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**‘The Image of Both Churches’:
The Uses of Convention in Tudor Polemical Literature,
1528-1563**

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis offers a literary analysis of mid-Tudor polemics, texts chiefly valued by historians in the field of Reformation studies. It focuses on the metaphors and imagery which polemicists use to put across their arguments, as well as the writers' manipulations of preexisting literary genres and their opponents' rhetoric. The major findings of this study are that religious and political debates are deeply embedded within literary tropes, the polemicists constantly returning to the analogy of dramatic performance to describe religious practices; and, furthermore, that the binary, antagonistic construction of polemical works ultimately means that the writers are dependent upon their opponents as points of reference.

The texts considered are placed within a religio-historical context, and special attention is given not only to the upheavals which occurred between the reigns of the four Tudor monarchs which the study's date range includes (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I) but also to the more subtle shifts in policy which occurred within individual reigns.

Central to the thesis is a foregrounding of Protestantism's concern over the treatment of allegory and figurative language. William Tyndale and John Bale's fears over allegory's misuse are shown to be linked to the iconoclastic urge, indicative of an uncertainty over what role visual and verbal images should play in worship. This is demonstrated to have long-term implications for English theatre. Protestantism's attitude towards drama is fraught and ambivalent: on the one hand, there is an evident desire to use plays and performative acts to promote doctrine; on the other, an attempt to sequester all that is histrionic or ludic with evil and the Catholic opponent.

The thesis draws attention to the polemics as transformative works, showing the mid-Tudor writers to be engaged in a project of reinvigorating medieval genres to fit new political and religious agendas. It considers John Bale's sectarianizing of the moralities, histories and saints' plays; Anne Askew and John Foxe's alteration of the conventions of hagiography; and the Marian polemicists' amended versions of the religious lyric and the Skeltonic political allegory.

A final major preoccupation is that of community as it is envisioned by polemical works. Anne Askew and Thomas Becon are considered as examples of the self-constructing reformist, and close attention is paid to how these individuals conceive of themselves in relation to their community of co-religionists. The self is also considered in

relation to texts, namely, the Bible and martyrological writings, as both human bodies and books become the subjects of persecution. The obverse of this concern is the polemicists' endeavour to construct the 'other', defining their own community in relation to that of their religious opponents. Close readings of the martyrological writings of John Foxe and Arthur Golding show the martyrologists' subversive use of their enemies' rhetoric, in particular, how the traditionalist authorities' own pro-persecution arguments are used to 'prove' them to be hypocritical and disorderly.

Tangential to this exploration of subjectivity and community are the study's reflections on aspects of gender and sexuality. The thesis points to the decentring of female figures within polemical narratives as a symptom of the discomfort of male writers and editors, and highlights the way in which accusations of sexual coercion and impropriety are used as a metaphor for religious tyranny.

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Introduction

No where is the doctrine of helth more purely taught, fayth more throughly co[m]mended, nor yet rightousnesse more highlye rewarded, than here. No where are heresies more earnestly condemned, blasphemous vices more vehemently rebuked, nor yet theyr iuste plages more fercely then thretened, than in this compendiose worke.

Herin is the true Christie[n] church (which is the meke spouse of the lambe without spot) in her right fashyoned colours described. So is the proud church of hypocrites, the rose coloured whore, the paramoure of Antichrist, and the sinfull sinagoge of Satha[n], in her iust proporcio[n] depaynted, to the merciful fore warnynge of the Lordes electes. And y^t is the cause, why I haue here intytled this boke, the Image of both churches.¹

The Tudor polemicists portray a world of black and white: of Christ versus Antichrist, lies versus absolute Truth. Although the contemporary political and religious differences were complex and nuanced, these writers insist on an antagonistic, binary construction of ‘us and them’, galvanizing the reader to adopt their sense of indignation and besiegement. Yet the important word of my adopted title is not ‘both’ but ‘image’. For Bale to show others his perception of the true and false churches he must construct a textual vehicle: the communication of his ‘truth’ requires literary artifice.

The key idea is therefore that the writing of polemics is, inescapably, a creative act. The texts considered within this study come from a time when confessional identities were still solidifying. These works show reformists and traditionalists caught in the act of writing themselves and their opponents, defining their doctrines and composing their histories. It is my contention that to understand polemics we must look at them not solely in terms of their semantic content, but also their literary building-blocks of tropes, metaphor and imagery.

Scope

The scope of this study is from 1528, the year of publication of Tyndale’s polemical call to arms *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, to 1563, the year John Foxe published the first edition of his retrospective on the Reformation, *Acts and Monuments*. It gives, therefore, an overview of the English Reformation and counter-Reformation period, spanning the

¹ John Bale, *The image of bothe churches [...]* (London: Jugge, [1548?]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 1297, sigs A2^{r-v}. All further references to *Image* pertain to this edition (the earliest complete edition still extant).

reigns of four Tudor monarchs: the latter half of Henry VIII's (1509-1547), the five-year terms of Edward VI (1547-1553) and Mary I (1553-1558), and the first years of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603).

The bracketed period is one of intense religious turmoil. King Henry's 'great matter' presaged the dissolution of the monasteries, the repudiation of papal authority, and the monarch's appointment of himself as the head of the national church in 1534, all seeming advancements for the reformist cause.² Yet the years following the 'Act of Six Articles' (1539) were marked by increasing religious conservatism and a move towards the maintenance of traditional forms of worship, especially concerning the sacraments.³ In this period up until the king's death, there was a corresponding intolerance of the reformists, leading to a swathe of heresy executions.⁴ With the accession of Edward under the protectorship of Somerset and, latterly, Dudley, came the consolidation of 'Protestant' identity, with the establishment of Anglican religious ceremony, Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) and the endorsement of clerical marriage.⁵ Mary's accession, following the abortive attempt to establish Jane Grey as Edward's successor, saw the pendulum swing back to Roman Catholicism, with traditional forms of worship being reinstated along with the papal ties, and sacred accoutrements returned to churches made bare by iconoclasm.⁶ The protests at these major reversions led to the Marian church asserting its power in a wave of persecutions. Along with imprisonments and interrogations, this involved the execution of around 300 persons on heresy charges.⁷

² On the early Henrician religious reforms see A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd edn. (London: Batsford, 1989), pp. 130-191; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 379-423; Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 105-136; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 2nd edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 241-354.

³ On the Act of Six Articles (1539) and Henry's later conservatism see Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 124-133; Haigh pp. 152-167; Scarisbrick pp. 408-423.

⁴ On the Henrician heresy executions see Rex, pp. 133-4.

⁵ On the Reformation under Edward VI see Dickens pp. 222-286; Duffy pp. 448-477; Haigh pp. 168-202; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Penguin, 1999).

⁶ On the Marian counter-Reformation see Duffy pp. 524-564; Haigh pp. 203-218; David M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553-1558* (London: Benn, 1979), pp. 148-182.

⁷ On the Marian persecutions see Dickens pp. 287-301; Haigh pp. 219-234.

In 1559 Elizabeth's government implemented changes which constituted yet another religious upheaval. As Carole Levin writes, the parliament's passing of the Act of Uniformity 'returned England to Edwardian Protestant form' while the Act of Supremacy '[gave] Elizabeth the title of Supreme Governor over the Church of England', thus effectively abolishing the mass and repudiating papal authority.⁸

Within a period of twenty-five years, therefore, there were five distinct shifts in religious favour. These shifts created an atmosphere of uncertainty for courtiers, clergymen, and the general populace alike. Recent historiography has shown the mid-Tudor period to be more tumultuous than was previously understood: the prevailing view within English Reformation studies, typified by A.G. Dickens' seminal work *The English Reformation* (1964) was of a gradual, inevitable Protestantization, quickly embraced and supported by the English people. Yet, more recent scholarship by historians such as Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh and Lucy Wooding has shown the 'reformations' to be piecemeal and precarious, and reformism itself to be a minority voice, which largely went against the traditionalist sensibilities of the majority of English subjects.

The implications of revisionist history for this study are that in viewing the mid-Tudor period as one of acute instability, where state and populace were frequently at odds over religion, polemic can be understood as a vital means of communication. It is my contention that the polemics considered are not empty or complacent, but instruments of attempted persuasion, and texts which dramatize the complicated relationships between literature, authority and orthodoxy.

This study is necessarily selective in terms of the texts which it considers. During Mary's five-year reign alone the number of polemical texts printed in English exceeds a hundred. Polemics vary in length from the single leaf of a broadside ballad to multi-volume chronicles or works of scriptural exegesis, which can run to thousands of pages. There is not time or space here to explore every polemic published during the thirty-year span of the mid-Tudor era, yet certain key texts need to be addressed. In terms of drama, John Bale's works are the most numerous and prominent of the extant morality plays; in terms of prose, it would likewise be impossible to ignore Foxe's magisterial work of partisan history, *Acts and Monuments*. There are other authors who clearly deserve our consideration: William Tyndale, Arthur Golding, John Heywood and Nicholas Udall are

⁸ Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 23. On the religious policy of Elizabeth's reign see Dickens, pp. 339-377; Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion, 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 1993).

already the subjects of critical attention. The importance of this study is in adding to the list some less well-known figures, whose works of polemic support and deepen our understanding of writers already considered 'canonical'.

Critical Heritage and Problems

Mid-Tudor literature has always been a neglected field. This may be partially due to 'periodization' in academia, as it falls as a band separating 'late medieval' from the aureate 'high renaissance' of the Elizabethan period, thus both between and beyond the remit of Chaucerians and Shakespearians. It is also the victim of sweeping value-judgements. In *Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century* (1954) C.S. Lewis unhelpfully christened it 'the Drab Age':

The Drab Age begins before the Late Medieval has ended, towards the end of Henry VIII's reign, and lasts into the late seventies. *Drab* is not used as a dyslogistic term. It marks a period in which, for good or ill, poetry has little richness either of sound or images. The good work is neat and temperate, the bad flat and dry. [...] Prose is now more artificial in some writers, more cumbersome in others.⁹

Even among those who have mounted in-depth studies of mid-Tudor literature (most notably, drama), such as E.K. Chambers, T.W. Craik, and David Bevington, there persists a teleological approach.¹⁰ Early Tudor drama is seen as an embryonic form, a clumsy predecessor to the perfected version exhibited upon the Elizabethan stage. The critical narrative is one of Darwinian evolution and natural selection, with the paring away of allegorical characters, homiletic content and native rhyming metres, deemed primitive and undesirable. 'Pre-Shakespearian drama' was an ore which needed to be refined to produce Shakespeare.

More recent criticism has begun to challenge this approach: Peter Happé and Greg Walker's work on the drama of John Skelton, John Bale, Nicholas Udall and John Heywood (among others) has established that mid-Tudor moralities and interludes deserve to be evaluated as texts of importance in and of themselves, rather than as forerunners to

⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 64

¹⁰ E.K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1903); T.W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1958); David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

something greater.¹¹ This study takes the same approach, considering the dramatic works of Bale and (in a later chapter) Udall as innovative and of relevance in reflecting the unique political and religious circumstances of their time.

Perhaps even more wronged than the drama has been mid-Tudor prose. Many of the prose texts considered here, such as Tyndale's *Obedience and Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528), Bale's *Image of Bothe Churches* (1545), Miles Hogaarde's *Displaying of the Protestantes* (1556) and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) were avidly read by contemporary audiences. Naomi Conn Liebler notes that the 'strikingly high number of printings and reprintings of prose fiction texts' in the early modern period is indicative of their popularity and profitability.¹² Yet the critical consensus, at least until the last decades of the twentieth century, was of sixteenth-century prose as 'drab', inconsequential and even unreadable. Constance Relihan comments:

Such texts [...] are often seen as the work of "hack" writers, as inelegant productions unworthy of close reading, as messy aberrations produced by the later sixteenth century that had (so the argument goes) little impact on the development of the novel or the history of English fiction.¹³

If early Tudor drama is at least allowed a place as an ancestor to Shakespeare, prose is wholly disowned, seen as having no effect upon the English novel, which apparently sprang up fully-formed at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Relihan blames the inattention to early modern prose on the schools of critical inquiry which dominated the first half of the twentieth-century: 'the texts included in this category were not suited to the decontextualizing approaches New Criticism and formalisms of various kinds advocated'.¹⁴ It is with the advent of New Historicism in the 1980s that the interpretation of texts within a historical, political and religious context came back into fashion (over commentary on purely 'aesthetic' values), and with the rise of feminist and post-colonial

¹¹ See esp. Peter Happé, 'Spectacle in Bale and Heywood' *METh*, 16 (1994), 51-64; *John Bale* (New York: Twayne, 1996); 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 39 (1999), 239-53; Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith, and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996); *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹² *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, ed by Naomi Conn Liebler, (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), p. 1.

¹³ *Framing Elizabethan Fictions: Contemporary Approaches to Early Modern Narrative Prose*, ed. by Constance C. Relihan (Kent, Ohio, and London: Kent State University Press, 1996), p. 2

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

approaches that the marginalisation of figures outside the traditional western canon began to be redressed. These movements within criticism heralded a moderate increase in academic interest in early Tudor polemical prose, and of especial importance to this study is the work of Thomas Betteridge, John N. King and Thomas Freeman.¹⁵

My own methodology identifies with New Historicism in recognising the importance of religious and historical context, and I espouse the principles outlined by H. Aram Veerer that 'every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices' and 'that literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably'.¹⁶ The polemics focused upon in this study define doctrine and are engaged in the act of constructing both sectarian communities and history, thus illustrating Richard Wilson's comment that:

Literature is *part* of history, the literary text as much a context for other aspects of cultural and material life as they are for it. [...] Rather than passively reflecting an external reality, literature is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality.¹⁷

The texts under consideration fit into the category described by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt as 'marginalized or excluded entirely from the canon [...] regarded as altogether nonliterary, that is, lacking in aesthetic polish, the self-conscious use of rhetorical figures, the aura of distance from the everyday world, the marked status as fiction that separately or together characterize belles lettres'.¹⁸ However, I would reject Harold Bloom's disparagement of New Historicism and the texts it champions as part of a barbaric 'School of Resentment', antithetical to what he terms 'aesthetic value'.¹⁹ While this study eschews value judgements it is nevertheless focused upon the literary qualities of the texts, which involves a degree of aesthetic appreciation. Through close reading I identify the tropes, metaphors and images which the polemicists use to construct their

¹⁵ See esp. Thomas Betteridge *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Thomas Freeman, "'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuose Women": The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs', *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), 8-33; Thomas Freeman, and Sarah Elizabeth Wall, 'Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 1165-1196; John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veerer (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), xi.

¹⁷ *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London and New York: Longman, 1992), p. 28.

¹⁸ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 9.

¹⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and the School of the Ages* (New York, San Diego and London: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 17.

message, and acknowledge the manipulation of pre-existing generic models. An important part of my agenda is to demonstrate the texts' literary qualities, and therefore, their suitability as subjects for literary criticism. I hope to reclaim Reformation polemic for literary studies, demonstrating that it is not solely the property of religious historians.

In addition to New Historicism, this study is informed by Saussurian semiotics and feminist criticism: chapter 1 investigates the reformist attempt to limit play between signifier and signified in dealing with parables and metaphorical language, while chapters 2 and 5 draw heavily on gender studies and post-modern conceptions of 'subjectivity' in examining the ways in which female figures construct themselves through narratives, versus their construction by their (male) supporters and editors.

A Note on Terminology

The naming and ascription of religious allegiances during this period presents a considerable difficulty. As Lucy Wooding notes, even an individual's articulations concerning the 'touchstone' issues of doctrine (like transubstantiation, the mass and justification by faith) are not always clear indications of religious identity:

What made a 'Catholic or a 'Protestant' in this era was more often a case of self-definition than adherence to a clear set of doctrines. [...] In the early years of Reformation there was no such thing as unequivocal religious orthodoxy.²⁰

For the purposes of this study, therefore, I classify polemicists on the basis of their professed allegiances, rather than attempting to impose an identity on them in light of notions of what might have constituted 'orthodox' Catholicism or Protestantism in the mid-sixteenth century.

In fact, the very terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' are anachronistic when applied to the early years of the English Reformation. 'Protestant' did not become a widespread or

²⁰ Lucy E.C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 3.

generally recognised label until the 1550s.²¹ Likewise, those who wished to continue in the established traditions of worship under Henry were unlikely to identify themselves as 'Catholic' in the sense that describes an allegiance to the Roman Church and its rituals.²² Duffy offers the term 'traditional religion' as an alternative the word 'Catholic', explaining that it 'does more justice to the shared and inherited beliefs and practices of the people, and begs fewer questions about the social geography of pre-Reformation religion'. Acknowledging that medieval religious customs were subject to changes and innovations, he adds that his use of the term 'traditional', is 'not meant to imply stasis or impassibility, but to indicate the general character of a religious culture which was rooted in a repertoire of inherited and shared beliefs and symbols'.²³

Throughout this study I therefore use the terms 'traditionalist' and 'reformist' to express the more nebulous religious allegiances of those under Henry VIII, reserving 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' as terms which gained usage during the reign of Edward VI, when identities became more fixed and polarised.

Structure

The first chapter takes as its subject the early reformist polemic of William Tyndale and John Bale, and their common preoccupation with allegory. It considers how the iconoclastic urge (the distrust of visual images and their role in religious worship) has linguistic implications, manifesting in a concern over metaphors and parables, and the proper method for their interpretation. I argue that reformism's preoccupation with the 'problem of allegory' is evident not only in writings about Biblical exegesis, but also as a major theme of Bale's propagandist drama. The chapter goes on to examine Bale's

²¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits the first native use of 'Protestant' to Thomas Becon: 'Ar not some called papists, some protestants, some Anabaptists, some sacramentaries?', 'Protestant, 2. a.', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), <<http://dictionary.oed.com>> [accessed 16 June 2010]. All further references to OED pertain to this edition. See also Thomas Becon, *A fruitful treatise of fasting wherin is declared what ye Christen fast is, how we ought to fast, [and] what ye true vse of fastyng is* (London: Day, [1551]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 18 May 2010] STC 1722, sig. A5^r. In his 1556 polemic Miles Hogarde refers to 'protestante' as 'a worde greatly pleasyng the[m]selues, a woorde inuented after theyr hartes desyre, a worde deuysed of themselues'. See Miles Huggarde [sic], *The Displaying of the Protestantes and sondry their practices, with a description of diuers of late frequented within their malignaunte church. Perused and set furth with thassent of authoritie, accordyng too the ordre in that behalf appoynted* (London: Caly, 1556), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 13558, p. 8^r.

²² OED cites Mary's injunctions of March 1554 as earliest recorded use of 'catholic' in this sense: '[...] to remove them, and place catholic men in their rooms'. See 'The Injunctions of Queen Mary, A.D. 1554', in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, ed. by Henry Gee and William John Hardy (London: MacMillan, 1896), pp. 380-83 (p. 383, item 17).

²³ Duffy, p. 3.

attempts to alter his medieval generic models in a way that allows him to explicate images and make them 'safe'. It also explores his relationship with the visual and verbal aspects of dramaturgy, in particular focusing on his habit of associating spectacle and linguistic play with vices, and his attempts to create a suitable idiolect and depiction for virtue. A final section identifies key moments in Bale's plays where there is an apparent disunity between the spoken word and performed action, and argues that this slippage demonstrates the irreconcilable nature of reformism's differences from the allegorical mode.

The second chapter focuses on *The Examinations of Anne Askew* (1547), considering how both the martyr herself and her later editors, Bale and Foxe, make use of a two-way analogy that conflates human bodies with texts, a device which serves to celebrate the links between Christ, the Bible and reformist martyrs as objects of persecution. The chapter considers the special resonances which the body/text analogy has for Askew, given the critical heritage of interpreting the *Examinations* either in light of its doubtful textual integrity or Askew's gendered subjectivity. Through close reading of certain passages, I show that Askew attempts to counter hagiographic conventions by promoting the martyr's text (rather than corporeal remains) as a sacred legacy. In demonstrating her belief in the apotropaic qualities of the Bible, I propose that Askew envisions Scripture as both metaphorical 'shield' and 'sword', protecting her body from the violence of her would-be persecutors and also allowing her, in turn, to challenge their dogmas with its irrefutable words. In the conclusion, I argue that Askew's appropriation of the Bible's words constitutes a vision of 'self as text', a conceptualisation which allows Askew to counter the inherent radicalism of *sola scriptura*, to secure herself a place within the reformist community, and, most importantly, to legitimise her own martyrdom.

In the third chapter, I turn from considering the reformist construction of the self, to the construction of the other. This chapter examines the appropriation and subversion of traditionalist pro-persecution rhetoric within a selection of martyrological texts: Askew's *Examinations* (1547), Arthur Golding's *A brief treatise concerning the burnynge of Bucer and Phagius* (1562) and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563). I identify three commonly occurring tropes given this treatment. Firstly, the interrogators' promise of 'gentleness' and benevolent intention in their handling of heretics is rewritten by the martyrologists to signify secret cruelty and hidden malevolence. Askew uses the repetition of promises of gentleness to highlight the sinister alternatives which underly her questioning and characterises offers of 'help' as demonic enticements, while Foxe criticises the bishop-

interrogators' attempt to dissociate themselves from heretic burnings by placing the blame on the secular authorities. The second trope considered is the metaphor of 'infection', where Catholic apologists use medical imagery and the idea of surgical intervention to justify religious persecution. I demonstrate that the martyrologists convert these arguments into proof of their opponents' bloodlust, portraying the promised 'surgery' as murder, 'healing confession' as wounding and heresy examinations as acts of sexualised violence. Finally, I examine how the traditionalist claim to represent unity and order through the universal Church is transformed by martyrologists into proof of their inherent disorderliness. I show that Foxe and Golding depict Catholic ceremonies as farces or stage-plays, highlight the corruption of ecclesiastical law through accusations of legal chicanery, and portray individual representatives of the clergy (such as Edmund Bonner) as scurrilous, animalistic and violent.

The fourth chapter examines the writings of those who attempt to justify their refusal to choose exile or martyrdom in the face of persecution over their beliefs. It begins with an overview of the history of lying and deception in Christian thought, considering how the Augustinian total ban on lying leads to controversy over practices such as nicodemism, dissimulation, equivocation, casuistry and mental reservation. The central focus of the chapter is upon the surviving text of Thomas Becon's 1543 recantation at Paul's Cross. I offer a reading of Becon's recantation as an ingenious and highly subversive work of persuasive literature, commenting on his innovative usage of meta-textual referencing and self-conscious theatricality in order to argue that such events were not necessarily acts of capitulation, but opportunities for covert evangelism and even shameless self-promotion.

However, I also point to the profound sense of unease which abjurations could raise among the recanter's co-religionists, and the related composition of 'counter-recantations', i.e. texts written by the guilty parties themselves, or interested supporters, in order to undo the recantation's perceived harmful effects within the community. I argue that the contradictions evident within Robert Wisdom's *Revocation* (1544), and Robert Crowley's *The Confutation of [...] Nicolas Shaxton* (1548) display the discomfort of reformist writers when called upon to explain apparent lapses of faith. To conclude, I propose that John Foxe's relentless focus on martyrdom as the only available response to persecution, and his subsequent decision to edit out references to backsliding from his history of the English reformation, reflects a wider Protestant fear of fabrication, fictionalization and multiplicity.

The final chapter focusses upon the ways in which Mary Tudor's supporters construct the queen through their polemical works. It considers the unprecedented difficulties which these writers faced in portraying Mary on account of the lack of a preexisting iconography for a queen regnant, the pressing need to counter Protestant hostility towards a female ruler, and the unpopularity of her foreign husband. While acknowledging the existence of Mariological parallels in early ballad works, I demonstrate that polemicists were able to move beyond simple references to the queen's Virgin namesake, drawing on archetypes from classical mythology as well as both the Old and New Testaments. I then consider works by John Heywood, Nicholas Udall and Miles Hogarde in light of their shared use of maternal imagery, arguing that the construction of Mary I as national mother serves to legitimise persecution by casting her as a loving disciplinarian, and also to link Mary to the Church and her people, thereby synthesizing a vision of a uniquely feminized state, set up in deliberate opposition to patriarchal Protestantism.

Chapter 1

'Straunge speakyng or borrowed speach': Bale, Tyndale and the Problem of Allegory

Introduction: the Reformist Distrust of Allegory

Many of the oldest churches in Britain still bear the scars of the Reformation campaign of iconoclasm: frescoes with the faces of the saints rubbed out; carved figures on pew ends so damaged as to be unrecognisable. Many more of the pre-Reformation adornments of such churches, the original stained glass windows, rood screens, and devotional statues, have been removed or completely destroyed without a trace.¹

The destructive actions of this period as manifested in the removal of holy images from the churches (which reached its zenith in the years of the reign of Edward VI)² are frequently denounced as ruinous and barbaric by historians and other commentators, an attitude neatly summarised by Patrick Collinson, who writes that 'according to common prejudice', English Protestantism 'produced no culture of its own but made an iconoclastic holocaust of the culture which already existed'.³ While we may well lament the destruction of irreplaceable objects of religious art (many of which were already antique at the time of their destruction), the damage that was done should be seen not simply as wanton violence, or an expression of malevolence towards the old faith, but rather as a symptom of fear and uncertainty in the attitude of reformist thinkers towards images and their function in lay religious belief.

The iconoclasts directed their destructive urges not only against the easy targets of the gorgeously bedecked virgins and saint statues, which were dressed, prayed to and given offerings (practices commonly denounced as idolatry by reformers),⁴ but at the stained glass windows, which were never considered to be objects of idolatrous veneration. The

¹ On the effects of iconoclasm upon English churches see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 381-386, 448-464, 566-589 and figs 58-59, 131-141; and John Phillips *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England 1535-1660* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 82-100 and figs 15-38.

² Brian Cummings, 'Iconoclasm and Bibliophobia', in *Images, Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Jeremy Dimmick and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 185-205 (p. 204).

³ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988), p. 94.

⁴ For the veneration of images and statues in fifteenth-century parish life see Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). On the subject of dressing statues, Gibson records that the 1501 will of one 'Jane Chamberleyn' of York, stipulates that the deceased woman's wedding ring, gold and silver girdle and coral rosary beads are to be placed upon the statue of St. Anne in St. Mary's Abbey on the day of her funeral (p. 71).

concern was not merely about the worshipping of idols and demi-gods in the churches; it was an anxiety specifically about mimesis, a suspicion that any kind of visual representation when it came to expressing religious ideas was somehow confusing and dangerous, and therefore best done away with entirely, for, as Cummings puts it, 'an empty church is empty of doubt'.⁵

The reformist alternative and antidote to all forms of visual representation was the Word, which in some cases literally replaced the visual image as church walls were whitewashed over and covered with texts against idolatry.⁶ Unlike human efforts to evoke the sacred through mimetic art, scripture was infallible and, in a sense, immaterial, belonging to the realm of thought and understanding rather than the depraved and woefully imperfect physical, visual world.

The reverencing of the scripture over visual media was not without its problematic elements. Firstly, the printing of the Bible in English resulted in a kind of intellectual egalitarianism which had never before existed. Before beginning his translation of the New Testament, Tyndale famously told a Catholic clergyman, 'I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost'.⁷ For the first time, the state was actively encouraging members of the lay community to attain unmediated knowledge of the Bible, and this revolution generated a massive increase in the potential for heterodoxy. The Tudor government saw the urgent need to institute some degree of religious conformity in the years immediately following the break from the Roman church, and the reigns of both Henry and Edward are marked by attempts to prevent incendiary preachers from public speaking and to curb the free interpretation of scripture.⁸ John N. King observes that Archbishop Cranmer's foreword to the 1547 *Book of Homilies* expresses concern at the pluralism of belief and divergent opinions which resulted from independent Biblical study. King sees the officially sanctioned homilies as an attempt to re-establish orthodoxy in the vacuum which existed after the exile of Catholic religious authority from England:

⁵ Cummings, 'Iconoclasm and Bibliophobia', p. 198.

⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 454.

⁷ William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, ed. by David Daniell (London: Penguin, 2000), intro. p. xvii.

⁸ For details on Henrician and Edwardian proclamations against preaching see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 387-8, 400, 410-11, 463-4.

Cranmer hoped that the authorized homilies, supplementing unrestricted Bible reading, would guide the study of the scriptures and formulate uniform doctrine. [...] In principle, the Bible is 'easy and plain for the understanding' [...] yet some 'obscure mysteries' can only be understood by the learned.⁹

Scripture created difficulties for the radical reformists as well as for the Tudor state: in the wrong hands it could be abused by quotations being lifted out of context by unscrupulous debaters and made to fit their own heretical purposes (according to the sixteenth-century proverb, 'even the devil can quote scripture for his own ends').¹⁰ This created an ideological battleground out of many issues, both traditionalists and reformers citing scriptural authority for their positions on matters such as the alleged succession of the popes from St. Peter and the attendant power granted them over earth and purgatory: 'quodcumque ligaveris' as Sedition quotes in Bale's *King Johan* (1538).¹¹ This sort of contention is sometimes bound up with the issue of translation: Tyndale's substitution of key words such as 'elder' and 'congregation' for the Vulgate's 'priest' and 'church' in his translation of the New Testament was especially galling to Sir Thomas More, as Daniell notes.¹² Bale sets up this particular debate in *Three Laws* (1538) when he has the Vice Infidelity greet Christus Lex by saying that he has heard of him and 'my mastres your wyfe' (i.e. the Catholic church).¹³ Christ's Law retorts:

Thys is not the church of dysgysed hypocrytes,
Of apysh shavelynge, or papystycall sodomytes.
Nor yet, as they call it, a temple of lyme and stone,
But a lyvysh buyldynge, grounded in fayth alone,
On the harde rocke Christ whych is the sure foundacyon:
And of thys church some do reigne in every nacyon,
And in all contrayes though their nombre be but small. [ll. 1327-33]

Veneration of the scripture caused another, perhaps essentially more troubling, problem for the reformers which is to do not with sectarian use of sacred words, but with the figurative

⁹ King, *English Reformation Literature*, p. 132; citing *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, intro. by Douglas Harrison (London: [n. pub.], 1968), p. 4.

¹⁰ See *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, ed. Jennifer Speake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), in <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t90.e525>> [accessed 21 June 2010]: 'The proverb alludes to the temptation of Christ by the Devil (Matthew iv) when the latter quotes a passage from Psalm xci'.

¹¹ John Bale, *King Johan*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed. by Peter Happé, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), I, l. 97.

¹² Daniell, *Obedience*, intro, pp. xx-xxi.

¹³ John Bale, *Three Laws*, in *Complete Plays*, II, l. 1302.

nature of the language itself, as scripture requires interpretation in order to serve as a guide for Christian living.

The reformers' relationship with scripture was especially agonised with regard to the role of allegory in religion. In *Obedience of a Christen Man* (1528) Tyndale calls allegory 'straunge speakyng or borrowed speach', an unstable, riddling form of language.¹⁴ Allegory is, in its most basic definition, the understanding of one thing presented to denote or symbolise something else: a linguistic form of mimesis.¹⁵ While the troubling visual representations which decorated England's churches could be deleted by smashing the windows and painting the rood screen, allegory could not be condemned or ignored. It was a mode of communication indigenous to the Bible itself, and therefore had to be assimilated into Protestant thought. The fault, as Tyndale saw it, came from our own inability to understand heavenly matters in anything but prosaic terms: 'The similitudes of the Gospell are allegories borrowed of worldly matters to expresse spirituall thinges' [R3^r].

There was a keen awareness that Biblical allegories had a long-standing heritage in Christian thought, and that these traditional meanings were firmly established in the minds of the people through the church's teachings: 'centuries of Catholic authority and intimately familiar dogma [...] ready to pounce on and overwhelm the ambivalent Christian', as Ivo Kamps puts it.¹⁶ The reformist intention was therefore to impose a new set of values upon the allegories and to find a way of fixing these new meanings as part of the commonly-held beliefs of the general public.

Much in the same way as the reformists propagated the belief that there was a 'true' or primitive church of the apostles which had been supplanted by the perverse Roman one (an assertion which allowed Protestantism to claim historical precedent in an age which valued antiquity and regarded innovation as suspicious), Tyndale cultivated the idea that there was a 'literal' meaning to all scripture. Cummings affirms the radicalism of this idea

¹⁴ William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christen Man* ([Antwerp]: [Hoochstraten], 1528; repr. Menston: Scholar Press, 1970), sig. R1^v.

¹⁵ The OED defines 'allegory, 1.' as 'description of a subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance'. For a brief history of the word see 'Appendix I: On the History of the Term "Allegory"', in Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 263-268.

¹⁶ Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 56-57.

by commenting that: 'the literal truth of scripture is commonly regarded as the most sensational doctrine of the Reformation'.¹⁷

In *Obedience* Tyndale mocks the four types of exegesis by which Catholic scholars traditionally endeavoured to achieve a full understanding of the scripture in all its senses: literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical [R1^{r-v}].¹⁸ These two latter he dismisses as fancy words for allegory, which narrows his field to only two real levels of understanding: the allegorical and the literal.

This established, Tyndale uses some popular proverbs to demonstrate that all allegories are only phrases which appear strange because they are couched in unfamiliar terms, or use images borrowed from other vocabularies, but which impart a commonly-understood wisdom:

[...] loke yer thou lepe / whose literall sence is / doo nothinge sodenly or without advisement. Cut not the bowe that thou stondest apon whose literall sence is oppresse not the comyns and is borowed of hewers. When a thinge speadeth not well / we borowe speach and saye / the Byshope hath blessed it / because that nothinge speadeth well that they medyll with all. [...] All fabels prophesies and redels are allegories asysopus [Aesop's] fabels and Marliens [Merlin's] prophesies and the interpretacion of them are the literall sence. [R2^{r-v}]

This is a double reduction: having established that the three figurative categories of Catholic scholasticism are in reality merely unnecessary subdivisions of allegory, he goes on to reveal that allegory itself is but a casing of unfamiliar words which conceals a kernel of truth. This central religious truth is what we should always be pursuing in scriptural exegesis:

Thou shalt understo[n]d therefore y^t the scripture hath but one sence which is y^e literall sence. And y^t literall sence is y^e rote and grou[n]d of all & the ancre y^t never fayleth where unto yf thou cleve thou canst never erre or goo out of the waye. And if thou leve y^e litterall sence thou canst not but goo out of the waye. Never the later the scripture useth proverbes / similitudes / redles or allegories as all other

¹⁷ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 5.

¹⁸ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* attributes fourfold interpretation back to Gregory the Great (d.604), 'principal initiator and greatest patron of medieval doctrine of the four senses.' Of the influence of this type of exegesis over the following centuries: 'This fourfold division of the senses (the literal, the spiritual—including the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogic) of Scripture invaded all areas of medieval life. [...] It remained classical in Biblical studies until the coming of the Protestant Reformers [...] who rejected it with derision in favor of a more direct, historical, literal exegesis.' See 'Exegesis, Biblical', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Berard L. Marthaler and others, 2nd edn., 15 vols (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), V, pp. 506-524.

speeches doo / but that which the proverbe / similitude / redell or allegory signifieth
is ever the literall sence which thou must seke out dilgently. [R1^v-R2^r]

The meaning which the reader derives from a scriptural allegory can only be established as truth by method of corroboration with other parts of scripture:

Moareover if I coulde not prove [i.e. try, test] with an open texte that which
allegory doeth expresse / then were allegory a thinge to be gested at and of no
greater value then a tale of Robyn hode. [...] Th[us] doeth the litterall sence prove
the allegory and beare it / as the foundacio[n] beareth the house. [R4^{r-v}]

Tyndale's methodology demonstrates an empirical attitude towards exegesis: in reading an allegory he desires Christians to form a hypothesis on what the 'truth' it expresses is, then to cross-refer to other points where the Bible may be giving an identical message, thereby establishing the hypothesis' validity. The same attitude is visible in reformist pamphlets and tracts, where each point the author makes in the main text is corroborated with a marginal reference to a verse of scripture. Some authors are so anxious for their arguments to appear convincing that the margins of their tracts appear almost totally black with references.¹⁹

The idea that every passage in the Bible should have one true, self-evident meaning seems like a strange mixture of naivety and arrogance, yet reformists such as Tyndale and Cranmer assert that by following the right guidelines (i.e. theirs), it is possible to discover the sole 'correct' interpretation of scripture.²⁰ Cummings points to this problematic reflexivity by commenting that: 'in such terms it is possible to forget that the phrase 'literal truth' is at best a paradox, perhaps an oxymoron'²¹ and that 'a literal interpretation, like any other, pays words back with words'.²² However, the propagation of this belief is an

¹⁹ See, for example, *The Image of Both Churches*: Bale was so unhappy with the quality of the printing of his copious marginal notes in part I that he discontinued his practice of dilligent referencing for parts II and III. In the preface of part II he bitterly complains about the 'heady hast' of the printers, saying of his references 'These haue both displaced them and also changed their nombers to the truthes derogacio[n]' (II, A3^v).

²⁰ In his homilies prescribed for the edification of the English people, Archbishop Cranmer sets out the following formula for scriptural interpretation: 'Reade it humbly, with a meke and a lowly harte, to thintent [sic], you may glorifie God, and not your self, with the knowledge of it: and reade it not without daily praiyng to God, that he would directe your readyng to good effecte, and take vpon you, to expounde it no further, then you can plainly vnderstande it'. See Thomas Cranmer, 'A fruteful exhortacion to the readyng of holye scripture' in *Certayne sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie, to be declared and redde, by all persones, vicars, or curates, euery Sondaye in their churches, where they haue cure* (London: Grafton, 1547), in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 13640, sigs. A3^v-B4^v (B2^v).

²¹ Cummings, *Literary Culture*, p. 5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

important part of the agenda of the reformists: unable to ignore allegory, they seek instead to stabilise it, insisting that every similitude has a meaning which is both singular and verifiable, the double aim being to discredit the Catholic 'dogma' surrounding allegory and to establish the Protestant doctrine as a revelation of truth rather than an alternative point of view.

Iconoclasm, concern over mimesis, emphasis upon the scriptures, and the pursuit of singular meaning are prominent features not only of reformist prose writings, but of the drama of John Bale. In this chapter I propose that Bale's oeuvre constitutes a set of experiments conducted by the playwright in order to make the formerly Catholic religious drama serve the purposes of Protestantism, an attempt which involves the stabilisation of allegory in its visual and verbal forms as well as the subversion and reinvention of the traditional meanings given to these allegories by his Catholic predecessors. The manner in which Bale deals with the allegorical mode in his various plays raises points not only to do with his implementation of the precepts found in the prose of other reformists, but also concerning the relationship between Protestantism and drama itself.

Dramatic Form: Bale's Modification of Allegorical Templates

There seems to be an agreement among those critics who have studied the development of anti-theatrical sentiment in England that, unlike their Puritan successors, who viewed the stage and its trappings with complete hostility, the early reformers had a more ambivalent attitude towards religious plays.²³ They revealed themselves, in Kendall's words, 'not as a single-minded enemy of the drama but as its troubled lover'.²⁴ Among those in power during the early years of the Reformation, Thomas Cromwell recognised the virtues of the medium and was prepared to use it as a propaganda device. He served as patron and protector to several Protestant playwrights, including Bale, using itinerant theatrical troupes to disseminate and popularise new religious ideas and to garner support from within the community. Sydney Anglo ascribes to Cromwell's secretary Sir Richard Morison the comments:

²³ On early reformers and their attitude towards playing see Russell Fraser, *The War Against Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 127-129 and Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) pp. 82-83.

²⁴ Ritchie D. Kendall, *The Drama of Dissent: The Radical Poetics of Nonconformity, 1380-1590* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 8.

Into the commen people thynges sooner enter by the eies then by the eares,
remembryng more better that they see than that they heere.²⁵

Although the early reformers therefore theoretically approved of drama upon the grounds of its usefulness as a didactic tool, even from the beginning the relationship between Protestantism and drama was a fraught one. Despite the sense that something was required to replace the Catholic types of popular drama — the moralities, mysteries and saint plays beloved of the common people — no existing form seemed wholly satisfactory to suit the doctrines and purposes of nascent Protestantism.

The mystery cycles sought to vivify scriptural episodes for the benefit of the vast majority of the community who were without knowledge of Latin or access to a Bible, and whose only acquaintance with the contents of the Bible itself came from the homilies of the parish priest and these annual dramatic productions. Yet much of the material contained within the mystery plays was humorous and non-scriptural, leading to the development of such apocryphal details as Noah having a shrewish wife who refuses to leave her gossips behind in order to board the ark,²⁶ or the comic business of sheep stealing which takes place in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play* (c. 1450).²⁷ Reformist drama would necessarily be produced on a much smaller scale than the mystery cycles, possibly even making use of itinerant troupes in order to maximise the reach of the propaganda. The plays would be aimed at an audience who had increasing access to vernacular Bibles and would aspire not only to enlarge the spectators' knowledge of scripture, but to encourage the audience to discriminate between traditionalist points of doctrine and those espoused in their own religious manifesto.

²⁵ Sydney Anglo, 'An Early Tudor Programme for Plays and Other Demonstrations Against The Pope', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20 (1957), 176-179, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/750157>> [accessed 16 June 2010], (p. 179). Anglo quotes from the unpublished treatise *A discourse touching the reformation of the lawes of England*, British Museum, Cotton MSS, Faustina C. ii, sigs 5-22.

²⁶ Noah's wife is quarrelsome and reluctant to enter the ark in the Noah mystery plays of the York and Chester cycles, and belligerent to the point of violence in the Towneley play: see 'IX: Noah and the Flood' (pp. 45-55), ll. 56-152 in *York Plays*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (New York: Russel, 1885); 'III: Noah's Flood' (pp. 42-56), ll. 97-112, 193-246 in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, Early English Text Society, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); 'III: Procesessus Noe cum filis (Noah and the Ark)' (pp. 23-40), ll. 190-243, 328-414 in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. George England and Alfred W. Pollard, Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897; repr. Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint Co., 1978).

²⁷ Towneley, 'XIII: Alia Eorundem (Shepherd's Play, II)', pp. 116-140.

Although John Bale's place in posterity is chiefly secured by the fierceness of his 'bilious' polemic rather than by his dramatic innovation,²⁸ his extant plays demonstrate a large degree of experimentation with form. His work is a palimpsest, exhibiting conspicuous traces of pre-existing forms of native drama, primarily the morality tradition, but also the mysteries and chronicle plays.²⁹ Yet Bale is more remarkable in how he deviates from the traditional dramatic conventions than in how he follows them: his work is innovative, and while he makes use of the familiar structures of English allegorical drama, he is engaged in a bold attempt to forge a new genre, striving to create a dramatic prototype for a reformed age.

a) The Morality Play

King Johan and *Three Laws* both possess features which immediately identify them with the moralities: such plays as *The Castle of Perseverance* (1382-1425), *Mankind* (1465-70), *Everyman* (c.1519) and John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* (1520-22) use personified abstractions to enact an eschatological plot, much like Bale's two popular-canon plays. While the writers of the pre-Reformation moralities frequently added local colour to their plays, these works also functioned on a universal and timeless level.³⁰ It is Bale's aim to make the allegorical drama express an intensely contemporary message, and to achieve this effect he reinvents key aspects of the morality drama, beginning with the convention of the Vice's disguise.

A metaphor which pervades all of Bale's drama is that of Roman ritual presented as a form of play acting, ceremony as mummary. The idea of the mass as a farce is common in reformation polemic, particularly that of Tyndale. His use of the word 'mummynge' to describe the church ceremonies conducted in Latin [*Obedience*, M1'] expresses both the

²⁸ Bale's nickname 'bilious Bale' was coined by Thomas Fuller c. 1662. 'Bilious Bale bespattereth him [...] hear how he ranteth [...]', Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, ed. by John Nichols, 2 vols ([London]: Rivington, 1811), in <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/MOML?af=RN&ae=F101355130&srchtp=a&ste=14>> [accessed 21 June 2010], p. 238.

²⁹ For comments upon Bale's reliance on indigenous dramatic forms see Honor McCusker, *John Bale: Dramatist and Antiquary* (Bryn Mawr PA: [n. pub.], 1942), pp. 77-96; Thora Balslev Blatt, *The Plays of John Bale: A Study of Ideas, Technique and Style* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1968), pp. 63-65, 127; and Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 31.

³⁰ See, for example, *Mankind* (1465-1470), where the head devil Titivillus instructs his lieutenant vices to enlist help from local personages, listing their names as: 'William Fyde [...] Master Huntyngton of Sauston [...] Wyllyam Thurlay of Hauston [...] Pycharde of Trumptynton [...] Wyllyham Baker of Walton [...] Rycherde Bollman of Gayton [...] Master Woode of Fullburn [...] Wyllyam Partryke of Massyngham [...] Master Alyngton of Botysam [...] Hamonde of Soffeham'. *Mankind*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), ll. 503-515.

idea of pretence or play-acting and mumbling — linguistic nonsense. Bale uses similar expressions in his religious autobiographical work *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishoprick of Ossorie in Ireland* (1553). Here he recounts his retort to the mutinous Irish priests of his diocese when they demand that he say a mass for the lately departed King Edward:

By my trowth sayde I / than muste ye go seke out some other chaplayne. For truly of all generacions I am no massemongar. For of all occupacions me thinke / it is most foolish. For there standeth the preste disgyse / lyke one that wolde shewe some conveyance or juglyng playe. He turneth his back to the people / and telleth a tale to the walle in a foren language.³¹

Alongside the mockery of the mass as farcical and senseless is the more serious accusation of wilful deception embodied in the idea of disguise. To those reformists familiar with the vice conventions of the English morality play the comparison is irresistible. In *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528) Tyndale uses the idea of a changeable disguise to explain the nature of the Antichrist, portraying him as a protean play-actor:

But his nature is (what he is bttred [sic] and overcome with the word of God) to go out of the playe for a season and to disgyse hymselfe and then to come in agayn with a new name and a new rayme[n]t. [...] Because the beast seeyth himself now to be sought for, he roareth and seketh new holes to hyde him self in and chaungeth himself in a thousande fashions with al maner wilines, falshed, subteltie and crafte.³²

A new name and a new raiment to conceal his true nature from the gullible protagonist were the stock tricks of the morality Vice and his dissolute companions; Bale's effectiveness lies in taking up these anti-Catholic metaphors from polemical writings and joining them with the dramatic conventions of the moralities, creating a powerful and radical allegory about the nature of evil in order to further his reformist agenda.

Part of this alteration to the traditional allegory of evil is its identification as specifically Catholic. This is a complete reversal of the iconography of the pre-Reformation morality tradition, where the sober virtues were often clad in ecclesiastical vestments (for example Mercy in *Mankind*, Confession in *Everyman*). It is a tactic which

³¹ John Bale, *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale*, ed. by Peter Happé and John N. King (Binghamton NY: Renaissance English Text Society, 1990), p. 66.

³² William Tyndale, *The parable of the wycked mammon* (London: Day, 1547), in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 24457, sig. A4^{r-v}.

anticipates the audience's expectation of the conventional and attempts to shock them with its perversity. As White comments:

Bale's most effective weapon is to present those revered images before the spectators only to discredit them by depriving them of their original sacred context, and substituting a profane or diabolical one instead.³³

Bale tries to incorporate a variety of clerical costumes into the representation of evil in his plays, usually reserving monastic garments for the vices of sexual crimes, the vestments of common priests for crimes of ignorance or perverse doctrine, and the more luxurious garments of the bishops, cardinals and popes for the more general but more heinous crimes pertaining to the abuse of power and avarice. His colophon attached to *Three Laws* on 'The apparelynge of the six vyces or frutes of Infydelyte' is particularly revealing:

Lete Idolatry be decked lyke an olde wytche, Sodomy lyke a monke of all sectes, Ambycyon lyke a byshop, Covetousnesse lyke a Pharyse or spyrituall lawer, False Doctryne lyke a popysh doctour, and Hypocresy lyke a graye fryre. The rest of the partes are easy ynough to conjecture. (p. 121)

The variety in the garments displayed during the course of the play underlines that they are costumes, reminding the spectator of the polemicist's idea of religious ceremony as mummery. This is also intended as an exposé of the deception and fraud perpetrated by the Church: Bale's the audience members are encouraged to question the reputability of an organisation which needs to resort to such cheap tricks in order to gull the masses into crediting it. Greg Walker comments: 'the implication is clearly that any spiritual authority which relies upon costumes, and thus disguise, is in fact worthless, and worse, fraudulent.'³⁴

Bale's plays are the first surviving examples of this Protestant dramatic tradition of explicitly linking evil characters with the Catholic Church, and it is a convention which is remarkably enduring: *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1547-53) includes a soliloquy by the devil who mourns the passing of Catholicism, thinking of it fondly as the best way he ever had to keep people in ignorance and superstition, and the Vice of *New Custom* (1550-73) is an old popish priest named Perverse Doctrine (his *nom de guerre* is 'Sound Doctrine'). Even as late as the 1590s playwrights could rely upon their audience to recognise the tradition, as

³³ White, p. 34.

³⁴ Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 191.

Christopher Marlowe has Faustus joke at the re-entrance of the devil Mephistopheles in a grey friar's habit: 'that holy shape becomes a devil best'.³⁵

However, a more complicated cross-pollination between polemical prose and morality play is occurring in Bale's work than the apparent simplicity of the device of giving the Vice a clerical costume might lead one to believe. The Balean vices do not use disguise in the same way that their pre-Reformation antecedents do, and the allegory of evil here functions differently. Medieval morality vices certainly play on the gullibility of the protagonists (and their disguises may be feeble), but their power is dependent upon their not being recognised as villains, and being instead mistaken for virtuous friends and counsellors. In the Marian morality *Respublica* (1553, attributed to Nicholas Udall), the character of Avarice must school his doltish lieutenant in the importance of preserving his disguise. This results in a metatheatrical moment which parodies the dramatic conventions of playing the Vice:

AVARICE

And whan yowe are [in] your Robe, keape yt afore close.

OPPRESSION

I praie youe, maister Policie, for what purpose?

AVARICE

All folke wyll take yowe, if theye piepe vnder youre gowne,
for the veriest catif in Countrey or towne.³⁶

The conventional dramatic allegory functions as follows: human beings are easily duped into behaving in an immoral manner, not necessarily because they knowingly embrace evil, but because evil is subtle and humans are often blinded to the sinful nature of their actions. This is not, however, how Bale's use of the Vice allegory works, for the powers of Infidelity, Sedition and their lieutenants do not depend upon their abilities to conceal their true identities. The clerical 'costumes' are not donned by the vices in order to trick people into thinking they are friendly or virtuous, for the vices are perfectly unconcerned that all the protagonists know their true nature.

³⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus (A Text)*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), I. 3. 26.

³⁶ *Respublica: A Play on the Social Condition of England at the Accession of Queen Mary*, ed. by Leonard A. Magnus, Early English Text Society (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & co., 1905), II. 429-432.

In *Three Laws* Infidelity is openly hostile, gloating even, about his evil powers and he shamelessly beards the three Laws in turn. The steadfast Laws of Nature and Christ flee Infidelity's presence in disgust, while the rather draconian Moses' Law impotently vows 'Than wyll I fet hyther the poure/ Of judges and kynges' (958-59).

The colophon gives no clue as to the ordinary costume of Infidelity, but when he enters to exchange banter with Moses' Law at line 800 he is apparently dressed as a grey friar. He claims that he has concealed his identity to 'smell out' the 'subtylte' (955) of Law of Moses, but it is a cursory deception: the Law instantly realises by his speech and behaviour that he is a scoundrel, and Infidelity has no qualms about revealing his name on demand:

MOSEH LEX

What art thou called, I praye the hartelye?

INFIDELITAS

Graye fryre am I non — by the messe I can not flatter.
I am Infydelyte, to tell the truth of the matter. (951-53)

Similarly, King Johan identifies Sediton as a lout as soon as the Vice opens his mouth:

[Enter Sediton.]

SEDICYON

What, yow two alone? I wyll tell tales, by Jesus!
And saye that I se yow fall here to bycherye.

K. JOHAN

Avoyd, lewde person, for thy wordes are ungodlye. (43-45)

As Benjamin Griffin writes, it is not Bale's intention or metaphorical mode of working that the vices should deceive anyone with their appearance:

Indeed we may question whether in Bale's play-world it is possible for him to be deceived. [...] This method of characterization leaves no room for secrecy: every character is laid bare, to Johan and to the audience.³⁷

Bale's protagonists are not the first to be suspicious of the vices: in the tradition of Catholic morality drama, the vices of Skelton's morality play *Magynfyccence* are probably

³⁷ Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama 1385-1600* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2001), p. 40.

the most openly disreputable. The eponymous ruler is at first reluctant to employ Fanny (who is calling himself 'Largesse):

FELICYTE

From whens come you, syr, that no man lokyd after?

MAGNYFYCENCE

Or who made you so bolde to interruepe my tale?

