

READING THE CATHOLIC MYSTICAL CORPUS
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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Introduction

From the martyred corpses of Jesuits (such as Edmund Campion and Robert Southwell) to the recusant figures hidden in priest holes and secret chapels, Catholic bodies haunted the early modern English cultural landscape. Scholars have become more attuned to the presence of these bodies due largely to the spate of recent studies which, under the umbrella manifesto of the recent “turn to religion,” has redrawn the historiographical lines of early modern Catholicism, effectively challenging the “Whiggish master narrative of English religious history.” The revisionary scholarship has seriously undermined the prevailing notion, summarized by Peter Lake, “that after some indeterminate point in Elizabeth’s reign, if not before, Protestants and Protestantism are central to the national story in a way that Catholics and Catholicism are not.”¹ English Catholics, who were undoubtedly present in bodily form under the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline regimes, manifested a variegated culture of their own against the backdrop of a hostile Protestant church. The methodological paradigm shift brought about by the turn to religion has resulted in a far more nuanced understanding of how English Catholics created “symbolic systems” of meaning within their communities of believers. Indeed, the physical presence of Catholics in England is, as Peter Davidson has shown, traceable to the “discrete expressions of their faith through the use of space, symbol, and inscription.”²

Adherence to Catholicism in this period, however, often entailed absence as much as it did hidden or illegal presence. Throughout much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many Catholics faced the very real possibility of exile through either imposed or voluntary relocation to the Continent. Prospects of banishment, as Alison Shell has helpfully articulated, engendered “two contrasting topographical effects, obliging one either to flee, or to stand one’s ground with an unambiguous proclamation of allegiance” to the

Roman faith. The latter topographical effect frequently involved living in distinct opposition to the established church, and this, as recent scholarship has emphasized, concomitantly produced counter-cultural expressions of piety.³ Fleeing England did not necessarily extricate Catholics from living in opposition to the Protestant discourse of their countrymen. Quite to the contrary, physical displacement could easily intensify the already pronounced differences between the two religious spheres. Still, charting Catholic culture among exiles proves difficult, largely because these Catholics lived physically outside, but always in relation to, the dominant power structures of the Church of England. In the seventeenth century, this paradoxical cultural orientation becomes most evident among English converts to Roman Catholicism who, through their fluency in dual devotional vocabularies, dramatize most clearly the effects of transition, displacement, and absence.

As apostates from the English Church, Catholic converts embodied opposition. Within the seventeenth-century context, I wish to concentrate here on three particular writers who powerfully exemplified this phenomenon: Sir Toby Matthew (1577-1655), Richard Crashaw (1612-1649), and Serenus Cressy (1605-1674). These specific converts shared a pronounced interest in mystical writings, especially those authored by the female mystics St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Julian of Norwich (1342-1416). The purpose of the present study is, first, to explicate the discursive correlation between the Catholic's exile (i.e. his bodily dislocation) and his interest in mystical literature, and, second, to underscore the thematic importance of the body within this discursive relationship. My overarching contention is that the cultivation of mystical literature among these convert-writers supplied unique resources for resistance to Protestant negations of bodily religious practice. Mystics like Teresa and Julian claimed in their writings to have experienced divine revelations through affective sensual states of ecstasy and rapture. Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy all

oriented themselves around the mystics' texts, and their tales of ecstatic devotion, in suggestive ways. Of the many characteristics of mystical literature, what appealed to these writers most was the prospect of envisioning the body as a *locus* of divine disclosure. There is in each of these instances, I would maintain, a discernable cultural correspondence between the Catholic exile's physical erasure from his country and his gravitation toward corporeal mysticism.

Importantly, approaching the physical body as the place of one's encounter with an ineffable God stood, among these Catholics, in contradistinction to Protestant inscriptions of "pre-given structures of stability upon the body."⁴ The dominant English Protestant voices of this period collectively fostered a radical antithesis between, on the one hand, the supreme authority of scriptural texts and rational theology, and, on the other hand, the elusive domain of the senses. The latter came to be almost absolutely associated, through complex gendered language, with Roman Catholicism. Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy took it upon themselves to challenge the pre-given and often over-determined conceptions of corporeality that proliferated in their former native context. They accomplished this, as I shall demonstrate here, in their dramatized respective roles as translator, reader, and transcriber of mystical literature. In addition, all three faced prolonged hardships due to their conversions to Catholicism and were repeatedly disenfranchised by a country that they both loved and feared. I shall suggest that the elusiveness of the body in mystical literature corresponded in interesting ways, at least for Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy, with the displacement that the Catholic convert felt upon exiting the dominant power structures of the English Protestant hegemony. Cultivating the corpus of mystical literature allowed these writers a unique countervailing opportunity to resist both the ideology of English nationalism and the Protestant disregard for the body.

I

Before advancing into a consideration of Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy, it is worth pausing momentarily to outline the conceptual relationship between textuality, mysticism, and embodiment in the seventeenth century. These three conceptions were all operative in early modern debates regarding the origins of authoritative spiritual truth. Several centuries of historical change leading up to this period contributed to the interrelationship of these notions: the advent of a fully developed print culture, the fragmentation of European Christianity, and the emergence of novel forms of religious praxis. An important cultural index of these changes can be found in the evolving conception of the mystical as it related to ecclesiology, scriptural exegesis, and pious observance.

Throughout the patristic and early medieval periods, the idea of the “mystical” was often initially related to biblical hermeneutics. From its original etymology, it signified something hidden, secret, or imbedded within the text of scripture itself to be teased out by the trained (i.e. clerical or religious) interpreter. Thus, within this timeframe it would be grossly anachronistic to think of those who contemplated the hidden meanings of scripture as mystics in the modern sense of the term. Nonetheless, there arose in the patristic period a parallel conception of visionary revelation that would in time come to be closely associated with the mystical as something hidden or arcane. Augustine was instrumental in the development of a robust conception of visionary experience, which for this speculative theologian signaled foremost the soul’s ascent through contemplation to the divine presence. Building on his Trinitarian speculations about the nature of rationality and epistemology (discussed in his works *De Trinitate* and *De Genesi ad Litteram*), Augustine articulated what is perhaps the first taxonomy of mysticism within the Latin Christian tradition. Bernard McGinn, the foremost historian of Christian mysticism writing today, has noted that the

Bishop of Hippo “laid the foundations for the theological evaluation of visions by dividing the showings produced by special divine action into three ascending forms based on their relation to materiality: corporeal visions, spiritual visions (i.e., visions given interiorly to the soul); and intellectual visions, which constitute an immediate grasp of infallible divine truths.”⁵ In early Christianity, visionary revelation did not stand in opposition to biblical revelation, but rather existed symbiotically with it.

The relationship between corporeal visions and infallible divine truths remained predicated upon Paul’s own visionary account of his journey to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians. Perhaps one of the most cryptic passages in the entire New Testament, the opening lines of 2 Corinthians 12 recount Paul’s rapture to the third heaven and his divine revelation of “unspeakable words” (*arreta rhemata* in the Greek text and *arcana verba* in the Vulgate). Recent biblical scholarship has demonstrated convincingly that Paul’s experience should be interpreted in the context of first-century Jewish Merkabah theology and the genre of apocalyptic literature of that period.⁶ Alan Segal has further noted that when Paul is properly situated within his intellectual *milieu* it becomes clear that he wrote as a mystic, and Segal contends that Paul “is the only early Jewish mystic and apocalypticist whose personal, confessional writing has come down to us.”⁷ Indeed, Paul’s visionary account has enjoyed avid readership through the ages. The apostle’s ineffable experience inspired many patristic and medieval writers, including Origen, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Bonaventure, all of whom grounded their mystical theology, at least in part, on the explication of Paul’s reference to divine rapture. What was perhaps most enigmatic about Paul’s account of mystical ascent was his uncertainty about whether the event affected him corporeally. Twice in his narration he reflects his irresolution about his bodily state during his visionary experience: “whether in the body, I

cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.” In some respects, since Paul entertained the possibility that the body could have been operative in mystical ascent, this biblical passage contributed to the theological significance of embodiment within multiple intellectual paradigms.

As the supreme model of Christian mysticism, Paul’s rapture to the third heaven elided naturally with both patristic Neoplatonic theology and medieval scholastic thought, both of which posited mutually reinforcing celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies that reflected the path of mystical ascent. However, during the Reformation many Protestants eschewed and critiqued mystical experiences as aberrations from the authentic deposit of faith. Through the collective enterprise of writers like Luther and Calvin, the epistemic ground of theology and religious practice began to shift increasingly toward an emphasis solely on scripture. As a result, many Protestants, both English and Continental, distanced themselves from visionary modes of religious practice, often denouncing them opprobriously as marks of “fanaticism,” “enthusiasm,” and “Romanism.” Luther had objected to both the mystical hiddenness of scriptural meaning as well as the prospect of visionary modes of revelation. Both remained, in the eyes of the magisterial reformer, legitimated by the oppressive ecclesiastical control of the Catholic Church.

