'Some Out of Vanity Will Call Her The Queene of Heaven': Iconography of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin in post-Reformation England, 1580-1616.

Submitted by Elizabeth Jane Grindlay to UCL as a thesis for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ENGLISH LITERATURE

I, Elizabeth Jane Grindlay, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:…………………………………………………………………………………

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to conceptualise the Virgin through a focus on post-Reformation representations of her bodily assumption and coronation as Queen of Heaven. The Reformation's emphasis on the Word was a driving force behind a diminishing of significance of the Virgin, underpinning a shift in perception of her image from Heaven's Queen to humble handmaid. This thesis will show how in spite of its eradication from state-approved liturgy, iconography of the assumption and coronation of the Virgin continued to be of cultural significance. Through historicised close reading of works by writers from a range of confessional standpoints, it will show how these contentious aspects of Mariology aroused powerful and complex responses in post-Reformation England.

The timescale of the thesis commences midway through the reign of Elizabeth I, in the year that marked the start of the Jesuit mission, and finishes midway through the reign of James I, in a year which saw the investiture of Charles as Prince of Wales. Thematically rather than chronologically structured, the thesis itself journeys on a spectrum of faith, encompassing views that range from Protestant polemicist to Jesuit Catholic. It will show how iconography of the assumption and coronation was symptomatic of the continued confessional complexity of post-Reformation England. The thesis commences with two chapters exploring oppositional representations of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven in Protestant writing. Chapters focusing on individual voices follow: Elizabeth Cary, the writers of recusant rosary books, Sir John Harington, Henry Constable and Robert Southwell. In a variety of ways, both oblique and direct, these writers engaged with images of the Virgin's assumption and coronation, and their representation of the Virgin's image reflects cultural and political as well as religious concerns.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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When referencing early modern editions, I have retained original spellings, with the exception of i/j and u/v, which have been modernised.

All Biblical references have been taken from The Geneva Bible unless stated: *The Geneva Bible*, introd. Lloyd E. Berry, facs. of 1560 edn (1969; rpt Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

All biographical information is from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* unless stated: http://www.oxforddnb.com, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011, which is abbreviated as *ODNB* in the text.

All references to the works of Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

All references to *The Faerie Queene* are from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton with Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki (2001; Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007).

In bibliographical references, ESTC refers to the English Short Title Catalogue: http://estc.bl.uk.

A&R refers to A.F. Allison and D.M. Rogers., *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation Between 1558 and 1640*, vol. 2, *Works in English* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE EMPTY IMAGE

SECTION 1: RETHINKING THE VIRGIN MARY

That she can be represented in so many ways, thought about and imagined in so many forms, is an indication of how deeply she speaks to us about the hope for the world's transfiguration through Jesus; how she stands for the making strange of what is familiar and the homeliness of what is strange.[1]

The image of the Virgin is one of paradoxes: regal and domestic, submissive and militaristic, both warmly human and impossible to reach. It is perhaps its emptiness which is the source of both its power and its appeal. Appearances of the Virgin in the gospels themselves are relatively rare; with the exception of St Luke's *Magnificat*, Mary is in the main a mute figure whose acquiescence to God's will leads to a reversal of the Fall.[2] Over the centuries, writers, artists and musicians have filled these gaps in the text of the Virgin's life, making the role of the creative imagination integral to the construction of her image. With emptiness comes adaptability: the result is as multi-layered as it is elusive, an image that can frequently bring insights into the age in which its creator lived and worked.

In this thesis, I will be focusing on a period of England's history when the image of the Virgin underwent a radical shift, moving from an object of devotion to a site of resistance and controversy. My research concentrates on the latter part of the reign of Elizabethan I and the early years of the reign of King James. We thus find ourselves in post-Reformation England, at a time when, following the pendulum swings of the earlier sixteenth century, Protestantism can be viewed as the established

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[1] Rowan Williams, *Ponder These Things* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002) p. xv.
[2] A list of the Virgin's appearances in the Bible can be found in Chris Maunder, 'Mary in the New Testament and Apocrypha', in Sarah Jane Boss (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 12.

religion of the state. 'Some out of vanity will call her the Queene of heaven' was the withering observation of the clergyman Thomas Tuke in 1614.[3] His words encapsulate the extent to which the image of the Virgin had become a polemical one, bound up for many with anti-Catholic sentiment. This thesis will focus on representations of two interrelated aspects of Marian iconography: her bodily assumption, and her coronation as Queen of Heaven. Both are extra-scriptural in origin; thus, Reformation Protestantism's emphasis on the Word led to their attempted obliteration in England as 'Catholic' imagery. Any reference to the assumption of the Virgin was eradicated from the liturgy, and there was a conscious shift in Protestant representations of the Virgin from the Queen of Heaven, to humble and acquiescent handmaid. Through historicised close reading of works from writers representing a wide range of confessional standpoints, I will show how iconography relating to the assumption and coronation of the Virgin still aroused powerful and complex responses in spite of – and sometimes because of – attempts to eradicate these aspects of Mariology from post-Reformation culture. One might presume that in a study focusing on the Virgin in post-Reformation England, her assumption and coronation will be deployed as a delineating marker between Protestant and Catholic. England's Reformation followed an uneven path, however, and our study of the image of the Virgin will reveal the extent to which this period in the country's history was one of acute confessional complexity.

A number of different bodies of scholarly thought have influenced this thesis. The range of books on the Virgin available today is testament to the enduring fascination of her image. Writing at the end of the twentieth century, the Lutheran theologian Jaroslav Pelikan described the Virgin Mary as 'more of an inspiration to

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[3] Thomas Tuke, *New Essayes* (London: N[icholas] O[kes], 1614), pp. 254-255.

more people than any other woman who has ever lived'.[4] Conferences are held to

discuss her significance in literature, art and culture, and a Centre for Marian Studies

has been established at Roehampton University so that we might find out more.[5]

Again and again in modern-day appreciations of the Virgin, one sees writers who find

themselves embarking upon a personal journey. In 2001, Donna Spivey Ellington

commented that encountering imagery of the Virgin 'is almost as irresistible as the

faint but distinct and compelling fragrance of roses that lures a hurried traveller into

the quiet of an enclosed garden'.[6] The words are shot through with emotive

language, but Ellington's exploration of the language of sermons of the late Middle

Ages is a scholarly one. In Marina Warner's bastion of Mariological studies *Alone of

All Her Sex* (1976), we find similar examples of a personal tone:

> The world of music, flowers, perfumes, and painting that enfolded her was
>
> filled with joy. It was only in the last two years at school, when I had been a
>
> devout Mariolater all my conscious life, that I felt the first chill wind sigh in
>
> this blissful pleasure dome.[7]

In Warner's account we find a tension between the appeal of the Virgin and the

damaging effects of her image. The writer's own convent upbringing is clearly a

strong drive behind her feminist argument that the figure of Mary is patriarchally

constructed, and has over the centuries placed impossible pressure on women.

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[4] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 2.
[5] See Chris Maunder (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns and Oates, 2008), p. ix; http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Library/Resources/Archives-and-special-collections/Centre-for-Marian-studies/, site visited 22/03/13.
[6] Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. viii.
[7] Marina Warner, *Alone of All her Sex* (1976; New York: Vintage, 1983), p. xxi.

Warner does not, however, undermine or deny the Virgin's appeal; axiomatic to her overview is that the Virgin has the ability to appeal to people in different ways at different moments in history. Many other Marian scholars have concurred with this viewpoint. The feminist writer Sally Cunneen describes Mary as 'a powerful and changing presence for millions of men and women for two thousand years' and 'the most flexible of symbols'.[8] Averil Cameron observes that 'the figure of Mary has been and still is capacious enough to permit an almost infinite number of different ever-changing and developing approaches'.[9] Anthropologist Simon Coleman comments that 'in social scientific terms, we might describe Mary as a powerful symbol that is able to sustain a range of referents within the same form'.[10] Miri Rubin's 2009 publication, *Mother of God*, foregrounds a different way in which the Virgin's symbol has changed over time, describing it as a site of power and polemic that has been shaped by powerful members of society throughout history.[11] Studies such as this reveal the image of the Virgin to be polyvalent, politicised and capable of arousing strong emotions.

My research has also been influenced by that of revisionist historians such as Eamon Duffy and J.J. Scarisbrick. This has challenged previously-accepted historiographical maxims that the late-medieval era was one of decline and decay, where the English Catholic Church was a morally crumbling structure which collapsed when kicked. Instead, we have come to accept a sense of a flawed but colourful late medieval piety, and a Reformation in England that, imposed by the

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[8] Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary* (New York: Ballantine, 1996), pp. xv, xxi.
[9] Averil Cameron, 'The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity', in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and Mary* (Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2004), p. 20.
[10] Simon Coleman 'Mary: Images and Objects', in Boss, *The Complete Resource*, p. 400.
[11] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God* (London: Penguin, 2009).

state, cannot be viewed in terms of a simple shift from Catholic to Protestant.[12] John

Bossy's seminal work has brought the phrase 'Catholic community' firmly into

currency as a small but significant unit, a picture which has been enriched and

extended by Christopher Haigh's microhistorical study of a religiously-isolated

Lancashire, and Alexandra Walsham's work on 'Church Papists', non-recusant

Catholics who outwardly conformed by attending church to avoid fines.[13] The sense

of confessional complexity that this historical scholarship has left us with is profound.

This is not to deny that a Reformation occurred and was remarkably successful, but

its progress was gradual and in many cases incomplete, rather than an overnight shift.

We no longer, to use the metaphors of Patrick Collinson, confine the Reformation in

England 'to the thirty years from 1529 to 1559, a manageable three-course meal

preceded by a few late medieval apéritifs and rounded off with a small cup of

Elizabethan coffee with one or two dissenting digestifs ("Puritanism" and

"Recusancy")'.[14]

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[12] For a history of decline and decay, often termed a Protestant-Whig narrative, see A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1964; London: B.T. Batsford, 1989). J.J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924; New York: Anchor, 1954), also fostered the concept of decline. See also a chapter entitled 'Huizinga's Harvest' in Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire* (London: Hambledon, 1993), pp. 146-147. Revisionist disruptions of the narrative of decline and decay include J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992; New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2005), and Christopher Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, vol. 93 (1981): 37-69. See also Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapter 5; Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism in Elizabethan England* (London: Scolar, 1979), and Peter Lake 'Anti-Popery', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.) *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (London: Longman 1989), pp. 72–106. I am aware that my use of the term 'revisionist' is a reductive one, but its use here in reference to a school of thought that has revealed the longevity and complexity of England's Reformation is fruitful in terms of this thesis. For a more historiographically-nuanced view see Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 1-4.

[13] John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975); Christopher Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (1975; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008); Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists* (1993; Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999).

[14] Patrick Collinson, 'Comment on Eamon Duffy's Neale Lecture and the Colloquium', in *England's Long Reformation,* p. 71. See also Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 27.

My work has also been influenced by an increased scholarly interest in what might be termed a post-Reformation Catholic aesthetic. Until the end of the twentieth century, this scholarship comprised Catholic writing only. Anthologies and commentaries were also in the main written and edited by Catholic authors, and sometimes bordered on the hagiographical, though our knowledge today of the richness of this area owes a huge debt to some remarkable Catholic scholarship.[15] However, in recent years, our sense of what the Catholic aesthetic is has changed, and the term now encompasses not only literature by Catholic writers but also works which deploy imagery relating to Catholicism. A significant milestone here is Alison Shell's 1999 *Catholicism, Controversy and the Literary Imagination*: as well as recovering 'the voices of the silenced' Catholic writers, Shell showed how anti-Catholicism can be viewed as an imaginative stimulus to Protestant writing.[16] A series of essays edited by Arthur F. Marotti and published in the same year also attends to anti-Catholic as well as Catholic writing, a methodology which I follow in this project.[17] When Alison Shell published her monograph, she described herself as feeling like a 'lone crusader' but in subsequent years much has changed, with the study of the Catholic aesthetic moving steadily away from the margins.[18] This move towards mainstream scholarly interest has often, though not always, been regardless of the confessional allegiance of the scholars involved. My thesis owes a debt to the

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[15] See for example Louise Imogen Guiney's anthology *Recusant Poets* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), which although out of print, remains a fruitful source of Catholic writing. A similar anthology of prose is A.C. Southern (ed.), *Recusant Prose* 1559-1582 (London: Sands, 1950). The Jesuit historian Philip Caraman has produced a number of valuable monographs on Catholic writers and public figures in the time of Elizabeth and James. See for example *The Other Face* (London: Longmans, 1960), and *The Years of Siege* (London: Longmans, 1966). The publications of the Catholic Record Society also form a valuable resource.

[16] Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 18.

[17] Arthur F. Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

[18] Shell makes this assertion in her second book, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), in a preface which acknowledges the resurgence in interest in the Catholic aesthetic, pp. vii-xi. See also Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, 'The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies', *Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2004): 167-90.

findings of writers such as Anne Dillon, Frances Dolan, Gerard Kilroy and Robert

Miola who have contributed to our growing sense of the richness of this field.[19]

Interest in the Catholic imaginary has both influenced and been influenced by

a resurgence of interest in Shakespeare's faith. Recent years have seen a variety of

theories about Shakespeare and religion, from exhaustive hunts for coded messages in

his works, to explorations of his plays as religio-political allegories.[20] Although this

thesis does not focus on Shakespeare, it does explore writers who were living and

working at the same time. Heather Dubrow's observation that 'Shakespeare criticism

has long been recognised as a touchstone to shifts in our critical discourses' is a

pertinent one, and my own understanding of cultural context has been greatly

enriched by the contribution made by Shakespeare studies to our awareness of the

sheer muddiness of confessional standpoints in post-Reformation England.[21] Of

particular significance to this project is the way in which many monographs on the

religious context of Shakespeare's work address themes of nostalgia, loss and

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[19] Robert S. Miola's incisively-edited *Early Modern Catholicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), is a rich source of Catholic writing, itself a testament to increased interest in the Catholic aesthetic. A more recent volume traces Catholic writing from 1483 to the present day: John Saward, John Morrill and Michael Tomko (eds.), *Firmly I Believe and Truly* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Works that have influenced this project's approach to the Catholic aesthetic include Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), Gerard Kilroy, *Edmund Campion. Memory and Transcription* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), and Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

[20] For occluded messages in Shakespeare see Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) and Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005). More multi-dimensional discussions on Shakespeare's Catholic leanings can be found in Peter Milward, *Shakespeare's Religious Background* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973) pp. 15-67 and *The Catholicism of Shakespeare's Plays* (Southampton: Saint Austin Press, 1997). For religio-political allegories see Donna Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) and Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). Edited by Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson, *Lancastrian Shakespeare* is a two-volume collection of essays which capitalises on the possibility of Shakespeare's Lancastrian, Catholic, connections, whilst encompassing a variety of viewpoints on Shakespeare and religion. See *Lancastrian Shakespeare: Theatre and Religion*, and *Region, Religion and Patronage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

[21] Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 119. I have chosen not to write specifically about Shakespeare as I believe this would have opened up a field of scholarship so wide that it would have been in danger of engulfing the project's overarching intention to create a cultural and ideological picture of confessional complexity.

memory. Jeffrey Knapp, Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose have all argued that the rituals of Catholicism appeared on the Shakespearean stage; Greenblatt's use of the phrase 'emptied out' to describe the way in which Catholic symbols were rendered hollow when played out in the theatre is a particularly evocative one.[22] Tapping into this sense of loss and nostalgia in a broader literary sense is Elizabeth Mazzola's *The Pathology of the English Renaissance*, which uses the evocative phrase 'symbolic residue' to evoke how repressed cultural memories such as purgatory and transubstantiation often surfaced in early modern literature.[23]

The fading of the Virgin Mary

Views of the fate of the Virgin Mary in early modern England have tended to be in accord with these post-Reformation tropes of nostalgia, memory and displacement. The most extreme conceptualisation of this is an often-repeated claim that as England became a Protestant country, the image of the Virgin simply faded away. Hilda Graef's much-quoted 1963 history of Marian devotion included a short account of English reformers which sounded something of a death knell: 'within two generations the Mother of God had faded from the memory of Anglicans.'[24] Views of the Virgin have evolved since then, but the use of the word 'faded' is still worthy of note, as it embodies a philosophy which is still pertinent. Eamon Duffy also uses the word 'faded' in *The Stripping of the Altars* to describe the fate of Catholic rituals in Elizabeth's reign, while Diarmaid MacCulloch describes 'a general Protestant silence

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[22] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 119; Louis Montrose, 'The Purpose of Playing', *Helios,* vol. 7 (1980): 51-74. Stephen Greenblatt uses the phrase 'emptied out' in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 113-14.

[23] Elizabeth Mazzola, *The Pathology of the English Renaissance. Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman et al., vol. 86 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 4-7.

[24] Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (1963-1965; Notre Dame IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009)*,* p. 289.

falling over Mary'.[25] More extreme is the view of the feminist theologian Tina

Beattie that 'by the seventeenth century, Mary had been all but eradicated from

Protestant consciousness'.[26] Did the Virgin's image in England simply fade away

gradually over two generations or was it a more complex process than this? My own

research is an attempt to dislodge a tendency to give the Virgin Mary in the

Reformation short shrift.[27]

A belief that the image of the Virgin simply faded away is implicit in a body

of scholarly opinion, pioneered by Frances Yates and Roy Strong, that as the Virgin

was eradicated from cultural consciousness, Elizabeth I filled the psychological and

cultural gap that she had left behind. In the words of Yates:

> The bejewelled and painted images of the Virgin Mary had been cast out of
>
> churches and monasteries, but another bejewelled and painted image was set
>
> up at court, and went in progress through the land for her worshippers to
>
> adore.[28]

This seminal scholarship has subsequently been much debated, and there has been

considerable and weighty research problematising the theory that the Queen of

Heaven was supplanted by the Queen of England. Louis Montrose retains a sense of

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[25] The word is used twice by Duffy in *Stripping of the Altars* on p. 585: 'memories of Catholic cultus faded'; 'chances of reversion to the old ways faded'. See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Mary and Sixteenth-Century Protestants', in Swanson, *The Church and Mary*, p. 214.

[26] Tina Beattie, *Eve's Pilgrimage* (London: Burns & Oates, 2002), p. 138.

[27] Sarah Jane Boss, in the 'Editor's Introduction', of *The Complete Resource*, comments that Marian doctrine and devotion in England in the early modern period has often been overlooked (p. 6).

[28] Frances A. Yates, 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea', in *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 10 (1947): 27-82 (p. 75). See also Roy Strong, *Gloriana* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), and Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 17.

skepticism about the extent to which any Elizabethan had a 'flatly idolatrous attitude toward her image', while Helen Hackett has examined in depth the faultlines that exist in the theory that one Virgin Queen filled the cultural and psychological gap left by another.[29] The theory that elements of the Catholic symbol of the Virgin were absorbed into iconography surrounding the Queen is of cultural relevance, but it is clearly to be approached with a degree of caution and qualification. Many Mariologists, however, have found its symmetry hard to resist, and have accepted it without question as a particularly convenient way of parcelling up Elizabeth's reign in overviews where the position of the Virgin Mary in post-Reformation England is on the fringes.[30] At various points in the thesis I will return to the significance of Marian iconography to perceptions of Elizabeth I, but I will view it in the context of the interrelation between the image of the Virgin Mary and perceptions of queenship. There are two queens within my timespan: Elizabeth I, a queen regnant, and Anna of Denmark, James I's queen consort. The differences between the two, and the anxieties engendered by queenship itself, are frequently played out through images of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven in a way which disrupts the view that the Virgin Mary's presence had simply faded away, and that her iconography had become the domain of the monarch.

A more nuanced approach to the fading of the image of the Virgin Mary can be found in a number of recent studies focusing exclusively on the role of the Virgin in early modern English literature, all of which add to post-Reformation tropes of nostalgia and loss by positioning Mary as a powerful but fragmented part of the literary detritus of the Reformation. A pioneering collection of essays edited by

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[29] Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 107; Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995).
[30] For examples of this see Rubin, *Mother of God,* p. 378; Barry Spurr, *See the Virgin Blest* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 35, and Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries,* p. 161.

Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins entitled *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama* was published in 2007. This gives an indication of the variety and richness of oblique Marian references found on the early modern stage, here viewed as evidence of a 'residual Catholic culture within the emerging, eventually dominant, Protestant one.' The editors of *Marian Moments* admit that their collection of essays is the tip of the iceberg, and the volume is explicit in its hope that its insights 'will spur greater interest in Marian moments in early modern British culture'.[31] Ruben Espinosa's 2011 monograph *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England* can be viewed as a further search for 'Marian moments', focusing on the symbolic power of oblique references to the Virgin as intercessor and compassionate mother.[32]

Adding to the associations of the Virgin with fragmentation and loss has been a body of literature focusing on England's principal Marian shrine at Walsingham, despoiled by Henry VIII in 1538. This has been driven by the research of Gary Waller, whose fascination with the literary and cultural influence of Walsingham has led to the publication of a collection of essays and a monograph focusing on the shrine.[33] In these publications, an image of the Virgin emerges which is fragmented but also culturally and ideologically significant, giving voice to 'complex yearnings, desires, losses and fears in popular devotion, literature, music, and other cultural forms'.[34] Waller's 2011 monograph *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* follows the same lines of analysis, though its focus is on wider aspects of the image of the Virgin. In it, Waller

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[31] Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (eds.), *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1, 17.
[32] Ruben Espinosa, *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
[33] Dominic Janes and Gary Waller (eds.), *Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Gary Waller, *Walsingham and the English Imagination* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
[34] Waller, *Walsingham,* p. 7.

frequently employs the language of psychoanalysis to demonstrate how images of the

Virgin resurfaced in translated or fractured form. His argument is that 'the Virgin

may indeed have faded from the emotional and spiritual life of Protestant England but

traces of her liminal suggestiveness have remained'.[35] The word 'faded' thus remains

a dominant terminology of this critical discourse (a whole section of this monograph

is entitled 'Fades and Traces'), but it is here used with far more resonance.

Research such as this has alerted us to the cultural significance of the Virgin

Mary in early modern England, and it is the intention of this thesis to extend these

findings.[36] I am indebted to Waller's methodology which examines the effect of the

diminishing of the Virgin's significance in terms of 'the history of ideologies, in

men's and women's emotional allegiances and their deeply rooted, even unconscious,

patterns of behaviour.'[37] My own aim, similarly, is to explore the ideological

significance of changes in perceptions of the Virgin, thereby enriching our

understanding of the Virgin's influence on what Ruben Espinosa has termed the

'cultural psyche' of early modern England. Espinosa's perspicacious observation that

the Virgin Mary 'reflects – even absorbs – many of the cultural anxieties precipitated

by the shifting religious atmosphere of sixteenth-century England' is one which

underpins my own analysis, and my use of the term 'anxiety', particularly in chapters

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[35] Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 135.
[36] A session entitled 'Mary Under Duress' was held at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. Organised by Arthur F. Marotti, the session included papers from Gary Waller, Robert Miola and Susannah Brietz Monta as well as my own, in which I presented ideas from chapter 2 of this thesis. The papers and subsequent discussions indicated that it is an exciting time to be studying Mary's place in early modern literature and culture, and that scholarship on this topic is still evolving. A conference under the same name is due to be held at Loyola University in 2014. Also indicative that attitudes to Mary are evolving is an essay by Arthur F. Marotti, 'Marian Verse as Politically Oppositional Poetry in Elizabethan England', in Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goodblatt (eds.)*, Religious Diversity in Early Modern English Texts* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013), pp. 25-54. The essay argues that expressions of Marian devotion in Elizabethan verse can be viewed as politically oppositionist acts. I am grateful to Professor Marotti for allowing me to read this chapter prior to publication.
[37] Waller, *Virgin Mary*, p. vii.

concerning Protestant polemic, will often refer not necessarily to the feelings of the individual writer but to a collective concern.[38]

However, both Waller and Espinosa, like the contributors to *Marian Moments*, view the Virgin from a standpoint that privileges oblique references to her image and this, I believe, does not tell the full story. To engage fully with what Espinosa terms a 'shifting religious atmosphere', it is necessary to attempt to engage with the breadth of confessional standpoints that existed in post-Reformation England. If revisionist history has taught us anything, it is that to view 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' as monolithic entities is a gross simplification. While my research acknowledges the significance of oblique references to the Virgin, I will also examine how the image is deployed in polemic and overtly devotional writing, and the image's interrelationship with apostasy and conversion. The breadth of this methodology means that the thesis, I am aware, stands in danger of becoming *bricolage*. I have taken two steps to combat this. I have narrowed firstly my thematic focus – to the assumption and coronation of the Virgin only – and secondly my chronological focus – to the short but significant timespan of 1580-1616.[39] Having said that, there is a part of me which also wishes to embrace this sense of *bricolage* as an indication both of the fluidity of confessional standpoints in post-Reformation England, and of the rich and varied cultural significance of the Virgin's image.

Themes and investigations

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[38] Espinosa, *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy*, pp. 1, 21.
[39] Waller's monograph on the Virgin, for example, covers a wide timespan, stretching from 1538 to the first half of the seventeenth century with frequent forays into late medieval.

The chronological focus of the thesis may be relatively narrow, but this is a particularly rich period in England's sectarian history. My starting point is 1580, in the middle of Elizabeth's reign, the year which marked the arrival of the first Jesuit priests in England. My time-frame finishes in 1616, midway into the reign of King James, the year in which his second son Charles I was invested as Prince of Wales, following the much-mourned death of his piously Protestant brother Prince Henry.[40] There are occasional glimpses into sources written before this period, but these are few: although my timescale is relatively short it has yielded a rich body of material. The years 1580-1616 encompass a dramatic sweep of events including domestic sectarian unrest, the threat of foreign invasion, fin de siècle sentiments of the end of one reign and expectation – swiftly followed by disillusionment – at the beginning of another. An important focus for my research is how texts reflect particular moments in time, but the thesis itself is not chronological in structure. Instead, it moves back and forth in time in a series of essays which commences, very broadly speaking, with views of the hotter sort of Protestant and ends with the devotional standpoint of the Jesuit Catholic. In between, we will hear the voices of a range of writers who through their deployment of images of the assumption and coronation of the Virgin provide an insight into different – and frequently elusive – confessional standpoints. I see this as moving across a spectrum of faith, though underpinning my acknowledgement of confessional complexity is an awareness of just how difficult it is to create a window into men's souls, and that attempts to categorise people's belief systems can ultimately be reductive.

In the second section of this Introduction, I turn to the history of the Virgin's image itself, and chart some of the developments in iconography of her assumption

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[40] Appendix A gives a more detailed chronological analysis of the events of the years covered by this thesis.

and coronation from the patristic period to the Reformation. After this, the thesis is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Shards and Fragments', focuses on polemical and Protestant writing, the second 'Voices from the Shadows', on devotional and confessional literature from writers whose lives and works can all be viewed as confessionally significant. I have selected work from a range of writers, both marginal and mainstream. By its very nature, this selection process leaves stories untold, and I have often been aware of the murmur of the voices of other writers whose work also reveals a complex deployment of the Virgin's image. John Donne, Aemilia Lanyer and Richard Verstegan spring most readily to mind as writers to whom the methodology of this thesis could be also be applied.

Part I, 'Shards and Fragments', sets out to disrupt the notion that the image of the Virgin Mary simply faded away in post-Reformation England by showing the prevalence of confrontational references to the Queen of Heaven. Chapter 1 examines the frequent references to the Queen of Heaven in printed religious discourse. The Virgin's powerful position as Heaven's Queen and man's intercessor was here often blurred with complaints about her role as an overbearing mother who exercised too much control over her son. The chapter will also include an extended exploration of how Protestant polemicists used the story of the disobedient women of Pathros of Jeremiah 44, whose idolatrous worship of a pagan Queen of Heaven brought about God's wrath. Repeated polemical references such as these could be said to keep the Virgin's image alive rather than destroying it, and an uneasy balance is frequently struck between veneration of the Virgin as a humble servant of God and misogynistic attacks on her as an authoritative and empowered woman. Chapter 2 focuses on the way in which Reformation thinking engendered a bifurcation within iconography of the Virgin between the 'Catholic' Queen of Heaven and 'Protestant'

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humble handmaid. It shows how iconoclastic destruction of statues of the Virgin was often validated via the creation of an alternative, sham Catholic version of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. In *Pasquine in a Traunce* by the reformer Curione, a work that has hitherto been largely overlooked, we see the literary embodiment of this via the creation of two Virgins: the true, humble Protestant model, and the peevish, morally suspect Catholic Queen of Heaven. I will argue that this discourse underpins the creation of a number of Spenser's female characters in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, particularly the characters of Lucifera and Duessa. The creation of sham Queens of Heaven is integral to the trope of the feminised Catholic Church, and the lines between the Catholic Queen of Heaven and the Whore of Babylon are frequently blurred.

In Part II, 'Voices from the Shadows', my aim is to foreground not only the continuing cultural significance of the Virgin's image but also to show how it can be a lens through which to view the fluidity of post-Reformation confessional standpoints. My focus therefore moves more to individual personalities. In Chapter 3, I continue and extend discussions about the Virgin's role and representations of women through a reading of the Senecan closet drama *The Tragedy of Mariam* by the woman writer Elizabeth Cary. This chapter therefore addresses the importance of oblique Marian references in early modern literature, though I am here nuancing this methodology to accommodate the polemical fracturing of the Virgin's image into 'Protestant' humble handmaid and 'Catholic' Queen of Heaven. I will show how in Mariam, Cary creates a character which gestures towards the Virgin Mary in her queenly state, but she seems to be constructed in opposition to post-Reformation discourse which saw the humble and obedient Virgin as the ideal silent, chaste and obedient woman of the conduct book. In the figure of Graphina, a slave girl, we find

the model of both the godly wife and the Virgin as humble handmaid is revealed but also marginalised. The chapter will evaluate whether these complex allusions to the Virgin can be read in the light of Cary's ultimate conversion to Catholicism.

After this, the focus moves from oblique and polemical references to the Virgin, to devotional representations of her image. I begin with a longer-length chapter in two sections, which takes as its theme representations of the rosary in early modern England. The first section of this chapter explores the language of rosary books which were circulated amongst the recusant community. As the rosary lent itself to secrecy, it was seen by Jesuit priests in particular not as a nostalgic nod to a forgotten medieval practice, but as an integral way of fostering a Catholic faith that had been driven underground. In contrast to the bifurcation seen in previous chapters we see in rosary books a polyvalent image of the Virgin, where Queen of Heaven coexists with humble handmaid and suffering mother. In the second part of this chapter, I move from the shadows of recusant England to the margins of the court, via an exploration of the writings of Sir John Harington. Harington's own slippery attitude to religion makes him archetypal of the confessional complexity which is at the heart of this thesis. His attitude to the rosary is particularly interesting in that he attempted to use it to gain preferment with King James and his son Prince Henry, via a presentation of a gift-book of epigrams which included an illustrated rosary prayer.

The subject of Chapter 5 is the courtier poet Henry Constable, whose early secular poems follow many Elizabethan conventions in both their use of sacred language to configure the erotic, and their encoded deployment of the language of love as a way of seeking preferment. Upon his conversion to Catholicism, Constable wrote only sacred verse, and the combination of this earlier, secularised poetic craft with the later voice of the apostate results in poetry of remarkable tension and power,

particularly as the idealised beloved of Constable's sacred verse is not Queen Elizabeth, but the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. The significance of one particularly striking reference, to the Queen of Heaven as *Virgo lactans*, will here be explored in depth. We end with Robert Southwell, the Jesuit poet and martyr, who used his poetic gifts as part of his mission, writing only sacred verse. Focusing on Southwell's poetic representations of the Virgin's assumption, the chapter will argue that although the Virgin was integral to Southwell's poetic attack on secular verse, her image is frequently characterised by a sense of absence. Representations of the Virgin's death will also be read against images of anticipated martyrdom in Southwell's verse in a chapter which aims to show how his work greatly contributes to our sense of the richness and complexity of the Virgin's image in post-Reformation writing, blending post-Tridentine devotion with an acute awareness of the separateness of the English Catholic experience. An Epilogue to the thesis looks forward in time to the Caroline period. Through analysis of work by writers including William Prynne and Richard Crashaw it will show how the Virgin's assumption and coronation continued to be of cultural significance.

SECTION 2: THE VIRGIN'S ASSUMPTION AND CORONATION THROUGH THE AGES

Marian piety and controversy in early Church history

An attempt to sketch a history of the assumption and coronation of the Virgin from patristic times to the starting point of the thesis is inevitably going to be an incomplete exercise, but my aim is to give some indication of just how entrenched this complex iconography was in cultural consciousness by the Reformation, and also

how frequently it was politicised. I begin in the early patristic period. From the second century onwards, the gaps in the text of Mary's story were filled by apocryphal writings, the most significant of which was the *Protoevangelium of James.*[41] This was a Syrian or Egyptian account of the childhood and life of the Virgin dating from around 150 C.E.. Originally written in Greek, it was translated into several languages, including Latin, and was to become a profound influence on literary and artistic representation of the Virgin throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period.[42] However, there is little concrete evidence of the existence of a uniform 'cult' of Mary until the fifth century.[43] At the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, Mary was officially given the title *Theotokos* or 'Mother of God'. The Council of Ephesus is often seen as the starting point of devotion to Mary, and from this time one sees the development of hymns, homilies and feasts in her honour. Twenty years later, the Council of Chalcedon reaffirmed the two natures of Christ defined at Ephesus, and affirmed Mary's virginity both *in partu* and *post partum*; thus, by the end of the fifth century the main features of later Marian theology had been established.[44]

The accretion of doctrines surrounding the Virgin's assumption and coronation follows its own course. In the fourth century, the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, gave orders for excavations in Palestine to look for relics. What was believed to be the true cross was found – but nothing at all was discovered that could be associated with Mary's death. No bodily relics, no grave, and no

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[41] For a survey of apocryphal writings of the second century see Raymond E. Brown et al, *Mary in the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978) pp. 241-282. See also J.K. Elliot, 'Mary in the Apocryphal New Testament', in Maunder, *Origins*, pp. 59-60.

[42] For different translations see Elliot, 'Mary', p. 59. More detailed descriptions of the contents of the *Protoevangelium* are in Rubin, *Mother of God,* pp. 10-11 and Spurr, *See the Virgin Blest,* pp. 7-9.

[43] A caveat to this comes in John McGuckin's observations that we cannot wholly dismiss cultic devotion to the Virgin in Christianity's early centuries. See 'The Early Cult of Mary and Inter-Religious Contexts in the Fifth-Century Church', in Maunder, *Origins*, pp. 1-22.

[44] Tina Beattie, 'Mary in Patristic Theology', in Boss, *The Complete Resource*, p. 80.

indication from the Gospels as to the death of Mary meant that the assumption grew from an entirely apocryphal corpus of traditions which emerged between the years 450 and 600.[45] These apocryphal texts took the name of *Dormition* or *Transitus* as well as *Assumption* narratives. Distinctions can be made in these early texts between what Stephen Shoemaker has termed 'assumption' narratives – those that describe Mary's assumption body and soul into Paradise – and 'assumptionless' narratives, also often referred to as the dormition or death of Mary, where the Virgin's soul is taken to heaven, but her body is transferred to a hidden place to await reunion with the soul at the end of time.[46] The most prominent of these myriad texts was the Latin *Transitus of Pseudo-Melito*, which dates from the end of the fifth century, and which clearly stressed Mary's bodily assumption.[47] My ultimate focus will be on the Virgin's corporeal assumption, as it is this, as we shall see, which ultimately took hold in the western world. Apocryphal legends about the Virgin's assumption were in currency in England in Anglo-Saxon times, when stories of Mary's bodily assumption were popularised by a number of *Transitus* narratives.[48]

Although there are many variants on the narrative, one can shape the following tale of the Virgin's bodily assumption from the Latin, Greek and Syriac traditions.[49] In mimesis of her annunciation, Mary is visited by an angel who foretells her death. In many versions of the story, the angel presents her with a palm-branch from paradise to be carried in front of her funeral bier. As Mary's death approaches, the apostles are summoned from their ministry over the world to be at her

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[45] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[46] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, p. 3.
[47] Eva de Visscher, 'Marian Devotion in the Latin West', in Boss, *The Complete Resource,* p. 192.
[48] Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)*,* p. 3.
[49] For more detailed versions of the different stories of the Virgin's assumption, see Clayton, *Apocryphal Gospels*, pp. 24-61.

bedside. The Virgin's soul leaves her body, often in a moment of great beauty, accompanied by the singing of angels. The disciples carry Mary's body on the bier to the tomb, and there is often here an attack by angry Jews who wish to burn her body. Sometimes the high priest tries to overturn the bier. As he does so, his hands become fastened to it and he suffers great torment. He converts to Christianity and his hands are freed. In some traditions, the apostle Peter gives the high priest the angelic palm, and he goes out into the city with it, miraculously giving sight to crowds of people who have been blinded. The narrative culminates with a second assumption as Mary's body joins with her soul to be transported into heaven by angels. Elements of the story thus mirror that of both the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Stories of Mary's assumption gathered force, and came to be celebrated in a feast day, the Feast of the Assumption, on 15 August.[50] This feast date was recognised by the sixth century as the Feast of the Virgin's Dormition and Assumption, and its official sanction by Emperor Maurice established it as a celebration throughout the Christian world.[51] It was to become, in the words of Stephen Shoemaker, 'perhaps the single most important Marian feast'.[52] A number of readings came to be associated typologically with the Feast of the Assumption. Late in the fourth century, Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, had linked Mary to the Woman Clothed with the Sun of the Book of Revelation, chapter 12.[53] Although Epiphanius was himself uncertain, his observations were seized upon by other exegetes, and this beautiful and obscure Biblical passage came to be seen as a

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[50] Clayton, *Apocryphal Gospels*, p. 25.
[51] Stephen J. Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity', in Boss, *The Complete Resource*, p. 141. August 15 had been significant Marian date even before the Council of Ephesus, as the occasion of a feast called the Memory of Mary, celebrated in Palestine and the Byzantine Empire. See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions,* p. 116.
[52] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions,* p. 141.
[53] Revelation 12.1-6; 13-17.

typological reference to the Virgin.[54] Other texts associated with the Feast of the

Assumption include the Bible's most lyrical of poems, the Song of Songs, whose

bride and bridegroom can be read as typological representations of Mary and Christ.

The bridegroom's invitation to the beloved to 'arise my love, my faire one' thus

became Christ the bridegroom's invitation to the Virgin, to rise to heaven.[55]

Bound to the story of the Virgin's assumption is her position as Queen of

Heaven: the Virgin rises to heaven to reign triumphantly by Christ's side as his

Queen. Early in the sixth century, an image of Mary as crowned and resplendent was

painted on the wall of the church of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome.[56] The coronation of

the Virgin also confirmed her hierarchical significance as higher than the angels and

the saints, and this had significant implications on how the image of Mary was

deployed.[57] To use Julia Kristeva's words, it made the Virgin 'a repository of

power'.[58] But it also represents a hierarchical paradox: here we have a woman who,

unlike her counterpart Eve, meekly obeyed the words of an angel, yet by her

assumption into heaven she was elevated to a place above the angels. In spite of this

elevation, many worshippers felt that they had a personal relationship with the Queen

of Heaven in her role as intercessor for man. Her bodily presence in heaven and the

intimacy of her relationship with God meant that she could offer protection to every

man and woman, and became the personal focus of many of their prayers.[59]

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[54] Tina Beattie, 'Mary in Patristic Theology', in Boss, *The Complete Resource,* p. 79; Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries,* pp. 177-187.
[55] Song of Songs 2.10; see also Warner, *Alone*, pp. 121-133.
[56] Warner, *Alone*, pp. 104-105.
[57] Henry Mayr-Harting, 'The Idea of the Assumption of Mary in the West, 800-1200', in Swanson, *The Church and Mary,* p. 88.
[58] Julia Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', in Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body in Western Culture* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 106.
[59] Ellington, *Sacred Body,* p. 102.

Maria Victrix: the Queen of Heaven in the Middle Ages

> Ne hadde the appil take ben,
>
> the appil taken ben,
>
> Ne hadde never our lady
>
> a ben hevene quen.

These words from a late-Medieval poem encompass the paradox of the Fall and the Redemption, rejoicing in the elevation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven as a triumphant consequence of this.[60] It was during the Middle Ages that the relationship between the Virgin and the Western poetic imagination truly crystallised, and Mary's position as Queen of Heaven became ubiquitous in both statues and art [figure 1]. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the Virgin and Child were increasingly presented as enthroned, and from the tenth century images of this nature began to be made as statues known as 'Virgin in Majesty' or 'Seat of Wisdom.'[61] This began with depictions of the Virgin and Child at the Magi's visitation, but soon extended to a more generalised iconography of the Virgin in a posture of enthronement.

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[60] The poem, from Sloane 2593, ff.10v-11, is reprinted in Thomas Wright (ed.), *Songs and Carols from a Manuscript at the British Museum of the Fifteenth Century* (London: T. Richards, 1855), pp. 32-33.
[61] Sarah Jane Boss, 'The Development of the Virgin's Cult in the High Middle Ages', in Boss, *The Complete Resource*, p. 161.
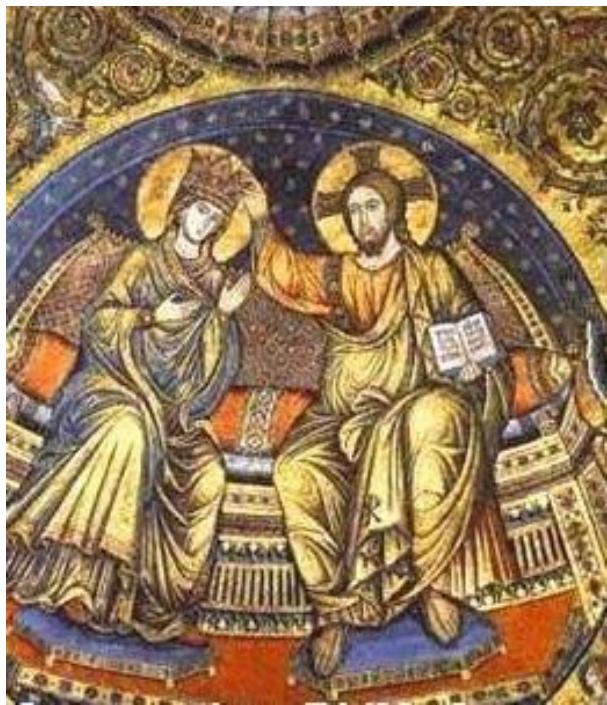
Figure 1. Mosaic decoration of the Coronation of the Virgin by Jacopo Torriti in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, completed 1296. Source: http://www.wga.hu.

The twelfth-century Cistercian abbot and mystic Bernard of Clairvaux wrote a series of sermons depicting the Bridegroom and Bride of the Song of Songs as an allegorical representation of Christ and Mary as King and Queen of Heaven.[62] His intense and passionate representation of the Virgin was to have a profound effect upon subsequent Catholic devotion to Mary.[63] By the High Middle Ages, Mary was a central figure in Western devotional practice. The cult of Mary's queenship flourished, amplified by the increasing popularity of the Marian antiphon the *Salve Regina* in the Western Church from early in the twelfth century.[64] Statues of the Queen of Heaven were often perceived as miraculous, and were integral to the popularity of pilgrimages. A statue of the crowned Virgin was the focal point, for example, of England's principal Marian shrine in Walsingham, Norfolk [figures 2, 3].

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[62] Rubin, *Mother of God,* p. 151.
[63] Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries,* p. 139; Boss, 'The Development of the Virgin's Cult', p. 159.
[64] Warner, *Alone*, p. 115.

At its heyday, the statue was courted like a lady, and stood resplendent with votive offerings; many other statues of the Virgin in many other churches stood similarly adorned.[65]

 Figure 2   Figure 3

Figure 2. This modern-day statue of Our Lady of Walsingham is based on an image preserved on a seal of the priory and pilgrim badges, and shows the Virgin enthroned in splendour with the infant Christ on her knee. The Saxon crown and throne are symbols of Mary's queenship, and also reflect the date of the founding of the shrine (1061). Source: www.walsingham.org.uk. Figure 3 shows an imprint of the original seal, which is preserved at the British Museum. Source: http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/dowry_walsingham.html.

There was a political dimension to Mary's queenship. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Mary was increasingly viewed as a type of the Church, or *Maria Ecclesia*. As Eva de Visscher has observed: 'crowned, dressed in splendour and often seated on a throne, she represents the power of the Church in general and of the papacy in particular'.[66] As well as deploying the image of the Virgin as a symbol of the powerful Church, the figure of the Queen of Heaven allowed Mary to become associated with strong women. In the Middle Ages, queens consort were often linked

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[65] *The Spoil of Long Melford Church*, ed. D. Dymond and C. Paine (Ipswich: Salient, 1992) describes a statue of the Virgin in Long Melford Church in Suffolk which was bedecked in precious jewels and cloth (pp. 13-14).

[66] Eva de Visscher, 'Marian Devotion in the Latin West', in Boss, *The Complete Resource,* p. 180.

to the Queen of Heaven because of the intercessory power of both roles.[67] In the

hammerbeam roof of the fifteenth-century Church of St Mary in Bury St Edmunds,

Suffolk, which is dedicated to the assumption of the Virgin, a carving of a procession

of angels culminates in a figure of a woman wearing a girdle to symbolise virginity,

with a crown in her hands. The figure has been identified not only as the Virgin

Mary as *Ecclesia* but also as Queen Margaret of Anjou, and the final figure of the

procession, a crowned king, represents her husband Henry VI as well as Christ the

King.[68] Margaret of Anjou's coronation pageants also linked her with the Virgin as

Queen of Heaven, underlining her role as mediatrix.[69] In her coronation pageants,

Anne Boleyn too was lauded as a Virgin crowned and, in a nod to both her name and

her pregnant state, she was linked to the Virgin's mother.[70]

However, the Virgin was not only perceived as a queen at this time. The

growth in popularity of the cult of the *Mater Dolorosa*, of Mary sorrowing at the foot

of Christ's cross, can be read as a softening of the image from queen to mother. The

Mater Dolorosa was particularly popular during the Black Death epidemic (1347-50),

an indication of how the image of the Virgin became a figure with whom the laity

could personally identify, as she experienced similar trials in her earthly life.[71] Boss

comments that the perception of Mary as a mother was due to a change in the

perception of motherhood itself, which thanks to the rise of the bourgeoisie became

linked with domesticity; again we see the Virgin as a flexible symbol, able to reflect

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[67] John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 196.
[68] Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 171-173. The initial identification was made by J.B.L. Tolhurst, 'The Hammer-Beam Figures of the Nave Roof of St. Mary's Church, Bury St. Edmunds', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* 3rd series, vol. 25 (1962): 66-70 (p. 70).
[69] King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, p. 197.
[70] Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, pp. 29-34.
[71] Visscher, 'Marian Devotion', p. 186.

the times.[72] An increased emphasis on the Cult of the Holy Family added impetus to

a late medieval emphasis on the humanity of both the Virgin and her son.[73] It is

further evidence of the paradox of the Virgin Mary – both humble mother and

heavenly queen appeared to co-exist within the same imaginative space. As the

anthropologist Victor Turner comments, the image of Mary can be seen as 'a signifier

meant to represent not only the historical woman who once lived in Galilee, but the

sacred person who resides in heaven, appears at times to living persons, and

intercedes with God for the salvation of mankind'.[74]

Feast of the Assumption

The Feast of the Assumption was lavishly celebrated during the Middle Ages. In the

late fourteenth century, the Augustinian writer John Mirk described it as 'an high day

and an high fest yn all holy chyrch, þe highest þat ys of our lady'. All men, women

and children over the age of twelve, he advised, should fast on the evening before the

festival and on the day itself, and come to church ready to 'worscip oure holy lady

wyth all your myght'.[75] Mirk's sermon on the assumption glorified Mary's powers as

Queen of Heaven, whilst also stressing her humility and contemplative nature. In

twelfth-century Rome, the Feast of the Assumption was described by Hans Belting as

'the annual climax of the town's communal life'.[76] In what was known as the August

procession, the whole populace would process to S. Maria Maggiore on the night

before the feast day itself. A full-length portrait of the Christ, the *Acheropita*, was

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[72] Boss, 'Development of the Virgin's Cult', p. 160.

[73] Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991) p. 162.

[74] Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p. 143.

[75] Johannes Mirkus, *Mirk's Festial*, ed. Theodor Erbe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905), pp. 221, 227.

[76] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 327.

removed from the pope's inner sanctum and processed through the city streets to the church, a procession which symbolised Christ the bridegroom leaving the residence of his earthly representative to enjoy a sacred reunion with his mother and bride.[77] The procession, itself a visual re-enactment of the language of the Song of Songs, underlined the pope's significance as God's earthly representative on earth, and Rome's significance as the heavenly Jerusalem.[78]

In the ninth to eleventh centuries, the bodily assumption of the Virgin was downplayed by some. In the 840s, an influential letter entitled *Cogitis me*, which was attributed to Jerome, stressed Mary's spiritual rather than bodily assumption.[79] Bernard of Clairvaux's four sermons on the assumption remain conspicuously silent on the subject of Mary's bodily assumption, while visual representations of the assumption often showed the Christ holding the Virgin's childlike soul in his arms [figure 4].[80] However, from the twelfth century, the concept of Mary's bodily assumption became truly dominant. One reason for this was that in 1156 and 1159, the mystic Elizabeth of Schonau had visions of Mary's corporeal assumption. These were recorded by her brother in *Visio de Resurrectione Beatae Virginis Marie,* and widely circulated. The circulation of these visions formed the impetus for a widespread belief that the Virgin's body as well as her soul was assumed.[81] Even here, however, we find politics lying behind representations of the Virgin. Elizabeth's visions were written down by her brother, who was an adversary of Cathar heretics. Cathars believed that the spirit was good and the flesh evil, and thus

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[77] The *Acheropita* is a term for a sacred image which, it was believed, was produced by divine intervention.
[78] Herbert L. Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 66, 142.
[79] Mayr-Harting, 'The Idea of the Assumption of Mary', pp. 86-87.
[80] Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion,* p. 185.
[81] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 394.

Elizabeth's brother used his sister's visions as a way to assert that on the contrary, flesh could be wholly pure.[82]
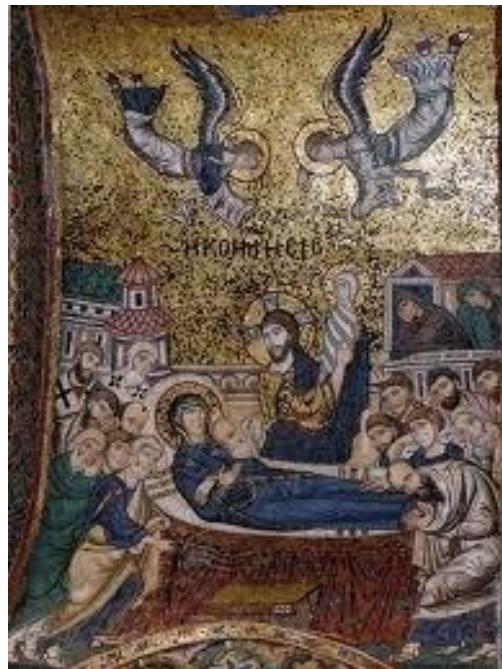
Figure 4. This twelfth-century image of the Virgin's Dormition from La Martorana, Palermo shows Christ holding up the Virgin's soul, which is represented as a child. Source: Warner, *Alone*, plate 5.

The story of the Virgin's assumption also played an important role in popular culture. *The Golden Legend* by the thirteenth-century Italian preacher Jacobus de Voragine was a popular collection of the lives of the saints taken from a variety of patristic and medieval sources; it was translated and printed by Caxton in the fifteenth century. One of the tales it told was of the Virgin's assumption into heaven, which used the *Protoevangelium* as its basis. This tale of Mary's bodily assumption features the story of the angel giving Mary the palm from paradise, and ends with descriptions of apparitions of the Virgin.[83] Elizabeth of Schonau's visions of the Virgin are quoted at length in *The Golden Legend*. In the East-Anglian N-Town cycle of

[82] Mayr-Harting, 'The Idea of the Assumption of Mary', p.109; Rubin, *Mother of God*, p.137.
[83] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (1993; Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 463-483.

mystery plays on the conception, birth and life of Mary the play entitled *The Assumption of Mary* depicted the bodily assumption of the Virgin with lavish spectacle.[84] In the play, the Apostle John is transported on a white cloud to be with Mary at her passing, which is accompanied by the singing of choirs of angels and the playing of organs. At the end, Christ calls Mary to be with him and the language here shifts to the Vulgate Song of Songs as the Virgin becomes the bride of Christ and the Queen of Heaven, with the words *'Veni de Libano, sponsa mea; veni, coronaberis'*. Mary's soul having been assumed into heaven, the play ends with the ecstatic assumption of her body into the clouds to be crowned 'Qwen of Hefne and Moder of Mercy'.[85]

The emphasis on the Virgin's corporeal assumption in Western culture made Mary's ascent into heaven a more dramatic and active one than it had been in the East.[86] The Virgin's bodily assumption sets her apart from the saints, and as Julia Kristeva observes, 'the fate of the Virgin Mary is more radiant even than that of her son'.[87] Through it, the Virgin's body and soul are reunited, something which for the rest of humankind is reserved until the Last Judgement. On a deeper symbolic level, the assumption of the Virgin also presents her as an archetype of the risen body of Christ, the realisation of a gift of heavenly glory promised by Christ to the members of his Church.[88] A belief in the Virgin's corporeal assumption can thus be mapped onto preoccupations with the Virgin's sinless flesh. The Virgin's sinlessness made her free from the putrefaction of corporeal decay, and because her assumption allowed her to escape this stench of human sin, she was often associated with fragrant

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[84] Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, p. 144.
[85] Stephen Spector (ed.), *The N-Town Play* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1991), pp. 400, 336, 409.
[86] Ellington, *Sacred Body,* p.106. See also Warner, *Alone*, pp. 82-84.
[87] Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', p. 105.
[88] This argument is discussed in more depth by Jean-Marie R. Tillyard in 'The Marian Issues', in Adelbert Denaux and Nicholas Sagovsky (eds.), *Studying Mary* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 10.

flowers, particularly in the love poetry of the Middle Ages.[89] The doctrine of Mary's

bodily assumption was also integral to the pilgrimage tradition, as it connected the

Virgin with apparitions. In the words of Victor and Edith Turner: 'her body having

disappeared from the world at the assumption, it is argued that she can reappear in the

body, in a more concrete way than a saint whose body remains buried or whose relics

are believed scattered in different places'.[90]

This examination of the history of the assumption and coronation of the

Virgin has revealed an image that adapted and changed over the centuries. We have

also seen how, as well as being of tremendous personal significance to individual

worshippers, images of Mary as Queen of Heaven in particular were frequently

deployed for politicised ends. There is little doubt that by the time of the

Reformation, the Virgin's assumption and coronation were firmly embedded both

liturgically and in popular culture.[91] Visual images played an important part in

establishing the tradition, with paintings of the Virgin's assumption appearing in

cathedrals and churches throughout Europe in the Middle Ages [figure 5].[92]

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[89] Ellington, *Sacred Body,* p. 106. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone, 1991), pp. 210-212, and Warner, *Alone*, p. 100.
[90] Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, pp. 154-155.
[91] It is important to note, however, that it was not until 1950 that the assumption of the Virgin was defined as official dogma, by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. Warner describes this, and the celebrations which greeted it, as 'the climax of centuries of tradition'. See *Alone*, p. 92.
[92] Warner, *Alone*, p. 85.

Figure 5. *The Virgin of the Assumption*, by Bartolomeo Bulgarini (1300-1310-1378), Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena. The picture depicts a variant of the assumption story that the Virgin threw her girdle to the disciple Thomas, as physical proof of her assumption into heaven. Source: http://www.wga.hu.

Rumblings of discontent

In the years leading up to the Reformation, however, we find significant rumblings of discontent. In England, the Lollard movement of the late fourteenth century criticised excessive devotion to the Virgin. Lollards were particularly scathing about the wonder-working elements of statues of the Virgin, nicknaming Our Lady of Walsingham 'Our Lady of Falsyngham'.[93] The humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus also used Walsingham as a focal point for his unease at excesses of devotion to the Virgin in his colloquy *The Religious Pilgrimage*, published in 1526. Included in this colloquy was a letter in which he ventriloquised the Virgin's voice, showing her as irritated by the presumption that she can wield power over her son:

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[93] Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* (London: Hambledon, 1984) p. 168.

Every Thing was asked of me, as if my Son was always a Child, because he is painted so, and at my Breast, and therefore they take it for granted that I have him still at my Beck, and that he dares not deny any Thing I ask of him, for Fear I should deny him the Bubby when he is thirsty.[94]

Arguments such as this were subsequently revisited by Protestant polemicists, but Erasmus himself was no schismatic. His was a tempering vision, which Diarmaid MacCulloch has argued gives us an insight into an alternative future for Catholicism, had the Reformation not occurred: 'There might have been a future for a Mariology drawing on the Christocentric theology of the Passion in a Catholicism which had not been traumatised by the Reformation'.[95]

MacCulloch's view presents us with a very potent 'what if', particularly when one considers the research of Christine Peters, who has identified an increasingly Christocentric focus within late medieval piety, and Caroline Walker Bynum's pertinent observations about a greater emphasis on the humanity of Christ and the Virgin at this time.[96] But it remains in the realms of conjecture. The Reformation did occur, and this led to more dramatic and more schismatic perceptions of both the Virgin as Queen of Heaven and of her assumption. An indication of this schismatic perception can be found in differing approaches to Song of Songs 4.8. In the Vulgate, the words *'veni coronaberis'* from this verse were often seen as denoting the coronation of the Virgin, figured as the Bride from the Song of Songs. We have already seen how the N-Town assumption play quotes directly from the Vulgate Song

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[94] Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies,* trans. N. Bailey (1526; London: Reeves & Turner, 1878), vol. 2, p. 5.
[95] MacCulloch, 'Mary and Sixteenth-Century Protestants', pp. 195-196.
[96] Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 16-17.

of Songs at the point of the Virgin's assumption and coronation. These words were Englished by Gregory Martin in the Catholic Rheims-Douai Old Testament as 'come: thou shalt be crowned', which encompasses the reading of the bride of the Songs as the Virgin.[97] In the glossings of The Geneva Bible, however, there are no Marian references in the Song of Songs; instead, the Bride is refigured as a representation of the Church. The Englishing of '*veni coronaberis*' is omitted entirely, replaced by an invitation to the spouse to come and 'loke from the top of Amanah', which is glossed as 'Christ promiseth his Church' (p. 281, note d). Through translation and commentary, battle lines are drawn.

We have seen how, prior to the Reformation, Mary as Queen of Heaven and Mary as humble handmaid coexisted within one polyvalent image. These two aspects of Marian iconography were polarised by Reformation thinking, as the teaching of Martin Luther reveals. Luther was devoted to the Virgin, and his commentary on the Magnificat, published in 1521, was a true labour of love. In this, he did not eradicate the nomenclature of 'Queen of Heaven', but he warned his followers against making too much of the phrase, which 'does not make her a goddess who could grant gifts or render aid'. Mary in this commentary is presented as a model of obedience, and is placed in a humble, domesticated setting:

> She is not puffed up, does not vaunt herself or proclaim with a loud voice that she is become the Mother of God. She seeks not any glory, but goes about her usual household duties, milking the cows, cooking the meals, washing pots and kettles, sweeping out the rooms, and performing the works of maidservant

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[97] Song of Songs 4.8, from Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney (eds.), *The Vulgate Bible, Douay-Rheims Translation*, 6 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), vol. 3.

or housemother in lowly and despised tasks, as though she cared nothing for

such great gifts and graces.[98]

As time went on, Luther – and particularly the Lutheran pastors who followed

him – did eradicate the use of the Queen of Heaven, effecting, as Beth Kreitzer's

research has shown, a transformation of the Virgin's role from active *Maria Regina*

interceding on mankind's behalf to a humble, submissive and obedient peasant girl.

Lutheran Mary thus becomes the perfect godly Protestant woman, serving as a

behavioural model to a pastor's female flock.[99] As Bridget Heal has observed, this

reworked old established symbols rather than abolishing them, stripping Mary of her

salvific power and instead exalting her as a model of right belief and conduct:

The humble and family-orientated Virgin who had feature in late medieval

images of the Holy Kindred remained, but her domestic role was no longer

offset by authority in the heavenly sphere.[100]

This ideological shift has been described by Merry Wiesner-Hanks as 'a

reduction of the female ideal from heavenly to housebound'.[101] How successful was

it? Heal's recent monograph reveals the diversity of Marian devotional practice

within Lutheran Germany, while Kreitzer's study concludes that the symbol of Mary

[98] Martin Luther, *Works*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann, 55 vols (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), vol. 21, pp. 327, 329.

[99] Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, p. 163; Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 214, and 'Luther and Women', in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 303, 305.

[100] Bridget Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 284, 114-115.

[101] Wiesner-Hanks, 'Luther and Women', p. 303.

was too polyvalent to fit snugly into this representation: 'The image of Mary often rests somewhat uncomfortably on sixteenth-century Lutheran preachers, for it is more complex and occasionally more subversive than they are willing to admit'.[102] This observation shows us how faultlines can occur when a complex image such as that of the Virgin is represented exclusively in one of its many guises, and it is this awareness of polyvalence that underpins my own analysis of post-Reformation England. How did the dichotomy of Heaven's Queen and humble handmaid present itself in England in this period, and to what extent was this a successful polarisation?

This Protestant re-positioning of the Virgin's role led in many ways to a Catholic retrenchment. Rubin observes that the Reformation resulted in a 'remaking of Mary by Protestant ideas and practices, and the subsequent Catholic defence of Mary and all she stood for'.[103] The Council of Trent (1545-1563) affirmed the centrality of veneration of the Virgin, although it did not take Mariology as a key focus for debate. As Trevor Johnson has observed, it was Counter-Reformation writers such as Peter Canisius who subsequently brought Marian piety to the forefront, sparking 'Marian fervour throughout Catholic Europe, at both elite and popular levels'.[104] Keith P. Luria describes the cult of Mary as 'the most successful of the Catholic Reformation'.[105] In Counter-Reformation Europe the Virgin became, in Heal's words, 'a symbol of militant recatholicisation', and was frequently seen in the empowered guise of Queen of Heaven.[106]

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[102] Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary,* p. 141; Heal, *Cult of the Virgin Mary, passim*.
[103] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God,* p. xxv.
[104] Trevor Johnson, 'Mary in Early Modern Europe', in Boss, *The Complete Resource*, pp. 363-365.
[105] Keith P. Luria, 'Popular Catholicism and the Catholic Reformation', in Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel (eds.), *Early Modern Catholicism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 119.
[106] Bridget Heal, 'Marian Devotion and Confessional Identity in Sixteenth-Century Germany', in Swanson, *The Church and Mary*, p. 225.

But as Ellington has shown, a view of the 'Catholic' Mary purely as Queen of Heaven is a reductive one.[107] From the language of early modern sermons, Ellington finds convincing evidence of a quiet, passive and contemplative Virgin who emerged in post-Tridentine Europe and formed a model for a devout Christian life. This more restrained Marian piety presented the Virgin as a passive recipient of God's grace: thus the 'Catholic' Virgin Mary here stands uncannily close to the godly 'Protestant' model. Ellington's caveat again alerts us to the fact that the polarisation of Protestant handmaid against Catholic Queen is not always a stable one. It could be argued that instead of co-existing with the image of the humble handmaid, the image of Heaven's Queen was being forced to exist in opposition.[108] Further complexities emerge if one translates Counter-Reformation orthodoxies onto English soil. Can the axiom of a militaristic defence of the Virgin be comfortably realised in the English Reformation where belief systems were not always clearly demarcated? Did Counter-Reformation representatives in England follow the zealous course of their continental counterparts when it comes to the image of the Virgin Mary, or did they adapt the image to fit their own surroundings? How did recusant worshippers – and those whose faith swerved or was secret – reveal or conceal their devotion to the Virgin? These are questions which this thesis aims to address.

The fate of the Feast of the Assumption

The image of the Queen of Heaven was clearly complex and contentious in post-Reformation England, but how was the Virgin's assumption into heaven perceived?

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[107] Ellington, *From Sacred Body, passim.*
[108] One of Christine Peters's arguments in *Patterns of Piety* is that there was in late-medieval piety an iconographical development of Mary as a mortal on whom the honour of a coronation was being bestowed (p. 96).

For the fate of the Feast of the Assumption, we turn to the rhythm of the liturgical year. The Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 greatly simplified the calendar and eradicated many Marian feasts, Thomas Cranmer retaining only the Annunciation and Purification. In 1561, however, the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Nativity and Visitation were all reinstated. As Paul Williams observes: 'the one, conspicuous, continuing omission was the Assumption, which disappeared from Anglican worship in 1549'.[109] A year before this, plays on the death, assumption and coronation of the Virgin were all removed from the York Corpus Christi Cycle of mystery plays, although the other plays in the cycle continued to be performed for twenty years or so.[110] How successfully did these measures wipe the memory of the Virgin's assumption from the collective consciousness? Let us look forward to the year 1592 when in his celebrated work *Synopsis Papismi*, the controversialist Andrew Willet felt the need to take a confrontational stance on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin:

> We doe not celebrate any festivall daies in the honour of creatures, neither of the Virgine Mary, nor any other Saint, but only to the honor of God: and therefore the feasts of the Annuntiation, and Purification, may much better be received, because they belong and are referred unto Christ, then the other festivities, of the assumption and conception of Mary, the institution whereof was most superstitious: the one for the fayned assumption of her bodie, which

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[109] Paul Williams, 'The English Reformers and the Blessed Virgin Mary', in Boss, *The Complete Resource,* p. 253.
[110] Harold C. Gardiner, *Mysteries' End* (New Haven CT: Archon, 1946), p. 61; Claire Cross, 'Excising the Virgin Mary from the Civic Life of Tudor York', *Northern History*, vol. 39 (2002): 279-84 (p. 280).

your owne writers are uncertaine of: the other to maintaine the heresie of the Franciscanes, that she was conceived and borne without sinne.[111]

A Protestant mistrust of the Virgin's assumption, particularly her bodily assumption, is clearly felt, but its very reference within this text also reveals that this long-eradicated feast is still a matter for debate for some. A decade later, the Puritan theologian William Perkins was to liken belief in the Virgin's assumption to 'the Idolatrie of our times' punning that 'there is no certaintie in historie to prove this assumption'.[112] Forty years after the Elizabethan authorities had taken concerted steps to eradicate any traces of the Virgin's assumption from the liturgy, a prolific Puritan writer felt the need to express his concern; one does not tend to do this about something that has simply faded away. This telling little detail stands as a salutary reminder that imagery of the Virgin's assumption had not completely left the cultural consciousness. There is a shift in tone – the assumption of the Virgin is a topic of polemic rather than devotion – but the image remains, still in currency, still capable of arousing a response. It is to confrontational standpoints such as that of William Perkins that we now turn as we move to an exploration of polemical representations of the Queen of Heaven.