FANSY

Nowe, *benedicite*, ye wene I were some hafter [i.e. sharper]
Or elles some jangelynge Jacke of the Vale;
Ye wene that I am dronken bycause I loke pale.

MAGNYFYCENCE

Me semeth that ye have dronken more than ye have bled.³⁸

Fanny eventually gains credibility by presenting a forged letter of recommendation, purportedly from a sage counsellor named 'Sad Cyncumspeccyon' (l. 311). His 'disguise' of virtue holds, and he is admitted to Magnifycence's court. While Skelton strains the dramatic convention by having his shabby vices resort to phoney references (as well as garments) in order to bolster their waning credibility, Bale's openly wicked vices push it past breaking point. In both *King Johan* and *Three Laws* the traditional allegory of the Vice's disguise has been dissolved. The point made by Bale is that they are not 'disguised' in these costumes at all, but rather that their external appearance is a (fluctuant) manifestation of their wicked nature.

Bale shares with Tyndale the idea of the Antichrist not as one single personage, but a spirit that has many incarnations and who can be viewed as a cavalcade of historical figures. Tyndale instructs the reader of *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* to understand the term Antichrist not as 'a man that shoulde sodenly appeare wyth wonders', but as a 'spiritual thing [...] that is one that preacheth false doctrine contrary to Christe' [A3^v]. He continues:

Antichriste was in the olde Testament and foughte with the prophytes, he was also in y^e tyme of Christe and of the Apostles [...] Antichriste is now and shell (I dout not) endure tyl the worldes end. (A3^v–A4^r)

³⁸ John Skelton, *Magnifycence*, in *Four Morality Plays*, ed. by Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), ll. 256–260.

The significance of the vices dressing as historical personages in *King Johan* is an illustration of this precept: in donning the clothes and names of Stephen Langton, Simon of Swinsett, Cardinal Pandulphus, and the Pope they are not so much like wolves wearing the lamb's fell as they are simply becoming corporeal rather than abstract, particular rather than general.

Bale's vices are much more powerful and pernicious than their medieval ancestors because their success does not depend upon remaining incognito and being mistaken for virtues, but on their perceived authority as members of the Catholic clergy. This revering of what is known to be evil is best demonstrated by the character of Nobility in *King Johan*, who is essentially well-meaning but ignorant and weak, all too easily bullied by the vices in their ecclesiastical finery when they bribe him with the promise of 'clene remyssyon' (980).

NOBYLYTE

Yt is clene agenst the nature of Nobelyte
To subdew his kyng with owt Godes autoryte,
For his princely astate and powre ys of God.
I wold gladly do yt but I fere his ryghtfull rode.

SEDICYON

Godes holy vycare gave me his whole autoryte.
Loo, yt is here, man, beleve yt, I beseche the,
Or elles thow wylte faulle in danger of damnacyon.

NOBYLYTE

Than I submyt me to the Chyrches reformacyon. (1176-83)

Thus, the allegory is not that English Christians are blind to the evil natures of their tempters, but that they continue to treat them with reverence against the urgings of their own consciences out of superstitious fear. The vices are shown to maintain the Church's strangle-hold on the country by propagating the belief that they alone can provide the sacramental reconciliation which they assert is necessary for salvation. In one hand they hold the carrot of absolution, in the other, the stick of excommunication. Bale presents it as a ridiculous, 'emperor's new clothes' situation: while the perversity of the doctrine is evident even to those as unlearned as Nobility, the agents of the Church will continue to tyrannize England until its citizens have the courage to oppose them.

In changing the role of the vices, the role of the protagonist has also been radically altered. Gone is the vacillating everyman-figure, replaced by the noble, steadfast characters

of King John and the three Laws. The medieval moralities stressed the weakness and gullibility of their protagonists, so by displaying characters who are defiled by evil despite remaining constant and vigilant, and Vices who have no need for the exigencies of disguise, Bale subverts the morality play form in order to criticise the powerful and pernicious influence of Catholicism upon the English nation. It is the modification of the familiar dramatic formula in order to make the point which makes it startling. Blatt summarises:

He wants to show that it is not by stealth, but openly and boldly that Antichrist walks the earth. Disguises would imply weakness. Bale's evil characters are so sure of their power that they have no use for this kind of aid. To an audience used to the disguise trick the disuse of it may have carried its own significance.³⁹

b) The History Play

The history play is frequently a vehicle for allegory because it allows the playwright to comment upon the present by indirect means. The desired effect is often satirical, a use which is especially valuable to those who wish to criticise a powerful government, personage, or institution, enabling the writer to work in relative safety through parallels and innuendoes instead of direct criticism. The play becomes a sort of secret code between the playwright and the audience. The allegory of history can also be laudatory, intended to flatter a contemporary figure delicately by comparison with a glorious personage from the nation's past.

King Johan manages to serve both of these purposes simultaneously: on one hand, the noble protagonist is presented as embodying the reformist aspirations which would finally be given glorious realisation under the kingship of Henry VIII (and, as the revised version adds in the exultations of Nobility in the final stanzas (2671-77), consolidated and maintained by Elizabeth I). However, Bale's intention is not solely adulation of Henry, for as Greg Walker observes, *King Johan* also demonstrates Bale's impatience with the piecemeal nature and slow pace of the Reformation under that monarch.⁴⁰ While he remains on safe ground when attacking the Pope and refuting the power of holy relics, Bale is straying dangerously close to heresy in ridiculing the sacrament of penance, which

³⁹ Blatt, p. 108.

⁴⁰ Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 210.

was upheld by the Ten Articles of faith established by the convocation of 1536,⁴¹ as well as the Six Articles of June 1539.⁴²

The jingoistic Bale would never condemn Henry personally for the continuation of these perceived abuses, and he carefully appoints all blame for the retardation of reform to the insubordinate clergy, treacherous nobility and self-serving agents of the law. His approach here is hortatory rather than critical. Bale wishes to excite the king's sense of righteous indignation by pointing to the seditious effect of this alleged sacrament, citing the urban myth beloved of reformists that the confessional was a device designed to transmit sensitive material to Rome via a spy network of duplicitous priests. Tyndale (whose purpose, after all, in *Obedience of a Christen Man* is to establish the authority of monarchs over the papacy) calls the confessor a 'privey traytar and a secret Judas' (O1^v), and points to the popular acknowledgement of the confessor's treachery using a homespun anti-clerical proverb: 'of hi[m] y^t is betrayed a[n]d woteth not how / we saye / he hath bene at shrifte' (R2^v). Bale evokes this conspiracy theory using the character of Sedition, who gleefully taunts Johan in response to the king's threat of reform:

Nay that ye can not, thowgh ye had Argus eyes,
In abbeyes they have so meny suttyll spyes.
For ones in the yere they have secret vysytacyons,
And yf ony prynce reforme ther ungodly facyons,
Than two of the monkes must forthe to Rome by and by
With secrett letters to avenge ther injury. (244-49)

Thus, while ostensibly using the allegory of history to praise Henry's Reformation as the realisation of the goals of the martyr King John, Bale's agenda is to push for more drastic change by arousing the indignation of the jealous, absolutist monarch. This is attempted by presenting the (still officially sanctioned) sacrament of penance (which involved the acts of confession and absolution) as an unchecked challenge to Henry's power, a conspiracy which enabled the priests still secretly loyal to the Pope to work mischief against the crown.

The *dramatis personae* of *King Johan* are an apparently incongruous mix of the allegorical personifications typical of a morality play and historical personages, and because of the latter class of character Bale is frequently accredited as the first writer of a

⁴¹ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 390-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 421-3.

chronicle play in English.⁴³ That Bale should be the originator of this genre is perhaps unsurprising given that he was a former hagiographer, a colleague of the king's antiquary John Leland, and a life-long collector of chronicles and other historical manuscripts.⁴⁴ His interest in history is a feature which pervades his polemical writing, and his elucidation of the Book of Revelation, *The Image of Both Churches* (parts I and II published in 1545, part III in 1547), demonstrates that he understood his work as an antiquarian scholar to be complimentary to his work as a Reformer:

It is a full clerenesse to all the cronicles & moste notable hystories which hath bene writte[n] sens Christes ascension, openynge the true naturs of their ages, tymes & seasons. He that hath store of them, and shall dillige[n]tly serch the[m] ouer conferryng the one with the other, tyme with tyme, & age with age shal perceyue most wonderful causes. For in the text are they onely proponed in effecte, & promised to folowe in their seasons, & so ratified with the other scripturs, but in y^t cronicles they are euide[n]tly seene by all ages fulfilled. Yet is the text a light to the cronicles, & not the cronicles to the texte. (I, A4^v)

While the scriptures are to be considered a superior truth ('yet is the text a lyght to the cronycles'), knowledge of history is a vital supplement to Christian edification, since the events of past times (as recorded in the chronicles) prove the fulfilment of the Bible's prophecies and the persistence of its archetypes. Therefore, just as Tyndale proposes that Christians ought to 'prove' their hypothesis of the meaning of a scriptural allegory against sentiments expressed elsewhere within the text, Bale asserts that history can only be interpreted by 'conferring' it with scripture.

The Book of Revelation is central to Bale's understanding of history; in *The Image of Both Churches* he praises it as 'the very complete summe and whole knitting vp [...] of the uniuersall veritees of the Bible' (I, A3^r), and as a comprehensive history 'from Christes asce[n]sion to the ende of the world undre pleasaunt figures and elegant tropes decyded' (I, A3^v). As Katharine Firth notes, Bale is not obsessed with numerology or involved in an attempt to explain Revelation's prophecies as pertaining to single occurrences which have

⁴³ See Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1965), p.34; Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 38; McCusker, p. 90; Kamps, p. 53.

⁴⁴ McCusker, pp. 1-28; 55-57. For a list of British chroniclers known to John Bale himself see the index of his *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptorum, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae summarium in quasdam centurias diuisum, cum diuersitate doctrinarum atque annorum recta supputatione per omnes aetates a Iapheto sanctissimi Noah filio, ad annum domini. M.D.XLVIII* ([Wesel]: [van der Straten], 1548) in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 1295.

already come to pass.⁴⁵ His interest in Revelation is instead primarily as an endorsement of the dualistic doctrine of the 'two churches', a belief considered to be a basic tenet of Tudor Protestant apocalyptic thought,⁴⁶ and continually emphasised by Bale. This thesis opened with the following quotation from his manifesto in *The Image's* preface:

Herin is the true Christie[n] church (which is the meke spouse of the lambe without spot) in her right fashyoned colours described. So is the proud church of hypocrites, the rose coloured whore, the paramoure of Antichrist, and the sinfull sinagoge of Satha[n], in her iust proporcio[n] depaynted, to the merciful fore warnynge of the Lordes electes. And y^t is the cause, why I haue here intytled this boke, the Image of both churches. (A2^{r-v})

These polarised groups signify the adherents of Christ and Satan, and by extension, the members of the true (apostolic) church and the false (Roman) one. Bale regards the role of the reformist historian as that of an observer of the ways in which the constant struggle between these two groups manifests itself throughout history, and as an identifier of the members of Christ's elect (such as martyrs) and the personifications of Antichrist and his followers (such as the pope and clergy).

This approach to history is conspicuous in *King Johan*, a play in which the vices each have two identities: a character from English history, and an abstract quality. Like Tyndale's Antichrist, these vices can go out of the play and return with a new name and a new raiment; Bale envisions himself as the knowing historian who can utilise the chronicles to teach his audience that these named figures are vestiges of the false Satanic church. *King Johan* is therefore not a clumsy attempt to mix morality plays and antiquarian knowledge but a demonstration of how the two churches are manifested in one period of history: a true Christian — the betrayed king — in conflict with the agents of the Antichrist, who have taken the form of a pope, a cardinal, a legate and a monk.

c) The Mystery Cycles

Bale's aim in referencing the mystery plays is once again to subvert and reform a medieval Catholic form of drama. He recognises the didactic potential of these short Bible plays and their use in plainly presenting sacred material for the edification of a wide and diverse audience. However, before the mystery plays could serve the reformist agenda they had to

⁴⁵ Firth, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay, 1978), p. 54.

be purged of all material not authorised by scripture. In many Northern and Western areas, towns tolerated the playing of the mysteries even into the Elizabethan era, merely striking out the material they considered too frivolous or too explicitly Catholic, what Duffy terms 'piecemeal bowdlerization'.⁴⁷ Bale's intention is not simply to delete the parts of such plays which were deemed offensive to Protestant sensibilities, but to create an alternative which would possess authority by virtue of being entirely scripture-based.

Bale's Bible plays are an attempt to familiarise the audience with scripture through the medium of drama while keeping the material free of the scurrilous humour and spectacle which conventionally formed part of such entertainment. *John Baptist's Preaching* (1538) and *Temptation of our Lord* (1538) most closely resemble the mystery plays because they are dramatisations of short Biblical episodes, while *God's Promises* (1538) has greater scope, offering an overview of Christian history and taking the covenants made by God with various Biblical personages as its connecting theme.

That Bale views these three plays as acceptable alternatives to the excesses of Catholic celebration can be seen in his determination to put on his trilogy of Biblical plays *God's Promises*, *John Baptist's Preaching*, and *The Temptation of Our Lord* in the market square of Kilkenny during the celebrations attending the accession of Mary I. He writes in *Vocacyon*:

On the .xx. daye of August / was the Ladye Marye with us at Kilkennye proclaimed
Quene of Englande / Fraunce / and Ireland / with the greatest solempnyte that there
coulede be devysed / of processions / musters and disgysinges / all the noble
captaynes and gentilmen there about beinge present. What a do I had that daye with
the prebandaryes and prestes abought wearinge the cope / croser / and myter in
procession / it were to muche to write. (58)

In the midst of the lavish festivities is the image of the sober Bale alone with 'Christes testament' (960) in his hand, determined to preach the gospel to the traditionalist masses despite their mockery. This is followed by his report that during the afternoon a group of young men of his acquaintance staged his three Bible plays, as he wryly adds, 'to the small contentacion of the prestes and other papistes there' (977). The New Testament and his own Bible plays are offered here as antidotes to the spectacle and frivolity of Catholic celebration.

⁴⁷ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 580.

In attempting to rehabilitate the mystery form by dramatising sola scriptura Bale meets with limited success. Firstly, there is the matter of the claim to scriptural authority: Bale's plays certainly lack the homely digressions of the mysteries (for example, the fabliau-like tone of the annunciation plays during the episode of Joseph's return,⁴⁸ or the women swearing at and beating the soldiers in the Chester 'Slaughter of the Innocents'⁴⁹), and at some points Bale is quoting scripture almost verbatim, as here when Pater Coelestis speaks his promise to the wayward Adam, echoing the words of Genesis 3. 15:⁵⁰

Thys ys my covaunant to the and all thy ofsprynge:
For that thu hast bene deceyved by the serpe[n]t,
I wyll put hatred betwixt hym for hys doynge
And the woman kynde: they shall herafter dyssemt.
Hys sede with her sede shall never have agrement;
Her sede shall presse downe hys heade unto the grounde,
Slee hys suggestyons and hys whole power confounde.⁵¹

Pater Coelestis goes on to tell Abraham, following Genesis 12. 2⁵² and 15. 5:⁵³

Of manye peoples the father I wyll make the;
All generacyons in thy sede shall be blessyd.
As the [starres] of heaven so shall thy kyndred be,
And by the same sede the worlde shall be redressed. (391-94)

While Bale manages to steer clear of sectarianism throughout the main play text of *God's Promises*, Baleus Prolocutor returns at its end to explain the ultimate covenant between

⁴⁸ Upon discovering Mary's pregnancy Joseph conventionally laments that he has been cuckolded and warns the men of the audience against marrying young wives: see '12: Joseph's Doubt' (pp. 123-130), ll. 49-52, 81-83 in *The N-Town Play*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols, Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); *Chester*, 'VI: The Annunciation and the Nativity' (pp. 97-124), ll. 123-160; *Towneley*, 'X: Annunciatio' (pp. 86-97), ll. 155-226. The York mysteries dedicate an entire play to his bewailing: see *York*, 'XIII: Joseph's Trouble About Mary' (pp. 102-111). In several plays Joseph also relates the story of a miracle (with distinctly sexual imagery) pertaining to his first meeting with Mary, recalling how he, as a barren old man with no thought of marriage, was forced to present the young Mary with a white rod in the temple, only for it to spontaneously burst forth with blossom: see *Towneley*, 'Annunciatio', ll. 227-268; *York*, 'Joseph's Trouble about Mary', ll. 21-34; and *N-Town*, '10: The Marriage of Mary and Joseph' (pp. 95-111), ll. 163-267.

⁴⁹ *Chester*, 'X: The Slaughter of the Innocents' (pp. 185-204), ll. 353-390.

⁵⁰ 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' (KJV)

⁵¹ *God's Promises*, in *Complete Plays*, II, ll. 114-20.

⁵² 'And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.'

⁵³ 'And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.'

man and God by the sacrifice of Christ as evidence for justification by faith. He cannot resist a jibe at the conventional wisdom of the Catholic clergy:

Where is now fre wyll whom hypocrytes comment?
Wherby they report they maye at their owne pleasure
Do good of themselves though grace and fayth be absent,
And have good intentes their madnesse with to measure.⁵⁴

Similarly, while *John Baptist's Preaching* and *Temptation of Our Lord* faithfully recount the events and frequently echo the phrasing of their scriptural sources, they are both distinctly flavoured with Protestant doctrine. John the Baptist denounces the Pharisees and Sadducees in terms which are eerily familiar to anyone who is acquainted with the pejoratives of Bale's conventional anti-clerical satire: 'pestylent tradycyons' (231), 'false expositions' (232), 'paynted Hypocrytes' (239), 'dysguysed hypocrytes' (332). Bale is clearly registering his grievance with Catholic worship when he has John denounce the 'fastynges, longe prayers with other holy behavers' (266) of the play's Jewish elders. They are also (like the Catholic-allied vices of *King Johan*) in a position of authority, and they question John's prophecy with an outrage stemming from their veneration of orthodox religious law and traditional hierarchies:

Our worthy decrees the knave doth not regarde,
But practyseth newe lawes soch as were never hearde.
By whose autoryte doest thou teache thys *newe lernynge*?
Doubt not but shortly thou wyllt be brought to a reckenyng. (251-54, italics mine)

Just as in Bale's two morality-based dramas, the evildoers are the ones occupying positions of power, and when they fail to out-argue the righteous John they fall back on plotting to slander him and cause his downfall: 'Wyth a lytle helpe of an heretyke he wyll smell' (298). As with the above-quoted promise of 'a reckenyng', the language suggests Bale is encouraging a connection between the persecution of the prophet John and the Protestant martyrs.

A more striking example of a Biblical character being made to speak on behalf of reformism is Christ in *Temptation of our Lord*. He enters the place to address the audience directly, relating that he has fasted for forty days and nights (as in Matthew 4); he goes on to explain in no uncertain terms that he does not do this so that men thereafter should copy

⁵⁴ *John Baptist's Preaching*, in *Complete Plays*, II, ll. 976-79.

his actions, but as an allegorical example of how mankind may resist the temptations of the devil:

Thynke not me to fast bycause I wolde yow to fast,
For than ye thynke wronge and have vayne judgement.
But of my fastynge thynke rather thys my cast:
Sathan to provoke to worke hys cursed intent,
And to teache yow wayes hys myschefes to prevent
By the worde of God, whych must be your defence
Rather than fastynges, to withstande hys vyolence.⁵⁵

As Duffy notes, 'the issue of the Lenten fast readily became a shorthand token for one's attitude to reform in general'.⁵⁶ While ardent reformers such as Bale challenged the practice as a thoughtless observance, traditionalists staunchly adhered to the customary proscriptions against consumption of meat and dairy produce, even in the face of a proclamation issued by King Henry on the 11th of March 1538 excusing his subjects from the practice.⁵⁷

Scornful phrases such as 'vayne judgement' are obviously Bale's words, not Christ's, and they demonstrate that the playwright has developed a conflict of interest: on one hand he wishes for the purity of scripture to replace the unauthorised additions of Catholic doctrine and unabashed fictional digression that were features of the mysteries, yet he feels the need to provide his own commentary, stealthily submerging it within the text and effectively putting sectarian words into Christ's mouth.

A key reason that Bale cannot make his plays from a dramatisation of plain, unadorned scripture is because he perceives the danger of allowing the audience to derive their own lessons from it, inculcated as they are with a lifetime of Catholic teaching: it is a reappearance of the reformist fear of the misinterpretation of scriptural allegory. The reformers realise that in order to establish their new faith more firmly they need to snatch such Biblical episodes as Christ's forty days in the wilderness from the jaws of the Catholic Church, so that they can imbue such allegories with the meanings which they regard as more satisfactory.

⁵⁵ *Temptation of Our Lord*, in *Complete Plays*, II, ll. 43-49.

⁵⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 405.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The second problem with Bale's intended renovation of the mysteries is that after stripping away the elements which made the mysteries entertaining — the spectacular elements, the humorous dialogue — he is not left with very much that looks like drama at all. His Bible plays are eminently serious and almost entirely static, consisting of a handful of Biblical characters standing still and conversing. It remains questionable whether such plays as these could ever really have replaced the mystery cycles, which were a great source of local pride in communities, as well as showcases for the craftsmen's guilds, and consequently aimed to be spectacular, lavish and entertaining.

d) The Saint Play

As both Clifford Davidson and Lawrence Clopper observe, few English plays are extant from the 'saints' lives' tradition, yet references remain within letters and guild financial records which make mention of these lost plays (many of which celebrated well-beloved local saints).⁵⁸ Of prominence among the national saints which became subjects of these lost plays was Thomas à Becket, the object of countless medieval pilgrimages.⁵⁹ It is clear that Bale attempted to use the dramatic form against Becket, singling him out as in special need of discrediting. From Bale's own lists of his works, *Scriptorum* (1548) and *Catologus* (1557), we find evidence of a lost play directed against Becket, listed as '*De Thomae Becketi imposturis*' in *Scriptorum* and '*De imposturis Thomae Becketi*' in *Catologus*.⁶⁰

More than any other individual saint revered by the English public, Becket was Bale's *bête noir*; not simply because of his popularity and the relics, miracles, and pilgrimages associated with him, but because he represented the seditious influence of the Roman Church in Britain. Becket was martyred because of his opposition to the crown; the idea that this is seen as a holy virtue by the masses — alongside the suspicion that the Church canonised him simply to encourage such behaviour in other Christians — incites the nationalist Bale to achieve new heights of vituperation. Blatt notes that Becket's martyrdom was the subject of many church sermons, which traditionally portrayed him as

⁵⁸ Clifford Davidson, 'The Middle English Saint Play and Its Iconography', in *The Medieval Saint Play in Europe*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp. 31-122. Lawrence M. Clopper, 'Why Are There So Few English Saint Plays?', *Early Theatre*, 2 (1999), <<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/eth/article/viewFile/7451/4438>> (accessed 24 June 2010), 107-112.

⁵⁹ For evidence concerning St. Becket plays see Davidson, 'Middle English Saint Play', pp. 52-60.

⁶⁰ Blatt, pp. 22-3.

[...] a saint helped in God's cause by the Pope and the pious French King, or, as Bale would have expressed it, an Englishman opposing his liege lord, God's anointed in England, in league with the enemy of the country, aided by a supranational tyrant eager to maintain and extend his power over national states.⁶¹

Although this example of an anti-saint play is no longer extant, it is possible to make an educated guess at the sort of material it might have contained and its mode of expression from Bale's *King Johan*, where Becket is exalted by the Vice Seditio, who wishes to be canonised alongside the saint after his hanging (upon the orders of Imperial Majesty):

Some man tell the Pope I besyche ye with all my harte,
How I am ordered for takynge the Churches parte,
That I maye be put in the Holye Letanye
With Thomas Beckett, for *I thynke I am as wurthye*.
Praye to me with candels for I am a saynt alreadye.
O blessed Saynt Partryck, I see the, I, verylye. (2587-92, italics mine)

Seditio's complacent assurance that his virtues are equal to those of Becket is of course ironic: that the audience has seen Seditio to be base, wicked, and treacherous casts a slanderous reflection onto Becket, and Bale thereby presents the latter as an entirely meretricious saint. Griffin sees the character of King Johan as the anti-Becket (standing for the values of sovereignty and nationalism), and the play itself as a 'reformed saint play', another example of Bale's attempt to alter inherited dramatic forms.⁶²

Bale's work in reclaiming John from the slanders of the monastic historians is in line with Tyndale's comments on the matter in *Obedience*: 'they have put the best and fayrest for the[m] selves and the worst of Ki[n]g John / for I suppose they make the cronycles them selves' (V5^v) – all this is presumably opposed to activities of reformist historians, who are occupied in recording the 'literal' truth and not blinded by the bias which afflicted the monastic chroniclers. The play is also part of the developing tradition of Protestant martyrology which had been seen in Bale's report of the trial of Anne Askewe, and would be most famously developed by Foxe.

The message of *King Johan* is an inversion of that proposed by the Catholic saint play: the traditional drama was presented in order to revivify the past, refreshing in the minds of the onlookers the hagiographic details and attempting to inspire faith in their

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 49.

⁶² Griffin, p. 39.

post-mortem potency by stressing their singular holiness and recounting their miracles: in such works the past still affects the present. John's sacrifice, on the other hand, is only invested with meaning through the reformist actions of Henry VIII. Despite John's best intentions to remedy the devastation wrought upon England by the Roman clergy he is coerced into surrendering his crown to the agents of the Pope and, beguiled by them, he is then poisoned. Only by seeing him as the ideological forbear of Henry, the successful banisher of the clergy, can his sacrifice be vindicated: in Bale's play, the present works upon the past.

Visualisation

In fitting his didactic material for the stage, Bale is brought back to the problem of physical representation, the question of how to approach an audience who had a sophisticated understanding of visual imagery, without resorting to the 'quick pictures', as Walker terms them, of the types of drama which represented the hated idolatry of Catholicism.⁶³

Bale finds the whole issue of dramatic spectacle to be troubling: in his defence against accusations of heresy before Bishop Stokesley in 1536 he explained that he had not denied the veracity of Christ's harrowing of hell, but that he had simply urged his parishioners 'not to beleue yt as yei se yt sett forth in peynted clothes, or in glasse wyndowes, or lyke as my self had befor tyme sett ytt forth in ye cuntre yer in a serten playe'.⁶⁴ Iconoclasm, as I have argued, is a symptom of uneasiness about the place of mimesis in faith and religious instruction. In wishing to make use of drama as a didactic tool Bale is therefore searching for a way to make images 'safe'.

a) Costumes and Properties

a.1) God

A particularly difficult aspect of staging for Bale is the presentation of God as a character in his plays. In some cases the problem can be neatly side-stepped by keeping the deity offstage: God in *John Baptist's Preaching* (as in the scriptural accounts of John's baptism of Christ, Matthew 3 and Luke 3) is only a disembodied voice. However, Bale chooses to give God a walk-on part in both *Three Laws* and *God's Promises*, and his physical

⁶³ Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 193.

⁶⁴ John Bale, *The answer of John Bale pryst unto serten artycles uniustlye gadred upon his prechyng*, British Museum, Ms. Cotton Cleopatra E.IV, fol. 167, transcribed in full in McCusker, pp. 6-13 (p. 7).

representation in both instances reveals a great deal about the playwright's struggle with the visual medium.

As Gail McMurray Gibson points out, the artistic representation of God was problematic in a way that of Jesus was not, for while 'the Mosaic Law had forbidden idolatrous images of the invisible Jaweh, [...] the coming of Christ in visible form gave sacred authority to image making'.⁶⁵ Christ was Logos, the incarnate manifestation of the holy Trinity, and could be visually portrayed without causing epistemological problems, but to include God in the *dramatis personae* was to attempt to give the invisible and ineffable a physical form.

In *Three Laws* Bale uses the very peculiar device of a statement which contradicts what is perceptibly evident: an actor enters the place and begins by introducing himself as God; he then goes on to refute what the audience can plainly see by denying his own physicality:

I am Deus Pater, a substaunce invysyble,
All one with the Sonne and Holy Ghost in essence.
To Angell and Man I am incomprehensyble,
A strength infynyte, a ryghteousnesse, a prudence,
A mercy, a goodnesse, a truth, a lyfe, a sapyence.
In heaven and in earth we made all to our glory
Man ever havynge in a specyall memory. (36-42)

Deus Pater declaring himself 'invysyble' is different from the declaration of the arch-devil Titivillus in *Mankind* 'euer I go invysybull yt ys my jett' (529). In the latter case the audience is given a privileged view of the proceedings, since they can see what the duped protagonist *Mankind* cannot, and indeed they have paid for the pleasure of seeing the star turn make his grand entrance: 'Gyf ws rede reyallys yf [y]e wyll se hys abhomynabull presens' (465). Titivillus conceals his appearance with magical invisibility, but he has a true form (which is as horrible as the ingenuity of the players themselves can make it), whereas Deus Pater appeals to the audience in his opening speech to understand the actor as only an outward and visible sign; an emblem of something which has no corporeal substance.

The strangeness of this device is difficult to fathom when simply reading the lines of dialogue, and it prompts us to consider how the God actor would have been presented in one of the performances staged by Bale himself. In neither *Three Laws* nor *God's Promises*

⁶⁵ Gibson, p. 13.

does he particularly specify what kind of clothing the God-figure should wear: a description of the clothes suitable for Deus Pater — or indeed, for his wrathful aspect Vindicta Dei (who may or may not require a differentiated costume) — is conspicuously missing from the colophon to *Three Laws*. The costumes of the vices are listed, but the list tails off with a dismissive 'the rest of the partes are easy eynough to conjecture' (p. 21).

It is possible that Bale is thinking of an established convention for God's portrayal, but in the native dramatic tradition the appearance of God varied: Meredith and Tailby's records of the mystery plays show the God of the York mercers' pageant wearing 'a "wounded" [sic] shirt and a halo and mask'.⁶⁶ However, in other mystery cycles God wears a costume of leather or animal skins: the Coventry Drapers Guild record payments c. 1557 for 'seven skins for God's tunic', the Smiths (1452) for 'six skins of tawed (i.e. whitened) leather for God's costume', and New Romney, Kent, (1560) lists payments for 'half a dozen sheepskins for the Godhead's coat'.⁶⁷

Blatt proposes that Bale would have styled his costumes along the lines of the illustrations accompanying the Cologne Bible (1478-80) — which were used in other Bibles thereafter, including the Great Bible of 1539 — where 'God is represented as wearing a flowing robe and sometimes a cloak, his head surrounded by a halo'.⁶⁸

Craik observes that the players of the smaller-scale moralities would need distinctive costumes to avoid confusion when doubling, and adds 'moreover, travelling actors must have adapted their limited wardrobe to their whole repertory'.⁶⁹ So, while Blatt's suggestion of robes for the God characters would have merit in the eyes of a reformist playwright on the grounds of the plainness of the garments (an antidote to the colour and spectacle of Catholic pageantry), it remains uncertain whether the notion is realistic in terms of common dramatic practice: while Bale was abroad with the collective known as 'my lord Cromwell's players' between 1537 and 1540 he was operating with a company of actors who were at least semi-professional.⁷⁰ Such a troupe would have had a store of costumes for their communal use, and may have been more inclined to use old

⁶⁶ *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation*, ed. by Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, transl. Raffaella Ferrari and others (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1983), p. 142.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Blatt, pp. 135-6.

⁶⁹ Craik, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Bevington, p. 52.

garments already in store, making a generic regal costume for the God character a more probable option.

Furthermore, the regal nature of the God character is something Bale stresses: it is interesting to note, for instance, that Deus Pater refers to himself as 'we' (41). While the plural pronoun may be calculated to evoke the three-in-one of the Holy Trinity, it may also be a regal affectation. Sovereignty is a reflexive metaphor for Bale's purposes: addressing God as a monarch is a way of conferring glory and authority onto the divinely ordained earthly king, whom Bale identifies as the only true mediator of authority between God and man.

Pater Coelestis of *God's Promises* is less awe-inspiring than Deus Pater: he has no speech explaining his true ineffable nature, and he behaves cantankerously throughout the play, bemoaning the iniquity of the ungrateful human race and having to be mollified by such Biblical figures as Abraham, Moses, and David in order that they can secure his promises of humankind's eventual redemption. In showing God's 'special relationship' with the leaders of nations Bale is engaged in some subtle royalist propaganda, lending his support to Henry's declaration that the king is head of the Church of England (and thus next to God in the ranks of human beings), yet he seems unable to strike the right balance in tone when writing the dialogue between these Old Testament figures and the Almighty: familiarity inevitably just seems like impudence. A notable example is God's interchange with Abraham when they haggle over the number of virtuous citizens which need to be found in Sodom and Gomorrah before the towns will be spared: here the idiolect of God is surprisingly demotic, even casual, and although the pattern of flattery and request is endemic to the scriptural source (Genesis 18. 22-32), the couching of the episode within a monotonous rhyme scheme makes Abraham and God seem more like a pair of dull-witted rustics than a patriarch and a deity:⁷¹

ABRAHAM FIDELIS

Paraventure there maye be thirty founde amonge them.

PATER COELESTIS

⁷¹ C.f., for example, the rhyming dialogue exchanges between the rustics Hodge, Diccon and Tib in *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (c. 1555), and Huff, Ruff and Snuff in Thomas Preston's *Cambises King of Percia* (c. 1569). See *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, in *Three Sixteenth-Century Comedies*, ed. by Charles Walters Whitworth (London: Benn, 1984), esp. I. 2 and I. 3; Thomas Preston, *Cambises*, in *Minor Elizabethan Tragedies*, ed. by T.W. Craik (London: Dent, 1974), esp. ll. 160-265.

Maye I fynde thirty I wyll nothyng do unto them.

ABRAHAM FIDELIS

I take upon me to moche, lorde, in thy syght?

PATER COELESTIS

No, no, good Abraham, for I knowe thy faythe is ryght.

ABRAHAM FIDELIS

No lesse I suppose than twenty can it have?

PATER COELESTIS

Could I fynde twenty that cytie wolde I save.

ABRAHAM FIDELIS

Ones yet wyll I speake my mynde, and than nomore.

PATER COELESTIS

Spare not to utter so moche as thou hast in store.

ABRAHAM FIDELIS

And what if there myght be ten good creatures founde?

PATER COELESTIS

The rest for their sakes myght so be safe and sounde,
And not destroyed for their abhominacyon. (369-79)

Pater Coelestis' speech becomes even more familiar and prosaic during a certain interchange with Moses. The prophet attempts to interrupt him during a lengthy complaint against the idolatry of the Israelites:

MOSES SANCTUS

Lete me saye sumwhat, swete father, in their behalfe.

PATER COELESTIS

I wyll first conclude, and then saye on thy mynde.
(497-98)

This easy fraternization with human beings is far removed from the sentiments of Deus Pater delivered in the opening of *Three Laws*. Bale's considerable ingenuity seems to have been defeated by the impossible task of finding a physical representation of God which is awe-inspiring and yet not idolatrous, which is perhaps why Pater Coelestis spends the bulk of his time simply reminding the audience of mankind's shortcomings: stumped when it comes to the portrayal of God, Bale can only stress his superiority to humans.

Bale has returned to the problem of allegory: all human understanding falls short of comprehending the true nature of spiritual things. Christians are all bound upon Earth to see 'through a glass, darkly' in Paul's words.⁷² God is not a father (Pater Coelestis, Deus Pater), nor is he a king (Imperial Majesty): these are merely common metaphors which mankind uses to prop up its imperfect understanding of the divine. Like the images of heaven and hell in stained glass windows and painted upon rood lofts, visual representations of the figure of God could only mislead people by fixing a false image in the mind of a spectator. John Phillips writes:

Their [i.e. the English reformists] attitudes towards religious images, like Calvin's, were based on a conception of God as incorporeal and invisible — thus unpredictable. [...] Corporeal representations of God were always unworthy, they argued, for they tended to reduce the fear of Him while increasing error about His attributes.⁷³

For the early modern Protestants there was no satisfactory way to portray God on stage, since to make a visual image of the creator was deliberately to misunderstand his nature and to run the risk of causing audience members to form erroneous ideas concerning him. That Bale's are the last extant plays of the early modern period to feature God as a character is illustrative of the prevailing conviction among post-Reformation playwrights that it was safest to leave the Almighty off the list of *dramatis personae*.

a.2) Vices

Where Bale succeeds in turning the slippery medium of dramatic spectacle to his own ends is in the specification of clerical garb for the various vices. As Happé suggests, the costumes may have been genuine vestments, sold off by churches during the Edwardian and Elizabethan periods to avoid them being simply confiscated.⁷⁴ It is a tempting suggestion, for Bale's main agenda in presenting his evil characters as members of the Catholic clergy is to desanctify the garments, tearing away traditional notions both of those wearing the cloth being of holy character, and of the garments themselves conferring this power by their own virtue. When Margery Kempe is questioned by the Abbot of Leicester on the subject of transubstantiation, she is able to answer with the orthodox formula she

⁷² I Corinthians 13. 12.

⁷³ Phillips, p. 83: citing John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1930), I, 98.

⁷⁴ Happé, *Complete Plays of John Bale*, intro., p. 23.

was coached in: that while the priest may be a man 'nevyr so vicyows in hys levyng', he is empowered by his ordination to perform the holy ritual of the mass, becoming in the process a conduit of God's sacred mystery.⁷⁵ Bale's mordant portrayal of clerical viciousness is not enough to disenchant the masses from their reverence: he must also demystify the rituals and the garments themselves.

In this respect the use of real clerical garb is an interesting prospect, shocking and iconoclastic in a way which we might well imagine would have delighted Bale. Taking the garments from their usual sacred setting and parading them around as mere cloth and thread has a deconsecrative effect. It is reminiscent of Elizabeth's proclamation, during the attempt to rid the churches of objects of reverence after their replacement under the Marian regime, that all the items should be 'put to profane use'.⁷⁶ Duffy writes that Elizabeth foresaw that prohibition of these items would not be enough: under Edward the vestments, altar stones, pyxes, chrismatories were removed from sight, but many were simply hidden or sold into safekeeping and returned under Mary I. According to Elizabeth's instructions, pyxes became weighing scales, sacred bells were used to adorn the harnesses of workhorses, holy water stoups found new employment as troughs, and vestments and altar clothes were cut up and made into domestic cushion coverings. To Duffy these actions demonstrate the Protestants' 'profound recognition of the desacralizing effect of such actions'.⁷⁷ A holy item may be hidden and later restored, but once it has been defiled by use in a non-sacred setting it becomes difficult to imagine how it could ever be re-invested with the wonder and reverence which it possessed in its virgin state.

Bale's use of real decommissioned vestments to clothe his vices remains a possibility, although we possess neither the evidence to uphold it nor to dismiss it.⁷⁸ The use of a costume made simply to *resemble* vestments is also intriguing because it allows allegory to function in a slightly different way. It is more protean, allowing the interplay of the polemical statements with what is visually evident. The character of Sodomy in *Three*

⁷⁵ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p. 234.

⁷⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 586.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 585-86.

⁷⁸ I have found no evidence to suggest that real clerical vestments were ever borrowed for use in performances of medieval drama. See 'Chapter 4: The Textile and Clothing Industries', in Clifford Davidson, *Technology, Guilds and Early English Drama* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), esp. pp. 57-79. Davidson states that the guilds organising and performing the individual mystery plays (and especially those, like the weavers, with vested interests in cloth) would have gone to trouble and expense to create costumes reasonably 'resembling' those of contemporary prelates when called upon to represent ecclesiastical characters (p. 65).

Laws is dressed (according to the prescriptions of Bale's colophon) as 'a monke of all sectes' which indicates not a general, undifferentiated monk's costume, but that his robe should be composed of a patchwork of the various orders' colours. Infidelity comments on beholding him:

This fellawe is wele decked,
Dysgysed and wele necked,
Both knavebalde and pyepecked,
He lacketh nothings but bels. (623-26)

'Bels' is a reference to the jangling adornment of the traditional motley costume of the fool, whom the every-monk evidently resembles. The Catholic vices are frequently dehumanised by their costumes, the clerical uniforms making Bale characterise them as a disorderly flock of some kind of rapacious animal, frequently opportunistic birds of ravin such as magpies, crows, and vultures. Here the widow Englande criticises the orders for their parasitic style of living, also making use of the metaphor of clerical dress as a rather ropery disguise, the monks peering owlshly from beneath their cowls:

Suche lubbers as hath dysgysed heades in ther hoodes,
Whych in ydelnes do lyve by other menns goodes:
Monkes, chanons, and nones in dyvers coloure and shappe,
Bothe whyght, blacke and pyed. God send ther increase yll happe! (36-39)

Elsewhere they are also characterised as swine with the extended metaphor of 'aper de sylva' (86) in *King Johan*, and as a pack of dogs when a long list of the monastic orders is rounded off with the requirement of 'a world to hear them barke' (458). Dehumanisation allows Bale to use more colourful pejoratives, and raises his iconoclasm to new levels: the monks, nuns and priests are not merely morally frail, culpable human beings (as Margery Kempe acknowledges), they are sub-human parasites controlled by base desires, whose collective aim is the confounding of good Christians.

Bale uses the costume of his vices both to desanctify clerical garb and to bestialise the clergy. Thus, although Bale struggles to create a doctrinally acceptable God-character, he can make the visual medium serve his purpose to great effect when dealing with evil characters: iconoclasm succeeds where reverence fails.

a.3) The Three Laws

Although Bale's distrust of visual effects usually leads him to associate them with his evil characters (leaving the virtuous to stand soberly and quote scripture), in *Three Laws* he notably employs change of costume to show the afflictions of the protagonists. The play follows a strict repetitive scheme: each Law disputes with Infidelity before leaving his presence in disgust; then Infidelity summons two other vices to serve as his lieutenants; and they eventually exit to corrupt the Law offstage. The Law briefly reappears for a soliloquy in order to display his woeful transformation and to rail against the behaviour of mankind in reducing him to such a state.

These physical transformations are intended to elicit multiple associations in the mind of a spectator. Bale's first evocation is of the stock visual image of the morality play, that of the once magnificent protagonist stripped of his power and rich raiment, now beggarly and crippled; an image which proved so potent that it persisted into the 'prodigal son' plays popular during the last decades of the sixteenth century.⁷⁹ From the earliest moralities this device is used to signal not only the financial ruination which follows association with vice — expenditure upon extravagant fashions, dicing, tavern-frequenting, and wenching being the conventional paths to debt and ruination — but as a mirror to the soul: a visual contrast offered between the immaculate state of innocence and the debased state of moral depravity.

Ordinarily it is the guilty protagonist who suffers the transformation (by way of penance), but sometimes it is an innocent abstraction. In *Wisdom, Who is Christ* (1460-70) it is the protagonists Mind, Will, and Understanding who fall into error, but the physical alterations resulting from their disobedience are wrought upon Anima. The stage direction indicating her re-entrance reads 'Here ANIMA apperythe in þe most horrybull wyse, fowlere þan a fende',⁸⁰ while a few lines on another direction indicates 'here rennyt owt from undyr þe horrybyll mantyll of þe SOULL seven small boys in þe lyknes of devylls and so retorne ageyn' (912). This macabre spectacle is intended to shock the wayward protagonists from their state of moral complacency.

⁷⁹ Examples of the English prodigal son drama include *The Glass of Government* (1575) by George Gascoigne, *The Disobedient Child* (1559-70) by Thomas Ingelend, *Lusty Juventus* (1547-53) by R. Wever, *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (c. 1569) by John Redford and the anonymous plays *Misogonus* (1564-77) and *Nice Wanton* (1547-53). A full study of the genre is made by Alan R. Young in *The English Prodigal Son Plays: A Theatrical Fashion of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Salzburg: Institut Für Anglistik Und Amerikanistik, 1979).

⁸⁰ *Wisdom*, in *The Macro Plays*, I. 902.

Similarly, in *Three Laws* it is the blameless Laws of Nature, Moses and Christ who suffer from the disobedience of mankind when the last is beguiled by the vices. In Bale's play the moments where the transformations are revealed are therefore metadramatic, serving as a speculum not to any onstage character, but to members of the audience. First to be disfigured is Nature's Law, who enters and responds to what he perceives as the audience's reaction to his new appearance, using direct address to force the spectators to accept responsibility as members of the fallen human race:

*I thynke ye marvele to se soch alteracyon
At thys tyme in me, whom God left here so pure.
Of me it cometh not, but of mannys operacyon,
Whome dayly the devyll to great synne doth allure,
And hys nature is full bryttle and unsure.
By hym have I gote thys fowle dysease of bodye,
And as ye se here, am now throwne in a leprye. (752-58, italics mine)*

Bale has also complicated the nature of the 'woeful transformation' as a metaphor. This is not simply the physical frailty which is a direct result of poverty, but leprosy: a sign associated in the Bible, as Blatt notes, specifically with divine punishment for spiritual sins.⁸¹ Leprosy is seen as a moral canker made externally visible, which partially explains the stigma attached to the disease. Just as Wyclif associated leprosy with the practice of simony,⁸² Bale here associates it with idolatry, the blight of superstitious practice on the face of true religion. Stewart comments that it is also a euphemism for '*morbis gallicus*, the epidemic syphilis which swept Europe for nearly a century from 1494'.⁸³ The symptoms of the latter stages of both diseases are similar, both involving the crippling of the limbs and the appearance of sores, making the body of the sufferer a horrific image of pre-mortem putridity, a living *memento mori*. The pox is a leprosy for Bale's time: a venereal disease, it is a direct punishment for sexual transgression and thus a fitting disfigurement for the Law who is perverted by Sodomy.

The veil which transforms Moses' Law has two almost contradictory meanings. As a conventional visual image it suggests blindness inflicted as part of the nefarious plans of the vices, as in the case of the character of Commynalte in *King Johan*, who is temporarily blinded by means of a veil. It is also bound by Bale to a scriptural allusion: in Exodus 34,

⁸¹ Blatt, p. 137.

⁸² Ibid, p. 138.

⁸³ Alan Stewart, "'Ydollatricall Sodometye': John Bale's Allegory', *METH*, 15 (1993), 3-20, p. 15.

when Moses returns from his encounter with God upon Mount Sinai his face is too bright for the Israelites to behold, and so he must cover it with a veil. The intention of the vices is not merely to rob Mosaic law of its potency by blinding it to their abuses, but to cover over its brilliance and virtue so that mankind may not perceive it:

AVARITIA

A vayle wyll I sprede upon the face of Moses,
That non shal perceyve the clerenes of hys contenance,
Whych is of the lawe the meanyng and true ordynaunce. (1104-6)

With Christ's Law the pattern established in the play changes subtly: he is the only Law who disputes with his vice assailants on stage (rather than exiting and later re-entering to show his fallen state) and his fate is only foretold as he is hauled from the stage. Like the morality protagonists his degradation involves the stripping off of his dignified clothes and their substitution with rags:

PSEUDODOCTRINA

Here I attache the for a busye scysmatyke,
And wyll the accuse for an haynouse heretyke.
Laye handes upon hym, and depryve hym of thys apearell.
Hic veste spoliatum sordidioribus induunt.
[here they strip his garments and give him shabby ones]⁸⁴
Loo, thus wyll I handle all them that shall take thy quarell.
Holde, away with thys gere, and laye it fourth asyde! (1724-28)

False Doctrine's language brings to mind multiple associations. Perhaps foremost in a spectator's mind is the similarity between the fate of Christus Lex with that of Christ himself, scorned and tormented by his captors, the soldiers who strip him and draw lots for his clothes as recorded in Matthew's gospel.⁸⁵ This would have been familiar material to an audience not only from the sermons of Easter week, but from the Crucifixion plays of the

⁸⁴ Translation mine.

⁸⁵ 'And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.' (Matthew 27. 35).

mystery cycles, which all feature episodes where Christ is mocked, flagellated and stripped, his garments then divided among the tormentors.⁸⁶

Just as in *John Baptist's Preaching*, the denunciation also echoes the language of the Catholic persecutors of reformist martyrs. In *Acts and Monuments*, first published in 1563, John Foxe describes in several places the process of 'degradation' which was the last act of the ecclesiastical powers before handing over a confirmed heretic to the secular authorities for execution.⁸⁷ The ceremony was performed on those apostates who had taken holy orders and involved the ritualised stripping of ecclesiastical garments, symbolising a return to what those pronouncing the anathema termed 'the seruitude and ignominy of the seculare estate' (1563, p. 430). Foxe also sees the comparison with Christ and his tormentors, depicting the reformist martyrs as patient sufferers who transcend all the indignities thrust upon them, allowing the enactors of the 'degradation' to show up the inherent cruelty and absurdity of the ritual itself. An account of the martyrdom of Rowland Taylor shows the doctor of divinity being forcibly dressed in the ecclesiastical garments he has forsaken in order to have them stripped off again. In imitation of Christ on the cross, Taylor benevolently prays to God for forgiveness on behalf of his tormentors:

Whe[n] he was throughly furnished therwith, he set his handes by his side, walking vp and down, and sayd: how say you my Lord, am I not a goodly foole? how say you my maysters? If I were in cheape, should I not haue boyes enough to laugh at these apish toyes, & toying trumpery?

So the byshop scraped his fingers, thu[m]bes, & the crowne of his head, and did the rest of such like deuilish obseruaunces. [...]

Then D. Taylor sayd: though you do curse me, yet God doth blesse me. I haue the witnes of my conscience, that ye haue done me wrong and violence: And yet I pray God (if it be hys will) forgeue you. (1583, p. 1524)

⁸⁶ See *Chester*, 'XVI: The Trial and Flagellation' (pp. 284-302), ll. 305-342 and 'XVI A: The Passion' (pp. 303-324), ll. 105-148; *N-Town*, 'The Second Trial Before Pilate' (pp. 314-323), ll. 210-212 and 'The Procession to Calvary: The Crucifixion' (pp. 324-335), l. 92; *Towneley*, 'XXII: Fflagellacio' (pp. 243-257), ll. 125-151 and 'XXIII: Processus crucis [et crucifixio]' (pp. 258-278), ll. 504-515 and *York*, 'XXXIII: The Second Trial Before Pilate' (pp. 320-336), ll. 337-426 and 'XXXIV: Christ Led up to Calvary' (pp. 327-358), ll. 321-331.

⁸⁷ The full Latin formula of the degradation ceremony is included in Foxe's account of the martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer: see John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments [...] The Variorum Edition*, ed. by David Loades and others (Sheffield: hriOnline, 2004), in <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/>> [accessed 6 September 2009], 1563 edition, pp. 1493-1496. Notable examples of the degradation described in English may be found in the accounts of the martyrdoms of John Castellane (1563 edition, p. 430); John Hooper (1563, p. 1058); Nicholas Ridley (1563, pp. 1374-5); Thomas Whyttel (1563, p. 1456); John Huss (1570, p. 736); William Sawtrey (1570, p. 617); Thomas Bilney (1570, p. 1151); and Rowland Taylor (1583, p. 1524). All future references to *Acts and Monuments* pertain to the hriOnline edition, unless otherwise indicated.

In *Three Laws* Bale goes on to strengthen the imaginative association between Christ's Law and the reformist martyrs by having Infidelity go on to decree:

Yea, burne hym wele, fryre, and lete hym no longer raygne.
Laye on grene fagotes to put hym to the more payne. (1745-46)

In the staging of the earthly powers despoiling the protagonist figure, Bale unites Christ, the New Testament printed in English, and the reformist martyrs in one iconic image, encouraging associations among all three in the minds of the spectators.

b) Ceremony

The early twentieth-century critics of Tudor drama expressed shock and disgust at Bale's anti-Catholic displays. W. Roy Mackenzie's appraisal of *Three Laws* begins with an apology to his gentle readers, anticipating that they will be offended by the mere inclusion of Bale's works in his study and hurriedly promising that the most egregious instances will be passed over: 'for the present we may turn, with thankful hearts, from the bitter and revolting invective against Catholicism'.⁸⁸

The plays' vituperative language and deliberate aping of Catholic ceremony are perhaps why Bale's plays are not seen in contemporary performance, despite the increased interest in the staging of pre-Shakespearian drama that has been evident since the latter half of the twentieth century.⁸⁹ Part of their power to offend lies in the assumption that Bale's polemic issues from a position of power (and that his plays were intended for an audience of his co-religionist cronies). His anti-Catholic matter is therefore perceived to come from a position of complacent authority: readers imagine that as a 'post-Reformation' playwright, Bale revels in the cruel deriding of the suppressed religious minority's sacred beliefs.

Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992) has changed the face of historiography by presenting the English Reformation as an unpopular revolution imposed by the government and supported by a small group of zealots, but deeply resented by the

⁸⁸ W. Roy Mackenzie, *The English Moralities from the Point of View of Allegory* (Boston: Ginn, 1914), p. 44.