Diverging from patristic and medieval forms of mystical devotion, Luther disallowed the visionary modes of revelation that had seemingly been confirmed by Paul and later systematized by Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius. The chasm between the individual believer and the deity was unbridgeable through any other means than that of the biblical text (the Word) itself. Luther declared:

The people of Israel did not have a God who was viewed “absolutely,” to use the expression, the way the inexperienced monks *rise into heaven* with their speculations and think about God as He is in Himself. From this absolute God everyone should flee who does not want to perish, because human

nature and the absolute God...are the bitterest enemies...We must take hold of this God, not naked but clothed and revealed in His Word; otherwise certain despair will crush us.⁸

The symbiotic relationship between corporeal visions and infallible divine truths that had been so integral to speculative theologians like Augustine undergoes a complete epistemological overhaul in Reformed thought. Noam Reisner writes, “Beginning with Luther...Reformed debates about the authority of Scripture tended to relocate that authority, and consequently the ineffable barrier of its language, from text to reader.”⁹ This process was fraught with vexing complications, due largely to its inability to accommodate the idea of hidden, ineffable mystery. Paul’s ineffable moment in effect constituted an extra-biblical mode of revelation. Whereas the apostle’s rapture had served in previous centuries as a cornerstone of apophatic theology, the same account lurks loosely and ambiguously behind Luther’s indictment of the late medieval meditative tradition. While Pseudo-Dionysius posited a celestial hierarchy that was concomitantly reflected in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Protestants like Luther initiated a transition through which individual believers interiorized the scriptures irrespective of external ladders of ascent or visionary experience. Put another way, piety for Luther was the process of attuning oneself to the internal inspiration of the Holy Spirit and certainly not advancing through any hierarchical channels. The emerging spiritual doctrine of *sola scriptura* within Reformed theology thus maintained a complicated and often confused theological relationship with what Paul expressed as the *arcana verba* (unspeakable words) that constituted mystical revelation.

In the formative years of Protestant orthodoxy, early modern Catholicism was manifesting its own advancements in the arena of mystical and visionary devotion. For Catholics, the term *mystical* was also linked to the mystical body of Christ, which in the Middle Ages signified the assortment of believers within the ecclesiological nexus.

Following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and largely in response to inter-denominational disputes over the Eucharist, *mystical* also became refracted through the sacramental materiality signaled by the Eucharistic phrase *hoc est corpus meum*. The semantic metamorphosis of the term “mystical body” (*corpus mysticum*) thus revitalized the linkage between biblical, liturgical, and ecclesiological pathways to divinely authoritative truth.

The two semantic facets of the *corpus mysticum* (i.e. “body” and “mystical”) assumed another valence in Catholic theology after Trent: the mystical saint. The *locus* of the “mystical body” followed a progression from the abstract understanding of the church, thereupon evolving through conceptions of Eucharistic theology, and culminating in the actual bodies of individual mystics such as St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) and St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). The Roman Church endorsed these figures in the late sixteenth century as embodiments of doctrinal veracity. In their writings John and Teresa popularized the motifs of the dark night of the soul and the quasi-erotic state of mystical ecstasy. The latter motif became most influential in the wider Catholic European context, as witnessed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s famous seventeenth-century sculpture depicting the ecstatic Teresa. It was because of John and Teresa that the term “mystic” is used as a substantive description of an actual person beginning only in the seventeenth century following the wider circulation and readership of their writings.¹⁰ The canonization of these saint-mystics initiated a process whereby the semantic dimensions of “mystical body” were renegotiated within Catholic Culture through much of early modern Europe.

The pairing of these two semantically erratic terms (“body” and “mystical”) intensified, rather than alleviating, the ambiguities inherent in their respective denotative meanings, and this point is essential to the narrative being summarized here. *Mystical* had, since the patristic era, pointed to something hidden that was nonetheless manifest in

something present (e.g. the Biblical text, the institutional church, or the Eucharist). Similarly, as Paul's visionary account suggested, the *body* constituted the form of the human sensorium that often blurred the distinction between absence and presence *vis-à-vis* visionary revelation. It was for this reason that Augustine had accepted the locution "corporeal vision" as a legitimate theological category. Both terms must be understood, especially following late medieval and early modern developments of affective spirituality, as involving a complex interplay between notions of absence and presence, hiddenness and manifestation, internal and external.

Reformed discussions of scriptural authority had obviated the semantic instability and ambiguity of "mystical body" in much of Protestant thought. In Catholic circles, matters were made more complex by the canonization of mystics who developed even further the corporeal idiom of mystical devotion. The interplay between hiddenness and manifestation necessarily assumed a widespread social significance given that mystics' personal experiences of divine revelation were refracted through the Church's popular hagiography. In the public sphere of early modern Catholic culture, interior sanctity and visionary modes of mystical life became the templates whereby authentic holiness could be detected and emulated. Construing early modern mysticism as generative of novel forms of discourse, Michel de Certeau locates that effect specifically in the mystics' corporeal language.

[T]he mystics were drawn away, by the life they lived and by the situation that was given to them, toward *a language of the body*. In a new interplay between what they recognized internally and the part of their experience that was externally (socially) recognizable, mystics were led to create from this *corporeal vocabulary* the initial markers indicating the place in which they found themselves and the illumination they received.¹¹

Most operative in this cultural phenomenon is the dynamic whereby the mystic's *body* becomes constituted not by a discrete definition of the term "body" but rather through the interchange of the mystic's subjective experiences with their correlative physical

manifestations. In the writings of figures like John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, such a discursive system had the paradoxically cumulative effect of appropriating corporeal language to emphasize the indeterminacy of the *body* as a definitive category of meaning. In this sense, I would suggest that within the (official) Catholic mystical discourse of this period the *body* functions as the ineffable *frontier* of religious experience. This elusive partition does not work to delineate definitively what is and what is not bodily, but rather underscores the uncertainty of the boundary by employing corporeal tropes to move between different religious registers (spiritual, sensual, etc.). Catholic mystic-saints even drew inspiration from the biblical story of Paul, who according to Acts 22:17 was momentarily *en ekstasei* and who subsequently received his hidden revelation, “whether in the body, I cannot tell” (cf. 2 Corinthians 12).¹²

Given the multivalent rhetorical function of the terms, interpreting the idea of the mystical body becomes an infinitely complex hermeneutical enterprise. The literary historian need not impose an artificial uniformity on the diverse significations of “body” or “mystical” to recognize that both terms were frequently employed in polemical exchanges between Protestants and Catholics in early modern England. As in much of Europe, the seventeenth-century English context revealed that the new corporeal idiom of Catholic mysticism had important political dimensions and ramifying social effects. Presently, I would like to concentrate on a few examples of Protestant skepticism regarding mystical devotion before proceeding to a consideration of how Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy utilized the discursive system of mystical corporeality. Such an overview will afford the opportunity of gaining greater interpretative traction on the Catholic converts’ resistance to Protestant ideology.

The genre of mystical literature popularized in the writings of John and Teresa was influential throughout much of Europe, though the discourse assumed new valences in

Protestant cultural contexts. In early modern England, for instance, an interest in esoteric devotion could all too easily be associated with the nation's two most feared religious foes: radical Anabaptism and authoritarian Catholicism. The former posited a church without hierarchical mediation: neither magistrate nor papacy. The latter was depicted as the supreme incarnation of Antichrist: despotic and heretical. Both were described as religions of "enthusiasts," a derogatory term denoting persons who claimed access to private inspirations and intense spiritual visions beyond the realm of rational speculation. According to Peter Lake, the specters of popery and Anabaptism were frequently appropriated by English interlocutors as "anti-types" in discussions of "the middle ground of protestant orthodoxy."¹³ While these polarities were first negotiated by the established church in the sixteenth century, they were frequently invoked again in the 1630s, 1640s, and 1650s when the magistracy and the established church reconfigured (while revitalizing) their institutional stance against Catholicism.¹⁴ Even as late as 1652, Henry Vaughan could write in the preface to his popular devotional work *The Mount of Olives, or, Solitary Devotions* the following: "I envy not their frequent ecstasies and raptures to the Third Heaven; I only wish them real, and that their actions did not tell the world they are rapt into some other place."¹⁵ Despite the fact that the Greek text of Acts 22:17 speaks of Paul *en ekstasei* and 2 Corinthians locates Paul in the third heaven, Vaughan could dismiss more recent reports of ecstatic experience (very likely that of Teresa of Avila) as an insubstantial mode of religious practice. Ecstatic mysticism, in its Catholic variant, was thus a crucial factor by which English Protestants could differentiate themselves from their great religious nemesis.

Another representative Protestant voice in this period was that of Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683), founding member of the Cambridge Platonists. Circulating in the same *milieu* as Richard Crashaw, Whichcote, in his attempt to establish a religion on "some

rational principle of certitude” declared: “We cannot ascend higher in our acting than we are in our Beings and Understanding. [...] [T]hey [i.e. Catholics and other “enthusiasts”] do not advance Religion who draw it down to *bodily acts*... [T]he *Christian Religion is not mystical*, symbolical, enigmatical, emblematical; but unclothed, *unbodied*, intellectual, rational, spiritual.”¹⁶ At precisely the socio-cultural moment when the established Church of England was attempting to formulate the boundaries of its orthodoxy, when the parameters were being constructed outside the ambit of Anabaptism and Catholicism (as Lake demonstrates), one can chart a prolonged animus toward the notion of the mystical. This comports with de Certeau’s explanation of the mystic discourse emerging in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: “The thread of psychosomatic signs was from then on the borderline that made it possible for mystical experience to be articulated in socially recognizable terms, *to be made legible* to the eyes of unbelievers.”¹⁷ Whichcote speaks for a large demographic of English Protestants who articulated denunciations of mysticism in any form, but especially that specimen predicated upon “popish” presuppositions. His rhetoric is as pointed as it is totalizing: the Christian religion “is not mystical” and it is “unbodied.” The attempt to make legible the ineffable experience of the mystic represents the extreme incoherence of objectification and further speaks to a radical rhetorical violence underlying this particular strain of Protestant polemic.

