

## What is a Catholic Poem?: Explicitness and Censorship in Tudor and Stuart Religious Verse.

Alison Shell

What is a Catholic poem?<sup>1</sup> This is a question crucial to a proper appreciation of post-Reformation religious verse, but surprisingly hard to answer. Louise Imogen Guiney, the first and only anthologist of recusant verse, made her choice from among poems written by Catholics, often regardless of subject; but most critics would be less catholic than she, limiting the designation to verse demonstrating devotional or religio-political sentiments. Any religious poem written by a Catholic is, in one sense, a Catholic poem; yet the distinctiveness of Catholic poetry rests in those elements which a Protestant could not have imagined or condoned. To make things more awkward still, identifying such elements is very problematic. In the past, the label of Catholic, or of Catholic-influenced, has seemed appropriate for the kind of poem containing elements traditionally attributed to Catholic sources -but in full recognition of the fact that these poems might or might not actually be *written* by Catholics. This is particularly true of poems which in some way show the influence of Ignatian meditational discipline, many of which were written by converts from Catholicism, like Donne, or lifelong conformists like Herbert.<sup>2</sup> Is a Catholic poem one that was read only by Catholics, or could it reach Protestants as well? Was it copied only by Catholics? - and if one finds what one thinks of as a Catholic poem in a manuscript miscellany, can one automatically assume that the compiler was Catholic? Or ought one to be suspicious of all binary oppositions, not only between Catholic and Protestant poems, but between Catholic and Protestant writers and readers? This is not, in short, an area in which there has been much taxonomical rigour. This essay, based around a limited number of case-studies, makes a preliminary attempt to answer the question, arguing in particular that a satisfactory response needs to address the circumstances of early modern censorship, both of an external and an internal kind.

Hard cases, though, are not the whole story. Some kinds of Catholic poem are very easy to define as such, and four provisional categories - to be taken as overlapping rather than discrete - can be identified straight away. First, early modern Catholic writers produced many uncompromising, usually polemical poems, unmistakably setting Catholics up in opposition to Protestants: Catholic martyr-ballads are obvious examples, such as the anonymous 'Why do I use my paper, ink and pen?', written on the death of Edmund Campion. Secondly, some non-religious poems deserve the definition because they are known to be written by a Catholic, and have traditionally been read in relation to their religious context: these can be political, or linked to a biographical event. One example is Chideock Tichborne's exercise in *contemptus mundi*, 'My prime of youth is but a frost of cares', composed the night before Tichborne's execution for his part in the Babington Conspiracy. Thirdly, it seems reasonable to count as Catholic any religious poems which do not touch on areas of Catholic/Protestant difference, but are always or usually found in the company of more obviously Catholic poems, in the context of a manuscript miscellany or printed anthology. Lastly, non-polemical religious poems of Catholic origin, most usually devotional, could be transferred into the Protestant mainstream, perhaps with relatively minor rewritings. Robert Southwell's *St Peter's Complaint*, a best-selling item in the publishing mainstream after Southwell's execution in 1595 and for many years thereafter, is a well-known example of this phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

With the fourth of these categories, we come on to censorship. Not all poems of Southwell's enjoyed mainstream popularity - as is well known, certain poems of his were circulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet not printed until the nineteenth because of their content - and even poetry printed in the mainstream could be edited to remove Catholic matter.<sup>4</sup> This illustrates a larger point: every poem, or sequence of poems, which survives both in a Catholic version and in a version doctored for Protestant tastes provides a checklist

of what a censor or censors, at one particular point in time, thought too objectionable to leave in.<sup>5</sup> A consciousness of censorship tells us that we ought to supplement the question 'what is a Catholic poem?', with a further one: 'which *elements* of a poem, or a poet's work, were thought too Catholic by Protestant contemporaries?'. But this entails, in the first instance, admitting that common ground among Tudor and Stuart religious poets is vastly more important than difference. Much writing on the topic is marred both by insufficiently rigorous definitions of the Catholic, or the Protestant, or the puritan aesthetic, and, conversely, an unwillingness to admit areas of overlap. Though differing theological emphases certainly have differing imaginative knock-on effects, criticism is often unwilling to search for counter-examples when identifying the Protestant, or Catholic, elements of a text. One is, perhaps, least likely to get it wrong if one takes one's bearings from contemporary controversial theology: going, unashamedly, for the obvious first.

