

Hellish Enfleshment

Embodying Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Culture

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on a term that I call “hellish enfleshment”: early modern English descriptions of Catholicism that connect anti-papal sentiment to the human body. I examine this term in the work of preachers, poets, political writers, monarchs, and playwrights who not only approach anti-Catholic discourse through corporeal metaphors, but also attempt to link Catholicism with malevolence, disease, political dissension, and discordant sound. Exploring the significance of the human body in anti-papal writing, I investigate how a range of early modern texts located in differing spheres enflesh dramatists’ conceptions of the Catholic body in their immediate historical setting. The embodiment of anti-Catholic discourse, I argue, occurs within the early modern English playhouse, as it is in this locale that playwrights attempt to affect playgoers’ bodies through sensory phenomena inexorably shaped by contemporary anti-Catholic attitudes. Examining several dramas that explicitly embody anti-papal discourse, the majority of this thesis analyses texts that engage with early modern corporeality through literal and metaphoric allusions to the body: Barnabe Barnes’s *The Devil’s Charter* (1607), Thomas Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon* (1606), the anonymous *Lust’s Dominion* (c. 1600), and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c. 1600). These plays, I argue, engage with the human body or reflect on its role in regard to fashioning anti-Catholic sentiment. Throughout this thesis, I attempt to examine discrete moments and cultural idiosyncrasies in these playtexts, utilising contemporary religious, medical, and political works to investigate the experiential qualities of an anti-Catholic discourse whilst contextualizing this evidence through references to early modern literature. Rather than analyse Catholicism as an international religio-political institution in early modern England, I have chosen instead to examine Catholicism as a domestic phenomenon in the imagination of English playwrights.

Certification of Thesis

The work contained in this thesis is the work of the candidate, and has not been previously submitted for an award. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement and reference is made in the thesis to that work.

Lachlan Malone

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Constructing Hellish Visions of the Catholic Body	14
Chapter 3 Catholic Treason, Papal Disease, and Popish Dissonance: Politics, Plague, and Sound	25
Chapter 4 Staging Popish Bodies from Edward VI to King James I	39
Chapter 5 “I feele a foule stincke in my nostrells”: Smelling the Antichrist Pope in <i>The Devil’s Charter</i> (1607)	60
Chapter 6 Corporeal Discord and Aural Physiognomy: Hearing Catholicism in <i>The Whore of Babylon</i> (1606)	79
Chapter 7 “Mad them with villainous sounds”: Catholicising the Foreign Body in <i>Lust’s Dominion</i> (c. 1600)	95
Chapter 8 “Mark Me”: Anti-Catholic Reverberations and Auditory Consciousness in <i>Hamlet</i> (c. 1600)	109
Chapter 9 Conclusions	127