestant polemicists as a way of validating their respective religious and cultural world views. Albigensianism had posed the

“most formidable threat to orthodoxy that France had known before the outset of the Reformation” (100); it was both highly organized and supported by much of the Languedoc elite. Thus it is hardly surprising that sixteenth-century Catholic authors seized on the Albigensian Crusade—spearheaded by none other than (St.) Louis IX—as an illustration of how heresy could be extirpated by a strong and pious king. Racaut provides an engrossing analysis of how the crusade was used in different ways by Catholic polemicists as the political situation in France changed. Meanwhile, Protestant polemicists were appropriating the Albigensian Crusade for their own purposes. The Albigensians, they wrote, were persecuted because they had dared to denounce papal abuses (119). After the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, the Albigensian Crusade took on a special resonance for Huguenots. Albigensians became fellow martyrs at the hands of a corrupt Church, and Huguenot authors increasingly trumpeted (as their German counterparts had done decades earlier) that the pope was in fact the Antichrist. Racaut does a fine job of tracing the Huguenots’ increasing identification with the Albigensian movement.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by inconsistent or downright sloppy editing. Most of the errors are minor: to take only two examples, Natalie Zemon Davis is Frenchified as “Nathalie” (82) and Agrippa d’Aubigné is alphabetized by his first name, not his last, in the bibliography. One might reasonably hope for better editing and proofreading in a \$75 monograph.

Still, *Hatred in Print* is a much-needed corrective to traditional interpretations of the early Reformation in France. Racaut effectively demolishes any lingering sense of the universal applicability of the “German paradigm,” explicated most notably by Elizabeth Eisenstein, which attributed the success of the Reformation to the spread of printing. He ably examines the appeal, concerns, and influence of Catholic polemic in mid-sixteenth-century France. Yet his work has broader implications as well. The success of Catholic authors in countering Protestant writings and affirming their vision of their religion did not end with St. Bartholomew’s Day, but continued throughout the Wars of Religion and well into the sev-

enteenth century. While scholars have mined Leaguer polemic and propaganda, much more work remains to be done on Catholic polemical writings, even (especially?) after the Edict of Nantes. Valuable in itself, *Hatred in Print* also suggests many avenues for further research.

Charles W. J. Withers. *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xviii + 312 pp. + 36 illus. \$69.95. Review by DOUGLAS CATTERALL, CAMERON UNIVERSITY.

To what extent can local communities of practice represent the nation? This is the question that Charles W. J. Withers raises with his new study of geography's role(s) in shaping Scotland's national identity. Withers's provocative answer suggests that the Scottish nation was and is highly textured and local in expression. Taking the period between 1520 and 1930 as his focus, Withers explores the interplay between the exercise of geographical knowledge and the networks in which it was embedded, from which, in his view, larger constructs such as that of nation emerged. His emphasis is on the constructed and situational nature of geographical knowledge: its reliance on social networks for its production and reception, its dependence on particular linguistic conventions and data-gathering techniques for credibility, and its ties to the use and control of particular spaces for its production and dissemination. He links his project to revisions by cultural geographers of geography's disciplinary history and to work in the history of science.

In each of the five chapters following his introduction, Withers examines the communities and contexts in which geographical knowledge arose in Scotland between 1520 and 1930. Chapters 2 and 3 largely address the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, chapters 4 and 5 the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter 6 considers the years from 1884 to 1930 and is followed by a con-