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[111] Andrew Willet, *Synopsis Papismi* (London: Thomas Orwin for Thomas Man, 1592), p. 403.
[112] William Perkins, *A Warning Against the Idolatrie of the Last Times* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1601), p. 174.

PART ONE

SHARDS AND FRAGMENTS

CHAPTER 1

IMAGES OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

In the heart of the City of London, under the shadow of the great cathedral itself, stood the outdoor pulpit of St Paul's Cross. Every Sunday, at ten o'clock, a sermon was delivered here which was attended by thousands of people.[1] Visiting London in 1599, the Swiss traveller Thomas Platter included the venue in his list of sites to see, and his descriptions of his experiences give us some vivid glimpses of the scene. The sermon, he reported, would last between two and three hours, and during it the congregation would stand or sit in the open air, 'coming and going at will'. The scale of the sermon, both in attendance and time, was such, he added, that the weakened preacher was frequently need of sustenance, and always had a bottle of wine and some bread close by.[2] With so many people present, it is easy to imagine how the place must have buzzed with noise.[3] Certainly, John Donne, who often preached at the venue, observed that a sermon could be met with 'periodicall murmurings and noises', and that those 'impertinent Interjections swallow up one quarter of his houre'.[4] A Sunday sermon at St Paul's Cross was clearly an event – and it was also a place where the visitor could gain access to the very latest religious thought. In close

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[1] It is not known how long a cross stood on this site, but there are records of public assemblies there from the thirteenth century. It was demolished in 1643 during the First Civil War. See Millar MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), pp. 3-19.

[2] Thomas Platter, *Thomas Platter's Travels in England 1599*, trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), p. 177.

[3] Arnold Hunt gives an imaginative reconstruction of the noises at St Paul's Cross in *The Art of Hearing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 62-63. See also Emma Rhatigan, 'Preaching Venues', and John Craig 'Sermon Reception', both in Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 104-105 and pp. 183-185.

[4] John Donne, *Sermons,* ed. G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1953-62), vol. 10, p. 133. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 319-323.

proximity to the pulpit were a number of booksellers' shops where it was possible to purchase a variety of religious tracts, and many of the sermons delivered there found their way into printed form.

St Paul's Cross was, to use Patrick Collinson's words, 'the nearest thing that the age offered to broadcasting'.[5] And at St Paul's Cross – on the pulpit and in printed tract – the position of the Virgin Mary was still being debated and discussed in post-Reformation England. My theme in this chapter is the representation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven in Protestant sermons and other religious works of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I will first explore how the phrase 'Queen of Heaven' was used as part of a string of titles for the Virgin by medieval worshippers. This practice was subverted by Protestant polemicists who repeated these lists in mocking form. I will then turn to the empowered elements of the image of the Queen of Heaven, showing how these often blurred with a complaint about the papistical image of the Virgin as a mother who many Protestant commentators deduced was overbearing towards her son. From the Queen of Heaven as a mother we will turn to the Queen of Heaven as a woman, and an exploration of an Old Testament prophetic reference that polemicists often mined to support their cause. This is the story of the disobedient women of Pathros of Jeremiah 44, whose idolatrous worship of a pagan figure named the Queen of Heaven brought about God's wrath. Finally, I will explore how in spite of polemic's directness of tone, these pejorative representations of the Virgin as Heaven's Queen are often complex and nuanced, as commentators take pains, sometimes unsuccessfully, to disentangle appropriate levels of respect and veneration for the Virgin as a humble handmaid

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[5] Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, p. 20.

from their vitriol and loathing of her elevated form. The balance struck is often an uneasy one.

The chapter is thematically rather than chronologically arranged, and references are made to texts that were written and printed across the entire timespan of the thesis. Where pertinent, the historical context of sources will be discussed, and the texts will also be viewed within the ideological framework both of early modern secular anxieties about women and authority, and a demonising of the Catholic Church that frequently used gendered language. My aim is to illuminate how the image of the Virgin as Heaven's Queen evoked a range of responses that were complex, emotive and often contradictory. The repeated and direct mention of the image of the Queen of Heaven in sermons and polemic of the period can be seen to disrupt the sense of 'fading' that, as we have seen, is often associated with the image of the Virgin in post-Reformation literature. These frequent references to the Virgin as Queen of Heaven are clearly derogatory, but it could be argued that they also serve the function of keeping this contentious image alive. St Paul's Cross, the site at which the sermon at the pulpit and the printed word of the bookseller interconnected, shows us in microcosm the popularity and vivacity of the religious discourse which forms the backbone of this chapter.

Early modern emphasis on the sermon

The sermon's influence increased in the Reformation, largely due to a greater emphasis on the Word and the individual faith of a believer.[6] This led, inevitably, to

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[6] See Susan Wabuda, *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)*,* pp. 26-27, 63. As a caveat to this, Wabuda observes a tendency amongst historians to presume that sermons were rare before the Reformation, commenting that although there were many

a transformation of the role of the preacher. To a certain extent, the initial drive for this was the growth of humanism; pre-Reformation humanist scholars such as Desiderius Erasmus and Bishop John Fisher expanded the preacher's role, highlighting the importance of preaching in emulation of Christ's ministry. In the Reformation, this aspect of humanism was retained, and the priest – whose principal role had formerly been as celebrator of Mass and hearer of confessions – became preacher and interpreter of the Word. The Reformation also brought with it the increasing politicisation of the sermon. Millar MacLure's 1958 monograph *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, something of a bastion of early research into the field, illuminates the intersection of the religious and the political in sermons in the Reformation and beyond. MacLure's research also concentrates on the St Paul's Cross sermon, showing how these prestigious sermons came to be interwoven with key events, from a justification of the first wave of iconoclasm to a reiteration of national strength in thanksgiving for delivery after the Armada and the Gunpowder Plot.

However, although the sermon's centrality in the early modern period seems undisputed, it has until recently been a worthy but neglected field of study. MacLure's rather withering observation is that 'in a literary way, most sermons deserve oblivion', and his monograph is one of a number of studies on sermons which seem to want to discourage the enthusiast from further study.[7] In recent years the field has been energised, however. Bryan Crockett's 1995 study *The Play of*

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obstacles to preaching, the homily was in fact an important part of late-Medieval devotion, albeit as 'a handmaid to the sacraments' (p. 24).

[7] MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons,* p. 167. See also William Fraser Mitchell, *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson* (London: S.P.C.K., 1932), and John Wheatley Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964). For a more detailed overview of sermon literature see Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised,* pp. 2-4.

Paradox emphasised the theatricality of the seventeenth-century sermon, observing that the orators of stage and pulpit often used similar rhetorical techniques, and that the sermon reached 'the height of its rhetorical effectiveness towards the end of the sixteenth century'.[8] There have also been several significant studies into the rhetorical nature of the sermon genre itself.[9] In 2000, *The English Sermon Revised* set out to free the genre from what it describes as 'an indulgent, even condescending, neglect'. Its editors name as catalysts for the collection 'a return to history in literary studies and fresh, critical thinking by historians about the use of literary evidence'.[10] Arnold Hunt's 2010 publication *The Art of Hearing* observes that it is an 'exciting time to be studying early modern preaching'.[11]

Pertinent to this thesis is new research building on MacLure's observations about the politicised nature of the sermon. As Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough have commented:

> In considering the place of sermons in early modern English society, we must remember that they were not simply words on a page, but instruments of policy, documents of religious change, and expressions of public life.[12]

Ferrell's research elsewhere into the importance of sermons in the Jacobean era is aptly entitled *Government by Polemic*, and is a convincing demonstration of how

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[8] Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 55.
[9] See Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapter 8, and Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapter 2.
[10] Ferrell and McCullough, *The English Sermon Revised*, pp. 3, 17.
[11] Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 4.
[12] Ferrell and McCullough, *The English Sermon Revised,* p. 10.

James I recognised 'the remarkable power of the word'.[13] Her study focuses in the main on anti-Puritan polemical debate, but it highlights for us the role of the sermon, particularly the St Paul's Cross sermon, as a mouthpiece for the King's policies.[14] Also influencing my own line of research has been the acknowledgement of the sermon's role within the 'public sphere', where preaching and the dissemination of news and public thought are viewed as intertwined.[15] This is one of the driving forces behind the 2011 publication of *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, a collection of essays on topics which include women and sermons and the translation of the sermon from oral to printed matter.[16] Important research has also been undertaken into how sermons were echoed in pamphlet literature.[17] *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, Peter Lake and Michael Questier's lively review of sermon campaigns against the theatre, highlights this interaction. This convincing study of the overlap between pamphlet and pulpit culture shows how the lowbrow of Grub Street (the literary underground of London) were often promulgating similar ideologies to those of the preacher in the pulpit.[18]

My own research for this chapter is not focused on the sermon alone, but it has the sermon – or rather printed versions of the sermon – at its core. As mine is a thematic approach rather than an exploration of genre, my examples are drawn from a number of different media as well as sermons, which can loosely be termed 'printed

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[13] Lori Anne Ferrell, *Government by Polemic* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 8.
[14] Ferrell, *Government by Polemic*, p. 11.
[15] For a discussion of the term the 'public sphere' see Tony Claydon, 'The Sermon, the "Public Sphere" and the Political Culture of Late Seventeenth-Century England', in Ferrell and McCullough, *The English Sermon Revised*, and Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 335-76.
[16] McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan, *Oxford Handbook*, p. xiv.
[17] See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*; Patrick Collinson, 'Biblical Rhetoric: The English Nation and National Sentiment in The Prophetic Mode', in Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (eds.), *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 30.
[18] Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, chapter 9.

religious discourse'. Sermons were just one of an extensive genre of religious publications that included tracts, biblical commentaries and devotional books.[19] My emphasis is on the printed word, but Hunt's observations in *The Art of Hearing* on the interactive and performative elements of early modern preaching must also be noted. Hunt describes the sermon as 'interpretative collaboration between preacher and audience, specific to the moment of spoken delivery', and his study makes the important distinction between reading and printing.[20] The popularity of the printed sermon ultimately brought about a breaking down of this distinction, but the initial reluctance of some preachers to see their work in print is significant, as are the revisions that occurred between delivered sermon and printed sermon.[21]

The structured way in which a sermon was heard also contributed to its afterlife beyond the pulpit, from regulated note-taking by schoolboys to fragments appearing in commonplace books and spiritual autobiographies.[22] Patrick Collinson has observed that 'repetition' was an extremely important element of the afterlife of the sermon, as godly Elizabethan neighbours met not only to pray and to read the Bible or *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, but also to engage in the repetition of a sermon that had been heard in public.[23] Ultimately, however, the thirst for and popularity of these printed texts cannot be denied. As James Rigney comments, the sermon has an important place in the history of the printed book. The move to print, however problematic, did make the sermon into 'a public space for the inscription and

[19] Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 1 and *passim*. See also Patrick Collinson, Arnold Hunt and Alexandra Walsham, 'Religious Publishing in England 1557-1640', in John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, 1557-1695 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 29-66. For the transition of sermons from an oral delivery into print, see Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, chapter 3.
[20] Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 16.
[21] Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, pp. 50-52.
[22] John Craig, 'Sermon Reception', pp. 189-193.
[23] Patrick Collinson, *From Cranmer to Sancroft* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 158-159.

exchange of views' not only through making it available to a wider readership, but also by allowing, through annotation, a space for alternative, often intrusive, voices of the readers to appear.[24]

From litanies of praise to epithets of disdain

The sermon and related printed discourse can therefore be viewed as an important element of early modern culture, and it is one which has a significant part to play in how the image of the Virgin was perceived in this time. One way in which this manifests itself is through the way in which preachers often listed epithets to the Virgin disdainfully. In the fifth century, the influential Constantinople preacher Proclus gave a sermon in which he delivered a string of titles in the Virgin's praise.[25] This practice of addressing the Virgin using a list of titles grew in popularity as the Christian faith took hold on the Western consciousness. By the Middle Ages, titles such as 'Queen of Heaven', 'Gate of Paradise' and 'Star of the Sea' were commonplace in primers. Marian litanies, popular from the twelfth century onwards, took the form of petitions to the Virgin Mary which were repeated in chant form; perhaps the most popular of these was the Litany of Loreto, sung at this famous Marian shrine, which was printed in 1558.[26] As Miri Rubin observes, the use of such lists of titles meant that homilies addressed to the Virgin often sounded more like an encomium of the court.[27] Erasmus found copiousness in this particular context

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[24] James Rigney, 'Sermons into Print', in McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan, *Oxford Handbook*, p. 202.
[25] Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, pp. 79, 87.
[26] Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, p. 26; *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Litany of Loreto, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09287a.htm, site visited 16.04.13.
[27] Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 67.

excessive; in his *Colloquies*, he satirised the insincerity of these appellations in a section which mocked sailors who called on the Virgin in distress:

> The Mariners, they were singing their *Salve Regina*, imploring the Virgin
> Mother, calling her the Star of the Sea, the Queen of Heaven, the Lady of the
> World, the Haven of Health, and many other flattering Titles, which the
> sacred Scriptures never attributed to her.[28]

Protestant writers followed Erasmus's lead, and often listed epithets to the Virgin as an amplification of their disgust. The argument was that such appellations of praise were idolatrous, and dishonoured the true, humble Virgin herself; excessive verbal embellishments therefore became analogous to over-decorated visual manifestations. An example of a Protestant writer who expressed disgust is the prominent reformer John Jewel, who observed:

> I beseech you, marke the fourme and fashion of their prayers. To the blessed
> virgin, they sayd, *Ave Maria, salus, et consolatrix vivorum et mortuorum*,
> Haile Marie, the saviour & comforter, both of quicke and dead…They cal her,
> *Regina Coeli, domina mundi, unica spes miserorum*. Queene of heaven, Lady
> of the world, the only hope of them that be in miserie. It were tedious, and

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[28] Erasmus, *Colloquies*, vol. 2, p. 278.

unpleasant to recite the like their blasphemies. Howe did these men accompt of the crosse and passion of Christ?[29]

Jewel's observations were made during a St Paul's Cross Sermon which was reprinted in 1583.[30] His 'marke the fourme and fashion of their prayers' may be an exhortation to ridicule, but it can also be seen as encouraging worshippers to commit these lost liturgies to memory. The epithets themselves, vivid descriptions which were presented as a catalogue, were both easy to remember, and easy to reproduce.

Many polemicists adopted a similar device, loading attributes and titles on the Virgin Mary in a mock-encomium. In 1573, the bishop of Oxford and Queen's Chaplain John Bridges made the following comments on the language of the primers:

Dyd ye never say this prayer in your Primer: O moste noble, moste excellent, and ever glorious Virgin, &c. O Lady my Queene, and Lady of all creatures, whiche forsakest none, dyspysest none, nore leavest anye desolate…Ye have in the Primer, a notable prayer to the blessed virgin *Ave domina sancta Maria* &c. Haile Lady S. Marie, mother of God, Queene of heaven, port of Paradise, Ladie of the world, eternall light.[31]

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[29] John Jewel, *Certaine Sermons Preached Before the Queenes Majestie, and at Paule's Crosse* (London: Christopher Baker, 1583), sig. 8r.

[30] Exiled during the reign of Queen Mary, John Jewel became Bishop of Salisbury under Elizabeth, and published widely on reformist issues. Many of Jewel's works were, like this one, printed and reprinted after his death in 1571, and I have therefore included them in my investigation. John Craig, 'Jewel, John (1522–1571)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14810, site visited 01.01.13.

[31] John Bridges, *The Supremacie of Christian Princes Over All Persons Throughout Their Dominions* (London: Henrie Bynneman, for Humfrey Toye, 1573), pp. 404-405. All further references will be to this edition.

Bridges's invective is here directed at the pardons and indulgences associated with Catholic prayer. After exploring the language of prayer used in the primers, he goes on to dismiss it as 'horrible stuffe…Yea it were infinite and to tedious, to rake out those most blasphemous prayers, that all your other bookes have' (p. 411). This text, like Jewel's, professes weariness at the multitude of Catholic prayers, and yet Bridges's exposition of the primers is a lengthy one, allowing time for the residual power and poetry of the language of these devotional prayers to stay in the reader's head. Prayers such as 'Haile queene of mercie, our life, our sweetnes, our hope' are mockingly repeated (p. 408). It is possible that Bridges was keeping the multifold titles for the Virgin – including her position as Queen of Heaven – alive in the public consciousness by the very act of repeatedly denigrating them.

Both Jewel and Bridges complain that to repeat praise to the Virgin is an act of tedium that borders on disgust; and yet, paradoxically, they repeat the prayers of the old faith at length. This paradox is more emotively suggested by the Puritan cleric William Charke in his 1583 text *An Answeare for the Time*:

> It were too tedious, and would require an whole volume by it selfe, to set
> downe al their horrible prayers…that they make to the Virgin and other
> Sayntes.[32]

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[32] William Charke, *An Answeare for the Time* (London: Thomas Dawson and Tobie Smith, 1583), sig. H1r. All further references will be to this edition.

The use of 'horrible prayers' shows a profound sense of emotional engagement, and certainly William Charke was a man who was no stranger to controversy. He disputed with incarcerated Catholic priests, including Edmund Campion, whom he had failed to convert in the Tower in 1581.[33] Charke's *An Answeare for the Time* is part of a furious pamphlet war with the Jesuit priest Robert Parsons, concerning Campion's arrest and execution. It seethes with anti-Jesuit and anti-Marian sentiment, and includes a mocking list of Mary's traditional attributes and titles:

> A Virgin before her byrth, a*nd* in her birth, & a virgin after her birth: the fountayne of mercie, the fountaine of salvation and grace, the fountaine of pietie and gladnes, the fountain of consolation and forgivenes &c. The like is *Ave Rosa sine spinis*. All haile rose without thornes, written forsooth with letters of gold in her breast. (sig. H1r)

At times Charke's sarcasm is so sustained that mock-encomium stands in danger of becoming an encomium itself. The attributes and titles of the Virgin Mary are listed in order to lampoon worship of her – but they are listed nonetheless.

> I am wearie in stirring this filthie Quakemyre of their cursed abomination, but that I see it verie necessarie, seeing these fine witted Jesuites that will restore

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[33] Richard L. Greaves, 'Charke, William (*d.* 1617)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5142, site visited 23.11.11.

all, and dispute the matter against all that can be brought, defending everie

absurditie, doe so greatly provoke mee. (sig. H1v)

At several points, Charke reiterates weariness – his reluctance, as he puts it, to 'blotte

paper' (sig. H2r), but in reality his invective pours across the page.

Charke uses rhetorical lists to amplify his view that the elevation of the

Virgin's role to Queen of Heaven is a gross error, but they also reveal his own

anxiety. There lurks behind this invective a fear of the residual power that the Virgin

could perhaps exercise over English men and women – a fear that was, in Charke's

view, being inflamed by Catholic writings and teachings:

> But is not this trimme stuffe, that you translate *Te Deum laudamus*, into *Te*
>
> *matrem laudamus*? where you call her the wife of the eternall Father, whom
>
> all the earth doeth woorshippe [sic]: Whom all the glorious companie all
>
> Confessours, doe call the Temple of the whole trinitie: whome the whole
>
> Courte of Heaven doeth honour, as the Queene of Heaven. Thou arte the
>
> Ladye of Angelles, the gate of Paradise, the Lader of the heavenlie kingdome.
>
> (sig. H2r)

Charke's invective begins here with a sharply-observed blow that '*Te Deum*

laudamus' is being interpreted as *'Te matrem laudamus'.* But this descends into a

mocking list of epithets, and the copiousness of his rhetoric has all the appearance of

an encomium. This is, admittedly, framed in a negative and sarcastic tone, but does

his repetition truly render worship of the Virgin ridiculous, as is Charke's intention? To what extent, then were these polemical representations of the Queen of Heaven ironically acknowledging the power of the symbol?

The Queen of Heaven as an overbearing mother

The use of a mocking repetition of epithets to the Virgin by many polemicists thus resulted in a disquieting invective which displayed a profound anxiety that to venerate the Virgin as Queen of Heaven was to over-inflate her role. The title 'Queen of Heaven' bestowed power on the mother that should be the Father and Son's alone, changing *Te Deum Laudamus* to *Te Matrem Laudamus*. For a number of writers, this anxiety at the Virgin's role became entangled with the domestic, as their invective against the Virgin's power as Queen of Heaven blurred with a representation of Mary as an overbearing mother who was trying to control her son. In the early stages of the Reformation, Bishop Latimer made the dramatic assertion that Mary, far from being free from sin, was a proud and arrogant mother. He based this on a scriptural reference, observing that she had interrupted Christ's sermon in the Temple so that she was recognised by all as his mother:

> She was pricked a little with vain-glory; she would have known to be his
> mother, else she would not have been so hasty to speak with him. And here

you may perceive that we gave her too much, thinking her to be without any

sparkle of sin.[34]

Latimer's claim here was that according to scriptural text, the Virgin was a proud

woman who wanted to bask in her son's glory.

Another Biblical reference which gives us insight into the relationship

between mother and son comes in the miracle of the Wedding at Cana in the Gospel

of John. At the point at which the wedding guests have run out of wine, Mary urges

her son to intervene, thus prompting his first miracle. But before he does so, Christ

utters some apparently brusque words to his mother:

Jesus said unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine houre is not

yet come. (John 2.4)

The text has through time lain itself open to a patriarchal reading of the Virgin as a

domineering mother, who fails at this point to understand the significance of her

son's ministry.[35] In 1610, the popular Kentish preacher John Boys offered the

following interpretation of Christ's words:

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[34] Hugh Latimer, *Sermons*, ed. George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), pp. 383-384, 515.
[35] See Maunder, 'Mary in the New Testament and Apocrypha', p. 63 and Richard Price, 'Theotokos', p. 31, in Boss, *The Complete Resource*.

Christ answered roughly, lest we should account his mother our *mediatrix* and advocate. For he foresaw the superstition of popery, making Mary the Queene of heaven, and assigning greater dignitie to the mother, then to the Sonne. For whereas Gods kingdome consists of his justice and mercy, the Papists attribute the greatest part, which is mercy, to Mary, making her high Chanceller, and Christ, as it were, chiefe Justice: so that a poore Client may well appeale from the tribunall of God, to the court of our Lady.[36]

Boys reads Christ's attitude to his mother as direct evidence that he foresaw that the Catholic faith would over-inflate Mary's role, elevating her to the position of Queen of Heaven. His scriptural exegesis of the roughness of Christ's tone gives the text of the Wedding at Cana a distinctly post-Reformation slant, and he also conflates the Virgin as mother with the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. His sermon functions as a warning to worshippers, but there is a distinct impression that the preacher is also putting Mary firmly back in her rightful place. The words of John Boys would have carried considerable weight. His comments on Mary as Queen of Heaven were part of a series of printed sermons which looked at the liturgy of the English Church throughout the year, and which ultimately earned him the position of Dean of Canterbury. It is a testament to his popularity that his books were reissued at least twelve times.[37]

Many other theologians and preachers of the period linked the Virgin as overbearing mother with the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. The prominent Calvinist

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[36] John Boys, *An Exposition of the Dominical Epistles and Gospels Used in our English Liturgie Throughout The Whole Yeare* (London: Felix Kyngston for William Apsley, 1610), p. 147.
[37] William Richardson, 'Boys, John (*bap.* 1571, *d*. 1625)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3144, site visited 17.04.13.

theologian and prolific writer William Perkins had plenty to say on this subject. This

example comes from one of his many printed works, a 1606 piece entitled *The*

Combat Betweene Christ and the Divell Displayed:

> They call the *Virgin Mary,* the *Queene of Heaven,* and pray to her, that by the
>
> authority of a mother, she would command her sonne to heare their praiers;
>
> which is to make Christ a punie and underling unto her.[38]

In Perkins's emotive description of Christ as 'punie and underling' we find a fear that

the mother's physical and emotional superiority and control constituted an

enfeeblement of the son. This is not the only time that Perkins observed that in

calling the Virgin the Queen of Heaven, worshippers enfeeble Christ: this concern

hovers over a number of his works.[39] He develops his ideas in some detail in *A*

Golden Chain, where he exhorts his readers to consider that to award the Virgin the

title 'Queen of Heaven' is to make Christ only half a saviour:

> For Christ must either be our alone and whole Saviour. Now
>
> they make him but halfe a Saviour, and they joyne others with him as partners
>
> in the worke of salvation…when they adde to Christs intercession the

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[38] William Perkins, *The Combat Betweene Christ and the Divell Displayed* (London: Melchisedech
Bradwood for E. E[dgar], 1606), p. 47.

[39] See, for example, *Of the Right Knowledge of Christ Crucified* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1596), sig.
C1v; *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles According to the Tenour of the Scriptures*
(Cambridge: John Legate, 1595), p. 124; *A Reformed Catholike* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1598), sig.
¶3v; *Satans Sophistrie Answered by Our Saviour Christ and in Divers Sermons Further Manifested*
(London: Richard Field for E.E., 1604), p. 121

intercession and patronage of Saints, especially of the Virgin Marie, whome

they call the Queene of heaven, the mother of mercie, withall requesting her,

that by the authoritie of a mother she would commaund her sonne.[40]

The image of the Queen of Heaven blurs with the image of the overbearing mother in

this invective.

Later in the text, Perkins returns to the same image, as he explores the

wrongfulness of the juxtaposition of 'mother' and 'God':

Againe, the Church of Rome maketh Marie the mother of Jesus to bee as God.

In the Breviary reformed and published at the commandement of Pius the V.

shee is called a Goddesse, in expresse words: and she is further tearmed the

Queene of heaven, the Queene of the world, the gate of heaven, the mother of

grace and mercy: Yea shee is farre exalted above Christ, and he in regard of

her is made but a poore underling in heaven: for papists in their service unto

her pray on this manner, saying: Shew thy selfe to be a mother: and cause thy

sonne to receive our praiers: set free the captives and give light to the blind.[41]

The erosion of Christ's power through the elevation of the Virgin is seen as a threat to

Protestantism's Christocentric vision. Christ the infant, sitting on his mother's knee,

becomes Christ the enfeebled servant to the Queen of Heaven, made 'a poore

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[40] William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1600), p. 263.
[41] Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, p. 650.

underling in heaven'. In the image of the enfeebled Christ, one also sees a

misogynistic anxiety of the emasculation of a man by a threateningly dominant

woman.

A similar blending of the representations of queen and mother can be found in

the works of George Downame, a popular and forceful London theologian.[42] In

1603, Downame produced a vehemently anti-Catholic work entitled *A Treatise*

Concerning Antichrist, which followed the commonplace of the time of representing

the pope as the Antichrist. Downame's contention is that the Catholic faith

represented a denial of Christ as God and within this we see a familiar mistrust of the

Virgin's empowered role:

> In heaven they set above him his mother whom they cal the Queene of
>
> heaven, desiring her to co*m*maund him, & to shew her selfe to be a mother (as
>
> though Christ were as they paint him a baby under his mothers governme*nt*).[43]

Again, we see a fear of the emasculation of Christ, who in the presence of the Virgin

as Queen of Heaven becomes as powerless as a baby under his mother's care. In the

pejorative tone of 'they paint him a baby' is the fear of representation, of the

dangerous and misleading influence of the image of the crowned Virgin with the baby

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[42] In addition to publishing devotional and moral works, George Downame, or Downham, became involved in some of the great controversies in this period, producing a number of anti-Catholic texts. He gained the favour of King James, and became Bishop of Derry in 1616. Kenneth Gibson, 'Downham, George (*d*. 1634)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7977, site visited 20.09.13.

[43] George Downame, *A Treatise Concerning Antichrist Divided into Two Bookes* (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1603), p. 57.

Christ in her arms. Domestic detail becomes doctrinal unease about the Virgin's role of mediatrix which was, Downame concluded, a dangerous one:

> The blessed virgin *Mary…*hath beene worshipped among them as much or rather more then God. Her they call their Lady and goddesse, and queene of heaven. In her they repose their trust and assiance [sic], to her they flie in their necessitie, of her they crave all good things, and from her they expect remission of sins and eternall salvation, in honour of her they have devised and used diverse services, as offices, letanies, rosaryes, psalters &c. full of blasphemous idolatries.[44]

Downame's text, produced in the year of King James's accession in 1603, can be seen as having the political subtext of cautioning the new King that it is dangerous to promise religious toleration.[45] It can also be perceived as sounding a warning note against the role of the queen consort: James's wife Anna of Denmark had converted to Catholicism in the 1590s, and his mother was of course Mary Queen of Scots, who through her death had been fashioned into a Catholic martyr.[46] An interesting anomaly about the Virgin's position as Queen of Heaven is that it encompasses the concept of the queen consort as well as the queen regnant. The image of Christ the

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[44] Downame, *A Treatise*, p. 96. There are no recorded entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for 'assiance', which possibly has the meaning of 'assurance' here.

[45] This is considered in more detail by Christopher Lee in *1603* (London: Headline, 2003), pp. 218-221.

[46] Maureen M. Meikle, 'A Meddlesome Princess', in Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 126-140. Meikle shows that Anna exerted considerable influence over her husband, particularly in the Scottish court. It is generally understood, however, that Anna's Catholicism was a more private and more elusive affair: she is described by Peter McCullough as 'one of Jacobean England's consummate "church papists"'. See *Sermons at Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 170. For criticism and mistrust of Anna's religious beliefs see also McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, pp. 178-182.

infant, sitting on his mother's knee, shows how Christ the King of Heaven is still bound by the memory of the infant son's dependence on his mother, but the Virgin is iconographically represented as Christ's bride as well as his mother.[47] In the Introduction to this thesis, I discussed how in the Middle Ages, queens consort were often compared to the Virgin because of their intercessory role.[48] However, this figure of an influential woman could also engender vitriol and fear: Margaret of Anjou, for example, was vilified on the Shakespearean stage as the 'she wolf of France'.[49] Kavita Mudan observes that the figure of Margaret is similar to that of Joan of Arc in *1 Henry VI* in that both are 'framed as cautionary tales for exercising political power.'[50] In France, Catherine de Medici came to be known as 'The Black Queen' for her influence over her sons, Francis II and Charles IX, and her perceived role in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.[51]

However, many of the sources analysed here were written when a woman was on the throne, and thus a subtext of fear of a powerful queen regnant can often be viewed. Representations of Queen Elizabeth were, as Louis Montrose has foregrounded, intrinsically bound to her gender; furthermore, negative discourse about Elizabeth expressed a recurring fear about the idea of a woman as queen regnant in an age in which women were viewed as unstable versions of men.[52] In his infamous 1558 polemic *The Monstruous Regiment of Women*, the Scottish reformer

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[47] Helen Hackett draws our attention to the relationship between 'queen' and 'mother' with an observation that Elizabeth's greeting to Mary of Luke 1.43 as 'The mother of my Lord' uses an expression that can also mean 'queen-mother' in the Old Testament. See *Virgin Mother,* pp. 22-23. The title of Queen mother, or 'gebirah', was one bestowed on the mothers of rulers of Judah in the Old Testament.
[48] See Introduction, p. 32.
[49] The famous quote about Margaret of Anjou comes from *3 Henry VI*, I.iv.111. It is used in the title of Helen Castor's study on the paradoxes of female rule: *She Wolves* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010).
[50] Kavita Mudan, '"A Queen in Jest"', in Alessandra Petrina and Laura Tosi (eds.), *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 244-256.
[51] Leonie Frieda, *Catherine de Medici* (London: Phoenix, 2003), p. 287.
[52] Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, p. 1 and *passim*. See also Carole Levin, '"We Shall Never Have a Merry World While the Queene Lyveth"', in Julia M. Walker (ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth* (Durham NC: Durham University Press, 1998), pp. 77-95.

John Knox warned of dangerous consequences if a woman is set above a man in authority:

> But as for woman, it is no more possible, that she being set aloft in authoritie above man, shall resist the motions of pride, then it is able to the weake reed, or to the turning wethercocke, not to bowe or turne at the vehemencie of the unconstant wind.[53]

Knox's treatise is a damning indictment of the misrule of three Catholic Marys – Mary of Guise, Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart – and perhaps one should add Mary the Queen of Heaven as an example of a 'Monstruous Regiment' of 'mischevous Maryes'.[54] In 1559, John Aylmer, who was ultimately to become Bishop of London, replied to Knox's work with *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects,* in which he represented the Queen as 'a loving Quene and mother to raigne over us'.[55] This iconography was to prove a powerful one, as Elizabeth I was repeatedly fashioned as a symbolic mother to the nation as well as its Queen.[56] Louis Montrose has shown how this conflation was often the seat of a profound psychological disturbance for many of Elizabeth's subjects, while Helen Hackett has

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[53] John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against The Monstruous Regiment of Women* (Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul, 1558), sig. C2r.

[54] Knox, *First Blast*, sig. F1r.

[55] John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes Agaynst the Late Blowne Blaste, Concerninge the Governme[n]t of Wemen* (London: John Day, 1559*),* sig. Q3v. Helen Hackett notes that although Aylmer's work is written to engender loyalty to the Protestant Queen Elizabeth it is 'somewhat half-hearted as a defence of female monarchy': *Virgin Mother*, p. 49.

[56] See Lena Cowen Orlin, 'The Fictional Families of Elizabeth I', in Carole Levin and Patricia A. Sullivan (eds.), *Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 84-110, and Christine Coch, '"Mother of My Contreye"', *English Literary Renaissance,* vol. 26, no.3 (1996): 423-450. Mary Tudor also blended the language of queenship with maternal metaphors in her denunciation of the Wyatt rebellion of 1554. See Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 215.

observed that Elizabeth's was something of a double-edged strategy, as this rhetoric was turned against her in parliamentary debates where the queen was said to be a bad mother to the nation for not doing what Parliament wanted.[57]

The sins of the city: Jeremiah 44 and the disobedient women of Pathros

The blurring of the role of Queen of Heaven with that of an overbearing mother mapped onto the image a dangerous amount of power, and can thus be set in the context of early modern secular anxieties about women and authority. There is also an undercurrent of religious fear here, as this representation of the Queen of Heaven can be viewed as a metonym for the Catholic faith as a disruptive female force. The association of the Queen of Heaven with dangerous and authoritative women is perhaps best exemplified in the widespread polemical use of one Biblical reference. Jeremiah chapter 44 describes the actions of the people of Pathros, a community of Israelites living in Egypt in the late sixth and early seventh centuries B.C.. The people of Pathros are described as a disorderly crowd, who had abandoned worshipping Yahweh and instead devoted themselves to a pagan figure, the 'Queen of Heaven', their devotion taking the form of burning incense and offering cakes and drink. The women of the community have taken the lead on this rebellion. Their actions are in defiance of the prophet Jeremiah, and their husbands are portrayed as weak and complicit in their wives' spiritual adultery: 'all the men…knewe that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods' (Jeremiah 44.15). Jeremiah rails against the people of Pathros for their idolatrous behaviour, but they refuse to change their ways.

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[57] Louis Montrose, 'Shaping Fantasies', *Representations*, no. 2 (Spring, 1983): 61-94; Helen Hackett, 'The Rhetoric of (In)fertility', in J. Richards and A. Thorne (eds), *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 149-171.

Worshipping the Queen of Heaven has led, they believe, to health and prosperity; the

moment they stopped, their luck ran out. In the words of The Geneva Bible:

But we wil do whatsoever thing goeth out of our owne mouth, as to burne

incense unto the Quene of heave*n*, & to powre out drinke offrings unto her, as

we have done, bothe we and our fathers, our Kings and our princes in the citie

of Judah, and in the stretes of Jerusalem: for then had we plentie of vitailes

and were wel and felt none evil.

But since we left of to burne incense to the Qnene [sic] of heaven, and to

powre out drinke offrings unto her, we have had scarcenes of all things, and

have bene consumed by the sworde and by the famine. (Jeremiah 44.17-18)

The Queen of Heaven in question here is not the Virgin Mary, either in literal

or typological form. The phrase may refer to a syncretistic pagan deity, an ancient

Semitic goddess, or it may denote heaven in its entirety, the planets and the stars.[58]

But the use of this phrase in translations of the Bible available to early modern

commentators gave Protestant preachers and polemicists a very contemporary-

sounding *exemplum* of the human weakness for idolatrous worship.[59] It would appear

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[58] Susan Ackerman, '"And the Women Knead Dough"', in Peggy L. Day (ed.), *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1987), pp. 109-124.
[59] In my use of the term *exemplum* rather than *type* I am following the lead of Mary Morrissey, who lucidly makes the distinction between the two. Morrissey observes that a *type* is an event in history designed by God to refer to a future event rather than a comparison made in hindsight. She concludes that 'Israel is compared to England by an *exemplum* or *example*, a far looser form of comparison with obvious hortatory uses'. See Mary Morrissey, 'Elect Nations and Prophetic Preaching', in *The English Sermon Revised*, p. 51.

that the compilers of the Protestant Geneva Bible realised just how convenient this

reference was to prove. To the people of Pathros's comment that 'we had plenty of

vitailes and were wel and felt none evil' when they prayed to the Queen of Heaven,

The Geneva Bible adds the gloss 'This is stil the argument of idolaters' (Jeremiah

44.17, note k).

Many commentators of the early modern period were, like the editors of The

Geneva Bible, attuned to the rich relevance of Jeremiah 44. This tale of disobedience

and idolatry was told and re-told, embellished and expostulated upon in the sermon

and polemic of the period. The people of Pathros, worshipping the Pagan Queen of

Heaven, became the papists of England, worshipping the Virgin as Queen of Heaven.

The widespread deployment of Jeremiah 44 is an example of what Arnold Hunt has

called a 'common stock of classical and biblical allusions, rhetorical figures and

moral observations that passed freely from one text to another, often with little

alteration'.[60] It also follows the common polemical method of comparing present-day

practices with those of the Old Testament idolater. In sermons at St Paul's Cross, the

'Jeremiads' is a name given to a group of sermons in which the sins of contemporary

Londoners were seen as holding up a mirror to the sins of Old Testament people.[61]

Michael McGiffert terms this comparison of England with Israel, and London with

Jerusalem, the 'Israelite paradigm', upon which preachers 'built the towering scaffold

of moral nationalism'.[62] The people of Pathros in Jeremiah 44 are represented as a

dangerously anarchic force, and the repeated conflation of the pagan Queen of

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[60] Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 294.
[61] Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp. 335-376. See also Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 281-325. Patrick Collinson observes in *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* that Jerusalem was such a familiar paradigm for London that 'every biblical type and figure of God's people was now applied to England, *ad nauseam*' (p. 10).
[62] Michael McGiffert, 'God's Controversy with Jacobean England', *American Historical Review*, vol. 88 (1983): 1151-1176 (p. 1153). See also Patrick Collinson, 'Biblical Rhetoric', p. 19.

Heaven whom they worship with the Catholic Queen of Heaven shows the extent to

which the Virgin's image was part of the web of prophetic writings linking Catholic

practices with disobedience and a threat to national security.

In this early modern exegesis of Jeremiah 44 we find evidence of the fine and

often controversial line that exists between translation and interpretation. In 1582, a

version of the New Testament translated by the Catholic priest Gregory Martin

appeared in Rheims, and its very appearance eroded the validity of a core Protestant

criticism of Catholicism: that priests denied the laity access to the Word. Lines of

attack were thus redrawn, as Protestant theologians instead attacked Gregory Martin

for his inadequate powers of translation.[63] One prominent print war on this subject

was between Martin and the radical Puritan William Fulke, who was master of

Pembroke College, Cambridge. The use of the phrase 'Queen of Heaven' in

Jeremiah, and its subsequent deployment as an *exemplum* for the Virgin, was

questioned by Martin. Martin observed that this was a rather convenient misreading,

as the Hebrew word in Jeremiah is not translated as 'Queen' anywhere else in the

scriptures. Protestant Biblical commentators, 'controllers…of the Latine texte by the

Hebrewe', were, he continued, 'content to dissemble the Hebrue worde' when it

suited them. When Jeremiah inveighs against those offering sacrifice to the Queen of

Heaven:

> This they thinke is very well, because it may sounde in the peoples eares
>
> against the use of the Catholike Churche, which calleth our Lady, Queene of
>
> heaven. But they know very well that the Hebrue worde doth not signifie

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[63] Thomas M. McCoog, 'Martin, Gregory (1542?–1582)', *ODNB*,
http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18183, site visited 17.04.13.

Queene in any other place of the Scripture, and that the Rabbines and later

Hebricians (whom they gladly follow) deduce it otherwise, to signifie rather

the whole corps and frame of heaven, consisting of all the beautiful starres

and planets…But the Protestants (against their custome of scanning the

Hebrue and the Greeke) translate here, Queene of heaven, for no other cause

in the world, but to make it sound against her, whom Catholikes truly call and

worthily honour as Queene of heaven.[64]

Fulke's reply was that in using the phrase 'Queene of Heaven', he and other

Protestants had merely been following the lead of the translation of the Hebrew into

Latin by St. Jerome. The intention was not to open up a war of words about the

Virgin's role:

But if wee bee accused of hereticall translation, when we joigne with your

vulgar Latine, with Hierom, with the Septuaginta, it is very strange, that they

should not beare the blame with us. Certaine it is, no Protestant did ever

teache, that the Jewes did worshippe the virgine Marie for the Queene of

heaven. But the Sunne, the Moone, or some great starre as Pagnine saith.

(p. 470) [65]

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[64] William Fulke, *A Defense of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holie Scriptures into the English Tong* (London: Henrie Bynneman for George Bishop, 1583), pp. 467-468. All further references will be to this edition.

[65] Santes Pagninus (1470-1536) was a Dominican biblical scholar who developed a Latin translation of the Hebrew Bible. See Stephen M. Miller and Robert V. Huber, *The Bible* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2003), p. 173.

What Fulke's erudite answer evades, of course, is how convenient the use of the 'Queen of Heaven' translation was in terms of providing an *exemplum* of dangerous religious practices in the polemic and sermonising in the period.[66]

In the scholar John Harmer's translations of the sermons of the Genevan reformer Théodore de Bèze, dedicated to Elizabeth 1's favourite Robert Dudley, we find a direct correlation between the women of Pathros and Catholic forms of worship that deftly acknowledges the translation/interpretation controversy:[67]

> In this sort after the captivitie they reproched Jeremie, that he had marred all, and that then and before he mealed[68] with preaching unto them, they and their fathers found themselves in good case by calling upon the Queene of heaven and burning incense unto her, Jerem 44.17…Now this Queen of heaven was the sunne, as the phrase of the Hebrue toung doth import, and in my time what other difference hath there been but this, that by the Queen of heaven, is ment not the sunne but the Virgin Mary, as if there were a Queene mother in heaven? For it is certaine that there is a Queen, the spouse of this Bridegroome which is already partly in heaven, and partlie yet languishing here on earth, to wit, the Church being coheire with Jesus Christ, as shee is also called by this name of Queene?[69]

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[66] It is also interesting to note that the Rheims Douai Bible, Gregory Martin's translation of the Old Testament, published in 1609-10, retains the phrase 'queen of heaven' in Jeremiah 44: Edgar and Kinney, *Douay-Rheims Translation*, vol. 4.

[67] In 1604, the Greek scholar John Harmer was one of the Oxford scholars assigned to work on the translation of the gospels, Acts, and Revelation for the King James Bible. P. Botley and N.G. Wilson, 'Harmar, John (*c*.1555–1613)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12353, site visited 10.09.13.

[68] The word 'mealed' is possibly a misprint of 'melled' here.

[69] Théodore de Bèze, trans. John Harmer, *Master Bezaes Sermons Upon the Three Chapters of the Canticle Of Canticles* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1587), p. 270.

The text here admits that the Old Testament Queen of Heaven is not the Virgin Mary. The title 'Queen of Heaven' is, it states, a polysemic one, whose meaning shifts and changes, and what has occurred here is a changing of signifieds for the same signifier. Instead of the sun, the object being idolatrously adored is the Virgin Mary, but the idolatrous practices – and by implication the wrath they will provoke – remain the same. The argument ends with another shift of signifieds – as the 'Queen of Heaven' comes to signify the Protestant vision of the True Church as Christ's spouse in heaven.

Most commentators, however, ignored these quibbles of translation, and instead directly conflated the worship of the pagan Queen of Heaven with the Catholic Queen of Heaven. I am here going to give just four examples of the use of the Jeremiah reference, the writers of which range from obscure to mainstream. However, these represent just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to how frequently Jeremiah 44 was mined by Protestant polemicists.[70] My first example is a mainstream one, from a sermon preached by James Bisse, a fellow of Magdelen College, Oxford, at Christ Church, London, in 1580. In it, the claim is made that, like the Jews in Jeremiah's time, Catholics 'follow their own inventions':

> Alas, are not yet the people as they were in the time of Jeremy? they sayde to
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> him, the word thou hast spoke*n* to us, in the name of the Lord, we wil not
>
> heare it of thee: but we wil doe whatsoever thing goeth out of our mouth, as to

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[70] EEBO lists over 30 anti-Catholic references to Jeremiah 44 from 1580-1616. For later references, see Epilogue, note 14.

burne incense to the Queene of heaven, and to purge out drink offrings unto her, as we have don, both we, and our fathers, our kings and our princes, for then had we plenty of victuall, and were well, and felt no evil. Are not these the sayings of the romanists, and Papists? first to graunt, that we have the word of GOD: secondly, to say, we will not so much as heare it: thirdly, to follow their own inventions. Againe, are not these their arguments? first of custome wee have done so, and our fathers: secondly of a generalitie: not we onely, but our fathers, our Princes, and al have done so? thirdly of their belly, then we had plentie of victuall, and felt no evill? and to whome would they offer their sacrifice? not to God, but as the Papistes doe, to the Queene of heaven. Aske the Papistes, how they proove their religion to be the trueth, and they will drawe their argumentes from antiquitie, from custome, from universalitie, and from the belly, as did the Jewes in the dayes of Jeremy.[71]

Bisse's invective 'we wil not heare it of thee' underlines the appeal of this Old Testament reference to reformers. The Reformation brought with it the construction of a belief system which privileged the ear over the eye, and this is particularly apposite to an exposition of Jeremiah 44. At its core, it is about the sin of closing up one's ears, of not listening. When James Bisse took to the pulpit and delivered the tale of Jeremiah it was as if he became the star player in his own allegory. In the words of Millar MacLure: 'moved by the breath of the Judgment trumpet, by national pride, by moral fervour, and indeed by simple custom, the preacher declared himself the voice of the Lord, the prophet calling the sinful city to repentance'.[72] Just as the

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[71] James Bisse, *Two Sermons Preached* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1581), sigs. G8v, H1r.
[72] MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, p. 120.

people of Pathros did not listen to Jeremiah, so papists were not listening to the preacher, whose voice thus becomes that of a contemporary Jeremiah, railing against the corruption he sees around him.

My second example comes from the work of the separatist Henry Barrow who, writing from his prison cell in 1590, railed against the 'wanton feasts' of the Catholic Church, which he saw as opportunities for gluttony, idleness and superstition. Today's sinners, he observed, found in the Old Testament a precedent for their actions: 'This is the fruite of their idola*r*rie & idlenes: this they learned of their forefathers in the wildernes'.[73] Barrow's attack rails colourfully against what he sees as a surfeit of sinful feasts, and he is particularly vehement about feasts relating to the Virgin Mary. He treats the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary or Candlemass, which was retained by Cranmer, with a sense of mock-disbelief. What, he asks, is being worshipped here? If it is the Purification that is being celebrated, then this is strange, as this is only a 'legal ceremonie, and not now to be brought into the Church of Christ'. If, however, it is the person of Mary that is being worshipped here, then this is a dangerous practice:

> How the*n* wil they escape the breach of the first co*mma*ndeme*nt*; unlesse peradventure they hope through her mediatio*n* to be dispe*n*sed withal, & that she wil speak a good word unto her So*n*ne for the*m*; & therfor they powre out unto her their drinke offringes, and burne incense to the Queene of heaven.[74]

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[73] Henry Barrow, *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church* [?Dort: ?1590], p. 81.
[74] Barrow, *A Brief Discoverie*, p. 82.

Barrow's railings have shifted from the Purification of the Virgin here to idolatrous worship of her in her Catholic form of the Queen of Heaven, and the image of pouring drink offerings and burning incense to the Queen of Heaven is of course an allusion to Jeremiah 44. Henry Barrow stood outside the mainstream of Elizabethan religious views; he was ultimately executed for his extreme religious beliefs.[75] However, in his conflation of Old Testament idolatry with contemporary Catholic practice, and in the allusion to Jeremiah 44 in particular, his writing is exemplary early modern Protestant polemic.

Another striking juxtaposition of Old Testament practices with contemporary worship can be found in a 1609 sermon by the clergyman Henry Greenwood. In it, Greenwood warns his flock of the perils of earthly temptations, and exhorts them to follow a sinless way to heaven. The sermon is full of colourful examples of sin and its dangers, as England is described as 'a sinke of sinne, a pit of pollution, and a place of abhomination'. Greenwood uses Jeremiah 44 as a focus for the sin of Marian idolatry:

Yea these last dayes of the world are like to the dayes of Israels provocation of the Lord in the wildernesse: wherein we preferre the slavery of Egypt above the sweete Manna of heavenly blisse.

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[75] Patrick Collinson, 'Barrow, Henry (c.1550–1593)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540, site visited 16.04.13. Barrow's life was fictionalised in David Edgar's play *Written on the Heart*, first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2011. The play explores Barrow's relationship with Launcelot Andrewes, who was instrumental in his imprisonment for separatism. At one point in Edgar's play, Barrow is seen smashing a window of the Virgin Mary with a hammer.

Yea that saying of the Prophet is verified of the most part of mankind: That the children gather stickes, the fathers made the fire, and the women bake cakes for the queene of heaven: That is, they offered sacrifice to the Sunne and Moone and planets, which they called the Queene of heaven. So the Beast of Rome with his Antichristian crue, doth sacrifice to Mary, making her an Idol, and calling her (as in their *Salve regina*: and *Regina coeli laetare*: doth appear) the Queene of heaven. They make ignorance the mother of their devotion: Sir John Lacklatine and Sir Anthony Ignorance are their chiefest clarkes, and best Massemongers.[76]

Greenwood's punning use of the proverbial 'ignorance is the mother of devotion' is unmissable; instead of Mary mother of Christ as the focal point of devotion, we have 'ignorance'.[77] He is careful to direct his satire in the direction of Catholic worshippers, lampooned as 'Sir John Lacklatine and Sir Anthony Ignorance' rather than at the Virgin herself. But in describing ignorance as a mother there is perhaps an implicit criticism of the Virgin, as well as of perceptions of her, particularly in the light of repeated polemic about the Virgin's role as an overbearing mother.

My final example moves from the public to the domestic sphere, and is of particular interest because in it, we hear a woman's voice. Dorothy Leigh was a Protestant wife and mother of three, who wrote a 'mother's advice' book for her sons in which she proffered advice on a range of moral issues. The book was

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[76] Henry Greenwood, *The Race Celestial, or, A Direct Path to Heaven* (London: N.O. for Henry Bell, 1609), pp. 15-16.
[77] The first recorded use of this proverb is in 1571. See Robert William Dent, *Proverbial Language in English Drama Exclusive of Shakespeare 1495-1616, an Index,* vol. 2 (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1984) p. 438.

posthumously published in 1616, and aimed to reach a wider audience than the family alone.[78] In it, Leigh advises her readers to avoid the temptations and traps of Catholicism:

> They pray while they live, that they may goe to purgatory; and when they die, they give much goods to others, to pray that they may come out of purgatorie againe: these are most vaine praiers never warranted by the word of God. They pray also to our Ladie to helpe them, much as the Israelites praied to the Queene of heaven: and as the Israelites praiers were accepted, so are theirs. But I pray God, for Christs sake, that you, nor none of yours may make such praiers.[79]

Although the pulpit was denied to women, we have here a woman's own exegesis represented in advice form. The fact that Dorothy Leigh used a Biblical reference that was so common in sermons of the period means that she was possibly repeating a sermon she had heard, keen to convey its contents to a wider audience. Women were collectors, readers and annotators of sermons and often repeated the teachings of sermons in commonplace books, which were then used in the teaching of children. Thus, a woman would become a consumer of sermons and religious literature, but in

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[78] Mother's advice books were a popular genre which women utilised to avoid the slurs which were directed at women who published their written work, a topic I will discuss in Chapter 3 of the thesis. Dorothy Leigh's book ran into twenty-three editions. See Jocelyn Catty, 'Leigh, Dorothy (*d*. in or before 1616)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45499, site visited 16.04.13, and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 283-289.
[79] Dorothy Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing* (London: John Budge, 1616), pp. 117-118.

the domestic sphere, she acted as a preacher herself.[80] It is a further example of how widely the concepts I am discussing in this chapter were disseminated.[81]

In Dorothy Leigh's account, we see the words of a Protestant writer who is anxious to distinguish both herself and her female readers from the rebellious Old Testament women of Pathros. The repeated use of Jeremiah 44 as an example of how the image of the Virgin became associated with the general vilification of the Catholic Church as an insubordinate female. Early modern commentary on Jeremiah 44 was therefore illuminating a gendered danger, conflating Catholic worship, and by implication the figure of the Queen of Heaven, with the trope of the disobedient woman, implying that women were more susceptible to idolatry. Frances Dolan has shown how early modern polemic often represented its targets as feminine, creating the stock figure of the dangerous and disorderly Catholic woman, portrayed as a troubling other to emergent English Protestant nationalism. The most widespread symbol of this in post-Reformation literature is the figure of the Whore of Babylon; Jeremiah 44 gives us a different Biblical trope of the insubordinate woman in the figure of the women of Pathros, and by association, the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, dangerously active and authoritative.[82]

In a 1567 theological debate with the Catholic academic Thomas Harding, John Jewel added a further layer of interpretation to Jeremiah 44, which also foregrounded the gendered elements of this spiritual exegesis. Jewel compared the women of Pathros to the Collyridians, an early Christian heretical movement of

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[80] See Jeanne Shami, 'Women and Sermons', in McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 164-167.
[81] For the importance of private reading of religious books for women see also Collinson, Hunt and Walsham, 'Religious publishing in England 1557-1640', pp. 63-64.
[82] Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, *passim*. The significance of the relationship between the figures of the Queen of Heaven and the Whore of Babylon is discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis.

women originating in Syria, who allowed women to be priests and who practised a cult of worshipping the Virgin. The Collyridians were described in the writings of Epiphanius, who wrote scathingly about them in his fourth-century *Panarion* book about heresies.[83] There are uncanny similarities between this sect and the women of Pathros, in both the freedom and independence granted to women, and the offering of baked goods. Jewel uses the Collyridians as a way of justifying the comparison of Old Testament idolatry with contemporary Catholic modes of worship: 'Ye thinke, the woordes of the Prophete Jeremie spoken of Idolles, and False Goddes, maie not justely be applied to the Sainctes of God'.[84] He then compares his own methods with those of Epiphanius, making a direct link between the customs of the Collyridians and those of Catholics:

> And therefore the Anciente Father Epiphanius applieth the like woordes of the same Prophete Jeremie, unto the Blessed Virgin Marie, beinge then idolatrousely abused by the Heretiques called Collyridiani, even as the same Blessed Virgin, & other Sainctes are by you abused nowe. (pp. 312-313)

Jewel's exegesis thus capitalises on the similarities between the women of Pathros, the Collyridians and contemporaneous Catholics as he collapses these three timescales, blurring three idolatrous forms of worship:

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[83] For an exploration of this early Marian cult, see Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies and Devotion', p. 132. For further debate about the cult see Geoffrey Ashe, *The Virgin* (1976; London: Penguin, 1988), pp. 150-152 and Michael Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), chapter 2.
[84] John Jewel, *A Defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande* (London: Henry Wykes, 1567), p. 312. All further references will be to this edition.

Although Marie be beautiful, and Holy, and Honourable, yet is she not to be

Adoured. But these Women, worshippinge S. Marie…prepare a Table for the

Divel, and not for God. As it is written in the Scriptures. They are fedde with

the Meate of Wickednesse. And againe, Theire Women boulte flower: and

theire Children geather stickes, to make fine Cakes in the Honoure of the

Queene of Heaven.[85] Therefore let sutche Women be rebuked by the Prophete

Jeremie: and let them no more trouble the worlde…Here wee see, the

woordes, that were spoken of the Heathenishe Idolles, are applied by

Epiphanius unto the Mother of Christe: not to deface that Blessed Virgin, but

to declare the fonde errours of those Heretiques. (p. 313)

Jewel's reference to the Collyridians works on a number of levels. It firstly adds

weight to the reading of the Queen of Heaven in Jeremiah 44 as the Virgin Mary:

Jewel is only following the lead of Epiphanius before him. It also gives a more

gendered slant to the idolatrous and disruptive actions of contemporaneous Catholics

through the use of language such as 'these Women' and 'sutche Women'. From the

women of Pathros through to the Collyridians through to women of the day, there is a

sense of the disordered and unruly woman through history.

Not Mary, but how she is perceived

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[85] The word 'boulte' refers to a method of sieving flour by passing in through a bolting-cloth.

Representations such as this clearly have misogynistic undercurrents, but the writing of Protestant polemicists and homilists often trod a fine line between the anxiety felt about the power which the title of Queen of Heaven invested in the Virgin Mary, and devotional praise of the Virgin herself. John Jewel is adamant that his intention is not to defame Mary whom he describes as 'beautiful, and Holy, and Honourable' (p. 313). Other writers acknowledge Mary's holiness and purity. The danger, it is argued, comes not from the figure of the Virgin, but from how she is interpreted and perceived. The fundamental dichotomy that drives this distinction is the one that exists between the Protestant humble Virgin Mary, a paradigm of faith and prayer that is to be emulated and reverenced, and the Catholic Queen of Heaven, an abomination that is to be abhorred.

A number of texts thus offered an alternative way of perceiving the Virgin. In *Synopsis Papismi,* the controversialist Andrew Willet outlined a mock-debate between 'Papist' and 'Protestant'. One of the topics for debate was the elevation of the Virgin using terms such as '*Regina mundi, scala coeli, thronus dei'*.[86] The Protestant response to this was that the Virgin should be honoured, but as a 'holy vessell', and that the awarding of such titles wrongly makes her an active agent of redemption:

> We doe allow all praise given unto the Virgine, without the dishonour of God
> and her Sonne and Saviour Christ: we doe acknowledge the honour that God
> vouchsafed her, not to be a meritorious or principall efficient cause of our
> redemption, but onely an holy vessell, and instrumentall cause of the

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[86] 'Queen of the world, ladder of heaven, throne of God'.

conception and birth of Christ…And therefore, those are blasphemous titles

which are given unto her, to call her the ladder of Heaven, and gate of

Paradise, and such like: and so in a manner to make her our redeemer.[87]

Willet is emphatic that the Virgin is not above the saints in power: she is in

heaven because of the strength of her faith. There is, he asserts, nothing exceptional

about the fact that she bore Christ:

As for that superioritie & higher kind of honour which she hath above al the

Saints beside, we finde no warrant out of scripture. She is respected now in

heaven, not as she bare the flesh of Christ, but as she lived by faith in Christ:

she also rejoyced in God her Saviour. The scripture therefore maketh one

condition and estate of all that shall be saved: and sayth generally of all, of

others as well as the Virgine Christs mother, That they shall be as the angels

in heaven…By the which we learne, that other the faithfull servants of GOD

may by their faith in Christ, be as well accepted of God, as if they had borne

Christ in the flesh. Where then is that high dignitie, which she hath, as the

mother of Christ, above all Saints? Augustine saith: *Tu concinis sine fine*

choris coniuncta, Angelis & Archangelis sociata: Thou (O Virgine) doest

rejoyce being joyned unto the heavenly quire, being associated to Angels and

Archangels. He maketh her not Ladie or Queene of heaven, but onely a fellow

[87] Willet, *Synopsis Papismi*, p. 403. Willet's anti-papist guide to religious controversies was extremely popular and expanded upon by the author; it ran into five different editions. See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 13.

companion of the Saints and Angels.[88]

Thus a delicate balance is revealed between honouring the Virgin and a reduction of her position from Queen of Heaven to one of the elect.

A similar balance was struck by the clergyman Thomas Tuke in a passage which contains the title of this thesis.[89] His views are poised between veneration of the Virgin, and Christological fervour:

> Hee made her, that was made of her: Shee that gave Him Flesh, received both Flesh and Faith from Him; and though shee brought Him into the world, yet Hee redeemed her out of the world. Some out of vanity will call her the Queene of heaven, shee is in truth a Saint in heaven, shining in heavenly glory…It is the pleasure of some to call her our Lady, a Title which shee knowes belongs not to her, though perhaps endowed with greater grace and glory, then any other Saint besides.[90]

'Faith' is a key word here, as it is the Virgin's faith, and not her elevated position as Christ's mother, that earns her a place in heaven in Tuke's Christocentric and egalitarian Protestant vision. Tuke uses words of great beauty and honour to describe the Virgin, but is emphatic that she is not Heaven's Queen. The Virgin here has been

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[88] Willet, *Synopsis Papismi*, p. 404.

[89] During his time studying at Christ Church, Oxford, it is likely that Tuke was influenced by the teachings of William Perkins. He held a number of positions in London churches throughout his life, and published widely. J.F. Merritt, 'Tuke, Thomas (1580/81–1657)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27809, site visited 20.09.13.

[90] Tuke, *New Essayes*, pp. 254-255.

elevated by man's vanity alone. Her exemplary faith means that she can serve as a model for the faithful to imitate, rather than an elevated heavenly figure for worshippers to honour.

This balance between polemic against worship of the Virgin and respect for the Virgin herself was not always struck successfully, as the writings of Thomas Bell reveal. Bell was an interesting figure: a Catholic priest turned Protestant polemicist, whose work displays all the zeal – and uneasiness – of the reformed convert.[91] His 1605 publication *The Woefull Crie of Rome* is an anti-papist tract which devotes its final chapter to 'Popish adoration, and invocation of Saints.'[92] Here, we find a familiar anxiety about Mary's role as a dominant woman, and Queen of Heaven. After detailing and translating a number of examples of Catholic prayers to the Virgin, Bell observes:

> Loe gentle Reader, these prayers (if they be well marked) doe containe every jote of power, right, majestie, glorie, and soveraingtie, whatsoever is or ought to be yeelded unto our Lord Jesus Christ; yea, the two last prayers make the Virgin *Mary*, not onely equall with Christ, but farre above him. (p. 74)

Bell talks in tones of disgust about 'superstition and grosse idolatrie', but in describing Catholic worship of the Queen of Heaven he uses emotive and sensuous language: 'But wee must sacrifice our bodies in mortifying our fleshly desires, unto

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[91] Alexandra Walsham, 'Bell, Thomas (*b. c.*1551, *d.* in or after 1610)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2026, site visited 17.04.13.
[92] Thomas Bell, *The Woefull Crie of Rome* (London: T[homas] C[reed] for William Welby, 1605, p. 70. All further references will be to this edition.

(the blessed Virgin) the Queene of heaven' (p.75). He is at this point Englishing the teaching of the Dominican friar Jacobus de Voragine on the Virgin's intercessory role, and he does so with relish, the imagery of 'sacrific[ing] our bodies' and 'mortifying our fleshly desires' striking a strangely sensuous note.

In the midst of this, however, comes a muted declaration of respect for the Virgin, which is placed in parenthesis:

> Behold here, the daily practise of the Romish church. For first, we see the merits of Saints joyned as a fellow-commissioner, too and with the holy passion of our Lord *Jesus*. Then, we see remission of sinnes and eternall glory, ascribed not onely to the merites of the blessed virgin *Mary*, (whom I honour and reverence in mine heart, as the dearest childe of God, and most blessed Saint in heaven) but also to the merits of all Saints. Yet not onely the blessed virgin, but God himselfe is by this means, most highly dishonoured, his holy name blasphemed, and his proper glory given to his creatures…Alas, alas, how hath the Romish church seduced and bewitched us? (p. 77)

The final words of this quotation are the final words of the text itself, a diatribe against the papacy in ominous tones which represents the Catholic Church as a sinful temptress. Bell's qualification about his devotion to the Virgin, and in particular the use of parentheses, feels like something of an afterthought. Ultimately, a balance is not struck in this text between a passionate tone – seen in both of Bell's sensuous rhetoric about Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary and the invective against her

position as Queen of Heaven – and the simplicity of his professed honour and reverence of the 'dearest childe of God'. The passionate language wins out, and shows perhaps how easy it is to be 'seduced and bewitched'.

A psychobiographical reading of this sense of imbalance within the text returns us to Bell's own Douai training and his role, prior to his conversion, as a daring and active force in the world of underground Catholicism. The writer's own fascinating confessional oscillations aside, Thomas Bell's *Woefull Crie of Rome* reflects a mindset that is central to polemic against the position of the Queen of Heaven. It reiterates that the Virgin herself is a blameless figure; the invective of the polemicist is reserved for man who in error has raised her up, and her elevated position as Queen of Heaven is in mimesis of man's own vanity and folly. But the uneasy ambivalence within Bell's writing reveals to us in miniature that the balance between devotion to the humble Virgin and invective against her queenly image was often a difficult one to strike. To what extent does the pure image of the Virgin become tainted in texts such as these?

Iconoclastic ambiguities

Bell's ambivalent text is an indication of how an attempted bifurcation of the Virgin's image, wresting the humble handmaid away from the Queen of Heaven, was an unstable one. To illustrate this further, my final source in this chapter is the teaching of one of the Reformation's most influential thinkers, John Calvin. In 1584, E.P.'s translation of Calvin's 1555 *A Harmonie Upon the Three Evangelists, Matthew Mark and Luke* was published in London. Within this commentary we find an imaginative reconstruction of Mary's humility, which embellishes the scanty evidence of the

synoptic gospels with a powerful representation of self-abnegation. Calvin's exegesis of St Luke's Magnificat is illustrative of the paradigms of the humble Protestant Virgin Mary and the Catholic Queen of Heaven. He emphasises the Virgin's description of her own 'lowliness':

> She sheweth the cause why she had the joy of her heart grounded upon God, even because that he of his favour and love looked upon her for in that she calleth her selfe poore, she resigneth all worthinesse from her selfe, and ascribeth the whole cause of her joy, to the free grace and goodnesse of God.[93]

When Mary cast herself down, she exalted God, meaning it was inappropriate to heap titles such as 'Queen of Heaven' upon her:

> Whereby we perceive how much the papists differ from her, for what good things soever she had of God, they made small accompt of and unadvisedly they set her foorth wyth their owne vaine inventions: They aboundantly heape up together for her magnifical & more then proud titles, as that she shuld be the Quene of heaven, the starre of salvation, the gate of life, the life, the swetenes, the hope and the health: yea sathan also carried them so farre into impudencie and madnesse, that they gave her power over Christ, for this is their song: Aske the father, commaund thy sonne. (p. 35)

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[93] John Calvin, *A Harmonie Upon The Three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. E.P., (London: Thomas Dawson, 1584), p. 35. All further references will be to this edition.