⁸⁹ Notes on 'report on modern production' and 'recorded production' are given for individual early Tudor plays in Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes 1300-1580: A Reference Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Plays listed as having the greatest number of modern performances are *The Castle of Perseverance* (5 reports, 3 recordings), pp. 45-46; *Everyman* (11 reports, 3 recordings), pp. 96-97; and *Mankind* (14 reports), pp. 225-6. There are no records of modern performances cited by Grantley for any of Bale's five extant plays, with the exception of *King Johan* which has one audio recording listed (LP record: BBC, *The First Stage*, dir. J. Barton), p. 191.

clergy and laity, who resisted change and (at least in many of the more outlying locations) continued to practise traditional forms of worship. This view is corroborated by Bale's autobiographical writing, his account of his tenure as Bishop of Ossory as a period of prolonged persecution, where he met with hostility from his priests, treachery from local government, and open mockery for his beliefs from within the traditionalist community in general, the experience culminating in the threats of violence against his person which necessitated his flight from Ireland.

His staging of some of his plays as a counter to the festivities of Mary's accession demonstrate that Bale perceives his position as that of the lone voice in the wilderness, a prophet in the mould of John the Baptist whose purpose is to persuade the unbeliever. A major part of his agenda is to demystify Catholic ceremonies, particularly those pertaining to sacramental ritual. Belief in the Church's teachings on the sacraments was seen by reformers such as Tyndale to be a persistent and pernicious item of popular belief, as it served to maintain the authority of the clergy and caused parishioners to value ceremony over the scriptures as means to attaining grace. In *Obedience* Tyndale defines 'sacrament' as follows:

This worde sacrame[n]te is as moch to saye as an holye signe / a[n]d representeth allwaye some promise of God. As in the olde testame[n]te God ordeyned y^t the raynebowe shulde represent a[n]d signifie vnto all me[n] an othe that God sware to Noe a[n]d to all me[n] after him / that he wolde no more drownd the worlde thorow water. (M1^r)

While the Catholic Church upholds seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony), in Tyndale's scheme there are only two: 'the sacramente of the body and bloud of Christe' (M1^r) and 'bapti[s]m' (M1^v). The remaining five are stated by Tyndale to reflect no promise between God and man, and therefore are 'no sacraments' (O8^v). Of these penance and anointing are stated to be outright inventions of the Catholic clergy, and without scriptural justification.⁹⁰ Tyndale alleges that the clergy have concocted such pseudo-sacraments simply to enable themselves to tyrannise and profit from the people: 'to endote them with lyvelode / to be

⁹⁰ 'Penaunce is a worde of their awne forginge, to deceive vs with all [...]' (M6^v); 'Last of all cometh the anoynge with out promyse / and therefore without the spirite and with out profit / but all together vnfrutefull and superstitious.' (O3^r).

prayd for for ever: and to geve them exemptions and prevelege and licens to doo what the luste vnpunished' (M6^v).

For Tyndale the defining characteristics of a true sacrament is that it is spoken and actively believed by participants, rather than enacted and experienced only passively:

Sacramente is than as moch to saye as an holy sygne. And the sacrame[n]ts which Christ ordened [sic] preach Gods word vnto vs and therefore justifie a[n]d minister the sprite to them that beleve / as Paul thorow preachi[n]g the Gospell was a minister of righteousnes and of the sprite vnto all that beleved his preachinge. [...] And hereby maist thou know the difference between Christes signes or sacramentes a[n]d Antichristes signes or ceremonies / that *Christes signes speake & a[n]tichristes be dome* (O8^v-P1^r, italics mine)

To Tyndale these 'dome [i.e. dumb] ceremonies' (O8^v) are action without meaning, repetitive bodily motions which signify 'superstitiousnes' (ibid.) rather than an intellectual and spiritual engagement with worship. This is also how Bale conceives of Catholic ceremony, and thus his response is to burlesque the familiar visual configurations of traditional religious ritual. His drama is irreverent, ludicrous and frequently obscene, yet the great strength of this sacramental parody is not that it diverges from Catholic practice, but that it accurately mimics it before an audience who would have found it familiar. Darryll Grantley terms the act of undermining authority by faithfully re-enacting its rituals 'camp':

An engagement with the orthodox, but in a way that is theatricalized and which recognizes its own theatricality, a *méchant* interplay between an awareness of the profound orthodoxy of the ceremony on the one hand, and a recognition of its grotesqueness on the other [...].⁹¹

This formula (here referencing Christopher Marlowe) applies well to Bale in *King Johan*. His practice of recreating sacred ceremonies within the play is not intended to estrange the viewer, but rather to generate an uncomfortable sense of familiarity, exposing the theatricality of the original ceremony itself. Upon witnessing the anathema publicly pronounced one Thomas Benet is said by Foxe to have replied in defence of his laughter upon the occasion: 'My frendes (said he) who ca[n] forbear, seing such merye conceites and enterludes playde of þ^e Priestes?' (1570, p. 1181).

⁹¹ Darryll Grantley, "'What means this shew?': Theatricalism, Camp and Subversion in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*', in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Ashgate-Scholar Press, 1996), pp. 224-238 (p. 224).

Behind this endeavour to make Catholic rituals ridiculous lies the concern which is the root of Protestant iconophobia: that visual emblems and ceremonies lead to a confusion in the mind of a member of the church's congregation between signifier and signified – i.e., between the figure, action or gesture and the meaning or idea it is intended to represent. In *Obedience* Tyndale complains about the credulous parishioners he has known who believe that baptismal water alone confers sanctity, concerned that a baby too sickly to be entirely submerged in the font may not be securely baptised (O3^v); those who would value the negligent wagging of a bishop's hand above the sincere blessing of a fellow layman (M4^v-M5^r); and those who believe that ordination is conferred by the dumb-show of the laying on of hands rather than by prayer (M5^r-M6^r).

The sacraments, Tyndale is at pains to instruct his readers, are only reminders of God's promises to man of redemption; understanding of the symbolism is vital, for without it the accompanying actions are meaningless. It does not benefit a Christian to have one thousand masses a day without Christ's promises held in the heart, Tyndale tells those who would take communion, 'no moare then it shulde helpe the in a deed thirst / to beholde a bussh at a taverne dore / if thou knewest not therby y^t there were wine with in to be solde' (M1^v).⁹² This homely example of Tyndale's has embedded within it an unstated criticism of the communion ritual itself, encouraging the reader to make a mental link between the *vin ordinaire* which quenches physical thirst and the eucharistic wine drunk in remembrance of Christ's redeeming sacrifice (Matthew 26. 27-28).⁹³ This is a parable which explains the dichotomy between signifier and signified, the implied extension of the metaphor being that without true understanding of what it symbolises, the wine of the

⁹² A bunch of ivy, as Daniells writes (*Obedience*, n. 306, p. 224), was the conventional emblem which adorned the signs of taverns and the premises of vintners.

⁹³ Although Tyndale here describes communion in both kinds (i.e. bread and wine), this was not common practice in Europe at the time of writing. As Lee Palmer Wandel notes, at the beginning of the 1520s communion wine was offered only to the religious and not to the laity, even in reformist Augsburg (until its introduction by Johannes Schilling in 1524). See Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 55, 64. In England, communion in both kinds was not specified until the publication of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* in 1563. See Church of England, *Articles [...] accordyng to the computation of the Churche of England, for thauoydyng of the diuersities of opinions, and for the stablyshyng of consent touchyng true religion* (London: Jugge and Cawood, 1563), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 21 September 2010], STC 10038.3, sig. B6^r: 'Of both kindes: The cuppe of the Lorde is not to be denyed to the laye people. For both the partes of the Lordes Sacramente, by Christes ordynance and commaundement, ought to be ministred to all Chrysten men alyke.'

eucharist is worthless — no more holy than what might be bought at a common tavern: the object itself is nothing without the knowledge of what it stands for.⁹⁴

It is not the ritual itself that the reformists despise, but the estrangement of symbolism from its meaning. The Roman Church's insistence upon liturgical Latin and awe-inspiring formal rituals is regarded by the reformists as a deliberate attempt to obscure the true signification of the sacraments – a stagey trick perpetrated by a parasitic clergy in order to secure the nation's dependence on them by maintaining that they are the sole distributors of salvation. In order to break the clergy's hegemony the reformists attempt to dispel the laity's belief in the efficacy of rituals alone: not by contradicting the existence of sacraments *qua* sacraments, but by accusing the priests of concealing the true message behind screens of unnecessary ceremony. This reformist campaign is part of the tactic of attaining authority and avoiding neophobia by identifying themselves as the 'true church' of the apostles, which antedates the church of Rome: they would have us believe that their traditions are the original and true forms, of which the Catholic ceremonies are merely shadowy corruptions, meaningless dumb-shows.

When Bale presents Catholic ritual as mummery he does so not out of complacent malice, but because he considers it an important item on his agenda as a reformist proselytiser. The vehemence of his language stems from a genuine sense of outrage at what he perceives of as the English people being held in thrall to ceremonies which have become divorced from meaning. His object is the demystification of these rituals through parody of their forms, the language they are conducted in, and the objects and accoutrements they depend upon to maintain their sense of sacredness.

Miller determines that *King Johan* contains 13 individual parodies, constituting 6-7% of the play's total material:

They are of the litany of the saints (636-656), the vespers for the dead, including psalms (763-68), confession and absolution (854-861, 1027-30, 1147-88, 1212-36,

⁹⁴ This was a major point of disagreement between Tyndale and his polemical adversary Thomas More, who argues that as divinity surpasses human understanding, it is God's prerogative to deliver grace through visual signs which the recipient cannot interpret: 'it hath pleased the spyryte to let his people haue and enioye the profyte wythout declaracyon of the specyall betokenynge, other then the secrete grace gyuyn them therin [...]'. *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ed. by Louis A. Schuster and others, 15 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), VIII, part I, p. 78.

1371-76, 1599, *19-*35, 1980-2014), the anathema and interdict (1033-50, 1356-70), and the Kyrie (25-29).⁹⁵

As the above demonstrates, Bale's dramatic recreations focus upon confession and anathema: these, in particular, suit his purpose not only because they are the rituals which he feels most strongly demonstrate the clergy's abuse of power (via the denial of absolution and threat of excommunication) but because they are among the most visually striking and instantly recognisable of the ceremonies he could have chosen. The ritual of confession is suggested by the scene between Sedition and Nobility, where the latter requires his confessor to improvise in order to recreate the atmosphere of the confessional booth before he will confess:

NOBYLYTE

Put on yowre stolle, then, and I pray yow in Godes name sytt.

Here sett down and Nobelyte shall say Benedycyte. (1148)

An audience would instantly recognise this configuration, but is kept aware by Bale of the fact that Sedition is a scoundrel who has donned a stole for the purpose of blackmail, Nobility his gullible dupe. The childlike credulity of Nobility crouching on stage next to his malevolent confessor is underlined by the following verbal formula:

SEDICYON

I trust ye beleve as Holy Chyrch doth teache ye?

And from the new lernyng ye are wylyng for to fle?

NOBYLYTE

From the new lernyng? Mary, God of hevyn save me!

I never lovyd yt of a chyld, so mote I the.

SEDICYON

Ye can saye yowre crede? And yowre Laten *Ave Mary*?

NOBYLYTE

Yea, and dyрге also, with sevyn psalmes and letteny.

SEDICYON

⁹⁵ Edwin Shepard Miller, 'The Roman Rite in Bale's *King John*' *PMLA*, 64 (1949), 802-822, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/459633>> [accessed 18 November 2006], p. 804. Miller uses the line numbering of *King Johan* in *Specimens of Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, ed. by J.M. Manly (Boston: Ginn, 1897), I, 525-618, who reprints J.P. Collier (Camden Society, 1838). The exceptions marked * pertain to the confession and absolution of John absent from the Collier edition and printed for the first time in *King Johan*, ed. by John Henry Pyle Pafford, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931). The line numbering used by Miller almost corresponds to Happé's edition, but is behind by one line in each case.

Do ye not beleve in purgatory and holy bred?

NOBYLYTE

Yes, and that good prayers shall stand my soule in stede.

SEDICYON

Well, than, good inowgh; I warant my soulle for yowre. (1156-64)

That this is a ritual based upon ignorance is made apparent by the catechism: to fulfil the criteria for the longed-for granting of absolution Nobility is anxious to satisfy his priest that he blindly follows the church's traditions, that he knows nothing of reformist 'new learning', and is inordinately proud of his ability to parrot back Latin refrains. His complaisance and willingness to buy into the ritual earns him only scorn in the eyes of the blackmailing Vice.

When the vices first gather together on stage, a request for blessing results in what is a scatological (playing on 'soil') or possibly a sexual pun: 'I assoyle the here, behynde and also beforne' (861). While there are no specific stage directions, as Happé notes, this moment seems to require obscene gestures from the actor playing Usurped Power.⁹⁶ The vices clamour for a papal blessing, and are instead ritually befouled: a neat summary of Bale's view on the matter, and a more extreme image than Tyndale's lightly scornful reference to the 'wagging' of the pope or bishop's hand. Like taking vestments out of their sacred context, this parodic image is intended to desacralise the Catholic ritual permanently.

Bale's distrust of dramatic spectacle leads him to rely heavily on verbal dispute rather than action: indeed, in the three Biblical plays action is almost entirely dispensed with. However, his ability to spotlight key allegorical points in his plays with iconic visual images is one of the great strengths of his drama: the speech and action combination is, as Blatt writes, Bale 'at his best'.⁹⁷ The most frequently noted example of this phenomenon in Bale's plays comes from *Three Laws*:

AMBITIO

Why, what dost thou thynke my mytar to sygnyfy?

INFIDELITAS

⁹⁶ Happé, 'Notes to *King Johan*', in *Complete Plays*, I (n. K861, p. 117).

⁹⁷ Blatt, p. 218.

The mouth of a wolfe, and that shall I prove by and by —
If thou stoupe downwarde, loo, se how the wolfe doth gape.
Redye to devoure the lambes, least any escape.
But thy wolvyshnesse by thre crownes wyll I hyde,
Makyng the a Pope, and a captayne of all pryde,
That whan thou doest slee such as thy lawes contempne
Thou mayst saye, 'Not I, but the powers ded them condempne.' [ll. 1183-90]

The internal stage direction is for Infidelity to demonstrate his point by pushing forward Ambition to bend at the waist, revealing the 'mouth' formed by the opening in top of the ecclesiastical headdress, and gesturing to it with the invitation to the audience 'loo, see how the wolfe doth gape'. This one image binds a skein of ideas: it takes up the theme of clerical costume as disguise (so often descanted upon by Bale), with a slight modification, since the bishop's costume does not need to be taken off to reveal the sinister nature of the wearer, only examined from another angle. The image also develops into comment on the tyrannical power invested in the mitre of office and the abdication of moral responsibility it encourages: 'not I, but the powers'.

The characterisation of those in power as wolfish calls to mind Christ's warning to his apostles: 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves' (Matt 10. 16). This would have special significance for the reformists who saw themselves as perpetuators of the apostolic church, and who believed persecution to be a mark of God's favour. Furthermore, the sinister bishop-wolf double image plays off the traditional significance given to the regalia: the bishop's crosier is a reminder of the pastoral duties of its carrier, and the unspoken suggestion made here by Bale is that the bishop is not the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing, but — what is more dangerous — a wolf in *shepherd's* clothing. The power of his use of the metaphor of disguise is, once again, that it inverts the traditional Catholic significance given to the image.

Another famous moment of action from Bale's plays is the 'bringing in' scene of *King Johan*. Here the vices indulge in a lengthy allegorical dispute concerning which of them should have precedence, before being eventually cowed by Sedition and agreeing to bear him aloft.

USURPID POWRE

Why, fellaue Sedycyon, what wyll thow have me do?

SEDICYON

To bare me on thi backe and bryng me in also

That yt maye be sayde that fyrst Dyssymulacyon
Browght in Privat Welth to every Cristen nacyon,
And that Privat Welth browght in Usurpid Powre,
And he Sedycyon in cytye, towne and tower
That sum man may know the feche of all owre sorte.

USURPID POWRE

Cum on thy wayes, than, that thow mayst make the fort.

DISSYMULACYON

Nay, Usurped Powre, we shall bare hym all thre,
Thy selfe, he, and I, yf ye wyll be rewlyd by me.
For ther is non of us but in hym hath a stroke.

PRIVAT WELTH

The horson knave wayeth and yt were a croked oke!
Here they shall bare hym in, and Sedycyon saythe

SEDICYON

Yea, thus it shuld be. Mary, now [I am] alofte
I wyll beshyte yow all yf ye sett me not downe softe. (791-804)

Again, Bale is uniting the argument with a visual parody of a traditional ceremony. At an allegorical level, their argument and subsequent bearing of their leader aloft reveals the symbiotic nature of evil: the vices of dissimulation, the lust for private wealth and unlawful (usurped) power all having a hand in 'bringing in' the crime of sedition to England. Furthermore, as White points out, the image is intended to bring to mind the enthronement ceremony which attended the ordination of bishops, where they were 'carried to the church altar in formal procession'.⁹⁸ Sedition is not yet in his Stephen Langton incarnation, but with this visual image Bale intends for the audience to make this connection, thereby anticipating his later appearance as a bishop.

Imagining the iconic visual moments of Bale's drama is often made difficult by the compressed, terse Latin of the stage directions. While the state of the manuscript of the A-text of *King Johan*, with its authorial revisions and strike-throughs, makes editing an onerous task, it is in this one respect fortuitous: what we have received in this manuscript is a copy intended for an actor, and without the neatening that Bale deemed desirable when he prepared his other plays for the printing press. Blatt comments on Bale's stage directions:

⁹⁸ White, p. 40.

The printed versions are obviously intended for reading as well as for acting, and stage directions are therefore as neutral as possible. In *Kynge Johan* they are more frequent and specific; in the A-text they are in English, and they are addressed in the imperative to the actors. [...] If *Kynge Johan* had ever been printed, the stage directions would probably all have been changed to conform with those of the other plays.⁹⁹

The Latin directions of *Three Laws* pose an obstacle to readers who are attempting to imagine a performance of the play in their own minds. The culmination of the action is the sequence where the Vice finally meets a power capable of defeating him, Deus Pater's wrathful obverse, Vindicta Dei: Infidelity is attacked with water, a sword, and finally fire in turn. Vindicta Dei's actions are sunk in the context of a speech which expounds their symbolic significance: the water is in memory of Noah's flood, when he 'drowned the worlde' (1818); the sword relates to the Pauline extended metaphor of the armour of God and is 'Christes Gospel' (1829);¹⁰⁰ the 'consumynge fyre' (1846) stands for the apocalypse. A reader of Bale's work is therefore left in no doubt of the meaning of the actions, but the directions which indicate them give no hint as to how these symbolic punishments are to be realised by an actor:

Hic Infidelitatem lymphā percuitit (1818)
[Here he strikes Infidelity with water]

Glaudio Infidelitatem denuo cedit (1829)
[A second time he strikes Infidelity with a sword]

Ignis flamma Infidelitatem locum exire coget (1851)
[The flame of the fire forces Infidelity to leave the place]

The first two punishments are easier to imagine: a stylised sword blow is delivered by a feint, and presumably a bucket or a stoup of water is laid to hand with which to deluge the Vice in the first instance. The management of fire is less obvious: some continental mystery plays demonstrate a highly sophisticated handling of this most dangerous of special effects, calling for such devices as the vomiting of fire by devils and the throwing of lightning by an angelic host,¹⁰¹ but these were large-scale events which (as surviving

⁹⁹ Blatt, p. 153.

¹⁰⁰ '[...] the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6. 17). Bale may also be making a reference to Christ's assertion, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matt 10. 34).

¹⁰¹ See Meredith and Tailby, pp. 90-91, 101.

legal agreements show) contracted professionals to handle the required pyrotechnics.¹⁰² Bale's plays are written with a small group of performers in mind, possibly an itinerant troupe such as the 'Bale and his fellows' of Cromwell's records,¹⁰³ and from the impromptu nature of the performance of *Three Laws* which Bale put on at the marketplace in Kilkenny on the day of Mary I's accession it is clear that no special or complicated technical arrangements were thought to be required.

A notable instance of pyrotechnic effect used in small-scale drama occurs in John Heywood's interlude *The Play of Love* (c.1520-1530), where the Vice, No-Lover-Nor-Loved, enters wearing a hat full of exploding squibs:

Here the vyse cometh in ronnyng sodenly aboute the place among the audiens
with a hys copyn tank [loaf-shaped hat] on his hed full of squybs fyred cryeng
watere, water, fyre fyre, fyre, water, water, fyre, tyll the fyre in the squybs be
spent.¹⁰⁴

Squibs are described in the OED as 'a common species of firework, in which the burning of the composition is usually terminated by a slight explosion', and Heywood apparently viewed these items as safe enough to use indoors without significant risk to actor or audience.¹⁰⁵ Here the Vice's intent is simply to create chaos by running among the onlookers, and the effect is comical and highly disruptive. The use of fireworks would clearly not be apt for Bale's play, where the intention is serious and the effect's duration brief.

Philip Butterworth records the usage of 'clubbes of fyre workes'¹⁰⁶ as well as 'fire speris, fire ballis, fire arrowis'¹⁰⁷ in early Scottish and English drama. The fire club (or spear) is a staff to which are affixed bundles of squibs or short sections of cane filled with

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 103-8.

¹⁰³ Bale's possible involvement with a theatrical troupe under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell is discussed in detail in Pafford's introduction to the Malone Society's edition of *King Johan*, pp. xvii-xviii.

¹⁰⁴ John Heywood, *The Play of Love* (London: [Copland?], [c. 1550]), in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 13304, sig. F3^r.

¹⁰⁵ *Play of Love* is thought to have been performed as a Christmas play at the Inns of Court, and was therefore probably performed in a dining hall. See Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes*, p. 204; Richard Southern, *The Staging of Plays Before Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 1973), pp. 231-5; Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, pp. 85-89.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

a 'slow composition', i.e. a slow-burning mixture of gunpowder and charcoal.¹⁰⁸ Another possibility described by Butterworth is the rushlight: a stripped eighteen-inch reed with the husk dipped in flammable tallow, able to be borne in hand as a light source.¹⁰⁹

The involvement of fire in Bale's play must therefore be effected through such a device, which might reasonably be entrusted to an amateur actor, and would not significantly interrupt the progress of the play. As there is no command to strike Infidelity physically, as in the two preceding directions, a reasonable solution is for the actor playing *Vindicta Dei* merely to brandish a fire club, rushlight or torch at him, thereby driving him backwards from the place. The stage directions are not by any means unworkable in this case, merely inexplicit, and this makes it difficult to imagine their visual impact upon an audience.

Another example of this frustrating nebulosity is the golden tongue bestowed upon John the Baptist in *God's Promises*. The stage direction in the middle of Pater *Coelestis*' speech reads:

Hic extendens dominus manum, labia Joannis digito tanget ac ori imponet auream linguam. (879)

[Here the Lord extends his hand, touches John's lips with his finger and gives him a golden tongue]

Refuting J.S. Farmer's figurative interpretation ('tongue, of course, for speech') Blatt proposes that this is a literal reference to a prop.¹¹⁰ This is a direction which becomes more puzzling the harder it is looked at: on one hand, is it plausible to suggest that the audience is supposed to understand the touch of God upon John's lips as conferring a (purely metaphorical) 'golden tongue'? The phrase is a strangely specific one to choose if the intention is simply to evoke John's loquaciousness, and is not mentioned in Pater *Coelestis*' preceding speech (he promises only to put 'stronge myghtye wordes' (878) into the prophet's mouth). Alternatively, if it is indeed some kind of prop, a tongue-shaped object painted gold, how is it transferred, and how would the John actor manage to speak thereafter (as he is called upon to do)? It seems unlikely that Bale could expect his audience to understand the prop and what it symbolises, without any attached explanation.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ Blatt, p. 91.

I propose that this image of the golden tongue is intended for a reader's eyes only. From the point of view of an audience member at one of Bale's performances of the play, *Pater Coelestis* promises John mighty words and touches his mouth to confer his gift: this is all that needs to be seen, for to imagine the actors struggling with a prop is an unnecessary and perhaps unworkable addition. This perplexing direction therefore tells us nothing of Bale's practical stagecraft, but demonstrates that he viewed his dramatic works not just as ephemeral pieces to serve his ends when he had the opportunity of holding the attention of a crowd, but as printed literature to be circulated for private reading, like his other polemical tracts, and to be edited with care for that purpose. In response to a pamphlet (*Expostulation or Complaynte*, c. 1552) where Bale praises a young servant for reading *Three Laws* in spite of the objections of the local priest, Kendall writes:

Bale's spirited defense of his play as a source of edification as accessible in the study as on the stage is suggestive of the nonconformist's fluid conception of what constitutes dramatic discourse. [...] For a brief moment in the turmoil of the Tudor period, circumstances conspired to allow a writer of Bale's temperament to produce a highly politicized drama for the stage. When those circumstances changed, Bale did not alter his course. He continued to feed his instincts for ritualized drama just as his Wycliffite ancestors had—by internalizing them in a literature that might produce a theatrical experience outside a theatrical environment.¹¹¹

Bale's relationship with the visual aspect of his drama remained an agonistic one, a catalogue of successes and failures. He is at his most incisive and inspired when revealing the symbolism of the vices' ecclesiastical dress, in moments of ceremonial parody, and in using iconic images as points of metaphorical nexus. However, he finds no solution to the problem of how to present the divine on stage and his iconophobia lingers, making him preoccupied with carefully expounding the significance of every image which appears upon his stage. What we might expect to be traditionally accomplished in drama with the aid of visual stimuli is now done verbally, and Bale's minimalist stage directions serve to draw attention to this innovation.

Verbalisation

Although Bale follows Tyndale in almost all of his reformist precepts, a noteworthy difference between the two writers exists in their attitude towards aggressive language and cursing. In *Obedience* one of Tyndale's primary objections to the act of excommunication

¹¹¹ Kendall, p. 123.

is that it contains an exhortation to God to curse the apostate. In his opinion, no man should wish evil to befall another:

Have we not a co[m]maundmente to love oure neyboure as oure selfe? How can I love him and curse him also? James saith / it is not possible that blessinge and cursinge shulde come both out of one mouth. Christ commaundeth .Math. V. sayenge: love youre enemies. Blesse the[m] that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Praye for them that do you wronge and persecute you / that ye may be the childern of your hevenly father. (N8^v)

To Tyndale the spirit of community is not that of the mob which bands together to cast out those who transgress, but that of the parish which encourages repentance and reformation in its fellow man, forgiving his moral frailties:

And we ought to pitie him and to have compassion on him and with all diligence to praye unto God for him / to geve him grace to repente & to come to the right waye agayne / & not to vse soch tyranny over God and man / commaundinge God to curse. (O1^r)

Bale is not so generous of spirit: he has only disdain for those who give in to carnal sins, and seems to believe in the active and personal malevolence of all those who serve Rome. There are no personable traditionalist priests in *Vocacyon*, only luxuriant epicures, fools, backbiters, and murderous plotters. Bale's justification for the use of such vehement language comes in the preface to *Yet a Course at the Romyshe Foxe* (1543) which, along with *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes* (part I 1546, part II 1548), forms the main body of his anti-clerical prose. He justifies his abusive language on the basis of Biblical precedent: Christ himself used pejoratives when denouncing iniquity, Bale asserts, before going on to declare the importance of clearly identifying evil:

Yea, Christ owr most ge[n]tyll a[n]d pacye[n]t redemer, spared not to call the[m] straungers, hyrlynges, theues, wolues, murtherers, dogges, swyne, adders, lyars, deuyls, hypocrytes, serpe[n]tes, oppressers, destroyers, tirau[n]tes, abhominacio[n], a[n]d whores brode, a[n]d manye other names of great indignacio[n]. Moche better ys yt to the Christe[n] beleuer that Satha[n] apere Sathan, a[n]d the deuill be knowne for the deuill, tha[n] still to lurke vnder a faire similitude of the a[n]gell of lyght, For wha[n] he ys ones knowne, he maye sone be auoyded, where as vnder a glytteryng couert he maye leade to destructio[n] [...].¹¹²

¹¹² John Bale, *Yet a Course at the Romyshe Foxe* ([Antwerp]: [Goinus], 1543), in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 1309, p. 96^r.

In the margin alongside this list he cites his references as 'Ioan.10, Matt.23, Luce.16, Apoc.17' (96^r). It is interesting to note that only the first three pertain to the recorded words of Christ during his ministry; the last refers to the words of St. John the Divine in the Book of Revelation. Bale demonstrates by the inclusion of this reference in a list of Christ's imprecations that he considers every book of the New Testament to contain Christ's own words.¹¹³ If Christ is the word made flesh (John 1. 14), then the New Testament is the spirit of Christ distilled into words; which is to say that the text was not considered by Bale to be merely a historical record of Christ's life and teachings, but rather, a whole and complete vessel of the spiritual truths which Christ embodied.

The phrases which issue from the mouth of the eponymous prophet in *John Baptist's Preaching* are also gathered from more than one place in the New Testament. Denouncing the guileful Pharisee and Sadducee who have come to incriminate him under cover of interest in his doctrines, John exclaims:

Ye generacyon of vipers! Ye murtherers of the prophetes!
Ye Lucifers proude and usurpers of hygh seates!
Never was serpent more styngynge than ye be,
More full of poyson nor inwarde crueltie! (255-258)

The first phrase, 'generacyon of vipers', is present in both sources used by Bale for the John the Baptist episode (Luke 3 and Matthew 3),¹¹⁴ but the same expression recurs in Matthew 23, when Christ (also rebuking the Pharisees) addresses his detractors in the temple with an impassioned speech: '[Ye] serpents, [ye] generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' (23. 33).

Bale clearly prefers Christ's more colourful and indignant words to John's, since much of the speech attributed to John in the play is actually a paraphrase of Christ's outburst in the temple, in particular 'murtherers of the prophetes' (23. 31: 'ye are the children of them which killed the prophets') and 'usurpers of hygh seates' (23. 6: '[...] love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues'). In addition,

¹¹³ Bale places great emphasis upon the role of the resurrected Christ in the composition of the New Testament. Of the Book of Revelation he writes: 'God the eternall father gaue it vnto Christ his well beloued sonne in our ma[n]hode. Christ now glorified committed it vnto the holye Goost [...]. The holye Goost delyuered it vnto John the peculiarly beloued disciple of Jesu. And John last of al lefte it with the uniuersal church to their christen erudicio[n]', *Image of Both Churches*, I, A3^v.

¹¹⁴ The presence of Pharisees and Sadducees is only mentioned in Matthew 3. 7; while the reference to the three distinct groups John preaches to (common people, publicans and soldiers) is only mentioned in Luke 3. 7-14. A short account of John's ministry is also given in Mark 1. 1-14, but it adds nothing new to the other two accounts.

'paynted Hypocrites' at l. 239 seems to recall Christ's metaphor for hypocrisy, 'ye are like unto whited sepulchres' (23. 27).¹¹⁵

The language used by John the Baptist and Jesus when speaking out against the Pharisees and the imagery of the Book of Revelation provide Bale with a rich stock of phrases to use against his religious opponents. As I have previously argued, the dissimulation of the two Jewish sectaries in the John story, along with their insistence on the authority of tradition alone and their treacherous aim to have the prophet killed as a heretic, identifies them as the allegorical predecessors of the Catholic clergy. Thus Bale has created a useful syllogism: the Bible shows Jesus and John the Baptist cursing the Pharisees and Sadducees; the Pharisees and Sadducees are analogous with contemporary clergymen; therefore the Bible authorises the cursing of the Catholic clergy.

Applying this formula of righteous denunciation to his two popular repertoire plays, Bale creates a language of virtue, which owes as much to the castigations of Jesus and John as recorded in the gospel as it does to the dramatic heritage of the morality play. His virtues are typically aloof but they are often surprisingly forthright, more prone to haranguing the vices than their predecessors from the moralities, who specialised in lamentation to the audience as opposed to direct confrontation. A particularly good mouthpiece for Bale's militant virtues is the widow England, who startles King John at the beginning of the play with the zeal of her words:

K. JOHAN

Why in the clargye? Do me to understande.

ENGLANDE

For they take from me my cattell, howse and land,
My wodes and pasturs with other commodityes;
Lyke as Christ ded saye to the wyckyd Pharyseys,
'Pore wydowys howsys ye grosse up by long prayers,'
In syde cotys wandryng lyke most dysgysed players.

SEDICYON

They are well at ese that hath soch soth sayers.

K. JOHAN

They are thy chylderne; thow owghtest to say them good.

ENGLANDE

¹¹⁵ Tyndale's translation (1525) has 'painted tombs'. See *Tyndale's New Testament*, ed. by David Daniell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Matthew 23. C.

Nay, bastardes they are, unnaturall by the rood!
Sens ther begynnyng they ware never good to me.
The wyld bore of Rome — God let hym never to thee —
Lyke pyggys they folow, in fantysyes, dreames and lyes,
And ever are fed with his vyle cerymonyes. (61-73)

Despite the violence of such words, these characters are plain-spoken, and any sort of tropes or metaphors they use have scriptural precedent: they refer to the Catholic vices as '*aper de sylva*', wolves, or vipers because such imagery is made permissible by its recurring appearance in the New Testament. The language of evil, conversely, is characterised by verbal games, a demotic vocabulary and a fondness for secular proverbs. One of Bale's motives for constructing these two polarised modes of speech is to ensure that there is no risk of confusing the moral allegiance of a character. In all of his plays evil can be spotted a mile away: Seditio has barely spoken before John has accurately identified him by his 'lewde wordes' (45) as a scoundrel; Infidelity mounts what Happé describes as a 'theatrical *coup*' with his entrance, juxtaposing the sententiousness of *Naturae Lex* with a jaunty pedlar's song ('brome brome brome', 176), followed by speech peppered with Catholic oaths and general indecency.¹¹⁶

Bale's vices live in a world of 'sound [...] over sense',¹¹⁷ shifting and protean not only in their tendency to don physical disguises, but in their wildly vacillating speech patterns which are rapid and frequently alliterative. Of the character of Infidelity, Kendall writes:

His language moves with the caprice of a drunk whose lurching gait shuns the straight path as if it were cluttered with obstacles invisible to the sober eye. The felicities of rhyme, puns, and clever insults easily divert the speaker from the business of making sense.¹¹⁸

Although Kendall is evocative in describing the ludic quality of the vices' mode of speech, and the joy which they take in being deliberately misleading, it is not strictly true to say that what they speak is nonsense. The function of the vices is not to undermine traditional religion simply by being bizarre and debauched representatives of it, for the power of parody, as I have proposed, lies in familiarity rather than strangeness. Just as Bale's sacramental parody relies upon the audience's conversancy with the visual images he

¹¹⁶ Happé, 'Notes to *Three Laws*', in *Complete Plays*, II (n. L175, p. 160).

¹¹⁷ Kendall, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

stages (recreating the *appearance* of blessing, confession, anathema), so it plays upon their capacity to recognise the language of these rituals.

The broad aim in burlesquing sacraments is to challenge the common (lay) belief in the sanctity of traditional religious rituals: in terms of language this involves the demystification of liturgical Latin. Bale creates two distinct registers of this Latin parody: the first is the vulgar variety, which simply contrasts sacred and profane language. Church Latin freely mixes with oaths in the mouths of the vices, as when Dissimulation and Sedition hail one another at their first meeting:

Here cum Dyssymulacy[on] syngyng of the Le[t]any.

DISSYMULACYON SYNG

Sancte Dominice, ora pro nobis.

SEDICYON SYNG

Sancte pyld monache, I beshrow vobis.

DISSYMULACYON SYNG

Sa[n]cte Francisse, ora pro nobis.

SEDICYON

Here ye not? Cockes sowle, what meaneth this ypocryte knave?

DISSYMULACYON

Pater noster, I pray God bryng hym sone to his grave;

Qui es in celis, with an vengeable *sanctificetur*,

Or elles Holy Chyrche shall never thryve, by Saynt Peter. (639-45)

This is iconoclastic, bold but crude, and relies upon an audience member's familiarity with the words of the litany and Pater Noster without necessitating an acute understanding of them. The physical presence of Dissimulation in his monk's habit, singing his holy chant and then mixing it with a curse upon the head of the stranger Sedition is enough to dispel any sense of sacredness that the words may be invested with.

The second register of linguistic parody is more sophisticated, as Bale alters the traditional forms with puns and substitutions. Here, Church Latin is perverted in such a way as to be perceivable only to one intimately familiar with its meaning as well as its formula. When Sedition grants absolution to Nobility with the phrase '*In nomine Domini Pape* [our master the Pope], *amen*' (1188) it is, as Miller points out, a subversion of the

traditional blessing of the holy trinity '*in nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen*'.¹¹⁹ To be effective it requires of the hearer both a basic Latin vocabulary and the ability to anticipate (through familiarity) the correct formula.

The vices are useful to Bale because they provide this potential for linguistic gaming, which is ordinarily a feature of his authorial voice in the prose narratives. Bale, like the vices, is fond of 'slip of the tongue' moments, all the more disingenuous when read on a printed page than when heard in a spoken context. Rainer Pineas describes it as what we might now term a Freudian slip, 'an ostensibly inadvertent revelation of truth, which is then immediately retracted to give place to a polite fiction'.¹²⁰ He continues:

Speaking of the bishops in *Epistle [Exhortatorye of an Inglyshe Chrystian]*, for instance, Bale says that 'Great is the dyligence, labour and study of his whoryshe apostataes, holy apostles I shulde say [...]'.¹²¹

Likewise, Sediton tells King John:

I have a great mynd to be a lecherous man —
A wengonce take yt — I wold saye a relygyous man. (304-5)

The vices provide an outlet for the punning and love of alliterative lists which are prominent features of Bale's prose, and they also secure an advantage over the authorial prose voice in that they help to create the illusion of a two sided-argument. The author's narrative in a tract may consist of a compelling argument, but a reader is necessarily aware that it is only a single speaker, and any lone voice is open to contradiction (as the refutations which passed between Tyndale and More demonstrate). As Walker writes, drama generates multiple voices and plays them against each other in a highly controlled world of the author's own creation. Having made characters which embody the ideas he or she is exploring, the playwright can manipulate the argument in order to select a clear victor:

In drama [...] the author controls an entire system of his own creation. By manipulating the contending figures he can determine both sides of the argument and so produce a conclusive victory for the side of his choosing. Not only can he

¹¹⁹ Miller, pp. 810-11.

¹²⁰ Rainer Pineas, 'John Bale's Nondramatic Works of Religious Controversy', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 9 (1962), 218-233, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2857117>> [accessed 28 November 2006], p. 231.

¹²¹ Ibid.

give the reformers all the best arguments, he can also produce representatives of the catholic Church who will falter before these arguments, and, better still, confess their own guilt and iniquity.¹²²

The spuriousness of Bale's apparent 'two-sided argument' is obvious: he does not write in the *in utramque partem* tradition of Humanism because it is too dangerous for him to portray Catholicism as a choice which could be viewed as valid. Consequently, the vices cannot display any true reverence, however misguided, and they reveal their calculated iniquity through gleeful asides. When Dissimulation is left alone on stage he relates in a soliloquy the vices' plans to cozen the English people through religious ceremonies and is comically reprimanded for doing so by the returning Usurped Power (in his guise as the Pope):

[DISSYMULACYON]

The Popys powre shall be abowe the powrs all,
And eare confessyon a matere nessessary.
Ceremonys wyll be the ryghtes ecclesyastycall.
He shall sett up ther both pardowns and purgatory;
The Gospell prechyng wyll be an heresy.
Be this provysson, and be soch other kyndes
We shall be full suere all waye to have owre myndes.

[*Usurped Power returns as the Pope, Private Wealth as a Cardinal, and Sedition as Stephen Langton.*]

THE POPE

Ah, ye are a blabbe! I perseyve ye wyll tell all.
I lefte ye not here to be so lyberall. (1019-27)

Bale asks his audience to witness that the vices are not only Catholics who happen to be amoral and wicked, but to dismiss the entire religion as a trick, since they make it plain with such calculated asides that even they do not believe in the dogmas which they propound, and that they hold humankind in contempt for crediting their lies.

The first-person narrative of Bale's prose writings is a confluence of the voice of the Vice (incorporating linguistic play, irony, parody, and a prurient obsession with sexual behaviour) with the voice of the virtue (denunciatory style, vocative appeals to the reader as witnesses of wickedness). It is tempting to propose that this may have carried over to the drama with Bale playing *in propria persona* as Baleus Prolocutor, then as both Fides Christiana and the Vice Iniquity during the play itself, as suggested by his own doubling

¹²² Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 189.

chart for *Three Laws* (p. 121). This representation of various selves is an external realisation of Bale's vision of the Manichean soul. In his written defence against heresy charges in 1536, he addresses his discontented flock (who have slandered him and made scornful mention of his former occupation as a Carmelite friar):

And wher as in yor vnadveysed furye ye haue called me fryr, I am nother dyscontented not ashamed of yt, no more than saynt powle was, whan he reported hymself to sumtyme to be a pharyse and a persecutor of ye cristen sort.¹²³

Bale acknowledges his past, regarding his former mistakes as emblematic of the *psychomachia* all Christians must fight within their own soul between truth and falsehood, and suggests that all must struggle against their urges to be the Pharisaical Saul in their quest to be Paul the evangelist.

In his drama, Bale separates these urges into distinct and polarised character groupings, and the language which these characters use is indicative of their natures, both defining and limiting them. The world of linguistic play and obscenity belongs to the vices, that of plain speech to the virtues. This is the case not only in the morality-based plays *King Johan* and *Three Laws* but in the Bible plays *John Baptist's Preaching* and *The Temptations of Our Lord*, where the Pharisees and Satan respectively serve as vice figures, adopting the appropriate language. The one exception is *God's Promises*, which has no interaction between good and evil, only God reporting some of humankind's more notable abuses while biblical characters take turns to agree with him. It is this lack of visible and verbal conflict which renders the play essentially *undramatic*, Bale becoming in this case, as Blatt puts it, 'more minister than dramatist'.¹²⁴

The tactic of keeping good and evil separated by linguistic style is seen by Kendall as a desperate measure which Bale undertakes to avoid moral confusion when operating through a rather anarchic medium. He calls Bale's stagecraft a 'divided drama', involving 'carefully demarcated zones of holy and demonic play'.¹²⁵

A man who lived in a universe of stark antimonies, Bale resolved his problem by parting the waters of drama like some Old Testament saint. All that he feared in the

¹²³ *The answer of John Bale pryst*, in McCusker, p. 9.

¹²⁴ Blatt, p. 64.

¹²⁵ Kendall, p. 111.

stage, he sequestered among his enemies and their creations; all that he could safely love, he appropriated as his own.¹²⁶

Plain speech, here, is envisioned as a kind of verbal iconoclasm. Just as 'an empty church is empty of doubt', only a speech stripped of humour and grandiloquence can be considered safe enough to be placed in the mouth of a virtue. Yet this betrays a value judgement on Kendall's part: he privileges the language of vice because it is more entertaining, more stylistically complex — and therefore, in his eyes, a superior mode of expression. Yet Bale clearly associates linguistic gaming with craftiness and deception, as he makes clear in his prologue to *The Image of Both Churches*:

The more the fygurate [sic] speche habou[n]deth here, the more let them conferre it with the other scripturs wythout all honyed colours of rhetorycke or of crafted phylosophye [...]. (I, B3^v)

The vices therefore eschew plainness because plainness to the reformists is a stylistic feature of truth. Evil characters require persuasiveness and verbal tricks because what they propose is manifestly false; the virtues do not speak in the blunt, unadorned style that characterises them because they are too dull to come up with anything better, but because flowery language would only sully the purity of their message. As G.D. Bone comments, when Tyndale calls his opponent Sir Thomas More a 'poet', he intends it as an insult rather than a compliment.¹²⁷

The use of both Latin and scholarly rhetoric was seen by reformists to be deliberately obfuscatory: their explanation for why the corrupt Roman Church had enjoyed ascendancy for so long was because proficiency in its language was unavailable to the laity; the masses were therefore both unable to see the Church's doctrinal abuses and to make their own voices heard in discussions which might lead to change.

Concerns with regard to the use of the vernacular and the availability of religious knowledge to laymen show a continuity between the sixteenth-century reformists and the Lollard dissenters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Lollards presented their movement as belonging to the secular proletariat, and regarded scholastic learning and the

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 131.

¹²⁷ G.D. Bone, 'Tindale and the English Language', in S.L. Greenslade, *The Work of William Tindale* (London: Blackie, 1938), pp. 50-68 (p. 68).

Church's use of Latin as elitist.¹²⁸ The Wycliffite Bibles, prepared during the period 1382-1395, were a literal (some would argue, too literal) translation of the St. Jerome Vulgate,¹²⁹ and, as Nicholas Watson notes, were written in the Central Midlands Standard dialect in order that the texts might be understood by the largest possible readership.¹³⁰ In showing his distrust of rhetoric and desire for a simple and widely understood mode of communication Bale is drawing on this proto-Protestant tradition.

The innovation of the verbal aspects of Bale's plays is analogous to that of the visual aspects of his drama. It parodies the language of Catholic ritual in order to desanctify it, and to stress the vicious and mendacious nature of its adherents. Bale is also aspiring to find a suitable mode for the presentation of the positive aspects of his message. His virtuous characters therefore avoid non-scriptural allegories and proverbs, as well as complicated rhetorical devices, and communicate in language which is deliberately unsophisticated. Like Tyndale's concept of 'literal truth' Bale's 'plain speech' aims at an impression of veracity by way of directness and simplicity.

The Imperfections of Bale's Allegories

In this chapter I have argued that reformist iconophobia shapes Bale's plays. The fear of the ambiguous nature of the visual image, and the acknowledgement of the Catholic heritage it might have in the mind of a spectator, leads the playwright to ensure that all visual material should be supplemented by a polemical dialogue. This is an attempt to control the potential multiplicity of the image: he is determined that what is seen on his stage will have a limited and precise meaning, which will be reinforced with repetition and appeals to the scripture.

The instances where Bale combines metaphor and dramatic illustration are often powerful and a means of unifying many ideas in a single iconic moment: as we have seen, the 'wolf's mouth' of a mitre ties the conventional morality play image of the vice's clothing as a disguise to an inversion of the Catholic 'good shepherd' portrayal of a bishop; the individual transformations of the three Laws all serve to expand and reinvent the

¹²⁸ See Nicholas Watson, 'The Politics of Middle English Writing', in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and others (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 331-352 (pp. 339-40).

¹²⁹ The Wycliffite Bibles retained Latin word order and grammar. See Bone, p. 342: 'the first Wycliffite Bible was intolerably literal. It was the Scriptures taken out of Latin but hardly put into English.'

¹³⁰ Watson, p. 342.

traditional image of the penitent protagonist; and the 'bringing in' of Seditio is a dramatic foreshadowing of his later reappearance as Steven Langton by the recreation of the ordination ceremony for prelates. However, Bale's homiletic images are not always harmonious, and it frequently appears that there is an estrangement occurring between action and meaning, the allegories sometimes becoming so twisted that they no longer seem to function properly.

It is notable, for instance, that the 'carrying in' scene of *King Johan* seems to prompt bizarrely polarised reactions from critics, some arguing that this scene is a triumph of dramatic action, others that it is tedious didacticism. In the latter camp is Greg Walker, who compares the episode to a 'poorly realized dumb-show'¹³¹ and argues that Bale's dogged insistence upon having the abstract vices debate their precedence *ad nauseam* destroys the audience's interest in the episode: 'the need for clear polemical statement stands in the way of the dramatic effectiveness of the scene'.¹³²

Kendall, on the other hand, sees the scene as dramatic rather than rhetorical, and goes so far as to call it 'form at the expense of meaning', since the argument about precedence has no clear resolution on an allegorical level: 'one reading is no better than the next because all are ultimately arbitrary, the inventions of ungrounded fancy rather than the compilation of a sanctified imagination'.¹³³ Here Kendall makes a valid point: the long argument which precedes the iconic bearing aloft of Seditio has no obvious or inescapable conclusion. Dissimulation, usurped power, private wealth and sedition are all simply abstract characteristics with no clear hierarchical order; Seditio ultimately wins out only because he is designated as 'Vice' and, in traditional morality play formula, the others are therefore his lieutenants. The play would still function, albeit with slightly different emphasis, if the names of the vice characters were swapped around.

Three Laws presents further challenges to allegorical interpretation. The first subordinate vices to be called upon by Infidelity are Idolatry and Sodomy, both personifications give a bravura performance in describing their natures and place in human history, and are then handed the tools of their trade by the Vice. Infidelity accomplishes this action while relating the significance of the items he doles out:

¹³¹ Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 188.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹³³ Kendall, p. 119.

Here have I pratye gynnes,
Both brouches, beades and pynnes,
With soch as the people wynnes
Unto ydolatrie
Take thu part of them here, *Ad Idol.*
Beades, rynges, and other gere,
And shortlye the bestere
To deceyve Man properlye.

Take thys same staffe and scryppe,
With a God here of a chyppe,
And, good beldame, forewarde hyppe,
To set fourth pylgrymage.
Set thu fourth sacramentals, *Ad Sodo.*
Saye dyrge, and synge for trentals,
Stodye the Popes decretals,
And mixt them with buggerage.

Here is a stoole for the
A ghostlye father to be
To heare Benedicite,
A boxe of creame and oyle.
Here is a purse of rellyckes, *Ad Idol.*
Ragges, rotten bones, and styckes,
A taper with other tryckes,
Shewe them in every soyle. (660-82)

The items given to Idolatry are entirely appropriate to her character: she has proven herself to represent not only the persistence of witchcraft and folk-medicine in the Christian community, but the superstitious side of orthodox religious belief, so she is given relics and holy beads to sell. Sodomy has also detailed his role in the religious community, focussing upon the prevalence of the sin he represents among members of the clergy as a result of enforced celibacy:

I dwelt amonge the Sodomytes,
The Benjamytes and Madyanytes
And now the popysh hypocrytes
Embrace me every where.
I am now become all spyrytuall,
For the clergie at Rome and over all
For want of wyves, to me doth fall,
To God they have no feare. (571-78)

In light of this explanation, the instructions and items Infidelity gifts him with seem curiously inappropriate: a stool and a chrismatory are not to sodomy what beads and relics

are to idolatry. Stewart argues that due to the physical proximity and transmission of intimate information involved, Bale is here portraying confession as an act of sexual and spiritual rape:

The opening blessing — *benedicite* — becomes sexual foreplay, confession becomes one of Sodomy's religious duties, which are inextricably 'mixt ... with buggerage'; the 'boxe of creame and oyle' become lubricants for his ghostly/sexual acts.¹³⁴

A clearer understanding of this character as a personification requires a rethinking of the word 'sodomy' itself as part of Bale's lexicon. In his substantial prose work chronicling the misdeeds of the clergy and monastic orders *The Actes [...] of the Englysh votaryes* (1551), Bale writes of sodomy and clerical celibacy as inextricably linked. Bale frequently states within the text that sodomy is the inevitable consequence of forsaking 'that holye ordynaunce of marryage, whych God had prouyded for mannys naturall necessity'.¹³⁵ Avoiding the remedy of marriage and attempting instead to stop up human sexuality is stated to result in sexual perversion; an inevitable recourse to either whoredom or sodomy:

Lyke wyse the men in their prelacyes, presthodes, and innumerable kyndes of Monkerye, for want of women hath brent in their lustes, and done abhomynacions withoute nombre [...]. (I 8^v)

But neuer write they in their legendes, what change it hath whan they lye with other mennys wyues, or playe the moste fylthye sodomytes for lacke of women. (I 53^r)

No, for they shall for wante of women, haue vncomelye lustes in theyr hartes, wherby they wyll be gyuen ouer of God to themselues. So shall they become buggerers and whoremaisters. (II 117^{r-v})

Similarly, in the polemical ballad *An answere to a papystycall exhortation* (1548), Bale complains: 'Where spirituall fathers be/ Masculi relicto naturali vsu femine exarserunt.¹³⁶ / with conscience aduste / They burne in ther luste / And worke moche vanyte'.¹³⁷ In *Three*

¹³⁴ Stewart, p. 14.

¹³⁵ John Bale, *The first two partes of the actes or vnchast examples of the Englysh votaryes [...]* (London: N. pub, [1551]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 9 September 2010], STC 1273.5, II, p. 60^v.

¹³⁶ Romans 1. 27: 'masculi relicto naturali usu feminae exarserunt in desideriiis suis in invincem' (Vulgate); 'the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another' (KJV).

¹³⁷ John Bale, *An answere to a papystycall exhortation [...]* ([Antwerp: Mierdman, [c. 1548]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 9 September 2010], STC 1274a, sig. A5^v.

Laws, Infidelity states: 'Where hungry dogges lacke meate / They wyll durty puddynges eate / For want of befe and conye' (488-90).

