

VIAGGI PER SCENE IN MOVIMENTO

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Journeys through Changing Landscapes

**Literature, Language, Culture
and their Transnational Dislocations**

edited by
Carla Dente and Francesca Fedi

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GENERAL EDITOR PREFACE

The transnational dimension of literature and research in the humanities has increasingly come into focus over recent years, selecting texts and authors and producing new scholarship that promotes dialogue across disciplines, times and boundaries. This series of research books intends to offer a channel for valuable work in this field: it will publish new writings in English, in Italian and in other European languages in areas such as transnational literature, history, language translation and linguistics, theatre and performance, political and cultural studies, history and dissemination of books and ideas. The investigations will suggest a rich web of itineraries and exchanges which have triggered a range of creative interventions in the cultural field, stimulating also the reflections of researchers in order to account for the complexity of cultural and literary phenomena. The emphasis, then, will be explicitly on movements and transformation of stories, texts and ideas across time and space with the aim at throwing new light on some problematic issues within a variety of cultural paradigms, while inviting an integrated approach to the understanding of their meanings and mechanisms.

Carla Dente

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'BEWARE OF ROME'. THE ITALIAN VILLAINOUS PRIEST IN TUDOR DRAMA

Nicoletta Caputo

In 1606, Thomas Palmer warned travellers to 'beware of Rome, the forge of every policy . . . the seller of all wickedness and heathenish impieties, or machedivell of evil policies and practices' (Palmer 1606: 44). But why discourage the English from going to Italy? What are the roots of such an outspoken anti-Italian feeling? With the break from Rome, an event that is usually seen as crucial in the development of English national consciousness (Oldenburg 1914: 5), what had been previously considered as the 'New Jerusalem' became the 'New Babylon', the mother of all iniquity. As early as 1536, Thomas Wyatt declared that 'poison and treason' were 'At Rome / A common practice used night and day' (Wyatt 2003: 78). A few decades later, Italy, the cradle of modern civilization, was apostrophized by the Elizabethan pamphleteer and dramatist Thomas Nashe as 'the Academie of man-slaughter, the sporting place of murther, the Apothecary shop of poyson for all Nations' (Nashe 1972: 83). Such a depraved, almost diabolical image of the country where the Pope lived, while far from being the only image of Italy circulating in Tudor times,¹ nevertheless proved expedient in Reformation propaganda.

It is well known that by the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Machiavelli, whose works were known in England from the late 1530s onwards, had come to embody what the English found abhorrent about Italy. His writings and his name were also used in the controversy between Protestants and Catholics, and his theories (or, better, a distorted version of them) were interpreted as 'instances of the corrupt and devious Catholic way to power' (Petrina 2009: 6). However, in the years that followed the Henrician schism, it was the autochthonous dramatic tradition that offered playwrights the means to express their animosity against Catholicism and the See of Rome. At a time when the Catholic Church and the Pope began to

¹ For a survey of the ambivalent image of Italy in Tudor times, see Warneke 1995: ch. 4: 'The Devil Incarnate: The Italianated Traveller'.

be perceived as threats, English dramatists produced plays charged with religious polemics, which featured venomous portraits of Italian or Italianate ecclesiastics. These clerics were the new incarnations of the medieval Vice.

Early embodiments of the 'villainous Italian (popish) priest' appear in John Bale's *King Johan*, which was first performed during the Christmas festivities of 1538 at the house of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. This highly polemical play was part of a propaganda campaign that was devised, or at least encouraged, by the Lord Chancellor Thomas Cromwell. According to the propagandist Sir Richard Morison, a protégé of Cromwell like Bale himself, the Protestant cause was in need of plays 'dyvysed to set forthe and declare lyvely before the peoples eies the abhomyntation and wickedness of the bishop of Rome, monks, friers, nuns, and suche like' (Morison 1957: 179).² *King Johan* was one such play.³ Here the Vice figures that represent the general sins of the medieval Catholic Church take on the guise of specific individuals in order to carry out their nefarious plans and ruin King Johan and Englande. The new identities the Vices assume are Italian or Italianate: at the end of Act One (*King Johan* is divided into two acts), Usurped Power becomes the Pope (Innocent the Third) and Private Wealth becomes Cardinal Pandulphus. Dissimulation is given the name of Raymundus, while Sedycyon is embodied by the Pope's candidate for the Archbishopric of Canterbury, Stephen Langton:

