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**Review Essay: DuPlessis, Robert S. *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1550-1582***

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DuPlessis, Robert S. *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1500–1582*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991. xv + 372 pp. \$69.95.

In the past two decades, histories of medieval and early modern towns have been popular. The authors of these studies have mined their largely archival sources well, presenting quality examinations of the people who inhabited urban areas. These works have turned traditional social history upside down as they have presented an almost entirely new view of towns in premodern Europe. To these we must now add Robert S. DuPlessis's *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1500–1582*, truly one of the best of these recent urban societal studies.

An almost universal problem with most of these recent urban social histories is their failure to combine the societal survey with political history. The importance of the political narrative simply seems to have diminished, if not to have been entirely discarded by these authors. Happily, DuPlessis is among the few who combine the societal survey with the political narrative.

DuPlessis's choice of town, Lille, is an important one if we are to better understand the southern Low Countries during the Dutch Revolt; for while at the outset Lille sympathized with and participated in the revolt, by the end of the sixteenth century, it, together with most of the other major urban areas of the southern Low Countries, chose not to split with Spain and Catholicism.

DuPlessis divides his book into two parts. The first, 'Forces of Revolt and Stabilizing Structures', is devoted to Lille's society. It is here that he presents an examination of the local governmental administration, the economic role of trade and the clothmaking industry, poverty and charity, and the struggle between traditional Catholicism and Protestant reformers. Section two, 'Revolution and Stability', is DuPlessis's political study of Lille between 1566 and 1582. In this section he traces the revolutionary unrest of the town first during 1566–67, originating from dissatisfaction over the poor harvest, extreme cold weather, interruption of grain imports, and extensive unemployment, and ending in almost complete urban disorder. From this DuPlessis follows history through the years 1567 to 1576, when, although Spain and William of Orange began to fight a war of secession, Lille became a rather submissive entity to its Spanish governors and thus was less harshly punished than most other southern Netherlandic towns. DuPlessis concludes his political narrative by examining Lille's final submission to Spanish rule, 1576 to 1587. As DuPlessis shows, countering traditional theses, this was not at the time a simple choice for the Lillois, who were torn between elements preaching defiance against Spanish rule and their own desire to restore peace to the southern Low Countries.

Thus Lille took its place among the rest of the southern Netherlandic towns that would eventually split from their northern counterparts. Thanks to Robert S. DuPlessis, we can now more clearly understand why. This is an impressive study. And while I was disappointed that the author chose not to take it through the end of the century, to also encompass the town's reaction to the defeat of the Spanish Armada, I understand his reasons for stopping when he does. Still,

one must wonder: after the failure of the Armada, did the Lillois ever think that they had backed a loser?

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Gajowski, Evelyn. *The Art of Loving: Female Subjectivity and Male Discursive Traditions in Shakespeare's Tragedies*. University of Delaware Press, Newark 1992. 153 pp. \$32.50.

Evelyn Gajowski, *The Art of Loving: Female Subjectivity and Male Discursive Traditions in Shakespeare's Tragedies*, is reviewed on pp 182.

Hardin, Richard F. *Civil Idolatry: Desacralizing and Monarch in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton*. University of Delaware Press, Newark 1992; Associated University Presses, London and Toronto 1992. 267 pp. \$39.50.

In *Civil Idolatry*, Richard F. Hardin sets out to chart the 'demythologizing of power' in certain literary works ranging from the end of the Middle Ages up to and including Milton. Drawing his title from Milton's charge that Englishmen are 'prone oftentimes . . . to a civil kinde of Idolatry in idolizing thir Kings', Hardin uses Erasmus to establish that dislike of ceremony was an important component of Christian humanism and argues convincingly that More, Erasmus, Lorenzo Valla, and George Buchanan in the next generation held deep reservations concerning the mythologizing of kingship. Hardin's chapters on Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton argue that the desacralizing of monarchy is an important theme connecting the works of these English Renaissance authors.

Hardin takes on a formidable body of criticism by challenging the importance of the idea of 'the kings two bodies', a concept explicated by Ernst H. Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957) and extended by Marie Axton in *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (1977). According to Hardin, confusion resulted from the uncritical extension of a continental concept of sacred monarchy into English political thought (pp 22-4). Hardin argues, for example, that in Spenser's well-known Letter to Raleigh, Spenser's reference to Elizabeth as bearing 'two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Emperesse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady', should be interpreted as an 'opposition between public and private person' and not complicated by attempts to 'identify it with a continental theory of kingship from the earlier Middle Ages' (p 28). Hardin's reinterpretation of Shakespeare's history plays admirably supports his claims.

In his very successful chapter on Erasmus, Hardin exhibits a broad knowledge of the important texts of More and Erasmus and a sensitive grasp of the need to differentiate the views of the younger More and Erasmus from the positions they later adopted. His analysis of Erasmus persuasively argues that