An awareness of censorship is valuable here, because censors at this date - or at any other - have a pronounced tendency towards literal-mindedness. Censors have no interest in, for instance, the precise nature of imaging undertaken by a poet; they go straight for the polemical flashpoints, looking for the transubstantiationist statement<sup>6</sup> in eucharistic verse, or the implications of mentioning the Virgin Mary, the saints or purgatory. Yet, if those expecting subtlety in a censor are likely to be disappointed, even consistency can sometimes be elusive. A black-letter, much-adapted broadside version of the Catholic sacred ballad 'Jerusalem, my happy home', printed in the mainstream and recorded in the 1624 list of ballads in the Stationers' Register, omits one verse which does survive in manuscript versions, 'Our Ladie singes *magnificat*,/with tune surpassinge sweete,/And all the virginns beare their partes,/sitinge [about] her feete' - but it leaves in other saints, Augustine, Ambrose and Mary Magdalen.<sup>7</sup>

Even with sole-authored ballad texts, verses have a pronounced tendency to float and evolve during the process of transmission.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, one is probably entitled to assume an official or unofficial censorship here, since the verse appears in another mainstream - if shadily mainstream - printed version of this poem, discussed below. If one places these two texts side by side, the intervention of a censor would suggest Catholic matter; but even if no manuscript evidence survived, the tolerant mention of saints might lead us to suspect, at least, a Catholic author for this particular poem. And this, in turn, points towards two conclusions: the limits of censorship as evidence; and a reminder that a Protestant audience could be surprisingly broad-minded - if more so as readers than as writers.

One cannot invariably assume, across the entire Elizabethan and Stuart period, that lines, or poems, about a topic challenged by the reformers bespeak a Catholic author. But trying to date a poem, then placing it in the context of conformity at the time it was written, can be a valuable way of alerting oneself to something unusual. To revisit an example cited above - the suppression in the mid-1590s of some of Southwell's poems - I know of no late Elizabethan Protestant verse on the Virgin Mary's death and assumption.<sup>9</sup> Yet during the 1630s and the ascendancy of Archbishop Laud, a considerable degree of Marian veneration was practised by at least some members of the Church of England.<sup>10</sup> Crashaw's poem on the Assumption, for instance, was probably written during the 1630s in the high-church, highly-charged atmosphere of Peterhouse, and was published in the first edition of *Steps to the Temple* in 1646. Crashaw had long converted to Catholicism by this stage, though *Steps to the Temple* discreetly avoids mentioning this. But the poem on the Assumption was probably not left in on the grounds that Crashaw was probably, technically, a Protestant when he wrote it - censorship in the 1640s was, after all, a very hit-and-miss affair.

Looking at Crashaw's career more generally, one sees a widespread difficulty of defining the Catholic poem. How is one to define religious verse, dealing with Catholic matter, written by a Catholic convert before he converted? It would be possible to call Crashaw's religious poems Catholic by retrospection, since so many of them seem to be experimenting with

Catholicism: yet how would we think of them if his Catholicism had remained at the experimental level, and he had stayed a member of the Church of England?<sup>11</sup> The fact of imaginative experimentation in religious verse reminds one of how important it is to give full weight to internal censorship, as well as external, and invites another question still: what, after all, did one do, when one wrote a religious poem in Tudor or Stuart England? To write any piece of Christian poetry - or, for that matter, any poetry addressing the tenets of an established religion - is an act of monitoring, testing a particular assortment of religious tropes against internalized standards of orthodoxy: one's own, and often other people's as well. This is not to deny that a writer of religious verse can be heretical or irreligious at times, either accidentally or - as so frequently with Donne - calculatedly, since the same standards define both conformity and deviation.

One can assume that there were several kinds of implied reader, differently foregrounded in different cases, for all religious verse at this date. God is the ideal, all-knowing reader. Then there is the orthodox reader, who agrees with the poet, without being able to see into his or her mind. To such readers, poets are generally anxious to demonstrate an orthodox position, which frequently entails defining their difference from other implied readers with who they are in theological disagreement: papists, puritans, Arminians, or the more exotically heterodox. This is where an internalized censorship could come into play, because of the necessity of not being misinterpreted - poets were constantly justifying themselves to an implied interlocutor who had, at least, the power of censure. I would argue that this was much more of an imaginative restriction to Protestants than to Catholics - yet all the same, Catholics were sometimes impelled to engage in explicit poetic justification of Catholic devotional practice, as if to a non-Catholic audience.

These could prove acceptable to a mainstream audience - here as elsewhere, one has to think beyond the old category of recusant writing. One such example can be found in the title-poem of a poetic miscellany which was issued by a mainstream publisher, William Ferbrand, in 1601, and registered at Stationers' Hall: *The song of Mary the mother of Christ: containing the story of his life and passion. The teares of Christ in the garden: with the description of heavenly Jerusalem.*<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the Bible would have validated Mary's song of praise, and the fact of her meditating on the life of Christ, Mary tends to define English Protestant poetics by her polemically-induced absence. The idea of writing a poem called 'The song of Mary' might just have been possible to a Protestant, although the pre-Laudian date would be very surprising.<sup>13</sup> Still, one begins reading the title-poem with a strong presumption of Catholic origin, which is borne out in the poetic preamble: a conventional declaration of authorial incapacity, unconventionally adapted to justify invoking saints. The poet begins 'Faine would I write, my minde ashamed is, / My verse doth feare to do the matter wrong. ..' (f.A2a), and is reassured by God: 'To publish it unworthy art thou found, / Yet I accept the proffer of thy will...' (p. 2). The poet then asks the saints, 'Lend me your notes, if now you sing no more'; but the saints reply 'No, thinke not so, our song for ever is. ..' (p. 2) and invite him to join with them in praising the name of Jesus.