² As a letter of the French Ambassador Henry de Marillac to the Duke Anne de Montmorency (dated 13 July 1539) testifies, the defamation campaign against the Pope was particularly successful: 'As to the sports and follies against the Pope made on land; there is not a village feast nor pastime anywhere in which there is not something inserted in derision of the Holy Father; and it seems, under correction, superfluous to write of them', Gairdner-Brodie 1894: 558, no. 1261.

³ James Bryant thinks that *King Johan* 'is probably the most representative polemical drama supporting the Reformation of the Church of England' (Bryant 1984: 46). Bale's *King Johan*, however, is an ambiguous play that aimed not only at convincing the English people that the break with the corrupt Church of Rome had been a necessary step, but also at persuading King Henry to proceed with the Reformation; in pursuing this goal, Bale included in his play transgressive material that may well have been judged heretical. On this subject, see Caputo 1998: ch. 3, and Caputo 2005: 7-28.

THE POPE: To coloure this thyng, thou shalt be callyd Pandulphus;
Thow, Stevyn Langton; thy name shall be Raymundus.
Fyrst thou, Pandolphus, shalt opynly hym suspend
With boke, bell and candle; yf he wyll not so amend,
Interdycte his lande and the churches all up speare
(*King Johan*, ll. 1056-60).⁴

Although Stephen Langton is obviously English, his connection with Italy and with the corrupt Romish Church is undisputable, since at the beginning of the play the audience has been told that Sedicyon has visited a number of Italian cities (and many other places) as the Pope's ambassador:

SEDICYON: I hold upp the Pope, as in other places many,
For his ambassador I am contynwally,
In Sycell, in Naples, in Venys and Ytalye,
In Pole, Spruse and [Beme], in Denmarke and Lumbardy;
In Aragon, in Spayne, in Fraunce and in Germanye,
In Ynglond, in Scotlond, and in other regyons elles.
For his holy cawse I mayntayne traytors and rebelles,
That no prince can have his peoples obedience,
Except yt doth stand with the Popes prehemynence
(*King Johan*, ll. 212-20).

As an original stage direction makes clear, not only do the allegorical characters assume historical aliases, but they also put on appropriate garb for the new role they are about to perform: 'Here go owt Usurpid Powre and Privat Welth and Sedicyon. Usurpyd Powre shall dresse for the Pope, Privat Welth for a Cardynall, and Sedicyon for a monke. The Cardynall shall bryng in the crose, and Stevyn Launton the bocke, bell and candell' (l. 983).

Assuming aliases and using disguises were typical morality play conventions, and in spite of the fact that *King Johan* is considered the first historical drama in English literature, it is a highly hybrid play in which most characters are allegorical. However, the fact that the only historical figures beside King Johan and his murderer, Si-

⁴ All quotations are from Bale 1985.

mon of Swinsett (another incarnation of Dissimulation), are Italian or Italianate adds enormously to the propagandistic thrust of the play. The association with the Vice makes the villainy of the Pope and his supporters explicit, and clearly marks out Catholicism as abhorrent to the audience. However, it renders it abhorrent to them not only as something inherently and utterly wicked, but also as something un-English. Being a Catholic means being a traitor, a spy sent by the Pope, and Catholicism is turned into something that should be as alien to the English as the villainous aliens who represent it in the play.

