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青島大学英文學會

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Thomas Pounce's "A Challenge and a Comfort":
Reading a Recusant Poem

Wayne Pounds



Pound being shackled at Stortford dungeon

Tudor indeed is gone and every rose,
Blood-red, blanch-white that in the sunset glows
Cries: "Blood, Blood, Blood!" against the gothic stone
Of England, as the Howard or Boleyn knows.

--Ezra Pound, Canto LXXX

This essay introduces a poet whom the tooth of time has largely devoured and proposes his resurrection. Thomas Pounce (1539-1614) and his long poem called "A Challenge and a Comfort," I want to suggest, deserve to be known by the poetry-reading public and to become part of the awareness of those who write about early modern English poetry, whether they be common readers, classroom proletarians, or New Historians engaged in Foucauldian genealogies to decenter the collapsed empire's still somehow dominating narrative. I mean the whig-Protestant myth of England's "special relationship" with Providence that tells how God, having made England a nation and an empire, Himself became an Englishman and a Protestant.

Pounce's long life and scattered writings provide illuminating material either for New Historians¹ seeking out oppositional voices silenced by the hegemonic narrative that runs from John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* to A. G. Dickens' *The English Reformation*, designed to forward the Reformation by denigrating Catholics and praising those Foxe called "the true humble martyrs and servants of God"; or material for revisionist historians like Christopher Haigh who for the last two decades have been giving us not a new representation of a single epical Reformation but of plural, piecemeal reformations (Heigh 2, 15).² Pounce's reconciliation to Catholicism in 1570, when he abandoned the courtier's life (see illustration above), was followed by thirty-five years of almost continuous imprisonment and confinement (plus punitive fines that consumed his substantial family estate), in all of which time he was never tried for a crime. This is the familiar story of the Elizabethan recusant, familiar at least to specialists. What is not sufficiently well known is the vitality of the

1 I would like to avoid omnibus footnotes. See the documentation in the collections edited by Dutton et al. and by Wilson in the Bibliography.

2 See the works cited by Haigh.

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English Catholic community, one small nexus of which was formed by pursued and imprisoned Catholics around Pounce. To the extent that this society's vitality was a function of a shared faith, I am silent; but to the extent that it relied upon poetry, epistles, and written polemics, I have something to say.

The discourse has suddenly become personal, and I'd like to keep it that way for a moment so that the reader may understand what has moved me to this research and the present writing. I am a product of the Protestant myth as it governs North America. After four decades in academe as an Americanist, I didn't think there was anything vital missing from my knowledge of the history of Protestantism. After I discovered Pounce's poem and began to study it, however, I realized that my confidence had simply been the blindness of insight, a witness to the power ideology has over even the specialist to render invisible what the dominant discourse ignores. In this I'm not alone—I could cite studies by a dozen contemporary New Historicist scholars (including the doyen) writing about socio-religious issues in the Elizabethan period who suffer from the same blindness, for whom Catholics are either invisible or the bemused victims of the historical process³--but it is of myself that I speak. What is it like for a child of the Protestant myth to realize that the blood of Catholics ran as copiously in Elizabeth's reign as the blood of Protestants in Mary's? The numbers are roughly equal, about 260 executions in each reign (Watkin 318; Nuttall 191-92). The differences are these: the executions under Mary were compressed into a brief six years, those under her sister dispersed over forty-five; Mary's minions didn't use torture, while Elizabeth's did (Langbein 90, 318); and the victors wrote the histories. It seems fitting that the two sisters lie in the same

3 Which is not to say there is no tradition of Catholic historiography, only that it is a minority voice and has had little impact on the protestant hinterland. For a critical view of it, see Trevor-Roper. For a balanced reply, see McCoog.

tomb, one above the other, Bloody Mary and on top of Bloody Liza: *hic obdormimus Elizabetha et Maria sorores, in spe resurrectionis*.