Conversely, celibacy is also stated by Bale to be a *result* of the sodomitical urge. In *Actes* he alleges that sodomites who infiltrated the early church devised the vow of celibacy as a way of enabling their perversion: 'The religiouse fathers had than made a boke of their religiouse factes and practises [...] to put downe matrimony and sett vp Sodome and Gomor in their spirituall generacion' (I 51^v). Bale makes a case for the innate proclivities of Catholic churchmen by declaring them the natural ancestors of the ancient romans (such as Nero (II 4^v)), who were notorious for their sexual excesses. Thus, in *Actes*, the relationship between celibacy and sodomy seemingly goes both ways, as within the disorderly environment of the Catholic Church, cause and effect have become jumbled: 'If ye spell Roma backward, ye shall fynde it loue in thys prodygyouse kynde, for it is preposterus *amor*, a loue out of order or a loue agaynst kynde' (II 6^v).

As Sodomy's personal introduction in *Three Laws* shows, Bale clearly does use the term to denote the act of homosexual congress, but this is perhaps only one manifestation of a sin which he interprets more widely and uses as an umbrella term of censure. Tom Betteridge notes:

At one level it is clear that for Bale sodomy is a general sexual crime. Masturbation, cross-dressing, self-castration and bestiality are for Bale all sodomitical acts. Indeed, as far as he is concerned the papists' subversion of monarchical power and their corruption of Scripture could also be seen as sodomitical since in Bale's writing they are inevitably represented as being caused by the papists' addiction to sodomy.¹³⁸

For Bale 'sodomy' comes to signify all the crimes perpetrated by the clergy against the natural order instituted by God. The perversion caused by Catholicism is textual and spiritual as well as sexual: interference in the interpretation of the scripture, and compliance with pontifical decretals, subverts or taints scriptural truth, and the resultant doctrines are therefore 'mixt' with 'buggerage'.

The result of this exegesis is that Sodomy appears to be on a different allegorical level from his companion Idolatry. She is representative of a general vice (the propensity of mankind to lavish devotion upon objects instead of focussing on abstract spiritual truths)

¹³⁸ Tom Betteridge, 'The Place of Sodomy in the Historical Writings of John Bale and John Foxe', in *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Tom Betteridge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 11-26 (p. 12).

which becomes narrowed into a specific one (the dependence of Catholics upon 'holy' accoutrements). Sodomy, conversely, introduces himself as a single sexual crime, and becomes broadened in application during Infidelity's closing speech until he is hazy and generalised. As a result, the term 'sodomy' loses all impact as a term of censure, and Bale's polemic, rather than being pointed and incisive, becomes a background drone.

The characterisation of the vices Ambition and Avarice (responsible for defeating the Law of Moses) is similarly problematic. Both begin with the conventional vice's monologue explaining their signification and role of the vice they represent in history. They are attired, we must recall from Bale's colophon, as 'a byshop' (Ambition) and 'a Pharyse or spirituall lawer' (Avarice) (p. 121) and at first their characterisation seems apt. Avarice relates his effete nature, his desire for worldly wealth, his willingness to live off the proceeds of others' toil, and gives this an inflection which particularly incriminates the Catholic clergy:

Our lowsye Latyne howres,
In borowes and in bowres,
The poore people devowres,
And treade them undre fete. (1020-23)

Ambition describes his selfishness and lust for advancement in terms of his role as a prelate:

I loke up aloft, And love to lye soft,
Not carynge for my flocke. (1028-29)

Hygh thinges I attempt, And wyll me exempt
From prynces jurysdycon. (1052-23)

Yet when they convene with Infidelity to discuss the subject of spreading a veil over the face of Mosaic law, none of their suggestions are appropriate to their own natures. Ambition suggests encouraging idolatry and sexual incontinence, and burning the faithful as heretics; Avarice proposes holding the people in ignorance and creating false ceremonies to dazzle them with. Their references to their own characteristics cease, and they too, like Sodomy, become indistinct. Although Bale puts some effort into the creation of these personifications, he fails to reinforce them and eventually they no longer make clear allegorical sense. The vices become homogenous instead of differentiated: all of them — regardless of the trait each personifies — discuss sexual transgression, Catholic superstition, and the policy of keeping the masses ignorant. Eventually the spectator

forgets that each of these individuals is supposed to represent a single quality and the play dissolves into a circus of Catholic misconduct much like *The Actes of the Englysh Votaryes*.

Evidently the vice pairings were originally chosen because Bale felt them to be apt: the Law of Nature must be undone by primitive vices, idolatry (the vice of the ignorant) and sodomy (the perversion of a basic urge); the Law of Moses is undone by the vices of Ambition and Avarice (the Pharisees, keepers of the Jewish law, are often condemned in the New Testament for their greed and corruption); the Law of Christ by the contemporary (Catholic) evils of hypocrisy and false doctrine. However, Bale sacrifices this allegorical structure in pursuit of wider polemic, and in doing so he reveals the choice of individual vices to be ultimately arbitrary, just as it was in the case of the 'bringing in' scene.

The imperfection of allegory occasionally found in Bale's plays may have a wider destabilising action than these small episodes suggest. I have stressed the reformist preoccupation with expounding the significance of all visual images and allegories in order to make them safe for an audience member to view. The aim is to dispel any potential the allegories they use might hold for confusion or multiplicity, creating something which has the appearance of a single and irrefutable truth. This objective is frequently at odds with another of Bale's tactics in polemical warfare: that of repetition. He wishes to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church with unrelenting portrayals of the iniquity of its clergymen, the staginess of its rituals, and the evils the church and its adherents have historically committed; and, as in the above instances, Bale frequently allows this kind of polemic to obscure his allegorical purpose. Consequently, the impression of singular truth is shattered: the point has been revealed as subjective because the imperfection of the allegory exposes it as such.

Conclusion

The problem of allegory perpetually lurks within the reformist writers' peripheral vision. They are unable to dismiss it as an entirely unsuitable literary device due to its privileged place in the New Testament (in the medium of the parable and the highly-figurative language used by the apostles to describe heavenly things), yet it is seen by them as something which needs to be treated with extreme caution and deliberate explicitness, as, as Cummings comments, 'every ambiguity concealed a threat as well as a promise'.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Cummings, *Literary Culture*, p. 11.

Iconoclasm had made the reformists suspicious of any device which was representative — *like* something but not the thing itself — because it smacked of untruth and had the potential to lead people down the path to idolatry. Biblical allegory was also seen as dangerous because of the potential it generates for doctrinally contentious alternative readings: allegories could be hijacked by sectarian enemies to justify their own dogma. This was a major obstacle to the acceptance of the reformed faith among the laity, since behind the Biblical allegories lay centuries of the Catholic traditions of exegesis, which offered their interpretations of scripture as justification for holy ceremonies and the ascendancy of the Pope and Church. These readings of scripture were firmly established in the minds of laymen by lifelong inculcation; the objective of the reformists was to replace the traditional interpretations of scripture with their own, to imbue these doctrines with authority and to fix them in the minds of the English public not simply as 'alternative' readings, but as revelations of the sole religious truth.

The reformist battle with allegory is therefore seen as an attempt to stabilise the device, and to narrow it, combating its potential for dangerous and confusing multiplicity. To this end, Tyndale cultivates the idea that everything — even the most gnostic of Biblical references — has a 'literal' meaning, which can and should be sought out. In *Obedience* he scorns the contrary practice of Catholic scholasticism, which sought not to reduce the complexity of scriptural allegory, but to compound it:

Tyll at the last they forgat the order / and processe of the texte / supposinge that the scripture sarved but to fayne allegories apon. In so moch that twenty doctours expounde one texte .xx. wayes / as childern make descant apon playne songe. (R5^r)

To Tyndale, anagogical and tropological exegesis was the practice of imposing foreign meaning on the pre-existing text. The meanings derived by way of these formulas were false interpolations for which there was no authority, coming as they did only from fevered brain of a Catholic scholar. The true meaning, he argued, was locked within the text itself, the kernel at the heart of the allegory. Discovering this central truth did not require supplementary information from any outside source: on the contrary, something which comes from *outside* the scripture lives in the fallen world of human beings and is not heavenly truth at all. The vocation of a Christian is, therefore, not to explain the text by 'feigning' further allegories upon it, but to discover this elusive literal truth which scriptural allegories express.

Tyndale has drawn up his argument in terms antithetical to the Catholic approach: instead of arriving at meaning by complicating the original terms, he seeks to simplify, then instead of privileging scholarly learning he takes what amounts to an egalitarian approach, since the only things required in order to follow his scheme for Biblical interpretation are the ability to read and the diligence to cross-reference (the 'proving' of hypotheses against other points of scripture).¹⁴⁰ His methods are therefore intended as a remedy, correcting the faults of the Catholic tradition of exegesis. As a pure theory it seems tenable, but when Tyndale moves on to cite examples of his own deconstruction of scriptural allegories, the problems with his 'literal truth' argument become obvious:

As Christ saith Luke .iiii. Physicion heale thy selfe. Whose interpretacion is doo that at whome which thou doest in straunge places and that is the literall sence. So when I saye Christ is a la[m]be / I meane not a lambe that beareth woll / but a meke and paciente lamb which is beaten for other mens fautes. Christ is a vine / not that beareth grapes: but out of whose rote the braunches that beleve / sucke the spirite of lyfe a[n]d mercy and grace and power to be the sonnes of God and to doo his will. [R2^v-R3^r]

Tyndale's explanations are not implausible, but they are not the only ones possible. 'Physician, heal thyself', for example, could just as easily be explained as a warning against hypocrisy, or an encouragement to self-betterment. The idea of scriptural meaning being both self-evident and singular is exposed as a reformist fantasy. Even in the simplest cases, allegory refuses to be pinned down: Tyndale wants it to be reducible to one semantic point, but it insists on remaining multiple.

Expressed in the terms of popular drama, the problem of allegory is played out in Bale's pursuit of a reformist dramaturgy, a mode of articulation whereby the playwright aims to limit both spoken and visual allegory to within acceptable parameters. The creation of a Protestant form of drama to replace the Catholic moralities, mysteries, and saint's plays — now considered unviable — is something which consumes Bale as a dramatist; he subverts and transforms his inherited structures in pursuit of this ideal.

The morality drama had been non-sectarian and panoramic, a product of the yet-unchallenged Catholic state. These plays aimed to speak not only to individuals, but to all Christians, and thus used allegorical terms broad enough to be universally familiar.

¹⁴⁰ Cranmer stresses strong faith as a pre-requisite for correct Biblical interpretation, and urges those seeking meaning within the text to pray for enlightenment: see *Sermons or Homelies*, sigs. B2^v-B4^r. Tyndale sees faith not as a conscious effort on the part of the reader, but a spontaneous result of hearing or reading scripture: 'But fayth is wrought by y^e power of God / that is / whe[n] Gods worde is preached / the spirite entereth thine herte & maketh thy soule fele it [...]', *Obedience*, S1^v.

Everyman represented both the spectator as an individual, and a personification of all of humankind; thus the drama played out on a personal level — the struggle of an individual to live a good life — and also a pan-historical level — the struggle of the humankind to achieve ultimate salvation. The vices were personifications of abstract sins made familiar and recognisable, who frequently appeared with visual stimuli to suggest their natures: Covetise with his thousand marks in *Castle of Perseverance*, Gluttony with his cheese and bottle in *Nature* (c. 1496). Their disguises consisted of a cloak for concealment or the assumption of a falsely virtuous name. The only references to Catholicism itself to be found within the plays were the ecclesiastical garments sometimes worn by the virtues to suggest the sage counsel of a religious elder.

From these forms which aspired to timelessness, Bale creates a radically altered drama, where the allegories are all shaped as acute references to contemporary religious and political issues. He begins by reinventing the allegory of the vice's disguise, associating with evil the very costumes which traditionally denoted virtue, playing off the audience's contrary expectations. Bale's work is the first surviving example of the Catholic Vice, who would continue to symbolise deception, greed and ignorance in dramatic convention throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. Despite scorning the extravagant spectacle of the mysteries, Bale did utilize the visual aspect of his medium, for his sacramental parody is a dynamic fusion of speech and action. He recognised the valuable desacralising effect of ceremonial parody; that objects such as vestments taken out of their sacred context and treated as stage properties can never regain their former state of unquestioned sanctity. He also discerned that the strength of parody lies in revealing the grotesque qualities of the original ritual; and he exploits the audience's familiarity with Catholic worship to present a nightmare vision of ecclesiastical treachery concealed behind the screens of familiar ceremonies and the separation of *verbum* from *res*.

Despite these innovations, Bale remained anxious about the use of visual effects in his plays and always felt the need to cocoon them within explanatory dialogue, often reinforcing the individual messages with repetition and tautology. By creating action and imagery which was strictly limited and controlled in this way, he hoped to stabilise the visual allegories which had been a prominent feature of morality drama. Like Tyndale, Bale seeks to forbid pluralism and to limit the potential for confusion where dramatic

imagery is concerned; he decrees that meaning will be provided for the audience (they will not be left to create it for themselves), and that it will be singular and inescapable.

Not everyone seems to have grasped the deliberateness with which Bale joins visual icons and explication. Mackenzie pronounces: 'The pleasure to be derived from allegory consists largely in the feeling that one is grasping a meaning which is merely implied' and complains that Bale (in the 'carrying in' scene of *King Johan*) 'insults the understanding of any hearer who is quick-witted enough to grasp the meaning for himself.'¹⁴¹ Mackenzie's point fails to take into consideration Bale's views on the function of drama: the critical assumption of clumsiness or lack of skill in Bale's work is based on purely artistic criteria. Bale did not see his drama as a work of art to be judged by academic standards, but as an argument; its purpose was to challenge, to provoke and to convert the audience it played to. This is not to say that his drama is lacking in artistic merit; for although Bale is not interested in subtlety, he is capable of great complexity both in matters of doctrine and in dramaturgy. The 'wolf's mouth' episode of *Three Laws*, for instance, demonstrates that he is capable of drawing several polemical points together and investing them in one iconic image; it is in moments such as this one that Bale's drama is at its most cohesive, uniting visual and verbal imagery in order to clearly communicate his polemical message.

The use of language in his plays also demonstrates his desire to limit and define allegory. Bale creates two differentiated styles of speech: the language of evil, and the language of virtue — or what may be termed 'plain speech'. The former is unstable, ludic and alliterative; it is a disreputable mode of communication, frequently obscene and abounding with metaphor and proverb. Plain speech seems rather staid by comparison, for the representatives of virtue speak with a pared-down vocabulary, using clear, precise prosody characterised by a lack of rhetorical adornment, and containing only such metaphors and similes as are authorised by scripture. This kind of speech is often confused with bluntness or a lack of authorial finesse, but the effect is, once again, entirely intentional. Bale's plain speech is a linguistic experiment in the vein of the Lollard tradition, and something akin to Tyndale's pursuit of literal meaning; not simply a virtuous vocabulary, but an attempt to narrow the gap between signifier and signified, to find a mode of speech which is appropriate to the delivery of religious truth. As Kendall writes,

¹⁴¹ Mackenzie, p. 220.

'one finds in Bale an attempt to limit the degree of play permitted between a word and the object it describes'.¹⁴²

Bale's dramatic experiment falters when he sacrifices the sense of his own allegories to satisfy the demands of his polemic. Allegory is a brittle form, requiring meanings to function simultaneously on two or more levels: a writer's failure to adhere to his or her own scheme will result in the catastrophic breakdown of the allegory itself. There are moments in Bale's plays — such as the precedence argument of the 'carrying in' scene in *King Johan*, and the personification of the lieutenant vices in *Three Laws* — where allegories appear to be a poor fit, and meaning often seems to be completely arbitrary. The impression of arbitrariness is very dangerous when we consider that Bale is attempting to present his work as the revelation of religious truth, and these jarring moments serve to destabilise his plays.

If Bale's plays are experiments in synthesising a Protestant drama he is never wholly satisfied with the results; and it is largely the unsolvable problem of allegory which highlights his failure. The victories he wins over the inadequacies of Catholic spectacle are intermittent flashes, and more to do with iconoclasm than the synthesis of a new, pure dramatic form. His plays are guerrilla warfare against Catholic ceremony — and as such highly effective — but ultimately his subversion relies upon the very traditions it undermines in order to derive its meanings. Perhaps, like 'literal truth' there is no prototype of Protestant drama to be found. Bale's attempts at Bible drama demonstrate that heavy reliance on scripture and distrust of visual stimulus lead to drama becoming lifeless and inert. When everything contentious is purged, all that is left is a sermon. If this is the case, drama is indeed antithetical to Protestantism: it has a place among early reformists because it serves to undermine the established regime, but it also relies upon the very framework it attacks. Once the institution has toppled, the elements which made the reformists uncomfortable — mimesis, wordplay, allegory — become more clearly exposed. Without the common enemy of Catholic worship, reformist drama itself falls as the next victim of iconoclasm.

¹⁴² Kendall, p. 100.

Chapter 2
Burning Books and Burning Martyrs
in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*

Introduction: The Rhetoric of Persecution in Sixteenth-Century England

In a sermon originally given at Paul's Cross on the 12th of May 1521, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, asserted that the violence shown by Luther towards papal documents was revealing of the apostate's secretly-held desire to burn the pope's own body:

And what suppose ye Martyn Luther and his adherentes wold do yf he had the popes holynes and his fauourers [...] in his daunger? I fere me that he wold vse no more curtesy with them than he hath done with theyr bokes, that is to say with the decretalles which he hath brent.¹

The sermon of Ioh[a]n the bysshop of Rochester made agayn the p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin luther is thought to have been reprinted in 1527,² just one year before the publication of William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christen Man*. A copy of the tract must have reached the exiled Tyndale in Antwerp, since he was so freshly riled by the above comment that he thought it necessary to diverge from the main argument of *Obedience* in order to respond to it, adding a corollary by way of retort:

Marten Luther hath burned the Popes decretals: a manyfest signe / saith he / that he wold have brunt y^e Popes holines also / yf he had had him. A lyke argumente (which I suppose to be rather true) I make. Rochester and his holy brethern have brunt Christes testame[n]te: an evident signe verely that they wold have brunte Christe himselfe also if they had had him. (II^r)

Tyndale's comment is rich in underlying suggestions. It associates Fisher and his 'holy brethern' with the Jewish religious authorities who conspired against Christ and his message. The statement also emphasises the equivalence between Christ and the New Testament, text and originator, since both are physical manifestations of God's Word, and both destined to endure persecution. The unstated comparison (hanging heavy over the sentence with the mention of the word 'burning') is between the fates of Christ and the holy Bible on one hand, and those of the reformist martyrs, who espouse the values of both

¹ The sermon of Ioh[a]n the bysshop of Rochester made agayn the p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin luther [...], in John Fisher, *The English works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, ed. Cecilia A. Hatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 95.

² STC 10895 (publication date conjectured by STC).

Christ and his text. This issue may also be hinted at in the aside 'which I suppose to be rather true', which points to the irony that while Luther never had the opportunity (or possibly even the inclination) to burn the pope himself along with his decrees, the traditionalist authorities in England could and did burn the bodies of those they adjudged heretics as well as their books.

Fisher and Tyndale's printed exchange therefore illustrates that even in the 1520s, the subject of religious persecution was being addressed with rhetoric which sought to conflate the images of bodies and texts. Yet such early polemic only hints at the potential extension of the analogy through the act of martyrdom; a link which would be more fully explored in the following decades, during the two great waves of Protestant martyrdom in England: 1539-47, the closing decade of Henry VIII's reign, and 1553-58, the short but turbulent reign of the Catholic Tudor queen, Mary I.

As a result of the upsurge in religious persecution, from the late 1530s onwards there appeared a virtual flood of works celebrating the actions and doctrines of the contemporary reformist martyrs, much of it produced by continental exiles such as Tyndale, John Bale and John Foxe. The prison letters and recorded examinations of the imprisoned or executed faithful were reproduced and circulated, both to popularise the reformist cause and to strengthen those converts who might be intimidated by the threat of persecution.³ Within these texts, the martyrs themselves, as well as their editors and commentators, continually stress the associations between books and martyrs as subjects of persecution and conflate the images, constructing a two-way analogy whereby texts are imagined as bodies and human bodies imagined as texts. The analogy functions within martyrological works to unite the self with not only Christ and his testament, but with reformist literature as a whole. The word 'text', as used here, therefore refers both and interchangeably to the vernacular bibles which reformist martyrs owned and espoused, and the literature which these martyrs produced as causes, or results of, the act of their persecution.

This chapter investigates the manner in which multiple associations between self and text are explored in just one of these martyrological works: *The Examinations of Anne Askew*. Askew's text is a complex and multi-layered work, linked to Bale not only because he serves as both editor and commentator, but also because Askew shares his

³ For details on prison literature as propaganda within the Protestant community, see Thomas Freeman, 'Publish and Perish: the Scribal Culture of the Marian Martyrs', in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, ed. by Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 235-254.

preoccupation with the problem of how to depict reformist virtue. I intend to demonstrate that within *The Examinations* both Askew and Bale add new dimensions to the body/text analogy, using it to connect seemingly disparate ideas, to consolidate the mythology of Protestant martyrdom, and to create a sense of communal identity for their co-religionists.

The Examinations of Anne Askew: Context and Afterlife

During the latter years of the reign of Henry VIII a vigorous anti-heresy campaign gathered momentum, these reactionary activities culminating in the 1539 'Acte abolishing div[er]sity in Opyinions', better known as the 'Act of Six Articles'.⁴ This piece of legislation frustrated the hopes of English reformists by commanding all subjects to profess belief in transubstantiation, to recognize the necessity of auricular confession, and to acknowledge the efficacy of masses for the dead (thereby confirming faith in the existence of purgatory). This 'whyppes with syxe strynges' (1563, p. 593), as Foxe termed the act, resulted in a number of reformists deciding to leave England for continental exile as Edmund Bonner, Archbishop of London, began a zealous campaign of interrogations within his diocese. The act also prompted Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Shaxton to resign from their bishoprics, and presaged the high profile execution of Robert Barnes in July of the following year.⁵

In comparison to Cranmer, Shaxton and Barnes, Anne Askew might be termed a minor figure in the reformist canon, only achieving fame in the aftermath of her death. What little is known of her life prior to her arrest in March 1545 comes courtesy of her editor John Bale in a brief side note to the text: the daughter of a Lincolnshire knight, Askew was 'compelled agaynst her wyll' to marry Thomas Kyme.⁶ Following her conversion to reformism (prompted by extensive Bible reading), Askew was ejected from the household by her religiously conservative husband. Leaving behind her two children

⁴ *The Statutes of the Realm*, ed. by Alexander Luders and others, 12 vols. (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1810-28), pp. 739-43.

⁵ On the effects of the Six Articles see Dickens, pp. 201-2; Rex, pp. 131-4; Kenneth Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church, 1520-1559* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), pp. 138-9.

⁶ Anne Askew, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. by Elaine B. Beilin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 92. All further references to the *Examinations* pertain to this edition, 'F' and 'L' indicate 'First Examination' and 'Lattre Examination' respectively.

she made her way to London to seek a divorce upon scriptural grounds (L 93).⁷ The precise circumstances of her arrest are not known, but it seems likely, as Elaine Beilin writes, that upon her arrival in London Askew joined a group of city-based reformers in order to participate in Bible study and debate.⁸

The Examinations purports to be a faithful transcript of Askew's interrogations, composed from Newgate prison by the martyr herself. The first printed version of the text to appear was John Bale's *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe, lately martyred in smythfeld, by the Romysh popes vpholders, with the Elucydacyon of Johan Bale*,⁹ published from Wesel in 1546 (within a year of her death) and promptly followed by *The Lattre examinacyon [...]* in 1547.¹⁰ Bale claims to have received a manuscript of Askew's account 'in coppye, by serten duche merchauntes [...] whych had bene at [her] burnynge' and to be setting it forth 'lyke as I received it' (L 88), although he intersperses the paragraphs of Askew's account with lengthy sections of his own commentary. *The Examinations* were subsequently further popularised by being incorporated into the martyrologies of John Foxe: the Latin work *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum* (1559) and the subsequent expanded version in English *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (1563). Foxe used Bale as his source, but chose to omit the former editor's supplementary material.¹¹

Given the lack of a surviving autograph manuscript, many critical studies of *Examinations* have focused on the issue of its doubtful textual integrity, indicating the ways in which its early editors may have altered the original document by means of

⁷ A divorce based on 1 Cor 7:13-15, 'But yf the vnbeleuyng departe, let hym departe. A brother or a syster is not bound in suche cases [...]', *Biblia. The Byble, that is the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faythfully translated in Englysh [...]*, trans. Miles Coverdale (London: Nycolson, 1537), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 15 June 2010], STC 2064, p. N6r. All further Bible quotations in this chapter pertain to this edition, the authorised Henrician translation.

⁸ Beilin, *Examinations*, intro., p. xv.

⁹ Anne Askew, *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe, lately martyred in smythfeld, by the Romysh popes vpholders, with the Elucydacyon of Johan Bale*, ed. John Bale ([Wesel]: [van der Straten], 1546), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 848.

¹⁰ Anne Askew, *The Lattre examinacyon of Anne Askewe lately martyred in smythfelde, by the wicked Synagoge of Antichrist, with the Elucydacyon of Iohan Bale*, ed. John Bale ([Wesel]: [van der Straten], 1547), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 850.

¹¹ Freeman and Wall identify Foxe's source as the c. 1550 edition of Bale's text (STC 852.5), the printing of which is attributed to William Copland. See Freeman and Wall, 'Racking the Body, Shaping the Text', pp. 1171-6.

additions, deletions, interruptions and rearrangements.¹² As a rare example of a female martyr writing in the first person, *The Examinations* have also become a vehicle for enquiries into sixteenth-century conceptions of gender, prompting studies which examine how Askew constructs herself as female through her rhetoric and use of language, and commenting on her interrogators' responses to these techniques.¹³ These two key concerns of textuality and gender frequently overlap as critics consider the ways in which Bale and Foxe attempt to fit Askew into their hagiographic mould in portraying her as the ideal Protestant female martyr.¹⁴ The concept of an interpenetration between text and body is one which therefore has special resonances for this particular work, given the inextricable nature of Askew and her narrative.

The Self and the Reformist Text in Askew's *Examinations*

The theme of self and texts as objects of persecution is first introduced to the *Examinations* during Askew's recounting of a conversation concerning her possession of a book by John Frith, a reformist theologian who had been burned for heresy in 1533:

In the meane whyle he [Bonner] commaunded hys Archedeacon to comen with me, who sayd unto me. Mastres wherfor are ye accused? I answered. Axe my accusers, for I knowe not as yet. Then toke he my boke out of my hande, and sayd. Soch boke as thys is, hath brought yow to the trouble ye are in. Be ware (sayth he) be ware, for he that made it, was brent in Smythfelde. Then I asked hym, if he were sure that it was true that he had spoken. And he sayd, he knewe wele, the boke was of Johan frithes makynge. Then I asked hym, if he were not ashamed for to judge of

¹² Freeman and Wall, pp. 1165-119; Thomas Betteridge, 'Anne Askewe, John Bale, and Protestant History', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27 (1997), 265-284; Kimberly Anne Coles, 'The Death of the Author (and the Appropriation of Her Text): the Case of Anne Askew's *Examinations*', *Modern Philology*, 99 (2002), 515-539; Theresa D. Kemp, 'Translating Anne Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52 (1999), 1021-1045; Oliver Wort, 'The Double Life of Anne: John Bale's *Examinations* and *Diue Anne Vitam*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 58 (2007), 633-656.

¹³ See Tarez Samra Graban, 'Feminine Irony and the Art of Linguistic Cooperation in Anne Askew's Sixteenth-Century *Examinations*', *Rhetorica*, 25 (2007), 385-411; Megan L. Hickerson, "'Ways of Lying": Anne Askew and the *Examinations*', *Gender and History*, 18 (2006) 50-65; Joan Pong Linton, 'Scripted Silences, Reticence and Agency in Anne Askew's "Examinations"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 36 (2006), 3-25; Elizabeth Mazzola, 'Expert Witnesses and Secret Subjects: Anne Askew's *Examinations* and Renaissance Self-Incrimination', in *Political Rhetoric, Power and Renaissance Women*, ed. by Carole Levin and Patricia A. Sullivan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 157-171.

¹⁴ See Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 163-4; Megan L. Hickerson, 'The Troublesome Mrs. Kyme: John Bale's Disorderly Virgin', in *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 42-72; John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 48-50, 55-60, 323; Megan Matchinske, 'Resistance, Reformation and the Remaining Narratives', in *Writing, Gender and State in Early Modern England: Identity Formation and the Female Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 24-52.

the boke before he sawe it within, or yet knew the truth therof. I sayd also, that soche unadvyسد and hastye judgement, is a token apparent of a verye slendre wytt. Then I opened the boke and shewed it hym. He sayd, he thought it had bene an other. for he coulde fynde no faulte therein. Then I desyred hym, nomore to be so swyft in judgement, tyll he throughlye knewe the truth. And so he departed (F 42-3).

Although Kimberly Anne Coles posits that the book which becomes the subject of the archdeacon's remarks is a copy of *A boke made by Iohn Frith [...] answeringe vnto M mores lettur* (1533), Askew herself does not name the text in her possession, or confirm the identity of its author.¹⁵ While bringing up the subject of the martyred Frith is obviously intended by the archdeacon as a threat or warning to Askew, her answer does not directly acknowledge the prospect of violence. It therefore seems as if her reply is at odds with the archdeacon's message: he warns her of the very real risk of agonising death which she faces, and she responds by directing his attention to the contents of a book. Yet in her last words to him, it is possible to catch a hint of her awareness of the suffering which she may face in the future: 'Then I desired him *no more* to be so swift in judgement, till he thoroughly knew the truth'. Here she is referring to her own plight and the danger of rash judgement being passed against her, just as it was against Frith.

While the archdeacon intends the exchange over the book to serve as a stern warning to Askew, she uses the opportunity first to humiliate him by showing up his lack of first-hand knowledge concerning the text, and then, with the exhortation against rashness, to caution him against the dangers of his own conduct. Her refusal to display fear when faced with the possibility that she may be executed, combined with her insistence that the archdeacon must judge the book by its contents and not its title page, form a refutation of persecution as an act which possesses any justice or meaning. By challenging the archdeacon to form a considered opinion on the allegedly heretical text instead of simply confirming or denying that its author is Frith, she shows that the fate or posthumous reputation of an individual has no bearing on the veracity of his or her writings.

In his elucidations accompanying Askew's account, Bale argues that persecution is always counterproductive, since not only does it invite the sympathy of the public towards those burned, it generates more publicity for the martyrs' writings, thereby ensuring the text's continued printing and propagation. In the section titled 'Johan Bale to the Christen

¹⁵ Coles, p. 518; John Frith, *A boke made by Iohn Frith prisoner in the tower of London answeringe vnto M mores lettur [...] ([Antwerp]: [van Middelburch?], 1553)*, in *Early English Books Online* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 11381.

readers' he introduces Askew's testimony by noting: 'great slaughter & burnynge hath bene here in Englande for Johan wycleves bokes, ever sens the yeare of our lorde. M. CCC. LXXXII. Yet have not one of them throughlye peryshed' (F 8). Both Askew and Bale demonstrate that the martyr continues to refute the justice of their persecution by means of their published works: for although John Frith is dead, Askew's knowledge of his writings on sacramentalism allows her to challenge the authorities who persecuted him.¹⁶ Likewise, that you – the present-day reader – are able to read her account of the episode concerning Frith alerts you to the fact that Askew's own narrative has (via Bale's agency) survived, and that its function is to allow those who lived after her to access *her* unalterable truths. In this way, the disputed book becomes a nexus, emblematically linking a host of human bodies: Frith's with Askew's, and theirs with those of individual reformist readers; expanding outwards from the focal point of the text to create a community united by the idea of past and present persecution.

This episode also highlights an important aspect of the Protestant martyrological tradition: self-conscious distancing from Catholic hagiography through an emphasis on the textual nature of the martyr's remains. By holding up the martyr's literature as their posthumous legacy, reformists disassociate themselves from the medieval 'saints' lives' tradition, where it is the relics, the bodily remnants of the saint, that are held to be effectual. Martyrology is therefore a sort of textual resurrection: as Catherine Randall Coats writes, the reformist martyr's body is 'recomposed through reminiscences of the words it once spoke: a collective memory which constitutes a sort of verbal holograph of the martyr's corpse.'¹⁷ Just as Askew produces Frith's book as a retort to the fact of his physical death, Bale asserts that although Askew has left no bodily remains as evidence of her martyrdom,¹⁸ it is the textual record — her examinations — which remain as the true witness to her persecution: 'thus hath not the fyre taken Anne Askewe all whole from the worlde, but left her here unto it more pure, perfyght, and precyouse than afore' (F 13).

¹⁶ On Askew's familiarity with Frith's work see Beilin, *Examinations*, intro., p. xxv; Coles, p. 522.

¹⁷ Catherine Randall Coats, *(Em)bodying the word: textual resurrections in the martyrological narratives of Foxe, Crespin, de Bèze and d'Aubigne* (New York: Lang, 1992), p. 19.

¹⁸ 'What was done with the Ashes of Anne Askewe and her companyons, I can not yet tell,' (F 12).

As Janel Mueller writes, many of Foxe's martyrs 'prepare for their burnings by figuring this mode of dying as an entry into bodily relation to divinity',¹⁹ often by imagining the trial by fire as a refining process whereby the corporeal 'vile body' is transformed into the ineffable 'glorious body'.²⁰ The Protestant martyrologists envision their own endeavour as a similarly alchemical process, whereby the act of witnessing physical suffering generates a textual legacy – in other words, bodies become translated into texts.

Askew and The Word

Her defence of Frith's book is an instance of Askew promoting the works of a fellow reformist, but the cause of her arrest and interrogation was not her ownership of heretical books, but her 'gospelling' – that is, her public promotion of the reading of the New Testament.²¹ She therefore habitually compares her own persecution not only to that of her reformist peers and their writings, but to the suppression of the Bible itself.²²

Askew's advocacy of Bible reading comes during a period of fluctuation and uncertainty. The royal injunctions of 1538 had seemed to strongly promote the vernacular Bible, demanding that each church obtain a copy of the authorised edition (the Coverdale 'Great Bible', first printed in England in 1537), and instructing that this was to be set up in a convenient place so that any parishioners who wished to consult it or read from it might do so. Priests were furthermore commanded to 'discourage no man privily or apertly from the reading or hearing of the said Bible'.²³ However, the 1542-3 'Acte for thadvancement of true religion and for thabbolishment of the Contrarie' abruptly withdrew permission for

¹⁹ Janel M. Mueller, 'Pain, Persecution and the Construction of Selfhood in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*', in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. by Claire McEacghern and Deborah Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 169.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

²¹ Women who took part in the phenomenon of 'gospelling' (itinerant promotion of the reading of the gospels) were portrayed by traditionalist controversialists (most notably Robert Persons) not only as heretics, but as advocates of marital, sexual and social disobedience. See Megan L. Hickerson, 'Gospelling Sisters "goinge up and downe": John Foxe and Disorderly Women', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35 (2005), 1035-51.

²² For an overview of the issues pertaining to the publication of, and access to, the Bible in English throughout the sixteenth century see David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 126-8; 134-9; 163-70 (on early opposition to the vernacular Bible); pp. 149-50; 160-1; 170-2 (on the controversy between William Tyndale and Sir Thomas More); and pp. 226-9 (on late-Henrician reactionism).

²³ The injunctions are printed in full in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, ed. by Henry Gee and William John Hardy (London: MacMillan, 1896), pp. 275-281. An overview of their contents can be found in J.R. Tanner, *Constitutional Documents A.D. 1485-1603 with an Historical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922; repr. Bath: Chivers, 1971), pp. 93-94.

access to the scriptures for laymen. Following this latter act, ownership and private study of the text was still permitted for the families of noblemen, gentlemen and merchants (strictly within their own households), but only licensed clergy were now permitted read from the Bible in public, and it became illegal for members of the lower classes to have any independent contact with it whatsoever.²⁴ These abrupt changes in the law reflected the anxieties of the Henrician authorities concerning the role that scripture should play in worship and the potentially subversive effect it might have in the wrong hands. The Bible was therefore consigned to a legally precarious position, not fully banned but strictly controlled. We should bear these circumstances in mind when reading Askew's account of her visit to Lincoln Minster:

Then he [Bonner] rebuked me, and sayd, that I shuld report, that there were bent agaynst me, thre score prestes at Lyncolne. In dede (quoth I) I sayd so. For my fryndes told me, if I ded come to Lyncolne, the prestes wolde assault me and put me to great trouble, as therof they had made their boast. And whan I hearde it, I went thydre in dede, not beyng afayed, because I knewe my matter to be good. More over I remayned there. vi. dayes, to se what wolde be sayd unto me. And as I was in the mynster, readyng upon the Byble, they resorted to me by ii. and by ii. and by v. and by vi. myndyng to have spoken to me, yet went they theyr wayes agayne with out wordes speakyng. (F 56)

Askew's phrase 'readyng upon the Byble' does not clearly indicate whether she is reading silently or aloud, but both Margaret Aston and Adam Fox insist that reading was almost invariably a vocalized activity in medieval and early modern societies, so we may perhaps assume the latter.²⁵ Reading the Bible aloud also seems to have been a common way for reformists to get themselves in trouble: see, for instance, the example of William Hunter, a Marian martyr whose persecution is recorded by Foxe. Like Askew, Hunter makes his reformist sympathies conspicuous to the religious authorities by publicly reading from a Bible, his passion for scripture immediately causing the traditionalist summoner who observes him to denounce him as a heretic.²⁶

²⁴ *Statutes of the Realm*, III, 34 & 35 Hen. VIII. c. 1. (pp. 894-7).

²⁵ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 194; Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) p. 36-7.

²⁶ 'Well sayd William Hunter [...] I pray God that we may haue the blessed Bible amongst vs continually. To the which wordes father Atwell sayd, I perceiue your mynde well inough, you are one of them that misliketh the Queenes lawes, and therefore you came from London, I heare say. [...] You and a great sorte moe heretickes wyll broyle for this geare, I warrant you.' *Acts and Monuments*, 1570 edition, pp. 1712-3.

Given, therefore, that reading aloud from an English Bible was both a clear indication of reformist sympathies and technically illegal for those who were not ordained clergymen, it is unclear why Askew's behaviour in Lincoln cathedral is tolerated. It is possible that the Lincoln priests are unaware of, or confused about, the most recent change in the laws governing use of parish bibles; or, given that they are allegedly 'bent agaynst' Askew and yearning to put her 'to great trouble', perhaps they are hoping for Askew to commit further or more serious offences (such as interpreting or glossing the passages she reads, or sermonizing) before apprehending her.

It is plain from Askew's retelling of the episode that she ascribes the priests' avoidance of her to cowardice and shame: she presents the image of herself as a lone, exposed figure standing before the open Bible, the priests as a multitude who come together to form groups of ever increasing number in order to approach her, but who invariably retreat before they get close enough to engage her in a dispute. Askew attributes an apotropaic power to the combination of Bible and reader: her enemies 'mind to have spoken to her' but they 'go their ways again without speaking', as if repelled by an unseen force. Her earlier confident assertion that she knew her 'matter to be good' combines with this description of the priests' behaviour on her arrival in the cathedral to suggest that they retreat because beholding her standing before the Bible causes their courage to waver, as they know, deep in their hearts, that their spurious arguments cannot withstand those of a faithful woman whose points are supported by the holy scriptures.

Like her co-religionist Hunter, Askew attempts to draw a clear distinction between reading the text of the Bible and expounding its meaning.²⁷ In spite of the fact that the acts of publicly reading and interpreting the scriptures carried exactly the same penalty in the statutes (one month's imprisonment for a first offence),²⁸ interpreting remained the more dangerous act; for although the former practice was prohibited, it was not of itself heretical, while the latter was instantly revealing of the expositor's (heterodox) beliefs, thereby laying him or her open to more serious claims of heresy.

Askew recognises the dangers inherent in the act of exegesis, and her self-defence throughout her examinations is therefore marked by an effort to cleave so closely to the

²⁷ 'There came in one father Atwell a Sumner, which hearing William read in the Bible, sayd to him, what medlest thou wyth the Bible? Knowest thou what thou readest, & canst thou expound the scriptures? To whom William aunswered and sayd: father Atwell, I take not vpon me to expound the scriptures, except I were dispensed withall, but I finding the Bible here when I came, read in it to my comfort.' *Ibid*, p. 1712.

²⁸ *Statutes of the Realm*, III, 34 & 35 Hen. VIII. c. 1 (pp. 895-6).

scriptures that she cannot be accused of holding heterodox beliefs. The endeavour of her accusers, conversely, is a persistent attempt to prise her apart from the text, since what is defined as 'belief' is precisely the ontological gap between the printed words of scripture itself and the individual, a gap which the individual must fill with interpretation. By forcing Askew to reveal her private understanding of certain key passages of scripture, such as James 5. 16 on the acknowledgement of sins (F 23) and Matthew 26. 26 on the Last Supper (L 99), the interrogators seek to establish whether or not she subscribes to the required articles of faith on the touchstone issues of confession and transubstantiation.

During her first examination Askew assiduously resists all attempts by the questioners to force her to explain her belief as in any way divisible from the text. Enquiries concerning her beliefs are met with a direct quotation from the relevant passages of scripture, or a reference to where those passages may be found. When asked to interpret, she obstinately refuses, falling back on quotations which affirm that she has no need to explain herself:

Secondly he [Dare] sayd, that there was a woman, whych ded testyfye, that I shuld reade, how God was not in temples made with handes. Then I shewed hym the vii. and the xvii. chaptre of the Apostles actes, what Steven and Paule had sayd therin. Wherupon he asked me, how I toke those sentences? I answered, that I wolde not throwe pearles amonge swyne, for acornes were good ynough (F 20-1).

The phrase 'pearls before swine' is usually intended in modern usage as a flippant or comical remark, but the full quotation from Matthew 7 expresses something much darker: 'Geue not that which is holy to dogges: nother cast ye your parles befor swyne *lest they treade them vnder thyr fete, & the other turne agayne and all to rente you*'.²⁹ That the metaphorical swine are not merely ignorant but also dangerous is something which Askew's fitting use of the passage highlights, for it is the intent of her questioners to force her interpretations from her in order to use them as grounds for persecution. Like her reply to the archbishop concerning Frith's book, the comment shows her once again engaged in using subtext in order to reveal the threat of violence which underlies the proceedings. Similarly, when Dare asks outright 'yf I ded not beleve that the sacrament hangyge over the aultre was the verye bodye of Christe reallye', she, 'demaunded thys question of hym, wherfore S. Steven was stoned to deathe? And he sayd, he coulde not tell. Then I answered, that no more wolde I assoyle hys vayne questyon' (F 20). St. Stephen was

²⁹ Matt 7. 6 (sig. A4v), italics mine.

stoned to death by the Sanhedrin for the statement, recorded in Acts 7: 'the hyghest of all dwelleth not in temples that are made with handes'.³⁰ Askew's reply therefore expresses both what she views as a scriptural endorsement for her non-belief in the real presence (a God who does not dwell in man-made vessels cannot, in her opinion, be within churches, pyxes or communion bread) and her conviction that an open statement of this truth will result in her being put to death.

As with the quotation of the 'pearls before swine' passage, Askew's referencing of the martyrdom of St. Stephen shows her utilising the contents of scripture to put across points she cannot express *in propria persona* without indicting herself before her persecutors. What she cannot legitimately speak is iterated by proxy by means of the text. As in the cathedral at Lincoln, the Bible is imagined in these two episodes as a protective barrier – a shield which keeps Askew's vulnerable human body from harm.

Elsewhere Askew protects herself by falling back on the pretence of feminine humility or the assertion that she is unlearned to avoid being forced to interpret.³¹ When she grows tired of the relentless interrogation, she begins to answer all questions with variations on the phrase 'I believe as the scripture doth teache me' (F 49).³² Her insistence on replying with either biblical quotation or a reference to a point of scripture is a defensive tactic that causes her questioners to expend considerable time and energy in simply establishing the fact of her heterodoxy, but the approach also functions as an attack on the traditionalists' own values: by repeatedly asserting 'I believe as the *scriptures* teach' instead of reciting an orthodox catechism she implies that the teachings of the scriptures and those of the Church are divergent and mutually incompatible. She therefore plays a delicately balanced game with the authorities: just as they encourage her to give away that her beliefs are contrary to what is legally required under the current religious laws, she seeks to trap them into an admission that their doctrines and ceremonies go against what is authorised by scripture. The Bible is therefore figured here not only as a defensive mechanism, Askew's shield, but also (perhaps recalling St. Paul's extended

³⁰ Acts 7. 48, (sig. K3r). For St. Stephen as a Protestant protomartyr, see John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, pp. 203-4.

³¹ 'I answered, that it was agaynst saynt Paules lernynge, that I beyng a woman, shuld interpret the scriptures, speycallye where so manye wyse lerned men were' (F 54).

³² C.f. 'I beleve so moche therof as the holye scripture doth agre to' (F 60), and her addition to the second recantation: 'I Anne Askewe, do beleve thys if Gods worde do agre to the same' (L 136).

metaphor of the armour of God in Ephesians 6. 17) a sword; a weapon which she may use to engage in active combat with her religious opponents.

Askew's shrewd usage of scripture allows her temporarily to evade and confound her opponents, but when the authorities grow impatient with her lack of co-operation, they remove the Bible from the equation by providing her with a document of their own construction and the ultimatum that she must either subscribe to the doctrines therein, or be sentenced to death: 'They sayd to me there, that I was an heretyke and condempned by the lawe, if I wolde stande in my opynyon' (L 110).

Conclusion: Living Bibles

We have seen that *The Examinations of Anne Askew* makes repeated and varied use of the body/text analogy of persecution, extending it far beyond the basic implications raised by Fisher and Tyndale. In the episode involving the archdeacon, the analogy is used by Askew to link the self with both the ideas and sufferings of other reformists, as shown in her identification with John Frith through the medium of a disputed book. It is also used to emphasise the separateness of the Protestant martyrological tradition from hagiography by highlighting the textual nature of the martyr's legacy, which is set up in contrast to the bodily relics of the saints of the Roman Church. In the retelling of events which transpired at Lincoln Minster, the body/text analogy is used to demonstrate the apotropaic qualities of the combination of Bible and reader, a point which is also maintained by Askew's response to interrogation: a self-defence through the construction of personal belief as indivisible from text, and an attack on traditionalist authority by means of scripture-based retort.

Askew's self-defence according to *sola scriptura* has frequently been seen as demonstrative of the doctrine's potential radicalism, the self-reliance and rejection of community and earthly authority implied in justification by scripture alone. Megan Matchinske writes that 'Askew's "resistance" supplants the notion of a shared religious community with individual and privatized scriptural interpretations'.³³ Thomas Betteridge summarises Anne Askew's faith, as it appears in her defence, as an 'individual and personal engagement with Scripture'.³⁴ The relationship between Askew and the scriptures is imagined in the above quotations as a duality of individual and text, standing side by

³³ Matchinske, 'Resistance, Reformation and the Remaining Narratives', p. 43.

³⁴ Betteridge, 'Anne Askew, John Bale, and Protestant History', p. 272.

side as Askew did with the Bible in Lincoln Minster; a relationship which is both *close* and *separate*.

However, Askew's faith may be alternatively characterised not as private engagement, or proximity to the Bible, but as an attempt to absorb or subsume the text itself. We have seen that during her examinations Askew will only give direct replies that are a quotation of its words, and demonstrates perfect recall when citing references to book and chapter, so that she in effect *becomes* a living Bible. The image of 'self as text' is a meta-level to the original persecution analogy which allows Askew and Bale to make several additional polemical points. Firstly, it is an inversion of the point made by Tyndale and Fisher, that violence done to a text is expressive of the frustrated desire to harm its author: by turning her own body into a Bible, Askew demonstrates that by persecuting her, the authorities reveal their secret desire to destroy the Bible itself. It also functions as a legitimisation of her martyrdom: if she is herself an embodiment of the Bible, then she cannot be a false martyr. Bale seconds this motion by explaining that the difference between true and false martyrs rests solely on this identification with the gospel:

In England here sens the first plantacyon of the popes Englysh church [...] ii. kyndes of martyrs hath bene, One of monasterye buylders and chaunterye founders, whom the temporall prynces and secular magistrates have dyverslye done to deathe, sumtyme for disobedyence, and sumtyme for manyfest treason [...]. The other sort were preachers of the Gospell, or poore teachers therof in corners [...] put to deathe by the holye spirytuall fathers Byshoppes, prestes, monkes, chanons, and fryers. for heresy and lollerye, they saye. (L 77-8)

Bale himself also takes up the idea of the martyr's body as a Bible when he describes the new kind of sainthood which Askew and her brethren embody, a sanctity which comes from reliance on scripture and can be contrasted with the bodily miracles and relics associated with the Catholic pseudomartyrs. Here he depicts Askew and her peers as pyxes or windowed reliquaries through which an observer can clearly see the motivating force of the Word: 'Anne Askewe and her felyshypp, had non other rellyckes aboute them, whan they stode at the stake to be brent in Smythfelde. but a bundell of the sacred scriptures enclosed in ther hartes, and redye to be uttered agaynst Antichristes ydolatries' (L 80).

The image of the 'Bible of the heart' is, furthermore, a way of combating the potential radicalism of *sola scriptura*, since it reintroduces the idea of community to the text by showing its potential for transmission not only through private study but through the agency of other faithful men and women. It is also a powerful aspect of reformist

mythology that because the Word is not just a physical object, a bundle of paper, but something that resides within all faithful individuals, it cannot be confiscated or destroyed. A prologue to the Wycliffite Bible reminds the reader that even if all written versions of their testament were to be razed from the face of the earth, the Word of God would persevere in the very bodies of faithful human beings: 'thou[gh] wickid men hadden brent alle our bookis, God hath writen his lawe in cristen mennis soulis and consciencis.'³⁵ Likewise, Bale concludes the *First Examination* with a prophecy, intended to warn the persecuting authorities of the fruitlessness of their destructive endeavours: 'They reckon that with fyre, water, and swerde they are able to answe're all bokes made agaynst their abuses [...] but trulye they are sore deceyved therin, as shall wele apere' (F 67).

The Examinations of Anne Askew exists as a reminder that not only the Word but also the martyr can live on in both the reformist text and within the hearts of the faithful: when books are destroyed, bodies stand up as witnesses to the truths that the lost texts embodied; and when bodies are consumed in flame, texts rise phoenix-like from their ashes to create the martyr's legacy. Ultimately the body/text analogy returns us to the prototype of all Christian martyrdoms, that of Christ himself: Christ's resurrection was not only bodily but also textual, and its textual aspect was reliant on human agency. The New Testament was first preserved in the hearts and memories of the apostles, who would ensure the propagation of their martyr's words through not only preaching, but writing. We might therefore broadly conclude that all martyrological narratives are of their very nature composite entities, made up of *both* bodies *and* texts.

Askew's text can be seen to echo the concerns of Bale and Tyndale in the first chapter. Askew's attempt to speak with only the words of Scripture shows that she shares Tyndale's horror of 'descanting' or feigning allegories upon the text, because of the possibility for heretical multiplicity which exegesis creates. Like Bale, Askew deals with the problem of representation, specifically, how to represent the ideal Christian self. There is a dramatic aspect to her behaviour as she reports it in *Examinations*. Her actions in Lincoln Cathedral are histrionic: she stands in a conspicuous position and reads from a script (the Bible), before a hostile audience. During her interrogations she plays the roles of 'woman' and 'true Christian', using these personas, by turns, to evade and engage with her questioners. Anne Askew appears 'as herself', yet it is a performance, one which is at

³⁵ *The Holy Bible [...] made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. by J. Forshall and F. Madden, 4 vols (Oxford, 1850; repr. New York, 1982), iv.685b; cited in Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988; repr. 2002), p. 103.

times every bit as stagey as that of one of Bale's righteous protagonists. Again, what we see is an *image*, a similitude. The expression of the reformists' 'Truth' requires artifice.

While this chapter shares with the first a preoccupation with the portrayal of the 'True' church of the reformists, the following goes on to readdress the issue of how to describe the 'false' – moving from self to other, and from associates to opponents.

Chapter 3

'They call me (saieth he) bloudye Boner. A veneaunce on you al': Rewriting the Enemy in the English Martyrologies

Introduction: A 'Willingness to Kill'?