The discursive power structures of Protestant England were geared toward identifying and controverting the psychosomatic signs of Catholicism. One important facet of this widespread cultural project was its gendered dynamic. Scholars such as Frances Dolan, John N. King, and Arthur F. Marotti have highlighted the degree to which Protestant invective toward Catholics frequently involved the polemical and misogynistic propensity to associate the Catholic Church with feminized corporeity. The English Church figured itself,

in the words of Marotti, as “a masculinized, reform Christianity” which abjured the carnality of Catholicism (and its reverence for the feminine Virgin and female saints) in favor of “the supposedly more spiritual orientation of Protestant text- and language-based religion.” The inherently “unbodied” nature of Protestant devotion, as Whichcote had phrased it, could be “intellectual, rational, spiritual” only through the linguistic basis of its religion. By identifying Rome with the Whore of Babylon, English Protestants could, as Dolan remarks, “vivify intensely corporeal denunciations of the church’s corrupt and feminized body.” Furthermore, “[b]y persistently associating the Roman church with fallen women, reformers could acknowledge its seductive appeal while simultaneously repudiating it.”¹⁸ While Roman Catholicism had, since the days of Luther, been denounced as a church mired in material matters, in Reformation England this attitude assumed a new trenchancy in subsuming the psychosomatic signs of Catholicism into the figurehead of feminized corporeality.¹⁹

These polemical caricatures were first fashioned in the sixteenth century but came to a head in the years leading up to the English Civil War (1642-1649) when King Charles I’s Catholic wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, came to embody all of Catholicism’s supposed perversions, including its endorsement of mystics.²⁰ It has been important for my purposes to note the engrained misogyny of Protestant anti-Catholic polemic. I do so to adumbrate how the discourse of the body was rendered problematic in the seventeenth-century English context. While a fruitful line of inquiry would pursue what these denunciations of the body reflect about Protestant anxieties surrounding female agency, I have been more interested here in charting momentarily how the gender-inflected language of Protestant polemic functioned as a backdrop to Catholic emphases on the elusiveness of the body in mystic discourse. Thus, if Queen Henrietta Maria came to represent all of the supposedly degenerate psychosomatic signs that perturbed the English establishment, she also served as

a nodal figure in the seventeenth-century cultivation of mystical discourse, especially among English converts to Catholicism. Two of the most prominent of these converts, Toby Matthew and Richard Crashaw, would intensify the association of Catholic enthusiasm with elusive corporeal devotion by interacting with the Queen.

II

Like Crashaw, Sir Toby Matthew (1577-1655) was the son of a staunchly Protestant father (the archbishop of York) whose anti-Catholic vitriol painted a very exotic picture of the Church of Rome. Following his academic training at Oxford (1590-1597), Matthew would convert to Catholicism in 1606/07 after meeting the English Jesuit and ideologue Robert Persons abroad, and would subsequently become a Jesuit himself. The trajectory of Matthew's life reveals that even when Catholics were given a modicum of acceptance among political elites, they remained within a hair's breadth from being ostracized culturally and religiously, if not physically. Throughout his life he enjoyed close relationships with people like Francis Bacon, John Donne, and the Duke of Buckingham. But Matthew openly avowed his interest in retaking England for the Catholic cause, as evidenced in his attempt to facilitate the Spanish Match. More importantly, despite his appeal to figures such as Buckingham (who was often responsible for orchestrating Jacobean tolerance of his presence), Matthew was exiled (first by Archbishop Bancroft in 1608 and later in 1618 by King James himself) for his obstinate and repeated refusal to take the Oath of Allegiance. He was allowed to re-enter the realm on both occasions due to his close affiliation with Buckingham and Prince Charles.

Matthew irked other members of the Jacobean establishment, however, primarily because of his cunning ability to convince influential figures, such as Frances Brydges and Anne Boteler, to convert to Catholicism. On more than one occasion Matthew was referred

to as “perverse” for his contagious Catholic influence, and many within the court feared that his proximity to Prince Charles was potentially pernicious.²¹ James was so beguiled by Matthew’s crucial role in the diplomatic venture of the Spanish Match that he knighted the Jesuit in 1623. Matthew was one of a very small group of Catholics to receive such patronage by the monarch in this period. With the knighthood he could move more freely as a courtier, but following the ascendancy of Charles I his growing influence provoked deep anti-Catholic sentiments among court officials. In 1640 Matthew was accused, probably erroneously, for being a participant in a Jesuit plot to kill Charles, and he was banished from the realm for good in 1641.

While Matthew’s courtly career would suggest a mere political dynamo, his true interest was always in literary Catholic culture, as is clear from his persistent interest in making translations of Catholic devotional literature. He was a lifetime devotee of Augustine, whose *Confessions* he translated to great acclaim in the 1620s. He would go on to translate works of Lucy Knatchbull and Francisco Arias. More important for my purposes is the fact that his final exile afforded him the opportunity to compose verse that reflected his displaced status as a Catholic and to translate Teresa of Avila’s *El Libro de la Vida*.

In striking ways, Matthew’s case testifies to the profound disruption experienced by Catholics in years leading up to the Civil War. On the occasion of his final banishment, he penned a poem entitled “Vpon the Sight of Douer Cliffs from Callis,” reflecting the emotional and physical displacement of having to take leave of his country:

Better it were for me to haue binn blinde
Then with sadd eyes to gaze vpon the shore
Of my deare countrey, but now mine no more
Which thrustes me thus, both [out] of sight and minde,

Better for me to haue in cradle pined
Then liue thus longe to choake vpon the coare
Of his sad absence, whom I still adore

With present hart, for harts are not confined

Poore hart, that dost in so high tempest saile
Against both winde and Tide, of thie friends will
What remedie remaines, that cann availe
But that thou doe with sighes, the sailes fullfill
Vntil they split, and *if the body die*
T'is well ymploy'd, the soule shall liue thereby.²²

Commenting that his country is no longer his, Matthew frames the exilic event as violent ejection: “thrustes me thus.” As in the case of many “papists” before and after him (cf. the lives of Southwell and Crashaw), Catholics hovered in the liminal space of an English culture that tolerated neither their physical presence nor their theological positions. Catholics were, as Matthew puts it, “out of sight and minde.” Gazing at his country from a distant shore, the speaker places Catholics in the destitute position of a lonely child who, being the progeny of an inhospitable mother, is cast off and left alone.

Punning on the Latinate word *cor* (“choake vpon the coare”),²³ Matthew employs one of his favorite figurative constructions: the heart. It is the heart, as metonymic representation, that functions as the emblem of the displaced Catholic. The Catholic experiences England as “absence” (7), and the heart becomes the vehicle of devotional mobility: “for harts are not confined.” Sailing upon the tempestuous seas of cataclysmic religious change (perhaps evoking the Civil War), the speaker refers cryptically to the heart’s fluid status between the body and soul: “Vntil they split, and *if the body die* / T’is well ymploy’d, the soule shall liue thereby.” Given the complex syntax and grammar of the last quatrain and concluding couplet, it is difficult to understand completely what the speaker’s last thought is meant to encapsulate. However, we may be justified in taking the reiterated emphasis on the heart as a poetic marker of the body’s liminal state as both exiled Catholic body as well as the dying national body of apostate England.

In Matthew's sonnet on exile, it is the heart that sails and moves in the chasm between Protestant England and the peripheral world of the Continent. His usage of the heart motif should be read in relation to a wider facet of Counter-Reformation culture that is often identified, sometimes opprobriously, as a quintessential baroque aesthetic: the flaming heart. Within the larger network of what Peter Davidson calls "the universal Baroque," the flaming heart "symbolizes the endurance of faith" in the face of rapid change, that further signals a "baroque tradition of symbolic ornament and symbolic articulation of place and history." While flaming hearts of this period were frequently depicted in emblem literature as "the disembodied devout heart floating in radiance in the heavens," they came to represent the excess of the corporeal as reflective of the immanence of an infinite divine reality in bodily form.²⁴ This baroque aesthetic functions according to the same logic that I have identified as operative in the mystical construal of the body as ineffable frontier. Just as the "body" becomes constituted as the partitioning boundary between two indeterminate spheres (spiritual and non-spiritual; bodily and non-bodily), the baroque flaming heart represents the paradoxical confluence of a finite material form emblazoned with the vibrancy of infinite divine signification. In this representational system, the semantic integrity of the "infinite" (which by definition contradicts everything corporeal and finite) is compromised and dispersed into a discrete representation of a bodily organ.

Part of the historiographical difficulty of addressing early modern English Catholicism has been the persistent problem of understanding how the so-called Counter-Reformation baroque aesthetic engendered a "symbolic articulation of place and history" specific to English Catholics. If we accept Matthew's figuration of the heart as the liminal devotional vehicle that traverses the space of exile, hovering between different "bodies" (cf. "Vntil they split, and *if the body die / T*'is well ymploy'd, the soule shall liue thereby"), his case

offers a compelling opportunity to rethink how English Catholics found means of articulating their place in history through the elusiveness of this bodily form. The elusive nature of the body in the English Catholic imagination did not necessarily preclude approaching the corporeal as a means of expression. This is most clearly borne out in Matthew's engagement with the work of St. Teresa of Avila and later in Crashaw's similar encounter with Teresa's corpus.

Teresa's work *El Libro de la Vida*, first published in Spanish in 1588, had been translated into several other vernacular languages by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Matthew saw to it that Teresa would be rendered in English as well by translating the saint's autobiography in 1642 and subsequently dedicating it to Queen Henrietta Maria who was then fleeing the onset of the Civil War. We may reasonably date Matthew's exile poem, preoccupied as it is with hearts, to his last definitive banishment from the country in 1641, for it was around this time that he initiated the extensive labor of translating Teresa's autobiography, which he entitled *Flaming Hart, or The Life of the Glorious S. Teresa*. In Matthew's translation, we see the author transmuting the aggrieved heart of the Catholic exile depicted in "Vpon the Sight of Douer Cliffs from Callis" into the flaming heart of Teresa. Since the flaming heart, in the words of Davidson, "symbolizes the endurance of faith," it makes sense that the translator dedicates his work to a fellow exile who both stands for England and remains physically asunder from its domain: Queen Henrietta Maria. In this work, Matthew's preface to the reader seemed to confirm English Protestants' worst suspicions: that Catholics manifested an inordinate attraction to the body of the female saint-mystic and in turn accorded it an authority usually reserved for the Bible.