What is it like to learn the bloody toll taken by the coercive violence of the Tudor State (the state, said Nietzsche, the "coldest of all cold monsters") and the political reformations that produced Protestantism? I felt appalled. I still do. And--to return to Thomas Pounce--as a lover of language and those who use it well, I felt a profound pathos at the fate of his most splendid associates, Edmund Campion -- perhaps the most gifted writer of his generation -- Robert Southwell, and Henry Walpole, poets of extraordinary talent, each of them tortured past duance, tried in a mockery of justice, then trundled to bloody Tyburn, where they were hanged until limp, disemboweled while still alive ("though he hanged longe, he was yet alive when they ripped him," writes a contemporary who watched the execution of the poet Chidioc Tichborne in 1586 [Hirsch 303]), then chopped into quarters which were impaled on pikestaffs around the city.

Of Pounce's own life, space doesn't permit more than a recommendation and an enumeration. The best resource is Richard Simpson's "Biographical Sketch," which includes a cento of quotations from Pounce's letters, buried in the obscure volumes of *The Rambler* for 1857. Next is the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, readily accessible. After that are two-page essays by Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) and Guiney in *Recusant Poets* (1939). Wainwright, in a series to be found in *Notes & Queries* for 1905, provides family history.

The Manuscript

The poem occurs in a manuscript in the State Paper Office (Dom. Eliz. 1582, no. 58), where it is preceded by the translation of a letter written by F. Francis de Castro relating the martyrdom of Peter Elcius (a Spaniard executed in Mexico), published in Cologne in 1582. The

poem, entitled "A challenge unto Fox the martirmonger written upon occasion of this miraculous martirdom of the foresaid Peter Elcius with a comfort unto all afflicted Catholyques," has 85 six-line stanzas and falls into two parts.⁴ The first, of 41 stanzas, is a polemic against Foxe, of which I will print nine stanzas. The second part, containing 42 stanzas plus a two-stanza envoi, offers comfort spoken in the person of Jesus to the Catholics in prison, and of this part I will offer twelve stanzas. The epistle dedicatory concludes: "Let us and our company bear the burden of all persecution courageously. If we consider how Saul in poor estate was most virtuous, and in prosperity most vicious; how David demeaned himself towards him in his misery, and how to Urias in his jollity; how friendly Pharaos butler was to Joseph in prison, and how unmindful in his liberty,--there is small cause why we should wish our case otherwise than it is."

The Style of the Poem

The poem belongs to a sixteenth-century school which long ago Yvor Winters described as representing "the sudden maturing of a tradition which can be traced backward through Middle English poetry into medieval Latin" (*Forms* 1-2). In his ambitious 1939 essay of "critical and historical reinterpretation" Winters aimed to rewrite "the Renaissance canon" by reclaiming the poets of this school, which he called "the native plain style," defined by the work of its principal practitioners, Wyatt, Googe, Gascoigne, and Raleigh, but still visible in Nashe, Greville, Shakespeare, and Jonson. He wanted to recover it from the imported Petrarchanism whose flourishing, between Surrey and Sidney, had obscured it. To expand Winters' argument, Petrarchanism has shaped and governed the taste of the poetry-reading public since the triumph of the lyric at the end of the

4 The ms. has deteriorated, and a good third or more of the 85 stanzas defy legibility. My thanks to Prof. Robert Miola for his generosity in sending me a copy of the microfilm.

neo-classical period to our own time. The standard of this taste and the monument of its triumph was erected by Francis Turner Palgrave in 1861 when he published *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, dedicated to his close friend Tennyson and ever since known simply as *The Golden Treasury* (still in print from Oxford University and other presses). Ezra Pound had cursed *The Golden Treasury* in London in the 1910s when the literary establishment wouldn't print his "stuff." E. K. Chambers, part of that establishment, took Palgrave's aesthetic for granted when selecting the poems for his 1932 *Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, with the result that he printed a lot of second-rate lyrics. Second rate, yes, but lyrics. It was the latter term that counted.