One of the greatest stumbling blocks for the twenty-first century reader when it comes to understanding early modern views of heresy and martyrdom is, as Brad Gregory writes, the so-called 'willingness to kill'.¹ Those who come from Western cultures which espouse post-Enlightenment ideals of mutual toleration (and within which sectarian plurality is the societal norm) find it difficult to comprehend why members of the church and state should be prepared to put to death otherwise law-abiding men and women on account of tiny variances in their religious practices. However, as Alexandra Walsham observes: 'in a context in which truth was held to be single and indivisible, the persecution of dissident minorities was logical, rational and legitimate'.²

In the sixteenth century, heresy was not understood as a matter of private conscience but as an issue affecting both social order and pastoral care. Throughout the era, and regardless of whether the presiding regime was Catholic or Protestant, the state and its clergy considered that they had a duty to protect the souls of the laity from being corrupted by heretics, and to maintain religious conformity in order to prevent the breakdown of society through competing claims to magisterial authority. Thus, accusations of heresy were often explicitly linked to civil and political disorder: for refusing to repudiate the pope and declare King Henry VIII head of the church, John Fisher and Sir Thomas More were executed for treason rather than heresy, as were later Elizabethan Catholics.³ An oft-cited example of heterodoxy causing political turmoil is the case of Münster, Westphalia, where Anabaptists founded their own theocratic free state under self-proclaimed 'successor of David' John of Leiden from 1532-1535.⁴ Heresy was therefore not a private crime but a public one, an act both of sedition and spiritual harm directed against members of the general populace. In his Marian work, *Displaying of the*

¹ Gregory, p. 74.

² Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England 1500-1700* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 1.

³ See *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁴ See Anthony Arthur, *The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Community of Münster* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

Protestantes, the traditionalist Miles Hogarde wrote of the detrimental effects of Protestantism upon the country in precisely these terms: 'at length they spared not also to co[m]myt murder [...] not onely in destroying this noble common welth, but also in killing the co[n]sciences of the sayd symple' (†3^v).

As a result of this understanding of heresy as a crime with grave public ramifications, the English ecclesiastical and magisterial authorities perceived it as their duty to pursue and punish the heterodox in order to stop the spread of pernicious doctrine. However, the extermination of heresy did not necessarily involve the killing of each individual heretic; in fact, despite the gravity of the offence, the death of the heretic was not usually the goal which the authorities had in mind upon the apprehension of a suspect. Instead, churchmen and magistrates frequently sought to reclaim the errant members of the flock by encouraging them to recant and make peace with the established Church. Alec Ryrie comments:

The rhetoric of the evangelical polemicists is full of denunciations of the conservative bishops as blood-thirsty persecutors, but in reality most conservatives saw burning a heretic as a defeat. Like Gibbon's enlightened magistrates, their first priority was to secure a recantation rather than a condemnation. We should not forget that to burn a baptised Christian for obstinate heresy represented a catastrophic pastoral failure. Execution, like a just war, was a last resort.⁵

The statutes set in place by Henry VIII for dealing with heterodoxy reflected this cautious preference for abjuration over execution, specifying the penalties of public recantation and the bearing of faggots upon the first two offences. Only obstinate, repeat offenders, or those who refused to abjure, actually faced death for heterodoxy.⁶ This information encourages us to conclude that – contrary to stereotype – most of the traditionalist persecutors were not bloodthirsty, nor did they actively seek to put heretics to death, but did so only as a last resort when all persuasive counsel had failed. Even the notorious heretic-hunter Edmund Bonner expended considerable energy in trying to reform the heterodox rather than hastily condemning them to death. Gregory points out that Bonner tries no fewer than fifteen times to get Philpot to recant; nine times with Elizabeth Young

⁵ Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 81.

⁶ See 'An Acte for thadvancement of true Religion and for thabbolishment of the contrarie' (34 & 35 Hen. VIII. c. 1.), in *Statutes of the Realm*, pp. 894-897 (p. 897).

and six times with Richard Woodman.⁷ Yet so powerful is the mythology generated by martyrological writings such as *Acts and Monuments* that the Marian bishop of London is still remembered by his Foxean epithet 'Bloody Bonner'.⁸

It hardly needs to be stated that one of the primary goals of sixteenth-century polemical writers was to make their religious enemies appear cruel. What is perhaps surprising is that to achieve this effect they do not generally resort to fabricating episodes or changing the key details of events. Brad Gregory notes that reports of heresy executions published by those with opposing sectarian agendas often give identical versions of the heretic/martyr's 'observable behaviour', differing only in their descriptions of 'internal disposition'.⁹ This tendency is illustrated by a parallel comparison of the Catholic Thomas Alfield's and Protestant Anthony Munday's tracts on the execution of the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion in December 1581. These texts are almost identical in their reportage of Campion's actions and last words at the Tyburn scaffold, yet while Alfield takes these gestures and prayers as evidence of Campion's 'constant patience',¹⁰ Munday sees them as betraying 'great timerity & vnstable opinion'.¹¹ Gregory comments:

[...] Precisely *because* these writers wanted to promote their respective causes, they strove to make their interpretations, however highly charged, however shaped by literary convention, fit the best available information about executions. Facts, not fabrication, best served propaganda.¹²

Rather than concocting stories in order to bolster their heroes or blacken their enemies, martyrologists tried to make the known 'facts' serve their polemical ends. I will argue here

⁷ Gregory, p. 80.

⁸ On the attribution of Bonner's nickname see David Loades' introductory essay to the HriOnline edition of *Acts and Monuments: 'Foxe and Queen Mary: Stephen Gardiner: Edmund Bonner'*, <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/apparatus/loadesmaryessay.html>> (accessed 14 June 2010); Kenneth Carleton, 'Bonner, Edmund (d. 1569)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (May 2006), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2850>> [accessed June 18, 2010].

⁹ Gregory, p. 19.

¹⁰ Thomas Alfield, *A true reporte of the death & martyrdome of M. Campion Iesuite and preiste, & M. Sherwin, & M. Bryan preistes, at Tiborne the first of December 1581 Observid and written by a Catholike preist, which was present therat [...]* ([London]: [R. Rowlands or Verstegan], [1582]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 12 April 2010], STC 4537, B4^v.

¹¹ Anthony Munday, *A discoverie of Edmund Campion and his confederates, their most horrible and traitorous practises, against her Maiesties most royall person, and the realme [...]* (London: [Charlewood], 1582), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 12 April 2010], STC 18270.5, F8^v.

¹² Gregory, p. 21.

that an analogous process can be observed in the martyrologies with regard to the opponent's arguments: instead of ignoring or refuting traditionalist rhetoric, martyrological texts appropriate it, subverting the tropes which the religious authorities used to justify their actions in suppressing reformism.

This chapter identifies three separate tropes used by the traditionalist authorities and their apologists to legitimise persecution: the statement of benevolent intention, the metaphor of heresy as an 'infection', and the claim to represent order. It is my contention that each of these arguments is subject to a systematic deconstruction by the martyrologists as part of a larger attempt to prove traditionalist rhetoric to be not only erroneous, but the very opposite of what it purports to be.

Gentleness as Cruelty

In persecuting those they deemed heretics, the traditionalist authorities conceived of themselves performing a kindness not only to the orthodox community but to the heterodox individuals themselves. As Walsham observes:

To take steps to correct religious deviance was a moral duty and a divinely ordained obligation, an act of compassion inspired by the conviction that heresy was, quite literally, soul-destroying. To allow men and women to persist in heterodox opinions was in effect to condemn them to eternal punishment in hell. [...] To persecute was to display a charitable hatred: a charity towards the sinner that was inextricable from a fervent hatred of the sin which endangered his or her salvation.¹³

In the martyrologies, traditionalist interrogators are recorded giving constant reassurances to heresy suspects, asserting that their intentions are benevolent. The martyrological writers, however, continually subvert these promises of gentleness in order to portray them as evidence of a concealed intention towards cruelty. The effect is generated in a variety of ways, perhaps the most simple of which is the act of repetition: the authorities' claims of sympathy and benevolence are restated so often that they eventually become unsettling. Anne Askew uses this tactic, listing her interrogator's frequent assurances of clemency until they begin to seem overstated.¹⁴ In a typical example, Bonner attempts to force a confidence from her by making a promise (ironic in retrospect) that no-one intends her any physical harm:

¹³ Walsham, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ See F 38-39, 40-41, 44-45; L 44.

And as I came before hym [Bonner], he sayd, he was verye sorye of my trouble, and desyred to knowe my opynyon in soche matters, as were layed agaynst me. He requyred me also in anye wayse, boldelye to utter the secretes of my harte, byddyng me not to feare in anye poynt. For what so ever I ded saye within hys house, no man shuld hurte me for it. (F 40-41)

The stated aim of the questioners in making these promises is the reassurance and encouragement of their detainee. They urge Askew to speak her mind without fear of reprisal, yet it is these very reassurances that introduce the possibility of violence to the text in the first place. The repeated acts of denial gradually raise suspicion in the reader's mind: why should these men harp on about gentleness unless the secret intention is to remind Askew of the alternative mode of interrogation, i.e. torture? As I have argued in the previous chapter, Askew is adept at making the subtext of her narrative serve to highlight the atmosphere of latent violence surrounding her questioning: she reveals the archdeacon's mention of the martyr John Frith to be a veiled threat (F 42-43), uses the phrase 'pearls before swine' to reveal her awareness of the persecution that will inevitably result from any revelation of her beliefs (F 21), and she makes her questioner Dare distinctly uncomfortable by drawing a subtle comparison between her own situation and that of St. Stephen (F 20). By fashioning a narrative wherein an innocuous surface is underlaid by a subtext of violent threats, Askew creates a vivid impression of her accusers' mendaciousness, demonstrating that they say one thing while secretly intending the opposite.

John Bale's commentary corroborates Askew's view of the persecutors with outside information. After the above quotation, where Askew records Bonner's (ironic) reassurance that she should be forthright in full confidence of his intention to do her no harm, Bale fulminates:

A foxysh faver was thys, both of the chauncellour and byshopp and soche a benyvolent gentylnesse, as not onlye sought her bloude, but also the bloude of all them whych are here named, yf they had than come to thys examinacyon [Bonner lists one 'Doctor Gyllam' and the reformists Edward Crome, David Whitehead and John Huntington as people to whom Askew is 'affeccyoned' (F 39)]. *For the evenynge afore (as I am credybye infourmed) the Byshopp made boast amonge hys owne sort, that if they came thydre, he wolde tye them a great dele shorter.* A voyce was thys full lyke to hym that uttered it. For therby he appeareth, not one that wyll save and fede, but rather soche a one as seeketh to kyll and destroye. (F 39. Italics mine)

Bale here uses the tactic beloved of all sensationalist publications when seeking to undermine a figure of hate: presenting evidence which flies in the face of that individual's public image, obtained from an unnamed but allegedly 'credible' source. He thus reveals that (just as Askew has suspected) Bonner is the kind of person who will give all kinds of fair and smiling promises to his detainees only because he hopes thereby to lull them into giving him information about their peers; while in private he reveals his true self by laughing about his plans for persecution with those of 'hys owne sort'. The traditionalists' assurances of gentleness are therefore doubly undermined within *The First Examination of Anne Askew*: firstly, they are made to seem sinister and misleading by means of repetition by Askew, and then they are actively contradicted by Bale with his references to the speaker's own private assertions (which are seen to be in direct opposition to what he has publicly promised).

The interrogators' stated intent to 'help' their detainee is frequently portrayed not only as an expression of secretly intended bodily harm (serving to encourage the person undergoing questioning to incriminate themselves and their co-religionists, thereby eventually leading them to their deaths) but as an even more reprehensible desire to inflict *spiritual* harm. The traditionalists' endeavour to reform the heterodox by counsel is invariably seen by martyrs and martyrologists not as a well-meaning attempt to bring the erring individual over to their own side, but as willful and malicious misleading of the spiritually vulnerable. Refusing to countenance that the traditionalists might actually believe their own doctrine, the reformists instead assert that it is the intention of these men to tempt their opponents' souls into perdition by inviting them to participate in a commonly-acknowledged lie. Askew tells those who come to persuade her to change her views on the eucharist that it is 'great shame for them to counsell contrarye to their knowlege' (L 96), and goes on to record:

On tewesday I was sent from newgate to the sygne of the crowne where as mastre Ryche and the Byshopp of London with all their power and flatteryng wordes went aboute to persuade me from God. But I ded not exteme [sic] their glosynge pretenses. Then came there to me Nicolas Shaxton, and counselled me to recant as he had done. Then I sayd to hym, that it had bene good for hym, never to have bene borne [...]. (L 119)

The obvious imaginative link is to Satan's tempting of Christ in the wilderness from Matthew 4. Anne Askew summons up this association when she tells the priest sent to converse with her 'I perceyve ye come to tempte me' (F 34), and Foxe seems to be

consciously evoking the same episode when he describes Bonner's attempt to win over the martyr William Hunter by means of financial incentives:

Then the Byshop called for [...] W. Hunter, and perswaded with hym, saying: if thou wilt yet recant, I will make thee a free ma[n] in the City, and geue thee fourty pound in good money to set vp thine occupatio[n] withall: or I wil make thee steward of my house and set thee in office, for I like thee well, thou hast witte inough, and I will preferre thee, if thou wilt recant.

But William aunswered, I thanke you for your great offers: notwithstanding, my Lorde, sayd hee, if you can not perswade my conscience with Scriptures, I can not finde in my hart to turne from God for the loue of the world [...]. (1570, p. 1715)

The pattern of worldly temptations refuted by scripture-based answers directly echoes Christ and Satan's dialogue, while the repeated use of the phrases 'if thou wilt', 'I will make thee' and 'I will preferre thee' imitates the wording of Satan's promise 'all these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me' (Matthew 4. 9). These associations work upon the mind of the scripturally-informed reader to make Bonner's offers seem less like altruism and more like demonic enticement.

One final important facet of the 'gentleness as cruelty' trope within martyrological texts is their response to the religious authorities' attempt to disassociate themselves from the violent aspects of the punishment of convicted heretics. This disassociation finds its most basic expression in the self-defending speeches of the authority figures, which suggest that the violence that results from heresy investigations comes not from the persecutors themselves, but from those who defy them. In Golding's *A brief treatise concerning the burnynge of Bucer and Phagius* (1562), the author's paraphrase of the opening speech, given upon the arrival of the heretic-hunting commissioners at Cambridge, plainly demonstrates this shift in responsibility: 'For their own partes, they more enclined to mercy tha[n] to rigor. Howbeit considering y^t so great diseases could not by gentle medicines be healed, they were driuen of necessitie to vse stronger.'¹⁵ Here the commissioners stress that their own desire is for clemency, but that, given the seriousness of the problem, they may be *forced* to use stronger methods: any resultant violence

¹⁵ Arthur Golding, *A brief treatise concerning the burnynge of Bucer and Phagius, at Cambrydge, in the tyme of Quene Mary with theyr restitution in the time of our moste gracious souerayne lady that nowe is [...]* (London: Marshe, [1562]) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 3966, sig. C4^r. Golding's work is a translation of part of *Historia Vera [...] D. Martini Buceri et Pauli Fagii*, ed. by Konrad Hubert. Foxe also gives an account of Bucer and Phagius' burning in *Acts and Monuments* (1570, pp. 2146-2152), but his version reproduces Golding's almost word for word.

therefore stems not from themselves, but from those who insist on infecting the university with erroneous doctrine.

Narratives of religious persecution, then, have something in common with cases of torture and execution undertaken by political regimes. An assertion made by those perpetrating acts of political violence is that it is the prisoner who is the author of the persecution, the persecutor himself the guiltless person experiencing pain and distress as a result. As Elaine Scarry writes, a torturer's complaints are part of a 'solipsistic' process that creates 'looped circles' whereby the reflex of pity stimulated by the sight of violence is made to bypass the tortured individual and return to the self.¹⁶ In reference to Heinrich Himmler's speeches advising members of the SS on how to overcome 'animal pity', Hannah Arendt glosses: 'instead of saying: "what horrible things I did to people!", the murderers say to themselves "what horrible things I had to watch in pursuance of my duties".'¹⁷ The traditionalist religious authorities use the same logic to defend acts of persecution, asserting that it is the heretics who are the causers of the violence, while their own actions are the fulfillment of a painful duty. Obstinate heterodoxy is, to those of a like mind to Hogarde, merely a form of suicide. In *Displaying of the Protestantes* he rather colourfully imagines ardent heretics queuing up and jumping into the flames: 'how many do we see for lacke of grace, wylfully without anye feare of God or man, precipitate themselves into the temporall fyre, without any respecte or due consideracion of the life to come' (B4^r).

Another claim which the religious authorities make in order to disassociate themselves from acts of violence is that the heresy burnings are conducted not by themselves, but by the secular authorities. The bishops' responsibilities extended only to the discovery of heresy, the imposition of penance upon those who abjured, the pronouncement of condemnation and (if the condemned was a clergyman) the ceremony of degrading; and since it was not lawful for ordained men to perform executions, it was the state that finally put men and women to death upon the charge.¹⁸ To the martyrologists this was a gross act of hypocrisy: having zealously pursued reformists, and subjected them to

¹⁶ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 59.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber, 1963), p. 93.

¹⁸ See editor's note to *HriOnline Acts and Monuments*, 1563 edition, p. 1433: 'Churchmen were forbidden to shed blood. Technically, after the clerics had sentenced a heretic to death, he or she was remanded to the secular authorities for execution'. On the ceremony of degrading from clerical orders, see chapter 1, a.3 'The Three Laws', above.

imprisonment and interrogation (and possibly even torture when seeking information about known associates), and having had them publicly stripped and humiliated on the way to the stake, the ecclesiastical authorities shied away from the final act of death-dealing, shifting the blame for the individuals' deaths onto the secular magistrates. John Bale makes reference to this conventional disclaimer in *Three Lawes* when he has the Vice Infidelity advise his bishop friend Ambition to say: 'not I, but the powers ded them condempne' (ll. 1189-900), while John Foxe gives the following address '*To the persecutours*' in the preface to *Acts and Monuments*:

And thinke you by charging the law, to discharge your selues? But you wil vse here some translation of the fact perchance, alledging that you burnt them not, but onely committed them to the secular power, by whom you wyl say they were burnt, and not by you. It wyl be hard to play the Sophister before the Lord. For so it may be said to you againe: that the fire burned them, and not the secular power. But I pray you who put them in? (1563, p. 13)

Foxe goes on to record just such a technical evasion during the lengthy examinations of John Philpot:

Phil. [...] The strongest answer that hee hath made agaynst me, is, that you wyl burne me.

Morgan. Why, we do not burne you: it is the temporal men that burn you and not we. (1563, p. 1433)

The martyrologists set about portraying the religious authorities' denial of having any involvement in the final execution, or desire to inflict such a punishment, as not only an obstinate rejection of the laws of cause and effect ('But I pray you who put them in?') but also as a tactic which allows them to conceal their true violent longings. The 'not I but the powers' claim is effectively contradicted by the inability of churchmen to step back from the events once conviction has been obtained, and their official duties therefore fully discharged. By their own admission, it is beyond the bishops' jurisdiction to involve themselves in the imposition of temporal punishment, yet Foxe shows that many of them lack confidence in the secular authorities to properly penalise the heretic, and that they therefore take it upon themselves to strenuously recommend death by burning. For instance, those in charge of convicting William Sawtre write a letter to the mayor and sheriffs of London, advising them (in almost threatening terms) on what precisely ought to be done with the heretic once he has been officially committed to their charge:

We co[m]maunde you as strenghtly as we may or can, firmly enioyning you, that you do cause the said William being in your custodie, in some publique or ope[n] place within the liberties of your Citie aforesayde [...] to be put into the fyer, and there in the same fyer really to be burned, to the great horroure of this offence and the manifest example of other Christians. Fayle not in the executio[n] hereof vpon the perill that will fall therupon. (1563, p. 143)

Foxe acknowledges in advance that the religious authorities will claim that as benevolent men of the cloth they neither sought nor effected men's deaths but merely did their duty in identifying heretics (always leaving it up to the secular arm of the law to deal with punishment), and he proceeds to undermine this claim by providing evidence that these men frequently bayed for blood from the sidelines. The attempted act of dissociation is exposed as a ruse, and the traditionalist bishops portrayed as executioners by proxy: men who both secretly desired and ultimately caused the martyrs' deaths. Golding's treatment of the 'not I but the powers' disclaimer refutes the sentiment in a more unusual way, since his text deals with heretics who have actually predeceased their trial:

[...] he [Chester] co[m]maunded their bodies to be digged out of theyr graues, & being disgraded from holy orders, deliuered them into the handes of the secular power. For it was not lawfull for such innocent perso[n]s as they were, abhorring from al bloudshed, and detesting all desire of murder, to put anye man to death.
[G2^{r-v}]

If the first clause was left out, this could be a description of the final stages of any heresy trial: the heretic is degraded from his ecclesiastical orders, then handed to the secular powers – Golding even provides a passive quotation of the authorities' commonly articulated disclaimer: 'innocent perso[n]s [...] abhorring from al bloudshed [...] detesting all desire of murder'. Yet the fact that all this conventional rigmarole is being applied to bodies which have just been 'digged out of theyr graues' immediately casts doubts upon the entire process and its justifications. Firstly, the absolute passivity of the mouldering remains which are the focus of the trial and burning serves to expose the prosecutor's myth that it is the heretics who are the antagonists here. Bucer and Phagius provide the authorities with no defiance, no insolent words or refusals to recant with which to work: the one-sidedness of the whole affair is risibly plain. The vehemence of the religious authorities' disclaimer is also curious within this context: the reader may question why the authorities feel the need to assert their lack of guilt in the act of killing heretics, since Bucer and Phagius have already been dead for several years (both as a result of natural

causes). As a consequence of this inappropriate usage, the disclaimer (much like the ceremony of degradation within the same episode) is exposed as a mindless formality that the religious authorities automatically repeat, regardless of the realities of the situation, a statement which therefore necessarily lacks both feeling and veracity.

Foxe also uses cases of the persecution of the dead to serve as an absurd mirror to the persecution of the living. For this purpose he introduces 'An example of crueltie, ridic[u]le and to be laught at' (1563, p. 1142), the story of one William Tooly, an individual whom Foxe freely acknowledges to be a common robber rather than a martyr to the faith. His death was therefore an entirely secular affair, accomplished by hanging, but upon the scaffold, Tooly was heard to utter 'this short praier that was wont to be sayd in kinge Edwardes time in the Letanie: From the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, & all his detestable enormities, good Lorde deliuer vs &c' (p. 1142). As a result of his use of this Edwardian anti-papist prayer, Tooly was subsequently exhumed and posthumously burned as a heretic. As a side note to the tale, Foxe speculates that the events which followed Tooly's death were orchestrated by Reginald Pole: 'for as Winchester and Boner did al wayes thyrst after the bloud of the liuinge, so Poles lightning was for the moste part kindled agai[n]st þ^e dead' (p. 1142). He proceeds to offer an explanation of the psychology behind the cardinal's bizarre vendetta:

And he reserued this charge onely to him selfe, I knowe not for what purpose, except peradventure being loafe to be so cruel as the other, he thought neuerthelesse by this meanes to discharge his dutie toward the Pope. By the same Cardinal like lightening, and fierie fist, the bones of Martin Bucer, and Paulus Fagius, whiche had lyen almost two years in their graue, were taken vp & burned at Cambridge, as Tooleis carcase was here at Londo[n]. (1563, p. 1142)

Pole is here shown to be playing a farcical game of catch-up with his more bloodthirsty peers: lacking the natural brutality of Winchester (Stephen Gardiner) and Bonner, he attempts to mimic their persecutory zeal by directing his wrath against subjects who cannot experience suffering. The example therefore provides Foxe with a double opportunity, allowing him to point out the ridiculousness of Pole's behaviour, and also to reflect upon the inhuman cruelty of his fellows, Gardiner and Bonner.

The Metaphor of 'Infection'

A frequently occurring analogy found within sixteenth-century writings concerned with heterodoxy and its detection is the comparison of heresy or heretics to an infection. The

image of heterodoxy as an encroaching necrotic disease (or a wild fire) attempts to communicate two key ideas: firstly, that it is pernicious, actively harming the previously untainted things that it touches; and secondly, that the response to it must be prompt and decisive, since delaying action or attempting to ignore the threat only causes it to spread further and with increasing power and rapidity. Within Hogarde's *The Displaying of the Protestantes*, the language of infection is ubiquitous, constituting a pervasive leitmotif which recurs in many differing forms: the Protestants are 'the viperouse broode, who never departe their haunt, til they haue infected whole cou[n]tries' (†3^v), 'rotten branches' and 'deade fleshe' (G3^r); while the heresiarch Arius is imagined as 'one sparckle [...] the flame thereof destroyed the hole worlde' (G5^r).¹⁹ In defence of the persecution of Protestants and other schismatics, he writes:

[...] leaven ought to be taken from the dough. A sparckle as soone as it dothe appeare, oughte too be quenched: rotten fleshe ought too be cut awaye: a skabby shepe, ought to be repealed fro[m] the flocke, least the house, the dough, the body, & the flocke be throughly corrupted, do burn, do putrifye and marre. (G5^r)

The infection metaphor therefore legitimises religious persecution, allowing it to be viewed as an undertaking that seeks to save the uncontaminated remainder of the populace: an expedient act of fire-fighting or surgery. Hogarde's only criticism with regard to religious persecution perpetrated by members of the Catholic Church is that the counter-insurgency measures have not always been swift or severe enough to nip the most tenacious of heresies in the bud. He wistfully laments: 'If in the beginning of Luthers doctrine some worthy souldiour of Christ & his church had gone about to have slayed the same, the worlde at this day had neuer felte the calamitie therof' (A7^r).

Allusions to infection and surgery are also made by representatives of the traditionalist authorities within the Protestant martyrological texts. Like the traditionalists' assertion of their reluctance to inflict harm, and their attempt to dissociate themselves from the act of execution, this metaphor of justification is another of the opposition's claims which martyrologists include in their narratives only in order to prove that it can be undermined and subverted.

¹⁹ For denying Christ's divinity, Arius (d. 336 C.E.) is known as a 'heresiarch' (i.e. chief of heresy) in Catholic thought. See 'Arius' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, p. 685. Robert Van de Weyer notes that Arius is 'often portrayed as the arch-heretic of all time' (*The Call to Heresy: the Prophetic, Charismatic and Mystical in Christian Religion* (London: Lamp Press, 1989) p. 4), and Rowan Williams observes that by medieval times Arius had come to be regarded as 'a kind of Antichrist among heretics', represented alongside Judas in ecclesiastical art (*Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), p. 1).

In the context of heresy examinations, these images are used by the interrogators not only to justify persecution to their co-religionists but also to encourage the co-operation of their prisoners. As Margaret Healey observes, 'medical regimes provided a tangible working model for the regeneration of the soul'.²⁰ This secondary use of the metaphor requires it to undergo a modification: instead of imagining heresy as an infection of the body politic on a national or global scale, it is expressed as a contamination of part of the erring individual's body. Heresy consequently becomes a canker of the soul that only the traditionalist clergy (as the qualified spiritual surgeons) can cure. Within this particular incarnation of the metaphor, the act of surgery is not imagined as a physical cutting away (as it is in the macrocosmic sense, where the removal of the infectious material refers to the destruction of the heretics' bodies and texts) but as a spiritual catharsis which is effected through the act of confession; the penetration into the individual's beliefs being imagined as lancing which allows all heretical material to seep out. Anne Askew's questioner, Bonner, attempts to encourage her to confess her heterodoxy by explaining his role using precisely this parable:

Then brought he fourth thys unsaverye symylytude, That if a man had a wounde, no wyse surgeon wolde mynystre helpe unto it, before he had seane it uncovered. In lyke case (sayth he) can I geve yow no good counsell, unlesse I knowe wher with your conscyence is burdened. I answered, that my conscyence was clere in all thynges. And for to laye a playstre unto the whole skynne, it might apere moche folye. (F 45)

Here the analogy used by the authority figure is not that of an infectious disease but of an open (and possibly suppurating) wound; an injury which he asserts must be exposed and searched before it can be healed. Bonner intends the metaphor to express his professional concern for her well-being and his qualification to heal her of spiritual afflictions, and to make clear to her the necessity of confessing (or uncovering) her heterodoxy so that the extent of the injury can be ascertained and the correct penitential poultice applied.

However, there is something unsettling about an open wound as a choice of image: it is, as Askew points out, an 'unsaverye symylytude', a conceit which alludes to her physical vulnerability, her capacity to experience suffering, and perhaps even her nearness to death.

Following Askew's extension of the medical metaphor to assert her state of unblemished integrity ('my conscyence was clere [...] whole skynne') the existence of the

²⁰ Margaret Healey, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern Europe: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 46

alleged injury becomes still more problematic. Is this hypothetical wound of which Bonner speaks therefore one that he intends to inflict in order to produce the desired confession? Is his similitude actually a threat masquerading as an offer of help? By implanting these suggestions, Askew's narrative once more attempts to undermine the traditionalists' reassurances by hinting at the existence of subtextual violence. Bale immediately picks up on the ironic possibility that the expressed offer of assistance conceals an intention to harm:

Hath not he (thynke yow) moche nede of helpe, whych seketh to soche a surgeon.
Uncircumspect is that pacyent, and most commonlye unfortunate, whych goeth to a
commen murtherer to be healed of hys dysease. (F 46)

According to Bale, to lay oneself open to members of the traditionalist clergy is necessarily to invite both bodily and spiritual death, since their offers of 'help' are belied by secret homicidal urges and the will to enforce pernicious doctrines; this illustration makes anyone who seeks out Edmund Bonner for spiritual guidance appear much like a hapless Victorian gentleman seating himself in Sweeney Todd's chair in expectation of a shave. As in the passage in *Three Laws* where the traditional 'shepherd' symbolism of the garments of a bishop is repudiated, and the wearer instead revealed, through a new symbolic ascription, to be a wolf, Bale's treatment of the wound metaphor portrays Bonner not as a surgeon but as its dark obverse: a murderer. In both cases, the inverted symbolism is used to demonstrate the tyrannical dominion which figures of religious authority hold over the most vulnerable in society, and the ever-present potential for them to abuse such absolute power; to attack those whom they should shepherd, or murder those whom they ought to preserve.

If Bonner's intention is solely to convey an intention to help and heal, his choice of image is unfortunate, given that the forging of a link between wounds and confession immediately suggests an act of torture – the very ideological basis of which is that the physical opening of the body through wounding produces the corresponding desired mental opening through the act of confession. As Scarry illustrates, the language of torturers frequently uses this very comparison:

The leading generals in charge of torture under the Colonels' Regime in Greece repeatedly spoke to their prisoners in images dramatizing the connection between two dreaded forms of exposure, open wounds and confession: 'Hazijisis punched

me in the chest one day and said, "Here, you're going to tell all. You will open out like a rose."²¹

Whether or not Bonner intends his words to be construed as a threat, his surgical metaphor allows Bale and Askew to bring up these depictions of bodily mutilation and coercion. In light of Askew's status as a lone female body surrounded by powerful male interrogators, Bonner's similitude also raises the spectre of sexual violence: even if the sense of resemblance between an open wound and female genitalia can be dismissed as a Freudian anachronism, the image of a wound hints at a forced sexual act because it suggests pain caused by a penetrating instrument. This potential reading is one that replaces the traditionalist image of confession as an act of spiritual lancing with that of it as an act of violation. Askew is ever aware of the highly damaging potential of such imagery: as Deborah Burks points out, Askew's continual indications of her own status as a physically vulnerable woman and use of 'violation rhetoric' (most notably, in the episodes where Bonner tries to interrogate her alone, like a 'would-be seducer', and during her racking) serve not only to vilify the traditionalist authorities as sadistic men who abuse their power by harming a single defenceless woman, but also to make a wider political point: 'to convey the vulnerability of all Protestants, male as well as female, to these tyrants of church and state'.²²

From just one example found within *The Examinations of Anne Askew* it becomes clear that infection imagery is a double-edged sword for the traditionalists. On one hand, the concept of 'infection' is an especially useful trope for heretic-hunters, because the appeal to the language of human medicine (with its designation of things as 'infectious'/'unclean' or 'healthsome'/'clean') serves to illustrate in recognisable, prosaic terms the Roman Church's practice of labelling persons, places, and objects as holy/sanctified or unholy/unsanctified, according to their status of spiritual healthiness. For both doctors and priests, the word 'infection' gives a name to an invisible, but nonetheless real, danger. On the other hand, because the Protestant iconoclasts see the Catholic obsession with sanctity and all its attendant rituals (such as blessing, anointing, transubstantiation, excommunication) and apparatus (censers, holy water, chrism) as particularly in need of discrediting, the infection language used by traditionalists becomes a prime target of

²¹ Scarry, p. 46.

²² Deborah G. Burks, *Horrid Spectacle: Violation in the Theater of Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2003), p. 12.

reformist polemic. Within the martyrological texts, each assertion which is made by a traditionalist figure concerning the efficacy, or necessity, of acts of purgation or sanctification is taken as an opportunity for the author to undermine, ridicule, and refute it.

The idea of infection, and the consequent need for purgation, is central to Golding's *A Brief Treatise*. The traditionalist commissioners make continual references to the metaphor in order to authorise their actions, imagining their task as the restoration of Cambridge to its pre-Reformation purity through the detection and eradication of all lingering residues of Protestantism. The commissioners draw on the customary fire/disease comparison by using it to affirm the need for their speedy intervention in the university, since 'it was to be feared (if it were not looked to in time) least (as it commonly commeth to passe in bodies diseased) thys mischiefe should take roote, and by litle and litle infect all the me[m]bers next vnto it which yet wer whole and sound [...]' (A5^v). The metaphor appears again during the opening speeches of the visitation when the university orator John Stokes likens the Protestant heresies followed in Edward's reign to a symptomless or unrecognised illness:

[...] beinge oppressed wyth so greuous a malady of the conscience and of heresy, we felte not our mindes one whyt diseased. For nedes must that disease be very daungerous, which wythout feling of payne wasteth and consumeth nature, & oftentimes bringeth men to theyr graues ere they think the[m] selues sicke. Wyth suche a kynde of dysease the vniuersitye was striken. (B5^r)

This is a slightly unconventional use since it seems intended not to justify future actions, but to excuse past ones. The comparison between volitional participation in (unrecognised) heresy and an illness that the sufferer is oblivious to may simply be intended as an illustration of how insidious heresy can be, but it may also be an attempt to pardon members of the university from conforming to official doctrine during the years of Edward VI's reign. Protestant heresy is here imagined as a perilous fever which may once have afflicted all the unknowing collegians, and from which the university has now safely, and thankfully, recovered.

The commissioners also use infection imagery in order to justify the removal of Bucer and Phagius' remains from their current burial place within the chapel:

[...] it was to the open derogation of Goddes honour, and the violating of his holye lawes, wyth the great perill of manye mennes soules, and thoffence of the faythfull, inesppecially in so difficult and *contagious* a tyme as that was. Wherefore it was not

to be suffered, that they whiche vtterlye dissented from all other men in theyr trade of liuinge, lawes, and customes, shoulde haue anye parte with them in thonour of burial [...] who euen in the same places where they lay wer *iniurious and noisome to the very elementes*: But the place ought to be poured [...]. (D3^v-4^r, italics mine)

This portrayal of the dead heretics as 'contagious' is not to do with the transmission of their doctrines and ideas, but with a more ethereal sense of uncleanness which originates from the physical remains themselves. The two men are here represented as anti-saints, for as a saint's relics sanctify their environs and all the things brought into contact with them, conversely, Bucer and Phagius' 'iniurious and noisome' remains create an air of unsanctity, as if their heresy leaks even posthumously from their corpses and pollutes the chapel. This is a clear appeal to miasmatic theory, where infection was explained by exposure to bad smells, filthy conditions or stagnant water. As Carlo Cipolla writes, 'people spoke of an ill-defined but universally recognised "corruption and infection of the air", which degenerated into highly poisonous 'sticky' miasmas that killed the person they infected, either by inhalation or contact'.²³

The removal of the two bodies marks the first step of the commissioner's four-pronged attack on heresy in Cambridge; a campaign which makes Bucer and Phagius its scapegoats, loading onto them all the associations of Protestantism within Cambridge in order that the removal of the bodies can be made to affirm the purgation of the university itself. The three further, complementary steps of the campaign are the book burnings, the examinations of individual collegians, and the mounting of Bucer and Phagius' posthumous heresy trial – a sort of anti-eulogy, where witnesses are encouraged to contradict all the glowing statements they formerly made about the two men. When the orator charged with the task of leading the discrediting makes difficulties about it on account of Bucer's famed 'integritie and purenesse of lyuyng' (E1^v) Cuthbert Scott, Bishop of Chester, imperiously retorts:

[...] thou at his buriall didst blaze and set him out marueylously with epitaphes and sententious meters, wherfore nowe also thou shalte neyther wil nor chose, but speake in the contrarie parte: and thys to do, I streyghtlye charge thee in mine owne name, and in the name of my fellowe commissioners. (E2^v-3^r)

The multi-faceted attack on Bucer and Phagius is designed to eliminate them (and consequently the heresy that they imbue) on all fronts: the examinations and anti-eulogies

²³ Carlo M. Cipolla, *Miasmas and Disease: Public Health and the Environment in the Pre-Industrial Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 4.

work to combat human memory, ensuring that the current collegians are untainted by heresy and unsympathetic to their former teachers; the book-burnings eradicate the written legacy, destroying all record of their doctrines; and the disinterment and burning of their bodies removes forever their physical presence from the university. By targeting books, bodies and memories, the commissioners behave like the misnamed Ministry of Truth in Orwell's *1984*, seeking to change the past by erasing all records of it, and by creating in its place their own version of events, which those living in the present are coerced into subscribing to. By utterly removing Bucer and Phagius from Cambridge they hope to draw a veil over five years of Edwardian Protestantism, a deletion that will allow them to portray their own regime as contiguous with the Roman Catholic past.

This act of wholesale purgation amounts to a traditionalist attempt to rewrite history, an act which martyrologists resist by using their own account to expose the cover-up and its perpetrators. Golding's account reveals the hypocrisy involved in the posthumous trial by naming and shaming the primary speakers, who are revealed to be the turncoat former authors of Bucer's rapturous eulogies (E7^r). That these men speak both untruthfully and contrary to their own private feelings out of a desire for self-preservation is illustrated by a supplementary story concerning one Andrew Perne, vice chancellor and leader of the anti-eulogists:

But what needeth witnesse to proue him a lyar? His owne conscience shall make as much agaynst him as a number of men. It was reported for a truthe, (and his owne familiar frendes were the bringers vp thereof) that he him selfe (eyther immediately after his sermo[n], or els somewhat before he went to it) striking him selfe on the brest, and in manner wepinge, wished at home at his house wyth all hys hearte, that God woulde graunte his soule myghte euen then presentlye departe and remayne with Bucers. (G5^{r-v})

Like Bale's revelation of Bonner's private behaviour through use of an anecdote from a 'credible' source, here the (alleged) words of Perne's own friends serve to expose his true convictions, and thus exonerate Bucer from the accusations of doctrinal and personal impurity. Perne's highly emotional display of regret and assertion that he wishes his soul could 'presentlye departe and remayne with Bucers' reveal his doubt concerning his own eternal fate as a consequence of his slander and true belief in the righteousness (and current heavenly residence) of his former teacher.

The actions of the commissioners in *A Brief Treatise* in attempting to restore Cambridge to its former state of Catholic glory provides many opportunities for the author

to ridicule the ceremonies of sanctification and purgation by means of the Balean device of showing ceremonies dissolving into farce. Comical effect of this nature is generated by the mounting horror of Nicolas Ormanet (a visiting Italian archbishop) as he tours the college chapels and finds them severely lacking: he is at first aggrieved to see that no pyx is present at the altar of Clare College Chapel, and then he is astonished to discover from the chaplain that the chapel itself has never even been consecrated (F2^{r-v}). Ormanet's rage becomes apoplectic when the chaplain goes on to reveal that, despite the lack of necessary sacramental accoutrements and official sanctification, mass has been habitually celebrated within the chapel. The episode derives its effect from a strong contrast between the mild bemusement displayed by the chaplain, who has apparently done his job for several years without being aware of the need for any of these ceremonies, and the histrionic consternation of Ormanet:

When he had co[n]fessed that both he him selfe, and others also, had oftentimes said masse there: O thou wretched olde ma[n] (quod Ormanet) thou haste cast bothe thy selfe and them in daunger of the greuouse sentence of Excommunication. [F4^r]

The lack of consecration and ritual is seen to have had no visibly detrimental effect on the chapel itself or on the day to day lives of its maintainers, yet the collegians are by necessity compelled to agree with Ormanet, and to go along with the effort to reinstate the former ceremonies. The choice of Ormanet as bringer of these prescriptions to Cambridge is in itself damning: as an Italian archbishop (and close crony of Pope Julius III (A1^v)) he represents external Roman influence. That an uninvited foreigner and tool of the pope is seen to invade Cambridge with these artificial prescriptions is intended to be especially galling to Golding's English Protestant reader.

Furthermore, Ormanet's attempts to reinstate the former ceremonies is met with recalcitrance from even inanimate objects:

[...] he [Ormanet] demaunded to haue sight of the thicke milke wherwithall and a litle Oyle men were wont to be annealed. When it was brought before him, and that he had well considered it, it was so ranke of sauour, y^t he was fayne to turne away his nose [...]. (D7^r)

On the surface this is merely the statement of an utterly prosaic fact (five years of lying unused means that the mixture of oil and milk used to make the chrism has become rancid), yet this detail severely undermines the sense of sacredness that the traditionalists

are trying to achieve. Ormanet is attempting to reawaken the lax churchmen's belief in the importance of ceremony and sacred objects, but the stench of the oil forces him to turn away out of visceral reaction, immediately negating all sense of awe in the event. There is also a hint of iconoclasm evident here, since the episode is concerned with the proving of an allegedly sacred object to have ordinary properties. It may be intended as a refutation of the Roman Catholic claim that sacred objects (such as the corporeal remains of certain canonised saints) are incorruptible, as the passage demonstrates that holy oil mixture goes off, just as its ordinary, un sanctified counterpart would. As in the case of the unconsecrated chapel, stress is laid on the idea that there is no discernible difference between objects in their blessed/unblessed state, except in the minds of the traditionalist authorities. One also cannot help but suspect that the whole episode is intended as a symbolic statement about Catholicism itself: a religion which has gone stale after five years of disuse, and one whose ceremonies – literally – stink.

Foxe's treatment of posthumously persecuted individuals raises many ideas similar to Golding's concerning the traditionalist obsession with sanctity and purgation. The most closely analogous story to that of Bucer and Phagius within Foxe's archive is 'The despightful handlyng and madnes of the Papistes toward Peter Martyrs Wyfe at Oxford [...]' (1570, pp. 2152-2153).²⁴ Therein Foxe records that Cardinal Pole and his underlings initially stumble over a pretext for exhuming the late wife of Peter Martyr Vermigli since they are unable to obtain enough evidence to secure a posthumous heresy conviction, as all witnesses brought forth claim that 'they knew not what religion she was of, by reaso[n] thy vnderstood not her language [...] [and] they could learne nothing, vpon which by law they might burne her' (p. 2152); but although they cannot find definite grounds to convict the late Catherine Vermigli of heresy, the doubt over her orthodoxy is deemed a sufficient reason for the removal of her remains when the possibility of their polluting certain nearby holy relics is introduced:

Notwithstanding, the Cardinall [Pole] dyd not leave the matter so, but wrote downe his letters a good while after to Marshal, then Deane of Friswides, that he should dyg her vp and lay her out of Christian buriall, because she then was interred nygh vnto S. Friswides relickes, sometyme had in great reverence in that colledge. D. Marshall lyke a prety man calyng his spades and mattockes together in the euening,

²⁴ The wife of Peter Martyr Vermigli goes unnamed throughout Foxe's account. Thomas Harding, an acquaintance of the theologian, names her as 'Catherine', a former nun. Quoted in M. A. Overell, 'Peter Martyr in England 1547-1553: An Alternative View', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1984), pp. 87-104, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2540841>> [accessed 2 June 2008], (p. 99).

when he was well whittled,²⁵ caused her to be taken vp, and buried in a dunghil. (1570, p. 2152-3)

The concerns over sanctity displayed by Cardinal Pole are here portrayed as a ruse, an excuse that allows him to bear out his malice toward the dead woman without having to present any genuine legal grounds. The suggestion that something underhand and faintly illegal is occurring is furthered by the details that the operation is entrusted to a drunken dean who works under cover of night.

As in Golding's text, this episode shows the Marian religious authorities (led once again by Cardinal Pole) engaged in an act of attempting to rewrite history by purging the reconsecrated churches of all reminders of Edwardian Protestantism. Also, as in Golding's text, redress comes in the form of Elizabeth I, who restores Bucer, Phagius and Peter Martyr's wife to their previous resting places.²⁶ In relating the circumstances of the restoration of Catherine Vermigli to the Church of St. Frideswide, Foxe ensures that the reader knows that the motives for returning the remains are utterly separate from the traditionalist motives for removing them. It is not, he asserts, on account of any superstitious belief that the resting place of the mortal remains must be in a consecrated place, 'for though the body being once dead, no great estimation were to be had, how or where þe bones were layd' (p. 2153). The reason that the remains of the dead woman ought to be restored are human rather than spiritual: it is an act of respect for her 'sexe and womanhood' (*ibid.*), and of hospitality towards Peter Martyr and his wife, who were both strangers invited to England by its sovereign King Edward; but perhaps most importantly, it is also a definitive rejoinder to the malice of the Marian Catholics:

[...] It was a great shame, that he which had trauayled so far at King Edwardes request [...] and so wel deserued of that Vniversity: should with so vngentle a recompence of ingratitude be rewarded agayne, as to haue hys wyfe, that was a godly woman, a strau[n]ger, good to many, especially to the poore, and hurtful to none, eyther in worde or dede, without iust deseruing, and besides theyr owne lawe, not proceeding agaynst her according to the order therof, spitefully to bee layd in a strinking [sic] dunghill. (*Ibid.*)

The return of the dead woman's bones is also effected in such a way as to make their removal, should another period of Catholic rule befall England, impossible:

²⁵ 'Whittle', v.¹ (*trans.*): 'To ply with drink, to make drunk, intoxicate; in *pa. pple.* excited by drink, drunk, intoxicated', OED.

²⁶ See *Brief Treatise*, sig. J2r onwards for Golding's description of the Elizabethan restoration.

Wherefore Master Calfield, then Subdeane of the Colledge diligently provided, that from Marshals du[n]ghil she was restored and tra[n]slated to her proper place againe, yea and withall coupled her with Frideswides bones, that in case any Cardinal wil be so mad hereafter to remoue thys womans bones agayne, it shall be hard for them to discerne the bones of her from the other. (Ibid.)

The act of coupling the bones of the (alleged) heretic with those of the beloved Catholic saint is engineered to be the last possible word in the dispute. Because the reformists are not shackled by having to observe the divisions between holy and unholy in their attitudes towards places and objects, they are able to gain the upper hand, thereby making the reinstatement of Catherine Vermigli's remains an irreversible act. Once again, it becomes clear that infection imagery is both a boon and an impediment to traditionalist polemic: on the one hand, the possibility of 'unholy pollution' has allowed Pole to justify the removal of the remains of the wife of the hated exile Peter Martyr; but on the other hand, it is this very obsession with purity and sacredness which makes Catholicism vulnerable to the iconoclasts' attack (and the ultimate outcome of the exchange at the Church of St. Frideswide's so galling). The metaphor of 'infection' ultimately proves that in the dispute over sacredness and ceremony, it is Catholics who have the most to lose.

Ceremony as Disorder

The word 'traditionalist' refers not only to the group's habit of looking fondly backwards in time to the pre-schism era but also to their upholding of 'traditions', i.e. the long-established practices and ceremonies of the Roman Church. Eamon Duffy refutes the idea (maintained by earlier historians of the reformation, such as A.G. Dickens) that these ceremonies had become unpopular or outdated by the time of Mary I's accession.²⁷ Instead, he proposes that the return to traditional modes of devotion was warmly accepted by both clergy and the majority of laymen.²⁸ Having highlighted the popularity which the traditional rituals, festivals, and saints' days enjoyed with such a large body of the population, Duffy concludes that 'in re-establishing the old ceremonial the Marian church was not engaged in irrelevant antiquarianism, but playing one of its strongest cards.'²⁹

Both tradition and ceremony had the potential to be ideologically powerful concepts for the supporters of the Church. The continuity provided by Catholicism's

²⁷ Dickens, p. 81.

²⁸ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 531-2.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 532.

ecclesiastical offices and the homogeneity of its ceremonies allowed traditionalist propagandists to portray the Church as orderly, authoritative, and univocal. By contrasting the conformity of their own rituals with their opponents' iconoclastic lack of uniform procedure in religious worship, the traditionalists could make the reformists appear discordant and anarchistic.

In *Displaying*, Miles Hogarde informs his readers that order is the very touchstone of true religion and defines the True Church as: 'that congregacion whiche wholly dothe agre in one vnitie of fayth and ministracion of sacraments' (A4^r). Likewise, he writes, false religion may be identified by its lack of doctrinal agreement and inability to settle on proper practices: 'the punishementes are not so diuers in hell [...] as are sondry opinions of these Protestantes' (A6^v). Hogarde goes on to describe the ridiculous and seemingly limitless variations which result from Protestantism's lack of ceremonial protocol: receiving the eucharist becomes a farce as the ministers are unable to decide where to place their communion tables, or whether to stand facing North, South, East or West (I8^v-K1^r). Even the bread itself becomes a source of contention, disagreements erupting between Protestants over whether it should be leavened or unleavened, and whether it is idolatrous to have the name 'Jesus' stamped upon the loaf (K1^v). The communicants too are also thrown into a state of confusion by the controversy:

For some of the co[m]municantes wold stande, some sit, some knele, some wold hold the cup himself, some would receiue it at the ministers hande, some of his next fellowe, some would haue a short pece of bread, some a thinne, some thicke and a thinne. (K3^v)

By citing these examples of the unrestrained disorder of the Protestant Church, Hogarde seeks to strengthen his image of a True Church characterised by unity and a false one characterised by disagreement: 'the one telleth, as it were, with a forefynger, the waie to saluacio[n]. The other disclotheth with the whole hande, the hie way to da[m]pnacion' (D2^v). The path to eternal life, he warns, is singular (indicated by the manicle of the holy Roman Church), while the ways to hell are as many and various as the proliferating doctrines of Protestantism. These 'more orderly than thou' taunts are obviously potentially damaging to the reformist cause, and it is therefore the responsibility of those who seek to popularise Protestant doctrine through literature – dramatists, pamphleteers, and martyrologists – to contradict the claim. In order to turn the

traditionalists' love of ceremony against them, the rituals themselves, along with those who conduct them, must be portrayed as senseless and farcical; order must become disorder.

a) Ceremonies as Stage-Plays

Often the transformation from ritual to disorder is effected by an explicit theatricalisation of the ceremonies. John Bale (as I have discussed in the first chapter) creates this effect by including the verbal and visual formulas of Catholic ritual within a play. By removing the gestures, liturgical phrases, and ecclesiastical garments from their normal sacred context and depositing them on the stage, Bale desacralises them and reveals their inherently theatrical properties. The prose of the martyrologies also abounds with this comparison between religious ritual and its enactors, and the actions and archetypes of the stage. I have already quoted the comments (recorded by Foxe) of Thomas Benet who describes the ritual of excommunication as 'merye conceites and enterludes playde of þ^e Priestes' (1570, p. 1181), and of Rowland Taylor, who responds to being forcibly re-clothed in his ecclesiastical garments (as a prelude to the ceremony of degradation) with 'am I not a goodly foole? [...] If I were in cheape, should I not haue boyes enough to laugh at these apish toyes, & toying trumpery?' (1583, p. 1524). However, the traditionalist ceremony as stage-play convention is not limited within the martyrological texts to such explicit remarks delivered in dialogue; it can also be found buried within the body of the prose where it works to create a more subtle and pervasive sense of the absurdity of ceremonial excess.

One of the most sustained portrayals of traditionalist ceremonies as histrionic can be found in Golding's *A Brief Treatise*. The commissioners' love of pomp, formalities and ceremony is in evidence throughout the text: they order extravagant banquets which they claim are frugal;³⁰ they favour lengthy celebrations of mass and insist that the chapels have all their ceremonial accoutrements restored;³¹ and they conduct lengthy and highly-formalised proceedings against the dead heretics.³² The culmination of all their efforts is the final pageant of the burnings of Bucer and Phagius. The event begins with a formal procession: the remains of the two former professors are brought to the market place escorted by an armed guard of uniformed men, and 'being bound with ropes, & layd vpon

³⁰ See E5^v-6^r.

³¹ C4^v; C7^{r-v}; D7^r; E7^v-8^r; F2^{r-v}; G7^r-8^v.

³² D8^{r-v}; E3^v-4^r; E7^r; G2^r.

men's shoulders (for they were enclosed in chestes [...]) were borne into the middes of y^e market sted with a great trayne of people following them' (H2^r). A suggestion of the stylistic nature of the ceremonial drama enters the account with the detail that the chests containing the remains are then bound to stakes with 'a longe yron chayne, as if they had bene aliu^e' (H2^v). The closing spectacle involves the dead heretics being set alight, along with 'a greate sorte of bookes that were condemned wyth them' (ibid.).