Calvin's influence on the writers cited in this chapter is perhaps here felt in what we can perceive to be familiar tropes: the Virgin's titles are listed, and her perceived power over her son is criticised. Mary's character is evocatively represented. Titles and power, Calvin comments, are not appropriate for a humble woman whose joy comes from God's grace alone: 'the papists differ from her.' This re-positioning of the Virgin, however, can be seen as a paradoxical one. E.P.'s translation of Calvin's work further embellishes upon Mary's Biblical persona by ascribing emotions to the Virgin: we are told that she views being represented by titles such as the Queen of Heaven with reproach:

> Furthermore, there is nothing more reprochefull to her, then to have her sonne spoiled of that, which was due to him, and that shee her selfe shoulde bee clothed with those sacrilegious spoiles. (p. 35)

The Protestant claim was that in making a humble and godly woman the Queen of Heaven, the papist was elevating the Virgin Mary to a position that was not only scripturally and morally wrong, but beyond her own expectations and desires. As the text rails against the Catholic for inventing the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, it too can be viewed as falsely imagining Mary, using her as a mouthpiece for Protestantism's abhorrence of the titles that Catholicism gives her. Once again we see an example of the quintessential emptiness of the Virgin's image, and it is as if

one mirage – that of the Queen of Heaven – is being replaced with another, of the faithful, submissive Virgin who is unhappy with the aggrandisement of her image.

The use of the word 'clothed' in the description of the Queen of Heaven as 'clothed with those sacrilegious spoiles' is loaded with a sense of artifice, and places a striking stress on the visual and material. It gives us a glimpse of Mary as a bedecked idol, and is also used to illustrate the wrongness of investing the Queen of Heaven with the power and veneration that should be due to the son. Later on in the same text, a similar metaphor is used in an exegesis of the Wedding of Cana, which also takes the view that Christ's rough words to his mother could be seen as a warning about the role of Queen of Heaven. It is an exegesis we have seen earlier in this chapter via the words of John Boys:

> Therfore Christ speaketh unto his mother on this wise, that he might deliver unto all ages a perpetuall & co*mm*o*n* doctrine, least the immoderate honour of his mother should darken his divine glory. Furthermore, it is well knowne howe necessarie this admonitio*n* was, by those grosse & filthy superstitio*n*s which followed afterward. For Marie was made the queene of heaven, the hope, the life, and health of the world. Furthermore, their mad fury went thus far, that they decked her with the things which they tooke fro*m* Christe, who*m* they left naked. (p. 43)

The metaphor of clothing the Virgin in titles is continued at this point: the Virgin is bedecked, but this leaves Christ himself naked. This clothing metaphor,

associated here with words, is an apt one for the belief that a false representation of the Virgin is being constructed by the titles loaded upon her. As with the text's earlier use of the metaphor, there are also strong associations with physical appearance – for in the 'decked' Virgin, 'clothed' with her titles we have an image of the wealth and adornment of the bedecked statue. Where is the image of the Virgin located at this point: is she humble handmaid or artificial idol? Or has the image indeed fragmented into two entirely separate Virgins: the dangerously powerful Queen of Heaven, and the humble and obedient Protestant model who is shocked by the titles and honours which the Catholic faith is bestowing upon her? It is this bifurcation – and some of the more extreme reactions to it – that I will discuss in more detail in my next chapter.

This chapter's exploration of printed religious discourse has shown how invective against the Virgin as Queen of Heaven was integral to the Protestant re-definition of her representation as humble and obedient handmaid. However, this polarisation can be viewed as leading to an unstable representation of the Virgin's pure image. The prevalence of references to the Virgin as Queen of Heaven explored in this chapter also indicates a continuing presence of the image of the Queen of Heaven in post-Reformation culture. The image of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven is an example of what Lake and Questier have termed 'a bundle of attitudes, assumptions and expectations of themes, images and fragments of narrative left over after the Reformation'.[94] The figure of the Virgin as Heaven's Queen was clearly perceived as a dangerous one, part of the polemicist's armoury in the construction of a powerful sense of otherness when it comes to Catholic methods of devotion. The constant repetition of 'they' in many of the texts we have explored has a sense of

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[94] Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 318.

reinforcing this sense of difference; this representation of the Virgin thus adds to discourses in the period constructing an emerging sense of Protestant nationalism. In the vehement excoriations of the Virgin's role as Queen of Heaven we also have found evidence of a profound anxiety, which links the Virgin with powerful – Catholic – female presences; set in a secular context, this becomes anxiety about rule by a woman. This highly significant representation of the Virgin could still provoke an emotive and often contradictory response, one which forms a powerful qualification to the view that the image of the Virgin Mary simply faded away in post-Reformation England.

CHAPTER 2

SHAM QUEENS OF HEAVEN: ICONOCLASM AND THE VIRGIN MARY

To pray to a statue is to take the dead for the living, the image for the substance, the

estuary for the source, the false for the true – and thus the devil for God. These

images do have their potency![1]

Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester

In 1538, on the orders of Bishop Latimer, the cult statue of Our Lady of Worcester

was stripped bare of its jewels and clothing. It was taken to London, along with other

popular statues of Our Lady of Walsingham and Ipswich, and ritually burnt.[2] On the

surface, this seems like a shocking, violent and misogynistic act, the destruction of a

beloved material object. Its symbolic resonances, however, are more subtle than this.

One way of justifying this iconoclastic violence was to state that it was not a

representation of the Virgin that was being destroyed but a devilish figure that had

assumed her form. Latimer's comment that in praying to images man takes the 'devil

for God' is scaremongering stuff. The idol may be alluring – Latimer admits that

'images do have their potency' – but the devil can of course adopt an attractive guise.

In the previous chapter, my focus was on the word, both written and spoken.

The popularity of sermons in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century culture is

an indication of the logocentricity of early Protestantism, privileging word rather than

image. It is to images that I turn in this chapter, which will focus on iconoclastic

reactions to the image of the Queen of Heaven. Taking the view that iconoclasm can

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[1] Latimer, *Sermons*, p. 55.
[2] The event is relayed in John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1973), p. 75, and Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 173. The year of burnings of statues of the Virgin, 1538, is a significant marker on England's iconoclastic timeline. Gary Waller commences his monograph on the Virgin at this point: *The Virgin Mary*, p. 1.

occur within texts as well as to material objects, I will show how writers attempted to destroy the thread of devotion that clearly still existed between worshipper and the beloved image of the Queen of Heaven by demonising and mocking the image itself. We have seen how the representation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven was frequently the subject of bitter, often misogynistic attacks. The radical juxtaposition of 'Protestant' Mary as humble handmaid against 'Catholic' Mary as Queen of Heaven led to a destabilising of iconography of the Virgin, as Protestant writers sought to wrest the image away from perceptions of queenly grandeur and power. At the end of the previous chapter, we saw in Calvin's writings a deep-seated unease that the Catholic image of Mary as Queen of Heaven turned her into something she was not. The next step, therefore, was to decide that if the Queen of Heaven was not Mary, she must be someone else. The most extreme manifestation of this came in the construction of what I will term in this chapter a 'sham Queen of Heaven', a dissembling impostor of dubious morality who was masquerading as the Virgin, but was in fact an entirely different figure.

In the first section of the chapter, I will set early modern iconoclastic attitudes into context, focusing in particular on the language of the Elizabethan *Homily Against Peril of Idolatry and Superfluous Decking of Churches.* I will then explore examples of literary iconoclasm in two texts. The first, *Pasquine in a Trance*, is a Protestant satire by the Italian Reformer Celio Secondo Curione, which was translated into English in the mid-sixteenth century. In it, the marked distinction between humble Protestant handmaid and Catholic Queen of Heaven is foregrounded by the creation of two different sham Virgin Marys: the figure of the statue of the Queen of Heaven, who is peevish, vain and morally suspect, and the Queen of the false Catholic heaven, a shadowy figure empowered only by the artifice of man. My second text is Book I

of Spenser's Protestant allegory *The Faerie Queene*, which as I will discuss was possibly influenced by Curione. We will first focus on the figure of Lucifera: I will argue that one of the many layers of allusion within this figure is to the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. In the character of Duessa we find not only loathing for the Catholic Church in the form of the Whore of Babylon, but also anxiety about the alluring appearance of the idol. Duessa too can be viewed as a sham Queen of Heaven, artificially beautiful but spiritually filthy. A foil to both Lucifera and Duessa is the figure of Una, who acts as a marker between true and false light, and a reminder of fallen man's tendency to be dazzled by the artifice of the idol. Finally, the chapter will foreground some of the paradoxes and problems which come from splintering the image of the Virgin, particularly the way in which her embodiment as a sham Queen of Heaven can be conflated with the image of the Whore of Babylon.

Fundamental to this exploration is an awareness of the Protestant reading of female archetypes in the Book of Revelation. John Bale's 1547 publication *The Image of Both Churches* offered two diametrically-opposed paradigms which had become commonplace in Spenser's time: of the Woman Clothed with the Sun as the True Church, and the Whore of Babylon as the corrupt, popish Church.[3] In the Book of Revelation, Saint John the Divine is carried into the wilderness where he encounters the following figure:

> I sawe a woman sit upon a skarlat coloured beast, full of names of blasphemie, which had seven heads, & ten hornes.

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[3] John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches*, in *Select Works of John Bale*, ed. Henry Christmas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849).

The woman was arrayed in purple and skarlat, and guilded with golde, and

precious stones, and pearles, and had a cup of golde in her hand, ful of

abominations, and filthiness of her fornication. (Revelation 17.3-4)

The figure of the Whore of Babylon is glossed in The Geneva Bible thus: 'this

woman is the Anti-christ, that is, the Pope with the whole bodie of his filthie

creatures'.[4] As Alison Shell has observed, the Whore of Babylon's presence was

ubiquitous in early modern literature of the period as 'the most powerful anti-Catholic

icon of all'.[5]

In binary opposition to this, Revelation also gives us the image of the Woman

Clothed With the Sun, a figure who is both pure and persecuted:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven. A woman clothed with the

sunne, & the moone was under her feate, and upon her head a crowne of

twelve starres. (Revelation 12.1)

The Woman Clothed with the Sun is pursued by a dragon with seven heads and seven

crowns. She gives birth to 'a man childe, which shulde rule all nations with a rod of

yron' and flees from the dragon into the wilderness (Revelation 12.5). Traditionally

associated with the Virgin, this image was redefined by Protestant thinkers to

represent Christ's Church. In the words of The Geneva Bible: 'the Church which is

compassed about with Jesus Christ the Sonne of righteousness, is persecuted of

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[4] Revelation, 17.3, note f.
[5] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 31. In a study encompassing both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Catherine Parsons has further shown the flexibility of the symbol of the Whore of Babylon as a site onto which many shifting cultural meanings were transferred: 'Harlots and Harlotry', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011.

Antichrist.'[6] The image was also used in relation to godly Protestant women such as Anne Askew, Lady Jane Grey and Elizabeth I herself.[7] My exploration of literary iconoclasm in this chapter will indicate the extent to which post-Reformation writing led to a discursive shift in the Virgin's representation within these two Revelation paradigms. The Virgin's associations with the Woman Clothed with the Sun may have been eradicated, but in pejorative descriptions of the Queen of Heaven she was often represented in a way that was uncannily analogous to the Whore of Babylon.

Insights into iconoclasm

The research in this chapter is informed by a number of studies relating to iconoclasm. Margaret Aston's historical monograph *England's Iconoclasts* (1976) is an incisive investigation into the relationship between the visual arts and religious experience which shows how in the sixteenth century idolatry became inscribed on the English conscience as a deadly sin. Her argument that the breaking of images was the destruction of a mindset as well as of material objects is particularly pertinent to my own assessment that many post-Reformation thinkers sought to destroy any residual affection that may have existed for the Virgin as Queen of Heaven.[8] Eamon Duffy's profoundly influential 1992 study *The Stripping of the Altars* has also illuminated my awareness of the emotional impact of iconoclasm.[9] Duffy's reconstruction of the faith of the late medieval everyman is beautifully written and compelling, alive with music and beauty, in which the link between the visual image

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[6] Revelation 12.1, note a.
[7] Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, p. 70.
[8] Aston, *England's Iconoclasts,* p. 394 and *passim*.
[9] In the preface to the second edition of *The Stripping of the Altars*, Duffy recalls his 'startled pleasure' on spotting four people in a London tube-carriage reading his book, p. xvi.

and personal faith is presented as a powerful one.[10] So persuasive are the descriptions

of late medieval piety that when Duffy's prose sets about the Reformation's work of

destroying this colourful world, it is hard not to feel a sense of loss. The chapters

describing Edward VI's reign are where the real stripping of the altars occurs, and it

is here that some of Duffy's most emotive and personal vocabulary is unleashed in

analysis that at times shows an almost self-reflexive awareness of the iconoclastic

power of words. Amongst the linguistic violence of the stripping of the altars, for

example, comes a glimmer of late medieval piety, a luxuriantly sibilant description of

medieval celebrations at St Paul's Cathedral at Whitsun, when it was the custom for

'a great censer, emitting clouds of sweet smoke and sparks, to be swung from the

roof…and for doves to be released'. The beauty of this description enriches a sense

of acute loss when followed by the blunt: 'Such gestures had no place in the world of

reformers'.[11]

Duffy's vibrant use of imagery shows us how iconoclasm can occur within a

text itself: he sets up a beautiful image, only to destroy it before our inner eye. The

power of words to evoke pictures in the mind brings with it a number of iconoclastic

ambiguities. Sir Philip Sidney's description of poetry as 'a speaking picture' in *The

Defence of Poesy* is an evocative interpretation of *ut pictura poesis* which shows just

how hard it is to disentangle word from image.[12] Sidney's is a positive analogy, but

the tension between word and image has underpinned a number of studies exploring

the relationship between iconoclasm and literary culture.[13] James R. Siemon's

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[10] In *The Reformation and the English People*, Scarisbrick also concentrates on the lives of the individual worshipper: pp. 36-38 and *passim*.
[11] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 459.
[12] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (1989; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 217
[13] My research in this chapter focuses on the Queen of Heaven, an image perceived as oppositional in Protestant writing, but it would be grossly misrepresentative to claim that images were not part of Protestant visual and literary culture. Although Patrick Collinson's use of the term 'iconophobia' to

Shakespearean Iconoclasm builds a persuasive case, both historically and theoretically, for adding "iconoclasm" to the arsenal of critical vocabulary used to analyse Shakespeare's language.[14] In *Iconoclasm and Poetry*, Ernest B. Gilman similarly argues that '"iconoclasm" is something that can happen to texts and within texts written during this period, and that the most compelling texts often betray a consciousness of the image-debate that reflects on the process of their own composition'.[15] In Protestant writing, Gilman argues, one frequently finds a 'creative confusion', the result of a 'battlefield' in which the inward imaging of the mind was called into question as well as the outer iconoclasm of picture and statue.[16]

My evaluation of the destruction of devotion to the image of the Queen of Heaven is also influenced by approaches to iconoclasm in terms of misogynistic discourse. In *Whores of Babylon*, Frances Dolan shows how gender issues were inseparable from religion, and the prevalence of the use of the term 'Whore of Babylon' itself in Protestant polemic perfectly encapsulates this gendered sense of Catholic corruption and otherness.[17] Arthur F. Marotti similarly has observed how Catholic women were often portrayed as seductresses, who were a danger to the souls of Protestant men: 'Protestant iconoclasm and misogyny shared a basic set of assumptions about the senses, about the place of the body in religious practice and about the seductive dangers of the feminine. Woman and Catholicism were both feared as intrinsically idolatrous, superstitious, and carnal, if not also physically

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describe the religious atmosphere of Protestant England post-1580 still holds a certain currency, more recent scholarship has qualified his thesis. Tessa Watt suggests a fluid adaptation rather than wholesale destruction of images, while David J. Davis has shown that images were still used in religious works. See Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England*, pp. 115-119; Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety,* and David J. Davis, *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures* (Leiden, Brill, 2013).

[14] James R. Siemon, *Shakespearean Iconoclasm* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 3.

[15] Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation* (Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1986), p. 11.

[16] Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry*, pp. 11, 45.

[17] Dolan, *Whores of Babylon, passim.*

disgusting'.[18] In *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, Huston Diehl introduces the

iconoclastic paradigm of 'bewhored images', in which the sacred image of a beautiful

woman came to be likened by reformers to the sexualised woman, thus turning the

devotional gaze into the erotic gaze.[19] The beauty of the idol was therefore perceived

in terms of the recurring motif of falsehood and cosmetics in relation to the Catholic

Church.[20] Diehl identifies a trend in Stuart love tragedies in which beautiful female

characters are destroyed, their beauty perceived as artificial and dangerous, their

power cunning seduction. This, she argues, is a form of symbolic iconoclasm,

mirroring the way in which formerly venerated images were re-positioned during the

Reformation.

Scholarship such as this highlights the fact that a reading of iconoclasm in

terms of a misogynistic discourse is a fruitful one. Diehl's iconoclastic paradigm of

the bewhored image is particularly apposite, and is, I believe, fundamental, to an

understanding of the fate of the Queen of Heaven in Protestant discourse. My own

research will engage further with this concept. There are, as Diehl has shown,

countless examples both in Protestant polemic and on the stage of the blurring of the

boundaries between virgin and whore. She comments that of all idols, it is the Virgin

Mary who is the subject of the most vitriol:

Iconoclastic discourse transforms the most sacred images of the Roman

Catholic Church – and most especially the revered and adored images of the

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[18] Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, p. 37.
[19] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
Diehl adapts the phrase from *Othello* 4.ii.118.
[20] For a detailed exploration of this motif, see Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, pp. 29-32.

Virgin Mary – into harlots whose betrayal is inevitable and whose allure is fatal.[21]

I would like in this chapter to make a further distinction: the iconoclast was not bewhoring an image of the Virgin, but bewhoring an image of the Queen of Heaven. As we will see, this was frequently constructed as another figure entirely.

Iconoclastic stories

Post-Reformation iconoclastic debates did not, of course, emerge out of nowhere: the history of Christianity is fraught with stories of idolatry and iconoclasm. At the end of the sixth century, Bishop Serenus of Marseilles grew increasingly concerned that his worshippers' attitude to images was becoming idolatrous, and therefore destroyed the images in one of his churches. This act of iconoclasm was prohibited by Pope Gregory the Great, whose letter to Serenus delivered the much-used and much mis-quoted maxim that images were the books of the unlettered, a defence of images that became the backbone of the philosophy of the Western Church.[22] In the eighth century, a series of Byzantine iconoclastic controversies led to the West taking steps to defend images in the Second Council of Nicea of 787 A.D.. As an attempt to clarify the relationship between image and prototype, the Council accepted a delineation between *latria* – the worship of God alone, and *dulia* – the veneration of other human beings. The influence of this distinction was still adhered to in the Middle Ages. The Virgin, however, occupied a special place in this scheme. By the thirteenth century, a third term had been introduced: *hyperdulia*. Largely in response

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[21] Diehl, *Staging Reform*, p. 160.
[22] My main source for this summary is Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 2.

to veneration of the Virgin, this represented something of a half-way house between the two, a level of devotion reserved for those who had a special relationship with God.[23]

It is perhaps a truism to observe that man's fraught and often emotive relationship with the devotional image was one of the key points of controversy which fuelled the Reformation. Martin Luther took something of a neutral view on images, seeing them as *adiaphora,* not essential to salvation and of use unless abused. However, this line of thought was not upheld as the Reformation in Europe took hold, and the writing and teaching of thinkers such as Huldrych Zwingli and Andreas Karlstadt fuelled waves of iconoclasm in Europe from the 1520s onwards as churches were whitewashed and statues defaced or destroyed. Iconoclasm spread in the 1520s throughout the Swiss states to Hanseatic cities and then to England.[24] By this time, England had already witnessed an iconoclastic controversy of its own in the form of Lollardy, a heretical movement which emerged in the mid-fourteenth century. Following the teachings of John Wycliffe, Lollards criticised the reverencing of images which led, they argued, to the belief that the image itself was imbued with divine powers.[25] Lollards also attacked the wealth that was showered upon the bedecked and gilded ecclesiastical statue. Although the Lollard challenge was viewed as heretical by the Church, many views which found their roots in Lollardy were to resurface in the writings of the English Reformation.[26]

One would be forgiven, therefore, for assuming that England was smoothly going to follow the lead of the Calvinist states, as iconoclasm shifted from heresy to policy. England's iconoclastic story, however, mirrors what Aston has termed 'the

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[23] See Aston, *England's Iconoclasts,* pp. 47-61.
[24] O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*, p. 54.
[25] Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 138.
[26] Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 191.

zigzag course of the Reformation', and is marked by many inconsistencies and reversals.[27] In the 1530s, during the reign of Henry VIII, the political climate of the dissolution of the monasteries and Henry's break from the Catholic Church fuelled the first big, sanctioned wave of iconoclasm in England, including the iconoclastic burning of statues of the Virgin in 1538. This did not, however, signal an outright removal of all images in England. The parries and thrusts of England's Reformation, from the radical iconoclastic injunctions sanctioned by the advisers of the Young Josiah Edward VI, to the restoration of Catholic ceremony and image under Mary, have been well documented.[28] By Elizabeth's time, we have what Eamon Duffy has termed the 'passing of a world', as the laity became accustomed to worshipping in churches that were stripped of images.[29] The anxiety about the image as idol that is displayed in late Tudor writing shows that England's iconoclastic story was not one that ended conclusively, providing a further indication of the incompleteness of England's Reformation.[30]

The Elizabethan *Homily Against Peril of Idolatry* is perhaps the best testament both of state-sanctioned attitudes to images in the late sixteenth century, and the anxiety that the ecclesiastical image still continued to evoke.[31] The dissemination of ideas from the *Book of Homilies* was widespread. The majority of parish priests were required to read from it, and such a uniform delivery of exegesis can be viewed as a way of controlling parish clergy, as well as an attempt to

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[27] Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, p. 221.

[28] The history of iconoclasm in England's Reformation is traced by Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, chapters 11-17.

[29] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 588.

[30] It is also worth noting that the continuing presence of relics in post-Reformation England meant that polemic against the image as relic was still germane. See *Relics and Remains*, ed. Alexandra Walsham, *Past and Present*, Supplement 5, 2010 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 126.

[31] The homily is part of *The Second Book of Homilies*, which first appeared in 1563. It is thought that it was written by John Jewel. See Ashley Null, 'Official Tudor Homilies', in McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, p. 360, and John Griffiths (ed.), *Book of Homilies* (1560; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2008), p. xxii and xxxi-xxxii. All further references to the *Homilies* will be to this edition.

streamline the hearts and minds of their congregations.[32] The *Homily Against Peril of Idolatry* rehearses a number of concepts which are fundamental to iconoclastic polemic of the time. Its recurring message is that image and idol are one and the same in the scriptures. Images used in worship should therefore be removed. 'Scriptures use the said two words, *idols* and *images*, indifferently for one thing anyway,' the homilist tells us, and those who bedeck images, and the interior of churches, 'greatly hurt the simple and unwise, occasioning them thereby to commit most horrible idolatry' (p. 168). The *Homily* is an impassioned, pulpit-thumping piece which mines many examples to support its cause, calling for evidence not only from the Old Testament but also from the thoughts and actions of influential figures from Christianity's history.

In spite of these historical and spiritual precedents, the homilist makes it patently clear that the preacher of the Word has a battle to fight, and in doing so reveals a great deal about the continuing appeal of the idol to the worshipper. He uses the imagery of 'poison' for the idol and 'remedy' for preaching, but it is clear that the poison is an appealing one, that is 'continually and deeply drunk of many, the remedy seldom and faintly tasted of a few' (p. 243). In the following example of the homilist's powerful use of rhetoric, we have the overriding sense that the image is so intoxicating that it has to be removed:

> It appeareth evidently by all stories and writing and experience of times past, that neither preaching, neither writing, neither the consent of the learned, nor authority of the godly, nor the decrees of councils, neither the laws of princes,

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[32] See Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 15; *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily Against Disobedience and Rebellion (1570)*, ed. Ronald B. Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 9-10; Ian Green, 'Preaching in the Parishes', in McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 138-139.

nor extreme punishments of the offenders in that behalf, nor no other remedy

or means, can help against idolatry, if images be suffered publicly. (p. 245)

The *Homily* also frequently uses shocking, sexualised language, both following and reinforcing a trope of the period which linked idolatry with spiritual whoredom. This found its roots in Jeremiah 3.9 where Israel, by ignoring the Lord and worshipping Baal, is described as a harlot who 'hathe even defiled the land: for she hathe committed fornicacio*n* with stones and stockes'. The phrase 'stones and stockes' for the deadness of the idol was a repeated motif in post-Reformation polemic, and the concept of committing fornication with these inanimate objects was both terrifying and scurrilous. Post-Reformation iconoclastic literature frequently dwells on the imagery of this Jeremiah reference, turning idol into whore and worshipper into lecher.

The *Homily* powerfully utilises this metaphor of spiritual whoredom; it is permeated with the language of lust and sexual attraction. Man, the homilist argues, is sexually weak; if he sees a 'wanton harlot', he will be unable to resist her, and the worshipper before an idol is prone to the same weakness. The iconoclast is thus re-imagined as the moral equivalent of the civic authorities that cleanse a community of prostitutes for the good of its members. The influence of *The Homily Against Peril of Idolatry*, with its vicious invective against spiritual whoredom and fornication, was far-reaching, and its presence (it is by far the longest of the homilies) is an indication of the anxiety that the religious image still continued to evoke. The language of the *Homily* shows us how post-Reformation writing consciously set out to break devotional threads between worshipper and beloved spiritual images. This in itself presents the religious image as a site of discursive power.

Two Queens of Heaven: the Protestant visions of Curione's Pasquine

Most beloved, most contentious, was the image of the Virgin bedecked in splendour, and one way to eradicate traces of devotion to this image was to expose it as a sham. To a certain extent, the pilgrimage tradition of the medieval Catholic Church laid the foundations for this strand of polemic. As Michael Carroll has noted, the presence of statues at Marian shrines led to a tendency to 'splinter the image of Mary into a range of personalities, each of which [became] the object of an extensive cult'.[33] He terms these 'madonnine images' and notes that they were given different qualities. Carroll's research into Italian Catholicism resonates with the English pilgrimage tradition: thus the concrete image of 'Our Lady of Walsingham' becomes a subtly different entity in the worshipper's mind from 'Our Lady of Ipswich' or 'Our Lady of Willesden'.[34] In the Reformation, however, this fragmentation of the Virgin's image served a polemical rather than devotional purpose.

An example of this can be found in the work of Marnix van St Aldegonde, a Dutch Protestant and prolific author who had studied under both Théodore de Bèze and John Calvin. His 1579 anti-Catholic polemic *The Bee Hive of the Romish Church*, a commentary on the teachings of the Catholic theologian Gentian Hervetus, was translated into English by George Gylpen, and was reprinted several times.[35] The text observes that there is another Mary – a Catholic Mary – one who seeks the glory that the title of the Queen of Heaven bestows upon her:

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[33] Michael Carroll, *Madonnas that Maim* (Baltimore MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 2.
[34] Carroll, *Madonnas that Maim,* pp. 52-66.
[35] Marnix van St. Aldegonde, *The Bee Hive of the Romishe Church*, trans. George Gylpen (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579). The ESTC records five reprints between 1579 and 1636.

This Ladie is greatly desirous of glorie and honour, and coveteth to bee

accepted and worshipped for the Queene of Heaven, and also to have the

preeminence before all the Saintes of Paradise: For shee is of an other

disposition than the holy Virgin Marie (the mother of Jesus Christ) was, who

did acknowledge her selfe to bee a poore handmaide of God, and did direct

those which needed any thing unto her sonne Jesus Christ. But this standes

bedeckt and garnished with Golde and Silver like a Queene, and willes that

we should reverence and adore her clothes and jewels, her Churches and

Chappels, her gilded cofers and other her furniture, utensiles, and

implementes, like unto the everlasting and living God. To conclude, the holie

Church hath made her Queene.[36]

Here we see another Virgin Mary, one created by the Church, a proud and vain

woman who wants to be worshipped for her finery. She is completely different from

the real Virgin, who is 'a poore handmaide of God', submissively directing

worshippers towards Christ rather than exerting any power herself. Significantly, her

appearance is described as being 'like a Queene' – for this alternative figure is not a

queen in her own right – but has usurped a place which is not rightly hers.

A more detailed development of the concept of a sham Queen of Heaven

came from the pen of the Italian reformer Celio Secondo Curione, who was a leading

voice amongst Italian Protestants living in exile in Switzerland and who enjoyed

some considerable fame as a scholar.[37] His popular satirical criticism *Pasquino in

Estasi* (1545) is one of a series of pasquinades in which Curione employed a genre of

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[36] Aldegonde, *The Bee Hive of the Romishe Church*, p. 252.
[37] Peter Hughes, 'Curione, Celio Secondo', *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography,* http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/celiosecondocurione.html, site visited 17.04.13.

satire which gives voice to a statue, Pasquine, or Pasquil.[38] It details Pasquine's

visions of heaven, hell and purgatory, and his encounters with false representations of

the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. The genre Curione uses, the pasquinade, originated

in the third century B.C., from the popular custom developed of affixing satirical

epigrams to a battered Hellenistic statue in the Campidoglio in Rome. The statue was

disinterred in the early sixteenth century and the custom of attaching satirical writings

to its mutilated form was revived.[39] The pasquinade soon found its way from

postings in public spaces into print. During the Reformation, Pasquine's voice was

often used to lampoon points of doctrine, and a mock literary salon was established,

as other statues were introduced to debate with him.[40] Perhaps the most prominent

use of the genre in England came from the pen of Thomas Nashe who used the

pseudonym 'Pasquil of England' in his pamphlets written in the Marprelate

Controversy, thus associating the name of 'Pasquil' or 'Pasquin' with anti-

Puritanism.[41]

In 1565-6 and later in 1584, two English editions of Curione's *Pasquine in a*

Traunce were published in London, translated by W.P.[42] Although this text was

originally written in a time outside the framework of this thesis, there is a strong

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[38] Celio Secondo Curione, *Pasquine in a Traunce a Christian and Learned Dialogue (Contayning Wonderfull and Most Strange Newes Out of Heaven, Purgatorie and Hell),* trans. W.P. (London: Wyliam Seres, ?1566). All further references will be to this edition.
[39] John W. Spaeth Jr, 'Martial and the Pasquinade', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 70, (1939): 242-255 (pp. 242-243).
[40] Spaeth, 'Martial', p. 246.
[41] Joseph L. Black (ed.), *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c. 2008), p. lxiii.
[42] A detailed discussion of the identity of W.P., with sources, can be found in Letizia Panizza, 'Pasquino Among Anglican Reformers', in Chrysa Damianaki, Paulo Procaccioli, Angelo Romano (eds.), *Ex Marmore* (Rome: Vecchiareli Editore, 2006), pp. 407-412. Panizza here concludes that the polemicist William Punt is the most likely translator. However, an introductory poem to the text, written by Bernard Garter, names the translator William Page in a poem which puts the translator on a par with the author for influence. William Page's name also appears on the frontispiece of a surviving copy of the 1566 edition, which is housed at Cambridge University Library. Other frontispieces, however, name the translator simply as W.P. The ESTC entry for both the 1566 and 1584 editions lists the translator as William Page, but suggests as other likely candidates William Painter, the writer and translator, and William Phiston, a translator who was known to have Calvinist sympathies.

argument in favour of its inclusion. Curione's *Pasquine in a Traunce* was written in Italy in 1545, but its influence extended far beyond both its country and year of origin. Curione was based in exile in Basle, but he was part of a group of Italian reformers who enjoyed a close intellectual relationship with many English humanists and reformers, such as John Cheke, Anthony Cooke and John Ponet. The royal tutor and renowned teacher Cheke met Curione in 1554 and the two men kept up a regular correspondence.[43] By Elizabeth's reign and the time period of this thesis this group of *spirituali* had had its day, but their works continued to be of influence. Anne Overell has observed that the second half of Elizabeth's reign saw a rise in popularity of translated religious books; John Foxe began to promote translations of theology from spiritual reformers, and Italian religious books became readily available in England.[44] The reprint of Curione's *Pasquine* in the 1580s is part of this revival, one which tapped into anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish war fever, and which made English Protestants particularly interested in what Overell has termed 'Italians-against-the-pope'.[45]

The fact that Curione's text was published by such high-profile Protestant printers is also worthy of note. The initial edition was printed by William Seres, one of the most prominent printers and booksellers of the English Reformation, who enjoyed the protection of William Cecil, whilst the second edition was printed by the London printer Thomas Este, who had collaborated with John Day on the production of a number of anti-Catholic books.[46] Some indication of the enduring influence of the text can be found in the clergyman Thomas Mason's 1615 re-working of extracts from *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. This includes a catalogue of Protestant publications

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[43] See Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations c.1535-1585* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 85.
[44] Overell, *Italian Reform*, p. 189.
[45] Overell, *Italian Reform*, p. 200.
[46] Panizza, 'Pasquino Among Anglican Reformers', p. 411.

and features a lengthy description of *Pasquine in a Trance*. Curione is described as 'a zealous, godly, learned man', in whose writing 'the whole packe of the Popes pedlary wares is laid open, that we may see what stuffe it is'.[47]

     Pasquine in a Traunce takes the form of a satirical dialogue between Pasquine and another statue, Marforius.[48] This was a particularly popular form of the satire in which the ignorant but pliable Marforius asked the questions and the knowing Pasquine provided the answers. Pasquine here represents a Protestant reformer while Marforius stands for the old faith – but his is an old faith that is desperate for education from the new. 'For this Religion wherein I have so long time lived,' he declaims at one point, 'hath in such sorte blinded me' (sig. B1r). To educate Marforius, who is something of a proxy for the reader, Pasquine describes his visions, in which he visits a true heaven and a false heaven, and uses this as a way of correcting Marforius's traditionalist Catholic viewpoint. Throughout all of this there runs a rather delicious irony: two animated statues speak out against iconoclasm, in a witty mimesis of the Catholic statue's perceived miraculous powers. The use of the dialogue form gives Curione's waspish satire full rein, as he can criticise the Catholic faith using the voice of others; in Pasquine's seemingly innocent descriptions of his visions, the worst excesses of the papacy are presented as literal embodiments, brought to life in exaggerated form. Pasquine seeks to re-educate Marforius about appropriate levels of veneration of the Virgin, and the result is an intriguingly protean representation of the Marian image in which several versions of the Virgin exist in conflict with one another.

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[47] Thomas Mason, *Christs Victorie over Sathans Tyrannie* (London: George Eld and Ralph Blower, 1615), p. 386.
[48] For the significance and popularity of Elizabethan polemical dialogues, both Protestant and Catholic, see Antoinina Bevan Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

At the beginning of the work, the two statues muse on man's historical tendency towards idolatry. Pasquine describes how the Jews became trapped in a vicious cycle of worshipping Baal. Here, we find another example of the Jeremiah 44 reference I have discussed in the previous chapter, further evidence of just how embedded a cultural commonplace it was:

> For feare and for the Religion of miracles, the Jewes could not rid themselves of the worshipping of Baal, nay, they said sometime, that bicause they had left of worshipping of him, that was cause of all their miseryes, as may be sene in Jeremy, where he sayth: Since we lefte of to do sacrifice to the Queene of heaven, we have had scarsitie of all thinges. (sig. B2r)

However, the main Queen of Heaven whom the statues discuss is the Virgin Mary herself. The gulf between Catholic representations of the Virgin as *Beata Virgo* and the real Virgin Mary is so wide, Pasquine decides, that there must be two Virgin Marys – the Mary who lived, and the Mary who has subsequently been 'set upon the Aultars':[49]

> Take thou which thou wilt, among all the Saintes, yea if thou wouldest take the Virgin Marye, who hath the chiefest place, and then consider well, after what sorte she was in tymes past, while she lived, and in what sorte she is nowe, after she became to be Diefied: And thou shalt finde, that I doubt not

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[49] In an article which has influenced my later reading of *The Faerie Queene* in this chapter, Timothy Cook uses the term '*Beata Virgo'* to evoke Curione's descriptions of the bedecked statue of the Virgin as Queen. This apt and useful term is one which I adopt in this chapter: Timothy Cook, 'Gabriel Harvey, "Pasquill", Spenser's Lost "Dreames," and *The Faerie Queene'*, *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 7 (1977): 75-80 (p. 80).

without cause, whether she that is set upon the Aultars, be the selfe same that was mother of the Lord. (sig. A4v)

Marforius's description of the Virgin Mary's mode of behaviour during her earthly life is a text-book Protestant representation of a modest, humble Virgin. According to the scriptures, he says, 'she was Virgin moste chaste, moste modest in behaviour, moste holy, most humble above all other creatures' (sig. A4v). Pasquine develops the image of the humble Virgin further, adding that she was:

full of charity towarde the poore, without anye jote of covetousnesse, without desire of gayne, or ryches, not devouring the price of the Dogge,[50] not esteeming Beades nor costly garmentes. (sig. A4v)

The reference to the true Virgin Mary's dismissal of 'Beades' shows the anti-rosary sentiments of the Protestant reformer, something we shall return to in Chapter 4 of this thesis. How, Pasquine asks, can this bear any resemblance to a grandiose and bedecked statue of the Virgin?

Thou seest therfore, what she was once, now tel me what thou thinkst by this, that with so much wax, with so much golde & silver, with so many chaynes & brouches, & with so many perfumes, the world doth at this day honor. (sig. B1r)

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[50] The word 'Dogge' is probably a reference to the Doge of Venice, and by implication to the riches given to the Catholic Church by state authorities.

Marforius is frightened to say anything against this grandiose embodiment of the Virgin, as he fears her vengeful streak: 'Beside that I doubt, that if I should say any thing against hir, she would forthwith be revenged upon me' (sig. B1r). He is similarly frightened of the vengeful nature of the saints, for 'they have done straunge and cruell miracles' (sig. B1v). How, Pasquine asks, can a saint who has been meek and godly on earth be vengeful and violent in his or her venerated form? If they had been alive, would they have behaved in this vengeful way? Marforius capitulates, admitting that they would not, because they showed goodness and patience in their lives.

A similar argument is applied to the difference in behaviour between the *Beata Virgo*, venerated on earth, and the 'true' Virgin Mary in heaven. Curione uses Pasquine's voice to express contempt for the earthly construction of a decorated statue of the Queen of Heaven:

I sawe these Saintes to be so farre different from that they were sometime, I would nedes goe to heaven purposely to see, whether they have there above the selfe same nature. For me thought it a thing unlikelye, that this Saint Mary here belowe, that hath the painting on hir face, that hath crownes full of Jewels on hir heade, that hath Chaynes aboute hir necke, that hath Ringes on her fingers, that hath so costly and so many sortes of garmentes upon hir, like one of those yong Girles of olde time, me thought it not I say, that this was al one, with that most humble mother of the Lorde, and so much the more I confirmed my selfe in this opinion. (sig. C1r)

Pasquine's criticism goes beyond that of a lavishly bedecked appearance, as he invents patterns of behaviour for his painted *Beata Virgo*. This Virgin, he confirms to himself, cannot be the Mother of God, not only because of the way she looks but also because of the way she acts:

> I sawe this Lady to be most covetous, moste desirous to heape uppe treasure, and most nigardly in spending it, and if she let any thing of hir owne goe out of hir handes, shee delt it most wickedly, so that I sayd often to my self, if this be the Lords mother, why hath she not compassio*n* upon her sonne, whom she seeth every day in the church where she is, goe aboute asking almes.
> (sig. C1r)

In a playful literary mimesis Pasquine, himself an animated statue, thus animates a statue of the Virgin Mary. There is more than a whiff of the indecorous about Pasquine's invented *Beata Virgo*. The descriptions of the bejewelled Virgin with a painted face echo descriptions of the harlot, an analogy which intensifies when Pasquine describes this sham Virgin Mary's encouragement of lewd behaviour. She is, he says, a woman who is mean-spirited towards the poor, and yet generous with her bounty to a holy father who goes on pilgrimages to Loreto, offering him all that she has to spend on 'whores, dogges, horses and Ganimedes' (sigs. C1r-C1v). This embodiment of the Virgin Mary, Pasquine concludes, is very far from 'that true and most pure Virgin the Lord's mother, the which above all other things hated this filthy kind of men' (sig. C1v).

In Thomas Mason's, *Christs Victorie,* his 1615 version of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Pasquine's descriptions of the earthly bedecked *Beata Virgo* are embellished

in considerable detail:

> The Virgin *Mary* was not honored with so many chaines, bracelets, perfumes,
> gold, silver, and wax, as she is now upon the Altar, with paintings on her face,
> and on her head crownes full of Jewels. She is attired with costly and many
> sorts of garments like a yong gyrle, they make her most covetous and
> niggardly, and to give nothing to the poore, but to bestow all that is given her,
> (which is aboundance) upon Cardinals and Hipocrites, to be bestowed upon
> Whores, Dogs, and Horses.[51]

It is worth remembering here the vividness of post-Reformation representations of the
Catholic Church as a whorish woman whose beauty is merely cosmetic, particularly
Huston Diehl's paradigm of the bewhored image. In Curione's text, repeated by
Thomas Mason, it is the Virgin Mary in her guise as bedecked queenly statue that is
presented as the embodiment of this trope.

Pasquine's vision of the 'Pope's Heaven'

Because Pasquine is perturbed by this duality – between false earthly representations
of the Virgin and the Saints and the heavenly reality – he decides to take a trip to
heaven 'to cleare me of this doubte' (sig. C1v). *Pasquine in a Traunce* then describes
Pasquine's visions in detail. Once he has succeeded in reaching a state of trance,
Pasquine is visited by an angel of true and sacred visions, who becomes his guide.
The angel tells him that there are in fact two heavens, the true heaven which Christ
ascended to, and a false heaven, which was 'builded by the handes of Popes and

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[51] Mason, *Christs Victorie*, p. 386.

mortall men, who had small skill in building' (sig. D1v). The text becomes a parody

of the Book of Revelation, as Pasquine is first led by an angel not to the true heaven,

but to the false 'Pope's heaven' which is situated some way from the sun (sig. D1v).

He finds himself in a great walled city, a pseudo-Rome with a maze of towers, and

many gates by which spirits enter laden with rosaries, oil, incense and precious

stones. This false heaven is a place of greed and materialism. It has the appearance

of a great city but, Pasquine wryly observes, 'I thinke surelye that it will shortly come

to naught, bycause it hath the fou*n*dations of it very weake, and made with little skill

for so great a building' (sig. D4r).

After their debate about representations of the saints and the Virgin on earth,

Marforius is understandably anxious to know whether the saints are to be found in

this Pope's heaven. Pasquine answers that the saints are there in name 'but by their

looke and by their maners, they be very unlyke Saintes' (sig. E1r). Instead, they are

'divelles, in forme of Saintes, that under this coverture deceive the world' (sig. E1r).

This chapter began with Bishop Latimer's assertion that in praying to an image man

is taking 'the Devil for God'; Curione here similarly warns that in praying to images

of the saints man is being trapped into consorting with the devil. This whole heaven,

Pasquine observes, 'seemed rather to be a Market, or a Court, than a heaven' (sig.

E1r). The climax of Pasquine's vision comes when he reaches a palace, which stands

in the middle and at the highest part of this Popish parody of the heavenly city. This

palace has clearly been built at great cost, but is as yet unfinished. It is completely

covered over, and lit only by candles and the glare from tables which are laden with

gold and silver, for 'the Saints of this heaven can abide no light' (sig. R2r).

It is here that Pasquine sees the Queen of this popish heaven. She is a

shadowy and rather sinister figure, who is 'of a duskishe coloure'. This is perhaps a

conflation of two forms of otherness, Catholic and Moor, in a text which elsewhere states that 'Mahomet and the Pope are brothers' (sig. S2v). This sham Queen of Heaven has the sun at her back and the moon at her feet, but she does not emit the radiance and light that one might expect. The sun 'hath not his beames at libertie', says Pasquine – as its light has been obscured:

> This Sonne is compassed about with a payre of Beads, the which, Saint Dominicks Friers have put rounde about it, so that it can not spread forth his light: & for this cause the place remaineth darke, and needeth candels and lampes. (sigs. R2v-R3r)

In a further mocking imitation of the Revelation of John the Divine, this figure can be seen as a parody of the Woman Clothed with the Sun. The artificial light of candles and lamps is needed, as the sun has become stifled, in imagery which speaks of popish darkness obscuring the light of truth. The 'payre of Beads' which obscures the sun is:

> That, which they call our Lady Psalter, that which the hoggish herde of Friers, do also cal the Rosarie, that with the which the Paternosters, or rather the Avemaries, are given by tale to God, nay rather to the Devill, that which every foolishe woman caryeth in her hande, when she goeth out of her dores in the morning, that which is sayde more with the hands then with the heart.
> (sig. R3r)

We here see the misogynistic link between women and Catholic worship in Pasquine's description of 'every foolishe woman' carrying the rosary.

There is a further level of deception and artifice to the image of the popish Queen of Heaven. Marforius wonders how the sun, with all its magnificence and power, can be captured and contained in such a space. Pasquine replies that the sun and moon which clothe this queen are not the sun and moon that we see in the world: 'Thou must understande, that there is a great difference betweene that Sonne and the Moone, which we see in this world, and them that clothe this queene' (sig. R3r). Marforius the willing pupil has by now guessed the reason for this: 'If there be that difference, which is betweene a thing that is true, and a thing that is fayned, it is very great' (sig. R3r). Our perceptions of what is real and what is artificial constantly collapse in these descriptions. Pasquine's shadowy, sinister queen of his popish heaven sits surrounded by artificial light. At first we think that this is because the symbols of light that clothe her are signifiers of obfuscating Catholic practices – the candles and lamps that surround her seem to be those of the interior of a Catholic church – but the sources of natural light in this false heaven are also themselves revealed to be false.

Within this heaven is a Council of Saints and Angels, a parodic Council of Trent, which prefigures the Stygian Council in Milton's Pandemonium. This complicated and hierarchical body is driven by a desire to maintain the pope's tyrannical authority, and to break 'the bonds of peace and love, and the yoke of our Maister and Savior Christ' (sig. R4v). Marforius wonders about Christ's role in this Council: 'Thou haste told me nothing of Christ,' he observes, 'sawest thou him there in the councel among those Saintes' (sig. T2v). Pasquine's reply is an interesting

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one; within it is a vivid representation of how the bonds of Christ's authority are here broken:

> I sawe him not, but as I came out afterward, I sawe before the Pallace a little childe that played with certaine other children there, of whome, when I had asked, it was tolde me that it was Christ, who fell to playing and therefore came not to the Councell, for his mother had the whole charge of all things. (sig. T1v)

'Is Christ alwayes a childe in this heaven,' asks Marforius, and receives the unequivocal reply 'Yea alwayes' (sig. T1v). The anxiety of the role of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven and overbearing mother, so prevalent in the printed religious discourse discussed in the previous chapter, is here realised in this witty vision of Christ as a child. The child is more interested in playing than theology, and this allows his mother to exercise full power.

Pasquine's Protestant heaven

After his visit to this false heaven, Pasquine's trance takes him to an alternative, Protestant heaven. In the false heaven he has encountered dimness, shadows and artificial light, but here he is here dazzled by natural brightness. The true heaven does have a queen; Pasquine initially presumes that she is the Virgin Mary, but soon realises that she is in fact the Church:

> One I saw clothed in that garment, that the Psalme speaketh of. My hart hath indyted a good matter. Hir espouse was Christ, and I tooke hir to have beene

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the virgin Mary, but myne Aungel tolde me, that it was the Church. (sig. U2v)

Marforius asks whether the Virgin Mary has any ruling role in this heaven; he receives the reply that foregrounds the Virgin's humility: 'shee for hir part, and after hir maner, adourneth & garnisheth the body of the espouse' (sig. U2v).

Marforius is still perplexed. Why is this true queen, this spouse of Christ, so little known? Pasquine's reply is that the jealous popes have raised up the Virgin Mary:

> Bycause the Popes have advaunced themselves above hir, and have usurped unto themselves hir authority, and made lawes after their owne devises, without having any regarde unto hir. And bycause the things should not be applyed unto them, whiche the holye scripture speaketh of the Church, therefore have they thrust into the place of the Church, the virgin Marye, and have attributed all things unto hir, and have called hir Queene and Empresse of heaven, and our Advocate, so that the name of the true Queene is utterly abolished and lost. (sig. U3r)

A sham Virgin Mary has thus been constructed: a Queen of Heaven who is a reflective representation of man's own vanity, a false monarch who has usurped the place of the True Church. The raising up of the Queen of Heaven by man also explains the evasiveness of this figure in the popish heaven; Curione has constructed an image which needs the machinations of man to maintain it.

The statues then fall to discussing the appearance of this alternative queen, the Church, which is in stark contrast to the bedecked and bejewelled earthly

representations of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven:

> I remember it well, she had the whole shewe of a most chaste Matrone, and
> albeit they consist of dyvers me*m*bers, they are notwithstanding with so great
> proportion joyned to their heade Christ, that nothing can be more agreable.
> (sig. U3r)

The hierarchy of this Protestant heaven is firmly established. While the Christ in the
false heaven is always a baby, unable to exercise his true power, the real Christ in the
true heaven reigns supreme. All are of one mind, Pasquine says – including the
Virgin Mary – that it is Christ who is the head of this heaven. Marforius then realises
the error of everyone's ways, that man has elevated the Virgin beyond both her
expectation and her capabilities:

> I se that al the fault procedeth hereof, in that we measure heavenly things
> according to our owne brayne. And therfore doe we thinke that the Virgin
> Mary is more mercifull than Christ, whome we imagine to be some cruell
> Tiraunt and fierce Judge, an error growen of the diversitie in nature betweene
> man and woma*n*, bicause we see, that Women are more pitiefull than men.
> But what a divellish madnesse was that, to take away the governement from
> Christ, and gyve it to hir: as though Christ who is the wisdome of the Father,
> doted or coulde not tell what he had to doe. (sigs. X1r-X1v)

Pasquine's work is done. Marforius has become, he proudly notes, 'a good and
playne Gospeller' (sig. X1v).

Pasquine in a Traunce thus presents us with multifold representations of the Virgin Mary. There is the striking popish earthly version of the Virgin as the Queen of Heaven which takes the form of a bedecked statue, the *Beata Virgo*, anthropomorphised by Pasquine and given unpleasant characteristics of jealousy and small-mindedness. There is also the shadowy and evasive figure of the Queen of Heaven, surrounded with false representations and artificial light. This false embodiment of the Virgin needs all the efforts of man to animate it, and is simultaneously a jealous mother who keeps her son in a state of perpetual infancy. And finally there is the real Protestant Virgin Mary, the humble handmaid, a marginalised figure who is the least substantially depicted. This Virgin Mary takes her place in heaven not as its queen, but as a handmaid of the Church.

Pasquine in a Traunce and *The Faerie Queene*

With this awareness of Curione's multifold representations of the Virgin Mary in mind, we now move to Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. The leap from Curione's text to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is in many ways a logical one, as there is some evidence that Spenser was aware of Curione's work. A 1977 article by Timothy Cook builds a persuasive case that Spenser was influenced by *Pasquine in a Traunce*.[52] Cook's evidence for this comprises the following observations made by Spenser's friend and tutor Gabriel Harvey in one of his many letters:

> I like your Dreames passingly well: and the rather, because they savour of that
> singular extraordinarie veine and invention, whiche I ever fancied moste, and

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[52] Cook, 'Gabriel Harvey'.

in a manner admired onelye in Lucian, Petrarche, Aretine, Pasquill, and all the most delicate, and fine conceited Grecians, & Italians.[53]

Harvey then adds that the Lucian, Petrarch, Aretine and Pasquil texts to which he refers are all associated with an extended vision. Cook's literary detective work focuses on Harvey's use of 'Pasquill', concluding that this is a reference not to the genre, but to Curione's text. Harvey had a strong intellectual influence upon Spenser, and was well-versed in his former pupil's reading habits.[54] Although Gabriel Harvey's observations concern Spenser's lost *Dreames*, Cook persuasively gestures towards a number of similarities between the imagery in Curione's text and Book I of *The Faerie Queen*. Ultimately, Cook's thesis, while credible, is sophisticated literary guesswork, and tantalisingly leaves many questions unanswered. I would argue, however, that it is a valuable exercise to set these two texts side by side. Not only are there a number of textual similarities between the two – the most significant being the echoes of Curione's Papal Heaven in Spenser's House of Pride – but both texts contribute to post-Reformation discourses on iconoclasm and the Virgin Mary, particularly through their very different evocation of images of sham Queens of Heaven.

A particularly powerful link between Book I of the *Faerie Queene* and *Pasquine in a Traunce* comes in the way in which both are influenced by the Book of Revelation. Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is informed by the teachings of sixteenth-century Protestant commentators such as John Bale, Heinrich Bullinger and Jan van der Noodt, and holds many echoes of the Book of Revelation, particularly in the

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[53] Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey, *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), p. 41.
[54] Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 88-102.

juxtaposition of Duessa as Whore of Babylon against Una as Woman Clothed with the Sun.[55] Cook opines that these oppositional figures may have had their imaginary roots in Curione's text:

> Is it not at least possible that Spenser not only knew Curione's tract but was prompted by it to use Revelation as the basis for a didactic fiction of his own attacking Catholicism? If that were the case…then Curione's opposition of the '*Beata Virgo*' of Mariolatry to Mary the lowly handmaid of the Lord and to the Church as the Spouse of Christ…may also have given him a starting point for his own Una-Duessa antithesis.[56]

I intend in my own reading to interrogate Spenser's use of the tainted *Beata Virgo* image further, showing how it can be applied not only to Duessa but also to Lucifera in the House of Pride. Both characters can be seen as subtle representations of the sham Queens of Heaven which Curione has constructed with such clarity. Regardless of whether or not Spenser had read *Pasquine in a Traunce*, these anti-Catholic constructs show an awareness that the image of the Queen of Heaven could be represented in a corrupt way.

Lucifera as a sham Queen of Heaven

In Spenser's House of Pride, we encounter a parodic version of the Queen of Heaven in the figure of Lucifera. That the palace is a place of danger is signalled to the

[55] John E. Hankins, 'Spenser and the Revelation of St John', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 60 (1945): 364-81; Michael O'Connell, *Mirror and Veil* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 39; Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser, Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 72.
[56] Cook, 'Gabriel Harvey', p. 80.

reader by the way in which its architecture connotes tropes relating to the Catholic Church: it is cosmetically glorious on the outside, but ruined underneath:

> And all the hinder parts, that few could spie,
>
> Were ruinous and old, but painted cunningly.
>
> (I.iv.5.8-9)

Within Spenser's descriptions of the House of Pride there are a number of similarities to Pasquine's visit to the false papal heaven, which as we have seen is founded on shaky foundations. The Queen of the House of Pride is Lucifera, and as so often occurs in *The Faerie Queene*, the narrative's initial introduction of her seems a favourable one:

> High above all a cloth of State was spred,
>
> And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day,
>
> On which there sate most brave embellished
>
> With royall robes and gorgeous array
>
> A mayden Queene, that shone as Titans ray
>
> In glistering gold, and peereless pretious stone.
>
> (I.iv.8.1-6)

Having constructed an image of beauty in his presentation of Lucifera, Spenser then swiftly and characteristically destabilises it. Lucifera's name, a feminine form of Lucifer, is a clear demarcation of evil. There are also echoes of the Whore of Babylon of Revelation here, particularly in the dragon under Lucifera's

feet, which calls to mind the beast which the Whore rides, and her glittering, jewelled appearance.[57] Spenser describes Lucifera using similes that bring with them a cluster of associations of pride, violence and theft, tainting the way in which she is associated with light. She is depicted as shining 'as Titan's ray', an image which evokes not only the sun's brightness, but also the rebellious and power-hungry Titans' wars. Her brightness is also compared in an extended simile to Phaeton, the rebellious son who stole Jove's chariot. Spenser then further corrupts the image of Lucifera by associating her beauty with envy. She is vainly gazing into a mirror, signifying pride and vanity through associations with the Ovidian myth of Narcissus, and jealously and impotently sets up her own beauty in competition with her surroundings:

> Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
>
> To dim the brightness of her glorious throne
>
> As envying her self, that too exceeding shone.
>
> (I.iv.8.7-9)

As Robin Headlam Wells has noted, this description is rich in the iconography of Queen Elizabeth, thus creating an undertow of criticism of the Queen.[58] Sayre N. Greenfield similarly describes this as an 'ideologically dangerous' moment, as realistic details about Lucifera, such as the way she greets visitors and presides at the tournament, make her a metonym for how the state of monarchy can corrupt.[59]

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[57] See Hankins, 'Spenser and the Revelation of St. John', p. 367.
[58] Headlam Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of* Elizabeth, pp. 32-33. Hackett also observes that the phrase 'mayden Queene' was often used by panegyrists of Elizabeth I: *Virgin Mother*, pp. 218-220.
[59] Sayre N. Greenfield, *The Ends of Allegory* (Newark NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 17, 41.

However, as with all Spenser's allegorical figures, a search for one meaning only is a reductive one. Lucifera certainly represents the pride and the vanity attached to the figure of monarchy, but the imagery surrounding her character connects her not only to Elizabeth I but also to the Protestant invention of a Queen of Heaven such as Curione's, peevish and materialistic.

A closer look at the imagery of light that surrounds Lucifera reveals that, like the imagery surrounding Curione's Queen of his Papal Heaven, it is tainted. Lucifera blazes, but the causes of this light are both worldly and artificial. Her robes shine like the sun but are not the sun, and her true sources of light are the 'glistring gold' and 'pretious stone' of her garments, and the mirror into which she gazes (I.iv.8.6). It is of further significance that Lucifera is an unlawful queen: she has no kingdom, and no right to reign:

> And proud Lucifera men did her call,
>
> That made her selfe a Queene, and crownd to be,
>
> Yet rightfull kingdome she had none at all,
>
> Ne heritage of native soveraintie,
>
> But did usurpe with wrong and tyrannie
>
> Upon the scepter, which she now did hold.
>
> (I.iv.12.1-6)

If we read Lucifera as a parody of the Queen of Heaven, there is here further indication of the Protestant viewpoint of the Virgin's unlawful queenship and authority that we have explored in the previous chapter. That Lucifera is a sham

monarch and not a real one also distances her from Gloriana, the rightful anointed

monarch, and could therefore be seen as deflecting criticisms of Elizabeth.

The Redcrosse Knight and the 'feeble eyne' of concupiscent man

In the figure of Lucifera, therefore, we see echoes of a sham Queen of Heaven, in a

section of Spenser's narrative which bears many of the hallmarks of Curione's false

papal heaven. There are also a number of conceptual similarities between Curione

and Spenser's texts, through which both are associated with iconoclastic discourses.

Pasquine in a Traunce clearly separates its version of the false from the true, but it

also interrogates the boundaries between perceptions and reality, wanting its readers,

like Marforius, to question what they had formerly accepted as the truth. Spenser

similarly interrogates these blurred boundaries between perception and reality in *The*

Faerie Queene. One of his favoured methods of doing so is through patterns of

imagery within the narrative relating to eyes and insight. In the Proem to the first

book of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser uses the lexicon of courtly love to speak of his

'feeble eyne' compared with the 'faire beames' of Gloriana (I.Proem.4.5). It is one of

many examples of the hyperbole of epideictic that can be found in Spenser's

addresses to Queen Elizabeth, but it also foregrounds a preoccupation with the frailty

of man's vision that hovers over much of Book I of *The Faerie Queene,* one which is

informed by the preoccupations that arose from a shift from visual to logocentric

modes of religious devotion.

The frailty of man's eyes was the subject of a number of iconoclastic

discourses in Spenser's time. Stuart Clark has shown how between the fifteenth and

seventeenth centuries, vision was associated with uncertainty and unreliability.[60] In

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[60] Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The Idolatrous Eye, Michael O'Connell explores the relationship between iconoclasm and antitheatricalism, arguing that the iconoclastic controversy and crisis of the period is interwoven with anxiety about the vision and sight. Integral to iconoclastic attacks on image and word, he concludes, is an awareness of the incarnational structure of medieval religion: 'the belief that God, in taking on a human form, became subject to representation as an image'.[61] In 1590, Anthony Munday described the eyes as a dangerous source of evil:

> There cometh much evil in at the eares, but more at the eies, by these two open windowes death breaketh into the soule. Nothing entereth in more effectualie into the memorie, than that which commeth by seeing.[62]

Munday's 1590 anti-theatrical polemic encapsulates a sense of anxiety about the extent to which a man can trust his eyes; it is, as O'Connell's research has highlighted, antitheatricalism with a religious timbre, echoing the Protestant mistrust of the idol. John Donne echoed this mistrust of the eyes when he described them as the 'devils doore', a weak point on the human frame that could let in evil.[63]

Spenser's narrative in *The Faerie Queene* repeatedly presents us with examples of the frailty of the eyes of concupiscent man. The weak eyes of man are shown in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* through the character of the Redcrosse knight and his relationship with Una and Duessa in passages which evoke the weakness of man before the idol. Redcrosse, Spenser tells us in his 'Letter to Raleigh', is a

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[61] O'Connell, *Idolatrous Eye*, p. 10; see also Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry*, p. 201.
[62] Anthony Munday, *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters* (London: Henrie Denham, 1590) pp. 95-96.
[63] *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M Simpson (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1953-62), vol. 8, p. 228.

character 'in whom I expresse Holynes' but he is, of course, a far more multi-layered representation than this (p. 716). At the end of Book I, slaying the dragon of sin, he becomes Saint George, symbol of the English nation, and defender of the Protestant Faith. Spenser patterns his romance narrative in Book 1 with a number of tasks which Redcrosse must undertake before his virtue and courage are assured. At several moments, he makes terrible errors of judgement which signal that he is a representation of the spiritual weakness of England's idolatrous Catholic past, as well as the hope and strength of its Protestant future. When we first meet Redcrosse he is travelling accompanied by Una, whose many associations include the beautiful maiden of the chivalric romance genre and a representation of Protestant truth. Redcrosse's first error of judgement is to trust a lone pious pilgrim who has been introduced to the reader by a series of Catholic signifiers of Ave Marias and praying on beads. Redcrosse fails to read the significance of this: the pilgrim is in fact the evil Archimago, an enchanter who can deceive the mind. Archimago tricks Redcrosse, showing him a vision of two spirits in the form of Una and a young man:

> Where that false couple were full closely ment
>
> In wanton lust and leud embracement
>
> Which when he saw, he burnt with gealous fire,
>
> The eie of reason was with rage yblent,
>
> And would have slaine them in his furious ire.
>
> (I.ii.5.4-7)

Redcrosse's weak eyes are overcome by rage, and lead him to believe that this false representation is in fact his beloved Una. Abandoning her, he travels alone, and

without the force of truth to steady him, his weak eyes fail him once more when he rescues a beautiful and virtuous-seeming lady, Fidessa. Fidessa is in fact the sorceress Duessa who like the House of Pride is cosmetically beautiful on the outside, but almost unspeakably loathsome within. Duessa's first appearance in the poem is on the surface an alluring one:

> A goodly Lady clad in scarlot red,
>
> Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay,
>
> And like a Persian mitre on her hed
>
> She wore, with crownes and owches garnished.
>
> (I.ii.13.2-5)

However, the surface of the narrative is very different from the reality, and this is one of many examples of Spenser setting up one visual perception only to distort it. The imagery here is freighted with allusions to the Whore of Babylon, connecting Duessa not only with papal corruption but also with the figure of the dangerous Catholic woman.[64]

The reader may have been alerted to the disturbing symbolism of Duessa-Fidessa's appearance, but Redcrosse becomes so bedazzled by her artificial beauty that his ears become too dull to listen properly to her tale of woe:

> He in great passion all this while did dwell,
>
> More busying his *quicke eies*, her face to view,

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[64] John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 91-97. See also Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, p. 37 and p. 226, note 19 and Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, p. 468.

> Then his *dull eares*, to heare what shee did tell.

> (I.ii.26.5-7, italics mine)

A pervasive fear in iconoclastic writing is that the eyes are more powerful than the ears, and it is here keenly felt. Redcrosse's actions at this point start to mimic those of the fallen, idolatrous worshipper. His attitude towards Duessa/Fidessa bears an uncanny resemblance to Margaret Aston's descriptions of late medieval worship: 'Finery was risky. The magic of gold and glinting ornament dazzled the eyes of peasants'. The voice here is not Aston's own: she is mimicking the views of late-medieval intellectuals such as Eustache Deschamps and Gabriel Biel who spoke, she comments, 'not without a certain supercilious detachment'.[65] Duessa in her finery thus echoes not just the Whore of Babylon, but also Curione's *Beata Virgo*, the richly-bedecked statue of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, turning Redcrosse into the misguided and ignorant worshipper.

The richness of the imagery that surrounds Duessa, of colour and precious stone, only serves to heighten the tension between how she appears, and how she is. Duessa's true nature and appearance is introduced to us gradually, however, in what Anthea Hume calls 'Spenser's characteristic accumulation of pregnant words and images'.[66] Her true nature is revealed first to the reader when Fradubio, one of Duessa's victims, tells his story:

> A filthy foule old woman I did vew
>
> That ever to have toucht her I did deadly rew.
>
> Her neather partes misshapen, monstruous,

---

[65] Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, p. 27.

[66] Hume, *Edmund Spenser, Protestant Poet*, p. 90.

Were hidd in water, that I could not see,

But they did seeme more foule and hideous,

Then woman's shape man would beleeve to bee.

(I.ii.40.8-I.ii.41.4)

Fradubio's voice resonates with bile; he is, after all, a duped victim of Duessa's sexual charms, lured, like Redcrosse, by her artificially seductive appearance. His attraction has here turned to misogynistic loathing.

