

**AN APPROACH TO THE  
EMBLEMATIC  
TRADITION IN 17<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY ANTI-  
CATHOLIC PAMPHLETS**

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The symbolic images of Christian Humanism —emblems, iconologies and hieroglyphics— are one of the most important components of the anti-Catholic rhetoric. Their universal and didactic character provided the pamphleteers with a wide range of possibilities to transmit moral and political messages to all kinds of readers (we cannot forget that in the seventeenth century, emblems were less elaborated and were written in the vernacular). In this paper, I will analyse these symbolic images in twelve anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish tracts of the 1620s, which made use of the multiple, different and even contradictory interpretations these emblems and iconologies offered. I will concentrate mainly on the most significant groups, that is, those related to the animal world, to the Classical mythology and to the Bible. Nevertheless, I will also make references to other types, so we can get a general perspective of the variety and extension of these visual metaphors.

Anglo-Spanish relations deteriorated after the Protestant reformation, as national interests were contaminated by religious conflicts. In 1606, however, there was a significant change, as James I's initial mistrust of Spain gave way to negotiations for a marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish princess Mary, which began in 1611. The Spaniards demanded freedom of conscience in England and the immediate release of the Catholic priests in prison (Loomie 1994: 238). Apart from that, James I's tolerant attitude was openly attacked by Parliament and many English Protestants, mainly after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1619. The English king held an ambiguous position: on the one hand, he supported his daughter Elizabeth, who was married to the Palatine elector, the head of the Protestant movement in Europe; and on the other, he continued the Spanish negotiations, which eventually failed. In the meantime, however, he managed to free over four thousand Catholic priests in 1622, which increased the already existing hatred towards Rome and Spain. The obstinacy of Spain together with the pressures of the English people on James provoked the end of the projected marriage in 1623.

Those events and the controversy that ensued were transmitted to the English population through a complex and distorting discursive net. Many pamphlets and plays presented and criticised each single point in the monarch's policy regarding the Spanish match. In this process, they elaborated a Catholic and Spanish "other," which, despite its inconsistency, was extremely helpful in reinforcing the English Protestant position. One of the main tools they used was the symbolic value of images such as emblems and hieroglyphics. Their universal and didactic character provided the pamphleteers with a wide range of possibilities for conveying moral and political messages to all kinds of readers (it must be kept in mind that in the seventeenth century, emblems became less elaborate and were being written in the vernacular). This paper analyses such symbolic images in six anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish tracts of the first half of the 1620s,<sup>1</sup> which made use of the multiple, different and even contradictory interpretations those emblems and icons offered. I will focus on the most significant groups, that is, those related to the animal world, to Classical mythology and to the Bible. Nevertheless, I will also make reference to other types, so we can get a general perspective of the variety and extension of these visual metaphors.

Similes referring to animals are frequently used to describe or recreate the enemy. In addition to its animalising effect, each image had several meanings which were attributed to the social groups the pamphleteers tried to attack.

A donkey appears in *An Experimentall Discoverie of the Spanish Practises* to ridicule the sophists and scholars of the Church of Rome (Scott 1623: 2), who are associated with this animal because of their ignorance. George Goodwin, for instance, attributes stupidity and falsity to Spaniards by comparing them to an ass disguised as a lion which is finally disclosed and mocked (Goodwin 1624: 35). Many emblems of this period present this same interpretation, as can be seen in Alciato's seventh emblem, *Non tibi, sed religioni*, where a stupid and proud donkey shows off in front of a crowd of people. The animal thinks they are worshipping him, but in fact, they just worship the image he is carrying.<sup>2</sup>

The Spaniards and the Catholic clergy are presented as pigs—which is even more common due to the offensive connotations of impurity and immorality applied to this animal—in such texts as *An Experimentall*

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<sup>1</sup>*An Arrow against Idolatry* (1624), *The Abuses of the Romish Church Anatomized* (1623), *Babels Balm* (1624), *The Anatomie of the Romane Clergie* (1623), *An Experimentall Discoverie of the Spanish Practises* (1623) and *Englands Ioy for Suppressing the Papists and Banishing the Priests* (1624).

<sup>2</sup>Cesare Ripa points out the negative connotations of this image in his iconographic portrayals *Arrogancia* (Ripa 1987: 1.112), *Ignorancia de todas las cosas* (Ripa 1987: 1.504), *Impiedad* (Ripa 1987: 1.510), *Indocilidad* (Ripa 1987: 1.517), *Obstinación* (Ripa 1987: 2.141), *Pereza* (Ripa 1987: 2.195-96) and *Mofa* (Ripa 1987: 2.92).

