

Winner of the 2011 Graduate Prize

Justin Reed (U.C. Riverside), “Dutch Propaganda and the Repeal of the Test Acts”

“Dutch Propaganda and the Repeal of the Test Acts” reminds us that, despite Steve Pincus’s notions of modern revolution, religion, specifically Catholicism, was not all about theories of statecraft. The Graduate Prize Committee was impressed with Reed’s analysis of Dutch propaganda in the debate over the Test Acts, a debate that makes plain how incomplete royal control of the press actually was. Reed’s careful assessment of the mostly Scottish and English critics who generated Dutch propaganda--men such as Gilbert Burnet, Gaspar Fagel, and Robert Ferguson--demonstrates the existence of a public hungry for debate and warm to the idea that a Catholic king could not, by virtue of the theology of his church, be a true believer in liberty of conscience. The fact that government believed it had to respond to the likes of Burnet, Fagel, and Ferguson, together with the frenzy of London printers and booksellers rushing to print pirated copies of their work, testified to the existence of an English audience receptive to these religious writings.