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978-0-521-76017-1 - Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England

Adrian Streete

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MODERN ENGLAND

Containing detailed readings of plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Middleton, as well as poetry and prose, this book provides a major historical and critical reassessment of the relationship between early modern Protestantism and drama. Examining the complex and painful shift from late medieval religious culture to a society dominated by the ideas of the Reformers, Adrian Streete presents a fresh understanding of Reformed theology and the representation of early modern subjectivity. Through close analysis of major thinkers such as Augustine, William of Ockham, Erasmus, Luther and Calvin, the book argues for the profoundly Christological focus of Reformed theology and explores how this manifests itself in early modern drama. Moving beyond questions of authorial 'belief', Streete assesses Elizabethan and Jacobean drama's engagement with the challenges of the Reformation.

ADRIAN STREETE is Lecturer in English at Queen's University, Belfast. His research focuses on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, poetry and prose, and his previous publications include *Re-Figuring Mimesis: Representation in Early Modern Literature* (co-editor, with Jonathan Holmes, 2005) and articles in journals such as the *Review of English Studies*, *Textual Practice*, *Shakespeare* and *Literature and History*.

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*For my parents, with love*

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## *Acknowledgements*

There is a wonderful book by Bill Duncan called *The Wee Book of Calvin: Air-Kissing in the North-East*. It is a parody of those small texts that are found in self-help sections or in card shops and that promise calmness, confidence, or whatever. But it is much more astringent, sceptical and canny than those mass-produced placebos, offering a beautifully written interchange of aphorisms and short essays on the Calvinist heritage of north-east Scotland, while also conveying a grudging respect for that tradition. In the final section, 'Are You a Calvinist?', Duncan writes this: 'You shiver with a sudden thrill when, after days of the sun's grinding dazzle, the trembling static of blue sky and the distant blur of altocumulus, a car passes the open window, its tyres hissing across the dusk as you turn from your book to the silent billow of the curtain rising like a ghost as you close your eyes and inhale the scent of rain.' I am not a Calvinist; I am not even religious. But I think I understand this. Duncan also observes: 'Your favourite confectionary product is "Fisherman's Friend – Extra Strong"'. For those friends and family who know of my devotion to the Calvinist sweetie par excellence, this too might go some way to explaining my fascination with this complex religion, its adherents and opponents. And although this present book has taken much longer to complete than it should have, as Duncan wisely notes: 'If it didnae hurt it wiznae worth daein.'

I have given shorter versions of various chapters at conferences, symposia and seminars in Stirling, Manchester, Stratford-upon-Avon, Belfast and New Orleans and I am grateful to the comments and suggestions made at each by colleagues and students. Thanks to staff at the National Library of Scotland, New College Library, Edinburgh University Library, University of Stirling Library and the Queen's University of Belfast Library for assistance and help. A section of Chapter 1 and most of Chapter 5 was published in an earlier version as "'Reforming Signs": Semiotics, Calvinism and Clothing in Sixteenth Century England', *Literature and History*, 12,

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It is good at last to be able to thank those who have helped to make this book better than it might otherwise have been. I began work on it at the University of Stirling, and I am grateful to a number of people there, past and present, including Vance Adair, Fiona Chalamanda, Martin Davies, Neil Keeble, David Reid, Angela Smith and Robin Sowerby. Further afield, thanks to Richard Dutton, Jonathan Holmes, Paul Innes, Chris Insole, John Joughin and James Knowles.

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relative novice through an occasionally daunting process. And I am grateful to the anonymous reports of two very helpful press readers, many of whose suggestions I have incorporated. Naturally, any errors or idiocies are my own.

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