Published in Antwerp, Matthew's translation of *El Libro de la Vida* positions mysticism squarely within the discourse of seventeenth-century English politics. Matthew

claims in his dedicatory address to offer the translation to her “Majestie a meanes of *magnifying your owne natural greatnes*, by your avowing & protecting, and enlarging the glory of an comparable Saint, S. Teresa, to whome, as I have well understood that already you carry an extraordinary devotion.”²⁵ He continues to underscore the political subtext of his translation by emphasizing that England has been forced to maintain convents and monasteries abroad, such as the one at Antwerp where much recusant English writing was published. By amalgamating the theological influence of Teresa’s work with the magisterial puissance of Henrietta Maria, Matthew is drawing clear correlations between the two spheres of influence.²⁶ This tendency is magnified even further in his prefatory statements.

In his preface to the “Christian and Civil Reader” (5), Matthew makes several significant and incendiary statements regarding the mystical corpus of Teresa. He places, for example, Teresa in league with the famed patristic author, Augustine. Like the bishop of Hippo, Teresa experienced God directly and provided a first-hand account of her experience just as Augustine had done in his *Confessions*. To Protestant readers, for whom Augustine was also a pivotal and singularly great figure, the comparison would have appeared grossly mistaken and undeserved.²⁷ As Whichcote’s and Vaughan’s comments have made clear, Teresa’s example of ecstasy would have discomfited the Protestant ethos of England in subversive ways. Even sharing a unique revelatory experience in common with St. Paul could not legitimize Teresa as a viable devotional model. In 1638 Joseph Beaumont elicited Puritan furor by publicly endorsing Teresa in a lecture at Peterhouse, Cambridge that would ultimately cause him to be expelled from the college. While Matthew throughout his prose writings refers to the bishop of Hippo as the “incomparable Augustine,” he willingly goes against his own opinion by likening Teresa to her patristic forbear and thereby elevating her texts to the level of supreme authority. Even such a devoted student of Augustine as Luther

never claimed to be like the saint in any discernable fashion. For Matthew, both Augustine and Teresa enjoyed ineffable experiences of the divine in a manner that confirmed and legitimated their theological writings.

Matthew's provocative assertions are compounded even further when he attempts to mitigate the seeming strangeness of Teresa's experiences by comparing them to biblical accounts of apocalyptic visions. According to him, the Bible is *more* absurd than Teresa's writings: "I must heer, put you also in minde, how, particularly, it is found in Holie scripture, that there are innumerable instances (and especially, in the *Reuelations*, of the Blessed, and Beloued Apostle, S. Iohn) which are *incomparably more repugnant*, both to reason, and euen to Commonsense, then anie thing, which is related heer [i.e. in Teresa's text]" (12, emphasis added). There are few inflammatory comments that could have alienated Matthew from his Protestant countrymen more than this. Not only was Matthew privileging Teresa's writing over more ostensibly venerable texts; in addition he was seemingly denigrating the biblical text as both irrational and nonsensical in the process. The gravity of Matthew's assertion needs to be understood specifically in relation to the Reformed doctrine of *sola scriptura* that I have already outlined. This doctrinal stance was an absolute principle that located divine authority squarely within the confines of the printed Word. To challenge the fixity of the Word and its final authority was, in Protestant theology, to risk compromising the faith at large.²⁸

Matthew's comments on the comparative dynamic between Teresa's works and the Book of Revelations show clear signs of an interpellated identity originating in the national Protestant ideology that equated Catholicism with the Whore of Babylon.²⁹ This ideological prescription, which has been examined by Frances Dolan and John King, fabricated a totalizing association of Catholics with the biblical demonic figure who threatened the

politico-religious establishment of England and the security of Christendom.³⁰ The ideology extended into the realm of Protestant biblical commentary. The Geneva Bible, for instance, glosses Revelation 17:4 in the following manner: “This woman is the Antichrist, that is the Pope with *the whole bodie* of his filthy creatures” (emphasis added). Matthew appears alert to the ideological subtext of Revelations, and perhaps he uses the comparison from within the discourse of Protestant ideology to both magnify and complicate the association. If he was cognizant of the Whore/Rome conflation in Protestant polemics, and it would have been difficult for him to ignore, then his deliberate comparison of Teresa’s *Life* with the Book of Revelations would constitute a radical confrontation with an essential component of English anti-Catholicism. As the Geneva gloss indicates, and as Matthew seems to accentuate, the body served as the supreme emblem of Catholic difference.

The Protestant hypothesis that the errors of Catholicism stemmed from its entanglements with the body clearly found expression in Matthew’s preface to *Flaming Hart*. Matthew anticipates his reader’s concerns and anxieties by drawing explicit attention to the corporeal texture of Teresa’s writings. To take but one example here, he addresses his reader, “my Reader, whosoever you may be,”³¹ and preempts any impulse to dismiss Teresa’s work as simply erroneous: “And so, that Seruant [i.e. Teresa], consisting both of a Bodie, and a Soule, his Diuine Maiestie is also graciously pleased, manie times, to affect both the Bodie, and the Soule, together, with *a sensible kind of feeling of that grace*; Those outward demonstrations (*which speake, but, as it were, to the Bodie*) serving chiefly, but to denote, and describe, in that sort, to the whole man, the influences, and impressions, which then are made, and powered out, into the Soule” (31-32, emphasis added). By representing the mystic’s body as the *locus* and conduit of divine disclosure, Matthew actively resists the “unbodied” belief structure typified by Whichcote. In this way, Matthew’s notion that

sensible manifestations of divinity *speak to the body* works as a seventeenth-century Englishman's articulation of de Certeau's premise: "It is not enough to refer to the social body of language. Meaning is written through the letter and the symbol of the physical body. Mystics receive from their bodies the law, the place, and the limit of their experience." Through his operative role as translator, Matthew in effect revitalizes the relationship between corporeal visions and infallible divine truths that had been so integral to Augustine. In his case, however, the immediate grasp of divine truth also entails the strictly affective modality of Teresa's ecstasy, which enjoys its own authority. What is more, Matthew's prefatory statements supply further evidence that mystical manifestations point to, in de Certeau's words, "a non-subject (stranger to all individual subjectivity)" that in turn "demystifies consciousness."³²

For an exiled English Catholic, a demystified consciousness may have represented an attractive alternative to pre-given Protestant inscriptions upon the body. As one who is no longer a subject in the national sense of the term, Matthew positions himself in relation to a corpus of mystical literature that purports to illustrate the elision between the saint's subjectivity and God's Being. However, the point of this is not that the body can be definitively isolated as a completely intelligible place of revelation or that it, with subjectivity, can be dissolved into the divine abyss. In Matthew's formulation, Catholic mystic visionaries reveal the "sensible kind of feeling of that grace" that *speaks to the body*. As Teresa's works seemed to indicate, grace could become both tangible and corporeal. But if Teresa's writings constitute, as many scholars have maintained, an example of apophatic theology wherein the divine is approached through *unsaying*, then such apophatic mysticism works to hold definitive conceptions of the body in perpetual abeyance. It accomplishes this by looking to the mystic's body as the place where the "voice" of divine truth becomes resonant. If, as

Matthew frames it, divine grace speaks directly to the mystic-saint's body, then to objectify the body is manifestly to objectify the very voice of God. Matthew's translation would have been alarming to his Protestant readers precisely because it subverted the objectifying speech about the body that had suffused the Jacobean and Caroline establishments. English Protestants routinely objectified the body by presuming to delimit its capacities in religious observance and speculative theology. The claim that Christian religion should be "unbodied" conceals a subtle circumscription of the concept of the body within the dominant Protestant discourse. One must presume to know what a body *is* before one can exclude it from the domain of devotional practice.³³ By contrast, Matthew's construal of the mystic's ecstatic events points toward a radical openness to the indeterminate nature of mystical corporeality.

III

Matthew's contention that Teresa's corpus was in some sense more pellucid than scripture and more redolent of sensual grace would resonate with many Catholics, including Matthew's contemporary and fellow convert Richard Crashaw (1612-1649). The first edition of Crashaw's religious verse, *Steps to the Temple*, dates from 1646 and contains the poems written while he was clearly in the Protestant fold. Having held Laudian sympathies for much of his adult life, Crashaw fled to Holland to seek refuge after Parliamentary troops took over his native Cambridge in 1643. It is likely that Crashaw converted to Catholicism in 1645. By 1646, it is clear that Crashaw's change in ecclesial affiliation was noticed even in England. The anonymous editor of the 1646 *Steps*, which was printed in London, bestows many compliments upon Crashaw's name, including his proficiency in several languages, but ends his preface by stating in passing that the poet is "now dead to us." Since Crashaw actually died in 1649, the author of the preface clearly means that Crashaw was dead *religiously*. He was no longer in communion with the English Church. In fleeing to Leiden in search of

support from his friend Mary Collet, Crashaw likely left the manuscript of his devotional verse, such as it was, in Lincolnshire with Jonathan Worthington. The 1646 edition of *Steps* contains two poems dedicated to St. Teresa entitled “In memory of the Vertuous and Learned Lady Madre de Teresa that sought an early Martyrdome” and “An Apology for the Forgoing Hymn.” Crashaw was likely compelled to write an apology for his enthusiasm for Teresa’s works because he understood how volatile such sympathies would have been in the hyper-Protestanized context of the late 1630s and early 1640s.