In order to understand the significance of the connection between Italianness and the Vice as well as the importance of such a connection in the light of the anti-Catholicism of *King Johan*, it may be profitable to examine first how the Vice's role is used in the play. The Vice⁵ was an allegorical character that had evolved in a popular context⁶ and which assumed a crucial role in morality plays and in Tudor interludes. The diabolical antagonist of the Virtues, he devised plots to make the human character fall into sin and be damned. The Vice was the driving force of the action, indeed his role may be seen as that of a sort of *director* of the play, on account of his incessant manipulation of people and events to his advantage. However, besides being a devilish mischief-maker, he was also the source of mirth and provided the audience with comic relief. The audiences found him very funny and extremely seductive. He could even prove sexually attractive and he unfailingly succeeded in creating a deep involvement on the part of the spectators. Thus, the Vice was an ambivalent and ambiguous character.

In order to bring his point home and make Catholicism thoroughly detestable, Bale modifies the theatrical role of the Vice, though he maintains its status as principal character. The Vices that appear in this play are used for satirical purposes, to chastise religious opponents. They are pure evil and, as the story unfolds, their *comic* side is progressively down-played. Accordingly, the laughter that the Vice statutorily excites gradually becomes an essentially

⁵ The best study of the Vice is still Spivack 1958.

⁶ On the origin of the Vice, see Mares 1958: 11-29; Happé 1964: 161-93; and Happé 1981.

scornful, contemptuous and derisive laughter. Such an operation renders any complicity between Bale's villains and the audience impossible. Connecting the Church of Rome to the Vice is an implicit and extremely effective condemnation strategy. The trick is functional to anti-Catholic propaganda because, as soon as the four villains assume their clerical disguise, the spectators realize that the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church are, in fact, the wicked mischief-makers of theatrical tradition, and that they must be rejected as immoral.

Sedicyon, for instance, presents all the features that are typical of the Vice, thus being negatively connoted as soon as he appears on stage, well before all his iniquities are revealed. For example, he immediately demonstrates that, just like the Vice, he is a liar, his very first words expressing his intention of calumniating King Johan and Englande: 'What, you ij alone? I wyll tell tales, by Jesus! / And saye that I see yow fall here to bycherye' (ll. 43-44). Like the Vice, Sedicyon twists and distorts what the other characters say, speaks alliteratively, curses and swears oaths. Examples can be found in the lines that follow the threat of calumny that has just been quoted:

K. JOHAN: Avoyd, lewde person, for thy wordes are ungodlye.

SEDICYON: I crye yow mercy, sur. I pray yow be not angrie.

Be my fayth and trowth, I cam hyther to be merye.

K. JOHAN: Thow canst with thy myrth in no wysse dyscontent me,

So that thow powder yt with wysdom and honeste.

SEDICYON: I am no spycer, by the messe! Ye may beleve me.

K. JOHAN: I speke of no spyce, but of cyvyle honeste.

SEDICYON: Ye spake of powder, by the Holy Trynyte!

K. JOHAN: Not as thow takyst yt, of a grosse capasyte

(*King Johan*, ll. 45-52).

Sedicyon also uses puns and scatological language ('I wyll not awaye for that same wedred wytche; / She shall rather kysse whereas it doth not ytche', ll. 95-96); he mentions the proverbial Willy Watt (l. 60), makes use of asides and proverbs ('Yt is as great pyte to se a woman wepe / As yt is to se a sely dodman crepe, / Or, as ye wold say, a sely goose go barefote', ll. 173-75), employs a light-hearted tone and makes witty and humorous remarks. Like the Vice, he

tells the audience about his travels (in the already quoted ll. 212-17). Then, we find the conventional self-betraying slip of the tongue, when Sedicyon says 'lecherous man' instead of 'relygyous man' (ll. 304-05). Sedicyon shows numerous signs of depravity and he even tries to find people to make merry with among the audience: 'I loke for felowys that here shuld make sum sporte' (l. 631). Immediately after, we find a reference to the 'stews' (l. 635), that is, the brothel, a place typically frequented by the Vice. Sedicyon is quarrelsome (see l. 651). He asks Usurped Power to carry him on his back, something the devil customarily did with the Vice in Tudor interludes (l. 792). He speaks colloquially and is often irreverent; he uses linguistic pastiche ('Par me faye, mon amye, je tote ad voutre plesaunce', l. 669); he has a deformed nose, a characteristic, this, of the Devil (see l. 647); he is a braggart: he boasts of his strength and wants to celebrate his exploits in song together with his accomplices:

SEDICYON: Ye suppose and thynke that ye cowl me subdewe.
 Ye shall never fyndy owr supposycy ontre we,
 Thowgh ye wer as strong as Hector and Diomedes,
 Or as valyant as ever was Achylles
 (*King Johan*, ll. 231-34).

SEDICYON: Is not thys a sport? By the messe, it is, I trowe.
 What welthe and pleasure wyll now to our kyngedom growe!
 Englande is our owne, whych is the most plesaunt grounde
 In all the rounde worlde! Now maye we realmes confounde.
 Our Holye Father maye now lyve at hys pleasure
 And have habundaunce of wenches, wyntes and treasure.
 He is now able to kepe downe Christe and hys Gospell,
 True fayth to exyle and all vertues to expell.
 Now shall we ruffle it in velvattes, golde and sylke,
 With shaven crownes, side gownes, and rochettes whyte as mylke.
 By the messe, Pandulphus, now maye we synge *Cantate*,
 And crowe *Confitebor*, with a joyfull *Iubilate*!
 Holde me, or els for laughynge I must burste
 (*King Johan*, ll. 1682-94).

The ability to provoke uproarious laughter is another distinctive feature of the Vice, as is the reference to the gallows that Sedicyon makes immediately after (l. 1697).

In 1536 Morison, who was engaged in a literary offensive against the Pilgrimage of Grace, had addressed the Pilgrims in a propagandistic pamphlet entitled *A Remedy for Sedition*, in which he defended the Royal Supremacy and saw obedience to the King as the foundation for social harmony (Morison 1984a).⁷ Morison had also attacked a 'seditious pope called Urban' (Morison 1984b: 95) in another of his pamphlets, *A Lamentation in which is shown what pain and destruction cometh of seditious rebellion*, which was also written in 1536. Thus, Sedition had already been introduced into post-Reformation polemics at a conceptual level, and the bond between Catholicism and Sedition had already been forged. Nonetheless, it was Bale who gave a body and a voice to what was simply an abstract idea. In *King Johan*, Sedicyon is made immediately recognizable as both a Catholic and as the Vice. In addition, in one of his first appearances the character declares that he is not English-born: he is an alien, and his birthplace is Rome. Thus, in a highly virulent play such as *King Johan*, Rome is established as the theatre of Popish intrigue, something that would bear fruit in Protestant and anti-Catholic propaganda. Although the association between Catholicism and Rome may appear obvious, predictable even, it is nevertheless polemically effective since it is the result of an ingenious operation that appeals to national sentiment for the purpose of stirring up anti-Catholic feelings and, consequently, advancing the Reformation. Showing how Catholic priests are agents of a foreign power is the same as declaring that being a Catholic is being un-English. Catholicism is utterly transformed into something unnatural to a loyal English-born subject. The demonization of the

⁷ I am grateful to Professor Nick Havery for directing me to this pamphlet. Other, later pamphlets that were similarly written in response to popular tumults and in which *sedition* appears in the title are Robert Crowley's *The Way to Wealth, wherein is Taught a Remedy for Sedicion*, and John Cheke's *The Hurt of Sedicion*, both composed on occasion of Robert Kett's rebellion in 1549. For an analysis of the contrasting theses maintained in these 1549 pamphlets, see Betteridge 2004: 97-110.

Catholic and the demonization of the alien go hand in hand in Reformation propaganda.