As the poet reports, collective humility makes them reluctant to begin: 'For none did thinke him worthy to be one, / And every one to other there gaue place:/But bowing knees to Iesus euery one, / They him besought for to decide the case. / Who said to me, most fit for this appeares / My mothers plaint, and sacred Virgins teares' (p. 4). The Virgin modestly agrees, and begins her narrative with a long hymn of obeisant praise to Jehovah. This stress on the Virgin's humility, on the saints' answerability to God and, most of all, Christ's legitimization of the Virgin's song is far from accidental; it pre-empts and counteracts any sense that the Virgin - as so often in late medieval piety - is acting in a semi-autonomous manner. This is not just a Christianized version of invoking the muses, but a poetic fictionalization of traditional Catholic doctrine, written explicitly to counter the assumptions and criticisms of an implied Protestant reader.<sup>14</sup> The poem would hardly have pleased all Protestants, but for

many, the fictionality of a poem might have been acceptable where a tract justifying the invocation of saints would have been felt dangerous.

Later in the poem, the narrative of the Last Supper is doing something very similar:

He caused them, the table for to lay,  
And eate the Lambe as vse was euery where,  
A figure of more sweet and heauenly cheere.  
Which he him selfe did institute and giue,  
Whereby his Church should euer eate and liue.

There was that table furnished that night,  
With heauenly Manna, holy Angels foode:  
The Paschall Lambe, the honny, giuing light,  
The Testament, the holy sprinckled bloud,  
The tree of life, which midst the garden stood.  
The meale and oyle, which eaten lasteth still,  
Elias loafe, to walke from crib to hill.

(pp. 14-15)

This description imagines the Gospel scene in a manner which some non-Catholic readers would find acceptable, but with imaginative details to which a Catholic writer would have had easier access than a Protestant. This needs to be recognized with an eye to counter-examples. It would, for instance, be easy to point to the cornucopian abundance of eucharistic imagery in this passage, clearly owing something to late-medieval Corpus Christi devotions, and conclude simply from this that the last stanza reveals a Catholic author; but though there is certainly a high quantity and concentration of eucharistic language, reformers were far from uniform in holding a low doctrine of the Sacrament.<sup>15</sup> Most of the language is typological - the bread and wine is compared to the Israelites' manna, the sacrificial lamb of Passover, then seen as the redemptive antithesis of the apple in Genesis - and so would have been acceptable within the English reformed tradition. Yet the employment of typological instances is very much a matter for individual authorial imaginations: and in this passage, the last instance - the cake fed to Elijah in I Kings 19, giving him enough strength to walk for 40 days and 40 nights - is unmistakably described in terms of the physical body of Christ, seeming to invite literal identification between Elijah's loaf, Christ's crucified body and the bread and wine of the Eucharist. 'Elias's loaf is literally, physically, imagined as walking from the crib to hill. While this is not spelling out transubstantiationist ideas, a transubstantiation takes place in the language: it is perhaps no coincidence that this comes last in the catalogue of sacred epithets.

The presumption of Catholic matter is borne out by the other poems in *The song of Mary*, mostly but not wholly mentioned on the title page: 'The teares of our Sauour in the Garden'; 'A heauenly Prayer in contempt of the world, and the vanities thereof'; 'The description of heauenly Jerusalem' beginning 'Jerusalem thy ioyes divine.. .'; 'Another on the same subiect,' beginning 'Jerusalem, my happy home. ..'; and 'A sinners supplication, or the soules meditation.' Some of the titles and first lines are enough, on their own, to alert one to a possible Catholic compilation: for instance, the two hymns on Jerusalem are of frequent occurrence in the manuscript poetic collections of Catholics. This may have been a privately kept miscellany that fell into the hands of the printer or publisher - many anthologies came to be printed by just that route -or a compilation pieced together by them.<sup>16</sup> In either case, the book's bibliographical arrangement is far from innocent. As already argued, the title-poem is a very placatory piece of writing in the way it justifies itself to an imagined Protestant interlocutor; whether it was written for mainstream, print publication or not, it is, at least, reasonably suitable for it. But some copies of the book included more inflammatory material. Most surviving copies are without the last four leaves, Signature F.<sup>17</sup> But surviving, more

complete ones reveal that this portion of the book contains the unexpurgated version of 'Jerusalem, my happy home', the Catholic ballad discussed above, and another, fiercely polemical Catholic poem, 'O blessed God, O Saviour sweet'. One verse of the latter refers specifically to the rack, the torture strongly associated in mid-Elizabethan England with the methods of the priest-catcher Richard Topcliffe: 'Then would I boldly dare to say, / that neyther racke nor corde; / Nor all the torments in the world, / should make me loose my Lord' (f.F4a).<sup>18</sup>