*Discoverie* (Scott 1623: 31), *The Abuses of the Romish Church Anatomized* (1623: B2) and *Babels Balms* (Goodwin 1624: 78, 89). Through this simile, which plays a central role in Ripa's iconographies *Avidez, Gula* (Ripa 1987: 1.127, 239, 472), *Ocio* (Ripa 1987: 2.143) and *Perfidia* (Ripa 1987: 2.197), the Protestant authors criticised the alleged incontinence and excessive carnal appetites of the papists.

*An Experimentall Discoverie* (Scott 1623: 1, 31) and *Babels Balm* (Goodwin 1624: 50) compare the Spaniards and the Pope to an owl. Its negative meanings in emblematic literature, such as death, the night or vile thoughts serve to justify this identification for these authors: "The popes Soules darknesse, and his friends retraite. / It also shewes, that papists hate Day-light, / And, most like Owles, see best in the darkest Night." (Goodwin 1624: 50).

The owl also appears in Ripa's representation of *Escarnio* (Ripa 1987: 1.350), *Superstición* (Ripa 1987: 2.334-42) and *Caudal* (Ripa 1987: 1.184), concepts which form part of the attack against the Church of Rome, often described as a market whose only objective was to get rich using the ignorance and superstition of their followers. However, the pamphleteers ignore the positive aspects associated with this animal, which was also the symbol of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom.

Something quite similar happens to the image of the peacock, which *The Abuses of the Romish Church* (1623: B5) and *An Experimentall Discoverie* (Scott 1623: 31) link with Spain and papal pride. Although in Christian art this metaphor was considered a symbol of immortality and the uncorrupted soul (Cirlot 1958: 337), the Protestant authors focus only on opinions that defined it as an arrogant and presumptuous bird (Ripa 1987: 1.112, 271-72, 319; Ripa 1987: 2.5, 92), which in fact agree with Thomas Scott's description of Spaniards as "bragging peacocks" (Scott 1623: 31).

They are also accused of ignorance through the monkey, which represents insolence (Ripa 1987: 1.269), stupidity (Whitney 1988: 240, 268) and, in Goodwin's pamphlet, falsity and incontinence. The identification of this animal with the devil was also frequent in contemporary texts, such as James I's *Daemonologie* (James I 1597: 15), Samuel Heron's *Works* (Heron 1607) and William Perkin's *A Discourse of the Art of Witchcraft* (Perkin 1608: 119), an idea that, although not present in an explicit form in the pamphlets, would be part of the readers' common knowledge.

The lion's<sup>3</sup> fierceness is mentioned by James I when he refers to the devil who "could find waies inough without anie helpe of others to wrack al

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<sup>3</sup>The lion figures in multiple iconographic representations and emblems, such as *Ambición* (Ripa 1987: 1.81-82), *Ira* (Alciato 1985: 99), *Furor et rabies* (Alciato 1985: 93 and Whitney

mankinde: whereunto he employes his whole study, and *goeth about like a roaring lion* (as Peter saith) to that effect..." (James I 1597: 21). This would indirectly emphasise the accusation found in the pamphlets that the Pope was the Antichrist (Goodwin 1624: 24). The lion is, in addition, a symbol of royalty and the capacity to judge and punish, as we see in Ripas's iconographic portrayals *Castigo* (Ripa 1987: 1.183-84) and *Venganza* (Ripa 1987: 2.390), which present him as a frightening and terrible being. All these characteristics are attributed to the Head of Rome, who is described in the pamphlets as a merciless tyrant who coerces and threatens his followers.

This comparison is reinforced with other metaphors, such as the wolf and the locust, that refer to the destructive power of the papacy and appear in *The Abuses of the Romish Church* (1623: C3) and *Babels Balm* (Goodwin 1624: 38, 46, 51, 78-9). Northern mythology considers the first one the principle of evil (Cirlot 1958: 268), while the second one symbolises, according to Ripa, "el castigo divino que envía Dios sobre los pueblos" ("divine punishment which God sends down upon the nations of the Earth"). In the pamphleteers' opinion, the Papists become a punishment for the true Christian, whom they seek to destroy.