John Bale, 'bilious Bale' as his opponents called him, also indicated Rome as the source of depravity and corruption in other plays. One is *A Comedy or Interlude Concerning the Temptation of Our Lord*, which was performed in 1538 like all the rest of Bale's surviving dramatic works. Here the Pope, 'the wyld bore of Rome' (l. 71) of *King Johan*, is seen as the Antichrist, and is anachronistically included in the list of Satan's allies in the scene of the temptation of Christ, together with the Pharisees and the scribes. As Christ's antagonist asserts: 'The vicar of Rome I think will be my friend' (l. 337). *A Comedy Concerning Three Laws, of Nature, Moses, and Christ* interestingly contains 'the earliest extant dramatic treatment of homosexuality' (Grantley 2004: 343), which is of course seen as an abominable, unnatural practice common among the Catholic clergy and the monastic orders. In this play, Sodomy defiantly asserts:

In Rome to me they fall,
Both Byshopp and Cardynall,
Monke, fryre, prest and all,
More ranke they are than antes.
Example in pope Iulye,
Whych sought to have, in hys furye,
Two laddess, and to use them beastlye,
From the Cardynall of Nantes.
(ll. 640-47).⁸

Rome is a recurrent topic of conversation among the Vices of the play. Infidelity asserts that 'At Rome for prelates are stewes / Of both kyndes. Thys is lust' (ll. 730-31) and the degeneracy that can be found at the Papal court is the subject of the following exchange between Avarice and Ambition:

AVARICE: Crosers and mytars, in Rome are good merchandyce,
And all too lyttle, to maynteyne their [the Pope's and the Cardinals'] pompe and vyce.

⁸ See Schroeer 1882. All quotations are from this edition.

AMBITION: The pope for whoredom, hath in Rome and Viterbye,
Of golde and silver, a wonderfull substaunce yearlye (ll. 1232-35).

Rome is also mentioned as a place that encourages the depravity of the clergy in the Scottish *A Satire of the Three Estates*, a very long play by Sir David Lindsay, which was first performed at the Court of James V in 1540. Here the Pope is a distant source of corruption, but he is nonetheless omnipresent. Rome is mentioned on several occasions. According to Wantonness, it is the abode of lechery:

Believe ye, Sir, that Lecherie be sin?
Na, trow nocht that: this is my ressounquhy.
First at the Romane Kirk will ye begin,
Quhilk is the lemand lamp of lechery:
Quhair Cardinals and Bischops generally
To luif ladies thay think ane pleasant sport,
And Out of Rome hes baneist Chastity,
Quha with our Prelats can get na resort.
(ll. 235-42).⁹

Then, Sensualitie declares that she has 'done pleasouris infinite' to 'all the Kinges of Christindome: / . . . and speciallie unto the Court of Rome' (ll. 283-86). Chastitie laments the fact that 'in Rome [she] could get na lodging, / Bot heidlang in the mirk' (ll. 1464-65), while Sensualitie implores Correctioun to be allowed 'to pas again to Rome: / Amang the Princes of that natioun' because there, 'amang Bishops and Cardinals / [She] wald get gould, silver and precious clais' (ll. 1732-33 and 1740-41).¹⁰

One particularly intriguing text is John Ponet's *Tragedy or Dialogue of the uniuste usurped primacie of the Bishop of Rome*, a 1549 translation of a now-lost Latin manuscript by Bernardino Ochino. This bitterly polemical work, as Michael Wyatt notes, is an adaptation of Thomas Kirchmayer's 1538 Latin comedy *Pammachius* and

⁹ See Lindsay 1979. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

¹⁰ Another long passage laments the sale of benefices that takes place in Rome to 'ane cavell, quhilk was never at the scule' (l. 2870).

is considered 'unperformable'.¹¹ In the first of its nine *tableaux*, we find Lucifer who, having been consigned to Hell, decides to take his revenge on God establishing the papal sovereignty over the Church:

I have devised with myself to make a certain new kingdom, replenished with idolatry, superstition, ignorance, error, falsehood, deceit, compulsion, extortion, treason, contention, discord, tyranny, and cruelty; with spoiling, murder, ambition, filthiness, injuries, factions, sects, wickedness, and mischief, in the which kingdom all kinds of abomination shall be committed. And notwithstanding that it shall be heaped up with all kinds of wickedness, yet shall the Christian men think that to be a spiritual kingdom most holy and most godly. The supreme head of this kingdom shall be a man which is not only sinful and an abominable robber and thief, but he shall be sin and abomination itself, and yet, for all that, shall he be thought of Christian men a god in earth, and his members, being most wicked, shall be thought of men most holy (Ponet 1906: 4-5).

