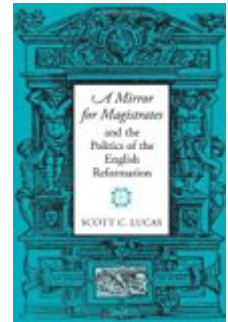


**Scott Lucas.** *A Mirror for Magistrates and the Politics of the English Reformation.*  
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We all understand what the *Mirror for Magistrates* genre is about. The genre was an English variant of the “mirror for princes” genre in that it offered sage, somewhat pedantic, advice on how to govern wisely to office-holders in England like the eternally praiseworthy justices of the peace. Scott Lucas, thankfully, offers a more subtle and, at the same time, startling picture of the genre in his study. It was not just a humanist, collection of predictable anecdotes on governance but, as he argues, was (at its inception) an allusive form of political resistance theory authored by disaffected Protestants in the reign of Mary I. This a valuable work of scholarship that will prove useful to both historians and literary critics of mid-Tudor literature relating to the religious controversies for which the period is known. It is a work aimed at scholars rather than students or non-specialists. Those of us who specialize in the Tudor period, in particular its culture, politics, and religion, have been given an original new study replete with insight.

Lucas’s study focuses on the *Mirror for Magistrates* genre as first articulated during the reign of Mary Tudor and concludes with a consideration of its later Elizabethan and Jacobean manifestations. As Lucas points out, it has long been recognized by scholars that the genre influenced the development of late Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy and history plays in terms of subtler characterizations and richer historical contexts than had been present in late medieval morality plays. Lucas respects this scholarship while at the same time offering a new contribution to the conversation in his emphasis on the historical specificity of the Marian and Elizabethan *Mirror* narratives. Lucas draws upon an extensive knowledge of printed Tudor religious polemic, *Mirror* literature, and secondary scholarship (both literary and historical) to create a complex picture of the religious context which generated the Marian *Mirror* narratives. Lucas presents the Marian *Mirror* poems as an allusive form of political resistance polemic that set the table for what he regards as later Elizabethan attempts to limit the power of

the monarchy, or what Patrick Collinson has identified as a “monarchical republic.”[1] Lucas’s study focuses primarily on the Marian iteration of the *Mirror* genre. For Lucas, the genre petered out as the Elizabethan religious settlement slowly achieved wide acceptance. As the Anglican church became ever more firmly entrenched the *Mirror* genre began to lose its impetus but he concludes that the *Mirror* tracts left an enduring legacy of a “growing assertion of parliamentary rights and personal liberties” (p. 235) that he regards as a feature of post-Elizabethan English politics.

Lucas demonstrates convincingly that the narratives of unfortunate medieval political figures from English history as included in the *Mirror* literature of the mid-1550s reflect Protestant dissatisfaction with Marian policies. For Lucas, the Marian *Mirror* poems on Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Edward, Earl of Somerset, and Thomas of Woodstock (uncle of Richard II) were attempts by Protestants to exonerate and rehabilitate the reputation of Edward Seymour, the Lord Protector during the reign of Mary’s Protestant predecessor, the under-age Edward VI. The poem narrating the fall of Gloucester as “the good duke” was, Lucas observes, meant to be read as an allusion to the later political disgrace and execution of Seymour, who held the title of Duke of Somerset and was known by his admirers as “the good duke.” Like all careful works of scholarship, Lucas’s study offers insights that make you thump your forehead and exclaim, “Of course!”

This study’s importance transcends that of the interpretation of one genre. Lucas’s work bears upon how scholars interpret the development of the English Reformation. Hindsight is the enemy of history and this is no more evident than in the long-standing tradition of regarding the English Reformation as “inevitable” due to a moribund Catholic church in England and the political ineptitude of Mary I. Fortunately, a cohort of historians, following in the wake of Jennifer Loach and Eamon Duffy, have sought to restore the sense of