Finally, an animal metaphor which is constantly alluded to in most pamphlets is the serpent, as it is shown in *An Arrow against Idolatry*, in which the Roman Church is accused of having "for the parent of it, the dragon or Divill, that old Serpent, who used his most utmost skil, cunning and craft, to beget and bring forth this his soulest child" (Ainsworth 1624: 89). Emblematic literature points out the multiple negative meanings attributed to this figure, such as cunning, falsity, heresy, lust or envy, but also proposes several positive connotations, such as wisdom, spiritual strength, prudence or health, which are, of course, ignored by the pamphleteers.<sup>4</sup>

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1988: 45), *Cólera* (Ripa 1987: 1.199-200), *Irritación* (Ripa 1987: 1.539) and *Furor indómito* (Ripa 1987: 1.453).

<sup>4</sup>For the negative meanings, the reader may consult Ripa's *Discordia* (Ripa 1987: 1.287), *Dolor* (Ripa 1987: 1.292-3), *Insidia* (Ripa 1987: 1.530), *Odio* (Ripa 1987: 2.10), *Guerra* (Ripa 1987: 2.187), *Pecado* (Ripa 1987: 2.187-88), *Peligro* (Ripa 1987: 2.188-89), *Fraude* (Ripa 1987: 1.444), *Herejía* (Ripa 1987: 1.474-75), *Injuria* (Ripa 1987: 1.526-27), *Engaño* (Ripa 1987: 1.340), *Desprecio y destrucción de las malas pasiones* (Ripa 1987: 1.273-74), *Apetitos inferiores* (Ripa 1987: 1.246) and *Envidia* (Ripa 1987: 1.341). See also Whitney's emblems *Remedium tempestium sit* (Whitney 1988: 171), *Si deus nobiscum quis contra nos* (Whitney 1988: 264), *Invidia integratis assecla* (Whitney 1988: 118) and *Invidiae descriptio* (Whitney 1988: 192), and Peacham's *Dolus* (Peacham 1612: 47), *Virtutem aut vitium sequi genus* (Peacham 1612: 49) and *Libidinis effecta* (Peacham 1612: 152). For the positive connotations, *Malis moribus bonas leges* (Peacham 1612: 34), *Initium sapientiae* (Peacham 1612: 2), *Fortaleza del ánimo* (Ripa 1987: 1.437-40), *Prudencia* (Ripa 1987: 2.5-6) and *Salud* (Ripa 1987: 2.290-91) can be consulted.

In opposition to the serpent, we find the image of the sheep traditionally attributed to Christ's followers. *The Legend of the Iesuites* (1623: B2) and *Babels Balm* (Goodwin 1624: 8, 46-8, 79, 85) show many examples that subvert the biblical image of the good shepherd and present a Pope that tortures and destroys his flock: "Alas, hee's not Sheeps feeder, but Confounder: / Black-cakered Conscience, ovide, Sheep-wounder" (Goodwin 1624: 48). With the word "ovicide," Goodwin not only accuses him of being an assassin of the Church, but of God himself, as Jesus is considered "the innocent lamb" of the New Testament (Ainsworth 1624: 111).

The symbol of the sheep in these writings can have two possible interpretations. The first one, based on the Bible, means innocence (Ripa 1987: 1.529), humility (Ripa 1987: 1.499) and moderation (Ripa 1987: 2.89) and opposes other emblems such as *Vini energia* (Peacham 1612: 157) or iconographic representations, such as *Desidia* (Ripa 1987: 1.271) and *Estulticia* (Ripa 1987: 1.387), where it is drawn as a simple and confused animal. The pamphlets employ both meanings to characterise, on the one hand, the true God, and on the other, what they considered the ignorant and stupid mass that followed the Pope and the Catholic clergy.

The multiple and diverse metaphors relating to Classical mythology show the pamphleteers' and readers' familiarity with this tradition. In contrast with the images of the animal world, these tropes are quite homogeneous and do not present double interpretations or paradoxical meanings; that is why the authors always use identical figures to attack each single individual or group.

The Pope's identification with Mars —"Hee's Frantick, frets, Mars-like molestteth all: / With two-edged Swords, doth fight and brawle" (Goodwin 1624: 16)— was quite helpful for the Protestant writers, as he personified the need for violence in all cosmic orders. Ripa is much more graphic in his iconography *Carro de Marte* (Ripa 1987: 1.168), where he draws the god of war as a terrible and fierce man surrounded by arms and monsters that underline his capacity to frighten and threaten the enemy. By means of this metaphor, Lasider and Goodwin point out the responsibility of the Papacy in the European conflicts of this period, which, according to these authors, was part of a strategy to spread his dominion. He is not considered a spiritual guide, but a political man without scruples.

