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978-0-521-11972-6 - The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England

Ethan H. Shagan

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The Rule of Moderation

Why was it that, whenever the Tudor-Stuart regime most loudly trumpeted its moderation, that regime was at its most vicious?

This ground-breaking book argues that the ideal of moderation, so central to English history and identity, functioned as a tool of social, religious and political power. Thus *The Rule of Moderation* rewrites the history of early modern England, showing that many of its key developments – the *via media* of Anglicanism, political liberty, the development of empire and even religious toleration – were defined and defended as instances of coercive moderation, producing the ‘middle way’ through the forcible restraint of apparently dangerous excesses in Church, state and society. By showing that the quintessentially English quality of moderation was at heart an ideology of control, Ethan Shagan illuminates the subtle violence of English history and explains how, paradoxically, England came to represent reason, civility and moderation to a world it slowly conquered.

ETHAN H. SHAGAN is Professor of History and Director of the Center for British Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002), which won numerous prizes including the Royal Historical Society’s Whitfield Prize and the American Historical Association’s Morris Forkosch Prize, and is editor of *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (2005).

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For Hannah and Noah

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Acknowledgements

Near the beginning of Woody Allen's 1980 film *Stardust Memories*, a fan tells the newly middle-aged film director played by Allen that she really loves his films, especially the 'early, funny ones'. This comment is much on my mind as this book goes to press, since readers who enjoyed my first book, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, may be puzzled to find such a different work in their hands now. One reader who emphatically did not enjoy that earlier book described me in a review as the '*enfant terrible*' of early modern British history, so perhaps in an autobiographical sense this new book, like Allen's film, is about the very *ungolden* mean of incipient middle age and the desire to do something different and larger than the work of one's youth. What lies between *enfant terrible* and *éminence grise*? In my case, apparently, an obsessive rejection of mediocrity.

My first book was so narrowly focused on the 'voices of the people' that I emerged from its publication as a gainfully employed historian of early modern Britain who had never read Hobbes's *Leviathan* or Hooker's *Lawes*, not to mention Aristotle's *Politics*. At a personal level, then, the goal of this second project was to write a learned book, to read deeply in the cultural and intellectual production of early modern England in order to make sense of the largest problem that I had discovered in my encounter with the subject: the apparent contradiction between England's obsession with moderation and its violent national history. The result, for good or ill, is a Big Book in a way that *Popular Politics* was not: it spans more years and more subjects over more pages using more methodologies, and it makes large arguments about the cultural dynamics and fault lines of early modern England. That is not to say that this book represents the final word. I am painfully aware of how much more remains to be said on so capacious a subject; my only excuse is that I hope this book opens more doors than it closes.

Given the many different issues at stake in this book, I have necessarily sought advice and criticism from a wide range of scholars who have been kind enough to offer their comments. Robert Harkins, Peter Marshall,

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I have also given oral presentations on this material at many scholarly meetings and seminars: the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in Montreal in 2010 and in Salt Lake City in 2006; the Reformation Studies Colloquium in St Andrews in 2010; the University of Reading Early Modern Studies Conference in 2010; the annual Lecture in Early Modern History at the Newberry Library in 2010; the Early Modern Britain Seminar in Cambridge University in 2009; the Oxford University Seminar on Early Modern British History in 2007; the North American Conference on British Studies in 2006; the Medieval and Renaissance Seminar in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in 2006; a conference entitled ‘Redefining the National Interest’ at the Newberry Library in 2005; the Seminar in Early Modern History at the Huntington Library in 2005; and the Seminar on the Ecclesiastical History of Britain at the Institute of Historical Research in London in 2004. I owe thanks to all the participants who endured and helped to refine earlier versions of my ideas.

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me being able to finish it. In particular, the Gang of Five has given me a level of intellectual stimulation about which most scholars only dream.

There are four colleagues and friends in particular who have made this book possible. Peter Lake is the intellectual inspiration for the whole project and he has stood by me throughout; as I wrote in the preface to my first book, his generosity in encouraging me to find my own voice is a model for mentors everywhere. John Morrill has since 1999 offered me not only exemplary mentoring but also extraordinary friendship. Ed Muir has been like an older brother to me, and having someone to argue with about early modern history while sitting at Wrigley Field made my years in Illinois uniquely stimulating. Finally, if it were not for my daily coffees with Jonathan Sheehan, digging as deeply as we could into whatever he or I happened to be working on that day, I would never have figured out what this book was really about.

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At a personal level, it is hard to imagine putting into words the thanks I owe to all the people who have helped me over the last eight years. Academic books take so many years that while you are writing them, life happens to you; in my case, since I started work on this project my daughter was born, my father died, I moved across the country, my father-in-law died, and my son was born. It seems hopeless to try to list all the people who have helped me survive these years while remaining a productive scholar. So let me just thank my family (including, but not limited to, Rena, Jillian, Henry, Robynn, Gary, Diana and Yeta), Sarah's family, whom I am happy to call my family, too (including, but not limited to, Vivian, David, Rachel, James and Joan) and all the friends who have stood by us over the last eight years. Most importantly, I wish that I could express the thanks I owe to four special people: my wife Sarah Paul for her love and patience; the late Mike Shagan for a lifetime of love and support; and my children Hannah Shagan and Noah Shagan for reminding me of the joys of excess. Hannah and Noah, this book is for you.

Abbreviations

AHR	<i>The American Historical Review.</i>
BL	British Library.
CUL	Cambridge University Library.
EHR	<i>The English Historical Review.</i>
HJ	<i>The Historical Journal.</i>
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies.</i>
LP	J. S. Brewer <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> (London, 21 vols. in 33, 1862–1932).
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library.
NAW	David Quinn (ed.), <i>New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612</i> (New York, 5 vols., 1979).
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.</i>
P&P	<i>Past & Present.</i>
PRO	The National Archives, Public Record Office.
SCJ	<i>The Sixteenth Century Journal.</i>
SR	<i>The Statutes of the Realm (1225–1713) Printed by Command of His Majesty George the Third</i> (London, 12 vols., 1810–28).
WJW	John Whitgift, <i>The Works of John Whitgift</i> , ed. John Ayre (Cambridge, 3 vols., 1851–3).
WMQ	<i>The William and Mary Quarterly.</i>
WRH	Richard Hooker, <i>The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker</i> , ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, Mass., 7 vols. in 8, 1977–98).

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