

PS: My religious history: parents Baptists who gravitated to C of E, I had that training but never believed. Yet respect Xtnty as big part of our culture, hate atheistical trendy priests, so have soft spot for RCs as serious religionists while muttering 'No Popery!' at the same time.

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15th September 1877

Dear Dr Lake,

I have been trying not to answer your letter for weeks, but no good: you raise too many interesting points. It was your insisting that the composer is so much more important than the performer that turned the scale—yes yes yes indeed. I gather Windgassen (you're the only one to have spotted him so far) is as safely dead as Wunderlich. On the religion lark, I don't regard it as all that important as such in the book. I started with my castration idea, which was hard to fit into a novel about our times. I could have shifted it 1) back into the 18th century in Italy: too much research, though probably no more than I did by adopting my solution. Or 2) to obscure Pacific island run by eccentric millionaire; the coward's or John Fowles way out. Or 3) CW. Having decided to abolish the Reformation I naturally had to follow things through, try to portray the whole society, or make it possible to infer the whole society. I too think a RC theocracy would be very repressive, but in one sense it didn't matter that the society was RC, any repressive one would have done; in another sense of course it had to be RC because I know something about it and so does my reader, and a 20th-century Europe run by the Turks, say, or a 21st-century Europe under a mad dictator who likes castrati, or a 22nd-century Procyon IX where little green men castrate little green boys would none of them seem as possible and therefore as (with luck) disturbing. Actually the answer to one of your questions says it all, about the reaction of RCs here. The two most intelligent reviews, in The Tablet and The Month, took the book not as an anti-RC assault but as a pessimistic comment on humanity: no matter how things are 'altered' the average chap comes off badly: if it isn't the Russians it's the Turks, if it isn't the KGB it's the Secular Arm, if it isn't apartheid it's 'separateness', etc. It's been the Prot press that has seen the book as anti-RC as such.

About the Reformation being really the first revolt against Christianity. Really really? I think one thing led to another all right, but no one knew or could have dreamed that it would. They would have been horrified at what has happened. TR idea: Luther is wafted into 1977 for a day and on returning to 1517 tears up his 95 Theses and goes into a monastery.

Best wishes. Thank you for all your kind remarks.

Cheers

Kingsley Amis