Winters defined the native strain as something "in every respect antithetical to the Petrarchist school." Its characteristics were "a theme usually broad, simple, . . . even tending toward the proverbial, but a theme of some importance, humanly speaking; a feeling restrained to the minimum required by the subject; a rhetoric restrained to a similar minimum, the poet being interested in his rhetoric as a means of stating his matter as economically as possible and not, as are the Petrarchans, in the pleasures of rhetoric for its own sake" (*Forms* 3). Though Spenser, Sydney & Co. encouraged critics to read poetry as spoken through a persona, the poets of the native tradition seem to speak to the reader directly. They seem to have no compulsion to wear a mask, survive by cunning, or live in exile (Williams ix-x). They speak as one intelligent person to another, expecting to be understood. Thus the poets can talk about what matters — of human actions, of the agents who perform them. They don't avoid "the grotesque, the ugly, the difficult . . . — the historically circumstantiated." They don't share the lyricist's "distaste for history" (Jones xxvii-xxviii).

At this point the aesthetic I'm describing is becoming a politics,

which is as it should be. The Petrarchan aesthetic was also a politics, for what is more political than the avoidance of politics? As Kenneth Burke remarked in *The Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), well before the Parisian sun acquired permanent residency in our zenith, "Whenever you find a doctrine of nonpolitical aesthetics affirmed with fervor, look for its politics."

At the micro level of form, the native poem is additive and accretive. It accumulates detail for the purpose of exposition (*copia*, the fullness of the poet's *invention*, was a stylistic virtue). It likes anaphora as a means of logically relating detail through a repeated parallel structure. Shakespeare — who drew on the native strain in his best sonnets — provides a fine example in sonnet 66 ("Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry) if we omit the final couplet, which as so often in his sonnets weakens the effect of a powerfully imagined problem by offering a pat solution.

In Winters' native tradition, "directness of diction" is also characteristic. One thinks of Wyatt's

They flee from me that sometime did me seek

With naked foot, stalking in my chamber

in contrast to almost any poem by Spenser or Sidney. The plain diction of the native school is appropriate since the intent of the poem is not self-celebration but the exposition of a problematic moral situation—unlike the Petrarchan poem, where the substance of the poem is secondary to its rhetoric, and the rhetoric's subtext is "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, and what I do, you too, Mr. or Ms. Critic, may also do."

Winters the rationalist believes that the framework of a good poem should bear rational inspection, and in his deliberately stark contrasts between the two poetic schools, a rational framework is what the native school usually has and the Petrarchan usually lacks. Even so, there is pleasure for the reader — for the iconoclast reader, at least — in watching Winters paraphrase Sidney's "Highway, since you my

chief Parnassus be." In the hope of sending the reader to Winters, I omit the paraphrase and offer only the conclusion: "It should be observed . . . that Sidney is concerned here primarily with obtaining what he regards as a graceful manner, a polished surface; that his theme is trivial; and that his best poetry is irrelevant to his theme and a casual accident" ("16th Century Lyric" 108).

In fairness, Winters states the faults of the native school: "the use of a heavily stopped line with a heavy cesura, the dependence upon heavily accented syllables in as many as possible of the accented positions, and to clinch the whole effect, the excessive use of alliteration" (*Forms* 4). In tone, "there is an affectation of directness," of the kind that becomes marked in Donne, opening lines like "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love" or "Busy old fool, unruly sun." Winter's 1939 example of this rhetorical ploy was Googe's memorable opening lines,

The common speech is, spend and God will send;
But what sends he? a bottle and a bag

where he comments, "The poem displays a measure of the only kind of rhetorical affectation to be found in the school, the affectation of hard directness, supported in part by the traditional alliteration which later poets were to abandon" ("Sixteenth Century" 99).