His allegedly excessive power allows him to be compared with Jove, the supreme deity of the ancient Romans: "Why maist not call him Iupiter, Earth's thunder, / Yet Elohim? The Worlds great God of Wonder?... / That all the World must bow to th' Pope of Rome..." (Goodwin 1624: 5). The symbolism of his attributes, explained in Ripa's iconography *Carro de Jupiter* (Ripa 1987: 1.168-69) was extremely useful: the lance as supremacy, the ray as punishment,

the eagle as power and the throne and the crown as majesty; all of them mark the absolute authority of the Head of Rome and the threat he presumably represented for the Protestant world (see Whitney's sixty-first emblem, *Tecum habita*).

Finally, he is also compared to Pluto, the ruler of the underworld, linked, by extension, to hell and the devil. The description of Rome as a "stygian chaos" (Goodwin 1624: 34, 37, 44, 79), as well as Proserpine's rape reinforce this interpretation. The latter is one of the most common episodes connected with this mythological character, which would add a clear reference to accusations of papal lust. Moreover, if we consider the possible confusion that could be created between Pluto and Plutus, the god personifying wealth, we could assume that they would indirectly add another feature to this representation: the Pope's alleged extreme desire for riches.

This negative portrait is supported by his identification with extremely violent and deformed mythological beings, such as the monsters and the giants. In this sense, he is compared to Briareus (Goodwin 1624: 5), Tifeus (Goodwin 1624: 9), Titius (Goodwin 1624: 12) and the Cyclops (Goodwin 1624: 43, 65, 82), whose physical deformity was considered a proof of their moral degradation. Anteus, one of the Cyclops, is, in fact, the central element in Ripa's iconography *Combate de la razón con el apetito* (Ripa 1987: 1.193-94), where he stands for what is purely material and corporeal. Through these metaphors, the Bishop of Rome is deprived of his intellect or spirituality, an attack which is also present when he is compared to the Titans (Goodwin 1624: 17), specially, Chrono, who rebelled against his father and devoured his own children in order to protect his power. The pamphleteers made use of this figure to accuse the Pope of provoking the disobedience of the Catholic subjects to their Protestant monarchs, something portrayed as unnatural as an attack against one's progenitor or offspring.

On the other hand, Rome is normally linked to goddesses and female monsters characterised by their seductive and destructive power. Goodwin likens her to Diana, the moon and also deity of hunting, an emblem of the aggressive and uncontrollable woman. James I includes in his *Daemonologioe* (James I 1597: 51) one of the meanings associated with this goddess which is very close to the general image of Rome in *Babels Balm*, that is, the female ruler of the underworld. This interpretation had been very influential in medieval witchcraft (James I 1597: 125) and is probably the sense referred to by the pamphleteers due to its connection with the superstition that, according to the reformers, defined the Church of Rome.

Finally, the Church of Rome is likened to the Sirens, emblems of prostitution and dangerous temptations (Goodwin 1624: 52) and to the Gorgon

(Goodwin 1624: 64-5), who, because of her incontinence, is, together with Bacchus, the clearest representation of the Papist clergy.

Regarding biblical references, the multiple parallels with the Old Testament were extremely helpful for praising the English monarchy. Margaret Aston explains the use of the *Book of Kings* in order to create continuity between the Tudor dynasty and the main rulers of Judah (Aston 1993: 43). Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I were presented as the true descendants of David, Solomon, Josiah or Hezekiah, after the long parenthesis of confusion and fraud that had characterised, according to the Church of England, the Catholic period. This tradition continued with James I, who is compared in these pamphlets to significant figures of the Old Testament.

*Englands Ioy* describes this monarch as a new Nehemiah<sup>5</sup> (Scott 1624: 3, 9, 10) who returns to reform London and clean it of its sins. London becomes therefore the New Jerusalem, God's chosen city, whose king has liberated it from the Papist weed. Other figures he is likened to are Jeremiah (Scott 1624: 5) —who saved the Ark of the Covenant from Nebuchadnezzar,— Jacob (Scott 1624: 9) —the father of the founders of the twelve tribes of Jerusalem,— Abraham (Scott 1624: 10), Moses (Scott 1624: 13), and finally, Josiah (Scott 1624: 8, 16), David (Scott 1624: 10) and Solomon (Scott 1624: 13) —three of the most important kings of Israel, well known for their struggle against idolatry and corruption.

