

in *Encounter* in which he argued the affinities between Ranterism and the counter-cultural movements of the late nineteen sixties. In the same year, Morton published his collection of essays, *The World of the Ranters*, in which Ranterism became a movement in its own right, influential throughout the length and breadth of England, evoking and only being suppressed by a systematic campaign of savage repression. In 1972, Christopher Hill gave the imprimatur of his enormous prestige to this evolving edifice in his brilliant study *The World Turned Upside Down*. The Ranters here assumed an ideologically leading and enormously significant role in the attempt at revolution from below; what Hill called the revolution within the revolt, or the second revolution. They were linked explicitly with the theories of Herbert Marcuse and implicitly with those of Antonio Gramsci.

The doors were open. The movement became a phenomenon. A flood of writings followed. G. F. Ellens, Frank McGregor, Barry Reay, Nigel Smith, David Underdown, Barry Coward, Anne Hughes, have all written at length on them. Ranter writings have been edited and subjected to literary analysis. Anonymous scraps of manuscript are now identified as Ranter on the basis of their style. Textbooks ignore them at their peril.⁷ Thesis writers, the final sign of a field which has 'arrived', are and have been busy. A British student journal, *The Ranter*, is in publication.

Surprisingly, there remains a good deal of confusion about which individuals in the seventeenth century were Ranters. Hill and Morton have insisted on the existence of a mass movement with a certain ideological vagueness at the core. McGregor sees nothing but the core, which he defines much more tightly. In both accounts, however, Coppe is *a* if not *the* leading figure. Moreover, the general consensus is that there are two central, identifying, features of Ranter thought; its antinomianism and its pantheism. For Ranters, as antinomians, the moral law was no longer binding. It was the Joachite third age of the Spirit. The laws of the first and second commissions, the Old and New Testaments, were dead letters to them. The Spirit spoke directly. Scripture had become a useless, if not pernicious, old book to be cast aside. To the pure, infused with the spirit, all things were pure. This could mean a practical antinomianism as well as a theoretical, an acting out of sin in order to show one's participation in the majesty of God. Swearing, drinking, smoking, fornicating, blaspheming, these were as much worship of the divine for the children of the Spirit as the cringing formalisms of those still enmeshed in the second commission. Indeed, they were more so. Closely associated with this was a pantheism which, seeing God in all things, could not acknowledge sin as a separate category. God was in darkness as well as light.