It is precisely the manner in which Crashaw depicts his enthusiasm for Teresa’s corpus that warrants a closer examination of his participation in the mystical discourse of the body. As is evident in the title of his first Teresian poem, ““In memory of the Vertuous and Learned Lady Madre de Teresa,” Crashaw figures the mystic as a learned scholar whose textual narration of her ecstasy provides material for her followers to study:

Those rare workes, where thou shalt leave writ,
Love’s noble history, with witt
Taught thee by none but him, while here
They feed our soules, shall cloth thine there.
Each heavenly word by whose hid flame
Our hard hearts shall strike fire, the same
Shall flourish on thy browes; and be
Both fire to us and flame to thee;
Whose light shall live bright in thy face
By glory, in our hearts by grace. (156-165)³⁴

The baroque motif of the flaming heart, which was exemplified so nicely in Matthew’s sonnet and translation, resurfaces here in Crashaw’s poem. Crashaw, however, adjusts the imagery of the flaming heart to reflect a deeper dimensions of the mystical trace: “Each heavenly word by whose hid flame / Our hard hearts shall strike fire” (161-162). The poet’s identification of Teresa’s text as a hidden flame emanating from her original mystical fire pushes the figure of the liminal heart (voiced by Matthew) into new significations. What Matthew had described as “a sensible kind of feeling of that grace” is clearly mediated for

Crashaw through the experiential nature of reading Teresa's works. Crashaw orients himself to Teresa's text, creating a dynamic of relationality whereby the mystical excess of ecstasy proliferates in hiddenness even as it proliferates in textual significance. The poet thus enacts the dynamic interplay of presence and absence, hiddenness and manifestation that had characterized conceptions of the mystical in patristic and medieval writers. However, Crashaw alters the dynamic by situating such interplay within Teresa's corpus itself. Matthew positioned himself as translator of Teresa's mystical corpus, which entailed a slightly different orientation to the text. Matthew strove to achieve fluency in the corporeal idiom of mystical devotion, while Crashaw accentuates his role as a reader whose spiritual flame draws nourishment from the hidden meanings of Teresa's published text. This theme becomes clearer in his other poems on Teresa.

Crashaw wants to draw attention to Teresa's unique manner of speaking about mystical revelations. For him, such a mystical idiom is transformative precisely through its textual mediation. In this respect, the poet transposes discursive agency away from the authorial perspective toward the printed text itself. A question thus seems to emerge: what is the function of the reader? In his "Apologie" for his first poem to Teresa, Crashaw recounts his poetic achievement in the following way:

Thus have I back againe to thy bright name
Faire sea of holy fires transfused the flame
I took from reading thee" (1-3).

Speaking once more of hiddenness ("all thy mysteries that there lye hid" [12]), the poet returns to the image of reading Teresa:

What soule soever in any Language can
Speake heaven like hers, is my soules country-man.
O 'tis not Spanish, but 'tis heaven she speakes,
'Tis heaven that lies in ambush there, and breakes
From thence into the wondring readers breast,
Who finds his warme heart, hatch into a nest

Of little Eagles, and young Loves, whose high
Flights scorne the lazie dust, and things that dye. (21-28)

This short poem provides highly wrought imagery to convey the poet's deep affinity with Teresa and her *Vida*. Demurring in the face of Teresa's renowned mystical eloquence, Crashaw seeks to give her a proper honorific in his English vernacular. Perhaps most startling is the manner in which the poet conceptualizes Teresa's influence as almost militaristic. The poem claims that the printed text of Teresa's work is guilty of having a life of its own in dramatically influencing the minds of her readers. Bolding asserting that the appellation "Spaniard" (cf. l. 15) does not apply to souls or to spiritual matters, Crashaw consciously attempts to forestall any association in the mind of his readers of Teresa with simply her country of origin. Indeed, he argues that Teresa's native language is not Spanish, but rather the universal idiom of mystical discourse that is clear for all to read, regardless of national associations. As I have noted, the new mode of speaking characteristic of early modern mystical discourse traces the elusiveness of both the mystical event and the mystic's body. For Crashaw, the trace must be pursued through the text itself. Once more, the poet figures the heart as the emblem of corporeal elusiveness, evidenced by the profusion of images (e.g. Eagles) emanating out of the converted heart.

We can begin now to understand even more precisely how mystic discourse evolved in relation to Catholic English converts in the seventeenth century. Crashaw describes the process of reading Teresa as a transfusion of blood from one heart to another. The animating life force of the mystic is conveyed to the English convert through writing.³⁵ Crashaw develops the scope of Matthew's sensual imagery to establish a seemingly homologous comparison between the mystic's body and the mystic's body of work. Just as Teresa was ravished by some divine reality, so too is Crashaw's reader ravished by Teresa's text: "Tis heaven that lies in ambush there, and breakes / From thence into the wondring

readers breast” (24-25). There is a crucial paradox at the center of this construction. The poet has made it clear that the mystic flame lies hidden in the text of the saint, and yet this divine hiddenness seizes and invades the reader’s breast to permeate the corporeal heart. The process whereby the mystical phenomenon becomes simultaneously hidden and manifest inscribes a mode of alterity in the text itself. Crashaw frames such alterity from the perspective of the reader, whose passivity forestalls any possible objectifying orientation. In this formulation, ineffability remains entangled with textuality. Crashaw’s Teresian poems encapsulate this principle in a number of ways.

The second edition of *Steps to the Temple* was printed in London in 1648 and announces on its title page that the volume contains “divers pieces not before extant.” This edition includes the following six new poems: “O Gloriosa Domini,” “In the Glorious Epiphany of Our Lord God,” “Charitas Nimia,” “To the Name Above Every Name,” “To the Same Party: Councel Concerning her Choice,” and “The Flaming Heart.” L. C. Martin, Crashaw’s modern editor, notes that “[b]y 1648 Crashaw had probably been absent from England for three years; but the supposition that he had written, for him, a good deal between 1646 and 1648 seems a likely one,” and further argues that “the religious and devotional verse now first published [i.e. in 1648] seems likely to have been very largely of recent composition.”³⁶ Thus, one important post-conversion poem by Crashaw is one that takes its name from Matthew’s translation of Teresa’s autobiography, “The Flaming Heart.”

In his poem, “The Flaming Heart,” Crashaw intensifies the heart imagery from his earlier works.

O Heart! the æquall poise of love’s both parts
Bigge alike with wound and darts.
Live in these conquering leaves; live all the same;
And walk through all tongues one triumphant Flame.
Live here, great Heart; and love and dy and kill;
And bleed and wound; and yeild and conquer still.

Let this immortall life wherere it comes
 Walk in a crowd of loves and Martyrdomes
 Let mystick Deaths wait on't; and wise soules be
 The love-slain wittnesses of this life of thee.
 O sweet incendiary! shew here thy art,
 Upon this carcasse of a hard, cold, hart,
 Let all thy scatter'd shafts of light, that play
 Among the leaves of thy larg Books of day,
 Combin'd against this Brest at once break in
 And take away from me my self and sin[.] (75-90)

Without necessarily conflating the poet and the poem's persona, it is interesting to note the reference to the self in this text. There is evidence from Crashaw's actual life that during his exile abroad in Leiden he felt profound displacement and uncertainty about his status. In a letter to Joseph Beaumont that speaks of how his friends abandoned him after his conversion, Crashaw writes, "But what now remains to be don with this desolate thing, this that is left of mee; what must I doe? what must I bee?"³⁷ If Crashaw composed "The Flaming Heart" around the time of his exile on the continent, we may rightfully discern important correlations between the poet's loss of his homeland and the speaker's loss of self in mystical rapture.

Crashaw is not, however, concerned simply with the supposed annihilation of the self in the divine. As all of his Teresian poems make clear, the discursive function of the mystic's life, in which the texts "exhaust themselves trying to express" the inexpressible, militates against the temptation to objectify the mystical phenomenon.³⁸ Far from objectifying the bodily form, Crashaw's poem personifies the Heart as a marker of the elusive body in its perpetual motion through text: "Live in these conquering leaves; live all the same; /And walk through all tongues one triumphant Flame" (77-78).³⁹ As a baroque emblem of divine saturation, the heart again functions as the vehicle of corporeal elusiveness that at once conquers and supersedes the static conception of the body as "carcasse of a hard, cold, hart" (86). Crashaw tellingly eschews a common motif of mystical literature, the

dark night of the soul, in favor of those “scatter’d shafts of light, that play / Among the leaves of thy larg Books of day” (87-88). In playing upon the homology of the mystical corpus (body and text), the poet once more signals the elusiveness of the body by playing upon the prismatic effect of light.⁴⁰ The mystic’s radiance points to the scattered shafts of both body and text. Like Toby Matthew before him, Crashaw imbues the mystic’s body of text with heightened resonances of the mystic’s actual ecstatic body. As Richard Rambus notes, “Teresa’s multiply penetrated body becomes multiply orgasmic...resulting in spiritual insemination and fostering of converts” whereby the woman’s ecstasy is, through the transposing of text for body, sublimated into the “the ecstasy of a male body.” What Rambus identifies as the “thematics of erotic penetration”⁴¹ is most readily seen in Crashaw’s depiction of Teresa’s text ravishing him, penetrating his own body and not just his soul or mind.

IV

The accounts of both Matthew and Crashaw would seemingly confirm the worries of English Protestants who feared that the reports of mystics, especially female mystics, would infect the minds of impressionable young men. This worry assumed widespread public visibility in the second half of the seventeenth century when Protestants and Catholics in England became enthralled in a debate over the writings of an English mystic: Julian of Norwich (1342-1416). It is worth contextualizing this debate briefly before considering the example of Serenus Cressy.