In challenging the position of the Petrarchan lyric, Winters recognized he was setting out to clean the Augean stables and was never sanguine about the prospect of success. Seventy years later it can be said that the essay didn't re-arrange the critical firmament but it has had an impact. In 1939 the first essay appeared in *Poetry* magazine. In 1963 the canon of poets Winters had proposed appeared in an anthology of renaissance poetry that gave Winters no credit. This oversight was corrected in the last paragraph of the editor's introduction when the anthology was reprinted by Norton (planting

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the first kiss of canonicity) in 1973. The original *Poetry* essay was republished in a critical anthology in 1967, the same year Peterson followed Winters' lead in his excellent *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne*. Still in 1967, Winters revised the essay, expanding it to a hundred and twenty pages, and made it the first chapter of his *Forms of Discovery: Critical & Historical Essays on the Forms of the Short Poem in English*.⁵

To come to the present, while "the native tradition" seems to be studied in elite graduate schools, I do not have the feeling that it has much place in undergraduate classrooms, where traditions of teacherly taste remain obdurate. It is notable that at least two of the teaching anthologies of the 1990s (Blackwell and Penguin) present it as an alternative. Also, *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse* (1991) shows Winters' presence in its introductory matter and choice of texts. And finally, Winters' alternative canon is present in the article called "Canons of Renaissance Poetry" on the internet's popular and populist encyclopedia, Wikipedia.⁶ *Requiescat Winters in pace*.

"A Challenge and A Comfort," Part I, Stanzas 1-7

As an initial excerpt from Pounce's poem to illustrate its style, below are seven stanzas from Part 1, the Challenge section of the poem. The row of three asterisks in the text marks omitted stanzas.

[1] Come forth, fond* Foxe, with all the rabble rout foolish⁷

5 This summary of the native vs. Petrarchan contest is merely suggestive. A better treatment would start with Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) and wrestle with C. S. Lewis's "drab" vs. "golden" distinction in *English Literature in the 16th Century* (1954).

6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canons_of_Renaissance_poetry

7 Vocabulary notes are for the non-specialist.

Of monstrous martyrs in thy brainsick book;
 Compare them to this glorious martyr* stout,
 And thou shalt see how loathly foul they look.
 For black and white comparèd somewhat near,
 Will cause them both the better to appear.

Elcius

[2] This blessèd man, of God's professèd foes
 With deep despite in ruthful sort was slain;
 What time himself a Catholic he shows,
 And in that faith he hopèd to obtain
 The endless empire of eternal bliss,
 Who prayed the saints to help and pray for this.

* * *

[3] For 'tis not pain that doth a martyr make,
 Nor glorious sort in which he seems to die,
 But faith the cause, which thine* did them forsake, Foxe's martyrs
 When from Christ's spouse they would so fondly fly.
 Where truth doth want, to utter wrack they fall,
 Not martyrs made, but most accursed of all.

* * *

[4] For if that he* a glorious martyr be,
 Which spite herself for shame cannot deny,
 Then every man which is not blind may see
 In what bad state thy monsters mad did die.
 For where the day appeareth fair and bright,
 There is no place for ugly shade of night.

Elcius

[5] On altars God and Dagon cannot hold,
 Our Christ and Belial needs must be at jar*;
 For wolves and lambs agree not in one fold,
 No more than peace can live at ease with war.
 If, therefore, he in endless bliss do reign,

conflict

The state of thine is ever during* pain.

lasting

Elcius

[6] Call in, therefore, thy loathsome lump of lies,
With humble mind make suit to God for grace;
That He may ope thy blind and blearèd eyes
Thereby to see, and purchase thee a place.
Whereas thy masters could not enter in,
Because they were so deeply drowned in sin.

[7] Which, that thou mayst, with all my heart I pray,
And that is all the hurt I wish to thee,
That we in peace may meet another day
In bliss, which here on earth could not agree.
And so, farewell, from thee I turn my style,*
To comfort Christian Catholics awhile.