Duessa's story in Book I reaches an unsettling iconoclastic climax when, overcome by the Christ-like King Arthur and Una, she is stripped of her dazzling clothing and jewels. We have earlier been exposed to her true nature via Fradubio's descriptions, and so we are aware that what will be revealed underneath is one of Spenser's monsters. The imagery Spenser employs to describe the stripping of Duessa makes uncomfortable reading:

Ne spared they to strip her naked all

Then when they had despoild her tire and call,

Such as she was, their eyes might her behold

That her misshaped parts did them appall,

A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill favoured, old,

Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.

(I.viii.46.4-9)

Into his presentation of Duessa, Spenser pours a mix of iconoclastic and misogynistic anxiety about the female form. Theresa Krier observes that the extended descriptive

passage of the stripping of Duessa parodies the blazon, an appropriate stylistic subversion to describe the punishment of 'a witch whose power over men has relied on opulent and sensuous sexuality.'[67]

This episode mimics the stripping of the Whore of Babylon which is prophesied in Revelation 17, a Biblical reference that in the Reformation came to represent the stripping of the trappings of the Catholic Church. However, I believe that further interrogation of this analogy brings a different level of meaning into play. A reading of this passage in *The Faerie Queene* is illuminated by an awareness of the intertextuality that exists between Spenser's descriptions of the fouless of the stripped Duessa and *The Homily against Peril of Idolatry*. The homilist likens the Catholic Church, bedecked in finery, to a harlot, demonising the Catholic Church through gendered language of artifice:

> For she, being indeed not only an harlot (as the Scriptures calleth her) but also a foul, filthy, old withered harlot…doth (after the custom of such harlots) paint herself, and deck and tire herself with gold, pearl, stone, and all kind of precious jewels; that she, shining with the outward beauty and glory of them, may please the foolish fantasy of fond lovers, and so entice them to spiritual fornication with her: who, if they saw her, I will not say naked, but in simple apparel, would abhor her as the foulest and filthiest harlot that was ever seen; according as appeareth by the description of the garnishing of the great strumpet of all strumpets, the mother of whoredom, set forth by St. John in his Revelation. (p. 261)

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[67] Theresa M. Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 135.

The extended metaphor is of the idolatrous Catholic Church as a vain and immoral harlot bedecking herself in gold and jewels, with the idolatrous worshipper as the lecher. Spiritual filth here is physically animated, as the outward bedecked beauty of the idol masks a foul and filthy reality. If men saw the true nature of the idol, they would abhor her, the homilist adds, in the way that they loathe the Whore of Babylon.

The language used to describe the Catholic Church as a harlot creates an image which conflates with the bedecked statue, the *Beata Virgo*, but is also intertwined with a reference to the Whore of Babylon. Reading this into the stripping of Duessa, we can see that Spenser's narrative mimics the actions of iconoclasts who stripped decorated statues of the Virgin Mary of their clothing and jewels. Redcrosse's *locus* in the action of the stripping of Duessa is significant here. He is placed as spectator, and the reader, with all fallen man's tendency towards idolatry, is forced to watch with him. When Fradubio earlier described Duessa's sexual organs they were obscured by water: the homilist similarly shies away from presenting his harlot naked, presenting her instead in 'simple apparel'. Spenser is not so circumspect. Although his muse may claim reticence when it comes to Duessa's filthy appearance, this is merely lip service. He lingers over the foulness of Duessa's true appearance, laying before the reader images of her bald head, foul teeth and shrivelled breasts. Krier notes that compared with Fradubio's glimpse of Duessa's true nature, which was an accidental encounter, here Duessa is 'intentionally exposed and degraded'.[68] Because it is deliberate rather than accidental, the stripping of Duessa further mimics the controlled vandalistic ritual of the iconoclastic act. A woman once adored as beautiful is exposed as a sham, and Redcrosse must see the full depths of her evil before he can be fully redeemed.

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[68] Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights,* p. 134.

Gary Waller has observed that Duessa 'stands for both the Church of Rome and what, as a loyal Protestant, Spenser saw as papist exaggeration of the role of the Virgin Mary'.[69] This interesting reading deserves more detailed attention: 'exaggeration' is perhaps too careful a word. In the iconoclastic stripping of Duessa, and the sheer unpleasantness of the imagery used, Spenser is forcing the reader, like Redcrosse, to face up to the filth that resides in the impure soul of those who commit idolatry. But just as the vitriol in the *Homily* is directed at the idol rather than the worshipper, so Spenser's misogynistic vitriol is reserved for Duessa rather than Redcrosse. On a figurative level Spenser, like Curione, is creating an alternative Queen of Heaven: an impostor who functions both as a metonym for fallen man's sinful tendencies towards idolatry, and a vessel into which hatred and scorn can be poured with integrity.

Spenser's Duessa thus becomes the site of an unsettling collapse of the image of the Queen of Heaven into the image of the Whore of Babylon. In Spenser's multi-layered allegory, Duessa is overtly identified with the Whore of Babylon, the focus of man's spiritual adultery, but she is also the Queen of Heaven, the bedecked statue that bedazzles feeble-eyed man, and which therefore needs to be destroyed. Men such as Redcrosse and Fradubio are seduced by her appearance, but when they know the reality behind the artifice, they come to loathe her. A pattern can thus be observed which mimics the shift from bedazzled worshipper in front of a beautiful statue to iconoclastic loathing and destruction. In Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, Guyon's actions in the Bower of Blisse, from sensuous attraction to iconoclastic destruction, follow the same narrative arc. Through the character of Duessa, the image of the Queen of Heaven is wrested away from associations of goodness and purity. The

[69] Waller, *Virgin Mary*, p. 120.

loathing and vitriol of the iconoclast is both amplified and justified, as it is directed towards this representation as a symbol of Catholic excess and hypocrisy that is exposed as rotten to the core.

Una, the True Church and true and false light

Spenser's iconoclastic narrative has therefore given us two alternative visions of the Queen of Heaven, and each associates the image with unpleasant qualities. The motif of the frailty of the eyes, and the initial allure of both Lucifera and Duessa, remind us that what is spiritually corrupt is also alluring. Redcrosse is, for a while, seduced by Duessa's appearance, and he willingly enters Lucifera's realm of the House of Pride. But after a number of trials in which he learns true faith, it is ultimately to Una that he turns. The Virgin Mary in her Protestant representation as humble handmaid is not perceived as a strong enough opponent for these sinful constructions of the Queen of Heaven. Instead, Spenser, like Curione, follows John Bale's paradigms of setting the True Church in opposition to false Catholic figures. Curione gives us a godly matron who is heaven's queen, whilst the homilist presents the chaste matron of the Church as a 'contrary part' to its idolatrous harlot (p. 262). Spenser's ideal of perfection is Una, his True Church and Woman Clothed With the Sun.

In the character of Una, Spenser absorbs and reclaims images associated with the Virgin Mary. A cluster of images and associations surround Una which can be regarded as oblique Marian references as well as epideictic praise of Elizabeth – she, like Lucifera, is a 'mayden Queene', and her virtue and virginity are often lauded. Una is predominantly a representation of the Protestant Church, seen through a focus on word rather than image. When Una finds herself in the forest with the primitive, ill-educated satyrs, she attempts to re-educate them into the way of Truth by means of

the scriptures. Their initial reaction to her has been to worship her blazing beauty.
That Una is a representation of Protestant truth is here foregrounded:

> During which time her gentle wit she plyes
>
> To teach them truth, which worshipt her in vaine
>
> And made her th'Image of Idolatryes.
>
> (I.vi.19.5-7)

Spenser here is concurring with the homilist of *Against the Perils of Idolatry*, who
comments on 'the proneness and inclination of man's corrupt nature to idolatry', and
like the homilist, Una finds that 'the evil opinion that hath been long rooted in men's
hearts cannot suddenly by one sermon be rooted out clean' (p. 250). Una is
ultimately successful, but the episode serves to highlight the problems faced by
reformist thinkers in the privileging of word over image.

Una's links to the True Church are most powerfully revealed by her
association with imagery connected with the Woman Clothed with the Sun. Mapped
onto Una's narrative are similar details to Revelation 12; she too has been persecuted
by a dragon and has fled into the wilderness. When she removes her veil, the
imagery which Spenser uses is rich in allusion to the Woman Clothed with the Sun:

> From her fayre head her fillet she undight
>
> And layd her stole aside. Her angels face
>
> As the great eye of heaven shyned bright,
>
> And made a sunshine in the shady place;
>
> Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.

(I.iii.4.5-9)

Una's angelic appearance has the power to emit the clear, unpainted light of truth. Her association with the image of the Woman Clothed with the Sun allows her to function as a touchstone of our own fallen perceptions, as she reveals to us the difference between real light and borrowed light. *The Faerie Queene* flickers with imagery of true and false light. We have seen the artifical light that surrounds Lucifera; meanwhile, in the stripping of Duessa, Una's description of Duessa shows us man's propensity to be dazzled by the false light of the idol. Una describes Duessa's beauty with language that resonates with both the artifice of man, and the tension between appearance and reality:

> "Such then," said Una, "as she seemeth here
>
> Such is the face of falshood, such the sight
>
> Of fowle Duessa, when her borrowed light
>
> Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne." (I.viii.49.3-6)

When Duessa no longer has her artifice of 'borrowed light' to cloak her, all that is left is 'counterfesaunce': at her core, she is deceit. The light that has surrounded this false idol is in fact artificial, but our vision is frequently too frail to comprehend this. In a text that constantly causes us to doubt our judgement about what we have seen, this is a warning to be on our guard against artificial light. Lucifera and to a certain extent Duessa are associated with a false Woman Clothed with the Sun, surrounded by 'borrowed light'. One is reminded of Marforius's description in *Pasquine in a Traunce* of the false light around the shadowy Queen of

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the papal heaven: 'If there be that difference, which is betweene a thing that is true, and a thing that is fayned, it is very great' (sig. R3r).

Paradoxes and problems

The Faerie Queene and *Pasquine in a Traunce* present us with a splintered representation of the Virgin Mary, by constructing alternative Queens of Heaven which are associated with falsehood and sin. Both texts can be viewed as iconoclastic in that within them, a formerly beloved devotional image is destroyed. Sham Queens of Heaven are presented as a covetous, materialistic metonym for spiritual whoredom, which must be cast out of man's hearts and minds, to be replaced not by the Virgin as humble handmaid but by heaven's true Queen, the Church. The Virgin herself in her Protestant guise as humble handmaid is marginalised, virtually excluded from the scene in both texts. The creation of a sham Queen of Heaven, and all the opportunities she offers for vivid description and emotive language, clearly exerts a fascination and this means that any representation of the real Virgin Mary, as humble handmaid or otherwise, is often marginalised.

This bifurcation of the Virgin's image brings with it a number of other paradoxes and problems. On one level, the need to imbue the Queen of Heaven with such unpleasant traits can also be seen as an indication of how attractive the image was to the worshipper. There is, perhaps, an element here of protesting too much, almost in the way one reminds oneself of a lover's bad traits to justify the end of an affair. Margaret Miles has observed how this residual affection can often be a driving force behind iconoclasm:

Sixteenth-century people destroyed images not because they loved them too

little or were indifferent to them but because they loved them too much and found themselves too attached to them.[70]

It is impossible, of course, to gauge the extent to which the creation of a sham and sinful version of the Queen of Heaven eradicated this residual longing.

Spenser's repeated motif of the eyes and their frailty has taught us that we should not always trust appearances, a literary reminder of the alluring and attractive nature of the idol man must destroy. This leads us to another fundamental paradox: we have seen a nuanced attempt to bifurcate the images of Queen of Heaven and humble handmaid, but is fallen man capable of grasping this? The fact that Redcrosse mistakes a disguised spirit for Una and then is attracted to Duessa-Fidessa pinpoints a blurring rather than a bifurcation of the two figures which many have found disturbing. Claire McEachern, for example, has observed that Spenser's text reveals 'the precariousness of the binary structure of the difference between women'.[71]

This blurring reveals itself in a different way in *Pasquine in a Traunce* which by lampooning perceptions of the Virgin Mary presents us with conflicting referents of the same signifier. Curione's polemical versions of the Virgin, the bedecked earthly *Beata Virgo* and the shadowy, artificial queen of heaven, are parody figures designed to satirise the perceived excesses of the Catholic faith. Yet all versions of the Virgin in Curione's text coexist within the same image, and it could be argued that this serves to destabilise and corrupt positive perceptions of the Virgin Mary, particularly when one considers the marginalisation of the figure of the humble

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[70] Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 107.
[71] Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood*, *1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 45.

handmaid in Curione's Protestant heaven. In seeking to save the Virgin from misrepresentation, although they assert their pious respect for her, reformers such as Curione often end up barely representing her at all.

A final problem comes with the extreme nature of the idea, implicit in the texts studied, that the sham figure of the Queen of Heaven was on some level also the Whore of Babylon. An extraordinarily explicit example of this conflation can be found in a 1582 translation by Thomas Rogers of a study by the Emden lawyer Sheltco à Geveren. *Of the Ende of This World, and Seconde Coming of Christ* was a popular work which ran into several reprints.[72] In this work, the familiar trope of the Church as Christ's true spouse is presented, and using this imagery, the Whore of Babylon becomes a love rival, a dangerous, powerful and seductive figure who has both slandered the True Church, and usurped its place. The work bewails the misfortunes which the Church has suffered:

> And yet most of all it greeves thee to see the shamelesse boldnes of that abhominable strumpet the whore of Babilon, which blusheth not to call her selfe the onely spouse of thy Christ: and to call thee an harlot…Hence it is, that before the world, which is the Sonne of this naughtie houswife, thou art contemned, hated, and afflicted: and she as the Queene of heaven is adored, loved, and advaunced: with her have all nations committed fornication, and

[72] John Craig, 'Rogers, Thomas (c.1553–1616)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23998, site visited 16.04.13; Patrick Collinson, John Craig and Brett Usher (eds.), *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Church of England Record Society, 2003), p. cvi. The ESTC records that *Of the Ende of This World* was reprinted ten times between 1577 and 1583.

the Kings of the earth have become frantike with Idolatrous wyne of her poysoned doctrine.[73]

This text goes beyond the creation of an alternative Queen of Heaven by explicitly stating that corrupt man has been honouring the Whore of Babylon as Queen of Heaven, that by 'Kings of the earth' she has been 'reverenced as the Queene of heaven' (sig. B6v). The True Church, however, is to take heart, for Christ, her husband is exposing her true nature:

> She which was so loved is now hated, and was glorious for her externall fairnes, is nowe become odious to many, for her spiritual filthines. Have pacience therefore but a little whyle, and thou shalt see her, to be of none accompt: for thy lover in whom thou delightest, shall bring her to such shame, as she shall not be able to showe her head out of hell, when thou shalt be in glorye with thy beloved. (sig. B5v)

The structure of this is a mirror of the end of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, as the whorish and false Duessa is stripped of her finery and cast out into the wilderness, and the trope of spiritual whoredom and filth is frequently repeated.

The sustained use of allegory makes this text an unstable one. The language of marriage and family dominates, with Christ as the husband and the Church as his spouse. There is an echo here of the language of the Book of Common Prayer that marriage signifies the mystical union between Christ and his Church, and also

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[73] Sheltco à Geveren, *Of the Ende of This World, and Second Coming of Christ*, trans. Thomas Rogers (London: Henry Middleton, for Andrew Maunsell, 1582), sigs. B4r, B5v. All further references will be to this edition.

perhaps Protestantism's increased emphasis on godly marriage.[74] The Whore of

Babylon, in counterfeited show as Queen of Heaven, is a seductive but morally

polluted mistress. The language of marriage and infidelity, of the True Church

usurped as God's spouse by the Whore of Babylon, is deployed to criticise the

Catholic elevation of the Virgin Mary to Queen of Heaven and Christ's spouse. What

strikes one forcibly about this piece of polemic, however, is that the analogies are so

violently and explicitly drawn that faultlines emerge. By turning the Catholic Queen

of Heaven and bride of Christ into the Whore of Babylon, the text comes dangerously

close to the blasphemous implication that Christ, as the True Church's spouse, has

become an adulterer. So mired is this reformist text in the language of spiritual filth,

whoredom and adultery, so colourful is the invective that constructs the Queen of

Heaven as the Whore of Babylon, that the text slips from invective to blasphemy.

Through the creation of an alternative version of the Queen of Heaven, the

collapse of the image into that of the Whore of Babylon is rationalised and justified.

The tensions we see in *Of the Ende of This World* alert us to the fact that the concept

is an extreme one, as it yokes two diametrically opposed forces together. For all the

careful positioning of the sham Queen of Heaven as something entirely different from

the Virgin Mary herself, this particular strain of literary iconoclasm was, ultimately, a

problematic and paradoxical one. It also reinforced rather than remedied some of the

fundamental paradoxes surrounding iconoclastic controversies, that the iconoclast can

be seen as animating the idol, imbuing it with a spirit and with powers, however

negatively portrayed. Elizabeth Mazzola has observed how 'iconoclasm's loathing of

sacred images imagines their power more forcefully'.[75] We have seen in the previous

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[74] William and Malleville Haller, 'The Puritan Art of Love', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Jan. 1942): 235-272.
[75] Mazzola, *The Pathology of the English Renaissance*, p. 106.

chapter how the repeated polemical use of the Queen of Heaven served to keep the phrase alive. In our move from words to images this phenomenon has been amplified. The attempt to destroy an image became exactly the reverse: the imaginative creation of an alternative and animated version of a stock and stone.

PART TWO

VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS

CHAPTER 3

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND THE HUMBLE HANDMAID IN ELIZABETH CARY'S *THE TRAGEDY OF MARIAM*

In Edward VI's reign, the reformist clergyman Thomas Becon outlined how an ideal woman should behave:

> There is nothing that doth so commend, avaunce, set forthe, adourne, deck, trim, and garnish a maid, as silence. And this noble vertue may the virgins learne of that most holy, pure and glorious virgin Mary, which, when she eyther hard or saw any worthy and notable thing, blabbed it not oute straight wais to her gossips, as the manner of women is at thys present day, but being silent, she kept al those sayinges secret and pondered them in her hart.[1]

Axiomatic to early modern thinking on female behaviour was the threefold ideal of the 'silent, chaste and obedient' woman.[2] The message promulgated in the pulpit and the press by reformed religion was that chastity and silence were virtues to be applauded in a woman, and that it was her duty to obey in the home, which was seen as a microcosm of social and religious order. Post-Reformation iconography of the Virgin has a place within this discourse: for some writers, like Becon, the Virgin

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[1] Thomas Becon, *The Catechism of Thomas Becon* (1564; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Parker Society, 1844), p. 369. The Biblical source of this is Luke 2.19.
[2] Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982) ushered in a wave of feminist criticism which considered the prescriptive model of women as silent, chaste and obedient. See also Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 12; Michelle Osherow, *Biblical Women's Voices in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 3-5; Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (1956; Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), pp. 44-50.

herself, in her state of mute acquiescence to the will of God, became a model of silent and obedient behaviour.

In the previous chapters, we have seen how reformist writers created a dichotomy within iconography of the Virgin, setting the true 'Protestant' humble handmaid in opposition to the false 'Catholic' Queen of Heaven. In this chapter, my focus is on the way in which this dichotomy can influence the way in which we view oblique references to Marian iconography in texts. I will first explore the way in which a range of writers mapped the image of the Virgin Mary as humble handmaid onto the figure of the godly Protestant woman. Following this, the main focus of the chapter is a reading of the Senecan closet drama *The Tragedy of Mariam: the Fair Queen of Jewry* (1613) by Elizabeth Cary.[3] Cary's play, which forms a subtle critique of the silent, chaste and obedient ideal, is patterned with Marian motifs which both interrogate and disrupt the post-Reformation polarisation of Queen of Heaven and humble handmaid.

In my reading of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, I am engaging with a different body of scholarship from the rest of the thesis, one which has been termed 'Marian moments' by Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins in a volume of essays which takes this name.[4] The 'Marian moment' is viewed in these essays as an oblique echo or reference to an aspect of Marian iconography, which is generally read as evidence of Catholicism's residual hold on the nascent Protestant culture. This scholarship has been instrumental to our understanding of the image of the Virgin during this period, and a similar methodology can be viewed to a certain extent in the work of scholars such as Gary Waller and Ruben Espinosa, both of whom have valuably evoked

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[3] I am following the convention of naming aristocratic women such as Elizabeth Cary and Mary Sidney by the most common name used to refer to them.
[4] Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins, 'Preface', *Marian Moments*, pp. ix-xi.

Marian echoes in early modern writing as expressions of often unconscious survivals in the cultural mainstream.[5] I believe that this methodology constitutes an extremely fruitful way of approaching texts, but it is one which can be susceptible to optimism. There is a danger that a reading of a text is reduced to 'Mary spotting' of possible allusions to Marian iconography which may not always be of significance. In the case of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, I will argue using my own and others' analysis that there is an accumulation of evidence which points strongly towards Marian iconography, and that this can illuminate our understanding of this intriguing and polysemic play.

It is also important to remember that the image of the Virgin did not only function within post-Reformation writing in the form of oblique echoes and references. The 'Marian moments' methodology therefore has a rightful place within this thesis, but does not and should not dominate. In a brilliant Foreword to the volume *Marian Moments*, Arthur F. Marotti sets the methodology itself into the broader context of a rich range of references to the Virgin in early modern culture, including conscious polemical preservations of, or statements of allegiance to, Mariology by both Catholic and Protestant writers. This to me seems crucial to the ultimate efficacy of the 'Marian moments' school of thought, but the ensuing essays in the volume, although stimulating and formative, do not encompass this sense of breadth. Perhaps one answer to this is to address the term 'Marian' itself. As we have seen, this is a term which embraced many different and often controversial meanings at this time, and one of the most powerful examples of this is the

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[5] Waller, *The Virgin Mary*, and Espinosa, *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy*. See also Susan Dunn-Hensley, 'Return of the Sacred Virgin', in Janes and Waller, *Walsingham*, pp. 185-197; this essay addresses memory and loss and nostalgia through imagery of the Virgin in the later plays of Shakespeare. The impact that this scholarship has had on our understanding of the continuing importance of the Virgin's image in post-Reformation England is discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 17-18.

bifurcation of Queen of Heaven and humble handmaid. My reading of Cary's play will demonstrate how our understanding of oblique references to the Virgin in post-Reformation writing can be enriched if it is nuanced to accommodate this. Direct references to Mary in early modern writing thus can impact on the way in which we view possible allusions to her. This has the effect of disrupting the maxim that all echoes of Marian iconography connote nostalgia for a Catholic past. A reflection of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven evokes a cluster of complex and controversial associations with both medieval and early modern Catholicism, and if the Virgin is alluded to as humble and obedient, this could be read as an evocation of Protestant iconography as well.

My reading will show how in a number of ways, Cary's construction of her heroine Mariam draws on associations with the Virgin Mary in her queenly state. However, in a play which consistently interrogates the silent, chaste and obedient trope, Mariam also disrupts the model both of the obedient wife and the Virgin Mary as humble handmaid by speaking out, an act of disobedience to her husband Herod which ultimately leads to her execution. In the scenes describing Mariam's death, however, we find that references to silence and obedience merge with allusions to the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. Cary thus creates in Mariam a Virgin Mary figure which appears to encompass both glorious Queen and humble handmaid, one which evokes both the medieval and Counter-Reformation models. While Mariam thus pulls against post-Reformation Protestant constructs of the Virgin, the slave girl Graphina is presented through a powerful cluster of associations which link her to the Virgin as humble and obedient handmaid. However, she is a marginal and powerless figure, who perhaps functions as a criticism not only of the silent and obedient wife, but also of the construction of the Virgin Mary as the ideal's paradigm.

The woman behind the play

Marian motifs within *The Tragedy of Mariam* can be seen to reflect the instability of the Virgin's image in post-Reformation culture – but perhaps they also reflect instabilities within Cary's life. Cary has received a great deal of critical attention in recent years, much of which has focused on the woman behind the text. *The Tragedy of Mariam* is a significant work in that it was the first original drama to be published in the English language by a woman. A woman writer whose work was published stood in danger of being viewed as a garrulous, dangerous and immoral figure in a period where women's speech was frequently elided with wanton behaviour.[6] As Gail Kern Paster has so memorably shown, the predominant Renaissance discourse of the woman's body was that of a leaky vessel, with its copious production of fluids linking to a lack of control, and excessive garrulousness.[7] This extended to the eloquent woman as well as the scold or shrew, highlighting an uneasy relationship between wisdom and sexuality.[8] To a certain extent, the genre of Cary's play does circumvent these criticisms. *The Tragedy of Mariam* is a closet drama, a term coined in the nineteenth century to describe plays that were not written to be performed on the commercial stage.[9] It was a genre which was favoured by aristocratic women,

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[6] Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference* (Newark NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 216. See also Lynette McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry in Early Modern England* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 2, 100, and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 279-340.

[7] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 24.

[8] See Sandra K. Fischer, 'Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious', in Margaret Patterson Hannay (ed.), *Silent But for the Word* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 225-237 and Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), chapter 1.

[9] It was thought initially that the plays were written to be read only, though recent scholarship has begun to consider their performability, suggesting that they may have been privately performed in aristocratic households, where they were free from the restrictions imposed on the public theatre. See Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright and Gweno Williams (eds.), *Women and Dramatic Production 1550-1700* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); Gweno Williams, 'Why May Not a Lady Write a

and the fact that women including Mary Sidney and Cary herself were able to publish their closet dramas gave a public platform to their writing.[10] However, it is hard to ignore that the very existence of a published work by a woman was entering into a discourse on women, speech and silence, regardless of its content. The subject matter of Cary's play – a wife who does not obey her husband – amplifies this sense of a polemical subtext.

However, in a study focusing on Marian motifs in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the most significant element of Cary's own life to consider is her own apostasy: her very public conversion to Catholicism in 1626 resulted in estrangement from the husband with whom she had borne eleven children, and a life in relative penury. Apostasy brought with it a different slant on views of the role of the obedient wife. In his 1591 *Preparative for Marriage*, Henry Smith claimed that as a marriage partner is like Christ's spouse they cannot be 'a harlot, heretic or atheist'.[11] Within the microcosm of the recusant family, it was the often the matriarch who was vilified for wielding a power which was disobedient to the state.[12] Henry Garnet's *A Treatise on Christian Renunciation* (1592), which was aimed at a Catholic female readership, stated: 'It behoveth to obey God more then men. This same let us understand both of servants to their masters, and of wives to their husbandes'.[13]

Good Play?', in S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 95-107; Yasmin Arshad, 'The Enigma of a Portrait', *British Art Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 30-36.
[10] Raber, *Dramatic Difference*, p. 14. Of the works by women writers in the period covered by this thesis, only two, Cary's *Mariam* and Mary Sidney's *Antonie* (1592), appeared in print form. The others were circulated in manuscript. Even here, Cary's text, an original work, differs from Mary Sidney's which is a translation – albeit loose – of Garnier's original play. See S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Renaissance Drama by Women* (London: Routledge, 1996).
[11] Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (London: Thomas Orwin for Thomas Man, 1591), p. 51.
[12] For attitudes to Catholic women see Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, chapter 1, and Marotti, 'Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England'. See also Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 149-180.
[13] Henry Garnet, *A Treatise of Christian Renunciation* (London, Fr. Garnet's First Press, 1593), sig. F2r.

Cary's personal history resonates neatly with her dramatic construction of wifely disobedience in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, and the critical practice of reading her tale of a defiant wife against the apostasy and marital discord of her life was an integral aspect of initial feminist reclamation of Cary as a writer worthy of a place in the Renaissance canon.[14] However, scholars have also pinpointed the limitations of what Stephanie Hodgson-Wright has termed 'the dangers of fusing Cary and text'.[15] Particularly pertinent is a danger identified by Margaret Ferguson, of assuming that the autobiographical subject is a stable and coherent whole.[16] Our major source for Cary's life is a biography, *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, a manuscript written in around 1650 by one of her four daughters, all of whom became nuns at Cambrai. For all its filial affection and domestic detail, this is at its heart a conversion narrative which has, as Isobel Grundy has observed, 'elements of the traditional saint's life'.[17] Another reason for eschewing close autobiographical contextualisation is one of timings. Although it was not published until 1613, scholars date the composition of *The Tragedy of Mariam* at between 1602, when its main source, Thomas Lodge's translation of Josephus's *History of the Jews*, was published, and 1609, when Cary

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[14] Credible readings of this nature include Margaret Ferguson, 'Running On with Almost Public Voice', in Florence Howe (ed.), *Tradition and the Talents of Women* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 42-43, and Fischer, 'Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny'. See also Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 157, and Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 180.

[15] Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'The Canonization of Elizabeth Cary', in Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen and Suzanne Trill (eds.), *Voicing Women* (1996; Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 65. See also McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry*, pp. 167-169. For a summary of different critical views on Cary, see Barbara Lewalski, *Writing Women*, pp. 190-201.

[16] Margaret Ferguson, 'Running On with Almost Public Voice', p. 39. See also Marta Straznicky, '"Profane Stoical Paradoxes"', *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 24 (1994): 104-133, and Dympna Callaghan, 'Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queen of Jewry*', in Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (eds.), *Women, Race, and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 163-177.

[17] Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry, with The Lady Falkland: Her Life,* ed. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1994). All further references to *Lady Falkland* will be to this edition. Isobel Grundy, 'Women's History? Writings by English Nuns', in Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (eds.), *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740* (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 132-133. For polemical elements of *Lady Falkland*, see also McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry*, p. 169, and Beilin, *Redeeming Eve,* p. 158.

had her first child.[18] Cary did not publicly announce her conversion to Catholicism

until 1626. As Dympna Callaghan observes 'most of the traumas, and probably the

conversion, had not yet occurred when she wrote the play at seventeen.'[19] Of course

it would be naïve to presume that Cary converted to Catholicism at the flick of a

switch: one of the core philosophies underpinning this thesis is the level of

confessional complexity that existed in early modern England, and Cary's own

history is further evidence of this.[20] My own approach to the play is underpinned by

a cautious awareness that Marian vestiges in Cary's play may be indicative of

Catholic leanings. However, instead of viewing *The Tragedy of Mariam* purely as an

allegory of Cary's own life story, I propose to examine the text in the wider context

of how post-Reformation constructions of the dichotomy of Queen of Heaven and

humble handmaid can affect the way we approach 'Marian moments' in texts.

The Virgin Mary and the godly Protestant woman

Our reading of Cary's play is greatly illuminated by understanding some of the

cultural context that is embedded within it, in particular the way in which views of

the Virgin Mary came to be elided with the silent, godly and obedient Protestant

woman. The Reformation brought with it new thinking on marriage. Virginity was

no longer perceived as an ideal state, and instead, marriage was privileged as

ordained by God, the bond between husband and wife mirroring the union between

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[18] For dates of composition see Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p. 190.
[19] Callaghan, 'Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam'*, p. 165. For a similar overview on the problem of timings see Hodgson-Wright, 'Canonization', p. 57.
[20] *Lady Falkland* relates a story that at twelve years old, Cary disputed on many passages in Calvin's *Institutes*, prompting her father to conclude 'This girl hath a spirit averse from Calvin', p. 188.

Christ and his Church.[21] One result of this was screeds of printed matter which offered marital advice, and much of this stressed the wife's obedience to her husband as an integral element of the ideal state of companionship. In his 1598 treatise on godly family life, for example, Robert Cleaver is unequivocal about marriage's interrelationship with godly living, and has plenty of advice as to how a wife should behave:

> The best meanes therefore that a wife can use to obtaine, and maintaine the love and good liking of her husband, is to bee silent, obedient, peacable, patient, studious to appease his choler, if he bee angrie.[22]

It is stock advice from a Protestant conduct book but it is worthy of close attention: what is interesting about Cleaver's text is that, like many others of the period, it drew its inspiration from a Catholic source. This was the treatise *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1523), by the Erasmian humanist Juan Luis Vives, a work which outlined a model for both single and married women and which became a template for many of the conduct books of Tudor and Stuart England. A Spanish Catholic, Vives dedicated his text to his countrywoman Catherine of Aragon; he was tutor to the Princess Mary, and much of his advice was written with the young princess in mind. *De Institutione* was originally written in Latin and was translated into English in 1529 by Richard Hyrde, a member of Sir Thomas More's household.

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[21] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 100-101. The Protestant ideal of marriage, propounded by the *Homily on the State of Matrimony*, was that marriage was 'instituted of God': Griffiths, *Homilies*, p. 500.
[22] Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government for the Ordering of Private Families* (London: Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598), p. 230.

However, in an indication of the porousness both of Catholic and Protestant texts and of Catholic and Protestant thinking on women, Vives's text shifted over time from an advice manual for a Catholic princess to a Protestant conduct book on the godly behaviour of women, and was reprinted nine times in the sixteenth century.[23] We have seen how Erasmus's ideas were given different emphasis by Reformation thinkers, and here is another example of the way in which humanist ideas were transmitted and reshaped as the Reformation progressed.[24]

In Vives's conduct book, the Virgin is presented as a model of decorous female behaviour. His text includes several passages in praise of the Virgin Mary which chime with post-Reformation Protestant thought on the way a woman should behave. The ideal woman, Vives observes, should emulate:

> the moste excellent and flower of virginite our lady, the mother of Christe, god and man: whose lyfe, nat only maydes have for an example to forme and fashen them selfe after, but also wyves and wydowes: for she hath been all thynge unto all folkes to provoke all and brynge them unto the example of her chastite: unto virgins the moste demure virgin: unto wyves, the most chaste wife: and unto wydowes, the most devout wydow. (p. 53)

The Virgin is here seen as an example to women at all stages of life: she is both Virgin and mother, and as the bride of Christ mourning her son's death, she is

[23] Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (1529), ed. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman and Margaret Mikesell (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. lxxvii. All further references will be to this edition.
[24] Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 53-56.

perceived as a widow as well. The repetition of 'most' – she is 'the most chaste', 'the most devout'– underlines her position as an ideal for women to emulate.

There are other examples within Vives's treatise of representations of the Virgin Mary that are concurrent with Reformation thinking. Vives discusses at length how a woman's silence, particularly in public, was a desirable state. He observes, for example, that a woman should 'holde her tonge demurely. And let few se her, and none at al here her', invoking the Pauline injunction that women should not speak in church (p. 23).[25] Again, the model for this is seen as the Virgin Mary:

> Tell me howe moche redeste thou in all the historie of the gospel, that our lady ever spake. The angell cometh in unto her: and she finished the matter with fewe wordes, and those wyse and sad, and also holy: She goth for to se Elisabeth, and speketh to the preyse of god: She bryngeth forth a sonne, whiche is god: She is lauded of the angelles, worshyppedde of the hyrde men, and holdethe her peace, gatherynge and kepynge in her remembraunce all their sayenges…Some other women wolde have asked, whan, howe, and where hit shulde have ben: but we rede nat, that she sayd any thynge. She loste her dereste sonne at Jerusalem: and whan she had sought hym thre dayes, and at the laste founde hym, howe many wordes sayd she to hym?...And at the crosse she was clene dumme: she asked never a whytte of her sonne, neither with whom he wolde leave her, nor what he wold commaunde her to do, whan he dyed: For she had nat lerned to prattle amonge

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[25] 1 Corinthians 14.34-35.

folkes. All maydes, and all women folowe you her: for she was but of fewe

wordes: but wonderous wise. (pp. 62-63)

Vives brushes over the Magnificat, referred to here simply as 'she speketh to the

preyse of god'. Instead, his focus is on the Virgin as a silent presence within the

pages of the Bible which is dramatically expressed using phrases such as 'clene

dumme', making the Virgin a model of modest female behaviour. In writings such as

this, the Virgin's silence is inextricably interlinked with her chastity, verbal restraint

becoming sexual restraint. As Peter Stallybrass has observed, in discourses relating

to speaking and wantonness, 'silence, the closed mouth, is made a sign of chastity'.[26]

The conflating of the Virgin with the ideal of the 'silent, chaste and obedient'

wife made *De Institutione* a useful text for England's Protestant readership, as it

mirrored the Reformist shift from the active empowered Virgin as Queen of Heaven

to the domestic, obedient and passive Mary, an ideal godly Protestant wife. It also

shows that to view the humble and godly Virgin Mary as an exclusively Protestant

construct is reductive. Significant revisions were made, however, so that Vives's text

might be suitable for a Protestant readership. One of the most striking indications of

this is found in the 1585 edition, published by the Puritan printer Robert Waldegrave.

In Vives's original text there are references to the Virgin Mary as an intercessor and

Catholic Queen of Heaven. These aspects of the Virgin's iconography are omitted

from the 1585 version: the angel Gabriel, for example, does not refer to the Virgin as

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[26] Peter Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories', in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy
J. Vickers (eds.), *Rewriting the Renaissance* (Chicago IL and London: The University of Chicago
Press, 1986), p. 127.

'quene and lady' (p. 132), but as simply 'the virgin'.[27] These corrections are worthy

of note. Within Vives's Latin original, written for a Catholic readership, humble

handmaid coexisted with intercessory Queen of Heaven, but as his text was

repositioned as a Protestant conduct book, we lose a sense of the Virgin as Queen of

Heaven, and instead are left with only the silent and acquiescent Virgin, the

Protestant ideal.

The Virgin's role as a humble housewife meant that she could be perceived as

an accessible figure whom women could emulate.[28] In chapter 1, we encountered the

writing of Dorothy Leigh, whose book in the 'mother's legacy' genre stated that the

Virgin should not be worshipped as Queen of Heaven. Leigh was not, however,

dismissing the Virgin whose role in acquiescing to God's will was one, she claims,

that should be lauded.[29] In her book, Dorothy Leigh is clear that women should

acknowledge their weaknesses, and 'give men the first and chiefe place'.[30] The

Virgin, she claims, is 'a woman virtuous above all women', as in acquiescing to

God's command in the annunciation, she brought Jesus into the world, taking away

the sin of Eve's disobedience.

For before, men might say: The Woman beguiled mee, and I did eate the

poisoned fruit of disobedience, and I dye. But now man may say, if hee say

truly: The Woman brought mee a Saviour, and I feede of him by Faith and

live. (p. 35)

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[27] Vives *Instruction*, pp. lxxxvii-lxxxvii. For a list of amendments in the 1585 edition see pp. 184-188.
It is perhaps significant that these amendments were made in an edition published at a time when anti-
Spanish feeling ran high.
[28] Peters, *Patterns of Piety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 224.
[29] Chapter 1, pp. 81-82.
[30] Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*, p. 17. All further references will be to this edition.

Through the figure of Mary, Leigh explores the ideal of chastity within marriage, and Mary is seen as an example to wives as well as maidens:

> Wherefore I desire that all women, what name so ever they beare, would learne of this blessed Virgin to bee chaste: for though shee were more replenished with grace that any other, and more freely beloved of the Lord, yet the greatest title that shee had, was, that shee was a blessed and pure Virgin; which is a great cause to move all women, whether they bee Maids or Wives (both which estates shee honoured) to live chastely. (p. 37)

We see again how the Virgin's unique position allowed her to be a role model for both chastity and obedience within marriage.

Dorothy Leigh's book shows how for some women, the repositioning of the Virgin Mary as a godly Protestant wife was welcomed. There are certainly dangers in seeing early modern thinking on godly marriage purely as constituting a stranglehold on women: many conduct books talk of the spiritual responsibility given to wives for educating their children, and the state of true companionship between man and wife was frequently exalted.[31] It is clear, however, that the ideal of the silent, chaste and obedient woman was strongly resisted. The popularity of conduct books is in itself an indication of the impossibility of maintaining the patriarchal ideal.[32] Lurking behind the ideal wife is the spectre of the disobedient wife who refuses to hold her tongue, a

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[31] Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp. 105-111.
[32] Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p. 2. Lewalski's study centres around different ways in which writers of the Jacobean period resisted this ideal.

Kate untamed by a Petruchio, and Protestant emphasis on the godly marriage added a new spiritual layer of significance to the shrew literature of folklore and stage.[33] In his notorious pamphlet *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women*, Joseph Swetnam claimed that the husband of a shrew is justified in beating her: 'As a sharp bit curbs a froward horse, even so a cursed woman must be roughly used.'[34] This staggeringly misogynistic text attracted lively criticism, but embedded in his invective are some truisms of the early modern treatise and pulpit.[35] Fascinatingly, Swetnam does give his reader a small glimpse of a perfect marriage, and the Virgin Mary is his model of the ideal wife:

> Although some happen on a devillish and unhappy woman yet all men doe not so… amongst dust there is Pearle found, and in hard rockes Dyamonds of great value, and so amongst many women there are some good, as that gracious and glorious Queene of all womankinde the Virgin Mary the mother of all blisse, what won her honour but an humble minde and her paines and love unto our Saviour Christ.[36]

In an interesting word choice, the Virgin is here a 'Queene of women' but Swetnam deliberately drains the word of any associations with power and authority. His Virgin

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[33] See David Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 116-136.

[34] Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (London: George Purslowe for Thomas Archer, 1615), sig. F4v.

[35] For responses to Swetnam's text see Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (eds.), *Half Humankind* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Henderson and McManus also set Swetnam's text within a context of pamphlet wars about the nature of women in Elizabethan England, pp. 11-20.

[36] Swetnam, *Arraignment*, sig. G4r.

Mary exists in opposition to the Queen of Heaven; it is her 'humble minde' that she is honoured for.

Mariam as Mary

Armed with an awareness of both Cary's own life, and of the cultural context to her play, let us now turn to consider the 'Marian moments' within *The Tragedy of Mariam*. The story of Herod and Mariam was a popular choice in the period, but Cary's treatment of events differs from others by privileging Mariam's point of view.[37] Set in Palestine thirty years before the birth of Christ, the play tells of events which led the tyrannical king Herod to execute his beautiful and beloved second wife, the Maccabean princess Mariam. Cary observes Aristotelian unities by telescoping events which in her source, Lodge's *History of the Jews*, last over a year, to a single day.[38] At the start of the day, and for the first three acts of the play, Herod is absent, and it is believed that he is dead. Mariam is torn between grief for a husband whom she has loved, and relief to be free from the obsessive and jealous love of a tyrant. The play pivots around Act 4 and Herod's return, and from then on his tyrannical presence dominates the action, as characters re-negotiate their positions. Herod is lovesick for Mariam, but she is unable to forgive him for his tyranny, and denies him her bed. This inflames Herod's anger, which is further fuelled by the words of his Machiavellian sister Salome. He is persuaded to believe not only that Mariam has been unfaithful to him, but also that she has attempted to poison him. He orders her

[37] There was a European tradition of dramas about Mariam and Herod, and two other English plays, Gervase Markham and William Sampson, *The True Tragedy of Herod and Antipater: With the Death of Faire Mariam* (1622) and Philip Massinger, *The Duke of Millaine* (1623) were written on the subject. See Betty Travitsky, 'The *Feme Covert* in Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam'*, in Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (eds.), *Ambiguous Realities* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 187.
[38] For a more detailed discussion of Cary's treatment of her sources, see *The Tragedy of Mariam*, ed. Stephanie Hodgson-Wright (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000), pp. 16-20 and 145-62.

execution by beheading, but ends the play a broken man, torn apart by guilt and remorse.

Cary's play alludes several times to the polarised symbols of Queen of Heaven and humble handmaid within early modern Marian iconography. This is most powerfully realised in the construction of the character of Mariam herself. Dympna Callaghan and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright have both linked Mariam to Mary, highlighting the chastity and purity which surrounds her representation.[39] Hodgson-Wright, whose study forges these links the most strongly, describes Mariam as the play's most significant 'Marian moment', seeing her chastity as her 'trademark'.[40] A further, particularly potent, link between Mariam and the Virgin comes in her name itself, which, in Hodgson-Wright's words, 'clearly links her to…the Catholic Queen of Heaven, the Virgin Mary herself'.[41] The use of 'Mariam' as opposed to the 'Mariamne' of Cary's source, Lodge's *History of the Jews*, widens the allegorical possibilities of the drama; it is read by Hodgson-Wright as a pun of 'Mary-I-am' and the fact that 'Mariam' is the Latin form of 'Mary' in the accusative case means that Cary has used a form of the Virgin's name used in veneration of her.

The power of the association of a regal 'Mary' with the Virgin had been established during the reign of Mary Tudor, when the significance of the monarch's name was amplified by many writers.[42] William Forrest, one of Mary's chaplains, used Marian imagery in his poem 'A New Ballade of the Marigolde', which

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[39] Callaghan, 'Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam*', p. 171; Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Not Kissing the (He)rod: Marian Moments in *the Tragedy of Mariam',* in Buccola and Hopkins, *Marian Moments*, pp. 161-173.
[40] Hodgson-Wright, 'Not Kissing the (He)rod', p. 165.
[41] Hodgson-Wright 'Not Kissing the (He)rod', p. 163.
[42] King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, pp. 197-199.

celebrated her accession.[43] Another writer to capitalise on Queen Mary's name was

Myles Hogarde, who presented a manuscript entitled *A Treatise Declaring Howe*

Christ by Perverse Preaching was Banished Out of This Realme to Queen Mary in

1554.[44] In one hundred and thirteen stanzas of rhyme royal the reign of Edward VI is

compared to that of King Herod, when Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with Jesus.

The repeated refrain 'Then Mary brought home Christ againe' conflates the Virgin,

bringing the baby Jesus safe from exile, with Queen Mary, delivering the Catholic

Church from the grips of the Protestantism of the Edwardian regime.[45] Mary's

Catholic reign is thus depicted in terms of deliverance and release, and the Virgin in

this poem is seen, like the Queen herself, as an active and merciful figure of hope. In

Cary's own lifetime, a royal Mary who was conflated with the Virgin is Mary Queen

of Scots, who went to the block an anointed queen and whose behaviour at her

execution led her to be viewed as a Catholic martyr.[46]

The association of the name 'Mary' in writing with living queens adds impact

to a reading which sees within Mariam echoes of the Virgin in her guise as a

magnificent Queen of Heaven. Mariam's queenly state is repeatedly referred to

throughout the play. Her regal stock, and her position as rightful queen hold echoes

of Mary's position as Queen of Heaven and a descendant of David's line.[47] As an

Idumean, Herod is from lower, more impure stock and has raised himself by marrying

Mariam, a Maccabean princess of pure regal blood. Characters frequently comment

on Mariam's royal lineage, and Mariam herself observes that Herod has used her

noble birth to foreground their sons' right to the throne:

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[43] The Marian imagery in Forrest's work is discussed at length in Arthur F. Marotti, 'Marian Verse as Politically Oppositional Poetry in Elizabethan England'.

[44] J.W. Martin, 'Miles Hogarde', *Renaissance Quarterly,* vol. 34, no. 3 (Autumn, 1981): 359-383.

[45] Excerpts from the poem are reproduced in Guiney, *Recusant Poets,* pp. 127-128.

[46] Hodgson-Wright argues that repeated emphasis on Mariam's nobility of birth constructs in Cary's play a powerful allegory of the beheading of Mary Queen of Scots: 'Not Kissing the (He)rod', p. 163.

[47] Warner, *Alone,* p. 20.

These boys that did descend from royal line.

These did he style his heirs to Davids throne.[48]

(I.ii.138-139)

Alison Shell also comments that Mariam's name is 'bound to suggest comparisons'
with the Virgin, observing that both Mariam and the Virgin are 'repositories of
orthodoxy', the Virgin through giving birth to Christ and Mariam through giving
Herod 'the best title to the Jewish throne by virtue of her descent and his marriage to
her'.[49]

Mariam as not-Mary?

If we are to see the character of Mariam in terms of a 'Marian moment', she can thus
be viewed as a figure who resonates most powerfully with the Virgin as Queen of
Heaven rather than as humble handmaid. Her strong and assertive behaviour also
could be read as eroding and destabilising our sense of her as a submissive wife and
as a model of the Virgin Mary as a paradigm of silence and obedience. Mariam
speaks out and speaks her mind in a play which constantly interrogates the
relationship between silence, speech and chastity. This seems to make Mariam not-

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[48] Weller and Ferguson, *The Tragedy of Mariam.* All further references will be to this edition.
[49] Alison Shell, 'Elizabeth Cary's Historical Conscience', in Heather Wolfe (ed.), *The Literary Career
and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 59. Michelle
Osherow notes the virtual interchangeability of the name 'Mariam' with the biblical prophetess
'Miriam', referred to as 'Marie' in both The Bishops' Bible and The Geneva Bible. Miriam's song of
praise in the Book of Exodus leads to her punishment for assertively speaking out, a pattern which as
Osherow notes finds parallels in Cary's tragedy. It is significant, overall, that Osherow's study of
Biblical stories which reflect the potency of female voices in early modern Protestant England finds
very little room for the relatively mute figure of the Virgin Mary. See Michelle Osherow, *Biblical
Women's Voices*, pp. 13-20.

Mary more than she is Mary: although she can be viewed as a figure constructed in specific reference to the Virgin, she seems to function more in opposition to Mary than in similitude. But the act of speaking out is itself a complex one in Cary's play. The power, and fragility, of the speech act is consistently, almost obsessively, interrogated in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, in which there are repeated patterns of words and images which connect breath, speech and the tongue with fragility, falsehood and death.

Mariam's very first soliloquy foregrounds her awareness of the dangers of the spoken word when she bewails how previously, she has publicly spoken out:

How oft have I with public voice run on

To censure Rome's last hero for deceit.[50]

(I.i.1-2)

By berating herself for her 'publike voice', Mariam acknowledges the dangers of the action of speaking out of turn, and out of the domestic sphere. Lynette McGrath has observed that in this speech, Mariam is an unfixed character – her moods are inconstant as she vacillates between relief and grief at her husband's death.[51] Mariam's words can certainly be viewed as dangerous and disobedient here: at one point in her soliloquy, she openly declares that her husband's death is something she

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[50] Mariam is here referring to Julius Caesar's outward shows of grief over the dead Pompey. See Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam,* ed. Stephanie J. Wright (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. 39, note 1.
[51] McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry,* p. 193.

has previously wished for, as she speaks of her animosity towards Herod and conjures up an imagined image of his corpse:

> Oft have I wish'd that he might lose his breath,
>
> Oft have I wish'd his carcass dead to see.
>
> (I.i.17-18)

The fragility of the breath, which is often a referent for speech in the play, is here foregrounded in the phrase 'lose his breath' to connote Herod's death.

There are many instances in the play where we see evidence that Cary's Mariam is a woman who speaks her mind with candour and vigour. Faced with taunts from Herod's tyrannical sister Salome, she fights back, with eloquence and vitriol, dismissing Salome's lineage:

> Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
>
> Thou mongrel: issu'd from rejected race,
>
> Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight,
>
> And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace.
>
> (I.iii.235-238)

Mariam's eloquence is not in doubt. Salome may loathe her, but she admits that 'she speaks a beauteous language' (IV.vii.429), while Herod talks of her 'world-amazing wit' (IV.vii.428), a powerful indication that not only has Mariam spoken out to the world with 'public voice' (1.i.1), but that she has been admired for doing so. It is interesting to note that the treatment of Mariam's speech in Cary's source, Lodge's *History of the Jews*, is far more unsympathetic. Lodge's Mariam is more of a scold, possessing 'a certain womanly imperfection and natural frowardness', often speaking outrageously to Herod, 'all of which he endured patiently, without any shew of discontent'.[52]

In speaking out, however eloquently, Mariam is of course rebelling against the carefully encoded behaviour of the early modern conduct book. This, it could be argued, has the effect of disrupting any sense that her character is associated with the silent and obedient Virgin. The view of Mariam's speech presented by others in the play also provides a subtle commentary on an ingrained system of ideas equating speech with moral laxity, thus on one level, her act of speaking out questions her chastity as well.[53] This can best be seen in the language used in a scene between Mariam and Herod's counsellor Sohemus, who is her friend and ally. In the scene, Sohemus is advising Mariam on how to behave on Herod's return. He delivers the encomium that Mariam is 'chaste queen' (III.iii.205), but there is a disturbing undercurrent to his speeches:

> Yet for your issue's sake more temp'rate bee,

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[52] Titus Flavius Josephus, *The Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus*, trans. Thomas Lodge (London: G. Bishop, 1602)*,* p. 398. All further references will be to this edition.
[53] McGrath has termed Mariam 'a mixed construction of chastity' which ultimately leads to her death: *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry*, p. 198.

The heart by affability is won.

(III.iii.149-150)

Cary is here echoing her source, for 'temperate' is a word used by Lodge to denote both speech and sexual morals. Lodge describes Cleopatra, for example, as a character 'addicted to…pleasures and intemperance' (p. 389) while Mariam's fault is that 'she presumed upon a great and intemperate libertie in her discourse' (p. 399). Sohemus later admits that Mariam's speech is uncontrolled: 'Unbridled speech is Mariams worst disgrace/And will endanger her without desert' (III.iii.183-184). It is an accusation that is in many ways pivotal to the play. Is Sohemus bemoaning the irony that the only sin that the chaste and virtuous Mariam has committed is to speak freely – certainly he says that she is endangered 'without desert' – or is he truly describing speaking out as a 'disgrace'?

Sohemus's use of the image of the bridle connotes a containing and stilling action. It originates in Cary's source, which speaks of Mariam's 'unbridled manners' (p. 399), but it also echoes both conduct books, and the shrew literature of folklore. There is perhaps an allusion here to the scold's bridle, used by communities both to curb the tongue of a shrew and to shame her publicly.[54] In his popular treatise on marriage *A Bride Bush or Wedding Sermon*, the seventeenth-century preacher William Whately opined that the dutiful wife is one who 'submits herselfe with quietnesse, cheerfully, even as a well-broken horse turnes at the least turning, stands at the least check of the rider's bridle, readily going and standing as he wishes that

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[54] Although this form of punishment was first entered into a city record in Northern England in 1620, Lynda E. Boose has cited striking literary evidence for the existence of the scold's bridle before that date: Cary's is perhaps another allusion to this practice. See Lynda E. Boose, 'Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Summer, 1991): 179-213 (pp. 198, 200-201).

sits upon his back'.[55] The figure of the scold or shrew – the woman who needs to be 'well-broken' – looms large here. There was in the period a strong inference that a husband who could not control his wife's speech would be unable to control her sex drive.[56] The fact that Mariam's speech is 'unbridled' implies that Herod is ultimately unable to contain her, and it identifies within Mariam a lack of control.

After Sohemus has advised Mariam the Chorus, which frequently serves an ironic function of undermining Mariam's character and actions, adopts the tone of a conduct manual on marriage, making the provocative assertion that 'public language' is the domain of the husband and not the wife:[57]

Then she usurps upon another's right

That seeks to be by public language grac'd:

And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,

Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste. (III.Chorus.239-242)

Sohemus and the Chorus seem poles apart at this point – the former weeping for Mariam's imminent downfall, the latter sanctimonious, almost delighting in her misfortunes. But in an example of many instances in the play where, as Sandra Fischer has observed, characters 'project guilt upon Mariam', the essence of their

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[55] William Whately, *A Bride Bush or Wedding Sermon* (London: Wiliam Jaggard for Nicholas Bourne, 1619), p. 43.
[56] Lisa Jardine *Still Harping on Daughters* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), chapter 4.
[57] See Beilin, *Redeeming Eve,* p.132.

warnings is the same.[58] Mariam has strayed from social mores by refusing to yoke herself to her husband's will.

Upon Herod's return, Mariam's 'unbridled speech' has deadly consequences. As Sohemus has prophesied, Mariam's flaw is that she cannot control either her words or her expressions. She meets Herod like a female Hamlet, in the dull colours that match her mood: 'My lord, I suit my garment to my mind' (IV.iii.91). She goes on to speak what is on her mind rather than what Herod wants to hear. Her disobedient words leave her ironically vulnerable at this point in the play to the slandering words of her character foil, Salome, who has earlier declared her intentions: 'Now tongue of mine with scandal load her name' (III.ii.97).[59] It is fitting that Salome's favoured synecdoche is the tongue, a forceful image which was freighted with associations of gender and power in a period when a man accused of slandering a woman by calling her a 'whore' might defend himself by claiming he meant 'whore of her tonge' not 'whore of her body'.[60] As Lisa Jardine has observed, 'throughout the literature of the period we find a willingness to slide provocatively from one sense to another: scolding = active use of the female tongue = female sexuality = female penis'.[61]

Salome ultimately succeeds in persuading Herod that Mariam is both murderous and inconstant, and as she does so, she again uses the highly-charged synecdoche of the tongue to damn her rival:

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[58] Fischer, 'Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny', p. 233.
[59] See Lewalski, *Writing Women,* p. 196, and Ferguson 'Running On with Almost Public Voice', p. 47 for how Cary constructs several female foils to Mariam in the play.
[60] Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520-70* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 80.
[61] Jardine, *Still Harping,* p. 121.

She speaks a beauteous language, but within

Her heart is false as powder: and her tongue

Doth but allure the auditors to sin,

And is the instrument to do you wrong.

(IV.vii.429-432)

Herself a master of persuasive language and hypocrisy, Salome here equates

Mariam's command over language with inconstancy. Her rhetoric ultimately seals

Mariam's death warrant. Baited by Salome's words, Herod damns Mariam, and also

uses the imagery of speech:

It may be so: nay, tis so: shee's unchaste,

Her mouth will ope to ev'ry stranger's ear.

(IV.vii.433-434)

At its most lewd, Mariam's mouth functions as a metonym for her legs, opening

indiscriminately to receive strangers: physically chaste or not, she is depicted as a

whore. Mariam's 'unbridled speech' has, as Sohemus earlier predicted, been her

undoing. Herod's wrath has by this time reached such a pitch that the trumped up

charges of murder have collapsed into charges of eloquence and sexual inconstancy.

Mariam's fate is sealed, by Herod, by Salome and most of all by the dominating

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ideological framework that both the Chorus and Sohemus have earlier constructed. She is a dangerously eloquent woman.

Amongst Cary's extant writings was a collection of *Lives of Women Saints*.[62] In writing this, Cary was following a tradition that focused directly on women, and on virgin-martyr saints who spoke out. As Robert Mills has observed, virgin-martyr saints 'defy the tradition of relegating women to an inactive, speechless, painful existence', creating a conflicting spectacle that is both victimised and empowered.[63] Female martyrs in texts such as *The Golden Legend* were able to defend articulately both their faith and their chastity, using what Maud Burnett McInerney has termed 'aggressive verbal power' in engaging in a public discourse with their oppressors.[64] As such, they were speaking out of turn against patriarchal pagan ideology and legal systems of their society, and refusing to respond to the lustful advances of the men who tormented them. Their bodies became symbols of both sexual purity and the purity of their religious convictions.[65] Perhaps, in writing about Mariam, Cary showed further evidence of this fascination with the sexually pure woman who spoke out. But by associating her heroine with the Virgin, a saint who in Cary's time was lauded for qualities of patience and silence, and layering early modern ideologies about speech and silence onto the play, Cary is here creating a woman whose speaking out undermines rather than reinforces her chaste status, at least in the eyes of society.

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[62] Frances E. Dolan, 'Reading, Work, and Catholic Women's Biographies', *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2003): 328-357 (p. 337).

[63] Robert Mills, 'Can the Virgin Martyr Speak?', in Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih (eds.), *Medieval Virginities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 187.

[64] Maud Burnett McInerney, 'Rhetoric, Power and Integrity in the Passion of the Virgin Martyr', in Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie (eds.), *Menacing Virgins* (Newark NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1999), p. 55.

[65] *Women of the Gilte Legende*, trans. Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 8-9.

Queen of heaven and obedient handmaid in representations of Mariam's death

From my reading of the play thus far, we have seen that Cary has created in Mariam a figure who echoes iconography of the Virgin in a queenly state, but in a play which consistently interrogates silence and obedience, it would appear that this assertive Queen of Heaven figure exists in opposition to the Virgin as silent and obedient handmaid. Can we therefore view Mariam as a dangerous and disruptive figure, a meretricious sham Queen of Heaven of the type we have seen in chapter 2? Cary's far more sympathetic portrayal of her heroine evokes very different resonances with post-Reformation constructions of the Virgin's image. Mariam's behaviour may seem transgressive, but as the play progresses her virtue becomes more and more apparent. Salome's brutal mastery of speech is key here, for it serves to illuminate Mariam's virtue, as their characters function more and more in opposition to each other.

It is in Cary's representations of Mariam's death that the allusions to the Virgin surrounding her character become more complex. Cary uses the technique of the Nuntio tradition to report Mariam's execution, one which was extremely important for the reporting of scenes of violence in the genre of closet drama.[66] The Nuntio presents Mariam's death in triumphant terms. As Beilin has observed, Cary here embellishes Josephus's story by adding several elements to Mariam's death which echo the resurrection of Christ.[67] Cary has added the Judas-figure of a butler who hangs himself, and allusions to the Resurrection: Mariam is described using imagery of the phoenix, a common figure for the resurrected Christ, while her last words to Herod, reported by the Nuntio, allude to her rising again in three days.

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[66] For the Nuntio tradition see Raber, *Dramatic Difference*, p. 175.
[67] Beilin, *Redeeming Eve,* p. 171.

"By three days hence if wishes could revive,

I know himself would make me oft alive".

(V.i.77-8)

Stephanie Fischer similarly comments that 'the play turns symbolically religious, casting over the sacrifice of Mariam a Christ-like aura.'[68] The Christ-like imagery that surrounds Mariam can be seen as lifting her out of the restrictions society has imposed upon her. Within Mariam's death we therefore see a paradox: the woman who spoke out is silenced and contained, yet there is a sense of freedom within this containment.

This conflation with Christ also intensifies associations of Mariam's character with the Virgin Mary, when one considers that the narrative of the Virgin's corporeal assumption and coronation in heaven is constructed in mimesis of the narrative of Christ's resurrection and ascension. Other images used also connect Mariam to the Queen of Heaven. Towards the end of the play, faced with the prospect of executing Mariam, Herod emblazons Mariam in terms of her brightness and light using imagery which turns his queen into the Queen of Heaven:[69]

Her eyes like stars, her forehead like the sky,

She is like Heaven, and must be heavenly true.

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[68] Fischer, 'Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny', p. 235.
[69] Ilona Bell persuasively argues that *The Tragedy of Mariam* consistently deploys the rhetoric of Petrarchism to provide an ironic commentary on Renaissance literary conventions: 'Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*', in Wolfe, *Literary Career*, pp. 17-34.

(IV.vii.451-452)

As he grieves incoherently at Mariam's death, Herod bids the Nuntio to bring Mariam back to him. The Nuntio's reply uses the following fanciful imagery:

> She'll come in stately weeds to please your sense,
>
> If now she come attir'd in robe of Heaven:
>
> Remember, you yourself did send her hence,
>
> And now to you she can no more be given.
>
> (V.i.145-8)

We are given a brief, celestial glimpse of Mariam as Queen of Heaven, dressed in 'stately weeds' and a 'robe of Heaven'. But the shutters are soon pulled down on this by the Nuntio's frank summation that Mariam is dead, and will not be coming to Herod again.

However, through descriptions of Mariam's death, Cary also ironically articulates the power of silence. The presentation of her death via the Nuntio makes Mariam a dramatically silent figure, but within his descriptions she is literally silent too. When he condemns her to death, Herod urges the executioner to be quick, lest he becomes persuaded by Mariam's dangerous eloquence:

> Then let the executioner make haste,

Lest she enchant him, if her words he hear.

(IV.vii.435-436)

The reality of the event is wholly different; we are told by the Nuntio that at her execution, Mariam remained silent and dignified:

She made no answer, but she look'd the while,

As if thereof she scarce did notice take,

Yet smil'd, a dutiful, though scornful, smile.

(V.i.51-2)

Mariam, it appears, is reconciled to death, and dies after 'some silent prayer' (V.i.84). Her smile seems a final gesture of mute eloquence, and is it possible to read not only in Mariam's silence but also in the word 'dutiful' an echo of the Virgin's mute acquiescence at this point? Has Mariam become a template for the silent and obedient Protestant wife, curbing her unbridled speech? Cary's presentation of Mariam is far more equivocal than this, for the nature of Mariam's smile shows her to be a mute, but not necessarily compliant figure. Her smile, Nuntio reports, is 'scornful' as well as 'dutiful'. Mariam's smile encompasses all the eloquence and complexity of the mute gesture, and can be set in marked contrast to the impotence of words which the play frequently explores. Though she appears to learn how to be silent and obedient in death, Mariam's scornful smile would indicate that she is still

standing outside societal conventions, and that she goes to her death retaining a sense of empowerment. The ending of the play celebrates Mariam's spiritual transcendence, and in her death, she is both silent and obedient and stately Queen.

Graphina as humble handmaid

Through her complex construction of the character of Mariam, Cary's text can be seen to destabilise a sense that the figures of silent and humble handmaid and powerful Queen of Heaven can be placed in binary opposition. However, *The Tragedy of Mariam* does not only address 'Marian moments' through the character of Mariam herself. Within the play, there is an interlude which to my knowledge has not been recognised by published scholarship as one which has resonances with Marian iconography. In the character of Graphina, a slave girl, Cary consistently and coherently deploys imagery associated with the Virgin Mary in her 'Protestant' guise of humble handmaid. Graphina is a character invented by Cary; in what Margaret Ferguson has termed a 'strange little scene', she is courted by Pheroras, Herod's younger brother.[70] Pheroras dominates the first half of this scene with an elaborate declaration of his love for Graphina, at the end of which he implores her to break her silence:

> Why speaks thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue,
>
> For silence is a sign of discontent:
>
> It were to both our loves too great a wrong

---

[70] Ferguson, 'Running On with Almost Public Voice,' p. 47.

If now this hour do find thee sadly bent.

(II.i.41-44)

It would appear that Pheroras is here privileging speech over silence, but when Graphina does open her mouth, however, her speech is circumscribed by the dominant discourse of the godly Protestant wife. As Beilin comments, the character of Graphina is a 'cipher' who is the exemplary wife of the conduct books: 'She speaks only when she is asked to do so, and says only what she is expected to say.'[71] Unlike Mariam, Graphina's speech is bridled by her humility and her acknowledgement of her position, encoded with obedience and virtue:

If I be silent, tis no more but fear

That I should say too little when I speake:

But since you will my imperfections bear,

In spite of doubt I will my silence break:

Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue.

(II.i.49-53)

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[71] Beilin, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance,* p. 135.