Like many western European cultures, England had experienced a surge of mystical writing in the late medieval period. Its noteworthy authors included figures such as Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth-century, however, the

corpus of mystical literature fell into limbo. The archives of early modern England were rich with literary artifacts of the medieval Catholic heritage, but many Protestants selectively utilized the nation's libraries to substantiate their own current political concerns. In this respect, as Jennifer Summit has recently demonstrated, "the history of the English Middle Ages is [really] a history of the Renaissance, since post-Reformation collectors like [Robert] Cotton," England's most distinguished antiquarian of this period, "selected, organized, preserved—and in so doing...remade—medieval books and documents in line with their own contemporary concerns and fantasies about the past."⁴² For committed Protestants like Cotton, the repository of medieval manuscripts was, in Summit's useful formulation, the laboratory where a distinct form of "scholarly alchemy" could be performed and geared toward Protestant nation building. The corpus of medieval mystical texts was catalogued but ignored, falling as it were outside the parameters of the emerging orthodoxy of the Church of England.

For English Catholics, however, the traces of pre-Reformation England were of special interest. Not all Catholics were attracted to Counter-Reformation forms of devotion (such as the Jesuit model of spiritual exercise), and several looked to the mystical contemplative tradition for an alternate form. For instance, Augustine Baker (1575-1641), a Benedictine monk in charge of spiritual direction of English nuns exiled in France and Flanders, found in Cotton's archive largely ignored texts such as *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Julian of Norwich's work *A Book of Showings*. These texts became inspirational to Baker himself, but more importantly to the nuns under his direction who required vernacular texts due to their lack of training in Latin. After his experience in England's most notable manuscript archive, Baker discerned a clear need to transcribe and to edit mystical texts, making them available for a wider Catholic audience.

Such a goal was, from the beginning, fraught with difficulty. Cotton's library was subsidized by a Protestant political regime that, in the helpful words of Summit, "made libraries into arsenals and manuscripts into weapons."⁴³ The national church required documentary evidence that its pre-modern origins lay not with medieval Catholicism but rather with a distinctly English history that naturally led to the Tudor and Stuart dynasties. When Baker visited Cotton's library in the early 1620s, he encountered, among others, William Camden, the first official biographer of Queen Elizabeth. Camden came to the library as an openly Protestant historiographer and busily made use of the resources to write a fully documented account and justification of England's recent history as a Protestant nation, one that Elizabeth had prudently guided in the *via media*.

When Baker noted that the archive was thus being utilized as a tool to substantiate the Protestant ethos at the expense of a possible Catholic counter-narrative, he reacted in kind by searching for, in his words, "a collection of all manner of ecclesiastical antiquities."⁴⁴ It was during his research that he discovered the rich English mystical resources of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Given his pastoral vocation, Baker was interested first in supplying his disciples with manuscript copies of medieval mystical works for their own devotional ends. Toward the end of his life he had established a scriptorium in Cambrai (in northern France) where he and his followers copied and disseminated manuscripts of late medieval works of English mysticism. It is because of Baker's editorial initiative to copy from Cotton's library that many of these works were not destroyed and forgotten to history.

Augustine Baker's initiative to rescue works of mystical literature from oblivion was taken over after his death in 1641 by his close friend and confidant, Serenus Cressy. Whereas Baker's archival work had been brought to immediate fruition outside of England in his private French scriptorium, Cressy introduced mystic discourse into the English

mainstream in the 1650s by editing and publishing Baker's rescued manuscripts. English Protestants could easily and decidedly denounce more recent mystics like Teresa of Avila as merely foreign exponents of a corrupt church. Matters became more complex, however, when Cressy published works of English mysticism that had been previously excised from England's cultural religious history by contemporary historiographers. Cressy's publication of the works of Julian of Norwich revived interest in the mystic's body, the *locus* of ecstatic rapture and quasi-erotic religious performance. Like Teresa of Avila, who had recently received the Catholic Church's stamp of approval, Julian enjoyed a physical ecstasy that supposedly both signaled her encounter with the divine and legitimated her spirituality.

Protestant polemic against female mystics occasioned Cressy's most profound defense of Julian. Cressy was one of the prime interlocutors of the English Bishop Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), whose work *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practiced in the Church of Rome* (1672) targeted the growing interest and support of mysticism among Catholics. Like Whichcote before him, Stillingfleet sought to provide, as he described it in 1662, a "rational account of the Christian Faith" that was both "unbodied" and anti-Catholic.⁴⁵ In 1671 he published a rabid attack against Catholicism entitled *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practiced in the Church of Rome* wherein he condemns, among other things, the feminine and bodily nature of Catholicism. Attacking specifically the new wave of Catholic expositors of contemplative theology such as Baker and Cressy, Stillingfleet writes:

Excellent men! That debar the people reading the Scriptures in their own tongue, and instead of them put them off with such Fooleries, which deserve no other name at the best than the efforts of *Religious madness*. Were we to take an estimate of Christian Religion from such Raptures and Extasies, such Visions and Entertainments as those are, how much must we befool ourselves to think it *sense*?⁴⁶

I quote these lines at length to underscore the manner in which Stillingfleet, echoing Luther in pronounced ways, frames the Catholic endorsement of mysticism as involving a rejection

of reading the Bible in the vernacular. Hovering just below these lines is a profound anxiety regarding Paul's rapture to the third heaven. Stillingfleet's uneasiness stems from the realization that Paul's *arcana verba* do not fit comfortably within the scheme of *sola scriptura*. Whereas the Bible is open to all through its dissemination in various tongues, the experiences of individual mystics, Paul included, do not extend to all Christians, and remain inscrutable in problematical ways.

In the fourth chapter ("Of the Fanaticism of the Roman Church") he laments "[t]he great number of female Revelations approved in the Roman Church" as evinced in "the Fanatick Revelations of Mother Juliana very lately published by Mr. Cressy." Stillingfleet asks, "Do we resolve the grounds of any doctrine of ours into any Visions and Extasies?" (258), before repudiating Julian's writings as "fopperies," "efforts of Religious madness," and the product of "distempered brains" (258). Stillingfleet was most vexed, as were his fellow Protestants, by Julian's ascription of the epithet "Mother" to Jesus.⁴⁷ This was both an intolerable notion and an evocatively sensual locution. The Protestant preoccupation with the mystical corpus (in its textual and bodily forms) coincided with what they perceived as Catholics placing the texts on par with scripture. As we have seen, Matthew established a precedent that substantiated the Protestants' distress. Stillingfleet suspected that Cressy was doing something similar by publishing and endorsing the works of a "demonstrably mad" pre-modern "enthusiast."⁴⁸

Cressy's response to Stillingfleet was both nuanced and dynamic. In his work, *Fanaticism Fanatically Imputed* (1672), Cressy speaks of the "science of saints" (59) in a manner that anticipates de Certeau's work in interesting ways.⁴⁹ The English Catholic convert knew that the science of saints would be unintelligible to his Protestant interlocutors, since members of the Church of England could isolate any given saint or mystic in the Catholic

tradition as an “enthusiast” *avant la lettre*. Stillingfleet had denounced the reports of mystics as “unintelligible canting,” to which Cressy took special offense. For Cressy, the “Mystick Divines” (i.e. ecstatic visionaries such as Julian and Teresa) acknowledged in their writings “the *Infinitenes, Totality, and Vniversality of Gods Being*” (48), and so it was thus nearly blasphemous to label their discourse “unintelligible canting.” Indeed, the Catholic convert responds by suggesting that what really makes Julian unintelligible to her Protestant readers is her excess. For Julian had entered the “*inaccessible light,*” which was, according to Cressy, the “light though infinitely glorious, yet to us *invisible,* and invisible because of the excess of its Visibility” (48). In printing Julian’s works for the first time, Cressy explains to Stillingfleet that he was merely transcribing this excess so as to dramatize its visibility for more readers (cf. 45-46).

Stillingfleet had proclaimed that doctrinal matters could never be adjudicated by appeal to ecstatic events, for such experiences appeared as simple religious madness. Cressy could respond by suggesting that such a negative orientation to visionary revelation would contradict much of the contemplative Christian tradition, including the theology of Augustine. But he warned further that if one were to follow this line of reasoning all the way down, one would necessarily subvert the New Testament itself. It was not that Catholics privileged mystical texts over the Bible (as Luther had maintained), but rather that Catholics grounded all mystical visions, even the corporeal, in the model established by the supreme scriptural archetype of ecstasy. Cressy therefore speaks of the one particular mystic whom Stillingfleet would be at pains to dismiss: St. Paul.

And this is a certain Holy man that professes of himself that in a wonderful Extasy he found himself present in *Paradise*, and there saw and hear (as he thought) God only knows what. Now what soever it was that he saw and hear, he was, no doubt, willing to have communicated it to his brethren, but he had not the power to doe it. No human language could afford words so elevated and Divine. For if it could, I am assured he, who was the greatest

master of language that perhaps every was, had not failed to do it. Nay more, which still increases the wonder...This was surely, according to the Doctours [i.e. Stillingfleet] grounds, the greatest Fanatick that ever was, yea the father of all fanaticks. Yet the Doctour dares not call him so, after he is told that this was S. Paul (41-42).

As Catholics understood, especially in the wake of the early modern mystical revival, this arcane biblical passage shifted the *locus* of divine revelation away from its textual mediation toward the inscrutable realm of the flesh: Paul himself entertains the possibility that he received some kind of bodily initiation into the divine mysteries and this sets the stage for his infamous discussion of his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:1-7). In linking Julian's visions to the account found in 2 Corinthians, Cressy insists that all mystical devotion must be reconsidered in light of the embedded textual indebtedness to Paul's template of corporeal revelation. Julian's text supplied English Catholics with further discursive means of resisting the dominant ideology of the established church, which objectified Catholic mysticism as madness. As Cressy's role as transcriber and publisher indicates, one important facet of this subversive move involved reminding Protestants of a scriptural passage that Reformed thought had conveniently glossed over. When Cressy reminds Stillingfleet that even Paul "could not determin whether all the while his corporall sences, externall or internall, were employed in this *Divine Visitation*" (43), he bestows a heightened degree of authority to corporeal visions that had been endorsed in the Catholic tradition from Paul, through Augustine, and now to Julian and Teresa.