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Elcius

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The theme, to rephrase Winters, is broad, simple, and of large importance for the recusants suffering and dying under the Elizabethan regime, for it takes on what was for them their chief antagonist in the war of print to win tolerance for their beliefs, namely Foxe's martyrology. The style likewise fits Winters' brief. The feeling corresponds to the importance of the subject, as does the rhetoric. The opening has the brusque directness described above, a tone no more than fitting to a poem which calls itself a "challenge." Its faults, if faults they be and not matters of taste, are a lack of variation in the accents and the placing of the cesura, and an overfondness for alliteration, especially in triplet forms. Still, the poem shows some variation. In six of the seven stanzas, there is one line where a natural stress doesn't fall on the iambic beat. In most of these cases, as in the fourth foot of l. 6, the variation is achieved by demoting a stress, so the line has only four beats. And stanza 4 uses an initial trochee in l. 6.

The cesura has little movement, appearing almost always after the second or third foot (exceptions: 5.1, 6.1, and 7.2)). Variation is achieved through the different mappings of sentence structure over line structure, with most sentences running two lines, some three, and one a full six (stanza 2, ignoring the semicolon). There is also occasional enjambment (1.1, 2.4, etc.). Alliteration abounds--a calculated effect, a drumbeat call to attention, as in the first two lines: "forth, fond Foxe," "rabble rout," "monstrous martyrs," "brainsick book." Finally, one finds the occasional aphorism, characteristic of the native school: "For 'tis not pain that doth a martyr make" (3.1).

Though questions of taste enter here, all these effects, it seems to me, are justified in terms of the tone of the poem, defined by its stated intent to challenge the dominance of Foxe's martyrology. For men and women spending their lives in prison, tortured at their masters' will, possibly facing a theatre of cruelty in which they would be hanged, gutted, and quartered, clearly the meaning of martyrdom mattered.

Explication of Part I, Stanzas 1-7

The "glorious martyr stout" of 1.3 is Peter Elcius, whose name occurs in the headnote to the poem. The listing in the Calendar of State Papers for 1582, adds that Elcius was a Spaniard executed in Morocco. This would have been before 1582, since that is the year the letter containing the poem was netted by the censors, who did posterity a service by retaining the poem in the records. I have been unable to learn anything more about Elcius.⁸

The opening line of stanza 3 is proverbial, and the idea was much repeated by Catholic and Protestant alike. It is still current in Thomas

8 Elcius's name appears again when John Bennet, "the Apostle of North Wales," is interrogated in 1583. Bennet clarifies the miraculousness of Elcius' martyrdom by stating his wounds did not bleed. Foley IV.504-05, where the name is spelled *Elchus*.

Fuller's *The Church-History of Britain* (1655): "It is neither the pain, nor the place, but only the cause makes a martyr." But the idea, of course, goes back to Augustine, and it remained current long enough that Flaubert used it in *La tentation de Saint-Antoine*.

In stanza 4 the feminine pronoun at line 2 is puzzling at first go, but the word is clearly legible in the ms. Thus, it can only be a personification of "shame." It does not refer to any woman in the omitted verses, for none appear. (To be sure, female martyrs existed on both sides, perhaps less noted among the Catholics because the missionaries, all male, occupied the center of the martyrs' stage. Under Elizabeth, women were not submitted to the theater of public torture. They were simply beheaded.)

In stanza 7 "turn my style" means "change my theme" (from stylus, a pen⁹). The tenor here, with Pounce wishing for a final reconciliation with Foxe hereafter, is found also in Pounce's letters to his tormentors during his long captivity, as if he always kept in mind the Christian obligation to forgive.

The turn in the first part from challenge to consolation comes after the 41st stanza, where there is a substantial blank space in the ms., occupying about a third of the page. The writing throughout the ms. tends to be vertically cramped as the transcriber seeks to get seven, sometimes eight, stanzas on a page. Such crowding was typical of a time when writing material of any kind was precious, and more typical still of Catholics, whom prohibitory laws forced to work in holes and corners. Therefore, the glaring white gap in the ms. after the 41st stanza emphasizes the thematic turn away from the Challenge to Foxe and toward Comfort. Foxe's book, however, is so completely at one with the ideology of the English Reformation, imbibed among Protestants with their mother's milk and Sunday school lessons, that its presence may be invisible to many readers, and they may need to

9 Prof. Miola's note.

be reminded of the background polemic in which Pounce's verses participate.