The scene echoes many of the *topoi* of the play, particularly the relationship between speech and silence, and the curbing or tying of the tongue.[72] It presents a humble and obedient wife – a foil to Salome and Mariam. I would argue that this figure of the humble and obedient wife functions as a powerful evocation of Marian iconography. The scene refers repeatedly to Graphina's virginity and purity, and when she does speak, her words in several places echo St Luke's Magnificat:

> Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state,
>
> To highest eminency wondrous grace,
>
> And me your handmaid have you made your mate,
>
> Though all but you alone doe count me base.
>
> …But study cannot boot nor I requite,
>
> Except your lowly handmaid's steadfast love
>
> And fast obedience may your mind delight.
>
> (II.i.57-60, 69-71)

The Magnificat – the most sustained example of the Virgin's voice in the Bible – is Mary's song of thanks to the Lord, and was and is integral to the Anglican

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[72] In a complex pun, Salome earlier uses the image of the tongue to deplore her marital situation to Constabarus: 'But now ill-fated Salome, thy tongue/To Constabarus by itself is tied' (I.iv.277-8). She here uses the tongue both actively ('by itself') and passively ('is tied'), highlighting the paradoxical nature of the woman's tongue as a force that is powerful, but also dangerous and needing to be controlled.

service of Evening Prayer, or Evensong.[73] In the Evening Prayer service of the Book

of Common Prayer, it begins with the following words from Luke's gospel:

My soule doeth magnifie the Lorde.

And my spirit hath rejoyced in god my saviour.

For he hath regarded the lowelines of his hand maiden.

For beholde from hencefurth al generacions shall call me blessed.

For he that is mightie hath magnified me: and holy is his name.[74]

Graphina's repetition of 'handmaid' and her description of Pheroras's hand which

lifts her 'from lowest state' make her speech a form of secular Magnificat, where

instead of praising the Lord for lifting her out of lowliness, she praises her husband.

In the character of Graphina, we therefore see a powerful conflation of the

role of the obedient Protestant wife with that of the Virgin Mary. But what is her

impact on the play? Ultimately, Graphina is a character who has no power and little

voice. She is literally a servant, similar in temperament as well as name to the patient

Griselda, and in marriage she becomes a servant of her husband as master and Lord.

Graphina may epitomise female virtue, speaking only when addressed and then with

humility, but she is dwarfed within Cary's drama by the stronger female figures of

Mariam and Salome. As Beilin observes, Graphina is 'feeble and lacklustre, but then

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[73] Luke 1.46-55.
[74] Brian Cummings (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 112.

literary virtue often appears less interesting and lively than vice.'[75] The scene

between Graphina and Pheroras reaches no resolution; their relationship is one of the

many left hanging by Cary at the end of the play, too insignificant in the face of the

unfolding drama between Herod, Mariam and Salome for its loose ends to be tied.

The character of Graphina is a fragment rather than a whole, as marginalised as the

'true' Virgin in Curione's Protestant heaven.

Conclusions

Elizabeth Cary's own devotion to the Virgin Mary was not in doubt. She took the

name of the Virgin Mary on her confirmation, and amongst her extant writings are

devotional verses to the Virgin.[76] *Lady Falkland: A Life* also reports how she:

> bore a great and high reverence to our Blessed Lady, to whom, being with
>
> child of her last daughter (and still a Protestant), she offered up that child,
>
> promising if it were a girl it should (in devotion to her) bear her name, and
>
> that as much as was in her power, she would endeavour to have it to be a
>
> nun.[77]

What is significant about this little anecdote is the way in which Cary is shown to

pray to the Virgin as an active agent who, like the medieval figure, has the power to

aid delivery of a healthy child. But Cary's own evocation of imagery associated with

the Virgin Mary in *The Tragedy of Mariam* creates a far more complex picture. Our

study of the characters of Mariam and Graphina has identified a number of Marian

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[75] Beilin, *Redeeming Eve,* p. 169.
[76] Weller and Ferguson, *Tragedy of Mariam*, p. 212.
[77] Weller and Ferguson, *Tragedy of Mariam,* p. 196.

motifs in Cary's play which both reflect and disrupt the post-Reformation dichotomy within the Virgin's image of humble handmaid and Queen of Heaven. How to evaluate the significance of this?

I believe that there are two different ways in which Cary's multi-layered deployment of 'Marian moments' can be viewed. The first is to see the play as a text which offers localised fragments of Mariology. The apparent contradictions within Mariam's character in particular are thus indicative of the fragmentation of Marian iconography in post-Reformation writing. But this is perhaps a reductive view. The second way is to read the play as entering more explicitly, and controversially, into post-Reformation discourses on the way in which the Virgin Mary could be viewed. In the character of Mariam herself, it could be argued that Cary is creating a Virgin-Mary figure which simultaneously evokes both powerful, assertive and magnificent Queen and silent, obedient handmaid. Mariam thus becomes a version of the Virgin that conforms to the pre-Reformation model, as seen in Vives's *De Institutione*. This model also connects with Counter-Reformation Marian iconography which, as the following chapter will show, yoked Heaven's Queen and humble handmaid together rather than placing them in opposition. Graphina, on the other hand, can be seen as both an allusion to – and criticism of – the Protestant version of the Virgin who is merely docile. Although she may embody the silent, chaste and obedient Protestant wife, she is an impotent presence within the play.

My reading of *The Tragedy of Mariam* has therefore nuanced the 'Marian moments' methodology to encompass the direct references to the Virgin that existed in early modern, particularly polemical, writing. Behind this discussion, though not dominating it, has been an awareness of Cary's own later apostasy. We cannot ascertain whether she had fully converted when she wrote *The Tragedy of Mariam*,

but Cary's play may indicate that she was developing leanings towards Catholicism, as it appears to uphold Catholic views of the Virgin whilst questioning Protestant models of femininity. The confessional complexity of the period now comes to the fore in this thesis, as we turn from oblique and polemical references to Virgin to look at the way in which her assumption and coronation was directly referenced in devotional writing. We will begin this investigation with a body of writing which was instrumental in bringing Counter-Reformation ideologies to English soil: recusant rosary books.

CHAPTER 4

THE VIRGIN MARY AND THE EARLY MODERN ROSARY

SECTION I: RECUSANT ROSARY BOOKS

In 1571, the Holy League of Southern European Catholic states defeated the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto. This success in battle was attributed by many not to the military might of those who fought, but to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. During the battle, many European Catholics had offered up rosary prayers, and a rosary procession was held in St Peter's Square in Rome on the day of the battle to mark the success of the Holy League.[1] In memory of the victory, Pope Gregory XIII instigated in 1573 a solemn feast, the Feast of the Rosary, to be celebrated every year on 1 April. The story of the Battle of Lepanto shows the enduring power of the rosary in Counter-Reformation Europe, and how, through it, the image of the Virgin Mary was deployed as a military symbol.[2] In late sixteenth-century England, however, we find the rosary being used in a very different way. Imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1594, his hands destroyed by torture, the Jesuit priest John Gerard fashioned rosaries out of orange peel which he sent to fellow prisoners. These orange peel rosaries were wrapped in paper which concealed notes, written in orange juice.[3] Gerard's story encapsulates in microcosm both the importance of the rosary in early modern England, and the way in which it was repositioned. Instead of being used as an outward symbol of military might, the rosary had become associated with secrecy. The fact that Gerard was able to find a way in which to craft a material

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[1] Throughout this chapter, 'rosary' will refer both to the prayers said and rosary beads, the material object which is used to mark those prayers.
[2] Warner, *Alone*, p. 308; Johnson, 'Mary in Early Modern Europe', p. 363.
[3] John Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman (1951; London: Longman, 1965), pp. 117-119.

object which was clearly identifiable as rosary beads shows how portable and adaptable this way of worship was in a world where Catholic rituals had been driven underground, and the prison had often become a spiritual space.[4] Gerard's use of the rosary seems far removed from Pope Gregory's militaristic stance, but on one level, it is remarkably similar. The imprisoned Jesuit priest used the rosary in a politicised way, blending rebellion with devotion; his act is also testament to a continued – even revitalised – importance of Marian piety amongst recusant worshippers.

This chapter takes as its theme the representation of the Virgin in rosary-related literature by late Elizabethan and early Jacobean writers. It is divided into two sections. This section, 'Early Modern Rosary Books', focuses on the language used in rosary books which were distributed to England's recusant community in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. I will explore how for the Jesuit movement in particular, the rosary was not a medieval prayer to be regarded with nostalgia but a valuable and pragmatic method of disseminating Tridentine Catholicism. The Jesuits were led in this by their superior Henry Garnet, who established the Society of the Rosary in England as a way of forging a degree of congregational homogeneity amongst England's diaspora of Catholic worshippers. In contrast to Protestant anxiety about images, these rosary books often reveal a synergy between word and image, both of which become a powerful aid to meditation. A further contrast comes with their representation of the Virgin: instead of the enforced bifurcation between Queen of Heaven and humble handmaid which we have previously seen, we here find many different aspects of Marian iconography all comfortably co-existing, and the Virgin is often presented as a model to appeal to female worshippers. Arguably the most important aspect of the Virgin's image within these books, however, is her role

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[4] Lisa McClain, *Lest We Be Damned* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 62-70.

as intercessory Queen of Heaven. Her power is unquestioned – even amplified – and she is viewed as a figure to whom beleaguered Catholics could turn for mercy and deliverance in the absence of a priest. This, coupled with the frequent use of the language of the apologia to describe the Virgin as Heaven's Queen, shows the image of the Virgin to be a politicised construct.

In the second section of this chapter, 'Harington's rosary', we move from the hidden world of recusant England to the Elizabethan and Jacobean court, through an exploration of a collection of epigrams written by the courtier poet Sir John Harington. I will first show how these poems reflect the complexity and indeed the confusion of the spiritual economy of post-Reformation England. They also reveal Harington's own confessional standpoint to be a slippery one, blending political expediency and a desire for preferment at court with often dangerous forays into nostalgia for England's Catholic past. This ambiguity is accentuated by the fact that Harington presented his entire collection of poems to King James's son Prince Henry, arranged in the form of a gift-book that also included an engraving of the mysteries of the rosary, accompanied by a rosary prayer in both Latin and English. I will discuss Harington's own elusive relationship with the rosary, and the extent to which he was here using it as a tool to plead with King James, through his son, for religious toleration. The chapter thus gives a platform to a number of different voices, but all of the texts studied will show the continuing significance of the rosary prayer, and how the image of the Virgin of the early modern rosary was very much a product of the times.

The history of the rosary

The practice of saying the rosary dates back at least as far as the Crusades. One story

of the origins of the rosary finds its roots in Dominican monastic prayer: legend has it

that Saint Dominic saw an apparition of the Virgin, in which she gave him a string of

beads, and instructed him how to say the rosary.[5] A different story of the origins of

the rosary is that it was developed by Carthusians.[6] This mesmeric devotional prayer

is centred around numbers: in saying the rosary, the worshipper repeats 150 Hail

Marys, which from the fifteenth century were divided into groups of ten, or decades,

each decade punctuated with the Lord's prayer.[7] Every time a prayer is said, the

worshipper moves a rosary bead along the string on which it is threaded, and

throughout each decade he meditates on one of fifteen mysteries. The traditional

fifteen mysteries of the rosary, regulated by Pope Pius V in the sixteenth century, are

in three groups of five, focusing on the life of Jesus and Mary. First come the joyful

mysteries: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation and the

Finding of Jesus in the Temple. These are followed by five sorrowful mysteries:

Christ's Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the

Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion. Finally, there are the five glorious

mysteries: the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the

Assumption of the Virgin and the Coronation of the Virgin. Integral to the rosary is a

belief in its power to obtain both mercy and protection from the Virgin. The Virgin's

status as Queen of Heaven is key here: the rosary's fifteen mysteries culminate in a

meditation on her assumption and coronation. For every mystery, the worshipper

echoes the words of the Angel Gabriel as he first greets the Virgin – '*Ave Maria*', or

'Hail Mary'. The addition by Pius V of 'Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of

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[5] Eithne Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969), p. 38.
[6] Anne Dillon, 'Praying by Number', *History*, vol. 88, issue 291 (July 2003): 451-471 (p. 458).
[7] Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 332.

our death' to the reformed breviary in 1568 foregrounded the Virgin's intercessory role, imprinting the image of the Queen of Heaven as intercessor onto the image of Mary as mother-to-be.[8]

During the English Reformation, the rosary moved from beloved familiar prayer to illegal practice. Thomas Cranmer condemned the use of rosary beads in his 1547 *Homily of Good Works*, and the practice was forbidden outright in the Edwardian Injunctions of 1547. When Edward's sister Mary was charged with religious disobedience in 1551, she rode into London accompanied by Catholic supporters, all of whom carried black rosary beads as a symbol of defiance.[9] In Mary's own reign, rosary beads were used as a devotional aid to the illiterate; thus, one of their prime functions in the Middle Ages was revived.[10] Elizabeth's accession meant that reciting of the rosary was once again abolished, and beads became contraband. But the rosary clearly remained popular with many. In the 1590s, for example, a group of Lancashire ministers commented despairingly that many of their parishioners were still using beads to say their prayers.[11] In the State Papers of the Public Record Office is evidence that in 1595, a carpenter and mason by the name of Greene in Derbyshire was not only constructing priest holes, but also that he 'maketh all the beades that liee in little boxes'.[12] When a peddler by the name of Richard Cropland was arrested during the time of the Gunpowder Plot, he was carrying a range of wares for recusant buyers, including rosary beads.[13]

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[8] Warner, *Alone*, pp. 306-307.
[9] Whitelock, *Mary Tudor*, p. 153.
[10] Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith* (Newhaven CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 17.
[11] Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (1975; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 222.
[12] Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967), p. 265; Henry Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (London: Burns and Oates, 1879), vol. 5, p. 470.
[13] A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 93. For further examples of the rosary's continued use, see McClain, *Lest We Be Damned,* pp. 86-87 and Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 141.

The rosary also remained – usually pejoratively – within the cultural consciousness. For many Protestant writers, it was ripe for satire as a symbol of the ignorance of the old faith. *The Lady of May*, a masque written by Sir Philip Sidney and performed at Leicester's house in Essex on the Queen's 1578 progress, gave an ironic representation of Leicester as a Catholic, praying to Queen Elizabeth and not the Queen of Heaven on rosary beads.[14] Tailboys Dymoke's 1599 erotic allegorical poem *Caltha Poetarum (The Bumble Bee)* also parodies the use of the rosary. It is the tale of a bee, thought to be Dymoke himself, who is in love with a marigold, an allegorical representation of one of the Queen's maids of honour. In adoration of his 'Marygold', a figure who herself alludes to the Virgin Mary, the bumble bee builds a chapel for her, creating a holy altar for his secular saint:

> With Virgin wax he makes a hony alter,
>
> and on it stands the torches and the tapers,
>
> Where he must sing his Rosarye and Psalter,
>
> and pray devoutly on his holy papers,
>
> With book, with candlelight, with bels & clappers,
>
> And in the praise of Goddesse *Caltha* sing,
>
> That all the holy quier & Church may ring.[15] (70.1-7)

When the bee realises that his beloved Marygold has left him, he declares his intention to withdraw from the world and become a hermit. He makes himself rosary beads, and in his secular devotions, Marygold becomes the Virgin of the rosary:

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[14] For a more detailed analysis of this see Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, p. 92. Louis Montrose describes this as a 'comically idolatrous episode': see *The Subject of Elizabeth'*, p. 108.

[15] T. Cutwode [Tailboys Dymoke], *Caltha Poetarum* (London: Thomas Creede for Richard Olive, 1599).

He made himself a paire of holy beads,

the fiftie Aves were of Gooseberies:

The Pater Nosters and the holy Creeds,

were made of red & goodly fair ripe cheries:

Blessing his Mary gold with Ave-maries.

(116.1-5)

The rosary is one of a number of Catholic signifiers which are treated bathetically to make them seem ridiculous, in a poem which lampoons the general trend in the 1590s to use religious, especially Catholic, imagery in love poetry.[16]

In Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595), the rosary is also used as a Catholic signifier, but here its representation takes a nostalgic rather than satirical tone. In one of the play's most dramatic moments, the beleaguered monarch descends like Phaeton from the sky and relinquishes his crown to his cousin Bolingbroke. As he does so, Shakespeare's poet king contemplates a life away from worldly cares:

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,

My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,

My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,

My figured goblets for a dish of wood,

My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff,

My subjects for a pair of carved saints

And my large kingdom for a little grave,

A little little grave, an obscure grave.

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[16] The interchange of the sacred and profane in love poetry is explored in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

(III.iii.146)

With his use of 'beads' here, Richard sees the act of saying the rosary as representing the simpler, solitary life of the religious hermit. Richard II is often more caught up in rhetoric than reality. The ordered anaphora of his list gives his words a sense of public declaration; the speech can be seen as masking his anguish at losing his crown, rather than a display of a genuine longing for a simpler past. What is significant for our purposes, however, is that the rosary is one of a series of signifiers that Richard II uses to denote a simpler and truer life away from the court. He sets his use of 'beads' here in antithesis to the 'jewels' that denote the rich trappings of kingship. With the use of the rosary reference Shakespeare is locating Richard in a pre-Reformation era, but its deployment here has cultural references for the Elizabethan era, too. Shakespeare's is a particularly interesting representation of the rosary for the way it is used to denote a crossing over from public to private life.

In the opening books of *The Faerie Queene*, we find the rosary is similarly associated with privacy, when Una encounters a frosty reception from the ignorant blind woman Corceca, (a Latin pun on 'blind heart'), and her vain and foolish daughter Abessa:

Shee found them both in darksome corner pent;

Where that old woman day and night did pray

Upon her beads devoutly penitent;

Nine hundred *Pater nosters* every day,

And thrise nine hundred *Aves* she was wont to say.

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(I.iii.13.5-9)

The blind old woman is a transparent representation of Catholicism, her rosary beads a metonym for superstition and ignorance. Spenser's contempt for the practice of saying the rosary is clear here; that Corceca sits 'in eternall night' denotes not only her physical blindness, but also the fate of her soul. Her frightened attempts to shut Una out show her lack of openness to Truth. But within Spenser's pejorative representation is one very telling detail. We find Corceca praying the rosary in a 'darksome corner' – hiding away from the outside world. In different ways, both Spenser and Shakespeare's representations of the rosary resonate with the time in which these texts were written. As a solitary and silent form of devotion, the rosary prayer was ideally suited to recusant England, a world full of darksome corners. Instead of a prayer that was a nostalgic memory of an old faith, the rosary became, as Anne Dillon has shown, emblematic of a new, underground Catholicism.[17] It was a powerful tool that allowed the worshipper to practise his devotion to the Virgin in secret. In what Frances Dolan has termed 'strategic and fluid deployments of space', the private space of the Catholic household became devotional, often reconfigured to house and hide the trappings of forbidden modes of worship, such as the rosary.[18]

In terms of the material object, the worshipper needed very little to say the rosary. Beads could easily be concealed; even more discreet was the rosary ring, which had ten studs for prayer around it, serving the same function as the rosary beads themselves.[19] The many rosary books which were distributed in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century tended to be small in size: like rosary

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[17] Dillon, 'Praying by Number', pp. 451-471.
[18] Frances E. Dolan, 'Gender and the "Lost" Spaces of Catholicism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 32, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 641–665 (pp. 641, 644).
[19] Diana Scarisbrick, *Tudor and Jacobean Jewellery* (London: Tate, 1995), p. 41.

beads, they were easy to carry and easy to conceal. A great deal of energy was expended in both the production and distribution of these illicit books. Some were printed on secret presses in England, whilst others were produced in continental Catholic centres such as Antwerp and Douai, and subsequently ferried into England by Catholic students and priests or by merchants, who were well paid for smuggling them to isolated places on the English coast.[20] These texts, as Ceri Sullivan and Alexandra Walsham have observed, are also testament to the importance of the printed word to the preservation of the Catholic faith in post-Reformation England. For many of their readers, these books were to become surrogates for an absent Catholic priest, providing, in Sullivan's words, 'all the practices which the Catholic Church would normally channel through its clergy'.[21] There is something of an irony to this, if one over-simplifies the Reformation to a conflict between image and Word: Walsham comments that it is now untenable to see the early modern English Catholic Church as hostile to print, which was, instead its 'life blood'.[22]

Garnet's *The Societie of the Rosary*: a text in time

The driving force behind the success of the rosary amongst the English Catholic community was the Jesuit mission. The Jesuit priests who landed on England's shores in the latter decades of the sixteenth century saw the inculcation of the Dominican rosary as integral to their mission.[23] In the 1580s, a number of

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[20] Alexandra Walsham, '"Domme Preachers"?', *Past and Present*, no. 168 (Aug 2000): 72-123 (p. 85).
[21] Ceri Sullivan, *Dismembered Rhetoric* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), p. 13.
[22] Walsham, '"Domme Preachers"?', p. 80. A&R list 932 items printed in English, and 1,619 in Latin and continental languages.
[23] Dillon, 'Praying by Number', pp. 453, 463-470. Dillon's article underlines that two versions of the rosary, both Dominican and Carthusian, were popular in England in the Middle Ages. However, the

missionary priests were authorised to admit English Catholics to the Dominican

Society of the Rosary, known on the Continent as the Confraternity of the Rosary. A

Catholic worshipper who became a member of the Society was given a way to gain

indulgences by saying the rosary – something which must have resonated strongly

with Church Papists. On a more practical level, membership of the Society was also

a way to feel part of a religious community, and the clearly defined rubrics of the

devotion meant that it could be clearly followed without the presence of a priest. The

work of one man, Henry Garnet, is of particular significance here. Garnet was Jesuit

superior in England from 1586 until 1606, when he was executed for his alleged role

in the Gunpowder Plot.[24] He set great store by membership of the Society, and

produced a book entitled *The Societie of the Rosary* as an aid to English Catholics.

Garnet's is the most popular of all rosary books studied in this chapter, and

was reprinted several times between 1593 and 1626.[25] It forms a step-by-step guide

to joining the Society, and to saying the rosary itself. Towards the start of the book,

the reader is told that he will be joining a Society with a long heritage, one which

Garnet traces back to St Dominic, as well as an impressive pedigree when it comes to

rooting out heresy. But it is clear as one reads on that the original rules have been

considerably relaxed. A rule, for example, that the members' names should be

written in a register book, has been modified by Garnet: 'this maner of inrouling

being not convenient in our countrey for respects too well knowne: it sufficeth that

after the names be once taken of such as enter, they be torne'.[26] We can read Henry

Garnet's *The Societie of the Rosary* as a text in time, a pragmatic post-Reformation

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Dominican rosary dominated in post-Reformation times, as it was the version used by the Jesuit
mission.
[24] Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot* (London: Phoenix, 1996), pp. 286-290; 319-323.
[25] Sullivan, *Dismembered Rhetoric*, p. 28. Details of all rosary books studied can be found in
Appendix B.
[26] Henry Garnet, *The Societie of the Rosary*, *Newly Augmented* (London?: Henry Garnet's Secret Press,
1596 or 1597), sig. D10v. All further references will be to this edition.

book written in full awareness of the conditions under which it is to be received, rather than a nostalgic repetition of a beloved prayer from the old faith.

There are other ways in which Garnet's book shows us the extent to which recusant rosary texts give a post-Reformation *timbre* to their subject matter. The language used in the book to describe the Virgin emphasises the importance of her protection in a manner which also places his text firmly within a historical and cultural context. The popularity of the rosary in England led to the amplifying of the Virgin's role, and there is absolutely no doubt about the Virgin's place of power within Garnet's rosary guide.[27] She is the mother of mercy, whose goodness has the power to curb God's vengeance, and in joining the Society, the Catholic worshipper is given a way to connect directly with her. Garnet's Virgin Mary is also clearly a post-Reformation construct, and through her, Garnet reconfigures the rosary from its medieval roots to embody Tridentine thinking. When Garnet sets out '25 singular priveledges of our Blessed Lady' – including her immaculate conception, the grace that is bestowed upon her, and how her powers exceeded those of the saints after her assumption – he is using his book as a way of disseminating Counter-Reformation values (sig. A6v). [28]

There are other ways in which Garnet places his text firmly within a contemporary cultural context. Its opening, for example, launches straight into a description of afflicted times, likening post-Reformation England to the disaster of the floods of Genesis 8. The writer beseeches God that 'these deadly fluddes may cease from the earth, and all creatures be restored to their former saftie' – and then proleptically figures the Virgin Mary as the rainbow which will end the flood:

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[27] For the Virgin's amplified role, see Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Mystery of the Rosary* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 8 and *passim*.
[28] Dillon, 'Praying by Number', p. 465.

This rainbow I meane to be the glorious Virgin, a most beutiful signe of

God's fre*n*dship with men, & such a token of his singuler mercie…shee is in

speaciall manner a rainbow against Heretickes: wheras the Church generally

singeth, she hath destroyed al heresies in the wholle world. (sigs. A2v -A3r)

The Virgin is here configured as a 'rainbow against Heretickes' and this active role is amplified by Garnet's use of military imagery in relation to her image. He describes the Virgin as a bow, shooting forth God's arrows, a metaphor that has strong military resonances (sig. A3v). Elsewhere, Garnet quotes the Song of Songs' description of 'a well-setled array of a pitched army', because 'she mightily overcometh, not only her owne but also her devout clients adversaries' (sig. A5v). The rosary beads themselves 'must be to our afflicted brethren instead of all maner of armour or weapons' (sig. A5v).

The conflation of the Virgin Mary and the rosary with military might is evidence of the influence of Counter-Reformation European thought on a par with the representation of the Virgin discussed at the beginning of this chapter. For McClain, this military representation of the Virgin is paramount; she views the 'reinterpreted, strong, warrior-like Virgin Mary' as the rosary's domain.[29] However, it would be reductive to see the Virgin of Garnet's rosary text as purely a military figure. What is particularly interesting about the representation of the Virgin in books such as Garnet's is how polyvalent her image is, a stark contrast to the abrupt severing of Protestant humble handmaid and sham Catholic Queen of Heaven that we have earlier seen in Protestant writing. Garnet's Virgin Mary encompasses both humble

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[29] McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 83, 96-107.

handmaid and Queen of Heaven – and many other personae besides. At one point, Garnet fashions the Virgin as the mother who has power to command the son, directly countering the Protestant polemic we have encountered earlier in this thesis:

> She had not only an intrincicall familiaritie with the sonne of God, and was a principall scholar of his: but he vouchsafed also to be subject unto her, she having a motherly right and authoritie over him. (sig. B10r)

But Mary as a mother also reverences her son:

> Who beeing subjecte unto thee, thou diddest diligently nourishe with a motherly care, and neverthelesse diddest alwaies exhibite an holy reverence unto him, as to the most high and mightie God. (sig. G4r)

In Garnet's book, the humble Virgin of the annunciation blends with the glorious Queen of Heaven. She is saluted by the angel for her 'meeke and benigne charity' (sig. M1r), and seen as blessed among women:

> first because thou art a mother & a Virgin: Then, because the mother of God: thirdly, because advaunced to the highest dignity, that could be given unto the women kind: that is to say: to bee Queene of heaven, and earth, to be next unto Almighty God, and above all creatures. (sig. M1v)

The augmented edition of Garnet's book includes an alternative way of saying the rosary, in which each mystery is entitled a 'contemplation', and is accompanied by an extensive and often sensuous meditation. The existence of this section reminds

us of the way in which the rosary was intertwined with Ignatian methods of meditation.[30] When it reaches the final mysteries of the rosary, this luxurious meditation focuses on some of the Bible's most exquisite love poetry. The Virgin as Queen of Heaven is here seen in her traditional medieval guise of lover as well as bride, as weaving between *Ave Marias* we find the familiar Mariological symbols of the Song of Songs:

> Arise, make haste my love my dove, my beautifull and come.
>
> Ave Maria
>
> For now the winter is past, the showre is gone, and ceased. (sig. *2r)

> My love thou art altogether beautifull, and no spot is in thee, come from Libanus my spouse, come from Libanus, come thou shalt be crowned.
>
> Ave Maria. (sig.*3r)

Elsewhere, the Virgin is presented as a suffering mother, standing under the cross 'in bitter greefe & sorrow' (sig. G8r), and in an extra-scriptural moment which foregrounds her importance as a mother, the risen Christ appears to her.

Mary as a model of patient suffering

Garnet's rosary book thus represents the Virgin in a way that reflects not only Counter-Reformation ideologies but also the cultural tensions of recusant England. She is a figure to whom the worshipper can turn in afflicted times, and she is seen in

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[30] The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola are a series of meditations and prayers in which the meditator is instructed in the art of 'seeing the place', envisaging an aspect of scriptural narrative with the mind's eye, and then placing themselves in the scene. They were frequently used as a spiritual and didactic aid by Catholic priests working underground in England. See Mitchell, *Mystery of the Rosary*, pp. 19, 56, 115, and Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism*, pp. 289-296.

his book in many different guises: humble handmaid, military figure, sorrowing mother, idealised beloved and powerful intercessory Queen of Heaven. Another rosary text, John Bucke's *Instructions for the Use of Beads* (1589)*,* also depicts a polyvalent image of the Virgin with frequent allusions to recusant England.[31] Bucke was chaplain to Lady Hungerford, sister of Jane Dormer, the Duchess of Feria, and was living in exile in Louvain. Both women were viewed as significant figures amongst exiled Catholics.[32] Like so many recusant writers, Bucke was drawn to the Biblical language of suffering and exile to express the persecuted times in which his text was being written and read. His rosary book begins with a florid introduction in which he evokes the language of the Book of Exodus as he thanks his patron for his escape from 'that darke Egiptiacal England (the verie sea of heresie).'[33] Bucke here synthesises Biblical suffering with the tortured suffering and exile of his own times. Although different in emphasis from Garnet's text, Bucke's is similar in that it is acutely conscious of the times both of its production and reception.

Bucke's book also shows how, through the rosary, the Virgin could be represented as a model to appeal to women worshippers. A preoccupation with suffering and persecution underpins a representation of the Virgin Mary as a patiently suffering woman undergoing earthly trials. Both the Duchess of Feria and Bucke's patroness, Lady Hungerford, had suffered considerably for their Catholic faith; Lady Hungerford is here represented as a virtuous woman who has 'endured many afflictions and grevous adversities' with patience and faith (p. 8), and it is clear that Bucke is implicitly and flatteringly linking his patron to the Virgin:

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[31] Bucke's text should be distinguished from Garnet's, as it does not encourage its readers to join a confraternity. See Dillon, 'Praying by Number', p. 463.
[32] M. J. Rodriguez-Salgado, 'Suárez de Figueroa [Dormer], Jane, Duchess of Feria in the Spanish Nobility (1538–1612)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7836, site visited 17.04.13.
[33] John Bucke, *Instructions for the Use of the Beades* (Louvain: [n.pub], 1589), p. 4. All further references will be to this edition.

What carefull troubles and dredefull perills dyd his blessed mother endure, when it was knowen that our maister Jesus should be borne? And after he was borne a great nomber of deadlie enemies dyd dailye arise against that swete babe and her. (p. 4)

Bucke's portrayal of a suffering Mary means that he dwells with emotion on Herod's massacre of the innocents and the Holy Family's flight into Egypt:

What terrible feare and care with paynfull labors dyd she endure travaling over hilles and dales; when she heard the cries of mothers for their children haled out of their armes and mordered before their eyes: when she dyd mete the cruell bouchers that fought to morder her dear childe by the cruell edict of wicked Herod, proclaming all male children from two yeres olde and under to be slaine? What soroufull cares and hard travalying dyd that blessed virgin endure to hyde and save her onlie sonne from the crueltie of those synfull creatures, whom her sonne came to save and kepe from hel and damnacion if they wolde accept hym?[34] (pp. 11-12)

The relationship between women and the rosary is thus integral to Bucke's representation of the Virgin Mary as a woman who, like his patron, bore her sufferings with fortitude. A decade or so before Bucke wrote his rosary book, another similar text, *A Breef Directory, and Playne Way Howe to say the Rosary of Our Blessed Lady* (1576), also chose to foreground the Virgin's suffering in a

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[34] Obvious printer's errors have here been silently corrected.

gendered way. The writer, I.M., dedicates the book to his sister, but expresses his hope that this is also read by the 'many good women in Englande that honour our Lady', as 'good bookes to stirre up devotion in them are scarse'.[35]

In the meditations of this book, the reader is exhorted to follow the Virgin throughout the joys and sorrows which are seen distinctly through her eyes. Like Bucke, I.M. frequently uses emotive language to 'stirre up devotion' amongst his female readers who in a manner akin to the Ignatian exercises are encouraged to 'see the place' from Christ's mother's point of view. The indignity and horror of Christ's death are dwelt upon in morbid, almost salacious, detail, with, for example, graphic descriptions of how 'the weight of his body stretched the holes of his handes and feete wider and wider' (sig. C2v). Descriptions are gendered throughout, as the reader is invited to stand with Mary, empathising with her pain:

> And then as in the former, beholde his blessed mother seeing her deare sonne in a position thus cruelly tormented, whipped and scourged for thy sinnes: Call for grace and compunction, that thou maist at least shed one teare with our Ladye, to see thy Lorde and Master for thy gylt so cruelly handled: and then saye the seconde Pater noster and ten Aves. (sig. B5v)

The worshipper is invited both to identify with and to emulate the emotions of the Virgin, particularly her sorrow at the torture and death of her son. Many writers have observed the importance of the role of women within the English recusant

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[35] I.M., *A Breefe Directory, and Playne Way Howe to Say the Rosary of Our Blessed Lady* (Bruges Flandrorum: excudebat Hu. Holost.[i.e. London: W. Carter and J. Lion], 1576), sig. ¶4r. All further references will be to this edition. I.M.'s book, like Bucke's, is evidence of the significance of the rosary at this time, but is not encouraging membership of the confraternity.

community.[36] Both I.M. and John Bucke, writing books dedicated to women, are

here encouraging women to follow the example of the Virgin Mary as a model of

devotion in afflicted times.

Praying the rosary: image and word

We have seen how Ignatian methods of meditation underpinned the impact of the

rosary book. Both I.M. and John Bucke also show the way in which the rosary

mirrored the Ignatian exercises through their frequent use of the imperative mood to

place the reader in the scene. This makes the saying of the rosary prayer highly

evocative, giving each worshipper a mental image of the assumption and coronation

of the Virgin which no one could destroy. Another effective way of imprinting the

imaginary visualisation in the mind in Bucke's and many other rosary books is an

actual graphic image, and the majority of rosary books also use illustrations as

imaginative stimuli.[37] In 1563, The Council of Trent's session 'On Invocation,

Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images' confirmed the acceptance of

visual art in devotional practice; it is here realised in these devotional books.[38] In

Meditations, of the Life and Passions of our Lord, Gaspar Loarte stresses the power

and importance of the image as a meditative tool. Loarte's advice is that the

meditator should set before them:

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[36] Richard Smith's *An Elizabethan Recusant House 1609,* ed. A.C. Southern (London: Sands and Co, 1954), is an evocative first-hand account of the house of Lady Magdalen Montague, a woman from a prominent Catholic family who blended power with piety. Lady Montague's life and entourage is discussed by Michael Questier in *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 211-232. For negative views of women in Catholic England see Chapter 3 of this thesis, note 12.
[37] I.M.'s is the only book studied which does not use illustrations.
[38] Norman Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington DC, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 774-776.

the figure or the Image…of the misterye which you are to meditate, the which,

when you have first beholden, it shal helpe to keepe you more collected and

attentive. For the memory of the Picture shall remayne as it were imprinted in

your minde.[39]

This relationship between text and image is integral to many rosary books,

which comprise a series of pictures of the fifteen mysteries of the rosary, with a

meditation attached. Figure 1 illustrates this. It is an example from the anonymous

Methode, of 1598, which condenses each mystery into a short, easily memorable

verse. Text and image fuse on the page: the first four lines of the verse appear above

the illustration, the second four below.[40] Words thus enclose the image; similarly, in

the image itself, the coronation of the Virgin is framed by an illustration of the rosary

beads, which become a second crown for the Queen of Heaven. The worshipper is

encouraged to gaze on the image, then meditate on its contents, imbuing the image

with what he or she has learned from reading the text. As Sullivan comments, this

conforms exactly to Loarte's methods of using pictures in meditation.[41] The fusing of

text and images in these books shows the images enriching the process of

worshipping: the reader is exhorted to imprint a scene on his mind's eye. The

relation between physical image, mental visualisation, and spiritual experience is here

presented as a synergistic one. This is in stark contrast to, and perhaps also protests

against, Protestantism's mistrust of the image.

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[39] Gaspar Loarte, *Meditations*, *of the Life and Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, trans. anon (London: Fr. Garnet's Second Press, 1596-8), sig. A7v.
[40] Anon, *A Methode, to Meditate on the Psalter, or Great Rosarie of Our Blessed Ladie (*Antwerp?: English Secret Press, 1598).
[41] Sullivan, *Dismembered Rhetoric,* pp. 82-83.

The fift and laſt glorious

S Ephrem. Our Ladie here is crownde with bliſſe,
5.   In pay of all her paines,
Licurg. 5. Where for each croſſe of earthly cares,
Iacob 5.   An heauenly crowne ſhe gaines.
Baſil.
S. Chriſo.
S. Cyrill.
hom. 9.
Neſtor.
S. Bernard

O Queene of heauen which worldly cares
   Eſcaped haſt ſo free,
Pray that our bale' may be our bliſſe,
   Rightly to follow thee.

              Pre-

Myſterie.
Prepare.

O Queene of heauen pray for vs.
  Then reade } *as before*
  And meditate }

1 How our Ladies ſoule beeing thus aſſumpted, deſcended ſhortly after, and went into her bleſſed bodie, which (as it is likely) was as free from corruptiõ as her ſoul had beene from ſinne. For if *Ra-hab* the harlot was ſpared, for only harbouring one of *Ioſuas* ſpies but for one day, : how much more deſerued the bodie of this bleſſed virgin to be preſerued free from corruption , which had ſhrouded and preſerued the Sauiour of the world nine monethes together.

G   2 How

Figure 1. The Coronation of the Virgin from Anon, *A Methode, to Meditate on the Psalter, or Great Rosarie of Our Blessed Ladie*, sigs. F8v-G1r. Source: EEBO.

    A particularly striking and powerful use of images comes in Bucke's

Instructions. Nestling in the back of this book is a fold-out illustration of folio size

[figure 2]. Entitled 'Lady Hungerford's Meditacions upon the Beades', it draws the

reader around the page in circular motion to gaze at illustrations of ten of the fifteen

mysteries of the rosary. In the centre of this is a drawing of the rosary itself, perhaps

so that readers who did not have access to the beads could at least have access to an

illustration. This comes after the worshipper has read the body of the book, and thus

can imprint the devotional power of the words onto the images. Within these

illustrations, as with John Bucke's text itself, we see how references to recusant

worship mix with the scriptural. In the bottom right-hand corner is an illustration

where the scene is a chapel. The crucifix and candles on the altar can clearly be seen;

a solitary worshipper kneels and is blessed by a priest. The old blends with the new.

An illustration in a 1613 edition of Gaspar Loarte's *Instructions and Advertisements,*

How to Meditate the Misteries of the Rosarie, printed in Rouen, has a similar effect

[figure 3]. The left side of the picture is dominated by the image of the crucified

Christ, but on the right-hand side is an image of a worshipper, meditating in solitude.

The scriptural scene of the high tragedy of Christ's execution fuses with the domestic

detail of the bed in the corner, while the worshipper's hat is slung onto the floor, as if

he is in a hurry, unable to observe a strict ritual of timings. This powerful image

works in two ways: the domestic detail of hat and bed reminds us that secrecy

overrides any sense of formality and ritual, while the clarity and realism of the image

of Christ – who is depicted as exactly the same size as the Catholic worshipper –

shows us just how clearly devotional exercises such as the rosary were meant to

imprint the scriptural images within the worshipper's mind.[42]

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[42] Gaspar Loarte, *Instructions and Advertisements, How to Meditate upon the Mysteries of the Rosarie of the Most Holy Virgin Mary* (Rouen: Cardinal Hamillon, 1613), sig. A1r.

Figure 2. 'The Lady Hungerfords Meditacions Upon the Beades', from John Bucke, *Instructions for the Use of the Beades.* Reproduced in McLain, *Lest We Be Damned,* p. 89.
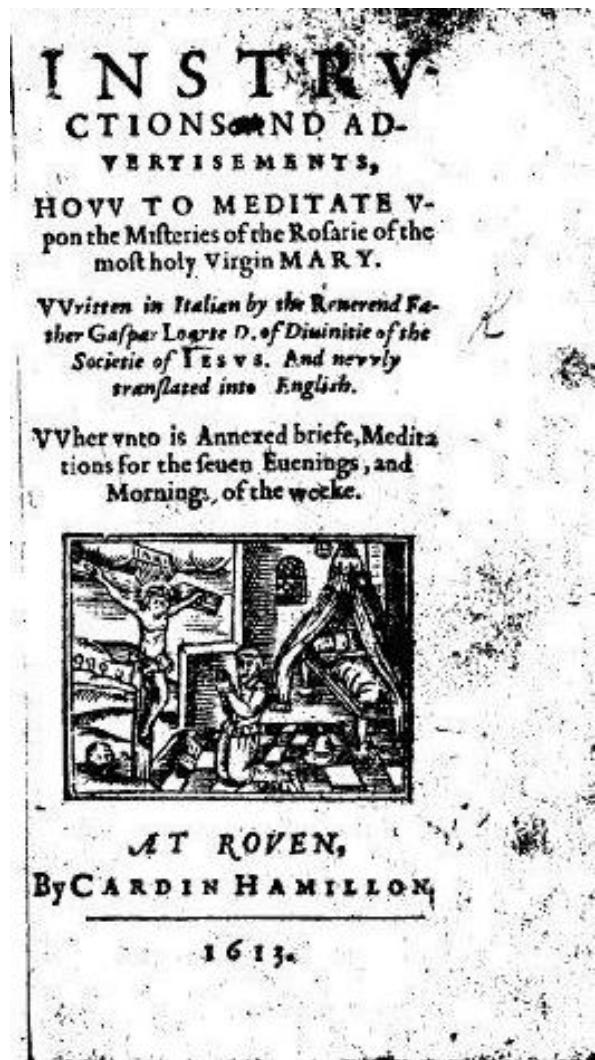
Figure 3. The title page of Gaspar Loarte's *Instructions and Advertisements, How to Meditate the Misteries of the Rosarie*, sig. A1r. Source: EEBO.

The importance of the Queen of Heaven

In the centre of Bucke's illustration is the image of the Virgin, with the infant Christ on her knee. Christ holds in his hands a chaplet, and the Virgin herself is encircled by the rosary beads which have the effect of crowning her. Larger than all other images, this image of the Virgin dominates the illustration as a whole, and one's eyes are drawn naturally and repeatedly towards it. The layout of Bucke's illustration aptly shows how integral the role of the Virgin was to the rosary books of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In images and words, the Virgin is

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constantly being brought to the fore. We have seen how within the rosary books, the Virgin appears in many guises, from sorrowing mother to devotional model. Her principal role, however, is as Heaven's Queen and man's intercessor. In the meditative act of placing oneself in the scene, and imprinting and amplifying the images on the page with the mind's eye, the worshipper is effectively crowning the Virgin each time he says the rosary. To use Henry Garnet's words, when a devout Catholic daily says his beads, he is:

> taking up with childly affection his most holy Mother, even corporally unto heaven and exalting and crowning her over all his holy Saintes and Angells. (sig. D5r)

John Bucke similarly exhorts his reader to meditate on the intercessory role the Queen of Heaven plays:

> The fift [sic] glorious mysterie is the Crowning of the blessed Virgin Marie, here beholde how that glorious Virgin before assumpted in bodie and soule was in the presence of all the holy companye in heaven with inestimable honor and glory by the Holie Trinitie crouned and placed above all Angells…And then note how in heaven she maketh daily intercession for the good estate of holy Churche: and ys redy to assist eache one whiche with a contrite hart prayeth to her. For the more reverence and devocion we bear towardes her, the greater helpe shall we receive of her sonne, in all our distresses. (pp. 36-37)

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The more we pray to the Queen of Heaven, exhorts Bucke, the more she will reward us. The anonymous author of the *Methode* similarly links the Virgin's intercessory powers with her coronation, as it is at this point that the worshipper is instructed to meditate:

> How gloriously she was invested and crowned by the holy Trinity where she remaineth ready to solicite and make intercession for all such as follow her vertues, and commit themselves to her patronage. (sig. G1r)

However, in praying repeatedly to the Queen of Heaven, the worshipper is going directly against the desires of the state, and an awareness of this frequently impacts how this aspect of the Virgin's iconography is deployed in rosary books. A 1600 rosary text, *Rosarie of Our Ladie* by Thomas Worthington, President of Douai College, demonstrates this through descriptions of the assumption of the Virgin which hold a distinct sense of the apologia. After a narrative of Mary's death and burial, the worshipper is guided to meditate upon the following:

> Whereupon these so many and so excelle*n*t eye witnesses do assuredly deme, that he who tooke flesh of this immaculate bodie, hath assumped the same into heave*n*, reunited to the soul in eternal glorie. (sig. G1r)

The reference to the 'excellent eye witnesses' of the apostles can be seen as a direct attempt to lend historical credence to the apocryphal and extra-scriptural. In a similar vein, Worthington's exposition of the coronation of the Virgin tells how the apostles who witnessed the Virgin's corporeal assumption told and retold the story,

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reaffirming the assumption as a story based on facts. Links between the Virgin's

bodily assumption and her intercessory role as Queen of Heaven are foregrounded

here:

> The Apostles are againe restored to the places from whence they were
>
> brought: and by them and others the death and Assumption of the most
>
> immaculate virgin, mother of God, is denounced in al parts of the world.[43]
>
> …For even from her Assumptio*n* the whole Church of Christ bega*n* (as stil it
>
> con*t*inueth) most solemnly to celebrate, not only the asce*n*ding of her most
>
> holie soul into heaven (as of other Saincts) but also the resurrection
>
> assumption and glorification of her bodie in heave*n*, where she enjoying the
>
> perfect vision of God, in the highest degree, after her sonne of al creatures, is
>
> established Quene of heaven, and of al blessed Saincts and Angels.[44]

After the meditations on the mysteries of the rosary come further meditations

on the Corona of Our Lady, a form of the rosary which emphasised the Virgin's life

before and after Christ.[45] When it comes to the mystery of the Coronation of the

Virgin, Worthington's text follows a different line of argument; it forestalls doubters

by stating that it is an event beyond mortal comprehension:

> Seeing the glorie of everie Sainct in heaven is so great, as no tongue can
>
> expresse, nor the mind of man understand…how much lesse can the glorie of
>
> the mother of God (exalted above al the quires of Angels) be uttered or

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[43] 'Denounced' here has the meaning of proclaimed or announced.
[44] Thomas Worthington*, Rosarie of Our Ladie* (Antwerp: Joannem Keerbergium, 1600), p. 67. All further references will be to this edition.
[45] Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954; New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 101-107.

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conceived by anie mortal man? But shal we therefore be silent and say

nothing at al therof? Shal we also cease to thinke and meditate therof, because

it so farre surmounteth both our sense and understanding? No, in no wise can

we be so excused; but so much the more we are bound to rejoice, and as we

can (seing we can not as we would) utter forth the praises of the mother of

mercie, mother of grace, mother of life, mother of glorie, mother of God, now

reigning Quene of heaven. (p. 99)

Again, we see evidence of a text that is acutely conscious of the times in which it is

written and received.

Henry Garnet's awareness of the contentious nature of the image of the Queen

of Heaven is if anything even more explicit, as in *The Societie of the Rosary*, he

posits that it is the duty of the Catholic to continue to pray to the Virgin in a world

where her role is actively being diminished:

Heresie doth ever goe aboute to derogate unto the glory of the most

soveraigne Queene of heaven and earth: so is it the part of every zealous

Catholicke with as much care and diligence, to procure to set forth, amplifie,

and increase, her wonderfull praises, and most deserved honour. (sig. A6v)

In Garnet's book, there is a moment where the tone changes from listing qualities of

the Virgin to an impassioned exhortation to the reader not to forget her:

In dangers, in distresses, in doubtfull cases, thinke upon MARY, call upon

MARY. Let her not depart from thy mouth, let her not depart from thy hart.

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> And that thou maiest obtaine the reliefe of her praier, doe thou not swarve
>
> from the example of her conversation. Following her, thou straiest not:
>
> calling upon her, thou despairest not thinking upon her, thou errest not.
>
> (sig. B3r)

Garnet's emotive repetition here makes it clear that in using the rosary prayer, the worshipper is fighting against the diminishing collective consciousness of Mary's role as intercessor. But while the Virgin's role as intercessor may have diminished, her power has not; by repeating this prayer, the worshipper can save his own soul.

Conclusions

Praying on his beads in a 'darksome corner', aided by recusant rosary books, the Catholic worshipper would have had cause to imprint a number of different images of the Virgin Mary onto his or her mind. In the fifteen mysteries of the rosary prayer he would have found the humble and obedient Mary of the annunciation, the sorrowing mother of the crucifixion, a military figure who could aid in the fight against heresy, and a model of devotion. But overarching all of these images is the wondrous image of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, the figure who, following her bodily assumption into heaven, has the power to intercede for the worshipper. The reader of these tiny but powerful books is being exhorted not only to remember the Queen of Heaven but also to amplify her role as conduit to God in a world where priests were scarce and modes of worship hidden. Unlike the splintering of humble handmaid and meretricious Queen we have seen in the Protestant writing of previous chapters, we here have an image of the Virgin which is as malleable and changeable as the rosary itself. The image of the Virgin is honoured – often lyrically so – in these books, but it

is also an acutely politicised construct. We will return to representations of Mary of the rosary towards the end of this chapter, but first, we are going to leave the recusant world and enter the world of the court via the writings of the courtier Sir John Harington. Although this seems to be an abrupt severing at first, we will soon discover how Harington's own complex relationship with the rosary adds further and perhaps unexpected layers of complexity to the significance of this prayer in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.

SECTION 2: HARINGTON'S ROSARY

Sir John Harington is something of an enigma. His letters have influenced historiographical accounts that elevate Elizabeth and blacken James, and yet he wrote many highly subversive poems about Elizabeth's reign, and actively championed the Stuart succession.[46] He was aligned to the Essex faction in court, and was one of the many knighted by Essex on his ill-fated expedition in Ireland in 1599, and yet he succeeded in withdrawing his support in time to keep his freedom.[47] His hand has been found in manuscripts of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), a subversive Catholic text, and yet he showed immense enthusiasm for the translation of metrical psalms that were distinctly Calvinist in tone.[48] Writer, courtier and godson to the Queen, Harington dedicated much of his life to the projection of a politically expedient outward image. Perhaps the imagery used in one of Harington's own poems best sums up his outlook:

> As Janus first two faces had assignd him,
>
> Of which one lookt before, t'other behinde him,
>
> So men maie yet be founde in manie places,
>
> that underneath one hood can beare two faces. (III.42.3-6) [49]

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[46] Four letters in the *Nugae Antiquae* manuscript in particular have influenced the work of historians such as Sir Antony Welden. See Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 186.

[47] Sir John Harington, *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington*, ed. Felix E. Schelling and Norman Egbert McLure (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), p. 21; Steven W. May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), p. 141.

[48] *Leicester's Commonwealth* was a ferociously satirical pamphlet written by a group of disaffected Catholic ex-courtiers: it was a capital offence merely to own it. In a manuscript of this now held at Exeter College Oxford, the last part is written entirely in Harington's hand. I am grateful to Gerard Kilroy for alerting me to the existence of this manuscript. *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), ed. D.C. Peck (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 1985). For Harington's fondness for metrical psalms see May, *Courtier Poets*, p. 211.

[49] Sir John Harington, *The Epigrams of Sir John Harington,* ed. Gerard Kilroy (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 185. All further references to Harington's *Epigrams* will be to this edition.

Harington himself was, as we will see, something of a Janus figure, hiding his views under a hood of polished wit. His attitude towards religious belief is particularly difficult to pinpoint. Behind the face that 'lookt before' of the courtier on the make, to what extent is there another Harington, one who is looking 'behinde him' to older, Catholic ways? Whether a result of his own religious beliefs, or an irenic desire for tolerance, notes of sympathy for the Catholic faith result in a poetic voice which is fascinatingly elusive, and speaks volumes about the incompleteness of England's Reformation.

During the course of the 1590s, Harington wrote and revised his *Epigrams*, a series of 408 poems that on the surface seem idle and frivolous.[50] They were presented in different carefully-calculated combinations to family and powerful friends and acquaintances, and the politically-motivated thought-process behind this shifts the emphasis of the texts themselves.[51] In this section, my focus is on one of these gift-books in particular, which was presented to King James's young son Henry, Prince of Wales, on 19 June 1605, the date of the King's birthday.[52] This manuscript gift-book comprised all 408 of Harington's epigrams; three years earlier, at a time when speculation about the succession was at its height, Harington had sent a similar gift-book to James himself.[53] Included in the supplementary matter that accompanied the gift-book to Prince Henry was a rosary poem in Latin and English, accompanied by an engraving illustrating the mysteries of the rosary. When poem and engraving are read in the light of both the tone of the *Epigrams* themselves and their

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[50] May, *Courtier Poets*, includes a more detailed dating of the *Epigrams* (p. 142).

[51] Recipients of gift-books by Harington included Lucy, Countess of Bedford, who was a Lady of the Bedchamber of Queen Anna, as well as Tobie Matthew, Archbishop of York. See Scott-Warren, *The Book as Gift, passim*. For a discussion of manuscript gift-books and their relationship with patronage, see Henry Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 90-92.

[52] The manuscript of the first gift-book, *A Newyeares Guift Sent to the Kings Majestie of Scotland, Anno 1602,* is now lost. The second gift-book is now in the Folger Shakespeare library, and forms the basis of Gerard Kilroy's publication. See Kilroy, *Epigrams*, p. 96.

[53] Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors* (1995; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 383-388.

transmission as texts, a complex and highly politicised attitude to the image of the Virgin Mary is revealed, though whether we come any closer to knowing Harington himself is questionable.

In many ways, Harington is an archetypal self-fashioning Elizabethan, the clever courtier whose wit and fluency with language constructed his identity as the queen's 'privileged jester'.[54] Much of his output as a writer makes it easy to pigeonhole him as the Rabelaisian wit who fell in and out of his godmother's favour. His 1591 translation of the bawdy tale of Astolfo and Jocondo in *Orlando Furioso* is purported to have enraged the Queen so much that she banished him from court until he had translated the whole work.[55] He is perhaps best remembered today as the inventor of the flushing jakes in his satire *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596). But there is a serious purpose behind the wit: *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, for example, can be read as a savage commentary on the filth of court corruption.[56] Jason Scott-Warren and Gerard Kilroy have both commented that the courtier poet's wit was in fact an embodiment of Castiglione's *sprezzatura*; that Harington was covering his true artistry of purpose with a studied nonchalance and playfulness.[57] For Scott-Warren, this *sprezzatura* is a mask for Harington's self-interest and self-promotion. Kilroy, however, finds behind Harington's mask Catholic leanings, including a lifelong fascination with the martyred Jesuit Edmund Campion, and a family background which shared bonds of kinship with a number of powerful and active recusant families.[58] Both of these modern-day Harington scholars concur, however, that there is more to Harington than meets the eye. Following their lead, my own

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[54] Harington, ed. Schelling and McLure, *Letters*, p. 50.
[55] May, *Courtier Poets*, p. 150.
[56] Jason Scott-Warren, 'The Privy Politics of Sir John Harington's "New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax"', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 93, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 412-442, *passim*.
[57] Baldessar Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1967).
[58] Kilroy, *Campion*, chapter 4 and *passim*.

research will search the subtexts, not only within the words themselves, but within the materiality of Harington's texts and their use in social transactions. However, rather than attempting to prove or disprove Harington's Catholic allegiances, my aim is to show how Harington's work, including the way in which he deployed the image of the Virgin, can be seen as paradigmatic for representations of post-Reformation religious confusion. This makes his connection with the rosary an intriguing and problematic one.

'Theise rymes are Mungrells gotte on witt and lafter'[59]

Our understanding of Harington's use of images relating to the Virgin and the rosary is greatly enriched by an awareness both of the *Epigrams* themselves, and of the timing of their presentation as gift-books. Harington's *Epigrams* are both acidly grotesque and sharply observed.[60] They present a dystopian picture of a corrupt court, populated by cartoonish figures for whom self-seeking, promiscuity and deception is meat and drink. The overall effect is clever, brittle, funny and extremely unsettling, and can be viewed as the work of a man who was on the margins of the court rather than at its heart.[61] Described by Schelling and McLure as 'satire in little', the poems are, to use Steven May's words, indicative of 'the vogue for satiric classical epigrams...which were tremendously popular among out-of-court poets during the 1590s.'[62] In the speaker of the *Epigrams*, one finds a duality: a fashionable, Sidneian stance that blends a disarmingly personal – almost confessional

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[59] *Epigrams,* IV.106.11.

[60] Although the poems are not, strictly speaking, all epigrams, I term them in this way in this chapter because Harington clearly wanted them to be viewed as such. The use of the titular *Epigrams* refers to the collection in its entirety, as ordered and presented to Prince Henry.

[61] Gerard Kilroy describes Harington as a 'courtier on the margins', concluding that because of his Catholic sympathies, Harington kept himself an outsider by choice: *Epigrams*, p. 3.

[62] Harington, ed. Schelling and McLure, *Letters*, p. 47; May, *Courtier Poets,* p. 164.

– tone with a retreat into anonymity. Harington also uses code names, many of which have a Martialian flavour, for many of his characters, giving the collection as a whole the feeling of one huge in-joke.[63]

Why did Harington present this collection of brittle satires to both King James and Prince Henry? Jason Scott-Warren's research has revealed that the theatrical presentation of many of Harington's gift-books is indicative of a writer who is acutely conscious of the environment of his texts' transmission. Harington's earlier 1602 gift-book, presented at the end of Elizabeth's reign, can be seen as a way of anticipating events, and inveigling his way into favour with the favourite for the succession.[64] The poems themselves had been written and revised during the 1590s, so at the time of writing, they functioned as bitter and witty dissections of the world around him. But presented to King James in 1602 in the twilight of Elizabeth's life, the emphasis of this portrayal of a false Elizabethan court shifts, becoming instead a vehicle for indirectly glorifying the new Stuart rule. Epigram becomes panegyric – reflected in both the words of the poems themselves and the act of presenting them as gift-books. In one epigram, Harington plunges the reader remorselessly into a dystopian world of an England that is 'bank'rout' (IV.1.1). The poem then presents a gloomy list of all that is wrong and corrupt with the world – with the answer given candidly in the final rhyming couplet:

> Might some new officer mend old disorder
>
> Yes, one good Stewart might set all in order.
>
> (IV.1.9-10)

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[63] The epigrams themselves owe a debt to Martial. See May, *Courtier Poets*, p. 143.
[64] Scott-Warren, *The Book as Gift,* chapter 5.

Presented to James, this epigram becomes an extreme form of flattery, the pun on

Steward/Stewart implying that he is the man to rescue England from spiritual

bankruptcy. One should not underestimate the riskiness of Harington's strategy at the

time of the 1602 gift-book, when discussion of the succession was forbidden, and

Cecil was conducting his correspondence with James VI of Scotland in secret.

There is a subtle difference in the timing of the gift-book given to Prince

Henry. Presented in 1605, uncannily close to the Gunpowder Plot, this was given at a

time when tensions between the Scots and English had tarnished the glow of

optimism that had greeted James at his accession.[65] Harington – like so many

courtiers – was beginning to pin his hopes on the young Prince of Wales, though the

1605 book, presented on James's birthday, should still be viewed predominantly as a

way of appealing to the father through the son.[66] This gift-book includes more

flattery of James, with the addition of a 'Gratulatory Elegie' which looks back on

James's entry into London in 1603 (p. 257). The poem resonates with the expectation

that this will be the Golden Age and in it, Harington expresses a hope for religious

unity which is a recurring theme in many of his works:

> Joy Protestant, Papist bee now reclaymed,
>
> Leave Puritan your supercillious frown.[67]
>
> (7-8)

But as always with Harington, there is more here than meets the eye. The guidelines

of Erasmus, that the panegyrist had a moral responsibility 'to reform bad rulers,

improve the good, educate the boorish, reprove the erring' were widely accepted in

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[65] Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), p. 249.
[66] For the book to Henry as a way of influencing James see Scott-Warren, *The Book as Gift*, p. 204 and Kilroy, *Campion*, p. 98.
[67] Kilroy, *Epigrams*, p. 257.

Harington's time.[68] Seen in this way, Harington's presentations of court corruption not only indirectly flatter James, they also caution him not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor. If one considers that the glow of James's accession was already fading by 1605, then Harington's poem glorifying James as the harbinger of religious tolerance brings with it notes of real urgency in its 1605 presentation.

Private spaces

Harington's panegyric here displays an avid hope that King James will unite the diverse factions of English religious belief. His presentation of a Marian rosary prayer to King James thus can be seen as a further call for wise stewardship of one of these factions: the Catholic community. Harington's deployment of the rosary is freighted with even more significance when one considers that within the *Epigrams* themselves, there are a number of poems which express a sense of despair at the muddied religious landscape within which the speaker finds himself. I am going to take a moment to look at two poems in which Harington is a fascinating mouthpiece for the confessional complexity of post-Reformation England, showing why his voice is such an important one within this thesis. Although these poems do not relate directly to the Virgin Mary, they illuminate our later analysis of Harington and the Virgin. In a poem entitled 'A Dishe of Daynties for the Devill', Harington moves away from gossip and expresses the need for an inner, private space:

> A godlie father, sitting on a draught
>
> to do as need and nature hath us taught,
>
> Mumbled as was his manner certayn prayers,

---

[68] Desiderius Erasmus, 'Letter to Jean Desmarez', in *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), vol. 2, p. 81. For the commonplace acceptance of this see Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, p. 3.

And unto him the Devill straight repayres,

And boldly to revile him he begins,

Alledging that such prayres were deadly sins,

And that yt proov'd he was devoyde of grace,

to speake to God from so unfitt a place.

The reverent man, though at the first dismayd,

Yet stronge in faith, thus to the Dev'll he sayd.

Thou damned Spirite, wicked false and lying,

dispayring thine own good, and ours envying

each take his dew, and me thou canst not hurt

to god my prayre I meant, to thee the durt.

Pure prayr ascends to him that high doth sitt,

Down falls the filth for fiends of hell more fitt.

(I.90)

At first glance, this is another example of Harington's lavatory humour. T.G.A. Nelson describes the poem, which was first published in *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, as both 'frivolous' and 'impish'.[69] Nelson's reading emphasises the scatological elements of the poem, and while acknowledging Harington's Catholic sympathies, he sees here an irreverent joke at the expense of Catholicism with the privy metaphorically mimicking the confessional.[70] Certainly, it is hard to draw one's mind from the bathos of the 'godlie father' being confronted by Satan whilst on the 'draught', or privy, and the unmistakable rhyme of 'sitt' and 'shit', unvoiced at

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[69] T.G.A. Nelson, 'Death, Dung and the Devil, and Worldly Delights', *Studies in Philology,* vol. 76, no. 3 (Summer, 1979): 272-287 (pp. 272-274).
[70] Nelson, 'Death', p. 280.

the end of the poem. It is Harington's own take on the scatological nature of much

Reformation propaganda, which was fuelled perhaps by Luther's own use of often

unsavoury language in relation to the Devil.[71]

The tone of the poem appears playful on the surface, but there is, I believe, a

very serious submerged meaning. The use of 'certain prayers' indicates that it is a

specific type of prayer that the priest is repeating, without giving specific details. All

we are told that he is reduced to mumbling his prayers in secret, in an enclosed,

private space. The word 'mumbled' would appear to indicate that these are Catholic

prayers, said in Latin. It was used in Protestant propaganda to evoke the superstition

and lack of openness of Catholic prayer, and may even refer specifically to the saying

of the rosary: in his 1621 *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton describes

Catholics as 'praying in gibberish, & mumbling of beads'.[72] Its pejorative

associations are here, however, inverted, as the priest is the hero of the piece.

Confronted by the Devil, the holy man remains steadfast in his belief that his true

prayers will 'ascend': the only gains for the Devil are the priest's 'filth'. In this most

unlikely of environments, sin is conquered, and the man's prayers, far from damning

him, are proved to be 'pure' as they ascend to heaven. If the old, mumbled prayers

are read as Catholic prayers such as the rosary, then the phrase 'unfitt a place'

becomes more than the jakes: it is the *locus* of the old faith, and a wry, scatological

commentary on the manner in which Catholics renegotiated the definition of sacred

space as their methods of worship were forced underground.[73] Unlike so many of the

clergymen in Harington's *Epigrams*, who are shallow, false or stupid, here we have a

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[71] Heiko A. Oberman, 'Luther Against the Devil', *Christian Century*, January 14 1990: 75-79.

[72] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1621), p. 21. For anti-Catholic uses of the word 'mumbled' to denote Latin prayers, see Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp. 245-246.

[73] Dolan, '"Lost" Spaces', pp. 641-665.

man who is genuinely devout, his actions proving the inner man worthy of the outer label of 'godlie father'.

A plea for tolerance

A different slant on religious sectarianism is illustrated in an epigram in Book IV entitled 'Of Two Religions'. Here, the *contemptus mundi* of the satirist blends with a plea for religious moderation and tolerance. The poem features a scholarly young man, whose father demands of him the answer to a knotty question: which Church, Protestant or Catholic, he asks, will save my soul? The son's answer is evasive:

> Sure (quoth the sonne) a man had neede be crafty
>
> to keepe his soule and body both in saf'ty.
>
> But both to save, this is best way to hold
>
> *die* in the new, *live* if you *list* in th'old.
>
> (IV.10.11-14)

On one level, this poem is a snide satirical commentary: we have here a father who is thinking about faith in an entirely pragmatic way of checks and balances. Tell me which way is right, he demands of his son, and I will follow it. The son encourages his father to be Machiavellian in his quotidian life – 'a man must needs be crafty' – and to adopt a Janus-like approach. Harington's own emendations to the final line of this poem muddy these already muddy waters still further. He was, it would appear, unable to choose between '*live* in the new, *dy* if you can in th'old', and 'die in the new, live if you list in th'old'. There are mixed messages here: should the father outwardly conform to the 'new' ways of Geneva while attempting to make his

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peace, inwardly, with the Catholic faith before he dies? Or does he have the freedom

to live following the old faith – Harington is perhaps flattering James as a religiously-

tolerant leader here – but to save his soul he needs to die a Protestant? In the gift-

book presented to Prince Henry in 1605 the overwritings of this line allow the reader

to see both versions.[74] This ambivalent poem thus reaches no conclusion. Neither

version of the final line is wholly satisfactory, and the dislocating effect created by

this allows the evasive Harington to slip through our fingers. The reader is left with

an overriding sense of a confused world, rife with indeterminacies of religious

allegiance and practice.

Underpinning this satire on ridiculous confusion is a heartfelt desire for

religious tolerance, for a world where such questions would be exposed as absurd.