The Pope, who is a veritable monster of sin, is also the true Son of Lucifer, just as Christ is the Son of God: 'it is necessary that this man be so furnished with all wickedness and iniquity that I may worthily say of him: This is my beloved son in whom is my only delight, hear him; even as the heavenly Father long ago did testify of His Son Christ' (Ponet 1906: 10). As Beelzebub notes, the Pope is 'the lively image of Antichrist himself' (ibid.). In this play, as in the equally venomous *King Johan*, the Pope appears not just as a leader of spiritual corruption, but also as a foreign political force. Particularly interesting are the anti-Italian feelings that are implicit in Lucifer's praise of: 'the insatiable ambition of the Romans, their craft and malice and guile, wherewith they be naturally infected' (ibid.: 11). However, the conclusion of the play is far from reassuring, since

¹¹ See Wyatt 2005: 91. For a description of the nine *tableaux* that compose the text, see ibid.: 91-95. As O'Neill 1964: 312-22 remarks, 'This play is a striking example of a Protestant play on religion. Though its arrangement is of little significance dramatically, it illustrates the use of dramatic forms in the religious strife of its age. It belongs, along with Bale's plays, in the forefront of extreme propagandist drama.'

Edward VI's words seem to suggest that even if Antichrist can be defeated, corruption is not so easily dismissible because 'the alien body' has already infected the national community:¹²

We have determined therefore to pursue the famous enterprise of our most famous father, and not only to pluck up by the roots and utterly banish out of our kingdom the name of Antichrist, and his jurisdiction, but also clearly to purge the minds of our subjects from all wicked idolatry, heresy, and superstition, and such like devilishness as by him was brought in (Ponet 1906: 244).

The plays that have been examined so far are highly polemical and extremely vehement in their indictment of the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope is the archenemy in the propaganda of the Reformation period, and Catholic priests are deemed agents of the Pope and directly involved in the struggle between the King and the See of Rome. Violence and abuse would decrease with the passing of the years, but Rome would continue to be seen as the source of religious corruption in England. To the reign of Elizabeth belong a group of plays which feature Italianate Vices embodying Catholicism. As Lloyd Edward Kermode observes, in plays that were written between the late 1550s and the early 1580s, 'to talk about religious corruption at home is . . . to recognize the influence of non-English practices' (Kermode 2009: 23). In the anonymous *King Darius*, which was printed in 1565, Iniquity leads a team of Papal Vices and, while quarrelling with Partiality and Importunity over who has the most exalted birth, he boasts of being the son of the Pope:

INIQUITY: Nay, if you begin of your fathers to boast,
I will tell you, where my father dwelleth and in what chost:
I think he came of as noble a blood

¹² On the 'English-alien contact' and the progressive internalization of the alien see Kermode 2009. As Kermode argues, 'The move from the concept of a dismissible alien body to the alien presence *within* is a frightening one, for the separate, identifiable alien person can be physically removed and eliminated, but the *alienated* individual or community must be reformed within the self or community' (Kermode 2009: 24).

As yours, and yet neither of them good;
In Rome he dwelleth, that is his common place,
Where all other bow before his face;
All Nations to him do obey
And never against him a proud word dare say.
I warrant you, his lands are very great;
He doth poll poor men and liveth by their sweat.
He hath as much lands, I warrant you,
As lieth between this and Southampton, I tell you.
Every house that standeth between this and that
Are his, by my troth I say, I care not what
(Anonymous 1906: 67).