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*

Sixteenth-century Catholic apologists had insisted that Protestantism was a recent heresy sprung from the forehead of Martin Luther and in no way essentially different from other heresies that the Church had been forced to confront in its long history. It was merely the latest form of Antinomianism. Just as the upstart Tudors had needed the Trojans to justify their bloody accession to the English throne, Protestants required a myth of origins to counter the Catholic allegation of schism. Foxe took the ecclesiastical nationalism of earlier churchmen and used the theme of martyrdom to link the national experience with the acts of the apostles and the history of the primitive church.¹⁰ The early part of Foxe's narrative has fanciful moments, as when England is evangelized by Joseph of Arimathea and preached to by Paul (but not Peter!), and the Emperor Constantine acquires a British passport before he converts the Roman Empire, but in the final account Foxe was a respectable historian, and when he gets to John Wycliffe as the founding father who begat Huss, who begat Luther, who begat truth, his narrative gathers strength.

Foxe put the matter succinctly enough in the 1570 version of *Acts and Monuments*, where he wrote that the "great controversie" in "these our Popish dayes" concerned the "first origine and plantyng of the faith in this our Realme." The logic is that if the Church of England could be shown to have first received its faith from Rome, then its relationship to Rome was dependent, and it should cleanse itself of heresy and return to the fold.

Foxe's nationalist arguments acquired vividness and an avid

10 Most of my account of Foxe's book and its history is drawn from the two sets of colloquia papers edited by Loades and from Loades' book on the Oxford martyrs.

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readership after the Marian persecutions, prompting the author to new and enlarged editions. The *Acts and Monuments* was never popularly purchased — it was too big and too expensive — but it became generally available along with the English Bible when in 1571 the Privy Council ordered that both be set up in every cathedral church and in the homes of the clergy. Nothing succeeds like a success backed by government sponsorship.

On the other side of the divide, the Catholic critique had begun while Foxe's book was still a small work in Latin--the *Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum*, which appeared in Basle in 1559. The first answering salvo came in 1564 with Nicholas Harpsfield's 1000-page *Dialogi sex contra summi pontificatus, monasticae vitae, sanctorum, sacrarum imaginum oppugnatores, et pseudomartyres*. The last and longest of his six dialogues was a fierce attack on John Foxe's martyrologies, opening a war that would continue for the next forty years, until the history of the Church in England resembled the aftermath of the Battle of the Marne. At least for those who knew Latin, for the Catholic authors wrote in Latin in order to address a European audience. That no work comparable to Foxe's was produced in English is hardly surprising since after the Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth in 1570 it was treasonable to print or distribute pro-Catholic materials in England, and treason meant hanging, drawing, quartering.

A good deal could be said about the Puritan use of Foxe in the seventeenth century, for once they edited out passages asserting the duty of obedience to the throne, they too were happy to have themselves portrayed as victims of persecution (a desire still much manifest in most of the one-time Puritan dominions). But because much of our knowledge about Thomas Pounce comes from the work of the nineteenth-century historian Richard Simpson, the story I want to tell leaps two centuries. The adherents of Foxe's narrative had long since won the day — "God blew and the Armada was scattered"¹¹ —

and the winners had been writing the histories for nearly three centuries. That God was English and spoke King James's English was as incontrovertible as the refusal of the sun to set on the British Empire. It was, that is, until the Oxford movement, Catholic emancipation, and the conversion of figures like Newman and Manning. Suddenly the Reformation was again a burning issue. Catholic scholars had acquired an intellectual voice in *The Rambler* ("new series"), founded in 1848 (Dessain 111). Historians like Richard Simpson, who wrote for and edited *The Rambler* in the 1850s, suggested Henry VIII hadn't re-invigorated an ancient English Church. He had created a new English church by fiat. What we had had was not a reformation but a schism. Victorian England didn't like aspersions cast upon its national origins, and the polemic over the Reformation reopened.