The reference to Solomon is problematic, as he was also influenced by his foreign wives and worshipped other gods. This episode, which formed part of many illustrations of the medieval Bible, receives a new meaning in the Reformation. The Jewish King could stand for the mad man who was once afraid of God. His idolatry shows how even the wisest person can be mistaken. In this sense, the relation created between him and James I in the pamphlet may imply that the English monarch's attention is being drawn in the Jesuit and Papist threat. His laws against them are praised, but they are not considered.

The figure of Josiah was important too. He was defined by two actions: his fight against the cult of Baal and the recovery of the Book of the Law. In the Protestant period, this king was associated with Edward VI and sixty years later this image was recovered to refer to a king with clear pro-Catholic tendencies. The parallel between James I and Josiah was probably to draw attention again to a king who did not behave as the true Head of Anglicanism. For many of his subjects, Edward VI had been sent from heaven to complete his father's work; now, it was James's duty to continue his ancestors' actions.

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<sup>5</sup>A Hebrew leader of the fifth century B. C., he reconstructed the walls of Jerusalem and later became its governor introducing multiple reforms to eliminate corruption.

The Papists are likened to biblical characters who are clearly opposed to those describing the English monarchs. The Pope is compared to tyrannical and idolatrous kings, such as Jeroboam (Ainsworth 1624: 90, 93) and Nebuchadnezzar (Goodwin 1624: 20), as well as with Baal himself. The figures of the New Testament belong to two groups: on the one hand, to the political-religious rulers who persecuted Christ, such as Caifas (Goodwin 1624: 6, 17, 38), Anas (Goodwin 1624: 38), Herod (Goodwin 1624: 66), Pilate (Goodwin 1624: 6) and Judas (Goodwin 1624: 6); and on the other hand, those referring to hell (Ainsworth 1624: 90), to the apocalyptic beast (Ainsworth 1624: 89) or Satan (Goodwin 1624: 6, 12, 35, 36, 47, 82).

There are also many parallels between Rome and several corrupt women of the Biblical tradition. Good examples are Jezebel (Ainsworth 1624: 90) and the whore of the Apocalypse since they represent the Papists' alleged falsity and idolatry, as well as the seductive and deceitful power of their church. This is also compared to cities such as Sodom (Ainsworth 1624: 115; Goodwin 1624: 77), Babylon (Ainsworth 1624: 97, Goodwin 1624: 38, 76), Gomorrah (Goodwin 1624: 80) and Babel (Ainsworth 1624: 97), all of them symbols of human pride and vanity. The relation between Babel and Babylon was a commonplace from 1560 onwards, so the link between Rome and the latter permitted a connection between the destruction of Babel and the fall of the Pope (Aston 75). Ainsworth and Goodwin seem to continue this tradition and announce the imminent end of proud and corrupt Rome, which could not be different from that of her ancestors.

The Bible was not only one of the main sources of the pamphlets, but also a powerful instrument to justify and legitimise Protestant England. The idea that the Pope was considered the Antichrist, that Rome was a symbol of perversion or that James I had been sent by God to save his subjects from the Papists were not simple stories believed by just a few. They were an essential part of the ethos of the Church of England, which considered itself the inheritor of the divine project begun by the Jewish kings and confirmed by Christ himself. Rome had interrupted it and now it was their duty to restore it.

It is impossible to sum up all the different types of icons found in these six pamphlets. They belong to very diverse groups related to war, nature, the family and of course, those analysed in this paper, linked with the animal world, Classical mythology and the Bible. All of them were part of a didactic strategy whereby images were thought to facilitate the reading of texts, an idea based on Platonism, which defended the sense of sight as the best way to attain knowledge (González de Zárate 1987: 23). The pamphleteers made extensive use of the possibilities this tradition offered them and manipulated the different and sometimes even contradictory meanings these visual metaphors presented.



The result was the construction of a unified “other” —the Catholic, the Spaniard, the Pope— in which they projected their own weakness. However, the emblematic language was well-known to the common reader, who could probably observe some paradoxes behind the intentional omissions of the writers, paradoxes that revealed the artificiality and inconsistency of this process of alterity.

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