One needs, perhaps, to remind oneself that the book was entered at r Stationers' Hall.<sup>19</sup> But the printer of this text, Edward Allde, had a history of printing dubious matter, Catholic and other: he had his press seized in 1597 for printing a popish confession, and two years later is mentioned in an order of the Master and Wardens for printing certain satires which had been ordered to be burnt.<sup>20</sup> This is a collection similarly operating on the limits of legality, probably not sold to all and sundry, even if technically on the open market; many Protestants would have tolerated the content of - at least - the main book, but most would have found it antipathetic to some degree. As with censorable literature throughout the ages, there would have been *ad hoc*, irrecoverable ways for the right sort of customer to make their preferences known. But even if one assumes an under-the-counter element to the production and distribution of this book in general, one is still left with the fact that only some copies were upgraded with the supplement.<sup>21</sup> Here, then, there survives evidence of something which is normally very hard to gauge: an idea of what the publisher thought was the most potentially dangerous material in the book. For these semi-legal operators, it seems, the full catalogue of saints in 'Jerusalem, my happy home', and the exhortation towards martyrdom in 'O cruel death, O wounds most deep' are Catholic matter, but carefully negotiated invocations of saints, and transubstantiationist passages, are seen as all right in the mainstream - literal-mindedness, indeed.

A poem similar to 'The song of Mary' was issued 21 years later in 1622, John Bullokar's A true description of the passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> Bullokar is very easily identifiable as Catholic from his biography, but the print version of his poem was published in the mainstream.<sup>23</sup> The history of its circulation in manuscript, too, proves its suitability for a Protestant audience - perhaps fortuitously, perhaps because the author had a Protestant interlocutor in mind.<sup>24</sup> Again, the description of the Last Supper - quoted below - is the place most symptomatic of the writer's allegiance.

O happy Feast held by a heavenly King,  
Where bread of Life with bounty was bestowd:  
No more a Type, but now a figured thing,  
True Rocke, whence pure sin-cleansing waters flowd:  
Sweet antidote, whose vertue sets man free,  
From deadly surfet of forbidden tree.

When thou wert made, each ceremonious Rite,  
That had prefigur'd better things to come,  
By Gods appointment was abolisht quite;  
New Sacraments succeeding in their roome:  
Whose worth in Christ. who worthily embrace,  
Adopted are new heires of heavenly grace.

Cleare light was then in place of shadowes brought:  
Figures for better Truth exchang'd away: .

But this is not yet all that then was done:  
For the new-spoused Church redeemed so deere,  
The precious Body of Gods only Sonne,

Was instituted to be eaten heere:  
That blessed Body borne for sinners good,  
True Manna, fane exceeding Angels food.

Such wisdom did th' Almighty workman show,  
In altering shadowes into substance true:  
Such humble service did a God bestow,  
Pure humbled thoughts in proud man to renew ...

(A7b-8b)

This description is strewn with translated quotations from Thomas Aquinas, and allusions to him. 'O happy Feast held by a heavenly King' gestures towards his *O sacrum convivium*,<sup>25</sup> the passage beginning 'When thou wert made, each ceremonious Rite.. .', and the exquisitely non-committal 'No more a Type, but now a figured thing', each differently render lines from '*Pange, lingua*'; *et antiquum documentum / novo cedat ritui*.<sup>26</sup> There is even a rapturous contradiction, or outdoing, of Aquinas's *Ecce panis angelorum*: 'True Manna, farre exceeding Angels food.'<sup>27</sup>

Catholics, it should be said, were not necessarily the only people to use Thomist reference at this date.<sup>28</sup> Aquinas was one of the few scholastic writers who generally found favour with Protestants, and would have been encountered by all those who underwent theological training at the universities. But one can get further by looking at the suppressions of the passage. While picking its way amid one of the most notorious minefields of the Reformation, the passage says nothing that a Catholic might not have found orthodox, but circumnavigates obvious confessional giveaways. The line 'In altering shadowes into substance true' is primarily an unexceptionable comment on how the New Testament has fulfilled the typology of the Old. Only secondarily might it be interpreted as implying transubstantiation; and, even then, the potential for disavowal is greater than the suggestion. Aquinas's conception of the bread and wine of the Eucharist as *figurae* was a congenial one to Protestants: so much so, that Catholics themselves began to move away from Thomistic vocabulary for fear of being misinterpreted. After the Council of Trent, it was unusual for a Catholic theologian, writing in Latin, to use the term *figurae* in talking about the sacraments.<sup>29</sup>

So why, then, do I see this passage as being typical of a Catholic writer? First, there is a difference between knowing a text, and endorsing it by allusion. If there was no reason in theory why Aquinas should not have been drawn upon by poets within the Church of England, I have not so far found this level of allusion to him among those whose conformist allegiances were fixed: which emphasizes - were added emphasis necessary - the considerable difference between the referential fields of , poetry and theology. Secondly, a narrative poem of this nature commanded an audience beyond the theological specialist, and this would have increased a writer's need to be prescriptive. Among Protestants, as argued below, this would have tended to mean an explicit distancing of one's text from popery. But among Catholics, prescriptiveness might have taken the form of gently introducing material Catholic in origin, in a form to which a Protestant could have assented. Bullokar can, perhaps, be classified as a Catholic writer writing for an audience that included Protestants, and acceptable to them.