We have already seen a glimpse of this mindset in Harington's 'Gratulatorie Elegy',

and it is a philosophy which we can see in much of the courtier-poet's output. In the

third part of *A New Discourse on a Stale Subject, An Apologie*, Harington's speaker is

pressed as to his religious leanings; his reply is that he is a 'protesting Catholic

Puritan'.[75] Beneath the wit of this paronomasia lies a very real plea for religious

freedom of choice. In *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown*, Harington also uses

the label 'Protesting Catholique, Purytan'; at its core, this work is an attempt to unite

all religious factions in the common cause of the justice of the Stuart claim to the

English throne.[76] Harington's desire for religious toleration was clearly heartfelt, and

with this in mind, the target for his satire in the perplexing poem 'Of Two Religions'

becomes not the father for asking such an impossible question, or the son for his

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[74] These overwritings and emendations are discussed in detail by Kilroy in *Campion,* p. 105.
[75] Sir John Harington, *An Apologie* (London: Richard Field, 1596), sig. P8v.
[76] Sir John Harington, *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown*, (1602), ed. Clements R. Markham (London: Roxburghe Club, 1880) p. 3 and *passim*.

sophistic answer, but a religiously-divided society that forces men to choose. The answers are impossible, the tenor of the time both confusing and ridiculous.

'One Mary I adore': Harington and the Virgin Mary

So far, our investigations into Sir John Harington have revealed a serious plea for religious tolerance beneath the wit. We have also found repeated insinuations of dissembling, privacy and secrecy from a writer who was clearly extremely sympathetic towards the Catholic cause, perhaps to the point of having Catholic leanings himself. Ultimately, however, his poetic voice is an evasive one. These findings greatly illuminate our view of Harington's representation of the Virgin Mary. An intriguing indication of Harington's attitude to the Virgin can be found outside the *Epigrams* in the Arundel-Harington manuscript, housed at Arundel Castle, a folio volume of more than 300 poems by writers that included Sidney, Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth herself. The collection was started under the direction of Harington's father Sir John Harington of Stepney, and continued by his son. Many of the poems in the manuscript were transcribed by Harington himself, and it was clearly of personal value to him. Ruth Hughey, who discovered the manuscript and subsequently edited it, commented that Harington turned it 'into a kind of commonplace book, filling its blank pages with his own compositions and those of his friends'.[77] Into this collection of poems an anonymous poem was transcribed in which a worshipper echoes the Litany of Loreto, which gives the Virgin titles including 'Mystical Rose', 'Tower of David', 'Ark of the Covenant' and 'Queen of Angels'.[78] It praises the Virgin and pleads for her intercession:

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[77] *The Arundel Manuscript of Tudor Poetry, Volume I,* ed. Ruth Hughey (Athens OH: Ohio State University Press, 1960), pp. 66-67.
[78] 'Litany of Loreto', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09287a.htm, site visited 16.04.13.

fflower of Roses Angells joy

Tower of David Arke of Noy

first of sayntes whose trew protecting

Of the younge and weake in sprite

Makes my soule thease lynes endyte

to thy throne her playnte dyrecting

Orphan chylde alone I lye

childlyke to thee I crye

Queene of Heaven usde to cherishe

Eys of grace behold I fall

ears of pitty heare my call

least in swaddling clowts I perishe.

(65.1-12)

Hughey has confirmed that this poem was transcribed at the time Harington was involved in the manuscript.[79] She also suggests that the author of the poem may be Edmund Campion, as it is immediately followed by Walpole's poem on Campion's death, 'Why do I use my paper ynke and pen'.[80] The Walpole poem, here cloaked by the anonymous title 'Verses made by a Catholiq' was much admired by Harington's father, who according to his son reckoned it 'an epitaph written fitt for a

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[79] Hughey, *Arundel Manuscript,* p. 30.
[80] Hughey, *Arundel Manuscript*, no. 66, p. 106. In *Campion*, Kilroy discusses the transmission of Walpole's poem, and its significance in the lives of both Sir John Harington and his father: pp. 67-71. I will return to the imagery of martyrdom used by Walpole here in chapter 6 of this thesis.

martyr', although 'truly he misliked the man and the matter'.[81] This description, from

Harington's *Tract on the Succession*, shows the writer in a mode of characteristic

political expediency, as on his father's behalf he self-consciously distances himself

from Campion's radical Catholic faith. Yet the son's own placing of this overtly

Marian poem at this point in the collection says something very different. Joshua

Eckhardt has commented on the politicised elements of the Arundel-Harington

manuscript, seeing it as an example of how the collectors of verse manuscripts used

their collections to 'assimilate texts into their own contexts'.[82] The placing of this

devotional Marian verse next to Walpole's poem could be seen as a statement of

solidarity with the Catholic faith. A devotional Marian poem thus becomes, as

Arthur F. Marotti has observed, not only a poem of consolation to anguished

Catholics but also a way to 'protest official oppression'.[83]

The Marian poem itself is an ingenuously beautiful work, which recalls the

devotional style of the medieval lyric, and honours the Virgin as Queen of Heaven.

In his significant inclusion of the anonymous Marian prayer in his commonplace

book, Harington is perhaps showing a level of devotion to the Virgin. The only poem

in the *Epigrams* themselves to mention the Virgin Mary also reveals a telling

devotional detail. Entitled 'In Prayse of Two Worthy Translations, Made by Two

Great Ladies', it is a paean to Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke and Mary Talbot,

Countess of Shrewsbury:

My soule one only Mary doth adore,

onely one Mary doth injoy my hart,

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[81] Harington, *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown*, pp. 104-5.
[82] Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 13.
[83] Marotti, 'Marian Verse as Politically Oppositional Poetry in Elizabethan England', p. 20.

yet hath my Muse found out two Maries more,

that merit endles prayse by dew desart,

Two Maries that translate with divers art,

two subjects rude and ruinous before,

both having noblesse great and bewties store,

Nobless and bewty to their works impart.

Both have ordayn'd against Deaths dreadfull Dart

a Shield of fame induring evermore

both works advaunce the love of sacred lore,

Both help the souls of sinners to convart.

Their learned payn I prayse, he*er* costly Alms

A Colledge this translates, the tother Psalms.

(IV.47)

This is a neatly-turned piece of praise, in which Harington clearly

distinguishes between the sacred and the secular. His wife, Mary, is the one who will

continue to 'injoy' his heart, the two 'Maries' of the poem deserve his 'prayse' – but

the use of 'soule' in the first line would appear to indicate that the Mary whom he

adores is the Virgin. The poem has immortality as its theme, claiming that both of

these great ladies have achieved fame, allowing them to conquer Death. Harington

clarifies in his final line that his use of translations in reference to each of the titular

Mary is different – one is translating, or transforming, a college through her

benefactions (Mary Talbot had donated funds to St John's College Cambridge), while

the other has translated psalms. This refers, of course, to Mary Sidney's involvement

in translations of the Psalms, a work which was based on the Protestant Geneva

Bible, and influenced by the commentaries of John Calvin and Théodore de Bèze. Within a poem which praises Protestant translations of the Psalms, Harington appears to profess his adoration of the Virgin, albeit in a muffled way.[84]

The structure of the *Epigrams*: Harington's counter-rosary?

Although only one poem in Harington's *Epigrams* refers to the Virgin, it could be argued that there is an oblique Marian presence within the collection as a whole as it was presented to Prince Henry. This is due not only to the inclusion of a rosary prayer, but also to a patterning of the poems which could be said to echo the decades of the rosary. The significance and importance of elaborate, often Biblically-based, numerology in poetry of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period is well-documented.[85] Harington's fascination here is with the number ten: the number of the commandments, and the number of *Aves* that are said in each decade of a rosary prayer. Embedded in Book III of Harington's *Epigrams* is a poem which alerts the reader that they should look at the ordering carefully, as every tenth poem is religious in theme:

> Whether it were by chaunce, or els by art
>
> You finde our vearse in number so well couched
>
> that each tenth Stanze may seeme the Parsons part.
>
> Marking the matters that therein are touched.
>
> (III.94.1-4.)

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[84] For Harington's enthusiasm for metrical psalms, and for an analysis of his own translations of psalms, see May, *Courtier Poets*, pp. 211-214.

[85] Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 62-84, and *Conceitful Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975); Christopher Butler, 'Numerological Thought', in Alastair Fowler (ed.), *Silent Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 1-26.

Harington's claim that this is by 'chaunce' is quite clearly disingenuous, so we should turn instead to his 'art'.[86] He was ordering his poems in this way for a reason. Kilroy's belief is that this makes the poems a mimicry of the rosary prayer, describing each tenth poem as a 'sequence of theological decades'.[87] It is a persuasive one if one considers that at the end of the gift-book to Prince Henry, the reader is actually reading a rosary prayer.

Regardless of whether this ordering is consciously done in mimesis of the sequence of rosary prayers, if we follow Harington's advice, and mark the matters of each tenth poem, we are following a repetitive meditation of sorts. And we find ourselves meditating on a very unsettling religious landscape. It is no coincidence that the two poems on religious confusion I earlier gave readings of, 'A Dishe of Daynties for the Devill' and 'Of Two Religions', are both examples of Harington's tenth poems. These poems, as we have seen, portray an age of secrecy and religious confusion: from other tenth poems, one can add a spiritually barren present-day dystopia of ignorant priests, hypocritical Puritans and Church schisms and corruption. In the repeated references to corruption in the modern-day Church and the confusion and boredom engendered by bad preaching, we have a sense of what Steven May has described as Harington's 'nostalgic ideals of a national Church as wealthy, prosperous and doctrinally united as he supposed the pre-Reformation Church to have been'.[88] One could almost describe this religious dystopia as Harington's counter-rosary: like the rosary worshipper, the reader of the *Epigrams* is being guided to meditate on religious themes in a numerically ordered way. But we are seemingly worlds away from the mesmeric wonder of repeating the prayers of the rosary itself.

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[86] For ordering and internal sequences in Harington's gift-books of epigrams, see Scott-Warren, *The Book as Gift*, p. 104.
[87] Kilroy, *Epigrams,* p. 43.

[88] May, *Courtier Poets,* p. 151.

In the context of the gift-book presentation of the *Epigrams*, this presentation of a dystopia in mimesis of a Catholic prayer can be seen as a powerful reminder to Henry and to James of their own religious heritage. Within the *Epigrams* themselves we find 'A tragicall Epigram', an emotional elegy in which the inept execution of Mary Queen of Scots is turned to poetic gain, as the personified axe 'shun'd to cut of a head that had bene crowned' (III.44.6). It is an evocative memory of James's mother, the woman who had ensured that her son was baptised a Catholic and who went to the block wearing the blood-red gown of a Catholic martyr.

Harington's 'Fifteen Several Disticks'

The argument that Harington's groups of ten hold within them echoes of the rosary gathers more weight when one considers that at the end of his gift-book to Prince Henry he included a real rosary in the form of 'Fifteen several disticks on the fifteen divisions'.[89] This Marian poem takes the form of a series of Latin couplets, or 'disticks', followed by a translation, also in couplets. A spiritual poem in Latin sees Harington flirting with danger once more: as May comments, 'any treatment of religious subjects in classical metres would necessarily have savoured of Catholicism.'[90] In this most unexpected of settings, we find a poem which would not be out of place in one of the rosary books which we examined in the first half of this chapter. The existence of this rosary prayer is further evidence that the practice of saying the rosary had not been expunged in Elizabeth's reign, and it is perhaps not too much of a leap of faith to see this as an indication of how the rosary books we have earlier discussed were reaching some of the most influential of households.

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[89] The English translation is headed in Harington's own autograph: Kilroy, *Campion*, p. 97. See also May, *Courtier Poets*, p. 213. Appendix C prints the Latin poem and its English translation in its entirety.
[90] May, *Courtier Poets*, p. 202.

The reader of the 'disticks' is also encouraged to fuse image and word, and because the subject matter is religious, this could be viewed as a highly subversive exercise. Alongside the poem was an engraving of the mysteries of the rosary, where each picture corresponds to one of the poem's elegiac couplets [figure 4].

Figure 4. Folger MS V.a.249, p. 261: Engraving of Mysteries of the Rosary.
Reproduced in Kilroy, *Epigrams*, plate 9.

The opening of the poem, with its use of 'picture', leaves the reader in no doubt as to its integral relationship with the illustration that accompanied it:

> The blessed virgins picture first hath place
>
> to whom thus Gabriel saith. Haile full of grace. (1-2)

Each couplet of the poem corresponds to a different picture in the engraving. The reader is thus guided through the fifteen mysteries step by step. The relationship between text and image is integral to Harington's rosary, as the reader's eye is drawn from image to word and back again, viewing the image with the corresponding words imprinted in his mind. This fusing of image and word turns the implied reader of Harington's rosary into a worshipper, who is actively being guided through the mysteries of the rosary, and the effect of reading is remarkably similar to reading a recusant rosary book. It is as if Harington, like rosary writers such as John Bucke and Henry Garnet, wants both to educate his readers on how to say the rosary, and to encourage them to use images as an *aide memoire*. We cannot be certain whether or not Harington intended the ordering of the *Epigrams* as a submerged reference to the rosary prayer, but his intentions here are perhaps easier to decode. He seems to wish to encourage both the Protestant King James and his pious Protestant son to commit a Catholic prayer to memory by following the Catholic meditative practice of fusing image and word. A plea for tolerance or an attempt to retrieve a memory of the Stuarts' Catholic lineage? In either case, we find our most slippery of subjects sailing

very close to the wind indeed.

The inclusion of the 'disticks' in this gift-book is perhaps the work of a serial risk-taker, but when it comes to representations of the Virgin's assumption and coronation we find Harington retreating into a hood of political expediency. In the Catholic rosary books studied in the first part of this chapter, we saw how the assumption and coronation of the Virgin formed the triumphant end to the fifteen mysteries, allowing the worshipper to crown the Virgin every time he reached the end of the rosary prayer. Harington's 'disticks', however, strike a far more cautious note. The formulation 'The blessed virgin's picture first hath place' is on one level a nod to the meditative practice of fusing image and word, but this rosary poem stops short of the Loyolan method of placing the reader in the scene, used by writers of many Catholic rosary books with such urgency. A more plangent note of caution is struck in the verses on the assumption and coronation of the Virgin. Here, the speaker of the poem becomes more evasive. Turning first to the Latin, one sees the shift from active to passive:

> *Creditur et mater caelis assumpta supernis,*
>
> *Supra virgineos sola beata choros.*
>
> (27-28)

The use of the passive voice in 'creditur' has a very different effect from the powerful '*credo*' of the Nicene and Apostles' creeds of the liturgy, and the result, perhaps, is that the speaker distances himself. There is a further sense of distancing in the translation:

> And after all theis things it is presumed,
>
> The blessed virgin was to heaven assumed.

While 'The blessed virgin was to heaven assumed' certainly covers *'mater caelis assumpta'*, it omits that it was to the 'highest' heavens ('*supernis*') that she was assumed; is there possibly a suggestion that the Virgin has not quite become Queen of Heaven?   Harington here gives very little attention to the second of the two verses of the original: because the Virgin is not raised to the highest heights of heaven, she is not necessarily *'supra virgineos...choros'*. In the Latin, 'supra' carries with it a definite sense of excelling someone or something else; the omission of it from the translation implies that perhaps the Virgin has not been assumed too high.

The final illustration in the engraving is familiar rosary fare, as it presents the Virgin Mary crowned in glory as Queen of Heaven. But the final 'distick' itself, in both Latin and English, shies away from crowning the Virgin; it leaves the reader instead at the end of the speaker's own life, when he will salute the Virgin in heaven:

> *Da mihi finitae pater o post tempora vitae,*
>
> *Illi cum sanctis dicere semper. Ave.*
>
> (29-30)

This is Englished as:

> God graunt me, when my life hath run the race
>
> to say to her with saynts. Haile full of grace.

The speaker hopes ultimately to be placed alongside the saints, but he, like them, is below the Virgin in heaven's hierarchy. In both English and Latin, this could be seen as dangerous enough, as it gives a vision of heaven which privileges the Virgin, but it is still a significant step back from the rosary prayer itself. Mary is not directly referred to as the Queen of Heaven interceding for men on earth. A further contrast in Harington's 'disticks' to the tone of the rosary books sees the end of Harington's rosary resting on the speaker of the poem, rather than the reader. In the light of who the implied readers of the 'disticks' were, this shows Harington, for all the potential incendiary nature of including a rosary poem, being pragmatic and cautious to the last.

In my analysis of Harington's *Epigrams*, my aim has been to demonstrate the extent of the complexity of the religious climate in the 1590s and early 1600s. Seen in the context of Harington's words and actions, this either gives us further evidence of a writer who had Catholic sympathies, or it shows us a man dispirited with the schismatic effects of the Reformation whose most sincere plea was for religious harmony and tolerance. But the poems are politically motivated works too, reflections of a spiritually barren Elizabethan age which become both an indirect praise of the Stuart succession, and a warning against the repetition of Tudor mistakes. Their arrangement, with every tenth poem on a religious theme, can be seen as a dystopian inversion of a rosary prayer and this, along with the inclusion of the 'Fifteen Disticks' themselves, functions as a reminder to King James and Prince Henry of their own familial links to Catholicism. Including a rosary was a risky thing to do, characteristic of a man who combined political expediency with dangerous forays. Harington's 'Fifteen Disticks' and their accompanying engraving show

uncanny similarities with the rosary books which were printed and circulated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly through the fusing of image and word. Seen in the context of the presentation of Harington's gift-book to Prince Henry, we find iconography of the Virgin Mary used in a politicised way by a writer who is acutely conscious of both the timings of his text and its implied readers. In his own way, Harington was politicising the image of the Virgin of the rosary just as much as the Catholic writer of a rosary book. He too, contributes to keeping the image of the Virgin alive. However, the language used to depict the most passionate and contentious elements of the rosary – the assumption and coronation of the Virgin – shows Harington hiding behind a cautious mask of pragmatism.   We find ourselves once again in evasive company.

CHAPTER 5

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND THE SONNET MISTRESS: THE SACRED AND SECULAR POEMS OF HENRY CONSTABLE

Sweet Soveraigne sith so many mynds remayne

Obedient subjects at thy beautyes call

So many thoughts bound in thy hayre as thrall

So many hearts dye with one looks disdayne.[1]

Henry Constable, 'Of the prowess of his Ladie'

In many Elizabethan sonnets, the speaker adopts the position of tormented devotion, yearning for the love of an idealised unattainable beloved. But love, as Arthur F. Marotti has so skilfully reminded us, is not always love in an Elizabethan sonnet. The patterned sonnet sequence of abject lover and cruel Petrarchan mistress is often encoded both socio-economically and socio-politically, particularly in terms of the ambition and social status of its creator. The lover-speaker's anguish can be read as an analogy for the courtier's pursuit of preferment or patronage, nowhere more so than in poems which took the Queen as their object of desire.[2] In this chapter, my subject is a prime exponent of this complex cultural exchange: the courtier poet Henry Constable. In the late sixteenth century, Constable wrote a sequence of

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[1] *The Poems of Henry Constable*, ed. Joan Grundy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960), p. 126. All further references to Constable's poetry will be to this edition.

[2] Arthur F. Marotti, '"Love is Not Love"', *English Literary History*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Summer, 1982): 396-428. See also Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, 'The Politics of *Astrophil and Stella*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1984: Winter): 53-68. For a caveat to Marotti's argument see Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 86 and *passim*. In a balanced bridge between feminist and new-historicist scholarship, Dubrow reminds us that the Petrarchan sonnet can be viewed as addressing sexual and gender as well as courtly politics. See also Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

elegantly crafted and rhetorically adept sonnets which take an intelligent delight in fashionable paradoxes and conceits. In many of these he adopted the politically nuanced position of the servile lover seeking favour from a cruel mistress. However, his conversion to Catholicism in the early 1590s was, it would appear, a stimulus for a change in poetic voice. In seventeen 'Spirituall Sonnettes', the focus of Constable's adoration shifted from the mistress of the secular sonneteering tradition to the Virgin Mary. Perhaps because he was so steeped in a poetic tradition that elevated the mistress – and because a number of his secular sonnets had been written to the Queen herself – he chose to represent the Virgin almost exclusively as the Queen of Heaven. The result is a triumphalist apologia for the Virgin delivered by a poetic voice seeking heavenly rather than earthly patronage.

In the previous chapter, I showed how devotional images of the Virgin became politicised in early modern writing. Through the circulation of recusant rosary books, iconography of the Virgin was disseminated in which she was portrayed in many guises, the most powerful of which was as intercessory Queen of Heaven. Our study of Harington took us to the margins of the Elizabethan and Jacobean court, to a writer who deployed the image of the Virgin as part of a personal – and risky – quest both for preferment and for religious toleration. We also here saw how the image of the Virgin could be a marker of confessional complexity. This chapter also finds us in the world of the court, and it serves to illuminate further the diversity of confessional standpoints in post-Reformation England. Henry Constable's work was, as we shall see, admired by Sir John Harington. His confessional history took a far more dramatic turn than Harington's, however, and his deployment of the Virgin's image was ultimately a far more confrontational one.

Constable's oppositional use of iconography of the Queen of Heaven is the driving force behind this chapter. I will first focus on Constable's secular poetry, showing how his was the voice of the fashionable Elizabethan gentleman poet, particularly in his use of Petrarchan language of love and self-abnegation as a coded reference to patronage and service. Hovering over this analysis is the figure of Queen Elizabeth, the idealised addressee of a number of Constable's poems. Constable's frequent use of sacred imagery for erotic purposes will also be evaluated. I will then move to Constable's sacred works, exploring how his representation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven can be seen as both complex and confrontational. My analysis here falls into three areas. I will first show how Constable's poems to the Virgin are criticising not only Queen Elizabeth herself, but also the encomiastic language used in secular poetry to describe her. In depicting the Virgin as an archetype of beauty, he is also consciously turning away from his earlier use of devotional language to configure the erotic. Secondly, I will examine the extent to which Constable, like other Catholic writers of his time, placed the Virgin within a clearly defined heavenly hierarchy, showing a Counter-Reformation development of Neoplatonic concepts of beauty and love. My third area of investigation forms an extended section at the end of the chapter. It is a detailed examination of the context of Constable's use of the image of the Virgin as both Queen of Heaven and *Virgo lactans*. Through readings of works by writers from a range of confessional standpoints I will show how the image of the nursing Virgin was, post-Reformation, a particularly contentious one. Constable's use of the image of the *Virgo lactans* shows him entering into a discourse fraught with cultural and ideological controversy. In the light of his oppositional use of the image of the Queen of Heaven, it epitomises a representation of the Virgin that is as polemical as it is triumphant.

From secular to sacred: the life of Henry Constable

Constable's life story shows how the path of the apostate in Elizabethan England was frequently a chequered one.[3] Born in 1562 into a distinguished family, he enjoyed the socially advantageous life of the well-connected. He was educated at Cambridge, and after graduating, spent some time in France, possibly as a spy. He was also a prominent figure at court, and as a gentleman poet his social standing was only slightly below the literary elite of courtly writers such as Sidney, Dyer and Fulke Greville.[4] During this time in his life, he carved for himself a reputation not only as a poet but also as a Protestant polemicist.[5] In 1591, Constable left England for France on an expedition led by the Earl of Essex. He never returned during Elizabeth's reign; at some point after his arrival in France, he publicly announced his conversion to Catholicism. It is thought that this occurred in 1591, and that Constable's father's death, in the same year, may have been related to the shock of his son's decision.[6] Upon leaving England, Constable spent time in Paris and Rome and undertook a mission to Scotland in 1599 in an attempt to convert James to the Catholic faith. He returned to England on James's accession, but his attempts to sway the King to Catholicism once more were thwarted by Robert Cecil, leading to his imprisonment and ultimate exile, again in France. He died in Liège in 1613.

The main body of Constable's extant secular work is a series of sixty-three sonnets whose source is the Dyce, or Todd Manuscript, which is housed in the

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[3] Ceri Sullivan, 'Constable, Henry (1562–1613)', *ODNB*, http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/6103, site visited 17.04.13.
[4] Constable's editor Joan Grundy observes that he was 'of considerably higher rank than such poets as Spenser, Daniel, or Drayton', and that he was clearly proud of his descent: *Constable*, p. 20.
[5] Grundy, *Constable*, p. 15.
[6] The source for this is a letter written by close friend Pierre du Moulin, which says that Constable 'has killed his father from sorrow'. See John Bossy, 'A Propos of Henry Constable', *Recusant History,* vol. 6 (1962): 228-237 (pp. 231-232). Guiney posits that Constable converted in 1591, and dates the 'Spirituall Sonnettes' at around 1593: Guiney, *Recusant Poets*, p. 305. See also Grundy, *Constable*, p. 34, and Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 123.

Victoria and Albert Museum.[7] Constable's influence as a secular poet has long been

recognised. He was one of the first proponents of the sonnet form in England, and his

influence is felt in the works of many other writers of his age, including the poetry of

Shakespeare, Drayton and Daniel.[8] Constable himself was loosely connected to the

Sidney-Pembroke coterie, and twenty-one of his secular sonnets were recorded by Sir

John Harington in the Arundel-Harington manuscript.[9] A sequence of twenty-three

secular sonnets was published in a collection entitled *Diana* in 1592 when the short

but intense English sonneteering craze, sparked by the 1591 publication of *Astrophil*

and Stella, was at its height.[10] In the nineteenth century, Constable's secular sonnets

were championed by William Hazlitt, who described them as the work of 'a mind rich

in fancy and invention'.[11] The secular sonnets have subsequently enjoyed a place in

many anthologies of Elizabethan verse.

Circulated in manuscript in Constable's lifetime were seventeen 'Spirituall

Sonnettes, to the Honour of God and Hys Saintes'.[12] Although Hazlitt included the

'Spirituall Sonnettes' in his printed edition, he observed that they 'rarely rise above

mediocrity'.[13] More recently, however, Constable's sacred verses have been regarded

as culturally and aesthetically significant pieces of work.[14] In the 1960s, Joan

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[7] MS Dyce 44, fols 12-43. For more on manuscript sources see Grundy, *Constable,* p. 50. A new edition of the Dyce Manuscript, edited by Claire Bryony Williams, is due for publication in 2014. I am grateful to Dr Williams for her insights into the dating of Constable's secular sonnets, which have helped in the writing of this chapter.

[8] Grundy, *Constable*, pp. 60-63.

[9] Hughey, *Arundel Manuscript*, pp. 244-252. See also Kilroy, *Campion*, p. 67.

[10] Marotti, '"Love is not Love"', p. 407. A second edition of *Diana*, published in 1594, featured five other sonnets by Constable, eight by Sir Philip Sidney and a further forty-one sonnets which are unassigned.

[11] Henry Constable, *Diana: The Sonnets and Other Poems,* ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1859), p. v.

[12] The source for these sonnets is British Library, Harleian MS 7553, fols. 32–40. The poems were first attributed to Constable by Thomas Park in 1812, when they appeared in his *Harleian Miscellany*. See Grundy, *Constable*, p. 53.

[13] Hazlitt , *Diana*, p. vi.

[14] For an evaluation of Hazlitt's contribution to a revival in interest of Constable's works, see Grundy, *Constable*, pp. 68-69. An indication of the views of scholarship today is Constable's place in David

Grundy edited an anthology of Constable's poetry in which she described Constable's sacred poems as an achievement which 'far surpass[es] the secular ones'.[15] Recent focus on the complexity of confessions in post-Reformation England has led to Constable's 'Spirituall Sonnettes' gaining a rightful place in anthologies of Catholic writing.[16] It has also meant that Constable's sacred verses are now read by scholars such as Alison Shell, Helen Hackett and Gary Kuchar in a way which acknowledges that their use of imagery of Catholic devotion is a powerful one.[17] The specific date of composition of these sacred sonnets is not known, though their marked difference in tone from Constable's secular work does support the generally accepted theory that they were written after his conversion: they are, as we will see, written from a standpoint that is not only passionately Catholic, but also frequently feels oppositional in tone. There is also a sense in Constable's sacred poems that he is atoning for his previous, secular, works.

Love, service and sacred language in Constable's secular sonnets

In Constable's secular verse, one finds a number of the Petrarchan motifs which characterise so much of Elizabethan love poetry. His repeated representation of the beloved as an idealised archetype of beauty follows all the rules. She needs no weapons but her eyes, she is white-skinned and has decorously blushing cheeks. Constable's lady is cruel and tyrannical as well as sweet: a series of sonnets project

Norbrook and H.R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, which is the sacred poem 'To St Mary Magdalen' (p. 536).
[15] Grundy, *Constable*, p. 82.
[16] Guiney's 1938 edition *Recusant Poets* includes seven of the poems (pp. 303-322). More recent anthologies have cited several examples of Constable's work, with a commentary on his life. See Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism*, pp. 187-192, and Saward, Morrill and Tomko, *Firmly I Believe and Truly*, pp. 177-180.
[17] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, pp. 122-126; Helen Hackett, 'The Art of Blasphemy?', *Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2004): 27–51; Gary Kuchar, 'Henry Constable and the Question of Catholic Poetics', *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 1-2 (Winter, 2006): 69-90.

the speaker's anguish as he complains of misfortune in love. Constable wrote sonnets to a number of addressees, but perhaps the most interesting of his sonnet mistresses is the Queen herself. Constable's verse thus exemplifies a tradition in both poetry and pageantry that portrayed the Queen as a beautiful but cruel Petrarchan mistress. His sonnets to Elizabeth were written to a woman who was well-versed in Petrarchan language, having followed the style herself in a poem written following the departure of her French suitor Alençon.[18] Elizabeth also understood that the language of love was frequently a codified expression of the language of ambition. It is highly significant that during her reign the word 'courtship' took on the meaning of wooing a woman as well as behaving like a courtier, in what Ilona Bell has described as 'a telling concatenation of meanings', as love signified a displacement of thwarted ambitions.[19]

A sonnet entitled 'To the Queene touching the cruell effects of her perfections' exemplifies this:

> Most sacred prince why should I thee thus prayse
>
> Which both of sin and sorrow cause hast beene
>
> Proude hast thow made thy land of such a Queene

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[18] Bell, *Elizabethan Women*, pp. 108-113.

[19] Bell, *Elizabethan Women*, p. 2; Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7. For Petrarchism in writing to the Queen see Michael R.G. Spiller, *The Development of the Sonnet* (London: Routledge, 1992); Leonard Foster, *The Icy Fire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 122-147; Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 61-165; Louis Montrose, 'Celebration and Insinuation', *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 8 (1977): 3-35, and '*Eliza, Queen of Shepheardes* and the Pastoral of Power', *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 10 (1980): 153-182; Leonard Tennenhouse, 'Sir Walter Ralegh and the Literature of Clientage', in Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (eds.), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 235-258.

Thy neighboures enviouse of thy happie dayes.

Whoe never saw the sunshine of thy rayes

An everlasting night his life doth ween

And he whose eyes thy eyes but once have seene

A thowsand signes of burning thoughts bewrayes

Thus sin thow causd envye I meane and pride

Thus fire and darknesse doe proceed from thee

The very paynes which men in hell abide

Oh no not hell but purgatorie this

Whose sowles some say by Angells punish'd be

For thow art shee from whome this torment is.

(p. 138)

Here is all the Petrarchan hyperbole of the rejected lover, as those denied the light of the Queen's gaze dwell in 'everlasting night'. Meanwhile, those on whom the Queen's gaze has alighted are plunged into the 'fire and darknesse' of tortured love, wracked with envy. This sonnet speaks very strongly, however, of love as a political exchange: in the first quatrain, the speaker uses the gender-neutral term 'prince' to describe the Queen as a monarch who has made her realm proud. However, in the sonnet's final lines, the speaker's state of jealous torment shows all the self-

abnegation of the secular sonneteer, with the Queen in the position of the *belle dame sans merci*.[20]

Constable uses a particularly arresting metaphor of a secular purgatory to describe this sense of rejection, with the Queen as his punishing angel. When one considers Constable's own personal history of apostasy, one sees within this sonnet an extraordinary moment of tension, but to what extent should we be reading the poem in this way? This is an image which tells us everything and nothing. The Catholic signifier 'purgatorie' is one of many examples of sacred language used to configure the erotic in Constable's verse, and may exist here simply for aesthetic purposes. Constable was a man of poetic fashion after all, and a fascinating interchange of sacred and erotic imagery, commonplace in medieval courtly love poetry, was popular in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign, when the use of Catholic lexis became particularly fashionable.[21]

However, the variegated religious landscape of post-Reformation England makes this trend a particularly perplexing one.[22] In the case of an apostate such as Henry Constable it is difficult to tell whether one should read his own personal confessional anxiety into his use of sacred language to configure the erotic. Following John Carey's 1981 study *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, what Paul J.C.M. Franssen has termed 'The Resurrection of the Author' has become a valid methodology of reading personal confessional details into the interchange of sacred

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[20] For the Queen's role as *belle dame,* see Susan Doran, 'Why Did Elizabeth Not Marry?', in Walker, *Dissing Elizabeth*, pp. 35-36.
[21] Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, p. 151 and 'Art of Blasphemy?', p. 42. As Stephen Greenblatt has so evocatively shown, the word 'purgatory' still held strong imaginative associations: *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[22] See Helen Wilcox, Richard Todd and Alasdair MacDonald (eds.), *Sacred and Profane* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1996), pp. xii-xiii and *passim*. For the use of Catholic language and imagery in the early decades of Elizabeth's reign, see Stephen Hamrick, *The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2009).

and erotic imagery.[23] Should we apply this to Constable's verse? As Helen Hackett

has observed, a psychobiographical approach to Constable can be a productive one.[24]

Certainly, it is hard not to feel that Constable's apostasy engenders in his use of

sacred imagery such as 'purgatorie' in secular verse a sense of tension. Was he

leaning towards Catholicism when he wrote these words? Our study of both

Elizabeth Cary and Sir John Harington has alerted us to the fluidity of many

confessions in post-Reformation England: Carey's words that 'it would be foolish to

hope to pinpoint some particular day or week' for Donne's own renunciation of

Catholicism could just as easily apply to Constable's own apostasy.[25]

A reading that sees the use of Catholic language in Constable's secular

sonnets as confessionally significant is, however, an unstable one because of the

fundamental differences in style and tone between his secular and sacred verse.

These polarities strongly support the accepted basic chronology that Constable wrote

most of his secular verse prior to conversion and sacred verse after his conversion.

There is a danger of reading forward into the future just a little too much, freighting

this imagery with significance, because we know how the story ends. When we come

to the 'Spirituall Sonnettes', however, we are reading back rather than forward,

juxtaposing the sacred voice with the earlier voice of the courtier poet. The dramatic

change in poetic voice, from that of secular love sonneteer to Catholic devotional

poet, can be seen as reflecting Constable's conversion. If we subscribe to this

interpretation, Constable's sacred verse becomes an example of what Louis Martz has

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[23] John Carey, *John Donne* (1981; London: Faber & Faber, 1983), pp. 37-59; Paul J.C.M. Franssen, 'Donne's Jealous God and the Concept of Sacred Parody', in Wilcox, Todd and MacDonald, *Sacred and Profane,* p. 153.
[24] In 'Art of Blasphemy?', Hackett uses the poetry of Donne, Barnes and Constable to show how a psychobiographical approach can illuminate our understanding of the use of sacred language for erotic purposes, arguing that the different belief systems of her three subjects can affect readings of their poems. Because of Constable's apostasy, Shell also advocates an autobiographical approach to reading his poetry. See *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 122.
[25] Carey, *John Donne*, p. 30.

termed 'sacred parodies', as it responds directly to trends in secular verse.[26] An

example of a sacred parody can be found in the work of Robert Southwell, who in his

poem 'Dyers Phancy turned to a Sinners Complainte' turned a secular love poem by

Sir Robert Dyer about unrequited love into a sacred poem about sin and repentance.

What is particularly interesting about Constable, however, is that his sacred verse is

situated in a dialogue with his own rather than other secular voices.[27] The result is,

however, the same: the use of the language of secular love poetry in Constable's

sacred works expresses a love that the poet perceives as infinitely superior to profane

love.

Constable and the Virgin Mary

Constable's only secular sonnet which refers to the Virgin Mary gives us much to

think about, in regard to both the encomiastic use of the Virgin's image, and the

fluidity of confessional standpoints in the writing of an apostate. Entitled 'To the

Countesse of Shrewsburye', it is an elegantly sophistic sonnet about names, turning

on the fact that the Countess, Mary Talbot, is herself called Mary. Constable here

uses the image of the Virgin as a vehicle for poetic praise. Other women named

Mary, Mary Queen of Scots and Mary Tudor, had reigns of 'bloud and fire'. But

although the Countess of Shrewsbury may not have worn a crown on earth, her

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[26] For the theoretical development of the 'sacred parody', see Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 184-193.

[27] Southwell's poem can be found in *St Robert Southwell: Collected Poems*, ed. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2007), p. 32. The extravagant language in Dyer's poem can be viewed as an encoded reference to falling out of favour with the Queen. Influenced by Southwell, George Herbert re-shaped the secular poems of his predecessors to give them spiritual emphasis, entitling one of his sacred poems 'A Parody'. In *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Dent, 1974), Patrides observes that 'parody' is used by Herbert 'in the musical sense of providing new words for a familiar tune' (pp. 209-213).

goodness means she is worthy of a crown in heaven, and can thus be likened in praise to the Virgin:

> Playnlie I write because I will write true
>
> If ever Marie but the Virgin were
>
> Meete in the realme of heaven a crowne to beare
>
> I as my creed believe that it is yow.
>
> And soe the world this Ile and age shall rue
>
> The bloud and fire was shed and kindled heere
>
> When woemen of youre name the croune did beare
>
> And youre high worth not crownd with honour due
>
> But god which meant for rebell fayth and sin
>
> His foes to punish and his owne to trye
>
> Would not youre sacred name imploy therein
>
> For good and bad he would should yow adore
>
> Which never any burnt but with youre eye
>
> And maketh them yow punish love yow more.
>
> (p. 145)

A number of factors indicate that this was a sonnet written around the time of Constable's conversion. Its title suggests that it was written after 10 November 1590 when Mary succeeded as countess.[28] Constable's public renunciation of Protestantism came just after this, in 1591, after which time he was to rely on the Talbots' protection.[29] However, the actual confessional standpoint of this sonnet is hard to pinpoint. In places, this poem bears an uncanny similarity to one by Sir John Harington, who regarded Constable as an intimate friend.[30] Harington's sonnet, which I have discussed in the previous chapter, also presents the Countess of Shrewsbury as an object of admiration, and also uses the Virgin as a vehicle for praise of women who bear her name, albeit more obliquely.[31] Constable's own religious standpoint is, however, as protean as Harington's at this point. Certainly, the Virgin's Catholic and frequently oppositional guise as Queen of Heaven is referred to, but one has the sense in this poem that Constable is covering his tracks. As Alison Shell has reminded us, the other Marys in the sonnet, excoriated by the speaker, are both Catholic queens.[32] And although the Virgin is described as 'meete', or worthy, to wear a crown in heaven, the sonnet stops short of explicitly stating that she actually is doing so. The use of 'I as my creed' certainly does suggest an alternative belief system, but the religious beliefs in question are bound up with the flattering tropes of patronage and service. It is an image therefore, which both gestures towards Constable's post-conversion fascination with the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, and simultaneously distances itself from it. This creates in this sonnet a sense of theological instability that pushes beyond the use of the sacred for erotic purposes.

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[28] Grundy, *Constable*, p. 235.
[29] Grundy, *Constable*, p. 235.
[30] Ceri Sullivan, 'Constable', *ODNB*.
[31] Harington's poem is discussed on p. 235 of this thesis.
[32] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 124.

The Queen of Heaven in Constable's sacred sonnets

The image of the Virgin forms one of the most evocative *topoi* in the interrelation of sacred and secular; the roots of this are in medieval tradition of courtly love which often redeployed imagery of Mary as a way of connoting erotic devotion. This was a two-way exchange, as the Virgin was frequently described in sacred verse in terms reminiscent of those used to describe the mistress.[33] As Julia Kristeva has observed, 'both Mary and the Lady were focal points of men's aspirations and desires'.[34] In Elizabethan England, the image of the Virgin Mary was, both explicitly and implicitly, part of the Catholic language that became fashionable in literature written towards the end of the Queen's reign, and imagery connected with the Virgin was used by some courtly poets in more extravagant panegyric to the Queen.[35] Constable's use of the image of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven in his sacred verse can be seen as a contribution to this, albeit from a standpoint of censure rather than of praise. His representation of the Virgin as both Queen and secular mistress in his 'Spirituall Sonnettes' is extremely similar to representations of Elizabeth in encomiastic poetry.[36] Constable's sacred poems function as apologia for the Virgin in her Catholic, oppositional guise of Queen of Heaven, and an encoded criticism not only of Queen Elizabeth herself, but also of the extravagant love poetry written about her. The poems can thus be seen as creating what Heather Dubrow has termed a

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[33] Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, pp. 130-131; A.A. MacDonald, 'Contrafacta and the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*', in Wilcox, Todd and MacDonald, *Sacred and Profane,* p. 33; Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), pp. 83-86.

[34] Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', p. 106.

[35] In *Virgin Mother*, Hackett gives a number of examples of the use of Catholic terminology in encomia to the Queen, including images of the Virgin. The use of hyperbolic Marian panegyric does not indicate, she argues, that the Queen was filling an emotional and psychological void left by the absence of the Virgin in post-Reformation England, but is further evidence of the use of Catholic language in late Elizabethan literature: pp. 146-151, 200-201.

[36] Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, p. 138.

'Petrarchan counterdiscourse', subverting the Petrarchism of secular love poetry. In Constable's case, this subversion redeploys the Petrarchan diction he had himself previously favoured in his secular verse.[37]

In a sonnet 'To God the Sonne' (p. 183), we find the following image of the Virgin as Queen:

> Greate Prynce of heaven begotten of that kyng,
>
> who rules the kyngdome, that himselfe dyd make:
>
> and of that vyrgyn Queen, mannes shape did take
>
> which from kynge Davyds royal stock dyd spring.
>
> (1-4)

The Virgin here is proleptically represented: she gives birth to her son not as a young and humble girl, but as the Queen of Heaven. This is a significantly-placed image on Constable's part: it both proclaims the Virgin as Queen of Heaven and underlines the validity of her lineage, justifying Mary's position by emphasising that she comes from noble stock. The phrase 'vyrgyn Queen' seems freighted with significance in other ways, both pointing towards Elizabeth, a previous object of Constable's secular devotion, and pointing away from her.

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[37] Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 7. See also Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors*, p. 46. Eckhardt describes Harington's *Epigrams* as providing the court with a 'poetic alternative to courtly love'.

Constable wrote four sacred sonnets entitled 'To our blessed Lady', and in all four, the addressee was the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. In the first, Constable describes the Virgin as 'Queene of queenes' and again alludes to her 'byrthes nobillitye'. This phrase works on two levels, encompassing both Mary's lineage and her immaculate conception.

> In that (O Queene of queenes) thy byrth was free
>
> from guylt, which others doth of grace bereave
>
> when in theyr mothers wombe they lyfe receave:
>
> God as his sole-borne daughter loved thee.
>
> To matche thee lyke thy byrthes nobillitye,
>
> he thee hys spyryt for thy spouse dyd leave:
>
> of whome thou dydd'st his onely sonne conceave,
>
> and so was lynk'd to all the trinitye.
>
> Cease then, O Queenes who earthly crownes do weare
>
> to glory in the pompe of worldly thynges:
>
> if men such hyghe respect unto yow beare
>
> Which daughters, wyves, & mothers ar of kynges;
>
> What honour should unto that Queene be donne
>
> Who had your God, for father, spowse, & sonne.

(p. 185)

This declaration of Mary's true lineage not only serves the purpose of elevating the Virgin, but also has a political edge. There is a strong sense of hierarchy in this sonnet. By representing Mary as the 'Queene of queenes', Constable is affirming her place in the hierarchy of heaven as man's mediatrix. In a more immediate way it is also, as Alison Shell has observed, a way of cutting Elizabeth I firmly down to size: the sonnet's message to all earthly queens is that they are merely daughters, wives and mothers of kings, while the Virgin is all three.[38] Elizabeth, of course, failed to be either wife or mother of a King – and in Catholic eyes was not even a legitimate daughter of a king.[39] The Virgin's power rests on the glorious paradox that God was, to her, both 'father, spowse & sonne' – there is no shadow of a debate about her fitness for rule here. The genre of this sonnet, an encomiastic poem in praise of the Virgin, also means that the poem functions as a criticism of secular poets who frequently deployed devotional imagery such as goddess, saint, and even the Virgin Mary to praise the Queen, a 'hyghe respect' that is viewed as misplaced.

In the second of Constable's sonnets to the Virgin, this sense of criticism of secular poetry is increased – this time through an examination of beauty. Like the idealised Petrarchan beloved of his secular sonnets, Constable's Virgin is represented as beautiful, but as this sonnet demonstrates, this is a beauty that outshines that of the

[38] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 125.

[39] In *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, the Catholic controversialist Nicholas Sander aimed to discredit Elizabeth by advancing the theory the Queen's lineage was an incestuous one, as Anne Boleyn was in fact Henry VIII's daughter as well as his wife. See Nicholas Sander, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* (1585), trans. David Lewis (London, Burns and Oates, 1877), pp. 23-27. Elizabeth's legitimacy was also denied in the propaganda war waged by followers of Mary Queen of Scots. See James Emerson Phillips, *Images of a Queen* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 24, 29-30.

earthly mistress. In this poem, Mary leads a hierarchy of queens. In it, we find a more personal sense of atonement on Constable's part for the former wrongs of his sonnets written in praise of Queen Elizabeth:

Sovereigne of Queenes: If vayne Ambition move

my hart to seeke an earthly prynces grace:

shewe me thy sonne in his imperiall place,

whose servants reigne, our kynges & queenes above.

And if allurying passions I doe prove,

by pleasyng sighes: shewe me thy lovely face:

whose beames the Angells beuty do deface:

and even inflame the Seraphins with love.

So by Ambition I shall humble bee:

when in the presence of the highest kynge

I serve all his, that he may honour mee.

And love, my hart to chaste desyres shall brynge,

when fayrest Queene lookes on me from her throne

and jealous byddes me love but her alone.

(p. 189)

The opening of this sonnet places us firmly in the lexicon of monarchy, patronage and power, but we have a speaker who focuses on heavenly rather than earthly rewards. We see again a representation of the Virgin as powerful, as opposed to meek and submissive. Her role here is of mediatrix: through her, the speaker can see Christ. The poem here functions as sacred parody, its use of the language of the lover, so familiar from Constable's earlier secular sonnets, denoting sacred devotion. The Virgin is presented as an archetype of beauty, whose face has the power to emit light, and whose beauty is above the angels. In an earlier secular sonnet, 'Of the excellencye of his Ladies voyce' (p. 124), Constable had similarly compared his mistress to angels: 'The basest notes which from thy voyce proceed/The treble of the Angells doe exceed' (9-10), but here the comparison is used for sacred rather than erotic purposes.

The use of imagery so explicitly connected with the love poems of the secular sonneteer serves as a reminder of the poetic style that the speaker has rescinded. His love for the Virgin ennobles him, turning him away from 'allurying passions' and towards 'chaste desyres'. There is an echo here of the secular Petrarchan sonneteer, who also claimed to be spiritually elevated by devotion to his unattainable mistress; however, this was often delivered with a knowing sense of hypocrisy, masking sexual desire as well as political subtext. In Sidney's sonnet 71, for example, Astrophil's 'chaste desyres' for Stella collapse into the carnal, as he cries out 'But ah, desire still cries: "Give me some food"', hankering after physical pleasure.[40] In Constable's sonnet, the speaker's earthly ambitions, for self-aggrandisement, and for sexual love, are both transcended by the Virgin's radiant presence, perhaps to emphasise that it is

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[40] Duncan Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 182.

only the Virgin who can inspire truly 'chaste desyres'. The duality of Constable's representation of Mary as Queen of Heaven – in both her own right and as a vehicle to criticise the Queen – is seen in the extraordinary shift which occurs in this sonnet's final rhyming couplet. Who is the 'fayrest Queen' that Constable refers to? Within Constable's vision of heaven, this is the Virgin herself, an empowered and active figure who shows justifiable anger at the speaker for seeking earthly love. But the image also evokes representations of Elizabeth. This means that the lines can be read as a criticism not only of the Queen, but also of the poetry written about her, which, like Constable's own, often presented her as the cruel Petrarchan mistress.

The hierarchy of heaven

Representations of the Virgin's beauty also figure strongly in the third example of Constable's four sonnets to the Virgin:

> Sweet Queene: although thy beuty rayse upp mee
>
> From syght of baser beutyes here belowe:
>
> Yett lett me not rest there: but higher goe
>
> to hym, who tooke hys shape from God & thee.
>
> And if thy forme in hym more fayre I see,
>
> What pleasure from his diety shall flowe,
>
> by whose fayre beames his beuty shineth so

when I shall yt beholde aeternally.

Then shall my love of pleasure have his fyll,

when beuty self in whom all pleasure ys,

shall my enamored sowle embrace and kysse:

And shall newe loves, & newe delyghtes distyll,

Which from my sowle shall gushe into my hart

and through my body flowe to every part.

(p. 191)

The reference to 'baser beutyes' could be viewed once more as criticism of secular poetry for raising up as its idealised beloved a woman who is unworthy of such representation. In the figure of Christ, Constable sees Mary's form even more beautifully reflected, but the Virgin's own beauty is not enough. In this sonnet, we see a Christianised version of the Neoplatonic ladder or staircase of virtue. Just as a follower of Castiglione or a Petrarchan sonneteer would claim that adoration of the beauty of an earthly mistress led him upwards to understanding of divine beauty, so here the speaker's adoration of the Virgin's sacred beauty directs him toward an even higher goal: adoration of the beauty of Christ, and spiritual communion with him.[41] The erotic imagery that Constable the courtier poet had used to describe 'baser beutyes' is also here directed wholly towards the sacred, in a poem that builds to a climax of sensual imagery. As in Donne's Holy Sonnets, most notably Sonnet 17,

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[41] Robert Miola comments on the Neoplatonic elements of this sonnet: *Early Modern Catholicism*, p.191.

'Batter my hart, three person'd God', we see sacred and profane love delicately poised, with love of God superior to erotic earthly love.[42]

Although Constable embodies the Virgin in triumphalist form as Queen of Heaven in this sonnet, he makes it extremely clear that the worshipper passes through adoration of the Virgin to reach a pinnacle in Christ. Mary's role as Queen of Heaven remained integral to Counter-Reformation worship, but as Bernhard Lang and Colleen McDannell have identified, a theocentric mysticism was fundamental within the teachings of Catholic Reformers both before and after the Council of Trent. Thinkers such as Antonino Polti, Peter Canisius and Francis de Sales preached a theocentric heaven that was not unlike the vision of their Protestant counterparts. There was one fundamental difference: the Virgin retained a prominent position within the divine centre.[43] Other Catholic writers of the time who represented the Virgin as Queen of Heaven also clearly delineated her place within the hierarchy of heaven. An example of this can be found in a poem by the Jesuit poet and martyr Henry Walpole entitled 'A Prisoner's Song'.[44] In this, Jerusalem represents both heaven and a state of mind as Walpole presents us with a double imprisonment, of his own literal incarceration, and of the soul imprisoned within the body:

> My thirstie soule Desyres her Drought
>
> at heavenlie fountains to refreshe
>
> my prisoned mynd would faine be out
>
> of chaines and fetters of the flesh.

[42] Franssen, 'Donne's Jealous God', and Gary A. Stringer, 'Some Sacred and Profane Con-texts of John Donne's "Batter my Hart"', both in Wilcox, Todd and MacDonald, *Sacred and Profane* (pp. 150-162 and pp. 173-183).

[43] Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven, a History* (1988; New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 156-167.

[44] Guiney, *Recusant Poets*, p. 259.

(1.1-4)

This is a visionary poem on an epic scale in which the soul travels to the 'everlastinge springe' of a sensory heaven (4.4). The speaker's ascent in heaven follows a clearly delineated hierarchy, moving from the perfectly realised natural world through to the inhabitants of heaven. He is able to feast his eyes on the saints in glory and a choir of angels, but above both of these we find the Virgin, heaven's queen, who is more elevated than saints or angels:

> Each Confessor a goulden crowne
>
> adornd with pearle and precious stone
>
> Thapostles pearles in renowne
>
> like princes sit in regall throne
>
> Queene mother virgine Iminent
>
> then saintes and Angels more devine
>
> like sunne amids the firmament
>
> above the planetes all do shine.
>
> (15.1-8)

But the Virgin does not represent the climax of Walpole's vision, as the speaker moves through this vision of the Virgin to one of God. Walpole's heaven is clearly a theocentric one:

> O princlie palace royall court
>
> monarchall seate imperiall throne
>
> where king of kinges and sovraigne lord
>
> for ever ruleth all alone.
>
> (20.5-8)

The poem affirms that God is heaven's ruler, but like Constable's, it foregrounds that without Mary, the speaker would not be able to contemplate the beauty of God. Again, we see a distinctively Neoplatonic take on the concept of Mary as mediatrix.

A similar awareness of the Virgin's place in heaven's hierarchy was shown in a poem, 'Of the Joys of Heaven', written by Sir Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel. This is also written from the point of view of incarceration; the Earl was imprisoned in the Tower of London, on suspicion of treason, dying there in 1595. This poem is the last in a series of four meditations on death, the day of judgement, hell and heaven. [45] In it, the speaker, who has been consigned to hell, has a vision of the heaven which he is unable to reach. It is a poem which speaks volumes of the martyr's hope for heavenly release from the 'hell' of earthly imprisonment. Arundel's vision holds echoes of the

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[45] Saward, Morrill and Tomko, *Firmly I Believe and Truly*, p. 166.

Book of Revelation, and the reader of the poem is invited on a journey through gates of pearl and streets of gold, in a heaven which is lit by the light from the Lamb. Again, we see a strong sense of order and hierarchy to this vision. The language of the poem speaks of 'order and degree' as we rise through visions of patriarchs, prophets, saints and angels – but higher than the saints and the angels is the Virgin. Three stanzas are devoted to a vision of the Virgin which is rich in visual imagery that presents her both as the Woman Clothed with the Sun, and as an idealised beloved:

> Above them all, the Virgin hath a place,
>
> Which caused the world with comfort to abound:
>
> The beams do shine in her unspotted face,
>
> And with the stars her head is richly crowned:
>
> In glory she all creatures passeth far:
>
> The moon her shoes, the sun her garments are.

> O Queen of Heaven! O pure and glorious sight!
>
> Most blessed thou above all women art!
>
> This city drunk thou makest with delight,
>
> And with thy beams rejoicest every heart:
>
> Our bliss was lost and that thou didst restore,

The Angels all and men do thee adore.

Lo! here the look which Angels do admire!

Lo! here the spring from whom all goodness flows!

Lo! here the sight that men and saints desire!

Lo! here the stalks on which our comfort grows!

Lo this is she whom Heaven and earth embrace,

Whom God did choose and filled full of grace.[46]

(X-XII)

This extended meditation represents beauty using imagery reminiscent of secular love poetry, but this hierarchical vision of heaven reaches its pinnacle not with the beauty of the Virgin, but at the vision of Christ as the Lord of heaven, who is in a 'higher throne' than the Virgin, and 'from whom proceeds all perfect joy alone' (XIII.1.3).

The Queen of Heaven as *Virgo lactans*

It is the thirteenth of Constable's 'Spirituall Sonnettes', however, that contains what is perhaps the most striking representation of the Queen of Heaven. The sonnet illustrates the speaker's contempt both for earthly Queens and for his own former amorous verse:

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[46] The poem is reprinted in Saward, Morrill and Tomko, *Firmly I Believe and Truly*, pp. 168-170.

Why should I any love O queene but thee?

if favour past a thankfull love should breede?

thy wombe dyd bear, thy breast my saviour feede;

and thow dyddest never cease to succour me.

If Love doe followe worth and dignitye?

thou all in [thy] perfections doest exceede:

if Love be ledd by hope of future meede?

what pleasure more then thee in heaven to see?

An earthlye syght doth onely please the eye,

and breedes desyre, but doth not satisfye:

thy sight, gyves us possession of all joye,

And with such full delyghtes ech sense shal fyll,

as harte shall wyshe but for to see thee styll,

and ever seyng, ever shall injoye.

(p. 190)

Central to this sonnet is the image of the Virgin as *Virgo lactans*, breastfeeding the

infant Christ. In the opening quatrain she is fecund and full, spiritually nourishing the

speaker as she physically nourishes Christ. It is a sacred reappropriation of the language of the secular sonneteer who seeks patronage, service and hospitality. The whole tone of the sonnet is one of satisfaction and repletion, seen through its repeated imagery of gestation, suckling and feeding. In it, the Virgin's power is located in her breasts, which both physically and spiritually nurture. If Constable is reproaching the Queen Elizabeth here, it is for her failure to provide an heir.

The imagery culminates in the pejorative description of secular pleasure, tainted by the limits of 'earthly syght' which only 'breedes desyre'. Here, the image of breeding is given unpleasant and spiritually sterile associations of lust. In gazing upon an earthly mistress the speaker is using only one sense, and the paucity of this is underlined by the fact that in gazing upon the Virgin he achieves a state of rapture in which all of his senses are engaged and satisfied. Margaret Miles has observed that in gazing at a painting of the Virgin's nursing breast a late medieval and early modern worshipper 'touched the breast and assimilated its nourishment by the act of looking', a theory which draws from Platonic theory of vision, that visual rays originated in fire warming the body that was most intense behind the eyes.[47] Constable is similarly evocative of the physical power of sight, and the result is a corporeal poem in which a fecund Virgin is able to nourish the 'thankfull love' of the speaker.

Constable's embodiment of the Virgin as *Virgo lactans* is a particularly confrontational one, as the image of the Virgin suckling Christ was at this time a discursive site of complex and often conflicting meanings. Initially adapted from pagan images of suckling goddesses, in particular the Egyptian god Isis nursing Horus, the *Virgo lactans* was a part of Marian iconography from the fourth century,

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[47] Margaret Miles, *A Complex Delight* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 9.

and reached its height of popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[48]

Conceptually, there are strong links between the Virgin's nurturing role and her role as the intercessory Queen of Heaven. A number of medieval representations of the *Virgo lactans* show her enthroned and crowned. An example of this can be found in the popular pilgrimage site of Halle in the Southern Netherlands where a thirteenth-century statue of the *Virgo lactans* as Queen of Heaven was said to have performed many miracles [figure 2]. A thirteenth-century wall painting in a church in Great Canfield in Essex shows the Virgin in splendour with the infant Christ on her knee. Her breast is bared, as if about to suckle the Christ child [figure 3].[49]

Figure 1. Thirteenth-century statue of The Black Virgin of Halle.
Source: http://www.interfaithmary.net/pages/halle.htm.

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[48] In Luke 11.27, a woman cries to Jesus: 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the pappes which thou haste sucked'.
[49] Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 26.

Figure 2. Virgin and Child from St Mary's Church, Great Canfield (early thirteenth century). Watercolour of figurative architectural detail by E.W. Tristram, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reproduced in Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid*, plate 3.

The links between the *Virgo lactans* and the Virgin's role as Queen of Heaven and mediatrix are exemplified in belief in the powerful spiritual properties of the Virgin's milk. The image of the Virgin's milk nourishing the souls in torment in purgatory was a common one, while representations of the Virgin at the last judgement often showed her baring her breast to Christ, as if to remind him of his infant dependency upon her.[50] There were even elements of a power struggle in some late medieval iconography, which often showed the Virgin suckling Christ to appease his anger, so that he might show mercy on humanity in the last judgement.[51] One of the most famous embodiments of the *Virgo lactans* in the Middle Ages came in the form of one of the visions of the twelfth-century abbot and mystic St Bernard of Clairvaux, in which the Virgin shot milk from her breast into his mouth, quenching his spiritual thirst.

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[50] E. Clive Rouse, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (1991; Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 1968), p. 60. Rouse gives the example of a fourteenth-century last judgement scene in North Cove, Suffolk, where the Virgin bares both breasts in supplication to Christ.
[51] Salvador Ryan, 'The Persuasive Power of a Mother's Breast', *Studia Hibernica*, vol. 32 (2002/2003): 59-74.

As belief in Mary's corporeal assumption led to the absence of bodily relics, the Virgin's milk itself became itself a powerful relic. A vial of Mary's milk, for example, supposedly brought from the Holy Land, was the most important relic at the English shrine in Walsingham.[52] The Virgin's milk was also linked with the blood from the wound in Christ's side, both liquids having the power to nurture and heal. Blood, milk and Eucharistic wine thus become interchangeable: as Susan Signe Morrison has observed, the conflation of the Virgin's milk with Christ's blood 'enhances the Virgin's role as co-redemptrix, the mother of the Eucharist and salvation'.[53] Associations between milk and blood were further enhanced by the belief, common in both the Middle Ages and Elizabethan England, that breast milk was a purified form of menstrual blood.[54] The physician Thomas Raynaulde's manual *The Birth of Mankinde*, reprinted several times in the Elizabeth and James's reign, observed that 'the milk which commeth to the breasts, is engendered of the terms'.[55]

As the Reformation gathered pace, iconography of the *Virgo lactans* was no longer used devotionally in Protestant countries.[56] There are a number of reasons for this, but not all are related to Reformation thinking. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, there was a reduced emphasis on Mary's maternal characteristics.[57] Christine Peters notes a gradual diminishing of the view of the figure of Mary baring her

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[52] Michael P. Carroll, 'Pilgrimage at Walsingham on the Eve of the Reformation', in Janes and Waller, *Walsingham in Literature and Culture*, p. 36. Calvin commented that 'had the breasts of the most Holy Virgin yielded a more copious supply than is given by a cow, or had she continued to nurse during her whole lifetime, she scarcely could have furnished the quantity which is exhibited'. See *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1844), vol. 1, p. 317.
[53] Susan Signe Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 33; Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, pp. 102-114.
[54] Bethan Hindson, 'Attitudes Towards Menstruation and Menstrual Blood in Elizabethan England', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 43, no. 1 (Autumn 2009): 89-114.
[55] Thomas Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankind* (1560), ed. Elaine Hobby (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 72.
[56] Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 40; Boss, *Empress and Handmaid*, p. 37.
[57] Boss, *Empress and Handmaid*, pp. 26-72.

breasts in the fifteenth century which she sees as 'part of a general trend in devotion in late medieval England that emphasised the adult Christ at the expense of the infant.'[58] Another reason for the decline of the *Virgo lactans* can be found in a cultural shift in the way in which the breast was perceived, moving from a sacred to an erotic, secularised image, one which led to increasingly negative associations of the naked, suckling breast.[59] Gary Waller contends that this sexualisation became intertwined with iconography of the Virgin in the Middle Ages, leading to an unease, even revulsion, at the image of the *Virgo lactans*.[60] Margaret Miles has observed that in Protestant territories, naked breasts appeared in paintings of Eve and witches, evoking 'sin, sex and death – not nourishment, care and primordial bliss'.[61] This affected perceptions of the Virgin: Sarah Jane Boss observes that as post-Reformation Western Christianity moved towards a culture in which the breast and motherhood had a sexual and medical, as opposed to a religious and devotional significance, iconography of the Virgin portrayed 'a prayerful young woman whose body had no ostensible association with maternal functions'.[62]

There was in Constable's time a commonplace belief that breast milk carried with it a sense of psychological and moral as well as physical nourishment. One result of this was widespread concern about wet nursing and the mental and moral characteristics of the nurse, particularly amongst Puritan writers, although this remained the popular choice for most women of higher social status.[63] What if, via

[58] Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, p. 74.

[59] Yalom, *A History of the Breast,* pp. 49-90; Miles, *A Complex Delight,* pp.10-19; Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, pp. 85-87.

[60] Gary Waller, 'The Virgin's "Pryvytes"', in Janes and Waller, *Walsingham in Literature and Culture*, p. 126.

[61] Miles, *Secularisation of the Breast,* p. 128.

[62] Boss, *Empress and Handmaid*, p. 40.

[63] Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, pp. 69-70, 84-85. In 1622, the dowager Countess of Lincoln, Elizabeth Clinton, published a short tract on breastfeeding in which she gave reasons why every woman should nurse her child, citing a number of examples of Biblical women who had breastfed their children: Elizabeth Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (Oxford: John Lichfield, and James

suckling the child, the mother or the nurse was passing on negative and immoral personality traits? This firmly-embedded link between breast milk and moral rigour led to the breast becoming a site of theological as well as psychological instability in post-Reformation discourse.[64] Feeding and theology fused. Sometimes, images relating suckling to religion were positive. Iconography surrounding Elizabeth I, taking its source from Isaiah 66, evoked the image of the feeding mother, describing the Queen as the nursing mother of both the Protestant Church and her subjects, in what amounts almost to a secular reappropriation of the *Virgo lactans* image. King James similarly described himself as a nursing father.[65]

More often, however, writers focused on the negative aspects of links between feeding and religious views. Breast milk can be seen to represent the passage from one generation to the next, and in a world where parents were often raised on a different system of beliefs from their children, it came to be associated with dangerous religious beliefs. In Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man* the image of the breast is equated with the Catholic faith of the mother, in a warning against following the example of the Church's history and using violence:

In as moch (I saye) as we have sucked in soch bloudy imaginacions in to the botome of oure hertes even with oure mothers milke.[66]

Short, 1622). Queen Anna, wife of James I, proudly breastfed her own children, expressing her distaste at the thought of wet nursing as it would mingle royal blood with the blood of a subject. See Morwenna and John Rendle-Short, *The Father of Child Care* (Bristol: John Wright & Sons, 1966), p. 26. See also Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, pp. 218-219.

[64] Yalom, *History of the Breast,* p. 37.

[65] Doran, 'Why did Elizabeth not Marry?', p.139; Hackett, *Virgin Mother,* p. 4; Catherine Loomis, *The Death of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 71-72. The Biblical source is Isaiah 49.23: 'And Kings shalbe thy nourcing fathers, and Quenes shalbe thy nources'.

[66] William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christen Man* (Antwerp: Hans Luft [Hoochstraten], 1528) fo. xxiiiv.