Catholic triumphalism that Mary’s reign represented to her contemporaries.[2] Although Lucas is not an historian (he’s a literary scholar), his work aids this laudable effort to undermine the sense of inevitability regarding the ultimately firm establishment of the Anglican church. Lucas’s study on the Marian and (as he cogently argues) Protestant *Mirror* genre reveals that many Protestants living in England during the mid to late 1550s considered the religious contest to have been irrevocably decided against them. Mary Tudor was the sovereign and, in 1554, she would wed another Catholic monarch, Philip of Spain. Cardinal Reginald Pole had presided over England’s reconciliation to the Roman papacy and he would assume a dominant position within the English Catholic church as archbishop of Canterbury. The smart money was on Mary and Philip producing an heir to establish a Catholic succession and that England would remain firmly within the Catholic fold. Some Protestant writers railed against this future, as did John Knox under cover of misogyny, but others, like the Protestant contributors to the Marian *Mirror for Magistrates*, used historical allusion to voice their political and religious dissent.[3] Lucas’s interpretation of the Marian *Mirror* genre contributes to a growing conviction amongst scholars of religion in Tudor England that the religious situation was fluid and far from predictive of the nearly unbreakable alloy of the political state and the Anglican church achieved in the late Elizabethan period.

The tone of the book is professionally tactful without indulging in false modesty. The prose resonates with conviction borne out of extensive research in both primary and secondary sources. Lucas has closely scrutinized these sources, especially the primary *Mirror* sources, without ever losing sight of the larger context of the fast-moving political and religious situation during Mary Tudor’s reign. It is exhaustively footnoted. This helps to overcome a quibble I have with the work:

the lack of division between primary and secondary sources in the bibliography.

Furthermore, there are two things that, as a historian, I would have liked to see included: a discussion of manuscript sources and greater familiarity with the work of Anne McLaren, Natalie Mears, and Judith Richards (Lucas does cite one of Richards's articles).[4] These are preferences rather than quibbles. The study focuses upon print culture, circulation, and audience—topics that traditionally exclude discussions of manuscript circulation (though this is changing in historical scholarship). A familiarity with more recent discussions of Marian and Elizabethan governments would have enhanced Lucas's study but probably would not have altered his conclusions. Indeed, Marie Axton's older work on Elizabethan legal drama would, at most, have more firmly contextualized Lucas's already strong argument. [5] His description of the legacy of *Mirror* literature as manifesting itself in the growth of parliamentary rights and personal liberties strikes me as a tad Whiggish but one usually comes under pressure to state something grandiose in a conclusion. Again, these are very minor concerns which in no way impinge on the overall high quality of this study.

The salient points of Lucas's work makes it well worth a scholar's time. Not only does Lucas undercut the sense of inevitability that once dominated historical scholarship regarding English Protestantism but he calls to mind one of the usages of "mirror" in sixteenth-century England. Since the fourteenth century, one of the most commonly understood meanings of "mirror" was "exemplar." This is the balance upon which Lucas hangs his argument: the Marian *Mirror for Magistrates* provided examples for Catholic politicians of the perils of corruption and power. Unless the political elite of Mary I's regime was careful, the *Mirror* poems warned, good government officers (those who were Protestants especially) would be destroyed by the state in the same spirit

as medieval politicians like Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and Edward, Earl of Somerset. As Lucas argues, Gloucester and Somerset functioned in the *Mirror* poems as warning allusions to the more recent demise of Edward Seymour, Protector Somerset.

This work itself could serve as an example of careful scholarship and breath-taking insight. The prose is mercifully free from strident egotism and self-congratulatory pop cultural references. The research is meticulous and judiciously employed. It provides yet another piece in the puzzle of English Reformation studies as well as adding welcome nuance to a genre long considered transparent. Political, religious, and cultural scholars of the Tudor period will find fresh insight here into their field. Thanks to Scott Lucas's work, no one will continue to think of the *Mirror for Magistrates* as a collection of one-toned, easily explained poems.

#### Notes

[1]. P. Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I," *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 31-57.

[2]. Among their many works, see J. Loach, *Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1986); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and for the more prominent of those who have further reconceptualized English Reformation studies in a less Protestant triumphalistic manner, see C. Haigh, *English Reformations* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1993); D. MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); and Judith M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[3]. J. Knox, *First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (Geneva: 1558).

[4]. A. McLaren, "Reading Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum* As Protestant Apologetic," *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 4 (1999): 911-939,

and *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth 1558-1585. Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); N. Mears, "Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 (2003): 703-722, and "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*, 1579," *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 3 (2001): 629-650; Judith M. Richards, "'To Promote a Woman to Beare Rule': Talking of Queens in Mid-Tudor England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 1 (1997): 101-121, and "The English Accession of James VI: 'National' Identity, Gender and the Personal Monarchy of England," *The English Historical Review* 117, no. 472 (2002): 513-535.

[5]. M. Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

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