

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910460675603321
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Titolo	"Betwixt jest and earnest" : Marprelate, Milton, Marvell, Swift & the decorum of religious ridicule / / Raymond A. Anselment
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Toronto, [Ontario] ; ; Buffalo, [New York] ; ; London, [England] : , : University of Toronto Press, , 1979 ©1979
ISBN	1-4426-5632-8 1-4426-3303-4
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (216 p.)
Collana	Heritage
Disciplina	827/.009
Soggetti	Satire, English - History and criticism English prose literature - Early modern, 1500-1700 - History and criticism Church polity in literature Religious satire, English - History and criticism Electronic books. Great Britain Church history
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- 1. Introduction -- 2. 'Nor Foolish Talking, Nor Jestng, Which are not Convenient' -- 3. The Marprelate Tracts -- 4. John Milton Contra Hall -- 5. The Rehearsal Transpros'd -- 6. A Tale of a Tub -- Notes -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Marprelate, Milton, Marvell, and Swift are among the best prose satirists in a remarkably rich literary era. Focusing on these key figures, 'Betwixt Jest and Earnest' examines the theory and practice of religious prose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Recognizing the difficulties inherent in attempting to transform unimaginative animadversion into effective satire, it analyses the ways in which Marprelate's tracts, Milton's anti-prelatical satires, Marvell's The Rehearsal Transpros'd, and Swift's A Tale of a Tub variously resolve the decorum of religious satire. Although the study is not specifically an intellectual history or a rigid definition of religious attitudes towards jest, it does bring

together basic symptoms of altering sensibilities in the period. Marprelate, Milton, Marvell, and Swift represent diverse religious dispositions, but they share a similar satiric vision. Each recognizes the central importance of manner, and all develop dramatic satire heavily dependent on character, an emphasis which often displaces the immediate issues contested, but never obscures the larger concerns the satirists pursue. Their preoccupations with the nature of tradition, their emphasis on the self, and their sensitivity to language reflect similar involvements in questions of certainty and absolutism. The virtues and abuses they find in such central questions are not unique to them or their time, but their emphases are, for they wrote in an age in which sensitive men could confront revolution and reaction with an assurance not easily attainable once that era had passed.