A similar striking image can be found in the Elizabethan *Homily against Peril of Idolatry*, which described the 'rabblement of the popish church' as having 'drunk in idolatry almost with their mothers milk'.[67]

Tyndale's image is just one example of a cluster of negative and violent images of suckling, driven by an often misogynistic anxiety. The image of the nursing mother, leaking milk, relates to the discourses of female incontinence and embarrassment identified by Gail Kern Paster.[68] Perhaps because breast milk was so powerfully linked to blood, both physiologically and iconographically, it was often conflated in early modern writing with violent images. In a pamphlet decrying the lack of support given by the Jesuits to Henri IV of France, the persuasive orator Antoine Arnauld made the following observation:

> Whence is it, that wee have so often seene the son directly opposite in opinion to his Father, but that the auncient sort did never sucke this milke of Jesuitisme?
>
> But will your Majestie beleeve, that they can be so audacious, as to glory and vaunt, how great, and ghastly a wound they have made in the harts of your subjects, which they enlarge, teare wider, and make bigger from day to day?[69]

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[67] Griffiths, *Homilies*, p. 187.
[68] Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, pp. 39, 83.
[69] Antoine Arnauld, *Le Franc Discours, Faithfully Englished* (London: James Roberts, 1602), p. 122.

Arnauld's subverted use of the image of suckling holds with it all the beliefs of the relationship between breast milk and moral instruction in his image of the young turning against the old, polluted by the 'milke of Jesuitisme'. The nurturing image of breastfeeding here collapses into the violent image of a body ripped apart, milk turning into the blood of a ghastly, tearing wound.

Literary representations of the suckling breast could also be negative and violent. The proverbial phrase 'pap with a hatchet', used most famously by Lyly in his contribution to the Marprelate controversy, held the meaning of hypocrisy, of doing an unkind thing in an outwardly kind manner. Encoded within this is the idea of the nipple being a force for ill rather than good. In Spenser's figure of Error, an image of a nursing mother is created that is redolent with anxiety about the relationship between breastfeeding and moral and religious instruction. When Redcrosse encounters this monster in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, she is described as suckling her children, all of whom represent monstrous births:

> Of her there bred
>
> A thousand yong ones, which she dayly fed,
>
> Sucking upon her poisnous dugs, eachone
>
> Of sundrie shapes, yet all ill favored;
>
> Soone as that uncouth light upon them shone,
>
> Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone.
>
> (1.i.15.3-8)

The image of Error's 'poisonous dugs' locates a frightening power within the breast. It is also significant that Error's monstrous offspring, unlike those of Milton's Sin, creep back into their mother's mouth and not her private parts. For it is from her mouth that Error, under attack from Redcrosse, vomits 'a floud of poison horrible and blacke' that 'full of bookes and papers was' (1.i.20.6). It is as if her young, nurtured by their mother's milk, have become the physical embodiment of anxiety about religious instruction, and are able to continue to propagate their mother's false creed. The description of the vomit as 'poison' links it directly to Spenser's earlier description of her suckling breast.

In a hiatus created by Redcrosse's revulsion at this vomit, Error's womb produces yet more monsters:

> She poured forth out of her hellish sinke
>
> Her fruitfull cursed spawne of serpents small,
>
> Deformed monsters, fowle, and blacke as inke.
>
> (1.i.22.5-7)

The blackness of the monsters recalls the blackness of Error's vomit, while the simile likening them to ink links them to the propaganda of the books and papers. Mouth, womb and breast are in this creation interchangeable orifices, all leaking dangerous and terrible propaganda. Anxiety about breastfeeding is underlined by the vampiric

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end to the section, as Error's brood suck their life force from their dead mother's blood, in a grotesque mimesis of their earlier suckling of her breasts which also holds echoes, as John N. King has observed, of 'a blasphemous parody of transubstantiation and the mass offered by yet another "mother", the Church of Rome'.[70] Bloated by their mother's blood, the offspring shift from parody of nursing infant to parody of fecund, pregnant woman, before their fullness leads them to explode:

> Their bellies swolne he saw with fullness burst,
>
> And bowels gushing forth: well worthy end
>
> Of such as drunke her life: the which them nurst.
>
> (1.i.26.5-7)

Spenser's use of the word 'nurst' is here sudden and jarring – as the positive connotations of the word have become wholly destabilised, in a narrative which speaks volumes about the way in which in both literature and polemic, the suckling breast could be perceived as a highly complex site of sectarian resistance.

The contentious image of the *Virgo lactans*

In the light of this, the image of the *Virgo lactans* becomes fraught with a sense of conflict. Perhaps the most potent reason for the Reformation mistrust of the image of the *Virgo lactans* is that it can be seen as one of the most empowered representations of the Virgin. In the image of the Virgin breastfeeding her child we see the infant

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[70] King, *Spenser's Poetry*, p. 87.

Christ powerless before his mother, needing her milk for nourishment and survival. Although the *Virgo lactans* can, paradoxically, be viewed as an image which connotes the Virgin's humility, post-Reformation debates over Mariolatry, as Frances Dolan has observed, constructed the suckling mother as a very powerful figure, capable of producing impassioned responses that were both positive and negative.[71] Dolan comments that one way to combat this disturbing dependency on the Virgin was to 'unmother Mary through iconoclasm, wrenching the infant from her arms'.[72]

Protestant writers also sought to 'unmother' the Virgin with their words. One example of this comes in *Jesuites Gospell* (1610) which was written by William Crashaw, the Protestant polemicist and father of Catholic poet Richard.[73] In it, we find a vilification of the image of the *Virgo lactans* which was written in response to devotional constructions of the image of the Virgin suckling by two Counter-Reformation writers, Justus Lipsius and Carolus Scribianus. During the final years of his life, the renowned Southern Netherlandish scholar Justus Lipsius made a pilgrimage to the statue of the *Virgo lactans* at Halle and was deeply moved by his experience there. As a result, he wrote *De Virgo Hallensis* (1604), one of three treatises on cults of the Virgin, in which he underlined his belief in the statue's thaumaturgic power.[74] In appreciation of this, the Antwerp Jesuit Carolus Scribianus published a Latin poem 'The Virgin of Halle'. *The Jesuites Gospel* is Crashaw's

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[71] For associations of the image with humility, see Spurr, *See the Virgin Blest*, p. 27 and Warner, *Alone*, pp. 202-205. In *Women Pilgrims*, Signe Morrison refutes, correctly I feel, Marina Warner's assertion that the suckling Virgin was purely a sign of humility (p. 33). See also Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, p. 112.

[72] Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, p. 114.

[73] Richard Crashaw's own striking use of *Virgo lactans* imagery is worthy of note. In his extraordinarily sensual poem 'Blessed Be the Paps which Thou Hast Sucked', the reader is placed in the position of the *Virgo lactans*. See *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*, ed. George Walton Williams (New York: New York University Press, 1972), p. 14. I will briefly discuss Crashaw as both Catholic poet and part of the Laudian revival of veneration to the Virgin in the Epilogue to this thesis.

[74] Marissa Bass, 'Justus Lipsius and His Silver Pen', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* vol. 70 (2007): 157-194.

riposte to both of these texts, and attacks both Scribianus and Lipsius. Crashaw's text reprints Scribianus's poem in full, with an English translation, thus contributing to the paradox we have seen at several points in this thesis, that polemical attacks on the Queen of Heaven can serve to keep an image alive.

In Scribianus's poem, the Virgin's milk is presented as having the power to assuage spiritual thirst, and is interchangeable with the blood in Christ's side. The speaker longs, like the infant Christ, to suckle at the Virgin's breast, but contents himself with asking for only a drop of blood from Christ's wounds:

> Yongling that in thy mothers armes art playing,
>
> Sucking her brest sometimes & sometimes staying,
>
> Why dost thou view me with that look of scorne
>
> Tis forcelesse envie that gainst thee is borne.
>
> Oft hast thou said, being angry at my sinne,
>
> Darest though desire the teats my foode lies in.
>
> I will not, oh I dare not (noble childe)
>
> Dutie from me is no so far exiled:
>
> But one, even one poore drop I doe implore,
>
> From thy right hand, or side I aske no more.[75]

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[75] William Crashaw, *The Jesuites Gospel* (London: E.A. for Leonard Becket, 1610), sig. C2r. All further references will be to this edition.

Crashaw then provides a biting commentary on the poem. His complaint is a familiar one: that to make Christ a dependent infant diminishes his power, turning his mother into an idolatrously all-powerful figure. Conflation of *Virgo lactans* with the Queen of Heaven is clear in this pejorative account:

> Speaking unto Christ, God coaequall with the father, and whose very humanity raigneth now in glory at Gods right hand, as to a seely infant in his mothers armes: and to him whose very humanity is fedde with the glorious presence and contemplation of the deity, as to a poore childe sucking his Mothers brests: such conceits are common, and such words and writings rife with them, of our blessed Saviour, who never speake of the Virgin Mary, but with the Title of Queene of heaven, Lady of angels, the gate of Paradise, the fountaine of mercy, or some such other titles, fitting none but him that is God, or at least she is always a comaunding Mother, and he an infant governed and an obedient childe. (sig. 13r)

As well as belittling Christ, such a representation, Crashaw argues, lays the weakened Son of God open to ridicule from both atheists and infidels. And in daring to desire a drop of Christ's blood and not the Virgin's milk, a blasphemous privileging of the Virgin over Christ is demonstrated:

You are content to have Christs blood, but as for the virgin Maries milke thou

darest not desire it: what, is her milk more precious, more dainty, more sacred

then the blood of the Mediator? (sig. L2r)

A perceived over-inflation of the value of Mary's milk here speaks metonymically for

the idolatrously over-inflated value of the Virgin herself.

Crashaw's polemic comes in response to a triumphalist representation of the

Virgo lactans from two European Catholic writers. English Catholic writers, like

Constable, also used the image of the *Virgo lactans* as a way of expressing devotion

to the Virgin. In his poem 'The Song of Mary the Mother of Christ', Henry Walpole

ventriloquised the Virgin's voice, and portrayed the infant Christ as vulnerable as he

suckles at his mother's breast. Walpole uses the image of the breastfeeding Virgin as

a way of foreshadowing the crucifixion, as leaking milk intermingles with leaking

blood:

O how my crosse was ever mixt with sweet!

My paine with joy, mine earth with heavenly blisse!

Who alwaies might adore my Saviours feete,

Imbrace my God, my loving infant kisse.

And give him sucke, who gives the Angels foode,

And turne my milke, into my Saviours bloud.[76]

(33-38)

In suckling Christ, the Virgin is turning the child into the man, but the image of her feeding is here seen as a vital part of the sorrow that she experiences at his death.

Christ's vulnerability in Walpole's poem is presented as coexisting with his overall power. The poem creates a paradoxical chain of nurturing where the infant Christ, nurtured by his mother, becomes himself the nurturer, and 'gives the Angles foode'. The prolific Catholic writer Richard Verstegan presents us with a similar paradox. 'Our Lady's Lullaby', also written from the Virgin's point of view, commences with the following striking image:

Upon my lap my soveraigne sits,

And sucks upon my brest,

Meanewhyle his love sustaines my lyf,

And gives my body rest.[77]

(1-4)

The image of the suckling Christ is strikingly direct and physical, but nourishment and nurture in this poem are inverted. Instead of the Virgin nurturing the infant

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[76] Guiney, *Recusant Poets*, p. 266.
[77] Guiney, *Recusant Poets*, p. 211.

Christ, we see Jesus represented as the 'soveraigne' whose love has the power to sustain all, including his mother. The juxtaposition of the helpless and dependent 'upon my lap' with 'soveraigne' encapsulates the paradox of Christ the King of Heaven assuming the fragile form of a baby. But while the Virgin's nurturing of the infant Christ is indicative of his vulnerability, this stanza also foregrounds Christ's ability to nurture his mother.

Constable's use of the image of the *Virgo lactans* is markedly different from both Walpole's and Verstegan's, as a return to the first four lines of his sonnet shows:

Why should I any love O queene but thee?

if favour past a thankfull love should breede?

thy wombe dyd bear, thy breast my saviour feede;

and thow dyddest never cease to succour me.

Not only is the Virgin's power to nurture both Christ and the speaker foregrounded, but she is also simultaneously represented as Queen of Heaven. In this poem, we see Constable's defiant reiteration of an empowered Virgin, and his depiction of Mary as both Queen of Heaven and suckling mother is a highly arresting one. Throughout his 'Spirituall Sonnettes', Constable's repeated representation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven can be seen as a way of counteracting the Protestant depictions of the Virgin as a humble handmaid. Perhaps the most controversial of all Constable's representations of the Queen of Heaven, however, was his image of her as the enthroned *Virgo lactans*. It is an image that is worthy of note for more than its

medieval resonances, providing a cultural expression of the *Virgo lactans* that, when read in the context of post-Reformation discourses on the religious significance of breastfeeding, becomes as confrontational as it is arresting.

In the next chapter, our study of overtly Catholic uses of images of the Virgin's assumption and coronation reaches what could in many ways be described as its apogee, as we turn to the writings of the Jesuit poet Robert Southwell. Henry Constable was, as we have seen, passionate about his Catholic faith, but he was publicly hostile to the Jesuit mission. However, in his shift from secular to sacred verse, and his expressions of criticism for secular love poetry, he ironically espoused many of Southwell's poetic theories. He is Southwell's ideal: the courtier poet who renounced the secular for the sacred. The representation of the Queen of Heaven in the hands of a man who was both apostate, and well-trained in the pursuits of courtly verse, is one which shows extraordinary tension and power. Constable's confrontational deployment of the image of the Queen of Heaven thus plays a significant part in enriching our sense of the richness and cultural density of this aspect of Marian iconography in post-Reformation writing.

CHAPTER 6

'FAULTLES CORS': ROBERT SOUTHWELL AND THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

On 21 February 1595, the crowds flocked to Tyburn to witness the brutal theatrical spectacle of a man being hanged, drawn and quartered. The man on the scaffold was the Jesuit priest Robert Southwell. His mildness and dignity are said to have moved those present, and when the hangman finally held up his severed head, it was reported that many signed themselves with the cross.[1] Southwell had landed on England's shores from Rome in 1586 and, prior to his imprisonment in 1591, had been one of the state's most wanted men. When he finally succeeded in capturing him, the sadistic priest-hunter Richard Topcliffe was heard to boast: 'I never did take so weighty a man'.[2] But Southwell was not only a Jesuit priest and driving force behind London's underground Catholic movement; he was also a poet, whose verse was already causing a stir amongst the University Wits.[3] He spent much of his time in the houses of rich and influential recusant families, but he was no gentleman poet, composing sonnets 'to his mistress' eyebrow'.[4] For him, the roles of priest and poet combined, and he wrote only sacred verse, displaying an exemplary post-Tridentine view of art's didactic and sacred purpose. This championing of sacred verse was also expressed in Southwell's virulent response to the secular love poetry of the period. He declared that poets who make 'the follies and feyninges of love the customary subject of theire base endeavors' were guilty of abusing both their talents and poetry

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[1] An account of Southwell's trial and execution is given in 'Leake's Relation of the Martyrdom of Father Southwell', reproduced in John Hungerford Pollen (ed.), *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 5 (London: Burns and Oates, 1891), pp. 333-336.
[2] BM. Landsdown MS 72, f. 113. 'Burghley Papers, 1592', reproduced in Christobel Hood, *The Book of Robert Southwell* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1926), p. 48.
[3] Christopher Devlin, *The Life of Robert Southwell, Poet and Martyr* (London: Longmans), pp. 222-223.
[4] *As You Like It,* 2.vii.149.

itself.[5] As Southwell's most recent biographer Anne Sweeney has appositely

commented: 'the creation of poetry for its own sake was not his end: saving souls

was'.[6]

Before he arrived in England, Southwell was a prefect of an elite group called

The Sodality of the Virgin in Rome. Members of the Sodality made an act of

consecration to the Virgin in which they promised faithful service to her as 'my

Queen, my Advocate, and my Mother'.[7] In this chapter, I will explore Southwell's

own poetic relationship with the Virgin through an analysis that focuses on his two

poems on the assumption and coronation: the Latin '*Poema de Assumptione BVM'*,

and the later English work 'The Assumption of Our Lady', which formed part of a

sequence of poems on the life of the Virgin. If we are to see the image of the Virgin

as a symbol which is capable of sustaining many referents, then this is encapsulated

in Southwell's verse. In both of his assumption poems, he invests the Virgin with a

complex identity that is by turns militaristic and devotional, didactic and personal. In

spite of this, Southwell's representation of the Virgin is often strikingly characterised

by a sense of absence, as he deploys contrast and antithesis to describe what the

Virgin is *not*.

My discussion is grouped around four key areas: polemics, beauty, love and

death. I begin by examining Southwell's polemical poetic voice through a focus on

the Latin poem '*Assumptione'*. There are many examples of Counter-Reformation

Mariological militarism in this work, particularly its presentation of the Virgin as a

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[5]'Epistle' from 'The Sequence of Poems from the 'Waldegrave' Manuscript (Stonyhurst MS A.v.27)'.
Included in Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell*, p. 1. All further references to Southwell's verse will
be to this edition.
[6] Anne Sweeney, *Robert Southwell, Snow in Arcadia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,
2006), p. 8.
[7] Emil Villaret, *An Abridged History of the Sodality of Our Lady* (St Louis MO: The Queens Work,
1957), p. 37.

warrior. However, the Virgin is for most of the poem a mute and elusive presence, overshadowed by Death, a personified figure through which Southwell engages vividly with the language of female ugliness. An awareness of this underpins the next section of the chapter, which is a discussion of beauty. In his frequent vicious satires on Petrarchan love poetry, Southwell warns against the lures of secular beauty, but his poems do not leave the reader with a strong sense of the Virgin as beauty's sacred archetype. The third section of the chapter takes love as its theme, and focuses on Southwell's English sequence of poems which intertwine the lives of Christ and the Virgin. Here, Southwell marshals a number of poetic methods to create a nuanced sacred parody which both celebrates the Virgin, and educates the reader about her cosmological significance. Turning to 'The Assumption of Our Lady', we find that for all its sophisticated rhetoric and joyful expressions of love, this poem ultimately reveals a sense of absence in its depiction of the Virgin which chimes with her elusive presence in other examples of Southwell's work. The final section of the chapter, which focuses on images of death, encompasses both Southwell's Latin and English assumption poems. Here, my aim is to show how Southwell's use of iconography of the Virgin's intact form at her assumption is integral to the way in which his poetry intersects with the cult of martyrdom, as it can be set in stark contrast to images with connote his own anticipated death.

The life and afterlives of Robert Southwell

On the eve of his departure to England, Southwell wrote: 'I am sent indeed into the midst of wolves'.[8] He was not engaging in hyperbole: England at this time was a dangerous place for a Catholic to be. In 1581, the 'Act to retain the Queen's

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[8] Henry Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), p. 319.

Majesty's Subjects in their due Obedience' was passed by Parliament. It meant that

to convert from Protestantism to Catholicism, or to reconcile to Catholicism, was

deemed treason, and enormous penalties were imposed by the state for non-

attendance at church. Under the statute of 1585, to be a seminary priest or a Jesuit in

England, or even to assist a priest in any way, became a treasonous offence.[9] The line

between 'martyr' and 'traitor' had become both blurred and dangerous, as the state

attempted to erode the spirituality of the Catholic cause via associations with treason,

duplicity and regicide. One of Southwell's very real fears was that he would be

arrested as a political traitor, before he had had the chance to prove his pastoral mettle

as a priest. His fears were well-founded. From the moment he arrived in England, he

was plunged into the terrifying cat-and-mouse game of Jesuit and pursuivant, and was

nearly captured several times, as this excerpt from one of his letters reveals:

> The pursuivants were rampaging all round the house…I heard them shouting
>
> and breaking down the woodworking and sounding the walls in search of
>
> hiding places. But after a few hours, thanks to God's goodness, they failed to
>
> find me although there was only a thin partition and not a wall that separated
>
> me from them.[10]

But although the odds seemed stacked against him, Southwell did manage to

avoid the pursuivants for six years, and, in doing so, he was able to leave a legacy of

the writing that was so integral to his mission. It would be wrong, of course, to view

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[9] *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay* (London: David Nutt, 1778). An introduction by Thomas Francis Knox gives a biased but informative overview of Elizabethan sanctions towards Jesuits and recusants (p.lxviii and *passim*). See also Robert Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master* (London: Phoenix, 2006), pp. 53-144.

[10] Pollen, *Unpublished Documents*, p. 313.

him as actively seeking his own death: the length of his mission is a testament to this. Students at the English College in Rome where Southwell studied were instructed not to seek immediate martyrdom in a manner that could be deemed suicidal. Effectively functioning priests were an integral part of the future of Catholicism in England.[11] At the core of Geoffrey Hill's brilliant assessment of Southwell's 'absolute reasonableness' is an understanding that Southwell's ministry was underpinned by a sense of his usefulness: he was 'meticulously practical in his conduct of missionary matters'.[12] Southwell's poems were part of this practicality, written both to teach and to give comfort to English Catholics. They were in the main circulated in manuscript, copied and passed from household to household: revived interest in the circulation of manuscripts has given us an awareness of the embeddedness of his work in the Catholic community.[13] From a secret press Southwell and his friend and Jesuit superior, Henry Garnet, were also able to circulate a body of printed prose works, including Southwell's own *An Epistle of Comfort.* Southwell's work, and the importance of poetry to his mission, provide further evidence of the vital importance of the written word in post-Reformation England where the Catholic Church had no churches, and very few priests.[14] His readership extended beyond the recusant community, however. After his death, printed versions of his poetry were widely circulated. Overtly Catholic references – such as to the Virgin's assumption – were, however, omitted from published editions.[15]

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[11] Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom*, p. 112.

[12] Geoffrey Hill, 'The Absolute Reasonableness of Robert Southwell', in *The Lords of Limit* (London: André Deutsch, 1984), p. 20.

[13] Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Paperchase', in Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (eds.), *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), vol. 1 (1989), pp. 120-143. See also Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell,* pp. xii-xiii.

[14] Walsham, '"Domme Preachers"?', p. 80.

[15] Two poems from Southwell's sequence, 'The Death of our Ladie' and 'The Assumption of Our Lady' were omitted from the first printed editions of Southwell's poetry, and not published until 1856. See Brownlow, *Robert Southwell*, p. 104.

Although it was popular in the years immediately following his death, Southwell's poetry subsequently languished for a long time in the literary shadows.[16] Monographs written in the first half of the twentieth century advanced scholarly research on Southwell, but they often tend to be hagiographical in tone, unsurprising when one considers the narrative arc of the Jesuit priest's life.[17] Hagiography aside, an approach that focuses on the man as well as the poetry seems appropriate for the poet who viewed his works as integral to his mission – but there is always a danger that an appreciation of the quality of the verse might become subsumed by the fascinating details about the man. From the mid-twentieth century, a number of studies began to privilege Southwell's poetry over details of his life and death. Louis Martz's 1954 *The Poetry of Meditation* established the scale of Southwell's influence on other writers, particularly George Herbert. Martz rightly and influentially viewed Southwell as a prime exponent of the sacred parody, but ultimately saw his work as flawed; for him, Southwell was the influencer of others, rather than the finished product himself.[18] Later critics, whilst observing that Martz's work was seminal, have acknowledged its limitations.[19] Southwell is now increasingly positioned as a poet worthy of study in his own right. In his 1996 publication *Robert Southwell*, F.W. Brownlow followed an appropriate *via media*, foregrounding Southwell's personal weaknesses as well as strengths in a scholarly introduction which is worthy

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[16] Printed editions of Southwell's poetry remained popular up until the Civil War. See Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 61. Scott R. Pilarz observes that most literary histories written before 1900 omit any reference to Southwell: *Robert Southwell and the Mission of Literature, 1561-1595* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. xxi.

[17] Christobel Hood's 1926 edition of the poetry of the 'sweet Elizabethan singer' gives an example of the kind of language often used: *The Book of Robert Southwell*, p. 1, while Christopher Devlin's 1956 study talks of Southwell's 'gentle exterior and intense holiness': *Life,* p. 131. See also Rose Anita Morton, *An Appreciation of Robert Southwell* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929), and D.H. Moseley, *Blessed Robert Southwell* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957).

[18] Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 179-210.

[19] Brownlow, *Robert Southwell,* pp. 127, 134; Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy,* p. 2.

of note for its incisive critical readings of Southwell's writing.[20] In 1999, Alison

Shell's *Catholicism, Controversy and the Literary Imagination* argued persuasively

for Southwell's canonical importance on the strength of the quality of his writing,

which 'met a need for imaginatively engaging religious verse'.[21] It is perhaps no

coincidence that following Shell's study into the Catholic imagination, we have seen

the publication of two monographs on Southwell, and a scholarly but approachable

edition of his Latin and English verse.[22]

Recent scholarly interest in Southwell has brought two aspects of his cultural

significance to our attention. The first is that it is fruitful to view Southwell's work in

terms of a 'Counter-Reformation' or 'Baroque' aesthetic. Leading the way in this

was Pierre Janelle, who in his 1935 study positioned Southwell's work as

instrumental in terms of putting down Counter-Reformation roots in England's

devotional literature. Rather reductively, this perceived in Southwell's work a move

from a concettist style which reflected his Jesuit education to a more direct style

which evolved as he stayed in England.[23] Later critics such as Joseph D. Scallon

have taken a less pejorative view of continental influences upon Southwell's verse.[24]

Anthony Raspa's *The Emotive Image* is an ambitious and erudite work which sees

Southwell as a prime exponent of the Counter-Reformation Baroque aesthetic in

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[20] Brownlow, *Robert Southwell.* See for example p. 45 where Southwell's high-handed treatment of his father is criticised. For a discussion of both the limitations and strengths of hagiographical writing see Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, pp. 5-6.

[21] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy,* p. 63. Brownlow argues that Southwell was a 'born poet who in normal circumstances might have produced a body of work comparable to any in his period': *Robert Southwell,* p. 134.

[22] Sweeney and Davidson, *Southwell* (2007); Sweeney, *Snow in Arcadia* (2006); Pilarz, *Writing Reconciliation* (2004). James H. McDonald and Nancy Pollard Brown's 1967 edition of Southwell's verse remains an invaluable resource: *The Poems of Robert Southwell S.J.* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967).

[23] Pierre Janelle, *Robert Southwell the Writer* (1935; Mamaroneck NJ: Sheed and Ward, 1971)*,* p. 153.

[24] Joseph D. Scallon, *The Poetry of Robert Southwell S.J.* (Salzburg: Institut fur Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1975), p.vii and *passim.*

England, motivated by powerful emotional forces.[25] A further non-pejorative

approach to continental influences on Southwell comes from Peter Davidson, who

places the Jesuit poet at the vanguard of a 'universal Baroque'. Davidson's

monograph is a fascinating trans-continental study which lifts Baroque away from an

exclusively Catholic definition. Instead, the Baroque becomes permeable, supra-

national and supra-confessional.[26] Adding to our sense of the permeability of

Southwell's work is Scott R. Pilarz's 2004 monograph which boldly places Southwell

at the cultural centre of his era as a poet who is at the vanguard of 'a religious

landscape more variegated than previously imagined'.[27]

Southwell's supra-confessional appeal is integral to the second aspect of his

cultural significance, which concerns how widely his work was both read and

imitated. A volume of Southwell's verse entitled *Saint Peters Complaint, With Other

Poemes* was first published in March 1595, and as Brian Cummings has observed,

this work 'still baffles conventional literary categories'.[28] Southwell's was clearly a

wide and literarily influential readership; in various forms, *Saint Peters Complaint*

had run into fifteen editions by 1636.[29] As Brownlow has observed, Southwell's was

an 'audience of writers'.[30] Ben Jonson was famously to observe 'That Southwell was

hanged yett so he had written that piece of his, the Burning Babe, he would have been

content to destroy many of his.'[31] Southwell's cross-confessional appeal is further

indication of the porousness of Protestant and Catholic texts: as Shell has shown,

Southwell's effect on a range of writers including Thomas Lodge, Edmund Spenser

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[25] Anthony Raspa, *The Emotive Image* (Austin TX: Texas University Press, 1983).
[26] Peter Davidson, *The Universal Baroque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).
[27] Pilarz, *Writing Reconciliation,* p. xxviii.
[28] Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 330; Brownlow, *Robert Southwell,* p.125.
[29] James H. McDonald, *The Poems and Prose Writings of Robert Southwell SJ* (Oxford: The Roxburghe Club, 1937), pp. 67-101; Hood, *The Book of Robert Southwell*, pp. 70-71.
[30] Brownlow, *Robert Southwell*, p. x.
[31] Ben Jonson, *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. R.F Patterson (1619; London: Blackie and Son, 1923), p. 17.

and John Donne was extensive.[32] Interest has also been sparked by a debate on

Southwell's relationship with his distant cousin Shakespeare. When Southwell wrote

'Still finest wits are stilling Venus' rose' he was clearly delivering a call to arms to

the secular poet to write less frivolous verse, but was he also alluding to

Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?[33] Do the initials 'W.S.' in a prose dedication to

'Saint Peters Complaynt', stand for 'William Shakespeare'?[34] Richard Wilson's

conclusion in *Secret Shakespeare* – that Southwell had read *Venus and Adonis* in

manuscript and wrote his dedication to Shakespeare as a result – is a daring leap of

faith.[35] John Klause has taken the more measured view that Southwell was probably

part of Shakespeare's 'Catholic reading', positing that Shakespeare seemed 'both

consciously and unconsciously to have welcomed a Jesuit into his mind'.[36] In her

most recent monograph, Shell realistically suggests that both writers may in fact have

been drawing on similar contemporary commonplaces, but she does not dismiss

entirely the notion that Southwell was criticising Shakespeare's erotic verse.[37] The

jury may be out, but what is certain is that the debate has helped to inch Southwell a

little more towards the mainstream. An awareness of Southwell's influence means

that his poetry can be viewed not only as a reflection of the zeal and claustrophobia of

the recusant world, but also as a body of work which mounts a credible critique of the

fashionable Petrarchan love poetry of the courtier poet.

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[32] Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, pp. 70-80.

[33] The line appears in verses from 'The Author to the Reader' at the opening of 'Saint Peters Complaynt' (Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell*, p. 63).

[34] The dedication appeared in a 1616 edition of 'Saint Peters Complaynt' published in St Omer's Jesuit press. The hypothesis that this referred to Shakespeare was first presented in 1868 by the Protestant minister A.B. Grosart in *Complete Poems of Robert Southwell* (London: Robson and Sons, 1868), pp. lxxxix-xcii.

[35] Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare*, pp. 126-143.

[36] John Klause, 'New Sources for Shakespeare's *King John*', *Studies in Philology,* vol. 98, no. 4 (Autumn, 2001): 401-427 (p. 403). For Klause's review of Wilson's approach see John Klause, *Shakespeare, The Earl and the Jesuit* (Madison NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), p. 19.

[37] Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Arden, 2010), pp. 85-91, 256 note 33.

Southwell and the Virgin: Marian polemics

In the margins of a letter to his friend Jan Dekkers, Southwell wrote a Latin metrical prayer to the Virgin Mary, a tiny, anguished reworking of the *Salve Regina* where in a begging tone, he implores the Virgin's succour:

> *O virgo clemens et pia*
>
> *O genetrix altissimi*
>
> *Succure mihi Maria*
>
> *Vae Vae Vae*
>
> *Misero mihi vae*
>
> *Nisi Succurras Maria*
>
> *Vae vae nihil nisi vae*
>
> *Quia privabo gloria.*
>
> (1-6)
>
> (O clement and loving Virgin, O mother of the Most High, run to my aid Mary, alas, alas, alas, have pity on me, alas, unless you succour me, Mary, alas, alas, and nothing but alas, since I will be deprived of glory.)[38]

Southwell is here invoking one of the most popular prayers of the Middle Ages. It is also a prayer with a history of militaristic overtones, sung, for example, by crusaders on the battlefield.[39] In our exploration of the rosary, we saw how the Counter

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[38] Stonyhurst MS A.vii.1, dated from Rome, 20 October 1580, reproduced in Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell,* p. 118. All translations from the Latin are taken from this edition.
[39] Warner, *Alone*, p. 115. Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, p. 180.

Reformation sparked Mariological militarism throughout Europe, and this militaristic timbre touched Southwell's life directly. The Sodality of the Virgin, the elite group of which Southwell was prefect in Rome, was, in the words of Anthony Raspa 'a kind of Marian youth corps'.[40] There was a strong proselytising and militaristic flavour to the act of consecration which Sodalists made to the Virgin, with many pledging to defend Marian doctrines to the point of death.[41] Southwell the priest was, as Anne Sweeney comments, 'honour bound to engage in Marian apologetics.'[42] How did Southwell the poet translate this Marian devotion? Proselytising zeal often found its expression in a polemical poetic voice.

This polemical voice can be seen in the Latin '*Poema de Assumptione B[eatae] V[irginis] M[ariae]*', which was composed while Southwell was still in Rome.[43] The poem sets an ambitious tone from the start. The opening thirty-eight lines feel like an anticipation of *Paradise Lost* in miniature, as Southwell attempts to encapsulate both the Fall from Eden and Lucifer's jealousy. After this, the focus of the poem narrows to the point of the Virgin's death and assumption. It depicts the fury and bewilderment of Death, who is personified as a foul and disease-ridden hag, that the pure and perfect Virgin has succeeded in overcoming Death's retinue. Death calls her nobles together, fearing that her realm is in danger. The poem then becomes a mock court case, with a just God presiding. Death acts as counsel for the prosecution, and Gabriel is counsel for the defence, speaking on behalf of a mute Virgin Mary. The impetus for this Stygian court case is Mary's exemption from

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[40] Raspa, *The Emotive Image,* p. 54.
[41] Villaret, *An Abridged History*, p. 38; Pilarz, *Writing Reconciliation,* p. 221.
[42] Sweeney, *Snow in Arcadia*, p. 38.
[43] The poem is preserved in the 'Autograph' manuscript (Stonyhurst A.v.4) and is reproduced in Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell*, p. 88. Davidson and Sweeney observe that it was written with a readership in mind that was well versed in post-Tridentine theology (p. 140). For manuscripts of Southwell's work still in existence see Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London: Mansell, 1980) vol. 1, part 2, pp. 495-522, and McDonald, *Poems and Prose Writings*, pp. 9-65.

original sin. Death's prosecution is that as Mary was born mortal, God has no right to
exempt her from laws that have been in place since Adam's fall. Gabriel then speaks
on the Virgin's behalf, protesting Mary's pure innocence:

> *Id Christi genetricis erat sponsaeque tonantis,*
>
> *Ut pura infectos transiret sola per artus,*
>
> *Communique carens culpa, mala debita culpa*
>
> *Haud ferret. Nullis Deus est nisi sontibus ultor.*
>
> (202-205)
>
> (It is in the nature of the mother of Christ and bride of the Thunderer
>
> that she alone should pass through an imperfect body while lacking the
>
> common guilt, and that she should not endure the evil dues of guilt.
>
> God is not a punisher of anyone but the guilty.)

The speeches of the prosecution and defence concluded, God pronounces his verdict,
that the spirit of the Virgin should rise up to the stars. The poem ends swiftly and in a
blaze of glory; Mary is assumed into heaven and takes her seat as its Queen. Death,
showing all the impotent fury of the defeated, takes flight.

Janelle is dismissive of the poem, seeing it as a flawed and juvenile college
exercise in which Southwell fails in his attempt to imitate Virgil.[44] For him, the
poem is indicative of the thesis on which he pins his analysis, that in earlier works,
Southwell displayed a concettist, artificial style that he was gradually to shrug off in
favour of the plain style on reaching England. Later commentators, rightly I feel,
have deemed the poem worthy of consideration. Davidson emphasises the

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[44] Janelle, *Study,* p. 127.

importance of Latin as a medium for the Baroque world; this poem, he asserts, is an example of the 'oppositional status' of the recusant Catholic, and a direct channel for continental influence in England.[45] The use of the language of the court case is also significant. On one level, it is highly theatricalised; Davidson and Sweeney observe how the poem reflects the 'controversialist tone and linguistic virtuosity' of Jesuit productions.[46] Sweeney persuasively reads this poem as a specific poetic expression of a post-Reformation debate, with Death as playing the Protestant role, and Southwell's Gabriel embodying 'plainer rhetoric' as he lucidly expounds tenets of the Catholic faith.[47] By transplanting theology into the court, Southwell shows an acute awareness of just how controversial the assumption of the Virgin had become.

Representation by absence: Southwell and the Virgin's beauty

What is most interesting about this controversialist poem, however, is that the Virgin does not speak on her own behalf in this court case. In fact, she does not speak at all. Adding to this sense of absence is the fact that in spite of the poem's title, the actual assumption of the Virgin is dealt with very swiftly indeed:

> *Annuit Omnipotens. Divum sonat aula triumphis,*
>
> *Virgo poli regina sedet, mors victa fugatur.*
>
> (218-220)
>
> (The Almighty gives assent, the Court of the Divine Ones resounds with
>
> triumphing; the Virgin takes her seat as Queen of Heaven. Death,
>
> overwhelmed, takes flight.)

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[45] Davidson, *Universal Baroque*, p. 49.

[46] Davidson and Sweeney, *Southwell,* p. xv. For the importance of theatricals in Jesuit schools, see John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993)*,* p. 242 and Davidson, *Universal Baroque*, pp. 50-51.

[47] Sweeney, *Snow in Arcadia*, pp. 38-39.

One could argue that the poem feels structurally flawed and uneven, particularly as it devotes far more time to the hysterical rantings of Death than to the Virgin's assumption and coronation.[48] The swiftness of the Virgin's assumption is, however, in line with Southwell's ephemeral representation of the Virgin as a whole in this poem. She is first introduced with militaristic imagery, described as '*vindex*' (46), a champion or punisher, who is able to overturn Death's retinue:

> *Donec virgo, suae vindex generosa parentis,*
>
> *Se rabido victrix objecit prima furori*
>
> *Mortis, et imperii saevas convellere leges*
>
> *Orsa, satellitium mortis superavit, et ipsi*
>
> *Terrorem incussit dominae, quod corporis aequa*
>
> *Temperies, vegetique artus, et vivida virtus*
>
> *Lethiferis aditum praecluderet integra morbis.*
>
> (45-51)
>
> (until a virgin, noble avenger of her parent, was the first to place herself in the way of the rabid fury of Death, and having set about destroying the grim laws of her dominion, overcame Death's retinue and struck terror into the lady herself, because the even temper of her body, her animated limbs, and her lively courage, unscathed, shut off access to death-bearing diseases.)

The imagery is redolent of Southwell's Sodality training, but after this dramatic introduction, there is little sense of the Virgin's physical presence within the poem.

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[48] Janelle comments that the assumption is 'disposed of in a couple of prosaic lines': *Study,* p. 131.

This representation is in stark contrast to the powerful and repulsive physical presence of Death, who is personified as a woman. In his foul descriptions of Death, Southwell spares no blushes:

> *Hic Annosa sedet canis mors horrida saetis,*
>
> *Os macie, taboque genas confecta, cavisque*
>
> *Immersos fossis oculos et livida circum*
>
> *Dentes labra gerens turpique patentia rictu.*
>
> (71-4)
>
> (Here sits the aged bitch Death, horridly bristled, her muzzle worn away with emaciation, her cheeks with wasting pestilence, displaying eyes sunk in hollow trenches, and livid lips around her teeth open in a repulsive grin.)

Margaret Healy's monograph on the effects of epidemic diseases on the literary imagination has shown how syphilis was a powerful symbolic signifier in Jacobean drama, linking disease with desire and pleasure.[49] Death's decayed and corrupt body is here redolent of the syphilitic, an outward emblazoning of inward sin, in contrast to the Virgin Mary who is a foil for Death in her purity, sweetness and beauty. Southwell's use of contrasting images of the female body to represent ideological and theological oppositions was not mobilising imagery of female bodies, however, but coming into a discourse that already existed. John Bale's *Image of Both Churches*, for example, used the image of the body to represent the True Church as pure, in opposition to the feminised, diseased false Catholic religion, epitomised in the body of the Whore of Babylon, who is capable of 'infecting men's eyes, ears, and

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[49] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 172 and *passim*.

understandings.'[50] In Southwell's work, Bale's model is subverted. Death – and by inference the Protestant lack of belief in the Virgin's assumption – is here seen as the diseased object, with the Virgin, a metonym for Catholic belief, as the pure alternative. Southwell's prosopopeiac representations of Death can also be seen to reveal a misogynistic anxiety about women as objects of sexual desire.

Beauty: Southwell's Petrarchan counterdiscourses

Southwell's '*Poema de Assumptione BVM'* ultimately reveals the Virgin as an elusive, absent figure, represented more by contrast to Death than in her own right. Death 'belches out terrible noises' whilst the Virgin remains fascinatingly mute. I would argue that this representation by absence is a pattern which Southwell repeats elsewhere in his poems, particularly if one examines the way in which he expresses – or rather does not express – the Virgin's beauty. There is little doubt that Southwell was both fascinated and repelled by poetic representations of beauty, as his writing returns again and again to a criticism of the Petrarchan secular poetic aesthetic. The satires on Petrarchism which occur in Southwell's verse are concomitant with his declared intention to use his talents for sacred rather than secular ends, confirming his contribution to the Petrarchan counterdiscourses that, as we have seen in the last chapter, existed in writing both from within and outside the court. In Southwell's verse, invective against courtly love frequently disintegrates into misogyny about the deceptive power of a woman's beauty.

'What joy to live' (p. 46), for example, sees Southwell deploying the Petrarchan and Sidneian oxymoron, as the speaker suffers a range of contrary emotions – 'I frye in freesing cold' (2). However, Southwell's longing in this poem

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[50] John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches*, in Christmas, *Select Works of John Bale*, p. 498.

is not for a woman but for a release from the prison of earthly existence. His

contemptus mundi finds its most vehement expression in an invective against

representations of earthly beauty:

> Heere bewty is a bayte that swallowed choakes
>
> A treasure sought still to the owners harmes
>
> A light that eyes to murdering sightes provokes
>
> A grace that soules enchaunts with mortall charmes.
>
> (19-22)

The use of anaphora here adds a tinge of hysteria to its misogynistic invective, and

the metaphor for beauty as a 'bayte that swallowed choakes' is a strikingly

unforgiving one.[51] It contrasts with the strikingly positive words 'treasure', 'light'

and 'grace', the speaker admitting that what is deadly can also be alluring. While

Petrarch's poetry sees love as an ennobling pathway to God, Southwell here bluntly

foregrounds the fact that English sonnet sequences, by ennobling earthly beauty, are

not pursuing a Petrarchan agenda of spiritual elevation. [52]

'Saint Peters Complaynt' also mounts a concerted criticism of Petrarchism (p.

63). Although the poem's speaker, St Peter himself, is full of reproach for denying

Christ, much of his vitriol is directed at the maid who has asked him whether he

knows Christ. Here, the speaker uses language which is uncannily reminiscent of

Southwell's own withering contempt of the tyrant mistress.[53] Peter bemoans that just

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[51] In 'Loves Servile Lott' Southwell again uses the metaphor of 'bait' for earthly beauty, describing a beautiful woman thus: 'she letteth fall some luring baytes' (25).

[52] Janelle has observed that these lines are a reworking of Petrarch's *sonneto* xv, finding in this evidence that Petrarch appealed to Southwell, as 'his expression of earthly love was so spiritual, so mystical even, that it was almost akin to Southwell's love of God'. See *Study,* p. 215.

[53] Peter denies knowing Christ to a servant girl in both Luke 22.54-57 and Mark 14.69-70.

like other men in the Bible – David, Solomon and Samson – he has been brought

down 'with wordes of woman's spight' (288). This complaint disintegrates into a

blistering invective against deceiving beauty:

> O women, woe to men: traps for their fals,
>
> Still actors in all tragicall mischaunces:
>
> Earthes necessarie evils, captiving thralls,
>
> Now murdring with your tongs, now with your glances.
>
> (319-322)

The descriptions of women's murdering tongues and glances are

unmistakably Petrarchan. It is an example of one of the many warnings which

Southwell's verse sounds against the traps and lures of secular female beauty, but

what examples of sacred beauty does he employ to counteract this? As prefect of the

Sodality, Southwell pledged allegiance to the Virgin in a manner not dissimilar to the

chivalrous knight and his lady.[54] One might therefore have expected Southwell to

translate this chivalry into his poetry, offering the Virgin as an idealised alternative to

the shallow and dangerous beauties of the earthly woman. We have seen how Henry

Constable followed this path, but while Southwell's poems create a critique of secular

Petrarchan poetry that is even more vehement than Constable's, his own

representations of the Virgin's beauty often seem fleeting and ephemeral.

In 'Saint Peters Complaynt', Southwell counters his vehement criticism of the

deceiving beauty of women with an extended deployment of Petrarchan language of

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[54] Villaret refers to the Sodalists as 'knights of our lady', *An Abridged History*, pp. 24-27. See also Devlin, *Life,* p. 10.

beauty directed not at the Virgin but at Christ himself. A brief mention in Luke's
Gospel is amplified to an apostrophe to the beauty of Christ's eyes:[55]

> These blazing Comets, lightning flames of love,
>
> Made me their warming influence to know;
>
> My frozen hart theyr sacred force did prove,
>
> Which at their lookes did yeeld like melting snow.
>
> (361-364)

Southwell here places himself comfortably within the idiom, sustaining the
apostrophe to the eyes for fourteen stanzas, and his semantic field is consistently that
of contemporaneous amorous verse.[56] When the sustained misogyny of Southwell's
anti-Petrarchan invective is taken into consideration, one can perhaps observe a
homoerotic impulse at this point. This is not wild conjecture; biographers treat with
sensitivity the young Southwell's intense relationship with Jan Dekkers, the young
man who persuaded him to become a Jesuit rather than Carthusian.[57] A homoerotic
instinct, however submerged, may lie behind Southwell's reticence when it came to
poetic representations of the Virgin's beauty.

It is also significant that one of Southwell's most sustained Petrarchan
representations of the Virgin presents her again as an elusive figure. In 'Josephes
Amazement', Southwell rescues Joseph from his representation as cuckold in

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[55] Luke 22.61.

[56] It is also significant that Southwell is diverting here considerably from the source of his poem,
Tansillo's *Lagrime*, which only alludes to Christ's glance towards Peter. See Janelle, *Study,* p. 216.
For Tansillo's poem as Southwell's source, see Mario Praz, 'Robert Southwell's "Saint Peter's
Complaint" and its Italian Source', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Jul 1924): 273-290.
For Baroque influences on the poem, see Helen C. White, 'Southwell: Metaphysical and Baroque', in
Modern Philology, vol. 61, no 3 (Feb 1964): 159-68 (p. 166).

[57] Devlin, *Life,* p. 30; Pilarz, *Writing Reconciliation,* pp. 117-133.

medieval drama, sympathetically charting the very human conflict of a man whose love for his wife clashes with his bitterness and shame at her imagined infidelity (p. 19). The poem depicts Joseph as a man who is suffering the pangs of tormented love, and can be read as Southwell's sacred reclamation of the courtly love imagery of the hunt. Joseph in this poem is trapped, and sees himself as both fleeing from and drawn to his beloved.

> I goe I come she drawes she drives away
>
> She woundes she heales she doth both marr and mend
>
> She makes me seeke and shun depart and stay
>
> She is a frende to love a foe to lothe
>
> And in suspence I hange between them both.
>
> (80-84)

The anguish of the speaker who both seeks and shuns his beloved recalls Wyatt's 'Whoso List to Hunt', modelled on Petrarch's *rime* 190, '*Una Candida Cerva*', in which the speaker is unable to draw his eyes away from his beloved, even though he is wearied by the chase.[58] The Virgin is clearly the object of desire in Southwell's poem, but she is also, again, an elusive presence.

Love: Southwell's sequence of poems on the Virgin and Christ

It would be grossly distorting, of course, to claim that the Virgin is not a presence at all in Southwell's poetry, but it is striking to note how frequently she is represented

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[58] Norbrook and Woudhuysen, *Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse*, p. 182. Wyatt's poetry was circulated in the sixteenth century via *Tottel's Miscellany,* an anthology of verse that shows a strong Petrarchan influence, and which was reprinted several times. For the influence of the Miscellany and the Henrician school on Southwell's lyric poetry, see Janelle, *Study,* p. 254, and Brownlow, *Robert Southwell,* p. 78.

through absence and contrast. An awareness of this ultimately serves only as a caveat to the maxim that Mary is constructed in Southwell's verse as a figure who inspires devotion, but it is one that can colour our readings of his representations of the Virgin. With this in mind, we now turn to Southwell's English poem 'The Assumption of Our Lady'. This is the last in a sequence of fourteen poems intertwining the lives of the Virgin and Christ which were written during Southwell's mission in England.[59] Within this sequence, we find Southwell engaging more overtly with the lexis of Elizabethan love poetry to describe the Virgin. Throughout the poems, Mary is associated, like Christ, with imagery of sun and light, and in the penultimate poem in the sequence, 'The Death of Our Ladie', Mary's beauty is described using extravagant imagery in relation to her eyes (p. 11):

> Her face a heaven two planettes were her eyes
>
> Whose gracious light did make our clearest day
>
> But one such heaven there was and loe it dyes
>
> Deathes darke Eclipse hath dymmed every ray.
>
> (13-16)

It is this imagery which Gary Waller has justly quoted as evidence that Southwell was re-directing Petrarchan rhetoric of the court from a secular to a sacred love object.[60] Pilarz, similarly, observes that 'finally Southwell has found an object worthy of the lavish adulation that secular poets waste, from his perspective, on the

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[59] The poems were preserved in the 'Waldegrave' manuscript (Stonyhurst MS A.v.27), dating from between 1590 and 1609. Davidson and Sweeney observe that they were written with the beleaguered Catholic community of late-Elizabethan England as their intended audience (*Southwell*, pp. xi, 148).
[60] Waller, *The Virgin Mary*, p. 150. A similar argument can be found in Brownlow, *Southwell*, p. 109.

women they love'.[61] The metaphor of Mary's face as a 'heaven' whose eyes shoot out beams of 'gracious light' would easily be at home in *Tottel's Miscellany*. It is an evocative image, but it is perhaps worth noting that it is far briefer than the fourteen-stanza apostrophe to Christ's eyes in 'Saint Peter's Complaynt'. It also comes in a poem which ultimately mourns the Virgin's absence rather than celebrating her presence, ending with the poet's preoccupation with the darkness that engulfs the world at the loss of its universal mother.

Our understanding of Southwell's sequence of poems on the Virgin Mary and Christ is certainly greatly illuminated by an awareness of the poet's antipathy towards secular love poetry. I would argue, however, that it is reductive to describe the sequence as a whole as love poetry with the Virgin as a sacred object of devotion; instead, this poetic device is one of a number of methods Southwell employs in the construction of a fascinatingly nuanced sacred parody. One of these poetic methods was to create a series of verses that had a strong didactic edge, actively encouraging devotion to the Virgin from worshippers. Devotion to the Virgin is fostered through the poems' structure, which echoes that of a sequence of rosary prayers.[62] We have seen how in England, the rosary was a vital spiritual lifeline for the recusant community. Southwell worked closely with Henry Garnet, the rosary's champion: the two men were friends as well as colleagues, and Garnet's *The Societie of the Rosary* was written in Southwell's lifetime.[63] Sweeney's assessment that Southwell's poetry offered visual aids to support Garnet's liturgies here seems apposite.[64]

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[61] Pilarz, *Writing Reconciliation*, p. 227.
[62] Martz observes that Southwell's sequence shows similarities to the corona of Our Lady in particular: *The Poetry of Meditation,* pp. 101-107. Scallon, however, observes that the rosary is all about numbers, and Southwell's sequence simply does not add up: *The Poetry of Robert Southwell,* p. 97.
[63] Caraman, *Friendship*, p. 68 and *passim*.
[64] Sweeney, *Snow in Arcadia*, p. 109.

Southwell's sequence actively encourages devotion to the Virgin in other ways. By devoting entire poems to the Virgin's immaculate conception and her perpetual virginity it can be read as a Counter-Reformation affirmation of the Virgin's significance; like recusant rosary books, these poems are therefore offering comfort to English Catholics who were living in a world where role of the Virgin Mary in the economy of salvation had been marginalised. Southwell's sequence also presents the Virgin is a figure of overwhelming cosmological importance, describing her not only as Queen of Heaven but also as Star of the Sea. The Virgin's power is also foregrounded in the poems through a presentation of her as a figure able to transcend temporal boundaries. In 'The Visitation', Southwell reveals this through a proleptic glimpse (p. 6). The poem retells the familiar Biblical narrative of Mary visiting Elizabeth and the child leaping in her womb, and commences by addressing Mary thus:[65]

> *Proclaymed Queene* and mother of a god
> The light of earth the Soveraigne of Saints
> With Pilgrimm foote upp tyring hils she trod
> And heavenly stile with handmayds toyle acquaints.
> (1-4, italics mine)

Southwell here simultaneously represents Mary as the Queen of Heaven, interceding for sinners in glory, and the young pregnant girl, on the arduous journey to visit her cousin. Mary's role as Queen of Heaven thus conquers time. 'The Nativity of

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[65] Luke 1.39-41.

Christe' commences with a similar temporal paradox of the mystery of the

incarnation and birth of Christ (p. 6):[66]

> Behould the father is his daughters sonne
>
> The bird that built the nest, is hatchd therein.
>
> (1-2)

When one views this image purely in temporal terms, one sees past, present and

future combining in the image of Jesus as father and son, Mary as mother and

daughter. The resulting effect is that time has been conquered. This seems entirely

appropriate for a sequence which has as its climax the Virgin's assumption, an event

which in triumphing over death could be said to represent a freedom from the

temporal constraints of the material world.[67]

Southwell's fascination with temporal paradoxes not only teaches his reader

about the Virgin's cosmological significance. It is also an integral part of the

rhetorical nature of the sequence, and as such is another of the methods employed to

counteract secular love poetry. The sequence itself is a virtuosic display of poetic

wit. Constructed with a skilful eye on sophisticated rhetoric, the poems abound in

conceits, paradoxes and aphorisms; through them, Southwell demonstrates to the

secular poet that his skills could be put to better, sacred, use.[68] This is best

demonstrated through a reading of 'The Assumption of Our Lady'. Here, we find

that the language of love blends with numerous examples of poetic wit and

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[66] Brownlow describes this line as evidence that Southwell 'delights in disappointing normal expectation', whilst for Anthony D. Cousins, this is a 'sacred paradox'. See Brownlow, *Robert Southwell*, p. 108 and Anthony D. Cousins, *The Catholic Religious Poets, from Southwell to Crashaw* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1991), p. 39.
[67] Warner, *Alone*, p. 94.
[68] Scallon gives a detailed exploration of the epigrammatic nature of the sequence as a whole in *The Poetry of Robert Southwell*, p. 100.

sophistication. This three-stanza poem condenses the final two mysteries of the rosary, the assumption and coronation of the Virgin, and like the others in the sequence it is a self-consciously rhetorical work.

If sinne be captive grace must finde release

From curse of synne the innocente is free

Tombe prison is for sinners that decease

No tombe but throne to guiltles doth agree

Though thralles of sinne lye lingring in their grave

Yet faultles cors with soule rewarde must have.

The daseled eye doth dymmed light require

And dying sightes repose in shrowdinge shades

But Eagles eyes to brightest light aspire

And living lookes delite in loftye glades

Faynte winged foule by ground doth fayntly flye

Our Princely Eagle mountes unto the skye.

Gemm to her worth spouse to her love ascendes

Prince to her throne Queene to her heavenly kinge

Whose court with solemne pompe on her attends

And Quires of Saintes with greeting notes do singe

Earth rendreth upp her undeserved praye

Heaven claymes the right and beares the prize awaye.

(p. 11)

The first two stanzas of this poem are a series of antitheses which juxtapose the Virgin's sinless body, rising to heaven, with the heavy, sluggish body of concupiscent man. In the poem's opening lines, Southwell's antitheses force the reader to dart back and forth, from 'sinne' to 'grace', 'tombe' to 'throne', 'sinners' to 'guiltless' in a manner which recalls stichomythia. The stichomythic effect continues in the second stanza. Here, concupiscent man is represented in the first two lines using the synecdoche of the 'daseled eye' and imagery of light and darkness – 'dymmed light', and 'shrowdinge shades'. The eyes of sinful man are shown to be as frail and feeble as his body, and too weak for the dazzling light of God's love. This is a Southwellian commonplace: images of mists and shadows in his poetry reveal that the eyes of the fallen man are unable to encounter external representations of God's brightness. In 'The prodigall chylds soule wracke' (p. 38), for example, Southwell's sinful speaker bewails the inadequacy of his 'dazeled eyes' (45).

In Southwell's 'The Assumption of Our Lady', man's feeble eyes are juxtaposed in the second stanza with the eyes of the Virgin who is metaphorically represented as an eagle: 'But Eagles eyes to brightest light aspire' (9). Southwell's use of the eagle metaphor condenses a number of associations. It both anticipates Mary's regal stature as Queen of Heaven, seen in the image of 'our princely Eagle' (12), and foregrounds her sinless state: compared with sinful man, her vision is strong, pure and clear. It was believed that the eagle could look at the sun without blinking; Nancy Pollard Brown and James H. McDonald gloss the phrase 'loftye glades' as 'beams of the clear light of heaven', commenting that the word 'glades' had, at the time, associations with flashes of lightning and tails from comets.[69] The

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[69] McDonald and Brown (eds.), *The Poems of Robert Southwell*, p. 123.

Virgin's eyes are thus set in direct contrast to the dazzled eyes of sinful man. The use of the eagle is also an allusion to another Biblical text traditionally associated with the assumption – that of the vision of the Woman Clothed with the Sun who, in escaping from a dragon, is transformed:

> And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert.[70]

There is a sense overall in Southwell's poem of the Virgin being lifted out of a world of concupiscence; a very similar effect is created by the escape from the dragon in Revelation. The submerged allusion to the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Southwell's eagle metaphor could therefore be read as a Catholic reclamation of this complex Biblical symbol.

The use of the metaphor of the eagle also anticipates the swiftness and lightness of Mary's assumption into heaven. This occurs in the third and final stanza of the poem, where the poem becomes lush, lyrical and beautiful. The allusion to the Song of Songs in 'spouse to her love ascendes' (13), links the imagery of this stanza with the Bible's most evocative of love poems. The duality in this stanza is not one of opposition, between the Virgin and concupiscent man, but one of congruence between the Virgin, variously represented as 'gemm', 'spouse', 'prince' and 'Queene', and the heavenly treasures that await her – 'worth', 'love', 'throne' and 'kinge'. As the Virgin departs, the imagery is that of a love poem, and in the swiftness and lightness of tone, one is reminded of the Virgin's assumption into heaven in Southwell's earlier Latin poem.

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[70] Revelation 12.14. I am grateful to Dr Monika Smialkowska for alerting me to this allusion.

Up until this point in the poem we have been witnessing Mary's assumption

and the poem's swiftness of movement has meant we have been, to a certain extent,

travelling with her. But in the final couplet, the perspective of the poem shifts, and

we are left behind:

Earth rendreth upp her undeserved praye

Heaven claymes the right and beares the prize awaye. (17-18)

The image of the Virgin as the personified earth's 'undeserved praye' who is borne

away into heaven strikes an uneasy, almost predatory note, particularly after the lush

beauty of the lines which have preceded it. Southwell is asking the reader to

contemplate man's unworthiness compared with the Virgin here – but these lines can

also be read as a commentary on the dark ages of the end of the sixteenth century, a

time in which such images of the Virgin's assumption and coronation had been

ripped out of the liturgy. It is the Virgin's triumph – but is it ours? We remain on the

dark ground, shut off from the blazing light of heaven. Noting the overall celebratory

tone of the poem, Waller observes Southwell's triumphalist stance against a

Protestant universe that had 'been emptied of superstition'.[71] But the end of the poem

is also about loss, as Southwell does not allow the reader to share in this triumph.

Brownlow says of Southwell's most famous poem 'The Burning Babe' that it begins

with a vision and ends with a disappearance. The same could be said of 'The

Assumption of Our Lady', as the Virgin disappears from our view.[72]

Anne Sweeney has argued that in this poem, Southwell's imagery is 'quoting'

a painting of the Virgin's assumption by Giuseppe Valeriano in the Madonna Chapel

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[71] Waller, *The Virgin Mary*, p. 119.
[72] Brownlow, *Robert Southwell,* p. 120.

of the Gesù [figure 1].[73] This fascinating reading does require a degree of

qualification: it is unlikely that Southwell saw Valeriano's completed painting before

he left for England in 1586. However, he may well have viewed a cartoon, and his

time in the Sodality in Rome would have given him access to similar images of the

Virgin's assumption. If we view the poem as an expression of a visual illustration, it

becomes an example of *ut pictura poesis* in an arrestingly pure form, and the

polemical nature of Southwell's work is foregrounded. He is using his verse to create

for the inner eye a type of vision that the iconoclast had destroyed. In the final two

lines, however, poem and painting part ways, for in Southwell's verse the Virgin

disappears. The poem commenced with a conditional 'if'; from the start, Southwell

is showing his awareness that the assumption and coronation of the Virgin represent a

contentious subject, an argument to be won. Anthony Cousins's observation that

Southwell 'mingles the culture of post-Tridentine Europe with that of his homeland'

seems pertinent here.[74] The absence of the Virgin at the end of the poem sharpens the

politicised subtext of her representation, and its last two lines have all the resonance

of recusant verse of exile and tears. On the surface, this poem is far less polemical

than the Latin '*Poema de Assumptione BVM'*, but beneath the surface, we find an

equally acute awareness of the contentious nature of the image of the Virgin's

assumption.

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[73] Sweeney, *Snow in Arcadia*, pp. 46-47. The paintings themselves are described in Gauvin Alexander
Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 247-249.
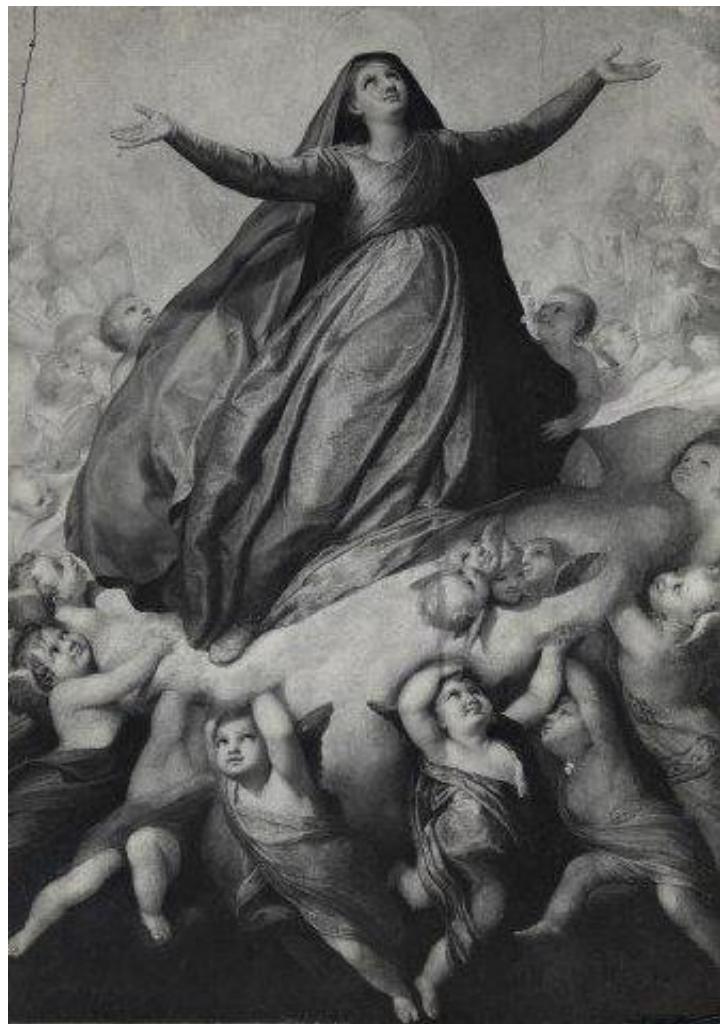[74] Cousins, *Catholic Religious Poets*, p. 71.

Figure 1. Giuseppe Valeriano, *Assumption of the Virgin*. Oil on panel, Chapel of the Madonna della Strada, Church of the Gesù, Rome (1586-1588). Reproduced in Gauvin Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, plate 109.

The Virgin's 'faultles cors' and Southwell's representations of death

In his English assumption poem, Southwell's description of the Virgin's body forms

a striking image:

> Though thralles of sinne lye lingring in their grave
>
> Yet faultles cors with soule rewarde must have. (5-6)

These lines encapsulate the movement of the whole poem – the swift flight of the

Virgin's assumption, and the sluggish torpor of the sinful reader, who is ultimately

left to 'lye lingring in their grave'. Inherent in the image of the Virgin's 'faultles cors' is the belief that not only is Mary's body free from sin, but that it also has not been polluted or penetrated by disease or wounds. My final exploration of Southwell's poetic depictions of the Virgin takes death as its theme, and centres around the way in which this image of purity of the Virgin's flesh contrasts with a constant motif of fragile and vulnerable flesh which runs through Southwell's poetry. Through this juxtaposition, Southwell's poetry intersects with English Catholic experiences in a different way, by obliquely invoking the experience of martyrdom.

This contrast is best demonstrated through analysis of a single poem. One of the ways in which Southwell's sequence departs so radically from the Dominican rosary is that the crucifixion of Christ is not included within it. Instead, the vulnerability of Christ's human flesh is represented in a poem entitled 'The Circumsision' (p. 7). Here, the reader is encouraged to look through images of the baby Christ's body, wounded in a Jewish ritual, to the crucifixion of Christ. The Virgin thus shifts from the concerned mother of her baby son to the *Mater Dolorosa* who experiences her son's pain with a synaesthetic intensity. The effect is similar to that of the *pentimento* in painting, where one can see a visible trace of another, earlier painting beneath the layers of paint on the canvas:

> With weeping eyes his mother rev'd his smart
>
> If bloode from him, teares rann from her as fast
>
> The knife that cutt his fleshe did perce her hart
>
> The payne that Jesus felt did Marye tast. (12-15)

The image of the knife cutting Mary's heart alludes to St Luke's gospel, where the ageing Simeon prophesies that Mary herself will become a martyr with the words 'And thy own soul a sword shall pierce'.[75] The Augustinian view of this was that the sword represented Mary's grief as she watched her son die.[76] In the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux connected this prophecy with the bitter laments of Mary as *Mater Dolorosa*, grieving at the foot of her son's cross, and exhorted worshippers to emulate Mary's spiritual martyrdom.[77] The image also encapsulates the contrast between the Virgin and Christ. The knife that cuts Christ's flesh is here real – but it pierces the Virgin's heart metaphorically. Whilst the son's martyred body is broken, penetrated and frail, the mother's remains pure and intact, leaking only tears, which have cleansing and purifying properties.[78] Southwell's representation of Mary's physical flesh as unscarred by wounds or disease is made all the more powerful by its marked contrast to the fragile flesh of her son, mutilated first by his circumcision and ultimately by his brutal death.