In the anonymous play *New Custom*, which was printed in 1573, we find the old Popish Priests Perverse Doctrine and Ignorance opposing the young Minister New Custom. Although this play too aims at showing that Catholicism is founded on superstition and perversion of the Gospel, this dramatist, unlike the bitterly abusive Bale, eschews vituperation and invective and chooses, instead, a doctrinal approach to defeat his religious opponents. A recovery of wayward Catholics is even deemed possible, as shown by the conversion of the Vice Perverse Doctrine. This is a very rare event in Tudor drama. In *King Darius*, for instance, the virtuous Charity, Equity and Constancy attempt to convert the reprobate Iniquity on three occasions, but he fiercely resists.

Another Protestant play that is not aggressively anti-Catholic is Nathaniel Woodes's *Conflict of Conscience*, which was probably performed in the 1570s. Here, again, the focus is on conversion: in relating the tragic apostasy of the Italian Protestant Francis Spiera, who is re-named Philologus, the play expresses anxiety about a re-establishment of the Catholic faith through papal inquisition. Among the *dramatis personae* we find the grossly superstitious papist priest Caconus and a Cardinal, who has been sent by the Pope for the express purpose of converting Philologus. When he is examined by the Cardinal, Philologus defines Rome as the 'New Babylon' and denies the Pope's authority:

The surest ground, whereon your Pope doth stand,
Is of Peter's being at Rome a strong imagination,

And the same Peter, you do understand,
Of all the disciples had the gubernation,
Surmising both without good approbation,
Unless you will by the name of Babylon,
From whence Peter wrote, is understood Rome.
As indeed divers of your writers have affirmed,
Reciting Jerome, Austin, Primatius, and Ambrose,
Who by their several writings have confirmed
That Rome is New Babylon: I may it not glose.
But it were better for you they were dumb, I suppose,
For they labour to prove Rome by that acception
The whore of Babylon, spoke of in the Revelation.
But grant that Peter in Rome settled was,
Yet that he was chief it remains you to prove

(Woodes 1911: ll. 1011-26).¹³

In plays where religious polemic is not a priority, the Roman Catholic cleric becomes a ludicrous character. This happens, for instance, in *Misogonous*, a prodigal son play that was probably written by a certain Laurentius Bariona, whose name appears on the title page of the first edition of this 'pleasant Comedie', dated 1577. Here the scene is nominally laid in Italy, and Sir John is a drunken, promiscuous and dissolute priest who swears, plays dice and cards, and dances with Melissa the *meretrix* in the tavern. After a winning streak, Sir John loses money and his gown, but he decides to carry on gambling even though bell and clerk summon him to celebrate the evening Mass. When Philogonus catches his son dancing with Melissa and threatens to disinherit him, Sir John even lies and claims to have married them. Sir John is never directly connected to Rome. Nevertheless, as James Bryant observes, 'to a settlement audience, the coarse self-revelation of Sir John would probably confirm the government's propaganda, both from tractates and pulpits, that [*sic*] stated that Romanist or *popish* priests were corrupt and avaricious' (Bryant 1984: 92). However satirical the tavern scene may be, we do not find vituperation in *Misogonus*, but simply good comedy, and the effect is not malicious, but delightful.

¹³ The spelling has been modernised.

Farcical priests that smack of Catholicism also appear in the so-called money plays, which were also written during the reign of Elizabeth and aimed at castigating social evils. The target of the criticism contained in the money plays is not primarily the Catholic Church, but covetousness. Even so, characters embodying the stereotype of the ignorant and corrupt Roman Catholic cleric are still present. In William Wager's *Enough Is as Good as a Feast*, which was printed around 1570, the Vice Ignorance is undoubtedly Catholic because he defends the use of Latin in the service.¹⁴ In Thomas Lupton's *All for Money*, which was printed in 1578, the clergy is represented by Sir Laurence Livingless, the 'foolish priest'. Livingless is an ignorant and worldly priest who loves women and playing cards, and hates the Reformation because now that people can read the Scripture in English they have learnt to despise unworthy ministers like him. Sir Laurence has been examined by the Bishop and deposed from all his benefices and livings (evidently, he was a pluralist), but he nonetheless succeeds in becoming the chaplain of the corrupt judge All for Money. These clerical characters are clearly Catholics, but no mention of either Rome or the Pope is made.