Though some sixty abridged popularizations of Foxe's book had appeared between 1660 and 1830, there had been no full edition of the *Acts and Monuments* since 1684. Suddenly, between 1841 and 1877, there were four. As a contemporary historian comments, the heyday of the British Empire was also the last age of Foxe editions. With the emancipation of Catholics and the resurgence of Catholic intellectual life in England, the question of the "reformation" was reopened. Was it, as the Reformers had it, a popular ground-swell of resentment against the abuses of the Roman Church? Or was it, as Simpson and others would argue, more an imposition from above instituted so that Henry VIII could get a divorce and pillage the monasteries, then fought through a forty-year finale as the Cecils and Walsingham instituted the regime of terror under Elizabeth that produced the nation state?

This is the climate in which Richard Simpson in the 1850s began writing about the Catholic martyrs under Elizabeth, one of whom was

11 The commemorative medal was stamped *Flavit deus et dissipati sunt*.

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Thomas Pounce. Where does his poem fit in this polemic? As history, it offers reminders that Protestants too were persecutors and Catholics too were tortured¹² and killed. As a poetic representation of a historical narrative that has been muffled by its rival's overwhelming success, it offers details from the lives of Catholic recusants necessary for a balanced understanding of the latter years of Elizabeth's reign. Curiously, these details emerge more clearly not in the Challenge phase of part one of the poem but in the Comfort phase of part two.

"A Challenge and a Comfort," Part II, Stanzas 1-12

The second part of the poem is more interesting than the first, I believe, because it abandons the fun of tying Foxe's tales together and setting fire to them, like Samson in the story. It gives up the pleasure of anathematizing Foxe as the Father of Lies, the Martyr Maker, the Martyr Monger. Instead of defaming a historian whose sources must lie outside the poet's competence — Foxe had free access to records and libraries, Pounce was lucky to find a few books in a dark corner—it does what we value poets for doing. In vivid language it imaginatively represents a history intimately known to the poet and felt on his own skin, whether witnessed in his personal presence, or told to him by close confidants. Although this half of the poem intends to offer comfort, the anaphoric series of stanzas below dwells on pain and torment. The suffering is detailed in the series of "though" clauses with the consolation suspended until the final stanza, which in its second line at last states the affirmation.

Richard Simpson, an accomplished scholar of Tudor and Jacobean history and of the Catholic community of the time, felt that the summary of the sufferings of the English Catholics in the poem,

12 The "too" is misleading. There seems to have been no organized torture under Mary. The use of torture became state policy in Elizabeth's reign.

which he identifies as belonging to the period 1582-1585, "was so carefully executed, that a moderate amount of industry would enable a man to trace the allusions of every half line, and to appropriate them to the persons in the mind of the writer" ("Keepsake" 373). Unfortunately, because of limitations of space, he did so, as he says, "only in a superficial manner." I'll mention proper names, but for more details the reader is referred to Simpson's essay.

[8] "Though you be stayed and searched in every port,
Received of friends and kin with sorry cheer;
Though you be cited like the sinful sort,
And summonèd with terror to appear;
Though law and lawless men do reeve* your wealth,
And stink of prisons do confound your health:

steal

[9] Though you be forced from place to place to fly,
By pursuivants* pursued, by spies bewrayed;
In woods and caves though hungry, cold, you lie,
In doubt and dread, you shall be reste and stayed;
Though you be drawn with death from sickly beds,
Like perjured folks, bear papers on your heads:

informers

[10] Though to their churches you be borne by force,
And wondered at, and made the railing-stocks
Of pulpit parleres* void of all remorse,
More proud than peacocks, learnèd less than blocks*;
Though you be brought in presence to dispute,
All void of helps, yea, forcèd to be mute:

preachers

blockheads

[11] Of famine sharp although you feel the smart,
Be hanged for rogues, and burnèd through the ear,
And in the streets be whippèd at a cart;