If we look deeper into the *pentimento* of the motif of Christ's broken and vulnerable human flesh it is also possible to see the image of the poet's own body, mutilated at Tyburn. In acknowledging this, one is not simply instilling the text with one's own macabre mental image of Southwell's execution: Southwell's awareness of his own likely martyrdom frequently breaks through his works. His prose work *An Epistle of Comfort*, for example, delivers a heady paean to martyrdom, with descriptions that are alive with contemporaneous language of torture and execution:

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[75] Luke 2.35.
[76] Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, p. 75.
[77] De Visscher, 'Marian Devotion in the Latin West', p. 182.
[78] Warner, *Alone,* pp. 221-223.

Let our adversaryes therefore loade us with the infamous titles of traytours,

and rebels…So lett them drawe us uppon hurdles, hange us, unbowel us

alyve, mangle us, boyle us, and sett our quarters uppon their gates, to be

meate for the byrdes of the ayre, as they use to handle rebels: we wil aunswere

them as the Christians of former persecutions have done.[79]

Southwell's poems, to use Brian Cummings' words, 'suggest beyond themselves,

without directly uttering it, the persecutory context of the poet's death'.[80]

The virtuosic poem 'Christ's bloody sweat' finds Southwell's speaker

exhorting God to make him a martyr in an impassioned apostrophe (p. 17):

> O sacred Fire come shewe thy force on me
>
> That sacrifice to Christe I maye retorne
>
> If withered wood for fuell fittest bee
>
> If stones and dust yf fleshe and blood will burne
>
> I withered am and stonye to all good.
>
> A sacke of dust a masse of fleshe and bloode.
>
> (19-24)

Davidson has shown how this poem typifies Southwell's encoded use of allusion,

with covert references to death on the scaffold, observing that in *imitatio Christi*,

Southwell here both accepts and anticipates his own death.[81] In the spirit of this

reading, one can see how Southwell's recusant readers must have been alert to the

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[79] Robert Southwell, *An Epistle of Comfort* (1587-8: Paris?), p. 133.
[80] Cummings, *Grammar and Grace*, p. 331.

[81] Davidson, *Universal Baroque*, pp. 177-178.

resonances of the image of 'a masse of fleshe and bloode', seeing in the words a reiteration of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, presented with characteristically Southwellian rich economy. Within this image is also an acknowledgement of the physical frailty of human flesh; it is one of many examples of the motif of broken and battered bodies that runs through Southwell's poetry.

At Southwell's trial, the Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, John Popham, baited him with accusations of hubris for stating that at thirty-three, he was the same age as his Saviour. Southwell's reply was that he was 'a worme of the earth, and the work and creature of Christ, his maker.'[82] But the link between the death of a Catholic martyr and the death of Christ is hard to ignore. In the line 'that sacrifice to Christe I maye retorne', Southwell conceptually conflates his own anticipated martyrdom with that of Christ. His awareness that his own earthly life was likely to end, like Christ's, in an undignified and brutal penetration of frail human flesh, is painfully acute. Geoffrey Hill has commented that the 'object contemplated' for Southwell in Ignatian meditational practice 'was most frequently and formally the Passion of Christ; but there can be little doubt that for Southwell it was also his own almost inevitable martyrdom'.[83] Brownlow describes the execution of an Elizabethan priest as having an 'implied script' of a Passion play only recently forbidden, as the martyr becomes 'the central figure in a reenactment of the passion and crucifixion of Christ, complete with bystanders, apostles, soldiers and faithful women'.[84] The influence of Michel Foucault is keenly felt in these words: Foucault's analysis of 'the spectacle of the scaffold' has made descriptions of the theatricality of the Elizabethan execution a critical commonplace. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault observes that

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[82] Pollen, *Unpublished Documents*, p. 334.
[83] Hill, 'Absolute Reasonableness', p. 19. See also Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 128-131.
[84] Brownlow, *Robert Southwell,* p. 23.

the sovereign used the body of the executed criminal to exercise power over his or her subjects, but that the ritual of the execution could also be a potentially subversive force.[85] These tensions are particularly acute in the example of the execution of a Catholic priest, dying for the Mass but executed for treason against the crown.

While Southwell was in Rome, he had witnessed the emotional outpouring that followed the execution of Edmund Campion in 1581. Alice Dailey has shown that the way in which the state branded Campion a traitor at his trial represented a pervasive and insidious threat to the Jesuit mission.[86] On the Continent, however, a powerful propaganda machine was at work, overturning the Protestant narrative of traitor on the scaffold into one of triumph for the Catholic martyr.[87] In 1583, the artist Nicolò Circignani painted the chapel walls of the English College in Rome with thirty-five frescoes, which depicted ancient and contemporary English martyrs. Circignani's visual depiction of Campion's death shows the executioners in Roman dress, vividly conflating Campion's martyrdom with the martyrdom of Christ.[88] Campion's face, like those of all the martyrs in Circignani's images, shows a stillness and calm. The paintings are an exercise in the *ars moriendi*; their aim is to allow the death of the martyrs to ascend into what Alice Dailey terms a 'suprahistorical narrative that connects Christ, the martyrs of the early Church, and the contemporary victim through typological reiteration.'[89] As tutor at the college at the time,

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[85] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 57-59.

[86] Alice Dailey, *The English Martyr* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), pp. 98-134. For a discussion of the lines between treason and religion see also Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 233.

[87] Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, p. 113

[88] Circignani's paintings were subsequently published in plate form by Giovanni Baptista de Cavelleriis in *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (Rome: Ex Officina Bartholomaei Grassi, 1584), plate 33. See also Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism*, pp. 131-132. For the use of Roman dress in Renaissance images of martyrdom and its relation to the persecution of early Christians in Rome, see Anne Dillon, *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 40.

[89] Dailey, *The English Martyr*, p. 100. For the *ars moriendi* see Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 241.

Southwell would have seen these paintings every day, and they became psychological

and spiritual preparation for martyrdom.[90] The circulation of accounts of the death of

martyrs such as Campion, both orally and in manuscript, was pivotal to the cult of the

martyr but Circignani's frescoes demonstrated that art also had a role to play in this

narrative.[91]

In England too, art was playing a similar part in memorialising Campion in

the form of poetry written about him. Most notable was Henry Walpole's eulogy

'Why doe I use my paper, ynke and pen' which was circulated prolifically in

manuscript form; this had, as we have seen, an important place in Sir John

Harington's manuscript collection of poems.[92] In a poem which ironically itself

functions as a way of keeping Campion's memory alive, Walpole claims that the

'paper, ynke and pen' that he uses to write his poem are in fact inadequate. It is

Campion's martyred blood that becomes the ink of the poem, speaking as eloquently

as the man himself, as his execution serves 'to write those precious guiftes in bloode'

(110). Campion's body here intersects with language as Walpole uses his poetic

skills to beautify and empower the mangled flesh of the martyr. Southwell's works

present similar paradoxes of beautiful savagery. 'The Flight into Egypt', a poem

which forms part of Southwell's sequence, focuses on the cruelty of Herod's

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[90] Pilarz, *Mission of Literature,* pp. 85-194, Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom,* p. 225.

[91] Dillon, *Michelangelo*, is a study of a broadsheet which graphically details the martyrdom of English Carthusians in 1530, revealing the influences of Michelangelo Buonarroti upon the broadsheet's 'structure, content and intention' (p. 9). Dillon shows how this broadsheet became the template for images of English Catholic martyrdom, including Circignani's frescoes (pp. 299-312). See also Shell, *Oral Culture*, pp. 114-148, and Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, pp. 66-94. For the transition from oral accounts of executions to manuscript circulation see Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom*, p. 77.

[92] All references are to Kilroy, *Campion*, which includes a transcription of the poem from the Arundel-Harington manuscript (pp. 195-207). In Chapter 3, Kilroy gives a detailed exploration of the manuscript transmission of Walpole's poem. Select and non-controversial verses from Walpole's poem 'Why do I use my paper, ynke and pen' were also set to music by William Byrd. See Kilroy, *Campion*, pp. 64-65.

massacre of the innocents (p. 9). Here, the broken flesh of the slaughtered babies is described as 'fayre garlandes', as their slashed throats sing God's praise (14).

As he faced his death with patience and heroism, Southwell must have been aware that his every word and move would construct a narrative that would be told and retold. It is reported that he repeated three times the prayer favoured by the Catholic martyr, '*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*' ('Into thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit').[93] Thus his dying words echoed those of his saviour.[94] But he was also heard to pray to the Virgin: '*Sancta Maria Mater Dei, et omni Sancti Dei orate et intercedite pro me*' ('Holy Mary, mother of God, and all the Saints, pray and intercede for me').[95] In doing so, he was using the name of the Virgin to foster a sense of community and identity amongst English Catholics.[96] A few years after Southwell's death, in 1605 and later 1607, the recusant composer William Byrd published his *Gradualia*, a collection of music for Catholic liturgical devotions. Included in the *Gradualia* was the motet '*In Manus Tuas*', the setting for which is a conflation of the titular prayer with '*Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis.*' It is thought that this unliturgical conflation of phrases from the Compline short responsory with the Marian prayer was an occluded message of remembrance of the words spoken on the scaffold by martyrs such as Southwell and Henry Garnet.[97]

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[93] Executed Catholics including John Short, William Filbie, Cuthbert Maine and Mary Queen of Scots reportedly used this prayer at the point of their death. See Craig Monson, 'Byrd, the Catholics and the Motet', in Dolores Pesce (ed.), *Hearing the Motet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 370.

[94] Luke 23.46.

[95] Foley, *Records,* p. 374. The main manuscript source for this is Stonyhurst, Anglia A.ii.1., a manuscript by an eye-witness which was copied by Richard Verstegan in 1595. See Devlin, *Life*, pp. 323 and 358, note.i.

[96] For the speech at the scaffold as a way of fostering Catholic communities, see McLain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 148-152.

[97] The scholarship of Joseph Kerman has been seminal in conflating Byrd's motets with occluded references to the plight of English Catholics. See Joseph Kerman, *The Masses and Motets of William Byrd* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981). Kerman's research was furthered by Craig Monson in an excellent essay which argues that Byrd's familiarity with both Southwell and Garnet was a driving force behind the unusual wording of '*In Manus Tuas*': 'Byrd, the Catholics and the Motet', pp. 348-374.

Byrd's motet, like Walpole's poem and Circignani's frescoes, is an example of the integral role that art could play in the construction of the narrative of martyrology. Southwell's own poems, awash with beautifully crafted allusions of the frailty of human flesh and circulated widely in print and manuscript after his death, ultimately functioned in a similar way. They became, to use Marotti's phrase, his 'literary remains', combining with the traditional martyrological narrative of heroism on the scaffold to keep his memory alive.[98]

If we look again at Southwell's descriptions of the Virgin's assumption in the light of this complex representation of death and the frail human body, the comparisons become stark. The Virgin is presented as pure and intact, a paradigm not only of sexual purity but also the physical purity of the body: her physical flesh is unscarred by wounds or disease. In '*Poema de Assumptione*' she is described as terrifying Death because her pure body shuts off access to deadly disease. The contrast between this and the repeated motif of fragile and mutilated flesh in Southwell's poetry is a marked one. Southwell's acute awareness of the physical vulnerability of the human flesh is a way of exploring what Caraman describes as a 'seam of meditation that time and time again brought him comfort', that God allowed human flesh to be mutilated and mangled only to make it perfect and beautiful in its second casting in heaven:[99]

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[98] Marotti uses the phrase in an essay entitled 'Southwell's Remains' in *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, pp. 9-31. For decades after his death, Southwell's poems were circulated in manuscript form by Catholics. They feature prominently, for example, in Constance Aston Fowler's verse miscellany of the 1630s, and in the Catholic verse miscellany Bod.Eng.Poet.b.5. See Helen Hackett, 'Women and Catholic Manuscript Networks in Seventeenth-Century England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 1094-1124, and Cedric C. Brown, 'Recusant Community and Jesuit Mission in Parliament Days', *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 33, *Medieval and Early Modern Miscellanies and Anthologies* (2003), pp. 290-315.
[99] Caraman, *A Study in Friendship*, p. 11.

And for our bodyes, they shalbe of most comely & gracious feature, bewteous and lovely, healthful without al weaknes, alwais in youth flower and prime of theyr force, personable of shape, as nimble as oure thought, subject to noe penall impression, uncapable of greefe, as cleere as christall, as brighte as the Sunne, and as able to finde passage thorough heaven, earth, or any other material stopp, as in the liquid and yeldinge ayre.[100]

The Virgin's body needs no second casting. In '*Poema de Assumptione*' Death's battle line makes a last request that it be allowed to dissolve Mary's body: '*Demum acrius instat/ Ut saltem extinctum liceat dissolvere corpus*' ('At last, it urges with particular avidity that it should at least be permitted to give the body dissolution', 214-5). God does not grant permission, and the Virgin rises to heaven escaping putrefaction and decay. In 'The Assumption of Our Lady' the description of her body as 'faultles cors' underlines how she rises to heaven inviolate.

Southwell also demonstrates how Mary's death is a painless one, explicitly contrasting it with both the death of Christ and his own anticipated end. In 'The Death of Our Ladie', the Virgin's death is juxtaposed against man's: 'Death was to her a frende to us a foe' (9), and perhaps an awareness of the way in which the Virgin's painless death contrasts with Southwell's motif of broken flesh gives added impetus to the Petrarchan language that this same poem uses to present the Virgin as physically beautiful. In '*Poema de Assumptione*,*'* Southwell gives God the following words:

> *et violenta doloris*

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[100] Southwell, *Epistle of Comfort*, pp. 191-192.

vis nulla impediat, sit summa exire voluptas.

 (209-10)

(And let no violent force of pain be an impediment. Let it be the

greatest pleasure for her to pass away.)

The Elizabethan traitor's death of hanging, drawing and quartering represented an

appalling violation of human flesh, emasculated, disembowelled and ultimately

dismembered. Nothing could be further from the perfection and beauty of the

Virgin's intact body as she is assumed to heaven.

Conclusions

This exploration of Southwell's use of iconography of the assumption has revealed a

representation of the Virgin Mary that is as polemical as it is devotional. Southwell's

pragmatic poetry also actively encourages devotion to the Virgin through its

embodiment of Tridentine values and its repeated affirmation of her cosmological

significance. But although many of his poems are shot through with a blazing sense

of devotion to the Virgin, Southwell does not consistently conceptualise her as an

idealised alternative to his savage satire of secular love. This adds to the sense that

when examining Southwell's relationship with the Virgin, one frequently encounters

imagery that connotes separateness and absence. It is there in 'The Assumption of

Our Lady', a poem which leaves the reader ultimately alone, and in '*Poema de*

Assumptione BVM', which presents a mute and ultimately evasive picture of the

Virgin. It could be argued that in his constant references to the Virgin's absence, this

Counter-Reformation, Baroque poet presents us with poetry that is in fact English

indeed, speaking for a sense of loss felt by recusant Catholics.

I began this chapter with the story of Southwell's death because his is so often a story that is told in reverse.[101] He landed on England's shores in 1586 in the almost certain knowledge that his mission would end in martyrdom. Southwell's work reveals an awareness of this through its overriding preoccupation with man's physical fragility and mortality, one which has a profound effect upon his very complex portrayal of the Virgin. One of his most sustained representations of the Virgin's beauty is that of her immaculate flesh as she is assumed into heaven, escaping painful death and earthly putrefaction. The Virgin's separateness from man is thus foregrounded, and her triumph over death – swift, beautiful and too pure for the eyes of sinful man – is revealed as radically different from Southwell's own.

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[101] Gerard Kilroy makes the same observation about Campion's life in *Campion*, p. 7.

EPILOGUE

THE ASSUMPTION AND CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE CAROLINE PERIOD

What's past is prologue

The Tempest (2.i.245)

The journey of this thesis is coming to a close. It has taken us from the pulpit at St Paul's Cross to Tyburn's bloody tree. In terms of miles this is a modest distance, but in terms of belief systems we have travelled a long way, from the Protestant polemic of the pulpit to the Marian devotion of the Jesuit mission. In between, has been a spectrum of many confessional shades: we have encountered apostasy, conversion and elusive confessional standpoints. An analysis of iconography of the assumption and coronation of the Virgin has thus given us an insight into the complexity of belief systems in post-Reformation England. This thesis is not attempting to refute that during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, Catholicism moved from the mainstream to the margins. With this, a set of universally accepted belief systems which privileged the Virgin as mediatrix were lost. But my research has added to the growing body of evidence that refutes previously-held maxims that iconography of the Virgin simply disappeared in the Reformation: the reality is far more complex. It could be argued that the marginalisation of the Virgin Mary's image made it more political, more polemical, particularly in the case of extra-scriptural aspects of Mariology such as the assumption and coronation. We have seen how excoriations of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven in pulpit and religious tract led to the construction of

the sham Queen of Heaven figure. I have shown how this figure exists in the writings in Curione and Spenser, but its presence must surely be felt in other works.

In the Introduction of this thesis I described the image of the Virgin as an empty image, one that has adapted and changed over the centuries. It is a testament to the infinite variety of Mary as a symbol that this thesis has encountered so many different aspects of early modern culture. The Virgin's assumption and coronation may seem at first glance to be limited aspects of Mariology. However, they have been a springboard into investigations which have revealed how the image of the Virgin interconnected with many diverse aspects of early modern culture, from the relationship between breastfeeding and religious instruction to the cult of martyrdom. Through the writings of Sir John Harington, Henry Constable and Elizabeth Cary, we have seen how the Virgin's presence was felt in court politics and in discourses on gender, while in different ways, recusant rosary books and the poetry of Robert Southwell have revealed that iconography of the Virgin played a significant role in the formulation of a Counter-Reformation aesthetic which was governed by the peculiarities of the English Catholic experience. In a thesis which argues for the continued cultural and ideological relevance of the Virgin in post-Reformation culture, this diversity forms perhaps the most persuasive argument of all.

In this Epilogue, my intention is to look forward, showing how an awareness of these complex and nuanced responses in late Tudor and early Stuart England can enrich our understanding of attitudes to the Virgin in the Caroline period. One reason for finishing the thesis in 1616 was a realisation that to encompass the end of James's reign and the years leading to England's Civil Wars would be to enter an era so rich and complex that it would constitute a whole new body of research in itself. In my Introduction, I observed that in selecting writers to discuss in this thesis, I heard the

murmur of voices of untold stories. As I embarked upon research for the Epilogue, this murmur crescendoed. The remaining pages of this thesis will only gesture towards the 1630s and early 1640s, and I am acutely aware that the observations I make are brief. I will give three snapshots of ways in which the Marian image was deployed in this period, and I am dipping in and out of texts by writers who all have a far more detailed story to tell.

I will firstly explore how in a work entitled *Maria Triumphans*, the Catholic writer N.N. used language of Mariology to praise England's queen consort Henrietta Maria, in a text which shows that the Virgin's place as Queen of Heaven could still be the subject of vehement debate. I will then show how in the writing of the Puritan William Prynne, the concept of the Queen of Heaven as a sham or an impostor was given a new impetus. Finally, I will turn to affirmative representations of the Virgin's assumption in the works of the Laudian writer Anthony Stafford and Catholic convert Richard Crashaw. Through this I will acknowledge how the return to liturgy and ceremony championed by William Laud had a significant impact upon representations of the Virgin's image.

Queen of Heaven and Queen of England: Henrietta Maria and the Virgin Mary

As 1616 is the year of Shakespeare's death, it is often viewed as the end of a 'Golden Age' of literature. Another event occurred this year which seems relatively insignificant, but in fact had ramifications for the country's future: 1616 marked the investiture of James's second son Charles as Prince of Wales, and from then on the young prince began to take a more active political role.[1] Thus on James I's death in

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[1] Stewart, *The Cradle King*, p. 280.

1625, Charles became king. It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the extent to

which the personality of the monarch was a contributing factor to Civil Wars whose

origins are undeniably complex.[2] There is little doubt, however, that religious

conflict was one of these origins, and that during Charles I's reign, sectarian unrest

was acute.[3] The years covered in the main body of the thesis may have marked the

final pendulum swing in England from Catholicism to Protestantism, but this did not

mean the end of England's Reformation, which was still viewed by many as partial

and incomplete.[4] One focus of sectarian unrest was Charles's Catholic Queen,

Henrietta Maria. As Charles's reign progressed and his relations with parliament

grew ever more strained, the debate over the Virgin's role as mother and mediatrix

became intertwined with a political anxiety about the influence exerted by the queen

consort, Henrietta Maria. Her Catholicism was far more conspicuous than that of the

previous queen consort, Anna of Denmark, and she was associated with the Virgin

Mary both in her name and in her shows of devotion.[5] During her reign, she acquired

numerous pictures of the Virgin, and her private chapel at Somerset House was

dedicated to Mary.[6] In the 1630s, Capuchin friars served in the Queen's Chapel; they

came from an order known for its zealous devotion to the Virgin, promulgating a

fervent Neoplatonic view that love of Mary, as a mirror of perfection, could lead man

to God.[7] It is therefore perhaps no surprise that this decade saw a flowering of

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[2] Speculation about the consequences of Charles's succession for the Church are discussed by Kevin
Sharpe in *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 279-284.
[3] See for example Robert Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English
Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 146-67. For the harsh application of penal laws in Caroline
England see Alan Dures, *English Catholicism 1558-1624* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), pp. 70-79.
[4] Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800*, *passim*.
[5] Martin Joseph Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press,
1962), pp. 43-44.
[6] Jessica Bell, 'The Three Marys', in Erin Griffey (ed.), *Henrietta Maria* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008),
pp. 111-112.
[7] Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 75-
109.

Marian devotional books.[8] For Catholic writers, Henrietta Maria's Catholicism and her associations with the Virgin gave expression to an epideictic outpouring in praise of both her faith, and her role as an earthly mediatrix.

N.N.'s *Maria Triumphans* (1635), is a particularly lavish example of how the vocabulary of Mariology could be used in a politicised epideictic.[9] In his dedication, N.N. directly equates Henrietta Maria with the Virgin, in her intercessory role as Queen of Heaven, and the language of a mother's influence here combines with the language of queenship:

> And thus will Mary intercede for Mary; The Queene of Heaven, for a great Queene upon earth; the mother of our Celestiall King, for the mother of our future terrene King: And finally, by your protecting & pleading for it, the Immaculate Virgin will (in a more full manner) become an Advocate for You, her Advocate.[10]

Henrietta Maria's role as queen consort here mirrors the Virgin's role as Queen of Heaven. N.N. creates a sense of symbiosis with each Mary interceding for the other: the Virgin, in her role as mediatrix, will intercede for her dutiful servant Henrietta Maria, but Henrietta too, 'protecting and pleading' to the King of Great Britain, will be an advocate for the Virgin, here symbolic of the Catholic faith as a whole.

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[8] Danielle Clarke, 'The Iconography of the Blush', in Chedgzoy, Hansen and Trill (eds.), *Voicing Women*, pp. 111-128.

[9] Observing that 'N.N.' was often used as a pseudonym for an author of a controversial religious book, Veevers believes that *Maria Triumphans* may have been written by the Jesuit priest Laurence Anderton. See *Images of Love*, p. 102.

[10] N.N., *Maria Triumphans* (St Omer: English College Press, 1635), p. 5. All further references will be to this edition.

Henrietta Maria's marriage to Charles I was considered by Catholic Europe to be a significant Counter-Reformation alliance: Pope Urban VIII, for example, who sanctioned the union, believed that he was taking a step towards the restoration of Catholicism in England, and actively encouraged the young queen to proselytise.[11]

The dedication of *Maria Triumphans* also places England's Queen consort at the vanguard of this conflict. In it, N.N. says that his purpose is to defend the Virgin:

> The subject thereof is, to vindicate (so farre as in me lyeth) the Honour of the most Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, from the Indignities, which she suffereth from the envenomed Tonges, & Pens of our *Precisians*. (p. 4)

He is, he claims here, fighting the Virgin's corner: defending her from the polemical tongue of the Puritan. This statement of intent is embedded within epideictic praise which yokes Henrietta Maria to the Virgin Mary; thus one feels that N.N.'s vindication of the Queen of Heaven will also vindicate England's queen consort. There are political shadows to these words, when one considers the vitriol that was directed against the earthly Queen as well as the heavenly. As Danielle Clarke observes, while the increase in devotional texts about the Virgin Mary in the 1630s can be linked to Henrietta Maria, attacks on Marian devotion were, conversely, intertwined with attacks on the Queen.[12] Frances Dolan has argued more specifically that debates over Henrietta Maria's role as Queen consort, and the immoderate

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[11] Havran, *Catholics in Caroline England*, p. 25; Charles Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 171.
[12] Clarke, 'Iconography of the Blush', pp. 111-128. For examples of the level of vitriol directed against Henrietta Maria, see Havran, *Catholics in Caroline England*, p. 56.

influence she exerted over her husband, are interwoven with debates over devotion to the Virgin.[13]

Arguments such as these gather in intensity when one takes into consideration that the language used against Henrietta Maria both rehearses and revisits many of the Protestant anxieties about the Queen of Heaven as a dangerously empowered woman that we have seen in the opening chapters of the thesis. The Queen of Heaven was still being demonised on the pulpit and in printed tracts at this time. The trope of Jeremiah 44 continued to be a symbol of female disobedience, and warnings against the Queen of Heaven as an overbearing mother abounded.[14] What has shifted is the context of these references. Instead of a subtext which criticises England's Virgin Queen or James's Catholic consort, these references can now be placed in the context of a King whose relations with his parliament were in tatters, and a Queen consort who was young and impetuous and who overtly practised her Catholic faith.

N.N.'s text itself, like Curione's *Pasquine in a Traunce*, takes the form of a fictional dialogic discourse, this time between a Puritan preacher Mariamastix (scourge of Mary) and an imprisoned Catholic priest Mariadulus (servant of Mary).[15] The two meet in Mariadulus's prison cell, and spend an entire day debating the differences in their attitudes to the Virgin. The title of N.N.'s text leaves us in no doubt as to its writer's Catholic bias, and it is therefore not surprising that its characters are not presented in a neutral way. Throughout the debate Mariadulus –

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[13] Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, p. 101.

[14] Examples include John Evans, *The Sacrifice of a Contrite Heart in Teares, Meditations, and Prayers* (London: A.M[athewes] for Richard Hamond, 1630), p. 244, and John Stoughton, *Choice Sermons Preached Upon Selected Occasions, in Cambridge* (London : R.B[adger] for John Bellamie, Henry Overton, John Rothwell, and Ralph Smith, 1640), pp. 106-107.

[15] The name 'Mariamastix' is possibly an allusion to William Prynne's 1632 publication *Histrio-mastix*, which was widely thought to be an attack on Henrietta Maria. Mariamastix's blustering attitude may be a parody of Prynne's polemical manner: *Histrio-mastix* (London: E.A. and W.I. for Michael Sparke, 1633).

who, we are told, is bearing his imprisonment with fortitude – is the more learned of the two. He is furnished with eloquent answers, using both the scriptures and the teachings of Christian fathers as his evidence. Whenever pressed, Mariamastix's answers are often bluster, ranging from a defensive 'I will not dwell any longer' (p. 48) and 'I will proceed no further' (p. 52), to simply 'Tush' (p. 85).

In the course of the day they spend together, this fictional pair discusses many topics including the rosary, miracles, perpetual virginity and the naming of churches after the Virgin. They also argue about the Virgin's assumption: Mariamastix's contention is that the Virgin was conceived in original sin, whilst Mariadulus counters with a detailed intellectual argument that as the Virgin was preserved from sin, through God's grace she rose spotless after her death. The titles given to the Virgin are also a point of contention between them. Mariamastix levels the accusation that papists give the Virgin the title 'goddess' which is 'a manifest signe of your superstition, or rather Idolatry to Her' (pp. 80-81). Mariadulus has a number of eloquent replies to this, but perhaps his most interesting strand of argument is to look back to the reign of Elizabeth I and the practice of civil worship,[16] using Spenser's *Faerie Queene* as an example:

> We fynd some Poets in dedicating their Poems to their Prince, feare not for the tyme, to invest him, or her, with the Name of God or Goddesse. I will insist in Spenser, the chiefest English Poet in this age. He dedicating his Faery Queene, to Queene Elizabeth thus saluteth her: O Goddesse hevenly

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[16] For civil worship and arguments which justify veneration of Queen Elizabeth see Hackett, *Virgin Mother*, pp. 201-206.

bright, Mirrour of grace & Majesty divine, Great Lady of the Greatest Ile.

(p. 83)[17]

What man, he asks, 'carps at the Poet herein', or believes that Spenser was genuinely being idolatrous (p. 83)? This moderate view of Spenser from a Catholic writer may have had the effect of placating Protestant readers with a literary bent.

As well as Empress, the pair discuss the naming of the Virgin 'Queen of Heaven', and the Catholic priest Mariadulus expresses a sense of sadness at the Protestant reduction of the Virgin's role:

Mentioning our B. Lady, who is an Immaculate Virgin, the Queene of Heaven, an Instrument of Mans Redemption, the Mother of God, and of the Saviour of the World, they bluntly and rudely, without any further title of Honour, terme her (as now you here do) only Mary. (p.35)

'We Catholiks to pray to all saints,' Mariadulus proudly claims, 'and particularly to the most glorious Queene of Heaven' (p.86). Mariamastix's riposte is that this is idolatrous, and not in accordance with the Virgin's own wishes. Within his answer, the polarisation between Heaven's Queen and humble handmaid is clear:

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[17] Mariadulus quotes from stanza 4 of the Proem of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, lines 1-3.

You see, that she is content to call herselfe only a Handmayd according to her answere to the Angell, *ecce ancilla Domini*: And yet you Papists, will needes invest her with the title of a Queene. (p. 113)

Mariadulus's answer combines Mary's role as mother with that of Queen of Heaven. At many times, his arguments reveal a Christocentric vision; Mariadulus frequently reiterates that the Virgin is not to be worshipped separately. The titles and praises awarded to the Virgin, he is adamant, should be 'Relative to Christ' (p. 116); it is because she is Christ's mother that she deserves the title Queen of Heaven. Ultimately the two fail to come to a conclusion, suggesting that this text is doing something more complex than simple proselytising. Although N.N. claims victory for the debate on the Virgin's behalf by terming her *Maria Triumphans*, this is not a victory to which Mariamastix will ultimately admit, and Mariadulus does not succeed in converting him to the Catholic faith. What this fictional debate between a Puritan preacher and an imprisoned Catholic reveals is that conflicting representations of the Virgin could still be viewed with a sense of raw urgency, illuminating the gulf between the Puritan and the Catholic, and that the role of the Queen of Heaven was integral to this discourse.

William Prynne and the sham Queen of Heaven

We now turn from the voice of a Catholic writer to that of the Puritan writer William Prynne a man who, throughout his colourful life, wrote prolifically and often hysterically against Catholicism. Although *sui generis*, Prynne's writing is

recognised as displaying some Puritan attitudes writ colourfully large.[18] His

criticisms of Henrietta Maria as an earthly mediatrix show the extent to which the

language of Mariology could provide the polemicist with a vocabulary with which to

create a misogynistic and an anti-Catholic discourse:

> They [Catholics] had Queen Mary her selfe in the Kings own bed and bosome
>
> for their most powerfull Mediatrix, of whom they might really affirme in
>
> reference to his Majesty, what some of their popish Doctors have most
>
> blasphemously written of the Virgin Mary in relation to God and Christ. That
>
> all things are subject to the command of Mary, even God himselfe: That she is
>
> the Empresse and Queen of Heaven, and of greatest Authority in the
>
> Kingdome of Heaven.[19]

In 1642, Prynne gave full rein to his distaste for the image of the Queen of

Heaven in the unsavourily-titled *A Pleasant Purge for a Roman Catholic to Evacuate

His Evill Humors*.[20] This comprises one hundred epigrammatic poems in persistently

uniform rhyming couplets. Throughout, a tone of mischievous irony is sustained, in a

text that is darkly comic in several places. Early in it, there is a rhyme against the

prayer '*Ave Maria*':

> None but An Angell, not one Mortall Man

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[18] Caroline Hibbard argues that Prynne should be taken seriously 'as a representative of moderate public opinion'. See *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill NC: North Carolina University Press, 1983), pp. 239-42. Others such as William Lamont view Prynne's writings as a little more out on a limb. William Lamont, 'Prynne, William (1600–1669)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22854, site visited 16.03.13.

[19] William Prynne, *The Popish Royall Favourite* (London: Michael Spark Senior, 1643), p. 56.

[20] William Prynne, *A Pleasant Purge for a Roman Catholick To Evacuate His Evill Humours* (London: R.C. for Michael Sparke Senior, 1642). All further references will be to this edition.

Saluted her with Ave here: how can

You then (no Angels, but mere men) presume

The Angels Salutation to Assume?

And this great Queene of Heav'n greet thus? I feare

You are too bold with Him and Mary here,

First to Usurpe his words, and then to cry

Ave to this grande Queene Familiarly,

Without their leave or God's, as if you were

Their equals; til you be so, pray forbeare

Your Aves: Its not Manners, or Decent

For you with this grand Queene to Complement.

(sig. B2r)

Ironically assuming the Catholic position, Prynne argues that if the Virgin is a 'grande Queene', then surely it is unwise to be so familiar. The angel only said his '*Ave*' once, he continues – so why repeat it all the time? This poem characterises the whole text with its uniform doggerel rhymes presented in a mocking tone which uses logic to belittle.

Some of Prynne's images of the Queen of Heaven are as familiar as they are startling. He frequently deploys polemical tropes which we have seen were firmly

established in late Tudor and early Stuart writing. This is perhaps a self-conscious decision, as there is often a sense in his writing that he views himself as someone who is preserving Elizabethan authority.[21] One verse against representations of the Virgin Mary has the following description:

> On, and against, Popish Pictures of the virgin Mary as a Queene, sitting on a Throne with a Triple Crowne on her head, and holding Christ, painted like a sucking Infant, in her Armes; and on the Reliques of her milke which they keepe and shew. (sig. E4r)

Here, the Virgin is the Queen of Heaven but the 'Triple Crowne' on her head equates her directly with the pejorative, feminised iconography of both the papacy, and the Whore of Babylon.

Prynne's doggerel against the Virgin Mary pours across the ensuing pages. He applies the realism of timescales to lampoon the figure of the *Virgo lactans*, seen here in elevated glory as the Queen of Heaven suckling her son. Prynne uses all the prolixity of his legal training to present a variety of arguments about the inappropriateness of iconography of the Virgin suckling Christ. The first is aimed at the Virgin's elevated state:

> It is not decent, fit for Queene, nor Lady:
>
> With them it's out of fashion; thou wilt shame

---

[21] Lamont, 'Prynne', *ODNB*. In *Histrio-Mastix*, Prynne refers several times to *The Anatomie of Abuses*, the 1583 attack on the stage by the Puritan Phillip Stubbes. See Prynne, *Histrio-mastix*, pp. 69. 71.

Thy selfe with these, they will thee taxe and blame:

Wer't thou no Lady, Queene, as heretofore,

Thou might'st doe this, but now not doe it more

Since Queene and Lady too.

(sig. E4r)

In her elevated Catholic role as 'Queen' and 'Lady', Prynne argues, is it socially appropriate for the Virgin to be suckling her son? This statement is layered with irony if one considers the Puritan emphasis on maternal breastfeeding, and the attitude of many Puritans towards upper class women who employed wet-nurses.[22] Prynne then disingenuously applies human constraints of time to the ontological: the child Christ, he argues comically, is surely old enough to be weaned:

Shall he be still a suckling, or a foole

To sucke so long? Tis time he were at Schoole.

(sig. E4v)

Encapsulated in this mocking piece of bathos are some familiar anxieties. The Catholic Church is ridiculed for its elevation of the Virgin to Queen of Heaven. But as Christ is kept suspended in this state of infantile dependency, so the Virgin's role

---

[22] See chapter 5, note 62.

as Queen regnant is artificially extended. Prynne's Romish Virgin here is seen in her

peevish, power-hungry incarnation:

> No sure; I feare his Mother is content
>
> To keepe him still, an Infant, that she may
>
> The better rule, and make him her obey:
>
> Were he but growne once unto mans estate,
>
> Her Regency would be quite out of date.
>
> Men would no longer to her pray, and say,
>
> Command thy Sonne, make him thee to obey,
>
> Now shew thy selfe a Mother, would no more
>
> Be heard, few would her ayde, or grace implore,
>
> But his alone, whom Papists now passe by
>
> Because a Babe, and worship, honour, Eye
>
> His Mother, more than him.
>
> (sig. F1r)

This representation of the Queen of Heaven holds with it an interesting view of

queenship, and replays many familiar tropes. The Virgin is here a queen regnant who

is able to exercise her power over her son whilst he is still an infant. Christ must be

kept 'a little suckling' so that this corrupt rule can continue, for if he grew to adulthood he would rule and overturn corruption. Prynne blames the Church of Rome for this monstrous creation of the Queen of Heaven. In Rome, he says, images of the Queen of Heaven with the infant Christ child are everywhere.

Having presented the Virgin in this way, Prynne then adds a caveat which is also familiar: this shrewish woman is, of course, not the real Virgin Mary but an impostor, created by the false images of the Romish faith:

But Mary, thou art full of innocence,

Not guilty of these crimes; its Romes offence

Thus to abuse thee, and thy Sonne, and make

Him still a Babe; thou from him thus to take

His rule, Crowne, Kingdome.

(sig. F1v)

The construction of the Virgin's image in Prynne's text is both fascinating and highly unstable. We have the sham Virgin in all her peevish and power-hungry glory, and the invective against the feminised Rome echoes invective against the Virgin, who in wearing the triple crown collapses into the image both of the papacy and of the Whore of Babylon. Prynne's tactic throughout this text is to use unerring logic to express the inexpressible. His morally-suspect Queen of Heaven is of course a sham. At the end we find the humble, submissive and godly Virgin, but is this too little too

late? Prynne has created such a powerful image of the Virgin as an overbearing mother that it is difficult to disentangle the mute and humble Protestant model from this. Prynne repeatedly states that this sham Virgin Mary is a creation of the papacy, which is also feminised. His image of the sham Queen of Heaven invests this particular aspect of the iconography of the Virgin with the immediacy of the Puritan attack against the threat of Rome. It illuminates how Marian iconography continued to be both protean and unstable.

Catholic or Laudian assumptions? Anthony Stafford and Richard Crashaw

Rome, however, was not the only focus of Prynne's ire: an enemy closer to home was the Arminian prelate William Laud, who advocated a return to orthodoxy and ceremony within the Anglican Church. In 1637, Prynne was arraigned for sedition, and suffered the grisly punishment of having the words 'S' and 'L' , for 'Seditious Libeller' branded on his cheeks. In a subsequent poem Prynne ascribed his wounds with the oppositional meaning of '*Stigmata Laudis'* or 'Laud's Scars'. His successful manipulation of the semiotics of martyrdom meant that for many he became a cult hero of the Parliamentary cause, with Archbishop Laud cast as the tyrant.[23] The 1630s are notable for the rise in influence of Laud, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633 and remained in this influential position during the personal rule of Charles I. Often a target of Puritan attacks, Laud was executed during Cromwell's protectorate.[24] Laud's hostility towards Puritanism, and his love of liturgy and ceremony, meant that he was often accused of crypto-Catholicism, ironic accusations

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[23] Carlton, *William Laud*, pp. 122-124; Andrew McRae, 'Stigmatizing Prynne', in Ian Atherton and Julie Sanders (eds.), *The 1630s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 171-184.
[24] Anthony Milton, 'Laud, William (1573–1645)', *ODNB,*
http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16112, site visited 16.03.13; Carlton, *William Laud*, pp. 111-131. See also Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*.

when one considers his hostility towards court Catholics in particular. My final

sources in this Epilogue are two affirmative representations of the Virgin's

assumption, from Anthony Stafford and Richard Crashaw. Both were influenced by

Laudianism, and their works illustrate viewpoints that were diametrically opposed to

that of the Puritan.

Anthony Stafford's *The Femall Glory* (1635) was one of the many books

published in veneration of the Virgin in the 1630s, worthy of note because it came

from the pen of a Laudian Protestant and not a Catholic writer. It comprises a series

of panegyrics to the Virgin, followed by prose descriptions of her life.[25] In it,

Stafford asserts Mary's perpetual virginity, claiming that having mourned for her son,

her only love, she was at last assumed into heaven:

> With pure, and ayrie pinions, hence she flies,
>
> And forsakes earth, to seeke thee in the skyes.
>
> When she arriv'd where her blest Mate doth dwell.
>
> (sig. e7r)

The text also includes a beautiful illustration of the Virgin's bodily assumption

[figure 1], and makes the claim:

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[25] Anthony Stafford, *The Femall Glory* (London: Thomas Harper, for John Waterson ,1635). All
further references will be to this edition.

What honor could to this great Queene be done,

More, then be taken up, to heaven high,

And, there, have GOD for Father, Spouse, & sonne.

The Angells wayte, the world stand wondring by. (sig. P1r)

Figure 1. Illustration of the Virgin's bodily assumption from Anthony Stafford, *The Femall Glory* (1635), p. 209. Source: EEBO.

Elsewhere, the Virgin's coronation itself is exuberantly described:

Come Blessed Virgin, and receive thy Crowne

Of full Renowne

Where Death, and Time have laid their Scepters downe.

(sig. A2r)

There is no doubt about the high acclaim in which Stafford holds the Virgin. At one point, he directly attacks Puritanism for its diminishing of the Virgin's role, a standpoint which, he argues, does not give the Virgin the respect that should be due her as the bearer of the Christ. The reduction of the Virgin's role is encapsulated in the mocking assertion that she is so little respected by Puritans that she is called by the diminutive title of 'Mal':

The Puritans in generall, but especially the obstinate non-Conformists of this Land, are those I meane, who as in their Course oratory they called Queene ELIZABETH, Queene Besse, So they give this Holy Virgin no higher a stile, than of Mal, Gods Maide. They reject all Testimonies of her worth…They abhorre to heare her call'd Domina, Lady, or Deipara, God-bearing.

(sigs. P6v-P7r)

Stafford also has the following warning for Puritans: 'Of one thing I will assure them, till they are good Marians, they shall never be good Christians; while they derogate from the dignity of the Mother, they cannot truely honour the Sonne' (sig. P8r).

Stafford's text may affirm the centrality of Mary and illuminate the beauty of her assumption, but he is strenuously clear that his is not a Catholic viewpoint. The Virgin's faith, obedience and humility are continuously lauded, in a text which frequently follows the Protestant model.

> Her modest soule no vaine Ambition sway'd,
>
> She rather chose to live an humble Maid,
>
> Then a Queene Mother.
>
> (sig. C3r)

There are strategically placed provisos to Stafford's descriptions of the Virgin's assumption, tempering the beautiful verses with observations that he one should show a degree of 'modesty...in discoursing of her Assumption, which by many of the Fathers, all of the Romish Church, and some of the Reformed is held for an undoubted truth, though upon no sounder proofes than the former produce concerning her departure hence' (sig. P1v).[26] However, the impact of his vivid descriptions of the Virgin's assumption is profound, and in spite of his attempts to tread a *via media,* Stafford ultimately failed to avoid criticism. The Puritan backlash to *The Femall Glory* was vehement. Henry Burton attacked Stafford's work in a sermon *For God and the King* (1636), which was censured by the Star Chamber, and Stafford himself was prompted to produce a vindication of his work. Depictions of the assumption in *The Femall Glory* show how boundaries between 'Laudian' and 'Catholic' were

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[26] The lack of dogmatic status of the Virgin's assumption at this date is here significant. See note 91 of the Introduction to this thesis.

frequently blurred.[27] Andrew McRae has charted a shift in emphasis from the 1620s,

when popery was the universally-constructed other, to the 1630s, when 'puritan

writers turned the conventions of anti-popery on their opponents *within* the English

Church'.[28] The controversy surrounding Stafford's text shows us how the Virgin

could in this period be a touchstone for schisms within the Anglican Church,

indicating the chasm that existed between Laudian and Puritan.

Our final Caroline writer is perhaps the most famous: the poet Richard

Crashaw. It is hard to talk about this period in England's religious and literary

history without at least a mention of this devotional poet whose verse is seen by many

as the pinnacle of Baroque sensibility.[29] Crashaw has a rightful place in anthologies

of Catholic verse, and although he is generally viewed as a 'Catholic poet' this label

comes with certain caveats.[30] His devotional sensibilities were in fact nurtured in the

cradle of Laudian Cambridge colleges Pembroke and Peterhouse, and he became

vicar of the high Anglican Little St Mary's Church in 1635. The Crashavian scholar

Thomas Healy describes his poetry as developing 'from the religious, intellectual, and

poetic environment he lived in at Cambridge between 1631 and 1643', and his poetry

is increasingly viewed as analogous with literary trends of the time.[31] Crashaw's

official conversion to Catholicism came in 1645 whilst he was living in exile on the

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[27] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 77-91.

[28] Andrew McRae, 'Stigmatizing Prynne', p. 175. See Lake, 'Anti-Popery', p. 73, and Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', p. 152.

[29] Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility* (Baton Rouge LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1939) was instrumental in the labelling of Crashaw as 'Baroque' and 'continental'. See also Douglas Bush, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), p. 142; Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 220; Louis L. Martz, 'The Action of the Self', in Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (eds.) *Metaphysical Poetry* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 117. This approach, typical of mid-twentieth-century criticism, is being reaffirmed as part of our current improved awareness of Baroque trends in England.

[30] Robert Miola describes Crashaw as being 'rightly viewed…as a Catholic poet on the grounds of doctrine, devotion, and style': *Early Modern Catholicism*, p. 255.

[31] Thomas F. Healy, *Richard Crashaw* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 2, 129-137. For a historical overview of critical responses to Crashaw see Lorraine M. Roberts and John R. Roberts, 'Crashavian Criticism', in John R. Roberts (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1990), pp. 1-29.

Continent, but as this thesis has repeatedly shown, apostasy is a slow-burning process and difficult to pin to a certain date. Crashaw's poem 'Hymn on the Assumption' would appear to be overtly Roman Catholic in its subject matter; however, as we have seen through our reading of *The Femall Glory*, there was evidence to suggest that Laudian reverence of Mary did for some include an appreciation of her assumption into heaven.

The sense of abundance and sensuality in Crashaw's poem is characteristic of what is seen as his Baroque style.[32] It is one of his religious hymns which in their ecstatic religious passion are similar to the Song of Songs. It was first printed in 1646 and then in 1648 in an anthology of sacred verse entitled *Steps to the Temple*, and appeared again in a 1652 anthology of Crashaw's verse *Carmen Deo Nostro*.[33] In this poem, man and nature, through the figure of the Virgin, connect with the wider forces of the universe. At the start of the poem, Crashaw poises the reader on the brink of the Virgin's assumption into heaven, a moment in which the 'poor world' must bid farewell. The Virgin's ascent into heaven is gloriously imagined in a rush of enjambment:

> A peice of heav'nly earth; Purer and brighter
>
> Then the chast starres, whose choise lamps come to light her
>
> While through the crystall orbes, clearer then they

---

[32] Paul A. Parrish, *Richard Crashaw* (Farmington Hills MI : Twayne Publishers, 1980), p. 44. See also Bush, *English Literature*, p. 80.

[33] Healy, *Crashaw*, p. 3. The title *Steps to the Temple* is Crashaw's acknowledgement of the influence of George Herbert, and therefore an allusion to Protestant verse.

She climbes; and makes a farre more milkey way.[34]

(3-6)

Crashaw's extravagant use of the imagery can be seen in his use of 'milkey way', which links the corporeality of the Virgin's milk with her cosmological presence.

The most repeated motifs in the poem come from the Song of Songs. The Bride from the Songs was consistently represented in Protestant iconography as a type for the English Church, under threat from the Whore of Babylon of the Catholic Church. Crashaw's poem can be seen as a conscious reclamation of the imagery to its traditional typological associations with the Virgin.[35] At one point, the voice of the poem becomes that of Christ, typologically represented as lover and bridegroom, who speaks to the Virgin using a range of signifiers associated with the Song of Songs:

She's calld. Hark, how the dear immortall dove

Sighes to his sylver mate rise up, my love!

Rise up, my fair, my spotlesse one!

(7-9)

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[34] The text used here is from a version of the poem first published in 1652 and reprinted in *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*, ed. George Walton Williams (New York: New York University Press, 1972), pp. 114-119.

[35] Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 19.

The call 'rise up, my fair…one' is an allusion to Song of Songs 2.10, while a repeated refrain of 'Come away, my love!' also echoes Song of Songs 8.14, as does the central motif governing the poem's treatment of the natural world:

> The winter's past, the rain is gone.
>
> The spring is come, the flowrs appear.
>
> (10-11)

In the poem, spring is waiting to burst fully into life but this change can only be effected if the Virgin is glimpsed on her ascent to Heaven. There are echoes of the Persephone myth to this, as the Virgin has the power to usher in the beginning of the spring. But it is ultimately her presence in heaven rather than earth which can cause this rebirth and regeneration.

Towards the middle of the poem, the mood changes as the assumption itself is connoted. The speaker now adopts the imperative tone, and the poem becomes the Hymn of its title:

> GOE then; goe GLORIOUS
>
> On the golden wings
>
> Of the bright youth of heavn, that sings

Under so sweet a Burthen. Goe,

Since thy dread son will have it so.

(37-41)

The end of the poem is an exuberant affirmation of faith as, in the absence of the

Virgin's bodily presence, her 'pretious name' will keep her presence alive. The

Virgin's assumption will allow spring to come, so that the speaker will be able to

strew 'fairest flowres' upon her name (54). In the final lines come beautiful and

celebratory descriptions of the Virgin's coronation:

LIVE, rosy princesse, LIVE. And may the bright

Crown of a most incomparable light

Embrace thy radiant browes. (60-62)

The repetition of 'live' in these final lines of the poem underlines its central paradox,

which is in many ways the paradox of the assumption itself. It is not death, but life.

Maureen Sabine finds a 'plaintive undertow' in Crashaw's poem, but it is

more common, rightly I feel, to view it in terms of exuberance.[36] Parrish comments

that 'The Assumption is thus not so much a departure from earth as an inevitable

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[36] Maureen Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 125, 201.
Sabine's evidence for this veers dangerously close to historical fiction as, noting the availability of
Donne's poems when Crashaw was an undergraduate, she concludes that Donne's verse 'sent shivers
of excitement and fear through Crashaw' (p. 198). Her psychoanalytical and feminist approach,
however, is a valid one.

return and reunion' as the Virgin, 'heaven', departs home.[37] Raspa also deems the

poem to be a jubilant one, in a reading which sees the Virgin as reflecting the

'preeminent significance of joy', which he sees as characterising a Baroque

universe.[38] Perhaps the most fascinating way to see the poem as an exposition of joy

is to see it in the light of Southwell's assumption poem studied in the previous

chapter. In Southwell's poem, speaker and reader experience a sense of isolation and

absence, as the Virgin – and with her any sense of joy – disappears from view.

Crashaw's poem, on the other hand, retains its exuberant tone in a poem which has as

its climax a hymn of praise:

> And while thou goest, our song and we
>
> Will, as we may, reach after thee.
>
> HAIL holy Queen of humble hearts!
>
> We in thy prayse will have our parts.
>
> (42-45)

The use of 'we', like the musical allusion to singing in 'parts', fosters a sense

of community which is further underlined by man's communion with angels. When,

Crashaw's speaker says, our 'weak desires have done their best' in singing praises to

the Virgin, there are 'Sweet Angels' who can 'sing the rest' (68-69). Crashaw's

poem imagines man's relationship with the Virgin's assumption in a markedly

[37] Parrish, *Crashaw*, p. 132.
[38] Raspa, *The Emotive Image*, p. 14.

different way from the Southwell assumption poem we have explored in the previous chapter, and the joy in Crashaw's verse seems to speak of community rather than exile and otherness.[39] This lavish and indulgent poem shows the Virgin as an ever-changing symbol, queen as well as mother, 'humble pride of earth' as well as 'mistresse of our song', the sensual muse who has inspired a poet who is always reaching towards her and the source of a pure joy who must be eternally praised.

Postscript

This glimpse forward in time has yielded a rich body of material, and it is with a certain sense of regret that I bring it to a close. The overarching argument of the thesis is that the emptiness and adaptability of the Marian image can be seen as the source of both its instability and its power. In this Epilogue, we have seen how a number of familiar tropes are not only replayed but also repositioned in the Caroline period, an indication of how the image of the Virgin, empty and powerful, was constantly evolving. The final words of the thesis, however, take us to the twenty-first century. In 2004, the feminist writer Charlotte Spretnak published the monograph *Missing Mary*: *The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-Emergence in the Modern Church*. Spretnak, a feminist writer and academic, describes herself as a 'Marian Catholic', and her accusation against Catholicism is that, post-Vatican II, it has sought to modernise itself by shrinking the influence and profile of the Virgin:

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[39] Lorraine M. Roberts compares Crashaw's 'Sancta Maria Dolorum' with Southwell's 'The Virgin Mary to Christ on the Crosse' and draws a similar conclusion. In the Southwell poem, Mary's role as speaker is one which 'emphasises her aloneness'; in Crashaw's poem the witness is speaker, which focuses the reader's attention on 'the devotion of the contemporary participant': Lorraine M. Roberts, 'Crashaw's Sacred Voice', in Roberts (ed.), *New Perspectives*, pp. 66-79.

Most 'progressive' intellectuals in the Church, in fact, tend to consider any glorification of the Nazarene village woman as 'Queen of Heaven' to be theologically regressive and even dangerously reactionary – or, at very least, in poor taste.[40]

The book laments the absence of Mary's 'larger, cosmological presence', which Spretnak sees as embodied in the symbolic figure of the Queen of Heaven.[41] In my Introduction, I touched upon the number of modern-day scholarly studies of the Virgin where a personal tone frequently broke through: Spretnak's impassioned but intellectually rigorous study gives us another example of this. For me, what is particularly fascinating about *Missing Mary* is that although the language it uses locates it in the present day, many of the arguments which it rehearses feel so familiar, in a book written over four hundred years after the primary sources for this thesis. Spretnak's questioning of politicised motivations behind the splintering of the image of the Virgin into either 'Nazarene Housewife' or 'Queen of Heaven' would be at home in many chapters of this thesis. The image of the Virgin may be constantly changing, but it would appear that the polarities established by Reformation thinking still have the ability to be the focus of urgent and impassioned debate.

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[40] Charlotte Spretnak, *Missing Mary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 1.
[41] Spretnak, *Missing Mary*, p. 9.

APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE THESIS, 1580-1616

By 1580, Queen Elizabeth I had been on the throne for over twenty years and excommunicated for ten, and any residual expectations of England returning to Catholicism were fast becoming a distant memory.[1] Negotiations for the Anjou marriage had reached stalemate, and it was now accepted that the Virgin Queen was not going to provide her country with an heir. The year 1580 saw the arrival of the first Jesuit priests, Edmund Campion and Robert Parsons, on England's shores. The mission was short-lived and culminated in the execution of Campion, the brightest of Jesuit stars, in 1581. This did not, however, stem the flow of young priests from the Continent and the Jesuit mission, along with the work of seminary priests begun a decade earlier, has been seen as integral to the survival of Catholicism in England.[2] The flipside of this, however, was an increasing mistrust of Catholicism as something alien and strange.[3] Jesuits were often perceived as foreign dissemblers, and their arrival in England is integral to an outpouring, in the 1580s, of vitriolic anti-Catholic polemic originating from the pulpit, in printed tract and in the form of anti-theatrical attacks.[4]

The 1580s also saw an increase in the state stranglehold on Catholics in England.[5] As state measures became increasingly draconian, Catholicism was driven

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[1] The main sources for this summary of historical events are John Guy (ed.) *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975); Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors* (1995; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), and Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003).
[2] Alan Dures, *English Catholicism 1558-1642* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), pp. 26-28.
[3] For demonising of Jesuits see Arthur F. Marotti, 'Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England', in Arthur F. Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 9-15.
[4] Patrick Collinson has cited 1580 as a significant year for the emergence of anti-Catholic discourse: see *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 112.
[5] Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 29-31

further underground into secret hiding-places and safe houses.[6] A number of key events punctuate this decade. As well as the death of Campion, it saw the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587, an event which could be perceived as a containment of the Catholic menace, but which also stimulated a flowering of epideictic poetry. England's fears of a Catholic Spanish invasion were realised in the 1588 Spanish Armada which for many linked the word 'Catholic' with invader.[7] The routing of the Spanish Armada was hailed as a triumph of the Protestant nation, but many of the Catholic laity also showed their allegiance to the crown at this time of crisis.[8]

From the routing of the Spanish Armada in 1588 to Elizabeth's death in 1603 is an age that has been termed 'The Long 1590s'.[9] This is an era often viewed as a Golden Age of English literature, the era of Spenser and Marlowe, and the time in which Shakespeare's plays flourished on the London stage.[10] The image of the glorious age of Gloriana is a potent one, particularly in modern times, but there is an element of artifice to its construction. John Guy has termed the 1590s as 'The Second Reign of Elizabeth I', where a fragile England was under considerable strain from losses in conflicts against France, the Netherlands and Ireland in a confused decade where the Queen might have died at any time.[11] The backdrop to this was appalling poverty as an increasing population forced up the price of wheat, a situation

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[6] Julian Yates, 'Parasitic Geographies', in Marotti, *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*, pp. 69-72.
[7] J. Carlos Viana Ferreira, 'Anti-popery and the Elect Nation in Early Modern England', in Rui Carvalho Homem and Fátima Vieira (eds.), *Gloriana's Rule* (Porto: Editora Da universidade do Porto, 2006), pp. 168-169.
[8] Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 35.
[9] Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins, 'Preface: The Long 1590s', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 16 (October, 2007):1-7, http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-16/foreword1.htm, site visited 16.04.03.
[10] C.S. Lewis famously made the distinction between the 'Drab Age' of late Henrician poetry of Wyatt and Surrey and the 'Golden Age' initiated by Spenser and Sidney. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).
[11] Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, p. 2.

exacerbated by a series of disastrous harvests in 1596 and 1597.[12] In an unstable

court there was a complex web of factionalism, patronage and paranoia.[13] The final

years of Elizabeth's reign are coloured by the rise and fall of the flamboyant and

charismatic Earl of Essex, who was locked in conflict with her Secretary of State

Robert Cecil. This was also an era of religious discordance, in which Catholic priests

continued to operate in England. The Archpriest controversy of 1598 between Jesuits

and appellant priests is a telling indication of factions existing within the Catholic

Church as well as between Catholic and reformed.[14]

In 1603 came Elizabeth's death and the accession of King James I. The sense

of disillusionment in the closing years of Elizabeth's Golden Age accounts perhaps

for the fact that James's accession was greeted with a surge of optimism. Here was a

married king who could already provide the country with an heir, Prince Henry, and a

spare, Prince Charles. James was Protestant, but his mother had been a Catholic and

his wife, many suspected, had Catholic leanings. Hopes for toleration thus ran high.[15]

However, James was panegyrically represented as a king who would continue to

champion Protestantism. He was ultimately a more pragmatic figure who shied away

from anti-Catholic methods involving violence and bloodshed, but the treasury

coffers needed to be filled, and by 1604 he was levying hefty fines against the

recusant community. The rise in popularity of Puritanism in this period underlines

the incompleteness of England's Reformation, and the 1604 Hampton Court

Conference was an indication of schisms between Puritan and moderate Protestant.

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[12] Jim Sharpe, 'Social strain and social dislocation 1585-1603', in Guy, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, pp. 192-211.
[13] Natalie Mears, 'Regnum Cecilianum?', in Guy, *The Reign of Elizabeth I,* pp. 46-64.
[14] Appellant priests were a group of priests who were against the appointment of George Blackwell by Rome as archpriest, believing him to be very much in the sway of the Jesuit mission. See Michael L. Carrafiello, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism, 1580-1610* (Selinsgrove PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1998), pp. 88-102.
[15] Carrafielo, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism*, pp. 103-115.

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 quashed the hopes for leniency of many Catholics, and in spite of James's own relatively measured attitude, the incident was frequently encomiastically positioned as a second Armada, with the Protestant James safely delivered.[16] A session of parliament of 1606 endorsed a harsh policy towards Catholics, who were required to swear an Oath of Allegiance that acknowledged the supremacy of King James: those recusants who refused to swear faced imprisonment or hefty financial penalties. Public opinion also swiftly turned against James; it was not long before Elizabeth's reign was being viewed through the rose-tinted spectacles of nostalgia. The King's own distaste for the common people did not help matters, and many started to pin their hopes for the future on the gifted and devoutly Protestant young King Henry. These hopes were to prove tragically fruitless when Henry died of typhoid fever in 1612 aged just eighteen: already popular, he became on his death a symbol of a lost new Golden Age.[17] The final year covered by this thesis is 1616, the year which saw the investiture of the young prince Charles as Prince of Wales. The young prince thus emerged from the political shadows and began to take more of a significant political role.[18] Had England seen a Henry IX, one wonders whether the course of history would have changed forever.

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[16] John Watkins, '"Out of her Ashes May a Second Phoenix Rise"', in Marotti, *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*, pp.120-123 and 127-131.
[17] Stewart, *Cradle King*, p. 249.
[18] Stewart, *Cradle King*, p. 280

APPENDIX B: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FIVE ROSARY BOOKS STUDIED

1. Anon, *A Methode, to Meditate on the Psalter, or Great Rosarie of our Blessed Ladie* (Antwerp: English Secret Press, 1598).
The ESTC states that the imprint printed in Antwerp is false, and that this was printed secretly in England. A&R concur, but state that the 15 engravings were imported from Antwerp.
A&R 924
ESTC S105465

2. Bucke, John, *Instructions for the Use of the Beades, Conteining Many Matters of Meditation* (Louvain: [n.pub.], 1589)
Includes large fold-out table at the end, 'The Lady Hungerfordes Meditacions Upon the Beades'. Ten small engravings of the mysteries of the rosary surround a larger engraving of the Virgin and child at the nativity, encircled by images of rosary beads.
A&R 95
ESTC S112699

3. Garnet, Henry, *The Societie of the Rosary, Newly Augmented* (London?: Henry Garnet's Secret Press, 1596 or 1597)
An augmented version of Garnet's original text (printed 1593 or 1594), this includes 'An epistle consolatory: of an Auncient Pope. To the Catholicks of Albania', which has separate title page, pagination, and register, though this does not appear to have been issued separately. A &R record four different versions of Garnet's text were printed, two in 1593-4, and two augmented versions of the text, one in 1595-6 and one in 1626 which included the addition of Pinelli's 'Life of Our Lady'.

A&R 320
ESTC S114738

4. M.I., *A Breefe Directory, and Playne Way Howe to Say the Rosary of Our Blessed Lady* (Bruges Flandrorum: excudebat Hu. Holost.[i.e. London: W. Carter and J. Lion], 1576)

This is the earliest of all the texts under review; the copy housed in the British Library is a tiny, beautifully bound volume, with gilt-edged pages, leather and gilt cover. ESTC reports that the imprint printed in Bruges is false. The author may be the Carthusian John Mitchell.

A&R 546
ESTC S105161

5. Worthington, Thomas, *Rosarie of Our Ladie. Otherwise Called Our Ladies Psalter.* (Antwerp: Joannem Keerbergium, 1600)

Relies heavily on sophisticated engraved illustrations, found on opening page of each mystery, and each section of mysteries. Many of the engraved illustrations are signed M. de Vos inuent. Ioan Collaert sculp. The Editor's preface is signed 'T.W.P'. This is read by both EEBO and ESTC as 'Thomas Worthington, priest'.

A&R 848
ESTC S120319

APPENDIX C

SIR JOHN HARINGTON'S 'FIFTEEN SEVERAL DISTICKS ON THE FIFTEEN DIVISIONS'[1]

Prima salutatam monstrat pictura Mariam,

Cui Gabriel foelix nuncius, inquit ave.

Viserit ut praegnans praegnantem proxima narrat,

Sensis et haud natus, gaudia nata puer.

Tertia ut illaesa de virgine natus Iesus,

Veraque iam mater, veraque virgo manet.

Et sequitur iussu tum circumcisio Legis,

Solus adimplesti hanc, o homo nate deo.

Postea te alloquitur Moses comitatus Elia

Turbat at haec sensum visio, Petre, tuum.

Sancta salutifero sudarunt sanguine membra,

Cum peccata ingens non sua sensit onus.

Scinditur et flagris, nostri dum flagrat amore,

Et veneranda tulit verbera dura cutis.

Spinea tum nudo capiti est aptata corona,

Hostibus ah magis haec apta corona tuis.

Hinc humeris lignum laceris portare coactus,

Sustinuit propriae baiulus esse crucis.

Inque crucem medius, binis latronibus, actus,

Uni perpetuae causa salutis erat.

Morte triumphata triduo, infernoque revixit,

Inde resurgendum credimus esse pij,

Tum quoque conspicuus caelos ascendit ad altos,

Unde reversurus iudicis ora geret.

Denique discipulos paracletum mittit ad omnes,

Doctaque non notos lingua dat ante sonos.

---

[1] Reproduced in Kilroy, *Epigrams*, pp. 255-256.

Creditur et mater caelis assumpta supernis,

Supra virgineos sola beata choros,

Da mihi finitae pater o post tempora vitae,

Illi cum sanctis dicere semper Ave.

Post Crucem Lucem

The blessed virgins picture first hath place

To whom thus Gabriel saith. **Haile full of grace.**.

Next she her Cosen visitts at whose voyce

the babe unborne did sensibly rejoyce

Thirdly is Christ borne of a mayde unstayned

and mother trew, a Virgin trew remained,

Fourthly hee's circumcis'd by lawes decree

those lawes that no man e're fulfild but hee.

Moyses Elias, meete him after that

When Peter ravisht, spake he knew now what

Then follow'd the Agony and bloudy sweat,

the burden of our sins did seeme so great

Then for base spight, of clothes he was bestripped

and loving us, for us he then was whipped.

On sacred head they clapt a Crowne of thorns,

Themselvs far fitter objects for such skorns.

They forced him in sight of lewd beholders

to carry his own cross on his own sholders.

They hange him, on each side a malefactor,

but he to th'one did prove a benefactor.

At three dayes end he brought to full subjection

both hell and death, and taught us resurrection.

Then playn in sight, to heav'n he did ascend

and will return a Judge this age to end,

The comforter to come was then discearned

and men did speake with tongues they never learned.

And after all theis things it is presumed,

The blessed virgin was to heaven assumed,

God graunt me, when my life has run the race

to say to her with saynts. **Haile full of grace.**

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