But reading is different from writing. No one would argue that readerly engagement with religious verse at this period was other than intense and discriminating; but readers of a poem are not answerable for it in the same way that authors are, and do not face internal interlocutors to the same degree. Much recent work has been done on the amount of Protestant devotional literature which, around this time, borrowed from Catholic sources with only minor alterations: an exchange facilitated both by the broad areas of similarity between the two traditions, and by the fact that devotional differences between Protestant and

Catholic are less often simple opposites than matters of degree, level and addition. It would have been perfectly possible for Protestant devotional fervour, on topics like the Eucharist, to slip into language which could sound Catholic; and sometimes it does. But Protestants tend to reveal themselves as Protestants, because they were unwilling to be taken for Catholics.

George Herbert's poem 'The H. Communion' stirs up the speaker's devotion precisely through the *denial* of transubstantiation.

ffirst I am sure, whether bread stay  
Or whether Bread doe fly away,  
Concerneth bread, not mee.  
But that both thou and all thy traine  
Bee there, to thy truth, & my gaine,  
Concerneth mee & Thee. ...

Then of this also I am sure  
That thou didst all those pains endure  
To' abolish Sinn, not Wheat.  
Creatures are good, & have their place;  
Sinn onely, which did all deface,  
Thou drivest from his seat.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, another of Herbert's poems, 'To all angels and saints', turns on the paradox of him addressing the Virgin Mary, only to explain why he cannot pray to her.

I would addresse  
My vows to thee most gladly, Blessed Maid,  
And Mother of my God, in my distresse ...  
But now, alas, I dare not; for our King,  
Whom we do all joyntly adore and praise,  
Bids no such thing. ..<sup>31</sup>

Because Protestantism forbids anything that is not explicitly bidden in the Bible, Herbert is 'now' unable to pray to the Virgin, whatever he might have been glad to do in former times. Though these poems address topics of hot debate, they do so in a faultlessly conformist manner; these are Protestant poems precisely because of Herbert's careful - though not unfriendly - distinction of his speaker's opinions from those held by Catholics. If the question 'What is a Catholic poem?' begs the counter-question 'How far can a Protestant poem go?', Herbert provides us with at least one answer: when approaching an area scattered with popish mines, Protestants made a poetic point of watching their step.

Sometimes their poems, like Herbert's, positively derive inspiration from this. This is also true of a vastly less self-aware writer: a late seventeenth-century poet, whose work survives in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This contains a series of poems in which he argues that, even though he has a cross in his study, he is not an idolater or a papist. In the poem 'None But Christ', he tells us that he merely regards the cross as an emblem.

If placeing of Some Emblems heere  
To anie Gives offence  
hee that shall Take offence heereat  
Ile say has Little sence /  
If that an emblem for to make  
It cann bee proovd a sinne  
Its then Ile owne and not till then  
Ive in An error beene / ...

When I my Cross look on I think  
I nothing do amiss  
because when I look on my Own  
It mindeth me of His[.]<sup>32</sup>

This personally defensive note reminds us again how religious verse, at this date, is most characteristically used to affirm the orthodoxy of its author. But, as we see here, the *need* for such affirmation can arise out of an initial doubt, formally postulated at the beginning of the poem, and resolved - or not - as the poem unwinds its argument. This forces the reader to try and locate the implied interlocutor. In the poems quoted above, Herbert is distinguishing his own position from the Catholic one with extreme care: less, perhaps, because he feels vulnerable from Catholics, than to pre-empt adverse judgements from members of his own church less sympathetic to ceremony than he is. One could see these poems, like 'None But Christ', as written *against* the imagined condemnations of an internalized censor, anti-Laudian or low-church. 'None But Christ' is thoroughly different, though, in its defensive tone; less poised by far than Herbert, and seemingly not written for any kind of circulation, it illustrates - more nakedly than Herbert ever could - the necessity of 'defining one's ecclesiological position against the importunate internal voice of dissent. Just as much as any anti-papal ballad does, these poems define themselves against Catholicism; the difference is that they rely less on abuse, more on an intimately, scrupulously negotiated dialectic with Catholic doctrine and practice. In these poems, Protestant sympathy becomes most pronounced and most necessary where the boundaries are thinnest; precisely because similarities are so easy to detect, differentiations have to be highlighted with especial care.