The impression of theatricality underlying these events is emphasised by a commentary, but it is a commentary which derives not from the narrator (in the manner of the 'autocommentator' Foxe (who favours littering his margins with comments in order to direct the reader's interpretation)³³ but from ancillary characters situated within the body of the text, witnesses to the original event being reported:

There was that day gathered into the towne, a greate multitude of countreyfolke (for it was market day) who seinge men borne to execution, and learning by enquire that they were dead before, partly detested and abhored th[e] extreme crueltie of the Commissioners toward the rotten carcasses, & partly laughed at theyr folly in making such preparature. For what nedeth anye weapon (sayd they) as though they were afrayd that the dead bodies which felt the[m] not, would do the[m] some harme? Or what purpose serues that chain wherwith they are tyed? sythens they might be burnt loose wythoute perill, for it was not to be feared that they would ronⁿe away.

Thus euery body that stood by, found faulte with the cruelnesse of the deed, either sharply or els lightly as euery mannes minde gaue him. (H2^v-3^r)

The use of the voices of these 'countreyfolke' is a tactic which proves to be much more effective than the denunciations of a narrator against such farcical ceremonies ever could be. It serves to generate the impression that this scornful appraisal of the traditionalists' behaviour is not anachronistic – a product of the narrator and his time, i.e. Elizabeth's reign – but a contemporaneous and genuine reaction.

Golding uses the episode, much like the 'vox pop' sound-bite of mass media journalism, to showcase perceived public disapproval and scepticism in response to official actions. The country-folk are shown to make two basic yet valid enquiries: 'why are you trying to inflict punishment on men who are already dead?' and 'why are you behaving as if they were still alive?'. These are, conspicuously, questions which have yet to be satisfactorily answered within the text – indeed, which the commissioners' high-flown (specious) orations have been designed to obscure. The use of these voices is also a

³³ Coats, p. 39.

reference to the polemical past: as Knott observes, using salt-of-the-earth-type rustics to collapse the credibility of traditionalist ceremony is a polemical tactic inherited from those early favourers of plain-speech, the Lollards.³⁴

Furthermore, the episode sets up a marked contrast in purpose between the laymen and bishops occupying the same space. Golding's explanatory gloss 'for it was market day' points to the fact that the country-folk are there to conduct daily, necessary business, and are using the marketplace for its ordained purpose, trade and commerce. The purpose of the traditionalist commissioners, however, is to draw attention to their own pomp and to ensure that they have an audience for their spectacle – an activity which has no practical or reasonable purpose in the eyes of the rustic spectators who deride 'theyr folly in making such preparature'. The two groups therefore represent a contrast between the domains of the real and the fictional. The status of the country-folk as passive spectators at the heresy burning, their bemused grumbling and announcement of their unanimous disapproval of the whole affair ('either sharpely or els lightly') as distasteful and ridiculous, even makes them resemble the critical audience of a bizarre play or piece of avante-garde street theatre. Golding apparently expects his readers to bear the same attitude towards the events of the entire text so far, as he soon after brings the Marian half of the treatise to a close with the comment: 'this was the last of this enterlude' (H4^v).

b) Corrupting the Law

As Bale's drama and Golding's prose both demonstrate, comparing the the activities and ceremonies of the traditionalists to a stage play is a highly effective way of discrediting them. To portray the ceremonies as histrionic is effectively to declare them artificial and fraudulent, to condemn them as outward and visual rather than inward and spiritual, and to hold them up as self-evidently ridiculous and worthy of scorn. However, the late Henrician and Marian ecclesiastical officeholders' claims to authority were vested not only in their mandate to perform religious ceremonies but also in magisterial and legal proceedings. Heresy trials represented the cross-over between religion and the law, and served as a reminder of the temporal powers of the Church. While polemicists could not argue against the efficacy of the Church's legal powers (as they could deny its claims to hold any spiritual power), they could arouse public indignation by criticising these proceedings as a travesty of true legal process. Thus, the affairs of the consistory courts and official heresy

³⁴ Knott, p. 73.

examinations are portrayed by the martyrologists as malfeasant, pseudo-legal affairs, offered as yet more evidence of the inherent disorderliness of all traditionalist activities.

A.G. Dickens points out that most of the Henrician bishops had undergone some form of legal training and therefore describes the spiritual leadership of the mid-century English church as 'pervaded with legalism'.³⁵ Even the most prominent of the Marian bishops, Edmund Bonner, began his career as a lawyer rather than a churchman.³⁶ That the traditionalist bishops possessed shrewd and legalistic minds is evinced by the martyrologists' portrayal of them within accounts of heresy examinations; yet it is the purpose of these texts to demonstrate that legal acumen does not necessarily manifest itself in a respect for due process, but in a Machiavellian ability to manipulate the proceedings, and to put those who the bishops interrogate at a disadvantage.

A text which offers numerous examples of such legal chicanery is Askew's *Examinations*, wherein interrogators are frequently seen to direct their energies towards entrapping the defendant, or encouraging her to perjure herself. When initial face-to-face examinations prove fruitless, Bonner resorts to sending a succession of proxies to surreptitiously discover Askew's religious views under the guise of offering her counsel (F 32, 42). Similarly, the king's secretary and advisor William Paget attempts to persuade her to confess her views to him privately with the dubious assurance that she 'myght (he sayd) denye it agayne, if nede were' (L 99).

Another underhand practice which Bonner and the other questioners utilise is the citing of accusations from witnesses who are never brought forth to give evidence (in clear opposition to the Henrician heresy statutes, which demand that such claims be testified to by deponents present on the day of the trial)³⁷ and despite Askew's repeated requests that she might be allowed to defend herself face-to-face with her accuser (F 55, 57). In his elucidations Bale responds by repeatedly denouncing Bonner as a Caiaphas,³⁸ thereby linking the bishop to the archetype of religious corruption, identifying him as one who seeks to gather false witness and to condemn defendants brought before him out of a mixture of personal malice and political expediency.³⁹

³⁵ Dickens, p. 67.

³⁶ Gina Alexander, 'Bonner and the Marian Persecutions', *History* 60 (1975), 374-391 (p. 375).

³⁷ See 31 Hen. VIII. c. 14, in Luder, p. 742.

³⁸ See F 44, 45, 46, 51.

³⁹ C.f. John 11. 47-53; Matthew 26. 3-4, 57-66.

Askew refuses to fall into the traps Bonner has laid for her, safeguarding herself by rebuffing his go-betweens and by demanding to see the accusers instead of directly responding to the allegations quoted at her. She also questions the idea of true legality by appealing to the biblical guidelines which she believes ought to form the basis of law in a Christian state. When Gardiner attempts to get her to testify alone and without any witnesses present (Bonner has already tried the same tactic in F 40) she justifies her refusal with a reference to points of scripture:

Then desyred the Byshopp to speake with me alone. But that I refused. He asked me, whye? I sayd, that in the mouthe of two or thre wytnesses everye matter shuld stande, after Christes and Paules doctryne. Math. 18. and 2. Cor. (L 97)

While Askew's interrogators have the upper hand in knowing exactly what the law is (and therefore how to use it and, indeed, subvert it), her implacable scripture-based replies demonstrate that she knows what the law *should* be. Her responses also carry the radical implication that she does not consider herself to be answerable to such questioners or bound by such corrupt earthly laws; her conduct is dictated by a higher standard, since the Bible is her statute book.

Golding's *A Brief Treatise* also makes use of the idea of a pseudo-legal trial in order to expose the disorder underlying traditionalist ceremonies. While the commissioners who come to Cambridge claim that they are mounting an earnest and 'nedefull' enquiry into whether the doctrines of Bucer and Phagius are 'good and wholsome' (D3^r), the proceedings against the two men are conducted in such a one-sided fashion that it is both obvious what the traditionalists' desired verdict is and inevitable that their kangaroo court will deliver it. Yet, in a parody of due process, the denizens of the university set about following all the legal procedures, even issuing a subpoena to the dead men:

[...] Andr. Perne [...] desired to send out processe to cite Bucer & Phagius to appeare, or any other y^t would take vpon them to pleade theyr case, and to stande to thorder of the court the thyrd daye after: to thentente that when they had exhibited them selues, the Court myghte the better determyne what ought to be done to them by thorder of the lawe. (E3^v-E4^r)

As in the case of the same text's portrayal of the ceremony of burning, the parodic effectiveness of the heresy trial episode hinges on the fact that the defendants are both dead. Perne's insistence in following the set procedure to the extent that he calls for Bucer and Phagius to appear in person before the court is farcical, prompting visions of skeletons

clambering out of their coffins in obeisance to the summons. Moreover, the idea that 'any other' will present themselves 'to pleade theyr [i.e. Bucer and Phagius'] case' is only fractionally less absurd, as none of the two men's former friends have any incentive to speak up in their defence: the dead men are clearly beyond requiring legal assistance and anyone who attempts to defend the former professors' doctrines will only succeed in putting themselves under suspicion of heterodoxy. Predictably, the appeal for defence witnesses is met with overwhelming silence from the assembly, although plenty of advocates step forward to toe the traditionalist line by denouncing the reformers:

After that they had taken theyr places, and that no man put forthe him selfe to aunswere for thoffendours, the iudges called aside D. Yoong, D. Segyswyke, Bullocke, Tayler, Maptide [sic], Hunter, Parker, Readman [...], Browne, Gogman, Rudde, Johnson, Mytche, Rauen, and Carre [...]. These men (taking fyrst theyr othe vpon a booke) were commaunded to beare wisse agaynst the heresies & doctryne of Bucer and Phagius. The .xxii. day of the same moneth was limited to this Jurye to brynge in theyr verdit. (E6^v-E7^r)

The assembly is therefore presented with a complete lack of defending counsel but a virtual torrent of witnesses for the prosecution. The imbalanced presentation of the case reveals that, far from being an earnest enquiry exercised with impartiality and fairness, the event is a show trial – a publicly enacted play that is both scripted and staged by the commissioners. The farcical excesses of this particular trial are seen by Knott as exemplifying the martyrologists' polemical message:

Thus the elaborate effort to purge the influence of the reformers, with its ritualistic assertion of the power of the Church to restore order to the university, is made to seem the worst kind of disorder, ceremony gone mad.⁴⁰

The trial itself is merely one example of what Golding asserts to be a much larger strategy on the part of the traditionalist religious authorities. He views these ceremonies and procedures as a smokescreen, serving to conceal the fact that the end results are engineered: like tyrants hiding behind a false democracy, the traditionalists are repeatedly seen to impose their will by using legal processes which make it seem as if a decision has been reached fairly and unanimously, rather than dictated and predetermined. Early on in the account, the narrator describes how the commissioners get a foot in Cambridge's door by means of just such a ruse, manipulating Vice Chancellor Perne into inviting them to

⁴⁰ Knott, p. 72.

visit, so that it will appear that the anti-heresy initiative comes from within the university itself:

Se what a feate conueyaunce this was, to suborne this man [Perne] vnder a colourable pretence to desire this thing of them by waye of petition, as who should saye, if he had not done so they would neuer haue gone about it of them selues.
(D4^v)

Both Askew and Golding's texts therefore undermine the traditionalist claim of orderliness, as it is vested in their magisterial and legal role, by portraying the law as a mere tool for the bishop-inquisitors. Askew seeks to demonstrate that earthly law is not a reliable standard by depicting her interrogators as men whose legal insight allows them to flout the law to obtain evidence, and by holding their procedures up to the scriptural ideal to generate an unfavourable comparison. Golding shows how the law can become a cat's paw for the traditionalists: a device which enables them to achieve their oppressive goals without having to sully their own reputations. In both cases, the traditionalists are presented as only interested in the law so far as it suits their purposes; when it does not, it is subject to change. Thus, the religious authorities' use of the law becomes not proof of their commitment to order, but evidence of their profound disorderliness.

c) Disorderly Persons

A tactic still beloved of politicians is to discredit an institution by latching on to the personal failings and private wrongdoings of one of its leaders. That a leader, the supposed embodiment of a group's values, should be guilty of greed, hypocrisy, or misuse of power is clearly a very damaging reflection upon all those who support that cause. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in characterising the traditionalist authorities as a disorderly breed, martyrologists should seek out individual and vivid examples by way of illustration.

The target of much of Foxe's censure is the Marian Bishop of London. Foxe gets a great deal of mileage out of Bonner's personal appearance alone, which is viewed as an external manifestation of his inner grotesqueness. Indeed, (perhaps due in no small part to Foxe's depiction of him) Bonner seemingly became synonymous with corpulence and ugliness in the minds of Elizabethan Protestants: Sir John Harrington (b. 1560, d. 1612)

recalls from his boyhood that the former bishop 'was so hated, that every ill-favoured fat fellow that went in the street, they would say, that was Bonner'.⁴¹

Uncharacteristically, Foxe resorts to the visual medium to satirize Bonner more effectively: 'The right Picture and true Counterfet of Boner' (Fig. 1) is one of the few of *Acts and Monuments*' woodcuts that does not depict a martyrdom. An apocryphal anecdote from Harrington indicates that it is a good likeness of the bishop (although this may be only a malicious Protestant joke at Bonner's expense):

I have been told also, that one shewed him his own picture in the Book of Martyrs, in the first edition, on purpose to vex him; at which he laught, saying a vengeance on the foole, how could he get my picture drawn so right? (p. 17)

Although the image accompanies the description of the experiences of one Thomas Hinshaw at the hands of the bishop, the Protestant protagonist is confined to the lower half of the picture, his face slightly obscured by the legs of the attendant who is seen covering his face in disgust. It is the awkward, portly figure of Bonner himself that draws the viewer's focus, his visage crumpled and apoplectic with exertion. Significantly, he is depicted in state of partial undress (lacking his cap and outer robe, which both lie discarded on the ground), the open lacing of his doublet and creasing of his undershirt suggesting that his clothes strain to contain his expanding belly. Foxe records that another Marian prisoner, Thomas Grene, saw Bonner walking past his prison cell in a similar condition, 'vntrust in his hose and doublet' (1563, p. 1698). Bonner's going about in this state calls attention to his inherent lack of dignity and unfitness for his office, since beneath the robes he is a ridiculous, Punch-like figure.

Bonner becomes the figurehead for traditionalist excess in the minds of Protestants not only because of his undignified and easily-mocked appearance, but because of his infamously irascible and mercurial temperament. While Gina Alexander proposes that much of Bonner's heretic-hunting activity was the result of pressure from the Queen and her council, and not an expression of personal zeal or antagonism,⁴² she concedes that Foxe's characterisation of him as thuggish and foul-tempered may have had its basis in fact, commenting: 'Bonner was never an easy or equable person, and as the years passed

⁴¹ Sir John Harrington, *A briefe view of the state of the Church of England as it stood in Q. Elizabeths and King James his reigne, to the yeere 1608 being a character and history of the bishops of those times [...]* (London: Kirton, 1653), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], p. 16.

⁴² Alexander, pp. 377-8.

he seems to have grown more violent'.⁴³ This deterioration in his personality was possibly the result of his endurance of four years of imprisonment under Edward VI: Foxe follows one example of Bonner's notoriously ungovernable temper (an episode wherein a fit of pique results in him physically attacking one of his own clergy as well as an unfortunate knight who attempts to intervene) with the offered excuses of John Feckenham, Dean of St. Paul's:

O M. Iosselin, you must beare with my lord: for truly hys long imprisonment in the Marshalsey, and the misusing of hym there hath altered hym, that in these passions *he is not ruler of hymselfe* [...]. Whereunto [Sir Thomas Joscelyn] merily replied & sayd: so it seemeth Maister Fecknam, for *nowe that he is come forth of the Marshalsey, he is ready to goe to Bedlem*. At which mery conceite some laughed and moe smiled because the nayle was so truly hitte vpon the head. (1576, p. 1404. Italics mine.)

The above passage suggests that, far from being the temperate and benevolent figure he characterises himself as during the speeches reported in Askew's text,⁴⁴ Bonner is unable to control his own volatile emotions. This is a man who has been scarred, embittered, and perhaps even mentally unhinged by his experience of lengthy imprisonment.

In a section headed 'An other Chapter of treatyse co[n]cerning such as were scourged and whypped by the papistes [...]' (1563, pp. 1694-1706), Foxe depicts the darker side of a personality more frequently seen participating in the intellectual and verbal conflict of heresy examinations by providing numerous examples of Bonner engaging in acts of physical violence towards reformists. These depictions of the unrestrained beating of suspects prove somehow more distasteful than heresy burnings. Burning a heretic is a ritualised process, and one which shows an agreement between persecutor and persecuted concerning the seriousness and importance of the issues at stake. It is, in a sense, an act of mutual consent, requiring not only authorities who are prepared to kill but also individuals who are prepared to die rather than recant. As Gregory explains:

Both dispositions embraced central Christian notions about truth, faith, the afterlife, answerability to God, and responsibility to others. [...] The issue was not suffering as opposed to meting out punishment, but rather what commitment to truth called for in divergent circumstances.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., p. 375.

⁴⁴ See F 38-41, 44-45.

⁴⁵ Gregory, p. 79.

For Bonner to substitute beatings for heresy trials is to display a profound contempt for the reformists and the doctrinal conflicts which they represent. Bonner is seen to be treating heterodoxy as if it were a willful, childish infraction rather than a considered disagreement over issues pertaining to human salvation. His impatient and dismissive attitude towards reformists is ironically confirmed by an attempt to deny his reputation for cruelty:

They call me (saieth he) bloudye Boner. A veneaunce on you al. I would fayn be ridde of you, but ye haue a delite in burning: but if I might haue my request, I woulde sow your mouthes and put you in sakes, & drowne you. (1563, p. 1702)

In the above remark, Bonner conveys his lack of interest in doctrinal distinctions and the fates of individual souls, revealing that he wishes that instead of having to interrogate them, he could simply silence and drown the heterodox as if the reformists were an unwanted litter of kittens. In attempting to show that he takes no delight in persecution, Bonner has therefore made himself seem all the more cruel and unfeeling, since he has effectively replaced the idea of legal inquiry leading to individual executions with a fantasy about mass murder.

Foxe's chapter dealing with Bonner's scourgings also depicts him as prone to launching unprovoked attacks on those wholly innocent of heterodoxy. In preface to an account of Bonner's beating of some young boys he finds bathing in the Thames near Fulham, Foxe writes that the purpose of the digression is to alert his readers to Bonner's character: 'this story although it touche no matter of religion, yet because it toucheth somthyng the nature and disposition of that man [...] I thought here not to omit' (p. 1704). He follows the episode by recounting an occasion when Bonner's wrath fell upon a 'pore starued sely beggar [...] a simple & sely wretch' (ibid.) for failing to receive the eucharist at Easter. Foxe is disgusted that the beggar's mental deficiencies and state of extreme poverty should inflame Bonner's desire to inflict corporal punishment rather than arousing charitable instincts, adding: 'but what pitie can moue the hearts of insensible Papistes?' (ibid.). Bonner is seen not only as a man of hasty and ungovernable temper but as one actually incapable of experiencing human (and Christian) sympathies.

There are also underlying suggestions present in Foxe's text that Bonner receives sexual gratification from the act of physical violence. One such passage occurs during the description of the scourging of Thomas Hinshaw:

[...] The bishop fumed & fretted, that scant for anger able to speake, he said: Doest thou answer my Archdeacon so, thou naughtie boy? I shal handle thee wel inough, be assured: so he sent for a couple of roddes, and caused him to knele against a long bench in an arbour in his gardein, where the saide Thomas with out any enforcement of his part, offred himselfe to the beating, and did abide the fury of the said Boner, so long as the fat pached bishop could endure with breath, and till for wearinesse he was faine to cease, and geue place to his shame full act. he had two willow roddes, but he wasted but one, and so left of. (1563, p. 1703)

As above, Bonner's beatings almost invariably take place within his private walled garden, suggesting an ironic reference to the *jardin d'amour* of medieval literature, the traditional locus of sexual assignations. The details of the 'shame full act' as involving the passive endurance of Hinshaw and the strenuous exertions of Bonner present obvious parallels with a coercive sex act, and the additional damning detail that the 'fat pached bishop' is physically incapable of carrying the event through to its desired end adds a note of dark comedy in asserting that, despite his raging and uncontrollable desires, Bonner is actually impotent. Thus, the episode ends with Bonner physically exhausted but ultimately unsatisfied.

Likewise, in the episode which recounts Bonner's attack on the young boys swimming in the Thames, suggestions of pederasty creep in:

Boner passing from London to Fulham by barge [...] as he went by water, he was saying Euesong with Harpsfield his chaplein in the barge, and beyng about the myddle of theyr deuoute Oriso[n]s, they espyed a sort of yo[n]g boyes swimming and washing themselues in the Thamis [...] vnto whome he went, and gaue verye gentle language, and fayre speache, vntyl he had set his men aland. That done, his men ran after the boyes to get them, as the Bishop commaunded the[m] before, beatyng som with nettels, drawing some thorow bushes of nettels naked, & som they made leap into the Thamis to saue themselues, that it was maruel they wer not drowned. (1563, p. 1704)

The episode contains all the lurid detail of a tabloid front page ('Fulham Kids' Nightmare at Hands of Bloody Bonner?'). His perverse instincts aroused by the sight of the group of carefree youths, Bonner discourages them from fleeing with the use of 'gentle language, and fayre speache' before launching the attack. There follows the description of the sadistic pleasure which Bonner and his cronies take in delivering cruel and unusual punishment, the boys being not only beaten but dragged naked through nettles and bushes. The enactment of this savagery eventually leaves the aggressors sated, and they return to their worship overtaken by an eerie calmness, as if the experience has been a cathartic one: 'the

bishops men returned to their maister again into the barge, and he & Harpsfield his Chapleyn went to their Euensong a freshe, where they lefte, and so sayd forth þe rest of their seruice as cleane withoute malyce, as an egge without meate' (p. 1704). The simile 'as an egge without meate' even suggests sexual emission, eggs standing euphemistically for testicles, and the emptied-out albumen for semen.

The Marquis de Sade would not be born for another two hundred years, and it would be anachronistic to suggest that Foxe is attempting to vilify Bonner by presenting him as a deviant who derives sexual pleasure from violence. Rather, the subtextual parallels between sex and violence are meant to instill in the reader an uncomfortable sense of equivalence between the two acts: Foxe hints at this comparison in order to propose that Bonner's aggressive behaviour is just as shameful and deplorable as an aberrant sexual act. Furthermore, the sexual parallels evoke the idea of incontinence, conveying the author's conception of Bonner as a dangerous individual who utterly lacks that most prized of sixteenth-century virtues, self-control. Perhaps most importantly, the sexual parallels make a statement about the abuse of power evident in the traditionalist bishops' handling of reformists. As Deborah Burks writes of Bale and Foxe's apparent obsession with accusing their opponents of such transgressions: 'sexual abuse crystallizes the charge that these villains took pleasure in persecuting their victims. Thus, in print propaganda and onstage, sexual abuse became emblematic of all kinds of tyranny'.⁴⁶

As we have seen in the above examples from Foxe, the metaphor of sexual violence functions even when it refers the bishops attacking male individuals, but it is at its most disturbing (and most damning of the traditionalists) when it refers to their treatment of female martyrs. The description of Anne Askew's racking at the hands of Wriothesley and Rich is, as Theresa Kemp puts it, 'fraught with the suggestion of a horrible violation of gender and office'.⁴⁷ Askew herself describes how her passive resistance on the rack enrages the traditionalist Lord Chancellor and a prominent courtier so greatly as to prompt them to take over the act of torture from the Tower attendants:

Then they ded put me on the racke, bycause I confessed no ladyes nor gentyllwomen to be of my opnyon, and theron they kepte me a longe tyme. And bycause I laye styll and ded not crye, my lorde Chauncellour and mastre Ryche, toke peynes to racke me [with] their owne handes, tyll I was nygh dead. (L 127)

⁴⁶ Burks, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Kemp, p. 1031.

Bale gives a more colourful and suggestive depiction of Wriothesley and Rich in his accompanying elucidation:

Marke here an example most wonderfull, and se how madlye in their ragynge furyes, men forget themselves and lose their ryght wittes now a dayes. A kynges hygh counsellor, a Judge over lyfe and deathe, yea, a lorde Chauncellor of a most noble realme [...] casteth off hys gowne, and taketh here upon hym the most vyle offyce of an hangeman and pulleth at the racke most vyllanouslye. (L 128)

Kemp comments that Wriothesley 'performs his vile offense, significantly, in a state of partial undress' (much like Bonner in Foxe's depiction).⁴⁸ That the aggressors remove their clothes before launching themselves on the supine and restrained woman does suggest an act of rape; yet what appears to be disturbing to Bale is not so much the overtones of sexual violation, but the violation of rank implied by Wriothesley's self-debasing intervention. In lamenting this action, Bale accuses the traditionalists of creating a world of such disorder that there are no behavioural boundaries, and consequently, no-one is able to tell the difference between the Lord Chancellor, and that most lowly and despised of social figures, the hangman.

For Foxe and Bale to present images in their martyrologies of strong women like Askew who defy both religious and civil authorities (and who even engage in theological debate with their male questioners), was necessarily to invite the accusation from their opponents that such women were instruments of social and sexual disorder. In *Displaying of the Protestantes*, Hogarde explicitly links learning (especially theological learning) to such disobedience, describing the females who married priests under Edward as both sexually and intellectually insatiable: 'led with diuers lustes euer learnynge and neuer able to attain vnto the truth' (I2^r). He characterises female Protestants in general as maenad-like representatives of social chaos: 'whose scripture mouthes are redy to allure their husbandes to die in y^e lordes verite, because they would fayne haue new' (I5^r). He slanders individual martyrs by offering proof of their disorderly ways: Joan Bocher is said to have 'reuyled and spytted at' the priest who spoke at her execution, 'makyng the sygne of the gallowes towardses him' (E7^r); while Anne Askew allegedly 'was of such charitie, that when pardon was offered, she defied them all, reuyling the offerers therof with suche approbious names, that are not worthy [of] rehersal' (E7^{r-v}). Having anticipated this reaction, Bale and Foxe

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1032.

attempt to refute such accusations preemptively by showing the traditionalist interrogators to be even more disorderly than the women they question.

Thus women in Foxe's text are frequently depicted offering calm but staunch resistance to the words and actions of their furious and seemingly deranged questioners. A clear illustration of this tactic can be seen in his account of a Marian Protestant named Rose Allin, who withstands a physical and verbal attack from the justice of the peace and notoriously zealous heretic-hunter Edmund Tyrrel:

Then that cruell Tirrill taking the candell from her, held her wriest, and the burning candell vnder her hand, burning crosse wise ouer the backe thereof, so long till the very sinnowes crackt asunder. [...] In which tyme of his tyra[n]ny, he said ofte[n] to her: why whore, wilt thou not cry? Thou you[n]g whore, wilt thou not cry? &c. [...] In the end, when the sinnowes (as I sayd) brake that all the house heard them, he then thrust her from him violently, and sayd: ha strong whore, thou shamelesse beast, thou beastly whore. &c. with such lyke vile wordes. But she quietly sufferyng his rage for the tyme, at the last, sayd: Syr, haue ye done what ye will do? (1570, p. 2200)

Megan Hickerson comments on the passage: 'Tyrell's accusation of whoredom can only be read as ridiculous, since his emotional outburst is shown in sharp relief to Allin's self-control'.⁴⁹ Far from being disobedient harridans, these women are, on the contrary, shown to display superhuman patience in putting up with the jibes and assaults of tyrannical bishops and magistrates. The exchanges between female martyrs and male questioners therefore provide not only the opportunity for the martyrologists to champion such women as forbearing and righteous, but to slander the reputations of the men that question them – or rather, to let such figures be seen to incriminate themselves, and to reveal the inherent disorderliness which lies just beneath the surface of their veneer of officialdom.

The language used by the questioners towards their female detainees is inevitably accusatory and obscene. Edmund Tyrell calls Rose Allin a whore four times in one paragraph, while the middle-aged matron Elizabeth Young is addressed by her interrogators as: 'Thou traytourly whore [...] Thou rebell whore [...] Thou rebell and traytourly whore' (1570, p. 2269); and 'Thou euill faouered whore' (p. 2270). These interrogators are seen to believe that by repeatedly shouting the word 'whore' at a woman, they can definitively prove that she is one. In reality, the act of throwing these accusations in the faces of calm and patient individuals reveals nothing except the accuser's own

⁴⁹ Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs*, p. 89.

prurient obsessions. The depiction of the interrogators here recalls that of the Vice Seditious in *King Johan* as he taunts the sober Widow Englande with sexualised and scatological banter (ll. 43-154).

Characterising the interrogators as uncontrollably aggressive men who use obscene language is also yet another way of linking traditionalists to theatricality. In his fits of rage, Bonner becomes, as Knott puts it, a 'caricature of the tyrant', reminding the reader of the most histrionic figure of the mystery plays, King Herod.⁵⁰ For the other interrogators to mock their female detainees with sexualised banter is immediately to call to mind the stock character of the morality plays, the Vice. While Bale makes the comparison between vices and the traditionalist religious authorities by having his personified vice characters transform into Cardinal Pandolphus, Stephen Langton and the Pope halfway through *King Johan*, Foxe makes it by temporarily transforming his text into a play script during his account of the examinations of Elizabeth Young.

Because Young refuses to take an oath 'vpon the four Euangelistes' (p. 2270) when giving testimony concerning her alleged importation from Emden, West Germany, of copies of a prohibited book entitled *Antichrist*, the presiding interrogators pretend to question her gender in the hope that she will be outraged enough to overcome her scruples against swearing. The result is an exchange filled with vice-like baiting and scurrility:

Eliz. My Lord, Christ saith, that who so euer is more then yea yea, or nay nay, it commeth of euill. And more ouer, I know not what an oth is: and therefore I will take no such thing vpon me.

Then sayd Cholmley: xx. pound it is a man in a womans clothes: xx. pound it is a man.

Boner. Thinke ye so my Lord?

Cholmley. Yea my Lord. &c.

Eliz. My Lord, I am a woman.

Bysh. Sweare here vpo[n] a booke, seeing it is but a question asked.

Then sayd Cholmley: I will lay twenty pound, it is a man.

Then Doct. Cooke brought her a booke, commaundyng her to lay thereon her hand.

⁵⁰ Knott, p. 39

Eliz. No my Lord, I will not sweare: for I know not what an oth is. But I say that I am a woman, and haue children.

Bysh. That know not we: wherfore sweare.

Cholmley. Thou euill fauoured whore, lay thy hand vpon the booke [...]. (p. 2270)

In this contrived piece of dialogue, Bonner and Cholmley become a facetious double-act, appealing to one another in arch exchanges: “think ye so my lorde?, ‘yea my lord &c’”. Cholmley’s offered wager ‘xx. pound it is a man in a womans clothes’ is at once both childish inappropriateness (since the purpose of the interrogation is to establish whether Young should be convicted of heresy and importing seditious books) and salacious, as it suggests that she will be required to somehow ‘prove’ her gender in order to satisfy the men’s curiosity.

In her dogged refusal to rise to her interrogators’ remarks and insistence that they focus on important issues, Young becomes reminiscent of Bale’s sober Widow Ynglonde enduring the taunts of the vices. Here, as elsewhere, Young’s earnest statements are ignored; her scriptural learning does not inspire respect in her questioners but becomes merely the grounds for bawdy speculation: ‘what preist hast thou layne withall, that thou hast so much scripture? Thou art some Priestes woman I thinke’ (p. 2272) exclaims Bonner’s chancellor, Thomas Darbyshire, comparing her erudition to the conception of a bastard child or a sexually transmitted disease. Exactly like vices, these men are seen to treat serious matters as if they are irrelevant and turn every one of their opponent’s statements into an obscene joke.

Once more, Foxe hints that there is something worse, something more insulting, than being called a heretic – being labelled a fool, someone too weak-brained to hold genuine opinions on matters of doctrine. As Bonner belittles captive Protestants by beating them instead of having them formally convicted as heretics, here he and his fellow traditionalists assert that Young is only to be taunted and insulted and not to be earnestly engaged in theological debate. That Young is released rather than executed is not because she dissimulates – her statements on the mass and transubstantiation are unequivocal – but simply because her questioners refuse to take anything she says seriously. When she reveals that she believes Christ is not bodily present in the host but received ‘in faith and spirite’, Cholmley merely retorts with casual malice: ‘Ah whore? Spirite and fayth whore?’ (p. 2270).

Again, the traditionalists are shown by Foxe to be failing to take even their own rituals and procedures seriously. Although traditionalists continually assert the importance and sanctity of their established practices, they are shown by Foxe's records of heresy examinations to be repeatedly ignoring, subverting and violating them. These are evidently men who are so disorderly that they cannot maintain consistency even in practices that are of their own devising.

Conclusion

The previous chapter has shown how martyrs and their editors use their accounts to construct an idea of a reformist self; a self which claims to form a link in an unbroken line of true church members dating back to the apostles, and which is conceived of as an entity in which the carnal and the textual are intermingled. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that martyrologies attempt not only to reconstruct the self but also to rewrite the other, the traditionalist opponent.

Taking as a raw material the traditionalists' own discourse, martyrological writers turn their opponents' own pro-persecution arguments against them. The promise of 'gentleness' – the assertion that heresy interrogations are ultimately for the suspect's own good – is made to signify a hidden cruelty, a desire on the part of the religious authorities to inflict both physical and spiritual harm upon those in their custody. The portrayal of heresy as an infectious disease enables the persecutors to portray themselves as intervening surgeons, but the accompanying wound imagery allows the martyrologists to taint the metaphor with associations of murder and misogyny. The addition of miasmatic theory to the infection metaphor illustrates the concept of sanctity as spatial (and therefore legitimises acts of 'purgation'), but it also leaves the traditionalists open to iconoclastic attack. The traditionalists' claim to represent unity and order in the face of the schismatics' profound disorder and endless variation is refuted in three separate ways: the martyrologists portray Catholic ceremonies as histrionic (and therefore false), churchmen's championing of the law as mere chicanery, and also transform the bishops and interrogators themselves into scurrilous, vice-like figures who commit acts of sexualised violence.

While the central tropes differ, the over-arching scheme for discrediting them is the same. In each case, a traditionalist claim is taken and made to prove its polar opposite: 'gentleness' is cruelty, 'surgery' is murder and 'order' is disorder. The martyrologists'

message is that beneath the plausible surface of traditionalist rhetoric lies a contrary reality, one which is invariably dark, sinister and mendacious.

Chapter 4

Martyrdom is not for Everyone: The Art of the False Recantation

Introduction: A Glossary of Terms

English Catholics and Protestants who at one time or another found themselves at odds with the state due to the vicissitudes of reformation and counter-reformation in the sixteenth century had few paths open to them when it came to continuing in their beliefs. Recusancy was likely to lead to imprisonment or even execution at the hands of the religious and secular authorities.¹ Voluntary exile required forsaking business and even familial commitments in England to go in search of religious tolerance abroad, and, as Thomas Freeman comments, was often an impossibility for women, given their lack of autonomy and subjection to spousal pressure.² That exile was not a valid option for many seems to be borne out by statistics: Andrew Pettegree calculates that the total number of Protestant exiles during Mary's reign could not have exceeded 1000 persons.³

The last remaining choice for the nonconformist was the exercise of some form of deception in order to avert the suspicions of the hostile community – such steps might involve attending the prescribed religious services and concealing one's true beliefs from neighbours and the local clergy. Deception, however, remained a problematic choice for those on both sides of the schism. Theologians and controversialists continued to debate the key issues pertaining to Christian conduct in the face of religious persecution, and this increased interest in the subject in turn gave rise to the coining of an array of specialist terms to describe the varieties and degrees of deception:

Nicodemism

'Nicodemism' is a term which describes the practice of outwardly conforming to the prevailing faith while secretly holding heterodox views. Although the term had been in use

¹ Around 50 persons were executed for heresy during Henry VIII's reign; 2 during Edward's; and c. 290 during Mary's. While only 6 were executed for heresy (anabaptism) during Elizabeth's reign, 189 Catholics were executed between 1570 and 1603 for the crimes of 'treason' and 'sedition'. See John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 90, 99. For numerical breakdowns of the Marian persecutions see John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials Relating Chiefly to Religion and the Reformation [...]*, 3 vols (London: Wyat, 1721), III, p. 293; F. H. Hansford-Miller, *The 282 Protestant Martyrs of England and Wales, 1551-1557* (London: Educational Publishers, 1979), p. 15.

² Thomas Freeman, 'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women', p. 13.

³ Andrew Pettegree, 'Nicodemism and the English Reformation', in *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996), pp. 86-117 (p. 87).

since the 1520s (the earliest example coming from a letter in which Luther denounced the behaviour of tentative followers of reform such as Erasmus),⁴ it was popularised in later decades by John Calvin.⁵ Calvin attributed its coining to clandestine Protestants, claiming that the advocates of hypocritical conformity attempted to use the Biblical example of the pharisee Nicodemus (who came to worship Jesus in secret in John 3. 1-2) to authorise their self-serving deceptions.⁶ As Carlos Eire clarifies, despite the misleading nature of Calvin's 'indiscriminate labelling', the Nicodemites were never a unified group or sect, rather: 'Nicodemism was an amorphous phenomenon [...] an attitude rather than a movement'.⁷

Although there were arguments in favour of Nicodemism, such as those advanced by Martin Bucer in *Consilium Theologicum*, (namely, duty to country and the avoidance of schism),⁸ the majority of English Protestant writings on the subject denounced it, advocating exile or non-conformism as the only acceptable choices for the faithful in the face of persecution.⁹

Dissimulation

The term 'dissimulation' describes a difference between outward appearance and inward conviction.¹⁰ In sixteenth-century English usage its is usually condemnatory: to 'dissimulate' is frequently to conceal evil intent with an appearance of virtue and

⁴ Ibid. pp. 89-90.

⁵ See Carlos M.N. Eire, 'Prelude to Sedition? Calvin's Attack on Nicodemism and Religious Compromise', *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 76 (1985), 120-145 (footnotes, pp. 120-1). Eire lists Calvin's most important anti-Nicodemite works as: *De fugendis impiorum illicitis sacris* (1536); *De sacerdotio papale* (1536); *Petit traicté monstrant que doit faire un homme fidèle entre les papistes* (1543); *Excuse à messieurs les Nicodémistes [...]* (1544); *Quatre sermons de M. Jehan Calvin traictans de matieres fort utiles pour nostre temps* (1552); *Response à un certain holandois [...]* (1562).

⁶ Carlos M.N. Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 10 (1979), 45-69, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539685>> [accessed 7 November 2008] (p. 46).

⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

⁸ Peter Matheson, 'Martyrdom or Mission', *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte*, 80 (1989), 154-172 (pp. 158-60).

⁹ Pettegree, pp. 95-9. See also the following contemporary anti-Nicodemite tracts: Robert Horne, *Whether Christian Faith may be kept secret [...]* (London: [Day?], 1553), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 19 June 2010], STC 5160.3; John Old, *A confession of the most auncient and true christe[n] catholike olde belefe* ([Emden]: [Egidius van der Erve], 1556), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 19 June 2010], STC 18798; 'I.T.', *An apologie or defence agaynst the calunnacion of certayne men which [...] do sclaundre those men, which for the better seruinge of God with a more pure conscience, according to his holy word haue abandoned theyr liuinges and vocacion, abydinge as exyles in poore estate oute of theyr natyue cou[n]trye* ([Wesel?]: [H. Singleton?], 1555), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 19 June 2010], STC 23619.

¹⁰ 'Dissimulation, n. 1. The action of dissimulating or dissembling; concealment of what really is, under a feigned semblance of something different; feigning, hypocrisy', OED.

godliness. In Bale's *King Johan* it is the name of one of the vices, who in his guise as the monk Simon of Swinsett, pretends affection for John in order to persuade him to drink of a poisoned cup (ll. 2102-2185). In a religious context it is often treated as a synonym for Nicodemism.

However, the term could also be used to distinguish passive from active deception: in *Petit traicté* (1543) Calvin uses the word 'dissimulation' (concealing or refusing to define one's beliefs) as the acceptable alternative to 'simulation' (feigning other beliefs, hypocritical conformity).¹¹ Here Calvin authorises a certain degree of discretion, advising those living under persecutory regimes to give no definite statement of their faith unless inescapably called upon to do so: 'I do not ask you openly to profess your piety; all I ask is, that you do not abjure it for the profession of impiety!'.¹²

Equivocation

Equivocation is defined as the use of amphibologies (grammatically ambiguous sentences) or pluralistic terms of speech.¹³ It was generally agreed upon by both Catholics and Protestants that equivocation was not lying, as one merely allowed the hearer to deceive themselves by choosing to understand the ambiguous sentence otherwise than was actually true.¹⁴ Thus, the Elizabethan Jesuits Robert Persons and William Allen authorised missionary priests entering England to use the practice with the following statement:

It is most difficult to take equivocation out of human intercourse, since we are often asked many things to which it is not expedient to reply and to which it is best to avoid making a reply by using equivocation. It is no objection to say that by such a reply we deceive the questioner, because he is not deceived by our reply but because of his own simplicity.¹⁵

¹¹ Eire, 'Prelude to Sedition?', p. 127. C.f. the definitions offered by the Irish essayist Robert Steele: 'Simulation is a Pretence of what is not, and Dissimulation a Concealment of what is', *The Tatler* 213 (1710), in *The Tatler, Complete In One Volume* (London: Jones and Co., 1829), p. 389.

¹² John Calvin, 'On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly, And Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion', in *Tracts and Treatises in Defence of the Reformed Faith*, trans. by Henry Beveridge, 3 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), pp. 359-411 (p. 410).

¹³ 'Equivocation, ad. 1. The using (a word) in more than one sense; ambiguity or uncertainty of meaning in words', OED.

¹⁴ Johann P. Somerville, 'The "New Art of Lying": Equivocation, Mental Reservation and Casuistry', in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Edmund Leites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 159-184 (p. 167).

¹⁵ William Allen and Robert Persons, *Resolutiones quorundam casuum nationis Anglicanae*, Lambeth Palace Library MS 565 (L. 17-19^v), in *Elizabethan Casuistry*, ed. and transl. by P.J. Holmes, Catholic Record Society vol. 67 (Norfolk: Lowe & Brydone, 1981), p. 64.

As Johann Somerville observes, the usefulness of equivocation was limited by a number of arbitrary factors, such as: 'whether a deceptive ambiguity was available, and whether the speaker had the linguistic skills needed to notice it'.¹⁶

Casuistry

Casuistry is the process of solving individual moral problems by the application of systematic processes of reasoning. Tracing the history of casuistry in both Catholic and Protestant thought, Kenneth Kirk describes it as 'the science of dealing with "cases" of conscience', and draws comparisons with equity or 'case law', since both are systems which allow the refinement and alteration of general principles by their application to unusual and difficult cases.¹⁷ However, the more popular understanding of 'casuistry' from the sixteenth century up to the twenty-first is that of specious or overly-sophistical reasoning, especially where it is used to justify immoral or hypocritical conduct.¹⁸

Historically, it became linked in this sense to the Jesuits – as Elliot Rose writes:

"casuistry" in modern English is a dirty word. It means whatever is sneaky, devious and jesuitical, "jesuitical" whatever is sneaky, devious and casuistic'.¹⁹

Mental Reservation

The mutual taint afflicting the reputations of both casuistry and the Jesuits derived from the practice of (strict) 'mental reservation'.²⁰ The Catholic Encyclopedia defines the practice as the following: 'in the strict mental reservation the speaker mentally adds some qualification to the words which he utters, and the words together with the mental

¹⁶ Somerville, p. 171.

¹⁷ Kenneth E. Kirk, *Conscience and its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), p. 109.

¹⁸ 'Casuistry. The science, art, or reasoning of the casuist; that part of Ethics which resolves cases of conscience, applying the general rules of religion and morality to particular instances in which "circumstances alter cases", or in which there appears to be a conflict of duties. *Often (and perhaps originally) applied to a quibbling or evasive way of dealing with difficult cases of duty; sophistry*', OED (italics mine).

¹⁹ Elliot Rose, *Cases of Conscience: Alternatives Open to Recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 71.

²⁰ N.B. Distinguished from 'wide' mental reservation, which describes equivocation and other kinds of verbal deception.

qualification make a true assertion in accordance with fact'.²¹ A statement made up of a combination of spoken words, thoughts and even gestures was known as a 'mixed proposition'.²²

As Elizabeth Hanson writes, mental reservation may be best understood in the context of English judicial history as an important evolutionary step towards the development of defendants' right to refuse to incriminate themselves.²³ But as many Protestants and Catholics alike were to opine in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, to view such intentionally misleading utterances as 'truth' was to consent to live in a world where 'yes' could mean 'no' and people were not bound by their consciences to keep faith with one another. Such fears became embodied in the negative stereotypes of the Anabaptists (who allegedly held it no sin for one of 'God's saints' to cheat or lie to those outside of their own sect), and latterly, the Jesuits.²⁴ While early Jesuit missionaries such as Allen and Persons did indeed authorise the use of mental reservation for the purpose of safeguarding of the lives of Catholic missionaries and their followers,²⁵ it was later adopted by priests for the purposes of social convenience – a practice famously satirized by Blaise Pascal in his *Provincial Letters* (1557):

'One of the most embarrassing problems is how to avoid lying, especially when one would like people to believe something untrue. [...] It is the new doctrine of mental restrictions. Sanchez gives it in the same place: "one may swear," he says, "that one has not done something, though one really has done it, by inwardly understanding that one did not do it on a certain day, or before one was born, or by implying some other similar circumstance. [...]"

'What Father! is that not a lie, and even perjury?'

'No,' said the Father [...] 'After saying aloud "I swear I did not do that" you add under your breath "today" or after saying aloud "I swear" you say under your

²¹ T. Slater, 'Mental Reservation' in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Charles G. Herbermann and others, 15 vols (New York: Appleton, 1907-1912), in (<http://oce.catholic.com>) [accessed 19 June 2010], X, p.196.

²² Somerville, p. 173.

²³ Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 4-7.

²⁴ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Temple Smith, 1970), pp. 253-4.

²⁵ *Elizabethan Casuistry*, p.125.

breath "that I say", and then go on aloud "that I did not do that." You see, that is telling the truth.'²⁶

Lying: A Critical History

As Johann Somerville writes, the doctrine of mental reservation 'was concocted in order to reconcile the ban on lying with such duties as saving lives and preserving secrets'.²⁷ This ban originated with St. Augustine, whose treatises *De mendacio* (c. 396) and *Contra mendacium* (c. 422) had set the Catholic position that lying was inevitably a sin, even in cases of mortal peril.²⁸ Thomas Aquinas later refined the doctrine by dividing lies into the categories of 'officious', 'jocose' and 'pernicious', but ultimately followed Augustine's judgement that all lies were to some degree sinful.²⁹ This inflexibility is perhaps surprising given that the Church authorised breaches of the sixth and eighth commandments by asserting that killing was permissible under certain circumstances (in self-defence, or when carried out by a magistrate according to the law) and that stealing could be condoned in cases of extreme necessity (such as when facing starvation). In other words: 'you could steal or kill to save your life, but never lie'.³⁰

English Protestants were not shackled to the Roman Church's policies, and could, in theory, ignore Augustine in order to take a more accommodating view towards lying. William Tyndale seems to be arguing for a more judicious approach to the subject in his *Exposition Uppon the v. [...] Chapter of Matthew* (1532), where he cites the laudable example of King David's deception of the Philistines in 1 Kings 27, and that of David's friend Hushai towards the wicked Absolon in 2 Kings 17. He concludes:

To lye also and to dissemble is not allway sinne. [...] To beare a sycke man in hand that wholsome bytter medecyn is swete, to make hym drynke it, is the dutye of charyte and no synne. To perswade him that pursueth his neyboure, to hurte him or slaye him, that his neyboure is gone another contrarye waye, is the dutye of euery

²⁶ *Pascal: The Provincial Letters*, transl. by A.J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967; repr. 1982), IX (p. 141).

²⁷ Somerville, p. 176.

²⁸ For a discussion of Augustine's definition of 'lying' and reasons for labeling it inherently sinful, see William E. Mann, 'To Catch a Heretic: Augustine on Lying', *Faith and Philosophy*, 20 (2003), 479-495.

²⁹ Somerville, p. 161.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Christen man by the lawe of charyte and no synne: no though I conformed it with an othe. But to lye for to deceue and hurte, that is dampnable onlye &c.³¹

Tyndale's remarks on lying, while offering reformists a perspective which is less restrictive than the Augustinian Catholic view, are frustratingly brief, and of little help to those facing religious persecution. He admits that lying and dissembling are not necessarily sinful, and defines the 'dampnable' kind of lie as a false statement made with *malicious* intent. Yet both the examples he gives of non-sinful deception fall under the remit of Christian charity because they are designed to benefit others: to heal a sick man, or save a man from a would-be murderer. It is unclear whether Tyndale's statement is also intended to authorise self-serving deceptions: making an untrue declaration of one's religious convictions when facing death on a heresy charge is not lying in a way which is intended to hurt others, but neither can it properly be termed 'charity'.

Whether or not a false recantation was to be considered a 'dampnable' lie, in situations pertaining to religious persecution Tyndale seems to prefer his co-religionists to choose death over abjuration. Foxe reprints 'A letter sent from Tyndall, unto Mayster Frith being in the Tower' wherein Tyndale counsels the imprisoned man to remain steadfast, citing the example of their friend Thomas Bilney's infamous submission of December 1527:

Feare not threatening therefore, neyther be ouercome of sweet words: with which twayne the hypocrites shall assaile you. Neyther let the persuasions of worldly wisdome beare rule in your hart: no, though they be your friends that counsaile you. Let Bilney be a warning to you. (1583, p.1081)

Another notable Protestant theologian to comment upon lying and Nicodemism was the sometime regius professor of divinity at Oxford, Peter Martyr Vermigli. Although he wrote more expansively on the subject of deception than Tyndale, as Perez Zagorin comments, 'it is doubtful that Vermigli was either clear or consistent'.³² His *Treatise of the Cohabitacyon of the Faithful with the Unfaithful* (published from Zurich in 1555 following his exile from England under Mary) strongly discouraged religious dissimulation, while the posthumous collection of his earlier writings *Loci Communes* (translated into English

³¹ William Tyndale, *An exposicion vppon the v. vi. vii. chapters of Mathew which thre chaptres are the keye and the dore of the scripture, and the restoringe agayne of Moses lawe corrupte by the scribes and Pharises [...]*, ([Antwerp?]: [Grapheus?], [1533?]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 24440, sigs. F8^v-G1^r.

³² Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 235.

as *The Common Places* in 1583) contains a section which supports the Augustinian total ban on lying, even in cases where it could preserve a human life: 'we may not suffer (saith Augustine) that anie man should kill his owne soule for the bodilie life of another man'.³³

Yet within the very same chapter Vermigli also authorises the use of guile against the enemies of God, and advocates dissimulation for the preserving of secret counsels (pp. 535-541). It is not clear why he considers guile, defined as 'a devise to deceiue a man (when one thing is done and another dissembled)' (p. 535), and dissimulation, which, from the examples given, he appears to define as the concealment of one's true thoughts (p. 541), to be entirely separate from lying, but it seems that he advocates them as forms of lying by omission. While he cannot authorise the speaking of false statements on the grounds that they go against the ninth commandment, 'thou shalt not bear false witness' (Exodus 20. 12), and encourage the breakdown of human society (pp. 542-3), Vermigli does go as far as to allow that unjustly questioned individuals may 'speake doubtfullie' (p. 547), i.e. answer vaguely, partially or using a double-meaning. He summarises: 'so as the truth must not alwaies be spoken to euerie man, neither at all times, nor yet of euerie thing: and yet we must not lie' (p. 542). Vermigli, then, seems to be following the Catholic tradition in encouraging the use of verbal equivocation instead of lying, and in so doing he supported the conduct of many reformers, including, as Susan Wabuda enumerates, Edward Crome, Hugh Latimer, Robert Barnes, Thomas Garrett and William Jerome.³⁴

Although Protestant theologians seemed to permit those living under a hostile regime to use some degree of deception, a definite bias emerged within sixteenth-century polemical literature which instead promoted open defiance as the correct response to persecution, glorifying the act of martyrdom. Wabuda shrewdly comments that 'if we were to depend solely upon the accounts of the martyrologists for the behaviour of men and women acting under persecution, we would be left with the clear impression of all the oppressed godly triumphing over their adversaries by means of their unshakeable

³³ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *The common places of the most famous and renowned diuine Doctor Peter Martyr diuided into foure principall parts: with a large addition of manie theologicall and necessarie discourses, some neuer extant before. Translated and partlie gathered by Anthonie Marten, one of the sewers of hir Maiesties most honourable chamber* (London: Denham and Middleton, 1583), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 24669, part 2, chapter 13, p. 547.

