

The Body and the Divine in Early Modernity
A panel series sponsored by the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies
Victoria College – University of Toronto

The Body and the Divine in Early Modernity III: Narrating the Body

Panel Organizer: Marco Piana (Smith College)

Chair: Sarah Rolfe Prodan (Stanford University)

Paper Proposals

1) *Faces of Sanctity. Venerable Bodies in Early Modern Painting in Southern Italy*

Giulio Brevetti (Università degli Studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”)

The paper aims to consider how the Early modern painting in Southern Italy treated the image of saints and venerable people and the tools with which the artists intended to introduce such topics to the faithful. Among the elements that will be taken into account, we will focus on the genre of portraiture of departed persons and saints. Particular attention will be reserved to the figure and the body of Naples’ most venerated saint, Januarius, in the paintings of Jusepe de Ribera and Artemisia Gentileschi, with a final comparison with the recent graffiti by the Neapolitan young artist Jorit.

Keywords: Saint Januarius, Jusepe de Ribera, Artemisia Gentileschi, Blood Devotion

General Discipline Area: Art History, History of Religion

2) *Reading Women’s Devotional Bodies in Eliza’s Babes (1652) and An Collins’s Divine Songs and Meditacions (1653)*

Jantina Ellens (McMaster University)

Drawing together the study of devotion, anonymity, and women’s writing, I examine how the women authors of two devotional texts defend their devotion through intentional, anonymous publication. Afflicted by ill humours, the anonymous author of *Eliza’s Babes* (1652) who “only desires to advance the glory of GOD, and not her own” and An Collins, “author unknown” of *Divine Songs and Meditacions* (1653), seek to reorient the signification of their seemingly-broken bodies by insisting that writing and re-reading devotional poems teaches the mind to translate pain into grace. Mindful of Paul’s admonition that women are saved by the bearing of children (1 Timothy 2:15), the authors resist the assumption that they are barren by presenting their devotional poems as spiritual fruits which demonstrate their faithfulness and nourish a community of believers. Their anonymity, which highlights their spirituality over their gender, superimposes the text on the body to prevent its misreading.

Keywords: An Collins, *Eliza’s Babes* (1652), *Divine Songs and Meditacions* (1653), Maternity

General Discipline Area: Literature, History of Religion

3) *Writing the Sacramental Body in Richard Crashaw's Poems*

Carmen Gallo (Università Federico II di Napoli)

The paper means to focus on the body as an object of sacramental devotion in the poems found in Richard Crashaw's *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652). I mean to show the coexistence of a distinctive Catholic medieval imagery together with an attention to *reading* usually connected to the Reformation. Crashaw distinguishes himself from other metaphysical poets for its metonymic hyperrealism - involving parts of the body (breast, eyes) as well as its functions (eating, bleeding, crying) – which can be considered as compensation for the “sacramental crisis” of his time. Particular attention is paid to the omnipresence of wounds which mirrors the influence of Laud's sacramental theology and the persistence of the medieval cult of wounds in England. Interestingly, Crashaw poetically restores the devotion of Christ's wounds transmuting them in letters “to spell” or making the wounded body a sacred text as in *On the wounds of our Crucified Lord*.

Keywords: Richard Crashaw, *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652), Holy wounds, Blood Devotion

General Discipline Area: Literature, History of Religion

4) *Catherine the Exorcist: Picturing Possessed and Stigmatized Bodies in Fifteenth-Century Italy*

Diana Bullen Presciutti (University of Essex)

Quattrocento visual depictions of exorcism typically feature a male saint performing the ritual at a safe remove from a female demoniac. These visual strategies create a sharp contrast between engendered bodies, one that highlights the power of the ritual to bring masculine discipline to feminine disorder. Representations of the newly canonized St. Catherine of Siena, however, diverge from these conventions. In a surviving print and panel, Catherine, rather than eschewing bodily contact, grasps the hand of the demoniac – using the power of her stigmatized hands to expel the demonic presence. In another panel, Catherine performs the ritual by assuming the stigmatic pose, creating a striking visual parallel between possessed and stigmatized female bodies. Through a close examination of these images, this paper will elucidate what the special case of Catherine and the vehicle of visual representation can tell us about fifteenth-century conceptions of possession, madness, gender, and the body.

Keywords: stigmata; exorcism; madness; healing; Catherine of Siena; hagiography; saint; touch; gender

General Discipline Area: Art History, History of Religion