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Edward J. Ingebretsen. *Maps of Heaven, Maps of Hell: Religious Terror as Memory from the Puritans to Stephen King.* Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996. 280 pp. (paper), ISBN 978-1-56324-872-6; $56.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56324-871-9.

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Guilt and Terror in the American Mind/Religion

With a fascinating mixture of wit and wisdom, Edward J. Ingebretsen has analyzed our Puritan past as a clue to our secular present. This exploration of the links between yesterday's Puritan pulpits and today's pulp novels is a rewarding exercise in literary history and popular culture. Even more, it is a stimulating experience of self-awareness in the form of recovering forgotten– indeed hidden and disguised– sources of our social setting. Why do we imagine things as we do and how do the possibilities and impossibilities of our culture become established? For Ingebretsen, a professor of English at Georgetown University, the answers come by carefully reexamining our Puritan roots and the way in which this theological tradition has been politicized and eroticized, so that confession, for example, is extended into voyeurism. "A need to tell and expose begot a need to watch" (p. xv).

The Puritans used terror as a means of conversion, thus linking the recognition of the holy and the acknowledgement of the horrific. Ironically, the fear that motivated conversion was so similar to the terror evoked by witchcraft and demonic possession that the Puritan religious tradition can be transmuted, in secular society, into the genre of horror fiction and film, including the tradition of American Gothic literature and the works of writers such as H. P. Lovecraft and Stephen King. There is, then, not merely an explicit historical link between the Puritan John Winthrop and the latter-day puritan Jerry Falwell, but also an implicit link between Puritan social control (such as exorcising demons and burning witches) and contemporary social diversion (such as books and movies about possession and witchcraft).

Accordingly, Ingebretsen taps into religious terror as memory. He finds it easy and insightful to look for God in the grotesque. Starting from the perspective of the present he returns to our early roots, and retraces the movement, as the subtitle puts it, "From the Puritans to Stephen King." In the course of this erudite treatment, the discussion may refer to Jonathan Edwards or John Bobbit, to Cotton and Increase Mather or the Moral Majority, to Calvin or Clarence Thomas, to Salem or Stonewall. The general principle is stated by Ingebretsen: "A culture's politics enacts its spiritualities, and what a social order chooses to forget shows what it needs to remember" (p. 192).

If you have any doubt about the significant place of horror in contemporary popular culture, just take a glance at the shelves in your local book or video store. If you have any doubt about the link between our fascination with horror and the Puritan obsession with sin, by all means read this book. Indeed, I cannot imagine anyone who would not benefit from reading this challenging, stimulating, illuminating, and entertaining study of religious terror and the genre of horror fiction. It is, to steal a line from the book itself, an answer to our prayer: Give us this day our "daily dread" (p. 206).

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