³⁴ Susan Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation During the English Reformation: The "Subtle Shadows" of Dr Edward Crome', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 44 no. 2 (April 1993) 224-242 (p. 229).

resolve'.³⁵ The prime example of this phenomenon is John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, also known as *The Book of Martyrs*. Foxe's work collects together elaborate woodcuts depicting figures being burned at the stake, descriptions of the martyrs' stoical behaviour during their executions, and their famous last words (such as Latimer's 'we shall this day lyght such a candle by Gods grace in England, as (I trust) shall neuer be put out'), all in an attempt to portray martyrdom as an iconic act of Protestant heroism.³⁶

However, as this chapter will show, martyrdom is not the whole story of early Protestantism and its relationship with authority. Alex Ryrie observes that, especially in the early years of evangelism during Henry's reign, 'most reformers were more inclined to dissimulation, recantation and pragmatic compromises than to defiance and martyrdom'.³⁷ While Foxe and his literary contemporaries undoubtedly had a preference for exemplary martyrdom and sought to disparage recantation, I will argue that to abjure publicly was not necessarily to declare oneself traitor to the cause. While it may be that many agreed to abjure solely because of mortal fear, or the acknowledgement that they lacked the necessary bodily or spiritual strength to endure torture or imprisonment, we may also consider the possibility that some individuals believed that they could better serve their faith by living to proselytise another day. Under certain circumstances, the act of recanting could even be re-written as a victory, as it provided an opportunity to proclaim outlawed doctrines in public. Thus, just as Knott comments that martyrs could overcome official symbolism, making their stoical deaths 'triumphs of faith rather than vindications of the truth and authority of the Church', recantations could also become opportunities for subversion.³⁸

Recantations and Subversion

In an article detailing the various ways in which religious ideas could be transmitted by textual means, Alexandra Walsham makes the following comment on the Protestant controversialist writers' practice of refuting their enemies works by republishing them:

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

³⁶ *Acts and Monuments*, 1570 edition, p. 1937.

³⁷ Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, pp. 8-9.

³⁸ Knott, p. 80

Such works often took the form of line-by-line dissections of heterodox passages; others printed the 'seditious' and 'superstitious' pamphlets and libels which were the objects of their fury before answering them; some simply republished them, confident that their mere exposure to public scrutiny was 'a sufficient antidote' to the errors embedded therein. As a consequence, such works became repositories of heresy, sources of the very poisons they were intended to neutralise.³⁹

Here Walsham highlights the fundamental irony which underlies any act of refutation: disparaging a doctrine necessarily involves ensuring that one's audience is familiar with the original work being denounced and therefore publicises it. This premise is illustrated by the fact that the only extant copy of Hogarde's polemical dream-vision poem *The Abuse of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar* (c. 1547) is preserved within Robert Crowley's printed diatribe against the same.⁴⁰ Likewise, the reading of a bill of recantation often required not only that the penitents should publicly affirm official doctrine, but that they should also publicly reiterate the crimes which brought them to Paul's Cross in the first place. Hence, the very act of denying a heretical doctrine involved informing the audience of the details of that particular heresy.

As Walsham's statement also makes clear, allowing heretical material to be publicly repeated reveals a certain complacency in the attitude of the printer (or stage-managing bishop), since they clearly assume that the audience's sympathies lie with them, and that there is no risk that the message may be misunderstood, or that previously orthodox readers/hearers may be subsequently infected with heresy as a result of the exposure to erroneous doctrine. However, that the authorities in charge of securing recantations were aware, on at least some level, of the desirability of ensuring that such doctrines were not glorified is suggested by the words of Robert Singleton, who plays down the seriousness and zeal of his own former opinion by stating in his abjuration: 'I am an unlearned fantastycall foole'.⁴¹ Similarly, Robert Barnes claims: 'I [...] overshott my self and [have] beyn deceived by trustyng to moche to myne owne heady Sentence'.⁴² The

³⁹ Alexandra Walsham, 'Preaching Without Speaking: Script, Print and Religious Dissent', in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, ed. by Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 211-234 (pp. 233-4).

⁴⁰ Robert Crowley, *The confutation of the mishapen aunswer to the misnamed, wicked ballade, called the Abuse of ye blessed sacrame[n]t of the aultare Wherin, thou haste (gentele reader) the ryghte vnderstandyng of al the places of scripture that Myles Hoggard, (wyth his learned counsail) hath wrested to make for the transubstanciation of the bread and wyne* (London: Day and Seres, 1548) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 6082.

⁴¹ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. by Josiah Pratt, 8 vols (London: Seeleys, 1858), in Google Books <<http://books.google.com>> [accessed 17 June 2010], V, pt. II, appendix, no. XII.

⁴² *Ibid.*, no. VII.

suggestion is that these are doctrines which no right-thinking person should take seriously, the eccentric products of overheated brains.

It was also in the recanter's own interest to characterise themselves as merely foolish rather than stubbornly heretical. In his recantation of 1541 Edward Crome even goes so far as to claim that his is a passive rather than an active sin, utterly denying that he preached heretical doctrine and instead insisting that he merely failed to make the orthodoxy of his words sufficiently plain:

Where of late moche vanytye of opynyons and contention hathe rysen and growne emongest thinhabitants of London by reason that either I by defaute of good utteraunce and openyng my mynde or other negligence of speache have not clierlye and playnly intreated and declared such matters as I have in my sermons spoken of, or ells bycause myne Audytours hathe mystakyn my preaching and otherwyse interpretated and understande [sic] the same then I mente [...].⁴³

It remains difficult to surmise how much contribution the recanters themselves made to the composition of the documents, and to what degree they were ghostwritten by the religious authorities. The short recantation of William Jerome, for instance, lays out the articles which he retracts in a very brief, legalistic fashion (suggesting perhaps, the use of a template) and ends with a suspiciously obsequious paean to the mercy and goodness of his captors 'the Kings gr[aces] honourable counsell and lerned clergy'.⁴⁴ Anne Askew claims that she had absolutely no input into the drafting of the recantation document to which she was obliged to set her hand, imputing its entire fabrication to Bishop Bonner:

Then my lorde went awaye, and sayd, he wolde entytyle sumwhat of my meanyng. And so he writte a great circumstaunce. But what it was, I have not all in memorye. For he wold not suffre me to have the coppie therof. (F 58)

One recantation which does seem to be predominantly the work of the penitent himself is that of Thomas Becon. Radically different from the terse efforts of some of his co-religionists, his public recantation of July 1543 is an expansive affair which lacks the legalistic phrasing typical of the private recantations.⁴⁵ Becon begins by relating the story of how he endeavoured to escape the authorities' notice after a former recantation by

⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. XVI.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, no. VIII.

⁴⁵ The private recantations set out points of doctrine as 'articles' or 'items', and recanters refer to themselves contractually as 'I the afore-named', see *Ibid.* nos. I (Geoffrey Lome); II (Thomas Phillip), VI (Thomas Gerrard).

creating a second persona. He tells the spectators that, having fled the environs of Norfolk and Suffolk (where he had been ordained), he then took on the *nom de guerre* Theodore Basile in order to covertly continue his promotion of reformist doctrine:

[...] I chaunged my dwellinge, and leavvinge that Country repayred unto Kent where I have lurked ever syns. I chaunged myne Apparell and shewyd myne self lyke a layman. I chaunged also my name, and callid my self Theodore Basile. I chaunged the forme of teachinge the people frome preachinge unto wrytynge. Onely this have I not chaunged but allwayes contynewed lyke myself, that ys to say, as I have under the name of Thomas becon preest preached untrulye soo have I under the name of Theodore basile wrytten untrulye [...].⁴⁶

In telling his audience that he cunningly took on a new name and a new raiment in order to escape recognition and detection while continuing in the same essential character Becon immediately summons up the image of a morality play Vice. Here the audience receives a first subversive hint from Becon, an intimation that his 'penitent wretch' character may be 'put on' or theatrically constructed for the occasion, rather than a genuine reflection of his true views or personality.

Although he characterises himself throughout the recantation as humble and remorseful, and purports to be giving evidence of his contrition by disparaging the doctrines enshrined in his former publications, his use of theatrical tropes indicates that he is in fact proudly calling attention to himself, rather than offering a shame-faced apology. In Becon's mouth, even the recanter's conventional disclaimer that he put too much trust in his own overweening intellect is oddly self-aggrandising:

First my newe counterfaite name, Theodore basile whiche ys as moche to say, as a kynge gyven of Godd, ys yt not a proude name to be of myne owne chosynge: ye may easely judge whither herein I lye of my self to please men [...] ye shall fynde in dyverse parties of my bookes greeke woordes made Englyshe as Encomion for a praise mnemosinon for a Remembraunce and suche other monstrouse wordes for the Reader to wonder at, and wrytten onely by me, for vayne glorye, to doo the Reader understande that I were learned in the greeke tonge, wherein I confesse playnely I am not learned at all. (ibid.)

While other recanters content themselves with a one-sentence declaration acknowledging that they were misled by their own learning, Becon gives a whole paragraph by dwelling on two peculiar details which he offers as evidence of his intellectual folly: that he took on a proud name and that he pretended knowledge of ancient Greek to impress his readers.

⁴⁶ Ibid., no. XII.

Derrick Sherwin Bailey assumes that such sentences which include references to Becon's 'pride and vainglory' were added to the recantation at the behest of the religious authorities, 'selected simply with the object of discrediting him, and so weakening the influence which he wielded through [his] writings'.⁴⁷ However, the rhetoric of the document itself suggests that he included them on his own initiative: that he lingers over such trivial misdemeanours demonstrates that Becon enjoys publicising his indiscretions and playing up to a crowd. The confession of how he tried to flee detection and adopted disguises also alerts the audience to his mendacious nature, encouraging them to doubt the truthfulness of the very recantation he is now compelled to present. We might also note that when Becon describes his pseudonym a subtle shift in tone occurs: appropriately for a 'kynge gyven of Godd' his speech becomes declamatory, perhaps even regal. It is tempting to suggest he is styling himself in this moment as a mystery play patriarch, or a morality 'God' figure, like Bale's *Pater Coelestis*.

The inclusion of rhetorical pronouncements aimed at a listening audience ('ys yt not a proude name to be of myne owne chosynge[?]') demonstrates that he conceives of the recantation not simply as a document to be read over, but as a monologue to be performed. He takes up a position much like that of the lead actor, repeatedly appealing to his spectators to agree with him as he lists the enormities of his former conduct:

Cann I say anny more trowe yee? dyd evyr man say of hys owne booke that yt contayneth as moche of chryste in a few lines as the Byble and doctors teache of chryste in manye? dyd evyr man gyve suche a tittle to his owne booke, to call yt the treasure house of christen knowledge? dothe not this place suffyce to prove my pryde? (ibid.)

He also casts his co-religionist and fellow recanter Robert Wisdom in a supporting role (undoubtedly much to the latter's chagrin given that, as we shall see, Wisdom's recantation was a source of great embarrassment to him). The internal stage directions of the text indicate that on the day that their recantations were read, Becon gestured or turned to Wisdom as he spoke:

But good Audyence [...] I might saye somewhat to maister Wysedome here presente how moche was he deceaved or howe moche went he aboute to deceave the good people, to call me opynly in his sermon made at Aldermarye in Lente last paste The

⁴⁷ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church of England* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1952), p. 36.

man of godd [...]. I mervaile maister Wysedom abhorred nott this Spyryte of pryde to make my wrytings equall with the sacred bible and goddis worde. (ibid.)

Here Becon once again self-aggrandises as he purports to debase himself, this time defaming Wisdom as he does so. He ironically chastises his associate for deceitfully calling him 'the man of godd' and for praising one of his books – thereby ensuring that the audience knows about his writerly reputation in reformist circles.

When Becon moves on to denounce the works of literature published under this pen name, he not only lists their titles, but helpfully gives detailed abstracts of heresies which each text contains:

In my booke of poliyceye of warre I saye, that as they persecuted the prophetes and true preachers of goddis woorde, evyn soo doo they nowe [...] In my booke of a Chrystmasse bankett I saye the giftes of grace cannot be ydle. [...] In the preface of my booke whiche I call mooste arrogantelye the golden booke of christen matrymony I wryte in dysprase of Contynencie these woordes folowinge [...] (ibid.).

He defends his decision to give such full descriptions of the erroneous doctrines contained within these books with the claim that he only goes into such detail so that men will not accuse him of having recanted untruly, and without full acknowledgement of his former iniquity:

And to avoyde all occation of slaunder, that I shulde for feare be seen to lye of my self, or rather doo thus of a polycie to escape, and so to save my self, then upon true knowledge of myne owne noughtynes, for the relief of other that hath fallen by myne occasion I shall declare unto you some specyalties both of myne owne preachinge whiche a great number of Norff. and Suff. knowe, and also untrue wrytinge whiche my bookes doo testifie. (ibid.)

The denunciations of the doctrines enshrined in his now-prohibited texts as 'naughty' are obviously necessary within the context of the recantation in order to satisfy his watching persecutors, but they may also serve a secondary purpose according to the principles of negative suggestion, as nothing allures potential readers more than being told something is too shocking or scandalous for them to read. As he cuts a copy of each book to pieces he states 'I wyshe here all my bookes destroyed accordyng to the kynges maiestyes proclamations as theese be here destroyed with myne owne hande' (ibid.), thus alerting the audience to the fact that other copies of his works are still in circulation (for them to read should they be so inclined).

To summarise, we might comment that Becon's approach to the recantation is one of self-conscious theatricality. He adopts a vocative, histrionic tone when addressing the audience, behaving like a comic lead actor in over-emphasising the ridiculous aspects of his own behaviour and involving his fellow recanter as a secondary character in the sketch. In adopting this manner he alerts his audience to the insincerity of his words and the staginess of the proceedings; effectively announcing that he is merely playing a part in an interlude being stage-managed by the traditionalist authorities. Having made the falseness of the sentiments he is made to espouse clear, Becon is free to publicise both himself and his writings, supplying his audience with a complete bibliography of his works and introducing them to reformist doctrines under the pretence of denouncing them. For someone as brash and pragmatic as Becon, one might even comment that a recantation could become an ideal opportunity for furthering the cause: if this example is representative, recanters were free to go into detail about their doctrines before a large audience, under the very noses of their opponents.

However, the art of the false recantation was a delicate one, and not without risks. Recanters had to satisfy the authorities that they were genuine, and that their abjurations contained a clear refutation of all points of heretical doctrine which had been identified during the individual's examinations. Unsatisfactory recanters were made to repeat the exercise: thus Edward Crome found himself called to Paul's Cross twice in 1546, the privy council finding fault with his initial declaration on the 9th of May and accusing him of dissimulation.⁴⁸ On the 27th June he was made to confess publicly: 'I dyd use collusion and colour of my hole proceeding concernynge the declaration of the saide Articles whereby I mighte appeare boothe to mantayne myne owne former evyl opynyon and neverthesse to satysfie my promyse in setting forth of Thartycles aforesaide'.⁴⁹

Furthermore, those who bargained on getting away with writing, preaching or otherwise disseminating heterodoxy by means of multiple false recantations were gambling with their lives. The statutes put in place by Henry VIII institute a 'three-strikes' policy: the first conviction for heresy required a recantation, and a subsequent relapse could be atoned for by a second abjuration and the bearing of a faggot, but a third conviction was immediately punishable by burning.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation', p. 235.

⁴⁹ Pratt, V, appendix, no. XVI.

⁵⁰ *Statutes of the Realm*, 34 & 35 Hen.VIII. c. 1., p. 897.

Another problem was the risk of a false recantation being received at face value. In this respect multiple recanters like Becon and Crome (who became well known for his 'canting, recanting, decanting, or rather double canting')⁵¹ had an advantage: their having a reputation for being made to recant meant that an audience was more likely to take these individuals' abjurations with a pinch of salt. Those who lacked this reputation for expediency, or who were less brazen about making their statements, were more likely to be taken seriously. To illustrate this principle Bailey sets up a contrast between Thomas Becon and the unassuming Robert Wisdom (who lacked his co-religionist's reputation for propagandising and abjured only under the influence of fear), asserting that while the former's recantation provoked no denunciations from within the Protestant community because it was perceived as 'deliberately false', Wisdom's was deemed 'an act of apostasy', and therefore necessitated his composition of the apology, *Revocation*.⁵²

This contrast between the two attitudes is in a sense paradoxical: in order to recant with impunity one had to have a reputation for recanting; in order to not deserve shame one had to be shameless.

Counter-Recantations

The type of text which I have termed a 'counter-recantation' may be defined as a work composed either by a recanter or one of their concerned co-religionists in response to an act of abjuration, and with the intention of undoing its perceived ill-effects. When the text takes the form of a denial, the counter-recantation serves a dual purpose, both salvaging the reputation of the alleged recanter and blackening that of the opposition by painting them as unscrupulous fabricators. John Bale's pamphlet *A brefe chronycle concerning the examination and death of the blessed martir of Christ, Sir Iohn Oldecastell [...]* (1548), gives a historical precedent for this practice by recounting the attempt by the contemporary religious authorities to make it seem that the Lollard Oldcastle (d. 1417) had recanted by publishing a false bill. The false document was at the time refuted by Oldcastle's friends, who, according to Bale, circulated a response:

⁵¹ 'Otwell Johnson, a merchant of London, to his brother John Johnson of the staple at Calais; on merchandise and news', in *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. by Henry Ellis, 2nd Series, 4 vols (London: Dawsons, 1827; repr. 1969), II, p. 176.

⁵² Sherwin Bailey, 'Robert Wisdom under Persecution, 1541-1543', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (1951), 180-189 (pp. 187-8).

Whyle the lord cobham was thus in the tower / he sent out priuily vnto his frinds.
And they at his desire wrote this lytle bill here folowing / causing it to be set vp in
diuerse quarters of London / that the peple shulde not beleue the slaundres and lyes
y^t his ennemies the bisshops seruants and Priestes had made on him abroade.⁵³

Bale's text also presents the idea of combating slander by publishing the truth at a meta-level, since the work as a whole is a defence of the Lollard's memory; an attempt to clear him of the accusations of treason levelled by traditionalist historians, and a re-casting of Oldcastle as a proto-Protestant martyr.

While the document published against Oldcastle may have been a fabrication, denials of having recanted can be less straightforward than they at first appear. When the religious authorities circulate a recantation which they claim is from Askew's previous imprisonment and interrogation, she writes to her mentor John Lascelles: 'I have redde the processe, whych is reported of them that knowe not the truthe, to be my recantacyon. But as sure as the lorde lyveth. I never ment [any]thyngesse, than to recant' (L 135). At first glance, this seems to be an outright denial of having signed the document. However, she does not ultimately deny that she once signed a recantation bill, only that she did so after writing a qualifying addendum to it: 'I Anne Askew do beleve all maner thynges contayned in the faythe of the Catholyck churche' (F 62); or as she remembers it in *Lattre*, 'I Anne Askewe do beleve thys if Gods worde do agre to the same, and the true catholick churche' (L 136). The addendum is seen by Askew as the clause which prevents her signing of Bonner's document from being an act of apostasy, the equivocal use of the word 'catholic' signifying her continued allegiance to the community of the faithful.

Yet the more we examine the records pertaining to her recantation, the more problematic her denial of it becomes. We have only Askew's word that such a codicil ever existed, since, as Megan Hickerson observes, it is a 'troubling fact' that no such addition to the original recantation survives in Bonner's register.⁵⁴ Hickerson feels that unease (and perhaps guilt), prompted by the reappearance on the eve of her martyrdom of the formerly unpublished recantation, underlies Askew's letter to John Lascelles, demonstrating her concern with how both her mentor and the wider reformist community would view her in the light of the newly unearthed secret: 'a heretic to her enemies, she was now potentially

⁵³ John Bale, *A brefe chronycle concerning the examination and death of the blessed martir of Christ, Sir Iohn Oldecastell the Lord Cobham, collected together by Iohan Bale* (London: Scoloker and Seres, [1548?]) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 1278, F1v.

⁵⁴ Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs*, p. 59.

apostata to her friends because she had saved her life by denying her faith, and could do so still'.⁵⁵ Noting that Askew's tone in her letter to Lascelles is sheepish rather than indignant, Hickerson summarises:

The *Examinations* thus serves a double purpose, denying recantation and affirming belief in the process, but also apologizing for it: Askew did not *mean* to recant, but she might *accidentally* have done so.⁵⁶

Foxe's treatment of Askew's material shows that he too was concerned by the ramifications of Askew being seen to have recanted, as the version of her *Examinations* published in *Acts and Monuments* interpolates the original recantation document in full. This may at first glance seem a 'surprising decision', as Freeman and Wall remark, given that 'Foxe was anxious to conceal or at best minimize the recantations of notable Protestants during Henry VIII's and Mary's reigns'.⁵⁷ In this case the diocesan original of Askew's recantation reveals a discrepancy in dates which allows Foxe to call the credibility of the entire document into question: 'in other words, Foxe printed Askew's confession because it undermined, or appeared to undermine, the claim that she had recanted'.⁵⁸

Elaine Beilin explains that the version of the recantation found in the Bishop's Register 'was apparently not entered in the record until June 1546', some time after the events of *First*, which ends with Askew's signing of the infamous recantation.⁵⁹ Beilin argues that from the language of the preamble ('to the entent the woorldde may see what credence ys now to be gyven unto the same wooman who in short tyme hath moost dampnably altered and chaunged her opynyon [...]')⁶⁰ it is probable that the late inclusion of the document was 'an attempt to justify Askew's subsequent harsh treatment'.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁷ Freeman and Wall, p. 1181.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 1182.

⁵⁹ Some confusion exists over the dating of the events which take place in *First*. Askew gives the date of her initial examinations as March 1555 (ll. 23-24), but it is unknown whether she assigned dates using the modern or the old style (which had the new year begin on the 25th March). Consequently *First* may refer to either March 1555 (over a year before her execution) or March 1556 (just a three months prior). For a detailed discussion of the dating see Beilin, *Examinations*, intro., pp.xx-xxii.

⁶⁰ Guildhall MS 9531/12, fol. 109r, cited in Beilin, *Examinations*, intro., p. xxxi. Foxe reprints the preamble and confession (see Beilin, pp. 175-7).

⁶¹ Beilin, *Examinations*, intro., p. xxxi.

Foxe uses the detail of its being a late addition to perform an act of rhetorical legerdemain: two uncertain pieces of information (Askew's version of the dating, and claim that an addendum existed) are treated as if they are facts and then made to corroborate one another:

And for as much as mention here is made of the Writing of Boner, which this godly Ann sayd before she had not in memory, therefore I thought in this place to infer the same, both with the whol circumstance of Boner, and with the title therunto prefixed by the register, and also with her owne subscription: to the entent the reader [may see] the same subscription nether to agre with the time of the title above prefixed, nor with the subscription after the writing annexed [...].⁶²

All that the attached document really establishes is that the bishop's version of events does not tally with Askew's, but Foxe treats the discrepancies as if they prove both Askew's veracity and the fundamental unreliability of all episcopal documents, so that the reader 'might the better understand therby what credit is to be geven hereafter to such bishops and to such regesters'.

Another notable example of this sort of posthumous bidding-war is the case of Thomas Bilney, who was, like Askew, a one-time recanter who subsequently embraced martyrdom for the reformist cause. An early evangelist and iconoclast, Bilney was put to death in 1531, three years before Henry's official break with the Roman Church. The contemporary traditionalist view of him was as a fond and foolish scholar-heretic, doomed by his own misled learning. He and his fellow recanter Thomas Arthur are the unnamed subjects of John Skelton's *A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scholers Abjured of Late* (1528), which describes their sort as 'yong scholars nowe a dayes enbolned with the flyblowen blast of the moche vayne glorious pipplyng wynde' (the 'wynde' symbolising the Lutheran contagion blown in from abroad).⁶³ Skelton was clearly sceptical about the veracity of Bilney and his associate's recantation, for the poem accurately prophesies: 'doutlesse ye shalbe blased, / And be brent at stake' (ll. 294-5).

After Bilney's death both reformists and traditionalists laid claim to his memory. In the opinion of John Foxe, 'Little' Bilney was to be remembered as a flawed hero, an 'innocente and vpright man' (1563, p. 461) who once recanted 'through infirmity rather

⁶² "'The two examinations of the worthy servaunt of God, Maistris An Askew'" From Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563)', in Beilin, pp. 163-192 (p. 175).

⁶³ John Skelton, 'A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scholers Abjured of Late' in *John Skelton; The Complete English Poems*, ed. by John Scattergood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), (pp. 372-386), p. 373.

than persuasion' (p. 480), but who was subsequently led by the urgings of his conscience to seek out 'the celestial Hierusalem' (p.482). Foxe describes him going to his death as a true martyr, totally lacking in mortal fear and without any lingering doubts concerning his (reformist) faith:

[...] From thence was he caried in the morninge to be burned in Lolares pit in Norwich with great ioy and gladnesse falling downe flat vppon hys face before the stake, then rising vp, kissed it and embraced it, and tooke the chaine and closed in him selfe, confessing his faithe, and animatinge the people to stand fast in the truth of Goddes holye woorde, and so suffered as a true martyr of Iesus Christ. (p. 483)

Sir Thomas More gives an entirely different account of the proceedings, ascribing Bilney's cheerfulness to a last-minute reconciliation with the Roman Church. According to More, prior to his execution Bilney 'kneled downe before the bysshoppes chauncellor in the presence of all the people, and humbly bysought hym of absolucyon from the sentence of excommuncacyon',⁶⁴ then partook of the holy sacrament and 'wyth tunsyons and knockynges vppon hys breste [...] there vnto god confessed and asked his mercy, that he had so geuously erred in y^t point, and so sore offended hym in contempnyng hys chyrche' (p. 25). Perhaps with a hint of mischief, More claims Bilney for his own side, styling him as a humble penitent rather than a defiant martyr.

The scramble to explain the motivations and circumstances behind the recantations of Askew and Bilney illustrates just how important such documents were to both sides in constructing an image of the heretics/martyrs. To the traditionalist authorities, a signed recantation was an affirmation of orthodoxy's victory over heterodoxy, and proof of the fickleness and error of wayward individuals. Recantations were held up to taunt and embarrass the opposition with the fact of their brethren's lapses. In response to such claims, the apologists of the persecuted individuals frequently asserted that the document in question was a fabrication, and therefore further evidence of the enemy's unscrupulousness. When a recantation took place in public, and therefore could not plausibly be denied, it had to be otherwise assuaged by the subsequent publication of a retraction coupled with an account of the extenuating circumstances.

Robert Wisdom's *A revocation of that shameful bill that Winchester devised and Wisdome read* (c. 1544) is a work which shows the author engaged in just such an attempt to excuse his own collapse when faced with persecution. Throughout the text Wisdom

⁶⁴ Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, p. 24.

asserts that it is the agency of others which brings about his troubles: first, a neighbour who comes to him with 'a fair countenance and pretended friendship' to encourage him to preach at a place where 'they had prepared the Bishop of London's Catchpole to attach me'.⁶⁵ When this attempt fails, along with several similar endeavours, Wisdom is eventually arrested on the testimony of two traditionalist priests: 'a great teller of Rome' and 'an extreme enemy of the Gospel of Christ' (*ibid.*), who prepare articles against him from their attendance at a 1541 sermon. Wisdom therefore begins his narrative by casting himself as an almost Christ-like figure by stressing that he was the innocent victim of the schemes and betrayals of a variety of Judases.

His description of the ensuing examinations under Bonner and, latterly, Gardiner, further disparages his traditionalist persecutors by making extensive use of the 'gentleness as cruelty' trope discussed in the previous chapter. Wisdom depicts Bonner performing his own good cop, bad cop routine to attempt to procure a confession, beginning with threats and then resorting to temptation and bargaining:

To be brief, he laboured very sore to get writing of mine own hand [...], threatening me very sore that I should smart for it, and be made an ensample unto all other. But when he saw that he nothing prevailed that way, he turned him to flattery and fair promises, with great attestation by God, and that as he was a true priest, he intended nothing so much as the glory of God, and rather my wealth than hinderaunce, and that I should find him as gentle and good unto me, as he would be to his own soul. (*ibid.*)

There is the familiar suggestion of Satanic temptation invested in the words 'flattery and fair promises' and Bonner's oath 'that as he was a true priest' is made to seem either deliberately or ironically equivocal as a qualifier for the succeeding promises: if (as it transpires, according to Wisdom) Bonner is not a 'true priest', his promises to the prisoner will not be valid. The specious reassurance that he will be 'as gentle' to Wisdom 'as he would be to his own soul' is also loaded with irony to a reformist reader, since those who persist in persecuting the righteous are not being 'gentle' to their own souls, but rather procuring their own damnation.

The impression of diabolical temptation arises again when Wisdom describes the pressure put on him by the urgings of a friend and a relative:

⁶⁵ Robert Wisdom, *A revocation of that shameful bill that Winchester devised and Wisdome read at Paul's Cross in London, on the Relic Sunday the xiiij day of July Ano Dom. 1543*, printed in part in Pratt, V, pt. II, appendix, no. XXII. Pratt gives the manuscript reference as 'MSS Cam 2.2.16, no. 25', but its current designation in Emmanuel College Library is Emman Coll. MS 261 (fo. 93r).

Mine uncle and Whitchurch, also allured by his fair words and promises (for who is it that bishops cannot beguile with their flatteries) came unto me and counselled me to follow the bishop's mind [...] (said they) you are of a weak complexion, and lack strength to abide the punishment of imprisonment, and know you that the bishop will commit you to prison: which, if he do, you cannot live a seven-night. And in case ye would abide all the daunger of prison, yet the end will be, ye shall either have a fagot and so run into perpetual infamy, or else be brent. (ibid.)

Wisdom characterises his uncle and Whitechurch as men who have been brainwashed by Bonner's insidious counsel: 'for who is it that bishops cannot beguile[?]'. Much as a demon allures by appearing in the guise of a familiar friend, Bonner puts pressure on Wisdom by turning the well-meaning visitors into unwitting proxies. Demonic counsel is also suggested by the fact that the words are calculated to provoke Wisdom to despair: his choices are starkly outlined as 'perpetual infamy' and death by burning. Like tormentors in a morality play, the speakers intimidate the protagonist by laying stress on the power of malignant forces over the weak fleshly body: 'you are of a weak complexion, and lack strength to abide the punishment'.⁶⁶

Although the wording of Wisdom's title (*A revocation of that shameful bill [...]*) leads the reader to expect that the work will be a retraction and an apology, its main preoccupation is with the conduct of persons other than Wisdom, the alleged penitent. Wisdom dwells on the betrayals of acquaintances, enemies and counsellors, seemingly much more interested in depicting the wrongs done to him than in expressing contrition for his decision to abjure. In direct addresses to the reader he also attempts to generalise his experience, submerging it within the context of the troubles of the entire movement in order to solicit empathy, and, perhaps, to discourage criticism of his abjuration by reminding members of the reformist community that this is an ordeal which they too may one day suffer at the hands of their common enemy:

⁶⁶ L.W. Cushman notes that medieval stage devils 'are accustomed to hold up before their victims the terrors of hell.' See *The Devil and the Vice in the Dramatic English Literature Before Shakespeare* (London: Cass, 1970), pp. 31-2. Demonic power over the human body is made a point of comedy in the medieval morality *Mankind* (c. 1465-70), where the devil Titivillus dissuades the protagonist from prayer by forcing him to have a bowel movement: 'Aryse and avent þe! nature compellys!'. See *Mankind in The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 153-184 (l. 560). A later recurrence of this tradition is the Faust myth, where Mephistopheles sways Faust away from salvation by reminding him of his demonic power to afflict the human body: 'I will tear thee in thousands of pieces, if thou change not thine opinions', *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* (1592), ed. by William Rose (London: Routledge, 1932), p. 105. See also Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* where Mephistopheles threatens: 'Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh' (V. 1. 68), and reveals in an aside 'I cannot touch his soul. / But what I may afflict his body with / I will attempt [...]' (V. 1. 78-80).

Here hast thou, Christian reader, the very beginning and ground of all my trouble; wherein thou mayest see a little of their goodness. They care neither for perjury nor for other mischief, so they may deface the truth and put preachers to silence. (ibid.)

Within the same paragraph he goes on to describe the conspiracy enacted between Bonner and Gardiner which allowed them to persecute him without accepting blame ('to wash [their] hands as clean as Pilate did'), summarising:

But the truth is this, that their hypocrisy is all one [...] bringing it to this point, that either I must recant, or else stand at their grace, which is as good to the preachers of God's truth, as is the grace of the bochers of Estcheape to the poor lambs brought into their market. (ibid.)

There is no positive emphasis on martyrdom here, none of Bale and Foxe's suggestions that defiance could be a virtuous, heroic and ultimately empowering act. In describing the alternative to abjuration Wisdom gives the reader only the image of the senseless slaughter of helpless innocents. Not only was his recantation the ultimate result of the machinations of ill-intentioned others, but it would have served no good if he had instead chosen defiance.

The introductory passage to *Revocation* ends with another subtle denial of the community's right to judge him, as Wisdom acknowledges his frailty but affirms that he seeks forgiveness only from God. The language is at once legalistic and incantatory, recalling both the phrasing of an abjuration oath and of a prayer:

Yet the lord knoweth how to make a man strong after this weakness, and to raise him again after his fall. Wherefore I wholly putting myself unto the mercy of God promised in his only-beloved Jesu Christ, do with all my heart repent that my slaunders, and as here followeth revoke it. (ibid.)

Here Wisdom attempts to transform the document from a press release into a private meditation. He reminds his reformist reader that what is really at stake in the case of a recantation is not the reputation of the movement, but the eternal fate of an individual soul.

The fact that Wisdom's counter-recantation remained in manuscript and was never printed during his lifetime raises further questions concerning its author's motivations. Bailey ventures the supposition that Wisdom's composition of an apology was the condition for his re-admission into the fold following his embarrassing public lapse.⁶⁷ Did Wisdom then leave the work in manuscript because it was intended solely for circulation

⁶⁷ Bailey, 'Robert Wisdom', p.187.

within an intimate circle of fellow believers (in other words, was he perhaps unwilling to risk putting his name to a printed work destined for a wider readership)? Or did he intend to print it, but eventually find doing so unnecessary once the furore surrounding his recantation had died down? Perhaps the most likely conjecture is that he wrote it in anticipation of criticism that never materialised. Wisdom's manuscript may therefore be considered an oddity: a public defence that never actually entered the public realm. Its content is similarly contradictory, since it is a narrative at once apologetic and defiant, contrite and yet continually affirming that the fault lies elsewhere, it is seemingly addressed to an audience of peers and yet categorically states that the matter of recantation is one which concerns only the errant individual and his maker.

Despite his insistence on the mitigating circumstances, Robert Wisdom at least had the good grace to express regret for his lapse – but what were the persecuted to do when faced with a truly unrepentant repenter? In cases where the recantation was apparently genuine it was up to a member of the forsaken community to posit a public response to the act of apostasy. Perhaps the most high-profile turncoat was Nicholas Shaxton, bishop of Salisbury, who was made to recant by the Henrician authorities in 1546 for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation.⁶⁸ Despite the more favourable climate for reformists which soon prevailed in Edward's reign, Shaxton never subsequently relapsed. As Wabuda writes: 'he never retracted this recantation, he never apologized to his former allies, he was not reconciled with his wife, and he remained conservative in opinion for the rest of his life'.⁶⁹ The responses of his former co-religionists show that his recantation was seen as a catastrophic betrayal. When, in 1546, Shaxton was sent to counsel Anne Askew to recant as he himself had done, her scathing reply was 'that it had bene good for hym, never to have bene borne' (L 119). Bale's response to the episode shows that he too regarded the former bishop as a traitor:

O Shaxton [...] what devyll bywyttched the to playe thys most blasphemouse part? as to become of a faythfull teacher, a temptynge sprete [sic]? Was it not ynough, that thu and soch as thu art, had forsaken your lorde God and troden hys vertyte most unreverentlye undre your fete, but with soch feates (as thys is) thu must procure the a more deper, or double dampnacyon? (L 120-1)

⁶⁸ Susan Wabuda, 'Shaxton, Nicholas (c. 1485–1556)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (May 2009), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25276>> [accessed 17 June 2010].

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Two years after Shaxton's fall from reformism, Robert Crowley was to give the fullest response by reprinting the original recantation along with a substantial refutation of the traditionalist doctrines which it articulated.⁷⁰ In the introduction to the work, Crowley's address is condescendingly amiable rather than overtly hostile: 'to the late bishop of Salisburie, Nicolas Shaxton, his well willer and faithful friend in Christ, Robert Crowley wysmeth eternall health thorowe Christe our savioure' (sig. A2^r). He promises that he has composed the work without any animosity:

Not for any displeasure that I had conceyued towardes you, or anye other, by whose meanes you shoulde be willed or (as it maye be thought) required to set them abroad to the world: but onelye for the loue I beare to Christes trueth, whyche I woulde not [...] suffer to be hindered by anye so blasphemouse doctrine of Antichristes schole, as are these Articles of yours. (ibid.)

Yet as he continues, his words begin to convey a distinct edge of displeasure towards Shaxton:

I call them [the doctrines] yours, bycause you subscribe to them, and set the[m] forthe vnder your name. But if I were required to say my co[n]science: I coulde not deny but I thinke them to be Wynchesters workemanshypp, because they agre so well wyth hys doctrine, & that chiefelye in the deuyllleishe detection of hys maister the deuyllles sophistry, whych he set abroad shortly after these Articles of yours. (A2^{r-v})

Two aspects of this comment make it overtly malicious: firstly, the expression of doubt that Shaxton actually came up with the doctrines he has since continued to profess, since, in Crowley's view, they are clearly of a piece with Winchester's own contemporary work *Declaration of the Deuils sophistrie* (1546).⁷¹ Worse than a genuine traditionalist, Shaxton is effectively accused of being one who will mindlessly parrot the orthodoxies of his persecutor in order to save his own life. This accusation serves a double purpose, not only discrediting Shaxton as a coward, but also countering the harmful suggestion that someone who had embraced reformist doctrine could ever truly be swayed by the theological

⁷⁰ Robert Crowley, *The Confutation of the .xiii. articles, wherunto Nicolas Shaxton late bishop of Saliburye subscribed and caused to be set forth in print in the yere of our Lorde .M.C.xlvi. when he recanted in Smithfielde at London at the burning of mestres Anne Askue [...]* (London: Day and Seres, 1548) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 6083.

⁷¹ Stephen Gardiner, *A declaration of the Deuils sophistrie wherwith he robbeth vnlearned people, of the true byleef, in the most blessed sacrament of the aulter* (London: Herforde, 1546) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 16 June 2010], STC 11591.

arguments of a traditionalist. In other words, Shaxton's fall was due to the weakness of the individual man, not because of any flaw in the doctrines.

There is also something suggestive in the wording of the phrase 'but if I were required to say my conscience: I coulde not deny'. Crowley inserts the phrase to convey his pretended reluctance to reveal the incriminating correlation between Shaxton's views and Winchester's, but perhaps he also intends it as an ironical comment on Shaxton: denying his conscience when 'required' is exactly what the former bishop has been doing throughout the two years which have elapsed since his abjuration. Continuing in this vein, Crowley later compares Shaxton to the apostle Peter, who disowned Christ on the night of his arrest (A6^r).

By shifting the emphasis onto the 'I', the words could even become a sort of brag: 'if I [Robert Crowley] were required [by the authorities] to speak my conscience, I could not deny [my faith, as you have done]'. Indeed, Crowley's entire work forms an affirmation of this sentiment, being an anti-recantation: a declaration of 'true' doctrine and a refutation of the turncoat's published lies – albeit one delivered from the comfort and safety afforded by Edward's sympathetic regime.

Although he begins by stating that he has composed the work 'onely for the loue I beare to Christes trueth', Crowley goes on to reveal a second inducement:

[...] Had not certaine honeste men enfourmed me of the greate numbere of the[m] that thorowe youre recantation were established in your errores: I hadde not taken this enterpryce in hande [...]. But whe[n] I understode what hyderaunce to God's trueth, your Authoritie, hath already and myghte here after do if your articles should remayne untouched: I thought it no lesse then necessarye to spend some tyme in it [...] (A2^v)

In other words, Crowley is not primarily motivated by a notional commitment to religious 'truth', but by his awareness of the continuing negative impact of Shaxton's recantation upon the credulous public. Because Shaxton's 'Authoritie' (presumably as a sometime bishop) continues to lend credence to his words, a formal riposte to his doctrines is required from within the reformist camp. To drive home this point about Shaxton's allurements of the people Crowley (unsurprisingly) resorts to the metaphor of stage-playing, portraying Shaxton's behaviour as false and self-consciously histrionic:

I am not ignoraunte of your behaiouire sence your recantataion [sic], boeth in the citye of London and els where. Your priuate communication (besydes youre

sermons dashed ful of sorowful teares and depe syghynges to alure the people to the Romeishe waye agayne) is openly knowen to all men. (A3^{r-v})

Yet despite this continued stress which is laid upon the harm which may proceed (and allegedly has already) from the recantation, Crowley also prints a document which seems to demonstrate the exact opposite to be true: 'the true coipe of a letter which the faithfull in suffolke made & gaue it vnto Nicolas Shaxton when he had reca[n]ted in London and came to Hadley to declare the same'. In this reprinted letter the people of Hadleigh, Shaxton's former living, write of their disillusionment with him following his break with the reformist faith, a faith which they themselves could never renounce, even in the face of persecution:

Oh Shaxto[n] Shaxton praye to oure mercifull God that he may geue the hys grace againe. For many by the are offended whose co[n]science be so assured in Gods trueth, that nother fyre, nor halter can plucke it oute of theyr hertes. [...] Yea ye haue brought yourself in such case, that none wil trust you, which is illuminate with christes verite. [A6^{r-v}]

It therefore seems as if Crowley wants simultaneously to chide Shaxton for alluring people away from the reformist faith, yet also to demonstrate, contrarily, that the faithful cannot be shaken or deceived.

One final intriguing detail of Crowley's preface to the articles of refutation is that he asks Shaxton to respond to him: 'I praye you write unto me (whether you shal thinke it beste) priuately or aparty, that I may either enstruct you further, other els be enstructed of you' (A3^r). Crowley therefore presents their disagreement as if it is a dialogue, a classical debate which will eventually lead to the emergence of a clear winner (thus, presumably, solving the differences generated by the Reformation once and for all). Crowley evidently shares the convictions of Tyndale and other advocates of *sola scriptura*, since he believes that the scriptures themselves will serve as an independent adjudicator in the dispute:

If you can by the Scriptures defend youre Articles and proue them to be chatholyke and Godly: I shal wyth all readines embrace theym and reuoke all that I haue wrytten to the contrarye. Otherwyse I require you (euen in the name of Christe [...]) that you acknowledge your errorrs, that suche as were offended by you, may haue occasion by you to ryse agayne. (ibid.)

He graciously admits the possibility that he himself may be in error and envisions that if his opponent proves the victor he will be forced to retract his refutations – but is this

request for a response really an attempt to foster good-sportsmanship? Only when Crowley goes on to describe the consequences of Shaxton's refusal to respond do we obtain a clearer sense of his true motives:

If you kepe silence and wryte nothyng agayne: then maye ye well thynke that we wyl iudge you obstinate and yet to haue nothyng to saye, for nowe is it fre for you to speake your conscie[n]ce, so far as the scripture wyl beare you. (ibid.)

On the surface this remark appears rather childishly goading: 'you had better respond, otherwise we will assume you have nothing to say for yourself', but what it is also intimating is that Shaxton's silence will offer his opponents proof of his guilt – something which they undoubtedly want. Given that Shaxton has refused to apologise to or answer his former co-religionists for the past two years, it seems a safe bet for Crowley to assume that he will not do so this time. The request for a response therefore allows Crowley to make himself appear fair-minded and open to debate, while remaining safe in the knowledge that no riposte will ever, in all likelihood, be forthcoming.

Crowley's *Confutation* is a very different type of counter-recantation to Wisdom's *Revocation*, but, like the latter, it is a text which appears to be full of curious contradictions: it simultaneously seeks to affirm and deny the effect which Shaxton's abandonment of reformism has had upon the faithful community, it asks for a response it does not really expect or desire, and it strenuously denies the personal antagonism which its mordant tone effectively communicates.

Conclusion

Whether they have survived recorded in bishops' registers or as pamphlets printed for public distribution, recantations are unique and intriguing texts.⁷² So much about each individual recantation is unknown and largely unguessable: its precise authorship, the true views of the recanters themselves, and how each work was interpreted by its contemporary reading or listening public. To the modern reader these scraps of the history of religious persecution in England seem like enigmatic play scripts, lacking stage directions to aid our interpretation. They are the records of a single performance, which, as Thomas Becon's

⁷² Susan Wabuda notes that none of the original printed pamphlets from Henry's reign has survived (the recantations from that period being reprinted within secondary works or issued as revised versions). She lists two Edwardian pamphlets: Richard Smith's *A Godly and Faythful Retraction made and published at Paules Crosse in London [...]*, (London: Wolfe, 1547), STC 22822, and *A Playne declaration made at Oxforde [...]* (London: Wolfe, 1547), STC 22824. See Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation', pp. 227-8 (note 13).

effectively demonstrates, had the potential to turn an act of punishment into an unlikely opportunity for evangelism, alerting spectators to the falseness of the exercise through the use of hyperbole and metadramatic devices while also informing them of some key tenets of reformist doctrine.

Yet as we have seen, to make a recantation – whether it was evidently false or a genuine act of apostasy – was to commit an act which often produced considerable literary fallout. An abjuration set off a chain reaction within the community of one's own (former) co-religionists, who then demanded an explanation for such an apparent betrayal of the cause. If none was forthcoming from the guilty individual, third parties might take it upon themselves either to excuse or damn the recanter, and to impose their own interpretation upon the recantation document itself.

Counter-recantations are compositions which prove to be just as problematic as the abjurations that inspire them. Both of the examples discussed above, Wisdom's *Revocation* and Crowley's *Confutation*, share one key quality: they are self-contradictory. Wisdom tries to acknowledge that his fall was his own responsibility while repeatedly asserting that it was someone else's fault; Crowley wants to prove to Shaxton that his actions had grave consequences while simultaneously proving the unshakeability of the Protestant community.

Recantations create a discomfort which even the most strenuous contradictions cannot assuage because their very existence requires the faithful to acknowledge that one of their number has been prepared to stand up in public and swear an oath that they believe a patent untruth to be true. In this light, it is hardly surprising that counter-recantations seem to be such ambiguous texts. We can perhaps better understand why such undue emphasis was put on acts of martyrdom by those who constructed the history of sixteenth-century Protestantism – and why Nicodemism and dissimulation needed to be written out of the story.

Although hypocritical conformity was also frowned upon by Catholics (provoking especially harsh criticism from the Elizabethan Jesuit pamphleteers, such as Robert Persons), it is tempting to think of it as somehow feeding into the peculiarly Protestant horror of confusion and multiplicity, which I have already discussed in relation to Bale and Tyndale.⁷³ To lie, dissemble or equivocate was to paint reality other than it is, to take

⁷³ For Jesuit views of hypocritical conformity see Alexandra Walsham, 'Reasons of Refusal', in *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1993; repr. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 22-49.

refuge in fiction and fabrication: the devices of the protean Vice, not of the plain-speaking Christian, whose vocabulary and perceptions are dependent on the incontrovertible Truth of the Word. In these terms, lying was an act considered perhaps not only immoral, but also *unfathomable*. Acts of martyrdom, on the other hand, create no such logical paradoxes: because thought and deed are in accord, dying for one's proclaimed faith is an act of singular and clearly understood meaning.

Jonas Barish writes of the common link between the antitheatrical sentiments of the fifteenth-century Lollards and those of the seventeenth-century Puritans: 'one of the most persistent of antitheatrical theses [is] that the players' intent is always to lie'.⁷⁴ If theatre is lying, Becon's recantation demonstrates that lying is also inherently theatrical. Lying, equivocation, dissimulation and Nicodemism – like acting – all entail taking on false attributes, citing opinions which are not your own and utilising linguistic ambiguity. Furthermore, when lying and theatre are employed in the service of promoting doctrine, or (as in recantations) denying it, what their smoke and mirrors really point to is the performative nature of belief itself. Becon is able to expediently alter himself and his doctrine to fit the circumstances – he is, to use Greenblatt's term, 'self-fashioning'.⁷⁵ His interiority, like Shaxton's, remains a mystery to the community, and the radical implication of this is that his inner beliefs may be just as unfixed and changeable as his public conduct.

Yet even if we understand the depth of the moral dilemma posed by false recantations, we should not let the Foxean model of a history of persecution 'shrouded in the smoke from the fires of Smithfield', as Freeman puts it, prevent us from also appreciating the ingenuity and tactics of those who sought to further their cause while simultaneously saving their own lives.⁷⁶ As Andrew Pettegree comments, we are not required to accept unquestioningly that the 'uncompromising moral absolutism' of the exiles and martyrs was a good thing.⁷⁷ The two responses to persecution – open recusancy (leading to exile, imprisonment and/or martyrdom) and hypocritical conformity may be understood as a struggle between deontism and utilitarianism. Those who proclaimed their faith openly when challenged avoided the sin of lying and deception, but those who

⁷⁴ Barish, p. 67

⁷⁵ See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁷⁶ Freeman, 'The Good Ministrye', p. 8.

⁷⁷ Pettegree, p. 116.

compromised their integrity and temporarily yielded in times of persecution may actually have done more, in the end, for English Protestantism than their intransigent brethren simply by staying alive and in England. Such individuals continued to exert an influence, however tentative, over the populace and eventually helped to found a more lasting institution, the Elizabethan Church. Recanters such as Becon, Crome and Wisdom played an important role in promoting their faith, even if their immediate successors tried their best not to acknowledge it.

Chapter 5

Polemical Paeans: Constructing the Queen in Marian Literature 1553-1558

Introduction: Historiographical Context

Now the omnipotent gouernour of all thinges so turned the wheele of her own spinnyng agaynst her, that her high buildinges of such ioyes and felicities, came all to a Castlecomedown, her hopes being co[n]founded, her purposes disappointed, and she now brought to desolation: who seemed neither to haue þe fauour of God, nor the hartes of her subiectes, not yet the loue of her husband [...] Marke here (Christian reader) the wofull aduersitie of this Queene, and learne withall, what the Lord can do whe[n] mans wilfulnes will needes resiste him and will not be ruled.

At last, when all these fayre admonitions would take no place with the Queene, nor moue her to reuoke her bloody lawes, nor to stay the tyranny of her Priestes, nor yet to spare her owne subiectes, but that the poore seruauntes of God were drawn dayly by heapes most pitifully as sheepe to the slaughter, it so pleased the heauenly Maiesty of almightie God, when no other remedy would serue, by death to cut her of[f] [...].¹

The early modern accounts which offer appraisals of Mary I's reign, such as John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563), and John Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (1721), are necessarily affected by a Protestant bias and teleology. These partisan histories portray the efforts of the queen and her churchmen in restoring Catholicism to England as misguided, her regime's persecution of heretics as tyrannical, and Mary herself as providentially fated to be overthrown.

While the historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lacked Foxe's stridency in denouncing the events of Mary's reign, some sympathisers even going so far as to praise her piety and character,² Mary's reproductive barrenness was taken to be a fitting metaphor for her reign as a whole and until the late 1970s the general consensus among historians was that all her endeavours had been ill-considered and unsuccessful.³ There also prevailed a view that Mary's take on Catholicism was nostalgic, looking back to

¹ *Acts and Monuments*, 1570 edition, p. 2298.

² '[...] from the passions which in general tempt sovereigns she was entirely free: to the time of her accession she had lived a blameless, and, in many respects, a noble life', James Anthony Froude, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (London: Dent, 1910), p. 317; '[Mary was] sincere, devout, conscientious', Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, 3 vols (London: Hollis & Carter, 1950-4), II, p.181; 'It has been acknowledged that her moral character was beyond reproof', John Lingard, *Lingard's History of England*, ed. by Dom Henry Norbert Birt (London: Bell, 1903), p. 361.

