

*Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature* offers a highly original examination of Victorian cultural and social conventions through readings of popular literary representations of Roman Catholicism. Maureen Moran argues that Catholic sensationalism provided a rich imaginative resource for Victorians of all denominations (and none) through which a range of cultural contradictions and conflicts could be explored and alternative identities proposed. Previous studies of Catholicism in the period have focused on notions of the exotic, corrupt religious Other which is inscribed as the implacable anti-English enemy. However, extreme representations of Catholic counterculture also fulfil a more subversive function, mirroring and deconstructing domestic norms and revealing ambivalence about cherished ideals of public and private life. Considering the work of authors including Charles Kingsley, Wilkie Collins, Charlotte Brontë, Robert Browning, George Eliot, Grace Aguilar, Mary Ward, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Francis Thompson, this lively account shows the centrality of the sensational modelling of Catholicism to secular debates about imperialism, gender and sexuality, the role of the law and the body, the power of the emotions and the pleasures of aesthetic sensuality.