This may be because the onus was on the Protestant not to sound Catholic, not the other way round. Whereas certain topics - for instance, the uncertainty of being saved - would preoccupy a Protestant, especially a Puritan, writer but not a Catholic one, it is considerably more difficult to identify devotional areas forbidden to the Catholic but allowable to the Protestant. Just as Catholic poets could draw on a wider range of devotional reference than Protestant ones, they had - in theory at least - more room for imaginative manoeuvre than their religious opponents. They may not always have taken up opportunities as fully as a poet from the reformed tradition would have done - Barbara Lewalski may be correct in asserting the especial potency of the Bible as an inspiration to Protestant poetics - but the Bible was not forbidden to Catholic writers in the same way that, for instance, Marian devotion was frowned upon among pre-Laudian English Protestants.<sup>33</sup> Looked at another way, Herbert's moderation, so much praised by the back-daters of Anglicanism, can be characterized as one of alert and pious restraint from Catholic hyperbole. A typical Catholic religious poet would certainly have been obliged to be orthodox, but would not have had such a pronounced fear of recklessness in devotional poetry. He might, for any number of reasons, not have gone out of his way to parade his faith; as argued above, he might have derived poetic inspiration from Protestant-stimulated attempts to justify his doctrine; but both in his subject-matter and in his attitude towards it, he would not have minded being *taken* for a Catholic.

We think of internal censorship as repressive. Herbert gives conflicting testimony here: his poem to the Virgin sounds regretful, his poem on Holy Communion content. The latter is perhaps more typical; clearly, the vast majority of Protestant religious poets felt little sense of constriction at being restricted to the devotional language approved by the reformers. Such language must often, indeed, have been experienced as positively empowering; and puritans developed hyperboles of their own. A vocal minority of poet-converts to Catholicism, though - most coming, significantly, from a conformist background - found Protestant limitations indicative of hardness of heart. Some, like William Alabaster, Write of a sense of release on their conversion which is as much linguistic as anything: his manuscript autobiography, preserved at the English College in Rome, tells us that an early sign of his change of heart was an exhortation upon the Passion, delivered with 'much more fervour



and feeling of Devotion, and with a greater tendernes of harte towards Christes Crosse and Passion, than it seemed to the hearers that the protestantes were wont to feele or utter; or ther spirit abyde'. The holy sonnets written after his conversion were specifically designed to stir himself up to greater and yet greater heights of devotion, using language he suddenly felt himself able to employ. 'And I did sett some tymes a certayne strife and wager between my present affections and future, my present perswadinge to devise sonnets now and so full of fyerie love and flaminge ardour towards Christ, ...but on the contrarie parte my future devotions made offer so to maintaine <and> increase the heate and vigour of love and affection in me, that when I should come afterwarde to reed over my former sonnets I might wonder rather at the coaldnes of them then gather heate by them. ..'<sup>34</sup>

Can one see this release as the final murdering of an internal monitor, one who before had been constantly truncating, toning down and reforming the livelier excrescences of Alabaster's religious imagination? If so, one has to admit that there is more to a Catholic poem than the keyword-searches of a licenser, more even than the opposition proposed above between Protestant devotional limitation and Catholic devotional justification -a sense of freedom from censure, of stepping into the spaciousness of a wider orthodoxy. If Catholic poetry was pruned by external constraints and the necessity to justify, Protestant poetry had some of its buds pinched out in the mind.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful, for help of various kinds, to Victoria Burke, Elizabeth Clarke, Ian Doyle, P. J. Fitzpatrick, Sean Hughes, Arnold Hunt, Steven May, Michael Questier, Ceri Sullivan, and all those who participated in the University of Wales conference at Gregynog, in July 1999, where this paper was first delivered.

<sup>2</sup> This was a definition which informed Louis Martz's landmark study *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), and was challenged by Barbara Lewalski in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). See my discussion of the Martz/ Lewalski debate in *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Southwell's publication history has often been discussed: see James H. Macdonald, SJ, and Nancy Pollard Brown, eds, *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S.J.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); James H. Macdonald, SJ, *The Poems and Prose Writings of Robert Southwell, SJ: a Bibliographical Study* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1937); Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Robert Southwell: the Mission of the Written Word', in Thomas M. McCoog, SJ, ed., *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), pp. 193- 213; Arthur Marotti, 'Southwell's Remains: Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern England', in Cedric C. Brown and Arthur Marotti, eds, *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 37-65; Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, ch. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Southwell's translation of Aquinas's *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* was rewritten to remove references to transubstantiation, in the 1620 edition of his poetry and onwards (Macdonald and Pollard Brown, eds, *Poems of Robert Southwell*, p. 130). Compare the discussion of eucharistic verse below.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the poems on Mary's death and assumption which belong in Southwell's poetic sequence on Christ's life were not printed in contemporary mainstream editions. Sir John Beaumont's poetic output provides a case-study from the early seventeenth century, regarding both what could incur censorship at press stage, and what was perceived as too Catholic to print at all: Beaumont's poem about the 'Fatal Vesper' (an accident at Blackfriars in 1623, in which a number of Catholics lost their lives while attending a sermon) was cancelled from the first edition of his poetry (1629), while his poem on the Assumption was not printed till the nineteenth century. See *The Shorter Poems of Sir John Beaumont*, ed. Roger D. Sell, Acta Academiae Aboensis, Ser. A Humaniora, vol. 49 (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1974), pp. 46-7, 158-9, 177-8, 317, 329-30.