Conclusion

Brian Cummings has characterized Paul's conversion and sensational transformation through ecstasy as a "monstrous metamorphosis."⁵⁰ What makes the change monstrous is its elusive and indeterminate nature. In seventeenth-century England, Catholic converts like Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy experienced their own monstrous metamorphoses in the eyes

of the national Protestant establishment. Accepting Jennifer Summit's contention that early modern English culture "made libraries into arsenals and manuscripts into weapons," I would suggest that it is perhaps equally prudent to conceptualize the dissemination of Catholic mystical literature in this time as a sort of spiritual guerrilla warfare. The writings of Teresa of Avila and Julian of Norwich supplied the three converts considered here with discursive means of resisting the dominant Protestant ideology of their time. De Certeau writes that in early modern Europe, the Catholic mystic's body becomes "the intended goal of a journey that moves, like all pilgrimages, toward the site of a disappearance."⁵¹ I have suggested that one method of reading the lives of these converts involves correlating the displaced existence of English Catholics with the elusive, ecstatic body of the Catholic mystic. Such a correlation, of course, is not viable for all English converts to Catholicism. In the cases of Matthew, Crashaw, and Cressy, however, Catholicism became inextricably linked with a corpus of mystical texts in the seventeenth century. It was within that corpus that the mystic's body (*corpus*) was safeguarded in an elusiveness to be traced by the exiled Catholic who, finding himself outside of himself (*ekstasis*), marked his monstrous metamorphosis by reading that which moved perpetually toward disappearance.

NOTES

¹ For an overview of this larger trend in the field, see the much-cited essay by Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, “The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies,” *Criticism* 46.1 (2004): 167-190, with the current quotation drawn from 169. The quotation from Peter Lake is taken from Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 321.

² See Peter Davidson, “Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England,” in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, eds. Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highly, and Arthur F. Marotti, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 46. I appropriate here Raymond Williams’ useful definition of “culture” as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group” that produces “signifying or symbolic systems.” See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 90-91.

³ See Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 130. For a consideration of the counter-cultural expressions of Catholics who chose to remain in England under the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline regimes, see Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, C. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴ I appropriate here the phraseology of Roland Faber, “Bodies of the Void: Polyphilia and Theoplicity,” in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality*, eds. Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 203.

⁵ See Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)*, vol. 3 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 155. For a detailed treatment of Augustine as a “founding father” of Christian mysticism, see chapter 7 of McGinn’s first volume, *The Foundations of Christian Mysticism*, 228-262.

⁶ For an overview of first-century Jewish mysticism, see Gershom E. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), 14-20, and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), 44.

⁷ Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 34.

⁸ Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms I*, trans. L. W. Spitz, Jr., vol. 12 of *Collected Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1955), 312.

⁹ Noam Reisner, *Milton and the Ineffable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 84.

¹⁰ Cf. Louis Bouyer, “Mysticism: An Essay on the History of a Word,” in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Wood, O.P. (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 42-55.

¹¹ Michel de Certeau, “Mysticism,” trans. Marsanne Brammer, *Diacritics* 22.2 (1992): 11-25, here 15 with emphasis added.

¹² Astute readers of the Bible have often discerned acute similarities between Paul’s description of the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12 and Luke’s description of Paul’s “heavenly vision” in Acts 26:19. Caravaggio was not the first to imagine Paul as an ecstatic visionary, for Acts 22:17 clearly speaks of Paul *en ekstasei*. Both Paul’s Damascus experience and his journey into Paradise were subsumed into a collective *mythos* throughout Christian history.

¹³ Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 17. As Lake demonstrates, the fundamental nature of English Protestantism was still very much being negotiated at the end of the sixteenth century, and debates over the Church of England’s essential theology carried over well into the Jacobean and Caroline periods. For further considerations of the wide appeal of anti-Catholicism on a grand cultural scale, see also Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat*, esp. 229-280.

¹⁴ For a useful explanation of how theological debates from the mid to late sixteenth century powerfully influenced English culture from the 1630s to the 1650s, see Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 31-77 and 146-150.

¹⁵ Henry Vaughan, *The Mount of Olives: or, Solitary devotions. By Henry Vaughan silurist. With an excellent discourse of the blessed state of man in glory, written by the most reverend and holy Father Anselm Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, and now done into English.* London : Printed for William Leake at the Crown in Fleet-street between the two Temple-Gates, 1652.

¹⁶ Quotes are from Ernest T. Campagnac, *The Cambridge Platonists: Being Selections from the Writings of Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith and Nathanael Culverwell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), xxxi; xvi. In the case of Whichcote, locating his anti-body philosophy of religion within the larger world of seventeenth-century English Protestantism can reveal interesting dimensions of this religious mindset on a large scale. See, for instance, James Deotis Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in Seventeenth-Century England* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

¹⁷ De Certeau, “Mysticism,” 15 (emphasis added).

¹⁸ Arthur F. Marotti, “Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological Fantasies,” in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Arthur Marotti (London/New York: Macmillan Press/St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 4; Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture*

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52. For a comprehensive overview of entrenched Protestant anti-Catholicism, which identified Rome with the Whore of Babylon, see also John N. King, *English Reformation Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 381-387; and *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 91-97.

¹⁹ This is not, of course, to deny that Protestants could also appropriate feminine imagery for their own conceptions of the authentic (i.e. established) church. See for example Una of Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, the imagery of Donne's Holy Sonnet "Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear," and Herbert's "dear mother" of his poem "The British Church." These Protestant templates of the feminine church are characterized by their emphasis on purity, whereas the gendered rhetoric of English anti-Catholicism figures the Roman Church as carnally corrupt through its aberrant (e.g. the whore imagery) feminized devotion.

²⁰ Dolan provides a helpful historical overview: "Henrietta Maria also notoriously engaged in theatrical performances, taking speaking parts, perhaps even dressed as a man, and presenting works she had written and directed. Her performance reinforced associations among women, theatricality, the foreign, and the Catholic. Furthermore, Henrietta Maria's entertainments were indistinguishable from her devotions, both because of a long tradition of attacking Catholicism for its theatricality and because of practices that did indeed blur the distinction between liturgy and performance. [...]Furthermore, Henrietta Maria acted out her Catholicism in offensively public ways: refusing to attend the coronation, chatting and giggling with her ladies through a Westminster Abbey service, or, perhaps most scandalously, enacting her notorious if apocryphal 'penance'" (*Whores of Babylon*, 99-100).

²¹ Cf. A. J. Loomie, "Sir Toby Matthew," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²² The sonnets of Toby Matthew have been transcribed from manuscript and published by Anthony G. Petti, "Unknown Sonnets by Sir Toby Matthew," *Recusant History* 9.3 (1967), 123-158, esp. 142-153. The current sonnet is identified by Petti as Sonnet 28 (his numeration). The emphasis is mine.

²³ Matthew's image of choking upon the heart naturally evokes the moment in *King Lear* when Cordelia, in response to Lear's questions at the beginning of the play, remarks, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth" (I.1.91-92). I am referring to David Bevington's edition of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, 5th Edition (New York: Pearson-Longman, 2004). Catholics were, perhaps, in a position similar to Cordelia, who speaks of her indebtedness to her father ("You have begot me, bred me, loved me" [I.1.96]), but who is ultimately rejected by her parent on grounds that are not her own.

²⁴ See Peter Davidson, *The Universal Baroque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 177-178. As Davidson demonstrates in this book, the use of the appellation "Baroque" to describe grotesque excess of corporeal forms develops out of a Whiggish-Anglican historiographical tendency to associate the body with foreign Catholicism. Davidson's larger project involves showing how what we commonly identify as Catholic/Baroque can be

traced, in some respects, through Protestant and non-western traditions as a universal impulse of expressivity.

²⁵ Toby Matthew, *The Flaming Hart, or The Life of the Glorious S. Teresa, Foundresse of the Reformation, of the Order of the All-Immaculate Virgin Mother, our B. Lady of Mount Carmel* (Antwerp: Iohannes Muersius, 1642), 2-3, with emphasis added. All references and parenthetical pagination are to this edition, which was accessed through *Early English Books Online*.

²⁶ There are important political dimensions of the narrative I am writing here. Obviously, both Matthew and Crashaw were in a position to receive political support from the exiled Queen. This does not mean, I would hasten to add, that their literary production should be reduced simply to political motivations. Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti have underscored the limitations of participating in “political analyses of early modern texts and history” that “approach religion *and* politics as religion *as* politics” (emphasis in original). See “The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies,” *Criticism* 46.1 (2004): esp. 168. As both Foucault and de Certeau demonstrate, tracing history involves figuring out how different writers organized themselves around a web of documentation and textual production. Matthew’s translation of Teresa’s autobiography remains under-studied. It is also worth bearing in mind that while Henrietta Maria was able to marshal support for both Matthew and Crashaw within her insular group of exiled English Catholics, she was not in a position to offer substantive preferment to either writer as a consequence of her own exiled status. For a consideration of politics in relation to early modern theology (as a form of political theology), see Debora Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England: The Sacred and the State in “Measure for Measure”* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).

²⁷ The political appropriation of Augustine by continental and English Protestants is well documented. Protestant engagement with the Augustinian corpus often involved selective readings. For an overview of this tendency among English Protestants see Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 79-86 and 170-190. For the role of Augustine as a figure of authority in Anglican conformist rhetoric, see also Peter Lake, “The Laudians and the Argument from Authority,” in B. Young Kunze and D. D. Brautigan, eds., *Court, Country and Culture: Essays in Early Modern British History in Honour of Perez Zagorin* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1992), esp. 159 and 164.

