Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World

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Description

Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World re-examines traditional festivity in early modern England and Shakespeare's plays in light of new scholarly understandings of the scope and progress of the English Reformation. Whereas most scholarship on Shakespeare and festivity has stressed the political and social meanings of early modern festivity, Religion and Revelry seeks to restore a sense of the importance of devotional issues to our understanding of the topic. The book argues that Shakespeare is a festive traditionalist whose plays not only acknowledge the relationship between traditional pastimes, stage plays, and religious controversy, but who aligns his own work, on aesthetic though not theological grounds, with festive energies identified with Catholic religious practices. Religion and Revelry also identifies an ongoing association between "popery" and festive pastimes made by both Protestant reformers and some early modern Catholics who practiced traditional festivity as a way of defining their own threatened religious community. In this way, the book contributes to a rich body of recent scholarly literature seeking to reconstruct the place of lingering Catholic ideas, beliefs, and behavior in early modern Protestant culture.

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Comments
Festivity in Shakespeare's time, Jensen argues, was inextricably linked to religious controversy, primarily because of its association with Catholicism, but also because of the way other strands of Christianity sought to redirect its energies for their own ends. To make this case, Jensen assembles an impressive array of materials—some published but many available only in manuscript—that record religiously inflected festive behaviour, from disruptions of church services by piping and dancing to household revels. She is not shy of accounts that complicate the picture and show (for example...