Conversely, a direct reference to Rome appears in Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London*, a play that was published in 1584 and which features a similarly powerful social and economic dimension. Here, once again, the corruption of the Church is pitilessly ridiculed, but the origin of the practice of buying and selling benefices is explicitly traced to Rome, since Simony is a character whose 'birth, nursery and bringing up [were] in Rome'. However, it is also made clear that the *English* Church of the time of Elizabeth is also corrupt. As a matter of fact, when Simony moved to England, he found that Lady Lucre – who, incidentally hails from Venice – was held in great esteem:

My birth, nursery and bringing-up hitherto hath been in Rome, that
ancient religious city.

On a time the monks and friars made a banquet, whereunto they
invited me,

¹⁴ He defiantly asserts: 'A man may as much edifying out of my Latin take / As ye may out of expositions that many ministers make' (Wager 1968: ll. 1271-73).

With certain other some English merchants, which belike were of
their familiarity;
So, talking of many matters, amongst others one began to debate
Of the abundant substance still brought to that state.
Some said the increase of their substance and wealth
Came from other princes, and was brought thither by stealth:
But the friars and monks, with all the ancient company,
Said that it first came, and is now upholden by me, Simony;
Which the English merchants gave ear to: then they flattered a little
too much,
As Englishmen can do for advantage, when increase it doth touch;
And being a-shipboard merry, and overcome with drink on a day,
The wind served, they hoist sail, and so brought me away:
And landing here, I heard in what great estimation you were,
[And] made bold to your honour to make my repair
(Wilson 1874: 269).

As Sincerity, who has studied in Cambridge, bitterly observes, in England divines who 'preach the word of God sincerely and truly, / are . . . little or nothing at all set by' and cannot get a living (Wilson 1874: 287), while Sir Peter Pleaseman, the embodiment of religious opportunism, succeeds in being presented for institution to a benefice by Simony who, naturally, asks for his share in the bargain:

. . . but if I help you to such great preferment,
Would you be willing that for my pain
I shall have yearly half the gain?
For it is reason, you know, that if I help you to a living,
That you should unto me be somewhat beholding
(Wilson 1874: 310).

In the sequel to the play, *The Three Lodes and Three Ladies of London*, which was published in 1590, Simony appears again, and again states that England is not his native country, and that he is a Roman (while Dissimulation is a *mongrel*, half Italian and half Dutch).

Also farcical is the treatment of the foolish representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, which was written in 1593. Here John Bale's *verbal* abuse has been substituted by *physical* abuse, as in 'Bright-splendent' Rome, Faus-

tus delights in playing mischievous tricks on the Pope and his company. Attacks on the corruption of Catholic clerics are, however, both occasional and mild, such as the cursory remark on the 'troop of bald-pate friars / Whose *summum bonum* is in belly-cheer' (Text A) or the ridiculous and parodic dirge that the friars sing at the end of Scene 7. Following this brief examination of several post-Reformation versions of Vice characters, we may say that with *Doctor Faustus* the embodiments of the 'villainous Italian priest' have come full circle. In both Bale and Marlowe there appear depraved and corrupt Roman clerics, who are more or less direct descendants of the medieval Vice. However, whereas Bale played down the comic aspects of his Romish Vices to make his clerics stand in for pure evil, in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* wickedness is downplayed, and its place is taken by pure farce. As George K. Hunter notes, in post-Reformation English literature 'the "stranger" could be shown to be a villain or a clown, but little else' (Hunter 1964: 42): in this study I have tried to show that, as far as theatrical versions of Italian clerics were concerned, the two opposite modalities ('the xenophobic poles of Fear and Derision') (ibid.) rather than represent an alternative, may more correctly be said to have appeared in chronological sequence.

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