<sup>6</sup> Though, as will be argued below, transubstantiationist *assumptions* could affect the nature of a Catholic poet's language and imagery.

<sup>7</sup> It could have been the popish address 'Our Ladie' that was objected to, more than the actual presence of Mary. The ballad in its printed broadside version concludes with loyal addresses to the monarch: described in Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), appendix A, no. 22. Hyder Rollins, *Old English Ballads* (Cambridge: Cambridge

---

University Press, first edn 1920), no. 24, takes the version from British Library Add. MS 15,225, attributed to 'F.B.P.', as the most authoritative. For the most exhaustive discussion to date of the borrowings and adaptations, see John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: John Murray, rev. edn, 1908), pp. 580-3.

<sup>8</sup> The version of 'Jerusalem, my happy home' printed in *The song of Mary the mother of Christ*, discussed below, is differently ordered in some respects from that in Add. MS. 15,225. This, however, needs to be assessed in the terms of a literary culture where, as Arthur Marotti argues in *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), creative textual instability was not uncommon in the short poem.

<sup>9</sup> A check of the most thorough reference tool to date, Roman R. Dubinski, *English Religious Poetry Printed 1477-1640: a Chronological Bibliography* (Ontario: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1996), subject index under Marian headings, suggests that there may have been a strong association between poetry about the Assumption and rosary-centred worship.

<sup>10</sup> See Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 3.

<sup>11</sup> I discuss this point more fully in *Catholicism, Controversy*, ch. 2. As has often been observed, there is a very high level of similarity between the contents of Crashaw's two major poetic collections, *Steps to the Temple* (first edn, 1646), and *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652), the latter of which was published after Crashaw's departure to the continent. See *The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> 12. Printed by Edward Allde (STC 17547) and entered for William Ferbrand at Stationers' Hall on 23 July 1601: see Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A.D.*, 5 vols (London: privately printed, 1875-1894), III, f.72b.

<sup>13</sup> Though occasional counter-examples can be found: e.g. John Weever, *An Agnus Dei* (1601), which mentions the birth of the Virgin.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the comment in Victoria James, 'English Catholic writing in the reign of Charles I (1625-1649)' (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1999), p. 68, discussing Marian texts of the 1630s: 'while [they] certainly partake of polemic they seem curiously non-committal about pushing their engagement to its usual conclusion. Instead we find Catholic authors modifying their own overstatement, emending the grammar of the church's canonical scripture, taking scrupulous pains to justify their language.'

<sup>15</sup> See Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England', *P&P* 161 (1998), 39-83, esp. the Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> See Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*, esp. the Introduction.

<sup>17</sup> STC lists Signature F as occurring only in the British Library and New York Public Library copies. Andrew Maunsell's *Catalogue of English Printed Bookes* (1595) has, analogously, a manuscript addendum listing prohibited books: see Shell, 'Catholic Texts', pp. 48-9.

<sup>18</sup> For 'O blessed God, O Saviour sweet' see Rollins, *Old English Ballads*, no. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Arber, iii, 677-8. Entered 23 July 1601 (Arber, iii, 188).

<sup>20</sup> For Allde, see R. B. McKerrow, *A Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1557-1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1910), under name.

<sup>21</sup> The risk was probably well worthwhile financially, given the high prices, which booksellers could charge for recusant books. See Alexandra Walsham, "'Domme Preachers': Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print' (*P&P* 168 (2000), 72-123); and Shell, 'Catholic Texts', p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Published by George Purslowe for Samuel Rand, and dated on the title page: 'Calend. Nouemb. 1618.' This book does not appear in the Stationers' Company register.