²⁸ Cf. Reisner, 85: “Paradoxically, and perhaps fittingly, for Luther the *idea* of the ineffable becomes itself ineffable—he will not openly discuss it, but its silent presence oppresses his religious vision to the point where he must act to save himself rather than merely rest in speculation. The core Reformation principles of *sola fides*, *sola scriptura* become in this context a survival mechanism which demands that Christians read the Bible and read it right, because otherwise there is only the silence of madness, despair, and ultimate reprobation.”

²⁹ I am indebted here to Althusser’s critical analysis of state ideology. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation,” in *Lenin and*

Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 85-126.

³⁰ See, *op. cit.*, Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 53-57, and King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*, 92-98.

³¹ I would maintain that, despite his dedication to Queen Henrietta Maria, Matthew anticipated a readership that consisted of both Protestants and Catholics. It was not terribly uncommon for Laudians at Cambridge and Oxford to display interest in Teresa's works. Richard Crashaw's friend and confidant Joseph Beaumont, for instance, refers to Teresa at times and even mentioned her in public addresses. It should be noted, however, that interest in Teresa almost explicitly came from those espousing a high-church ecclesiology (i.e. Catholics or Catholic sympathizers). Arthur F. Marotti has written persuasively about Toby Matthew's very public conversion, which he describes as "performative." See Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 115-119.

³² De Certeau, "Mysticism," 21-22.

³³ My understanding of the English Protestant propensity to objectify matters is indebted to Barbara J. Shapiro's explanation of the "culture of fact" that originated in the seventeenth century. See Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), esp. 170-171.

³⁴ All references to Crashaw's poetry are to L. C. Martin, ed., *The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

³⁵ Even though Crashaw's first two poems on Teresa were written while he was still technically a Protestant, I feel justified in calling him a convert at this point. Some scholars have argued that Crashaw is an inherently Protestant poet who converted only under duress. See, for instance, John N. Wall, "Crashaw, Catholicism, and Englishness: Defining Religious Identity," *Renaissance Papers* (2004): 113; Clifford Davidson, "The Anglican Setting of Richard Crashaw's Devotional Verse," *Ben Jonson Journal* 8 (2001): 259-276, and Thomas F. Healy, *Richard Crashaw* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 1-9. This critical tendency goes against the grain of more solid historical research. Alison Shell, *op. cit.*, provides perhaps the best corrective. Noting how "Laudianism contained within itself the potential for experimentation with Rome," Shell writes, "Even when a conversion took place near-instantaneously, the convert was assenting to a previously learnt body of theological discourse; and where a conversion was more considered, it involved processes of deliberate exploration, such as reading, praying, dispute, discussion, and - inevitably - a certain degree of imaginative role-playing which could be vented in poetry. There is no contradiction in recognizing that Crashaw could assume a Catholic mentality while still a conformist, and it is helpful to approach his poetry in this light" (*Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*, 95; 93). For a further consideration of what Shell calls the "imaginative role-playing which could be vented in poetry," see Molly Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature: Verse and Change from Donne to Dryden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 105-137.

³⁶ Martin, ed., xlvii.

³⁷ While Crashaw never refers to Joseph Beaumont by name, most critics have agreed with Elsie Elizabeth Duncan-Jones that Beaumont is the most likely recipient. See Elizabeth Duncan-Jones, "Who Was the Recipient of Crashaw's Leyden Letter?" in *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw*, ed. John R. Roberts (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 174-179. The letter is reproduced in Martin, xxviii-xxx, here at xxx.

³⁸ Cf. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, Volume I: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15.

³⁹ Deneen Senasi, "Matter of Words: Aesthetics of Reading and Embodiment in the Poetry of Richard Crashaw," *Religion & Literature* 36.3 (2004): 1-21, has suggested that "Crashaw's poetics reveal his multivalent incorporation of bodies, words, and doctrinal aesthetics within the cultural matrix of seventeenth-century England, thereby illustrating the limitations of the conventional opposition between Protestant and Counter Reformation writers" (2), and concludes that he "is therefore a poet of bodies and of words converging with one another in a polymorphic performance of passion and faith" (19). However, I am contending in this paper that Crashaw's engagement with mystic discourse complicates the notion of bodily and textual convergence in its preference for an elusive body that resists reduction to text *even though* textuality is integral, as de Certeau shows, to its alterity. Senasi's attempt to undermine the Protestant/Catholic bifurcation in critical taxonomy, while commendable in some respects, risks re-inscribing the very tensions she works to resist by objectifying the body as substance (Senasi speaks of Crashaw as the "poet of substance and of sign transubstantiates the poem itself from word to 'flesh' and back again" [21]). I agree with de Certeau that, "The mystical body is the intended goal of a journey that moves, like all pilgrimages, toward the site of a disappearance" (*The Mystic Fable*, 81-82). The body that moves towards the site of disappearance (which does not mean the body ceases to "exist") resists figuration as "substance." Indeed, the idea of transubstantiation represents the doctrinal tensions embedded in the Eucharistic presence, which is also a move toward disappearance. For a different approach to Crashaw's poetry, one that emphasizes "somatic display," see Richard Rambuss, "Sacred Subjects and the Aversive Metaphysical Conceit: Crashaw, Serrano, Ofili," *ELH* 71.2 (2004): 497-530.

⁴⁰ Methodologically, I am very much indebted to Leah Marcus' pioneering work on the authorial body/textual *corpus* connection. Cf. Leah Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (London: Routledge, 1996), 192-198.

⁴¹ Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 40. Rambuss further remarks: "Accorded a mystic body both impregnable and phallic, Teresa's ecstatic experiences overrun any template that organizes gender or eroticism in terms of a binary structure...Similarly, gender is not transcended in Teresa's ecstasies; rather, it is palpably taken up and on, gender's concomitant forms, postures, and acts serving as a tensile field for the expression of Crashaw's trenchantly corporealized mysticism" (42). However, I exercise caution in adopting too readily Rambuss' association of orgasm with Teresa's experience for it re-inscribes a problematic first voiced by Jacques Lacan: "You need but go to Rome and see the statue of Bernini [i.e. of Teresa] to immediately understand that she's coming.

There's no doubt about it. What is she getting off on?" See Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality and the Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore, 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 76. Recent groundbreaking work in feminist scholarship has seriously questioned the Lacanian inclination to read sex and religion as religion *as* sex. The relationship is far more complex than this. See especially Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Building foremost on Foucault, Burrus seeks to complicate our conventional understanding of the body's role in religious practice and she delineates how, upon reading saints' lives through history, modern scholars can more easily "affirm the holiness of a love that is simultaneously embodied and transcendent, sensual and spiritual, painful and joyous; that may encompass but can by no means be limited to (indeed, may at points entail disciplined refusal of) the demands of either biological reproduction or institutionalized marriage; *that furthermore resists the reductions of the modern cult of the orgasm*. In the stories of the saints who steadfastly reject both the comforts and the confinements of conventional roles and relationships (swapping and discarding 'identities' like so many threadbare cloaks), we may discover not only evidence of the historic transformation of desire but also testimony to the transformative power of *eros*" (1-2, emphasis added). Rambuss' "thematics of erotic penetration" is compatible with my point about the elusiveness of the body in mystical discourse if "erotic" is taken in the wider sense of *eros* that Burrus elucidates.

⁴² Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 136.

⁴³ Summit, 140.

⁴⁴ Qtd. in Dom Justin McCann and Dom Hugh Connolly, eds., *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B.*, Catholic Record Society 33 (London: John Whitehead and Son Press, 1933), 112.

⁴⁵ Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae, or a Rational Account of the Grounds of Christian Faith* (London: 1662), iii. This work was accessed through *Early English Books Online*.

⁴⁶ Edward Stillingfleet, *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practiced in the Church of Rome and the danger of Salvation in the Communion of it: in an answer to some Papers of a Revolted Protestant: wherein a particular Account is given of the Fanaticism and Divisions of that Church* (London: Robert White, 1671), 235-236. Parenthetical references are to this edition, which was accessed through *Early English Books Online*.

⁴⁷ Julian was not unique within medieval mysticism in her use of this appellation, but it did strike a particularly sensitive note in the print culture of seventeenth-century England. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), and "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays in Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

⁴⁸ Stillingfleet's initial publication of the *Discourse* provoked several responses from Catholics. In his rejoinder to these various treatises, he remarks: "But I would fain know of these men,

whether they do in earnest make no difference between the Writings of such as Mother *Juliana* and the Books of *Scripture*; between the Revelations of S. Brigitt, S. Catherine, &c. and those of the *Prophets*; between the actions of S. Francis and Ignatius Loyola and those of the Apostles?" See Edward Stillingfleet, *An Answer to several late Treatises Occasioned by a Book entituled A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practiced in the Church of Rome, and the Hazard of Salvation in the Communion of it* (London: R.W. for Henry Mortlock, 1673), 11. Clearly, Stillingfleet is drawing attention to the wider tendency within early modern Catholicism to promote non-biblical modes of devotion. Of course, this goes to the heart of Protestant/Catholic disagreement in this period and beyond.

⁴⁹ Serenus Cressy, *Fanaticism fanatically Imputed to the Catholick church by Doctour Stillingfleet and the imputation refuted and retorted / by S.C. a Catholick ...*, [Douay? : s.n.], 1672. Parenthetical references are to section numbers within the work. This work was accessed through *Early English Books Online*. For a helpful overview of the cultivation of the medieval past among English Catholics in the late seventeenth century, see Jennifer Summit, "From Anchorhold to Closet: Julian of Norwich in 1670 and the Immanence of the Past," in *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, eds., Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan: 2009), 29-48.

⁵⁰ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 370.

⁵¹ See de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 81-82.

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