³ 'Sterility was the conclusive note [...] Mary's reign had been a palpable failure,' A.F. Pollard, *The Political History of England*, 12 vols, VI: 1547-1603 (London: Longmans, Green and co., 1910), pp. 172-3.

the lost late medieval traditions of her own youth, and therefore totally unfit for the altered spiritual requirements of the time. According to A.G. Dickens in *The English Reformation* (1964), Mary's mistake was not that she tried to reinstate Catholicism but that she 'failed to discover the Counter-Reformation'.⁴ Because her regime lacked the vibrant militancy of the campaigns which were to emerge on the continent and in Elizabethan England as part of the Jesuit-led recusancy movement,⁵ Dickens ultimately deems her reign 'a failure, whether judged by her own objectives or by the interests of the nation'.⁶

This sense of failure and inadequacy was also transferred onto Marian literature, with literary critics perceiving the state-authorized texts of the period as wrong-headed and ineffectual, and independently-published works by Catholic polemicists judged dull, workmanlike and less deserving of critical attention than those of their Protestant counterparts. J.W. Martin's 1981 paper 'The Marian Regime's Failure to Understand the Importance of Printing' accuses Mary and her counsellors of fatally underestimating the laity by refusing to emulate Cromwell's campaign of propagandising by means of vernacular polemic.⁷ In the same year Martin published a study of Miles Hogarde's works, singling him out as the most noteworthy author of the period, yet persisting in value-laden judgements, remarking on 'the general clumsiness of [Hogarde's] verse and his tendency to be a one-topic author' and avoiding commentary on the works as literature by stating that his interest 'lies not in the quality of the product but in the person producing it and what his mental world was like'.⁸

However, the last decades of the twentieth century saw the gathering momentum of a revisionist movement within the field of Tudor history, and yielded publications which aimed to evaluate Mary's reign on the strength of its own achievements rather than in the light of the propaganda of the succeeding decades. This trend began cautiously with the

⁴ Dickens, p. 311.

⁵ On the Jesuit counter-reformation effort in the 1580s see Bernard Basset, *The English Jesuits: From Champion to Martindale* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), pp. 27-54; Michael L. Carrafiello, 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581', *The Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), 761-774, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2639839>> [accessed 4 March 2010]; Francis Edwards, *The Jesuits in England From 1580 to the Present Day* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1985), pp. 17-31.

⁶ Dickens, p. 313.

⁷ J. W. Martin, 'The Marian Regime's Failure to Understand the Importance of Printing', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 44 (1981), 231-247, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3817339>> [accessed 12 October 2009].

⁸ J.W. Martin, 'Miles Hogarde: Artisan and Aspiring Author in Sixteenth-Century England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 34 (1981), 359-383 (p. 361).

first of David Loades' major studies of the queen and her times, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (1979), in which he concludes:

The most important judgement which I hope to have reversed [...] is that of insignificance. Mary failed in most of the things which she set out to achieve, but failure is relative and there was a positive achievement to hand on to her successor: a legacy of sound administration, financial reform, and strengthened episcopacy.⁹

This limited praise was developed and expanded by Loades in his later publications,¹⁰ and in 1984 he found support in the conclusions of J.J. Scarisbrick.¹¹ Subsequent appraisals have been still more positive towards Mary's religious and economic policies: Christopher Haigh's *English Reformations* (1993) acknowledges the detrimental effect of the Marian persecutions, but deems the regime's reinstatement of Catholicism an overall success, characterised by 'restoration and repair', summarising: 'the last years of Mary's reign were not a gruesome preparation for Protestant victory, but a continuing consolidation of Catholic strength'.¹²

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Lucy Wooding's *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (2000) refuted the fallacy that Mary's church was an exercise in late medieval nostalgia by demonstrating that Marian Catholicism was a separate entity both from what preceded and what followed it, defined by humanist ideals of religious reform, and consequently progressive, vital and nationalistic; indeed, sharing many doctrinal similarities with the Protestant 'opposition'. Most assertive in championing the historiographical movement towards a reassessment of the Marian period is Eamon Duffy: in the chapter devoted to Mary's reign in *The Stripping of the Altars* (2000) he argues that the queen's religious policies were in tune with the devotional practices of the majority of the English laity, and that the campaign to re-equip the parishes was well under way and gathering momentum up until her untimely death in 1558.¹³ In *Fires of Faith* (2009) Duffy declares an agenda to 'dispose once and for all of some of the

⁹ David M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor*, p. 470.

¹⁰ For Loades on Mary's reign see also: *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); *The Reign of Philip and Mary* (Oxford: Davenant, 2001); *Mary Tudor: The Tragical History of the First Queen of England* (Kew: National Archives, 2006).

¹¹ 'Mary Tudor's reign was not so unsuccessful after all [...] it produced a good deal of sensible housekeeping and reform.' J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 136.

¹² Haigh, p. 234.

¹³ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 524-564.

misapprehensions which have dogged the historiography of mid-Tudor Catholicism – that it was ineffective, half-hearted, complacent, unimaginative, insular, lacking in leadership [...]’ and states (contrary to received wisdom) that ‘Marian England was the closest thing in Europe to a laboratory for counter-reformation experimentation’.¹⁴

Academics in the field of sixteenth-century literature have also begun to focus more attention on Marian works. In 1986 Jennifer Loach challenged Martin’s assertions about the Marian state’s alleged ‘failure’ to utilize the medium of print, reinterpreting the evidence of surviving texts to conclude that Mary’s propagandizing agenda was focused on a continental (rather than domestic) audience.¹⁵ However, while the importance of the writings of Marian polemicists has been reasserted by Thomas Betteridge,¹⁶ Lucy Wooding, Eamon Duffy and others, these studies have tended to focus on the historico-religious significance of the works produced during the reign, rather than offering commentary on literary aspects such as the stylistic tropes and recurrent metaphors which these texts use to create their impression. The following chapter will consider the works of a selection of the most prominent Marian writers (namely, Miles Hogarde, John Proctor, Nicholas Udall, Richard Smith, John Heywood, Leonard Stopes and John Forrest) in order to consider the manner in which they present the figure of Queen Mary herself, their visions of the Church, and the alterations which they make to the polemical form.

Embodying Queen Mary

Catholic polemicists faced several difficulties when it came to constructing an appropriate representation of Mary Tudor within their texts. The first was the complete lack of pre-existing iconography for a queen regnant for them to draw on: as Judith Richards writes, this representative lacuna was evident even at Mary’s coronation, where attempts to alter the visual symbolism of a ceremony only ever previously used for queen consorts resulted in confusion for onlookers.¹⁷ From 1554 onwards there was also the uncertainty

¹⁴ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 8.

¹⁵ Jennifer Loach, ‘The Marian Establishment and the Printing Press’, *The English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), 135-148 (esp. p. 147).

¹⁶ Thomas Betteridge, ‘“Making New Novelties Old”: Marian Histories of the Reformation’, in *Tudor Histories*, pp. 120-160.

¹⁷ Judith M. Richards, ‘Mary Tudor as “Sole Quene”?: Gendering Tudor Monarchy’, *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 895-924, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2640128>> [accessed 9 July 2009] (pp. 895, 897-902).

surrounding the position of Philip to contend with: many subjects were troubled by the alliance to a foreign monarch who 'necessarily diluted [Mary's] authority' and 'raised the specter of external domination', as John King puts it.¹⁸ The Marian writers' response seems generally to have been to ignore Philip as much as possible, mentioning him only in the formulaic salutations at the beginning or end of their texts. The politeness of these addresses is sometimes strained: John Standish rounds off to his expansive praise of the queen by adding a hasty codicil that King Philip is 'not much inferiour to her highnes in grace, vertue and godlynes, as credible menne reporte' – the use of the word 'credible' suggesting he is torn between 'creditable' and 'credulous' when acknowledging the sources of his second-hand information on the king.¹⁹

The unprecedented fact of a female ruler also left England open to criticism from Protestants living in continental exile – among the most vociferous being John Knox, whose *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) compares Mary Tudor to Jezebel and the whore of Babylon and asserts that:

To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled [revealed] will and aproued ordinance, and finallie, it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice.²⁰

The apologists for the regime therefore had to discover a way of representing Mary in terms which both emphasized her power and legitimized her reign in the face of such hostile rhetoric.

A further problem for Marian writers was knowing to what extent religious authority was invested in Mary. While the official return to the Roman fold and lifting of the interdict in November of 1554 (by means of Cardinal Pole's strenuous diplomatic efforts) resulted in general celebration,²¹ it is difficult to gauge how enthusiastic the English subjects really were about papal obedience. Antipapalism had been a feature of

¹⁸ John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 215.

¹⁹ John Standish, *A Discourse wherein is debated whether it be expedient that the scripture should be in English for all men to reade [...]* (London: Caly, 1554) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 26 August 2009], STC 23207, p. 12^{r-v}.

²⁰ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, ed. by Edward Arber (London: [n.pub.], 1878), p. 11.

²¹ On Cardinal Pole and the Marian restoration see Rex H. Pogson, 'Reginald Pole and the Priorities of Government in Mary Tudor's Church', *The Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), pp. 3-20, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638465>> [accessed 24 June 2010], (esp. pp. 11-12).

official policy since the 1530s (following Henry's Act of Supremacy) and was by this point deeply ingrained in the public imagination by 'twenty years of savage anti-papal propaganda'.²² While Duffy argues that the return to papalism was high on the queen's agenda and that any delay on the subject was only a result of reasonable caution,²³ Wooding points to the insularity of English Catholicism and argues that reverence towards the pope was largely an invention of the later Counter-Reformation.²⁴ This uncertainty may be reflected in the fact that so few Marian texts deal with the issue of papal obedience – only John Standish's *Triall of the Supremacy* (1556) and the homilies contributed by Nicholas Harpsfield to Bonner's *A profitable and necessarye doctrine* (1555) go into the subject in any depth.²⁵

It is the contention of this chapter that the concerns of iconography and authority which surrounded Mary can be seen to be reflected in the texts produced during the reign, and that these works are engaged in an attempt to discover a way to consolidate queen, Church and country in literary terms.

Predictably, the accession of a Catholic monarch named Mary prompted some authors to link the queen panegyrically to her virgin namesake. Two broadside ballads published in 1553, William Forrest's *A new ballade of the Marigolde* and Leonard Stopes' *An Ave Maria in Commendation of our most Vertuous Queene*, both make this explicit connection. The poet-priest Forrest's work is threaded through with gentle punning allusions which unite the queen and the Virgin by means of flower imagery.

The Virgin Mary had frequently been associated with flowers and gardens in medieval devotional art and literature, especially the *hortus conclusus* or enclosed garden, used as a metaphor for both the womb and virginity and drawing on the Song of Solomon:

²² Dickens, p. 292.

²³ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 40.

²⁴ Wooding pp. 4, 11, 166, 126-135.

²⁵ John Standish, *The triall of the supremacy wherein is set fourth ye unitie of christes church milita[n]t geue[n] to S. Peter and his successoures by Christe and that there ought to be one head bishop in earth Christes vicar generall ouer all hys churche militant [...]* (London: Marshe, 1556), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 22 September 2009], STC 23211; John Harpsfield, 'An homelye of the Prymacie' and 'An other homelye of the Prymacie', in Edmund Bonner, *A profitable and necessarye doctrine with certayne homelies adioyned thervnto* (London: Caly, 1555), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 8 August 2009], STC 3285.9 (homilies), fols. 48-49.

'a garden inclosed [is] my sister, [my] spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed'.²⁶

Flowers were commonly offered to statues of the Virgin, and in the latter half of the sixteenth century the Catholic Church actively encouraged artists to paint the Madonna surrounded by flowers in an effort to combat the effects of iconoclasm.²⁷ However, Forrest eschews flowers more traditionally associated with the Virgin, such as the rose and the lily, in favour of the more homely marigold. While he repeats the composite words 'Mary' and 'gold' throughout, the poem offers a Christocentric explication of the flower's symbolism.²⁸ Using the double meaning of sun/Son, the opening of the flower in response to sunlight is seen to represent the Virgin's devotion to Christ (opening perhaps also suggesting the act of conception or giving birth),²⁹ as well as Mary Tudor's righteous example in directing the people to follow true religion:

This Marigolde Floure, marke it well,
with Sonne doth open, and also shut;
which in meanyng vs doth tell
To Christ, God's sonne, our willes to put.³⁰

Forrest goes on to offer another link between Mary Tudor and the flower because of their shared quality of steadfastness. The marigold 'sheweth glad cheare in heate and colde', and likewise Mary endures and overcomes the ill-will of her opponents:

To Marie, our Queene, that Floure so sweete,
This Marigolde I doo apply,
For that the Name doth serue so meete
And properlee, in each partie;

²⁶ Song of Solomon 4. 12 (KJV). On the Virgin Mary and the *hortus conclusus* see Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 116-8; Penelope Hobhouse, *Plants in Garden History* (London: Pavilion, 1992), p. 78; Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 49.

²⁷ Goody, pp. 156, 175.

²⁸ As Prior notes, the true etymology of 'marigold' is likely to be Anglo-Saxon ('*mersc-mear-gealla*, marsh-horse-gowl'), but like many other English flowers, the name became sacralized by an association with the Virgin. R.C.A. Prior, *On the Popular Names of British Plants*, 3rd edn. (London: Norgate, 1879), p. 148.

²⁹ In medieval paintings of the Annunciation, the prenatal Christ is sometimes depicted being borne towards Mary on sunbeams. Discussing one such work, the Mérode altarpiece (1425-1428), Margaret Freeman notes that both St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Bridget use the metaphor of sunlight passing through a window to describe the Virgin's conception. See Margaret B. Freeman, 'The Iconography of the Merode Altarpiece', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 16 (1957), 130-139, in <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3257688>> [accessed 20 June 2010] (pp. 133-4).

³⁰ William Forrest, 'A new ballade of the Marigolde', in *Old English ballads, 1553-1625, chiefly from MSS*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920) in Internet Archive: Canadian Libraries <<http://www.archive.org/details/oldenglishballad00rolluoft>> [accessed 10 November 2009], pp. 8-12 (stanza 6).

For her enduringly patiently
The stormes of such as list to scolde [...] (7)

Next he further descants on the appropriateness of the name by asserting that Mary Tudor is 'Mary's gold', the virgin's gift to the world and as unparalleled in human virtue as gold is among the precious metals:

She may be calde Marigolde well,
Of Marie (chief), Christes mother deere,
That as in heauen shee doth excell,
And Golde in earth, to haue no peere;
So (certainly) she shineth cleere. (8)

Here the ambiguity generated by the use of the pronoun 'she' finally blends virgin and queen together. A similarly blurring effect is created in Stopes' ballad by the intermingling of a paean to Queen Mary with the words of the Ave Maria. Not only are the words of the Ave printed between the stanzas, but each individual stanza begins with the word of the heading above:

HAILE

Haile Quene of Engla[n]d, of most worthy fame
For vertue, for wisdom, for mercy and grace;
Most firme in the fath, Defence of the same,
Christ saue her and keepe her in euery place.

MARIE

Marie, the mirrour of mercifulnesse,
God of his goodnesse hath lent to this lande
Our iewell, our ioye, our iudeth, doutlesse [...] ³¹

When the poet moves on to Mary as an exemplar of womankind, the familiar pronoun slippage (here caused by the use of the word 'this') combines with the repetition of the Marian adjective 'blesséd' in order to blur the distinction between queen and virgin as female paragons:

Women and widowes, with maidens & wiues,
Of this blesséd woman example may take,
In womanly wisdom to leade well their liues,

³¹ Leonard Stopes, 'An Ave Maria in Commendation of our most Vertuous Queene', in *Old English ballads*, pp. 13-18 (stanzas 1-2).

All Englande is blessed for this woman's sake. (15)

Both poems seek to inspire devotion to the new queen by means of the double image: the Marys are interchangeable or both present at any given moment in the text. Yet, while Stopes and Forrest, as the earliest writers to publish in praise of the new queen, both immediately grasped the ideological usefulness and literary possibilities of linking the queen with the mother of Christ, Loades notes that Mary Tudor had a distinct lack of personal interest in the affiliation: 'although Mary was famously enthusiastic about the Mass, and attended at least one every day, she is not known to have had any favourite devotion, not even to her Virgin namesake'.³² The apparent return of the plays containing the Marian apocrypha to the mystery cycles seems to have been a spontaneous reversion rather than actually encouraged by the state: the House Books of the York guilds note the suspension of the plays 'the deyng of our Lady/ assumpcion of our Lady/ and coronacion of our Lady' in 1548,³³ and again in 1561,³⁴ suggesting that they were taken up again in the intervening period – most likely, during the reign of Mary.³⁵ Lucy Wooding also remarks on the curious lack of a Mariological renaissance:

In the light of the traditional interpretations of this reign as a period of Catholic reaction, one might expect to find Mary's accession prompting a revival of dedication to the Virgin Mary. In fact, there was a remarkable absence of references to the Blessed Virgin; few of the Marian religious works make even a passing reference to any of the saints.³⁶

As a possible explanation for the phenomenon, Wooding cites Duffy's appraisal of the lack of restoration of saint and virgin statues during the reign as indicative of 'real shifts in religious feeling'.³⁷ The fact that Stopes and Forrest's works were published within the first year of the reign may suggest another possible explanation as to why they were seemingly

³² David Loades, 'The English Church During the Reign of Mary', in *Reforming Catholicism in the England of Mary Tudor: The Achievement of Friar Bartolomé Carranza*, ed. by John Edwards and Ronald Truman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 33-48 (p. 41).

³³ *The Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), pp. 291-2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 331-2.

³⁵ See also *York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Arnold, 1982), pp. 27-8.

³⁶ Wooding, p. 117.

³⁷ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 562.

the only writers to make references to the Virgin Mary so explicit – following the queen's marriage to Philip in July 1554, further references to virginity became inappropriate.

In praising the queen the Marian polemicists draw from a varied range of flattering archetypes: Stopes hails Mary Tudor not only as another 'Judith' (as above), but also as 'Hester' (st. 3) and 'Mynerue' [i.e. Minerva] (22); a mixture of Old Testament, Apocrypha, and classical figures united by status as righteous combatants and thus appropriate types for a queen whose task is 'all wicked workers to wede them out clene. / Of sectes and schysmes a riddaunce to make' (3-4). In his preface to a treatise concerning the desirability of public access to the Bible in English, John Standish refers to Mary as 'another Helena' (i.e. St. Helena of Constantinople, purported to have rediscovered the True Cross);³⁸ and a gift given by God to his people in their adversity, like Esther and Judith (8^r). He compares her to St. Jerome's godly and learned disciples St. Paula, Eustochium and Blessilla (10^v). She is also the true daughter of her pious mother, 'a very Phenix' (12^v), rising from the ashes of Catherine of Aragon, whose fall marked the beginning of all England's troubles. Virtue is thus seen in this case to be matrilineal, as no reference to the schismatic Henry is made.

Standish does not restrict himself to selecting paragons of the queen's own sex when praising her. Mary is also masculinized as an angelic instrument of redress ('god's pitiful mercy did elect & sende this blessed woman Mary our queene in stede of Michael tharchangel to overthrow [heresy]' (8^v)). She is an agent of prophetic revelation such as 'Josue, Esdras or Judas Macabeus' (9^r) and compared to Solomon as a virtuous leader sent as proof of God's love for his people (9^v-10^r). Likewise, Richard Smith in his preface 'to the Quene' in *A Bouclier of the Catholyke faith* (1554) describes her as a Mosaic figure who leads the people out of the bondage of error into the light of truth:

See we not also evidently that this newe believe, yea an vnbelieve rather, was not of god [...] [seeing] that it is nowe ouerthrowen so soone agayne? [...] Wherefore I considering most vertuous Quene, y^e gret goodnes of God declared towarde your grace, & toward this whole realm, & cou[n]trei, in restoring againe the true religion of Christ into it, & also seing your hyghnes earnest zeale towards the trouthe, & exceding trauel of the same in setting it forth [...].³⁹

³⁸ Standish, p.8^r.

³⁹ Richard Smith, 'To the moste gracious and vertuous Ladye oure Souereigne', in *A Bouclier of the Catholyke faith [...]* (London: Totell, 1554), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 17 August 2009], STC 22816, sig. C5^{r-v}.

Yet, although direct comparisons to the Virgin Mary are comparatively rare (and the writers are by no means limited when it comes to name-checking heroic figures in comparison to the queen) the contemporary polemical literature does make use of the maternal imagery traditionally belonging to the Virgin in order to construct an iconography for the first queen regnant. In his lengthy 'prologue to his deer breathren, and naturall countreemen of Englande' at the beginning of his translation of the writings of St. Vincent of Lérins, *The Waie Home to Christ* (1556), John Proctor uses contrasting portrayals of motherhood to legitimise both Church and monarch. First, the traditional construction of the 'malignau[n]t and cursed church' as Revelation's whore of Babylon is contrasted dichotomously with the image of the true (i.e. Roman Catholic) Church as a loving and protective mother:

It is she, that by her flatteringe meanes and deceatfull allurements hath intised you to come from so swete & amiable mothers lappe, vnto her whorishe armes: fro[m] churche to church I grau[n]t, but not from like to like.⁴⁰

Proctor expands upon these female stereotypes: the false church is a 'cruel stepmother', a 'slattern' who feeds those in her care with 'stinkinge carren' in contrast to the wholesome food provided by that 'sweet nurse', the true church (9^r). He then uses the imagery of maternal nourishment to unite the Church with the queen herself and national identity:

Who is our mother? Wher is our home? No doubt the vniversall church is our mother, her lappe is our home. If you be not ther at home, you can not be at home with God. If you acknowledge not her to be your mother, you may not acknowledge God to be your father. To this mother, Mary the mother of her country calleth you. (9^v)

Proctor continually expounds the idea of Mary's reign as proof that God is providentially calling England to return the Church – envisioned as a homecoming to the maternal lap by the prodigal English populace. His insistence on referring to Mary using the epithets 'heauenlye virgin' and 'maide' is somewhat puzzling given that by the time of the work's publication in 1556 Mary had been married for two years (and had suffered two phantom pregnancies). While Protestant writers viewed marital faithfulness as a form of chastity (in

⁴⁰ St. Vincent of Lérins, *The Waie Home to Christ* [...], transl. by John Proctor (London: Caly, 1556), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 19 August 2009], STC 24755, pp. 6^v-7^r.

John Ponet's words, 'chast married lyfe'),⁴¹ the Catholic Church's position, after St. Paul (1 Corinthians 7) and St. Augustine was that marriage was to be held as distinct from virginity and widowhood, to which it was inferior.⁴² However the terms 'virgin' and 'maide' were intended by Proctor to apply to the married queen, they again allow for a deliberate blurring of the distinction between the earthly and heavenly Marys, a device which Proctor here uses to woo the reader towards acceptance of his admonitions:

Thus God, the creatour, and lorde of mercie most gently & louinglye calleth you [...] nowe last of all by a famous Mary, whose merites and mercie towardes you all, might moue you al to come: by an heavenly maide, whose integritie of life and contancie of faithe ought to perswade you al to come willingly: by a mightie Quene, whose authorities might compel you al, to come with spede [...] to your mothers lappe. (23^v)

Because the queen is understood to embody her namesake's qualities of maternal affection, mercy, virginity and piety, the polemicists are often able simply to recycle Marian commonplaces. However, the phrase 'might compel you al' points to a fundamental difference between the earthly and heavenly queens. The line is perhaps deliberately ambiguous in its suggestions of agency – either Mary's unquestionable legitimacy means that her subjects cannot (as a matter of conscience) fail to respond to her wishes, or it implies that the apparatus of her state can ensure that they comply (by means of coercion). Thus, Proctor conceives of a Mary with more clout than the heavenly intercessor; a mother who is prepared to punish the wayward child/subject. This concept of the queen as a loving disciplinarian becomes a pervasive image in Marian literature.

John Heywood offers a somewhat demotic portrayal of Mary I as a broom-wielding house-maid in his long allegorical poem *The Spider and the Flie* (1556). Here, a series of debates and battles between the respective spider and fly factions concerning the right ownership of the holes in the window lattice are brought to a close with the entrance of the maid, who rebukes the chief spider and treads him to death as the author-narrator looks on (see fig. 2).

⁴¹ John Ponet, *A defence for mariage of priestes by Scripture and aunciente wryters* (London: Wolff, [1949]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 9 March 2010], STC 20176, A2v; see also John K. Yost, 'The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI', *Church History*, 50 (1981), 152-165, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3166880>> [accessed 9 March 2010] (esp. p.162).

⁴² Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *De bono coniugali/De sancta uirginitate*, ed. and transl. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 19, 20-21; Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), pp. 11-13.

The elliptical nature of the references in Heywood's poem caused it to be poorly received by contemporary audiences, and it fell into obscurity almost immediately. William Harrison wrote in his *Description of England* (1577) that Heywood 'dealeth so profoundly and beyond all measure of skill that neither he himself that made it, neither anyone that readeth it, can reach unto the meaning thereof.'⁴³ While the poet himself tells us in the epilogue that the maid 'Clerelie conueithe the sense alligoricall, / To our sufferaigne Ladie, Queen Marie'; 'Her windowe: this realme'; and the master and mistress of the house whom she serves 'Christ' and 'mother holie church catholical' respectively; the identities of the spiders and flies remain obscure.⁴⁴ Heywood begins with a rather arch description of the dangers of the allegorical mode, itself delivered in allegory: three women named Marjorie, Margaret and Marian (perhaps a daringly unflattering reference to the queen herself?) dress before mirrors which allow them to see (and therefore mock) their companions but not themselves: 'which women and glasse, / Are a glasse, this booke, and readers to compasse' (A3^r). The author therefore schools the poem's audience (his contemporaries and countrymen) to look to themselves in interpreting the querulous spiders and flies of the narrative, but this is a somewhat evasive approach which fails to illuminate the binary significance of the two categories.

The proprietorial and oppressive behaviour of the spiders, with the dissenting nature of the more multitudinous flies has suggested to critics such as James Holstun that the text should be read as an agrarian class struggle narrative (with the spiders as aristocratic land-owners and flies as peasants) which offers a literary treatment of Kett's rebellion in 1549.⁴⁵ Yet the author's own staunch Catholicism and personal support of Mary (Heywood was probably the Princess Mary's tutor prior to her parents' divorce; was once required to recant during Edward's reign; and went into exile after Mary's death),⁴⁶ coupled with the description of the maid as Mary, her superiors as Christ and the Catholic Church also points to a polemical, pro-Counter Reformation reading. As Heywood tells us

⁴³ William Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*, ed. by Georges Edelen (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1968; repr. London: Constable, 1994), p. 338.

⁴⁴ John Heywood, *The spider and the flie* (London: Powell, 1556), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 5 September 2009], STC 13308, Ds3^{r-v}.

⁴⁵ James Holstun, 'The Spider, the Fly, and the Commonwealth: Merrie John Heywood and Agrarian Class Struggle', *English Literary History*, 71 (2004), 53-88.

⁴⁶ Judith Rice Henderson, 'John Heywood's *The Spider and the Flie*: Educating Queen and Country', *Studies in Philology*, 96 (1999), 241-274, in Jstor archive <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4174642>> [accessed 15 July 2009] (p. 241).

in the epilogue that the poem was begun twenty years previously, abandoned and finished in honour of Mary's accession, critics have pointed out that the work is a palimpsest, Heywood's original significations becoming blurred as they became overwritten by the new concerns of the Marian regime.⁴⁷

In the final stanza before the author's epilogue, we get an image of Heywood's admiration of Mary for sweeping away the iniquities of the past, a national change which he himself observes from the sidelines:

The spiders and flies (for the time) being gon,
The maide swept that window cleane in all places.
In all corners: that her broome might light vpon,
Ech copweb (with her broome) she full defaces:
No wem [sic] seene: in casemunds, nor casemund cases.
Vpon her cleare cleansing werof: out went she,
And in cam I, her workmanship there to se. (Dr4^r)

The action of cleansing is portrayed as a positive one, but as we have seen in chapter four, it also belongs to the surgical/purgation trope so frequently used within sixteenth-century polemic as a justification for persecution. When the maid happens upon the scene of the spider 'as he wold have perst the flies hed', her reaction is swift and decisive:

Setting her brome, hard to the copwebs top.
Where: at one stroke with her brome: striken sounde,
The copweb and spider, [s]he strake to the ground.
[...]
She swept downe the copweb, the flie flew about
The parler round. Neuer more lustie nor stout.
The spider on the grounde: vnder the maides foote,
To treade him to death, and was about to doote. (Dn4^v-Do1^v)

The maid/Mary is here portrayed as a retributive force more divine than human, overwhelming in stature when compared the spider whose evil act she anticipates and prevents. Heywood continues with scenes showing the erstwhile aggressor pleading for mercy:

But the spider (on knees[]) lift vp his handes hie.
Beseching her (of milde maidenlie pittie[]),
To be con[t]ent to here him speake ere he die:
[...] and so to iudge him iustlie,

⁴⁷ See Henderson p. 242; Edmund M. Hayes, 'John Heywood (1497-1580?)' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, pp. 212-3.

And that she wold (in meane time) he foote withdraw,
Sight wherof: made his hed ake, and his stomock gnaw. (Do1^v)

With his appeal to her 'maidenlie pittie' she temporarily draws back the death-dealing foot and listens to his attempts to justify his former behaviour. When the maid delivers her judgement that he must die for his offences against the flies, she also asserts her rights within the hierarchy to make such decisions: 'Which custom is vnderpropped (as I saide) / With reason, with law, and with conscience' (Do4^r). The spider replies that he does not question these rights, but respectfully commits himself into her 'merciful hands'.

Unrelenting, the maid decrees:

Thou shalt haue (quoth she) mercie euen as much:
At my hands, as the flie should haue had at thine.
[...]
Make pacience thy salue, for this sore in fine.
And make thee redie spider: for finalie,
I assuredlie assure thee, thou shalt die. (Do4^v)

Henderson describes the message of the poem as the broadly conservative and traditional one that religious, social and political rebellion are 'both immoral and foolhardy' and comments that 'to posterity [Heywood] left the problem of reconciling his picture of the first Tudor queen as "merciful maiden" with the "Bloody Mary" of Whig history'.⁴⁸ However, within the poem itself the appeals to maid/Mary as merciful are often, significantly, put into the mouth of a character she then executes. Heywood writes his narrator as an approving spectator to the action, but he does not portray the female protagonist as merciful in any sense that is passive or mild; instead, she passes judgement and carries out the dread-sentence required, tempering her dismissal of the insect majority with the exemplary death of the head spider – just as Queen Mary ordered the execution of the leaders of the Wyatt rebellion and leading Protestant agitators. The spring-cleaning of the realm is therefore not without its casualties.

The allegorical mode also presents a problem in Nicholas Udall's interlude for the Christmas period of 1553, *Respublica*; not because the author coyly refuses to specify how the representative characters are to be interpreted, but because the abundance of authoritative female figures within the play make it difficult to perceive where a true figure

⁴⁸ Henderson, pp. 263, 245.

for Mary is to be found. The play begins with the traditional anxious disclaimer against any offence being intended by its author:

And our poete trusteth the thinge we shall recycte
may withowte offence the hearers myndes delyte.
In dede, no man speaketh wordes so well fore pondred
But the same by somme meanes maye be misconstrued,
Nor nothinge so well ment, but that by somme pretence
ytt maie be wronge interpreted from the auctors sence. (7-12)

Apparently to forestall any willful misinterpretation, the Prologue explains that the play's eponymous character signifies 'all commen weales Ruin and decaye / [...] whan Insolence, Flaterie, Opression, / and Avarice have the Rewle in their possession' (19-22). Within this same opening speech Queen Mary is positively identified as 'our most wise / and most worthie Nemesis, / of whome our plaie Meneth, t[']amend that is amysse' (53-4). *Respublica*, therefore, we are to understand as the commonweal; *Nemesis* as the triumphant Mary who enters after the crisis has occurred as an agent of redress – but is the allegory as straightforward as Udall would have his audience believe?

'Commonweal' is a concept which does not immediately lend itself to dramatic personification and Udall's construction of *Respublica* therefore suggests a degree of representative play – at some points she seems to denote the population (although *People* is occasionally brought on as a discrete character), at others the national economy, and also at times a governing monarch. This monarchical impression is perhaps created by generic expectation – Udall's work fits into the later morality template of the political allegory, following such plays as Skelton's *Magnyfycence* (c. 1515-26) and Bale's *King Johan* (c. 1538), where the protagonist is a duped ruler who discovers the vices' true identities and subsequently is able to reform the land.

In some ways *Respublica* is analogous to Bale's *Widowe Ynglond*: she is in fact named as 'a wydowe' (p. 1) in the *dramatis personae*, and her function within the play is, similarly, to invoke pathos by depicting the realm's degradation through feminine distress. However, while *Ynglond* is clear-sighted yet powerless, *Respublica*, more like the morality play ruler-protagonist, apparently wields power (*People* petitions her for intervention and the vices fear her discovery of their true natures) but lacks perception, and thus continually prevaricates, torn between the contrasting reports of her subjects and the evil ministers she has surrounded herself with:

O lorde, what maie yt meane to bee thus borne in hand,
And yet non emendment to fele nor vnderstand?
People doth dailie and hourelie to me resorte,
Chalenging my promise of relief and comforte.
I reporte to hym, as my rewlers [i.e. advisors] doe to mee:
People still affirmeth that they devourers be.
[...]
what shoulde I judge of this? maie yt bee credible,
or by anie reason maie yt be possible,
That such fowre as those in whome I have putt my truste,
shewing suche face of frendship, shoulde bee men vniuste? (970-81)

In plays such as *Magynifycence* the combination of a morality framework and a political allegory creates a vehicle for criticism of the contemporary regime, allowing Skelton to comment on the immature King Henry's propensity to be led astray and the dangers of him surrounding himself with vicious and profligate counsellors.⁴⁹ Udall's decision to employ this dramatic model therefore has the potential to be highly problematic – *Respublica* stands in the place of the figure the audience instinctively wants to read as monarch. Thus, the Prologue's speech is no expository dead letter, but a necessity, allowing Udall to peremptorily correct any suggestion that he is criticizing Mary by instructing the audience only to look for her in the form of Nemesis, the play's late-arriving conqueror.

Respublica is a commentary on the past woes which the present regime has done away with: the vices explicitly represent the ecclesiastical reforms of Henry and Edward. Oppression is renamed 'Reformacyon' (380) and he brags about how he has profited by taking away the livings of the clergy (776-821), while Avarice proclaims that he has sold benefices and looted churches (855-73). Once the plot has been exposed, *Respublica* herself laments: 'Insolence, Oppression, Adulacion. / O lorde, how have I bee[n] vsed these five years past' (1776-7), referring to the exact term of Edward's reign. The tide turns with the appearance of the virtues, among whom is Veritas, long-dreaded and anticipated by the vices. Avarice warns his cohorts:

And tyme hathe this one vngracious propertee,
to blab at length and open all that he doothe see.
Than a daughter eke he hath, called Veritee,
As vnhappy a long-tongued girle as can be.
She bringeth all to light, and some she bring[eth] to shame [...] (908-12)

⁴⁹ Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, pp. 60-101.

Veritas discovers to Respublica the true natures of the vices and also serves as a herald for Nemesis, the figure for Mary Tudor, who had already adopted the phrase 'veritas temporis filia' (truth is the daughter of time) as a personal motto. The phrase was put on the Great Seal in 1553, the classical epigram becoming, as King puts it, 'converted [...] into an argument for the validity of Catholic tradition, rescued by Time from oppression'.⁵⁰

The appearance of Nemesis 'the mooste highe goddessse of correccion' (l. 1783) in the last one hundred lines of the play reinforces this sense of Mary's reign as triumphal peripeteia. In a scene which evokes the biblical parables of the wicked steward (Matt 24. 45) and the wicked vineyard tenants (Matt 21. 33) the villains who profited under the old regime are brought to account and the wronged innocents comforted by Nemesis, who infantilizes them with words of maternal encouragement:

Come foorth, Respublica, our darling mooste dere.
[...]
People, whie aret thow bashefull and standest so farre?
bee of good chere nowe, & I warraunte thee come ner. (1815-20)

Although Misericordia (mercy) twice pleads for leniency on behalf of the vices, Nemesis asserts that 'neither all nor none shall taste of severitee' (1875), and the play ends with Oppression and Avarice being led away to face the law, while Adulation (perhaps a figure for the playwright himself in a regretful moué for his participation in the reformist activities of Edward's court) promises to embrace his new identity as 'perfeicte honestee' (1890), eventually making good on his vice alias.⁵¹ Udall therefore ultimately creates a vision of the Marian regime as powerful, clear-sighted and assertive; his Nemesis/Mary displays maternal affection for her subjects and country, and is tempered by mercy, but like Heywood's maid she recognises the paramount importance of exemplary justice.

In a strikingly similar construction to the finale of *Respublica*, Miles Hogarde also writes of Mary's accession in terms of a triumphal entry in his allegorical dream-vision *The Assault of the Sacrame[n]t of the Altar* (1554). In the poem's final moment of crisis, the Edwardian 'byshoppes effeminate' assault Lady Faith and take her prisoner, drawing a veil before her to hide her from the people's eyes. Then, in response to the narrator's fervent prayers, a champion arrives:

⁵⁰ See King, *Tudor Royal iconography*, pp.191-194.

⁵¹ On Udall's religious and political vacillations see Greg Walker, *Politics of Performance*, p. 166.

I harde trompetes blowe very swete and hye,
Then did my hart reioyce putting care away,
Me thought the sounde was of some victory,
With that comming in I sawe sodainly
A noble standard all of white and grene
Imbroidred with roses royally beseene.
After the which standard did enter in,
One triumphantly as the chiefe captaine,
Which was a crowned quene and vyrgin.⁵²

The description of the triumphant captain as 'a crowned quene and vyrgin' is another instance of the use of Marian imagery, serving to conflate the England's queen with the Queen of Heaven. Like other contemporary polemicists, Hogarde is not content with the obvious comparison, and over the next few lines the Mary Tudor figure appears with a variety of allusions ascribed. She is given the role of priestly anointed one, privileged in her ability to approach the tabernacle and bring forth its holy wonder into common sight:

Who seing lady faieth so had in disdaine,
Drue backe the vaile that I might se plaine,
Lady faieth styll holding the sacrament,
To which the quene did knele continent. (ibid.)

In kneeling before the superior majesty of the host, Mary then becomes the loyal handmaiden to Lady Faith, much like a more dignified version of Heywood's broom-brandishing maid. She continues in this humble vein by giving thanks to God for her providential accession, making reference to a victory achieved 'with out bloude shede most miraculously' (E3^r) – perhaps a reference to the abortive Wyatt rebellion.⁵³ The vision portion of the poem ends with Mary again adopting the role of Nemesis, commanding the release of those who suffered under the old regime 'and were punished for lady feithes sake' (ibid); the egregious nature of the crimes perpetrated during Edward's reign being dramatized by Hogarde in the person of the persecuted Lady Faith, another figure of outraged feminine modesty, like Widowe Ynglond and Respublica. Just like his more courtly peers Heywood and Udall, Hogarde depicts the very moment of Mary's accession as a triumphal victory, where past evils are instantly dissolved and truth reasserted.

⁵² Miles Huggarde [sic], *The assault of the sacrame[n]t of the altar [...]* (London: Caly, 1554), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 12 August 2009], STC 13556, E2^v.

⁵³ Finding the city gates closed against them at Ludgate, Wyatt's rebel army dispersed in the outskirts of London. See David M. Loades, *The Wyatt Rebellion* (Oxford: Davenant, 2000), esp. pp. 21-23; Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 5th edn. (Harlow: Pearson, 2004), p. 95.

Conclusion

This chapter began with Foxe's portrayal of Mary's personal misfortunes and untimely death as events assured by providence, yet we have seen that her contemporaries continually applied the very same concept of divinely assured inevitability to her accession, emblazoning her as Nemesis and a warrior queen. While the construction of the queen in these works undoubtedly owes a debt to medieval Mariological formulas, few direct comparisons to the Virgin are made and numerous other fitting archetypes are offered instead, drawn from the Old and New Testaments, Apocrypha and classical legend. In creating a diverse iconography for the first queen regnant, such works served as models for the Elizabethan panegyrists – who appropriated the useful imagery and allusions without crediting the Marian authors, self-consciously distancing themselves from the old regime and its religion.⁵⁴

The most frequently recurring trope which appears in Marian polemic is that of the queen as national mother figure. At its most simplistic this involves blurring the distinction between earthly and heavenly Marys as a means of stimulating the people's allegiance. However, more vitally, the generation of a pervasive image of maternity enables the writers to unite monarch, country and Church, thereby synthesizing a vision of a uniquely feminized state – which is set in direct opposition to the fiercely patriarchal government advanced by Protestants like Knox.

Although the works discussed all, without exception, utilize such maternal imagery, it must be noted that this is never linked with passivity, but with decisive (and often violent) action. In the works of those such as Proctor and Udall, this involves a corresponding infantilization of the reader and English subject as wayward or prodigal children in need of correction. Critics have tended to see the polemicists' affectionate characterisation of Mary as either propagandist or fanciful: in his introduction to Stopes' ballad, Hyder Edward Rollins remarks somewhat facetiously that 'the eulogy of "Bloody" Mary as a mirror of merciful meekness has, to phrase it mildly, an unusual sound'.⁵⁵ Yet it is clear that the Marian polemicists did not see the qualities of love and discipline as mutually exclusive, but rather as two aspects which were both necessary for a monarch to possess – their Mary is one who walks softly and carries a big stick.

⁵⁴ See King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, p. 184.

⁵⁵ Rollins, *Old English ballads*, p. 13

Afterword

The central thesis of this work is that polemics are not simply vehicles for doctrine or records of the vicissitudes of Reformation politics – and as such, the exclusive property of religious historians – but literary works, which benefit from critical close reading. Polemics are of interest not just because of their message, but also in terms of their construction: the imagery and tropes with which they build their case.

The material considered has included drama, martyrological texts, chronicles, broadside ballads and heresy recantations; texts both state-authorised and clandestine, reformist/Protestant and traditionalist/Catholic in allegiance. Yet despite the disparate nature of these works, a series of common properties have emerged.

Appropriation

Each text examined here displays self-consciousness about generic form. Polemicists reinvigorate medieval literature, tailoring familiar forms to the new political and doctrinal needs of their own era. The mysteries and morality plays had long been used as vehicles of religious instruction, and leading reformists such as Cromwell continued to harness vernacular drama for pedagogic use.

John Bale is the first writer to effectively sectarianize English drama, writing and producing plays in the service of reformist propaganda, attempting to replace conventional didactic lessons with the new dogmas. From a literary form which aspired to timelessness, Bale creates a contemporary satire, changing the significance of ecclesiastical costume by making it indicative of vice rather than virtue, and altering the attendant allegory of ‘disguise’ by making it no longer about concealment, but the tyranny of office. Good and evil are given their own distinct idiolects and Bale’s tactic of uniting dramatic image with doctrinal message results in a dramaturgy which is, at times, genuinely powerful.

For reformist prose writers, popular dramatic conventions become the basis of a metaphor which equates Catholic ceremony with histrionic performance. Sacraments, the mass, and the liturgy are continually construed by writers such as Foxe, Golding, and Tyndale as ‘apish toyes’, ‘merye conceites and enterludes’. In addition, the portrayal of their religious opponents as ‘Vicelike’ enables a dehumanising effect, allowing them to present the traditionalist clergy as demonic or bestial. This tactic proved so effective that in some cases the caricature outlived the immediate religio-political context: thanks to Foxe

the epithet 'bloody Bonner' – along with the bishop's reputation as ill-favoured and irascible – lasted well into Elizabeth's reign and beyond.¹

Catholic writers also made innovative use of medieval genres. Nicholas Udall's *Respublica* recalls the political allegory format of Skelton's *Magnyfycence*, yet where Skelton's play is intended as a critique of the behaviour of the young Henry VIII and his parasitic advisors, Udall reworks the allegory in a way that allows him to praise the queen unreservedly. Placing the commonweal in the role of protagonist (traditionally occupied by the sovereign-figure) allows Udall to pin the blame for adverse events on the Edwardian government, portraying Mary as the conquering heroine of the new prosperous age, Nemesis. The Marian balladeers Forrest and Stopes altered another medieval form, the religious lyric, in order to redirect the traditional devotional behaviour associated with the Virgin towards her namesake, the English queen. Yet, in constructing a multi-faceted iconography for the first queen regnant, the Marian polemicists unwittingly created a store of words, images and allusions for the Elizabethan panegyrists to appropriate and later use to legitimise the rule of their own Protestant queen.

This keen awareness of genre shows the extent to which religious and political debates are embedded within literary tropes. That all the polemicists (whether they chose to convey their message in prose, poetry or a play) appealed time and again to the conventions of the mysteries and moralities shows how fixed these had become in the national psyche.

A second type of appropriation is that of the opponent's rhetoric: reformist polemicists effectively hijack the pro-persecution arguments of the religious authorities in order to subvert them. Each image the traditionalists put forward to illustrate their good intentions is proved within reformist texts to be a concealment of a truth which is its exact opposite: gentleness is disguised cruelty, spiritual surgery is murder; confession is

¹ A slew of unflattering epitaphs were published in the wake of Bonner's death in 1569: Lemeke Avale, *A Commemoration or dirge of bastard Edmond Bonner, alias Savage, usurped Bishop of London* (London: [Kingston], 1569), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 14 June 2010], STC 977; Thomas Broke, *An epitaph declaring the lyfe and end of D. Edmund Boner* (London: Day, [1569?]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 14 June 2010], STC 3817.4; Thomas Knell, *An epitaph, or rather a short discourse made vpon the life [and] death of D. Boner sometimes vnworthy Bisshop of London whiche dyed the v. of September in the Marshalsie* (London: Allde, 1569), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 14 June 2010], STC 15033. Bonner is also cast as a villain in Thomas Drue's play *The life of the dutches of Suffolke* (London: Mathewes, 1631), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> [accessed 14 June 2010], STC 7242, where he confides his bloodthirsty wishes to his cohort Stephen Gardiner: 'every towne should blaze, / And every streete, in every towne looke red, / With glowing sinders of the Miscreants [...]' (sig. G3r). On Foxe's influence on Bonner's reputation see also David Loades, 'Foxe and Queen Mary: Stephen Gardiner: Edmund Bonner'.

wounding, and ceremony, violent disorder. The overall vision created by this tactic is that of the traditionalists occupying a world that is shadowy, sinister, and fraudulent.

The ability of Protestant texts to transform medieval and contemporary Catholic narratives displays an aptitude for literary innovation and an awareness of how best to shape polemical message for a popular audience. However, while this tactic of appropriation and subversion is effective, it is also reactionary, dependent upon the very structures to which it sets itself up in opposition. The emergent tendency (visible in the works of Bale and Foxe) to sequester metaphor and imagery, humour, and demotic language with evil – and, increasingly, to define the reformist self only in relation to the scripture – point to radical Protestantism's future antipathy towards the creative arts. For all Bale did to advance mid-Tudor dramaturgy, the deep-seated discomfort in the liminal spaces between word and image that is evinced by his plays shows him to be the ancestor of the anti-theatrical campaigners from Elizabeth's reign and beyond.

Community and History

Another shared feature of the polemics examined is their awareness of community, and the need to define it. Anne Askew creates within her text a concept of a community (both historical and geographical) of true church members through her image of a Bible of the heart. In the wake of the disruption of Henry's reign and five years of Edwardian Protestantism, the Marian polemicists John Standish and Richard Smith recognised the need to redefine both Catholic and national identity. This they achieved by feminizing both, promoting the Church and Queen Mary as maternal authority figures in order to encourage cohesion and obedience among English subjects.

The conceptualisation of 'community' within these works frequently involves defining not only the present, but also the past. John Foxe's great martyrological work synthesises Protestant identity even as it claims to be merely recording it, subtly editing the past to advance a vision of unity. As Foxe's response to Askew and his downplaying of the Henrician recanters demonstrates, he is not above glossing over inconvenient details, such as backsliding or doctrinal disharmony. While those like Becon and Crome, who survived under Mary's rule, were later instrumental in the establishment of the Elizabethan church which Foxe pledged allegiance to, he felt that their expedient lapses could not be publically acknowledged.

Bale too, alters communal perceptions of the past. He reclaims King John from the monastic chroniclers who had portrayed him as a tyrant, instead casting him as a heroic proto-Protestant martyr, murdered by the minions of a tyrannical Church. Bale shares with Tyndale an understanding of history that turns in repetitive cycles, illuminated by archetypes. As humanity is bifurcated into followers of the true or false church, figures may appear interchangeably in generalised forms or as specific historical personages. The evil of antichrist can be recognised in the Pharisees, Pope Boniface, the wicked monk Simon of Swinsett or seditious legate Steven Langton, while the spirit of Christ invigorates the apostles, King John, lollards such as Oldcastle and of course, the reformist gospellers.

Arthur Golding's rewriting of communal history is twofold: on the one hand, he is engaged in bringing to light the Marian Catholic authorities' attempt to alter the collective memory by means of book-burnings, anti-eulogies and the removal and destruction of the physical remains of the reformist theologians Bucer and Phagius from the university (the nation's intellectual centre); on the other, he is clearly engaged in his own project of history-making, structuring his text in such a way that the reader observes the degradation and turmoil of Marian England before moving on to the 'restoration' of Bucer and Phagius (and therefore, symbolically, truth and good order itself) under Elizabeth.

Gender and Sexuality

Major chapters of this study have focused on two very different women: Anne Askew and Mary Tudor. Although they are situated almost at opposite ends of this thesis, and are separated by class, consequence, and their religious allegiances, both are women who appear to be self-constructing, as well as the passive objects of others' construction. While Askew writes in the first person, her words are constantly impinged upon, interpreted and rearranged by her magisterial male editors, Bale and Foxe. Her voice is most audible when she speaks through scripture, appropriating phrases to subtly assert her doctrinal identity or comment on the events at hand.

While the balladeers Stopes and Forrest were quick to exploit the imaginative links between Mary I and her Virgin namesake, the queen's own lack of devotional interest in the Virgin suggests an eschewing of medieval modes of devotion. Mary's adoption of the motto 'veritas temporis filia' points to a self-conception more in line with polemicists' portrayal of her as a triumphal conqueror and redresser of wrongs.

Both of these women existed within a culture that disparaged female power and outspokenness, and thus they, and those that wrote about them, needed to mitigate the potential radicalism of their position. For both Askew and Mary Tudor this is achieved by diffusing the focus of the narratives and introducing other concepts as legitimising props. Askew is bound up within a nexus of meaning, comprised of her own body, that of fellow martyrs, the wider reformist community along with their writings, and – most importantly – the Bible itself. Likewise, Mary is subsumed into the overarching maternal metaphor of queen-Virgin-Church. In these texts both women become effectively decentred, so that the public gaze is not concentrated directly upon the female subject but on the wider concepts she is made to represent.

Polemics on both sides of the religious divide engage in portraying their opponents as of ambiguous gender. For Hogarde, the relaxing of the laws of clerical celibacy makes the Edwardian bishops 'effeminate', while for Bale the 'shavelynge' beardless and tonsured priests are the epitome of gender-confusion. In both traditionalist and reformist rhetoric, gender confusion signifies the opponent's profound disorderliness (both physical and spiritual) and unfitness to govern within a staunchly patriarchal society.

Polemicists also level accusations of sexual abuse at their religious opponents. Foxe's martyrology portrays the traditionalist authorities as violent and predatory, and often shows female martyrs at the mercy of men like Edmund Tyrell, whose questions are punctuated with prurient accusations. Anne Askew skillfully draws the reader's attention to the disturbing undertones of her interrogators' language, presenting Bonner's offer to search her spiritual 'wound' as a coercive sex act. Yet the rape metaphor is not only applied to cases involving female victims: male martyrs such as Thomas Hinshaw also suffer attacks that are portrayed as acts of sexual molestation. Sexual violence is in a sense ungendered within polemical texts, because rape and other taboo sex acts such as sodomy are treated as metaphors rather than physical acts. For Bale and Foxe, rape represents all kinds of tyranny (religious and political) and sodomy all kinds of perversion (that of social order and doctrine). While Michel Foucault writes that for early modern society (which lacked a concept of homosexual identity) sodomy was 'an act without a discourse', Danielle Clarke shrewdly counters that it is a 'discourse without an act'.²

² Danielle Clarke 'The Sovereign's Vice Begets the Subject's Error: the Duke of Buckingham, "Sodomy" and the Narratives of Edward II, 1622-28', in *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 46-64 (p. 61).

Implications

This study has argued for the suitability of polemical texts as subjects for literary analysis, and the links identified above show that this approach can yield valuable results, enabling the discovery of conceptual and literary common ground within texts authored by those of opposing religious allegiances, across a period of thirty years. Yet, as discussed in the introduction, this is necessarily a selective survey, and cannot be considered exhaustive or complete. A large amount of work remains to be done on the Marian period, which saw the production of a huge number of polemical works, printed both by the newly-restored Catholics at home and Protestant exiles abroad. Another opportunity for further study is in the treatment of heresy recantations as literature, and I believe that the transcription and evaluation of these documents would be of considerable value to Reformation studies.

Illustrations

Fig 1: The right Picture and true Counterfet of Boner', from *Acts and Monuments*, 1563 edition, p. 1701

☞ The right Picture and true Counterfet of Boner, and
his crueltie, in scourging of Gods Sainctes, in his
Orcharde at Fulham.



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Fig 2: 'The mayde [...] wyth her foote presseth hym to death', in John Heywood, *The Spider and the Flie*, Cap 94.

THE SPIDER

The mayde (appeering as woe to distroye the spider as he is to be dystroyde) wyth her foote presseth hym to death. Cap. 94.



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