<sup>23</sup> His son Thomas (Pater Joannes Baptista) became a Franciscan priest and was martyred. His biographer describes how he came of an orthodox family: Mason, *Certamen Seraphicum* (1649), pp. 31-61, comments about parents on pp. 31-32. See also Timothy J. McCann, 'Some Unpublished Accounts of the Martyrdom of Blessed Thomas Bullaker O.S.F. of Chichester in 1642', *Recusant History* 19(2) (1988), 171-182. John Bullokar's dedication of a pamphlet in 1616 to Jane Browne, Viscountess Montague, is some evidence of implication in the Catholic literary culture of early seventeenth-century Sussex. For the Browne family and their Catholicism, see G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, 14 vols (repr. Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1982), vol. 4, p. 100, under Anthony Maria Browne, Viscount Montague (husband of Jane Browne); Richard Smith, trans. and ed. A. C. Southern, *An Elizabethan Recusant House, comprising the life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague (1538-1608)* (London: Sands & Co., 1954); Julia Roundell (Mrs Charles Roundell), *Cowdray: the History of a Great English House* (London: Bickers & Son, 1884).

<sup>24</sup> An article by Victoria Burke and Sarah Ross of the Perdita Project, Nottingham Trent University, 'Elizabeth Middleton, John Bouchier and the Compilation of Religious Manuscripts', forthcoming in

---

*The Library*, charts the manuscript circulation of a version of Bullokar's poem which includes stanzas by Southwell. Bouchier, its author/compiler, had Calvinist sympathies; the variations between Bullokar and Bouchier, and between different surviving versions of Bouchier's adaptation, are nevertheless not especially significant from the denominational point of view. Bouchier's poem may well have been read by puritans and non-conformists. I am grateful to the authors for allowing me to see this article, and to Elizabeth Clarke for lending me photocopies of relevant manuscripts. See also Clarke's article, 'Elizabeth 1: Middleton, Early Modern Copyist', N&Q 240 (1995), 444-5.

<sup>25</sup> *O Sacrum Convivium* is the second Antiphon of the second Vespers of the Office of Corpus Christi in the Sarum Breviary (ed. F. Procter and C. Wordsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1879-86), vol. I, cols mxxiv-v) and the York Breviary, 2 vols (ed. S. W. Lawley (Durham: Surtees Society 71 (1880-3), vol. I, col. 539). It is also translated by the Catholic writer Richard Verstegan in *Odes* (1601: Dubinski 1212.66) It has often been attributed to Aquinas, though authorship is not certain. I am grateful to Ian Doyle for help on this point.

<sup>26</sup> For a full text and translation of *Pange, Lingua*, see Joseph Connelly, ed., *Hymns of the Roman Liturgy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), pp. 118-21. These lines are translated as 'Let the old types depart and give way to the new rite' (p. 120). Aquinas's hymns would have been available in contemporary copies of the Little Office of the Blessed Sacrament (e.g. in John Wilson, *The Treasury of Devotion*, 1622), primers, and devotional collections drawing on these (e.g. *A Manual of Prayers* (1613, STC 17273)). Verse 13 of *Lauda Sion* may also be being referred to. "Domme Preachers": Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print' (*P&P* 168 (2000), 72-123); and Shell, 'Catholic Texts', p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Behold, the bread of angels', line 63 from *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*: see Connelly, ed., *Hymns of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 128.

<sup>28</sup> I am grateful to Sean Hughes for his comments on this poem. Throughout the late sixteenth and early/mid-seventeenth centuries, translations of *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* - though often partial - made their way into the mainstream via other, and more Protestant, sources than Southwell: e.g. John Cosin, who translated and adapted verses 2, 5 and 6 for his *Collection of Private Devotions*, ed. P. G. Stanwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 229, 352-3; and the compiler of Folger V a 399, a conformist Royalist miscellany, who translates two verses of Aquinas's *Lauda Zion* (Sub diversis speciebus ... nec sumptus consumitur', f.59a). Kenneth Larsen discusses Crashaw's translations of Aquinas, arguing that they are marked by Anglican eucharistic theology r ('The Religious Sources of Crashaw's Sacred Poetry', Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1969, pp. 181-205).

<sup>29</sup> For the effects of Trent on Catholic eucharistic theology, see P. J. FitzPatrick, *In Breaking of Bread: the Eucharist and Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. ch. 1, and the debate between Fitzpatrick and Herbert McCabe in *God Matters* (London: Mowbray, 1987), part 4. I am grateful to Dr FitzPatrick for his further comments on the eucharistic poetry in this essay.

<sup>30</sup> *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, this edn 1959), p. 200. On how the poem addresses the question of the efficacy of the elements, see Elizabeth Clarke, *Theory and Theology in George Herbert's Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 160-1.

<sup>31</sup> *Works of George Herbert*, p. 78; cf. comments in Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> 'Original Poems on Several Subjects', MS Rawl.poet.101, fAa, slip between 4b and 5a. The author was also responsible for MS Lt 50 at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, in which a version of this poem appears (ff.43a-44b). The Brotherton catalogue provisionally identifies him as William Tipping. For a Protestant poem on this topic which comes to a different conclusion, see Francis Quarles, *Divine Fancies* (1641), Bk III, no. 49, p. 135: 'On a Crucifixe'.

<sup>33</sup> This is one of the central arguments in *Protestant Poetics*.

<sup>34</sup> This argument is developed further in Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, ch. 2.