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informers

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preachers

*; blockheads

Though gyves and racks your limbs do gall and tear;
Though bedlams* bedless make you lie on ground;
Though cold, though dead and rotten you be found:

madhouses

[12] Though you be forced to ransom life and land
For favouring facts and men you never knew,
When laws severe themselves, uprightly scanned,
Would have both quitted* them and also you;
Though you be penned in prisons close by might,
Whilst others wed the wife is yours by right:

acquitted

[13] Though you, my priests, for jubilees past date,
Receive the death which traitors ought to have,
And those which are of worshipful* estate,
For that to you they entertainment gave,
Constrained now in deep distress do lie,
Through loss of goods, and lands, and liberty:

high

[14] And though their wives with child are forced to go
From house to house in ugly shade of night,
Their shirtless babes all helpless left in woe,
Refused of friends in such distressed plight;
And though their nearest kin are in disgrace
Who for their childbirth do allow them place:

[15] Though underground such men be laid in gyves,
And fed with stinted fare of brown-bread crusts,
Which had been begged from door to door for thieves,
Debarred of water fresh to drink their lusts,*
With guiltless friends and servants by their side,
For them in prison judged always to bide:

desires

[16] Although your husbands do procure your care,
 And parents do renounce you to be theirs;
 Although your wives to bring your life in snare,
 And brethren false, affright you full of fears;
 And though your children seek to see your end,
 In hope your goods with thriftless mates to spend:

[17] On pillories although you leese your ears,
 Enjoined to seven years duress close besides;
 With dogs though you be bated like to beeves,
 And made like fools coolestaffe* steeds to ride;
 Though you be termèd mad, and bound in bands,
 And whipped to death by preachers' bloody hands:

see below

[18] Though misreports with slander seek your shame,
 And queans* be brought within your bed to lie,
 And bear of cursed coinerers* the name,
 Arraigned for rapes, in dread and doubt to die;
 Though witness false as traitors stop your breath,
 As all the world may witness by your death:

prostitutes

counterfeiters

[19] Though all these griefs, I say, and thousands more,
 You guiltless for your faith are forced to bear,
 Yet you of comfort sweet shall have such store,
 Through fervent prayer, as shall allay your fear.
 My arm is now as long as e'er it was,
 The fault is yours if it come not to pass."

Explication of Part II, Stanzas 1-12

Ports (8.1) were important as places of embarkation for those wanting to flee the country to seek refuge overseas and for missionaries from abroad wanting to enter England. They were

closely watched. Pursuivants (9.2)— literally, "pursuers," spies and informers working for the government to find, incriminate, and imprison Catholics — were in the ports and major cities making a living either from reporting Catholics or taking money from the Catholics not to report them.

Simpson finds the circumstances detailed in stanzas 8 and 9 to be too common to require particulars to illustrate them: harassed by the authorities in every port, unwelcome among friends and kindred for fear they would get them in trouble with the law, summoned before the authorities knowing that their life could be in peril, hounded at law by men who took advantage of the anti-Catholic laws to appropriate their property and wealth — these were common events in the lives of Catholics in Elizabeth's reign.

The fifth line of stanza 9, Simpson thought, may refer to William, the son of Sir Robert Tyrwhit, who, was dragged to the Tower for having heard mass at his sister's wedding. Ill at the time he was moved, he died within two days.

Line 9.6 most likely refers to the fate of Edmund Campion, perhaps the most gifted of the many gifted young men the regime tortured and killed. Simpson was keenly aware of Campion, since he was working on a biography of him.¹³ Edmund Campion, one of the "fools of time," in Shakespeare's phrase--"one of God's almighty fools" in the phrase of the poet Henry Walpole, who a few years later followed Campion to the scaffold-- was made to ride through London with a paper in his hat, inscribed, "Campion, the seditious Jesuit" before being hanged, disemboweled, and quartered.

Dragging Catholic prisoners to church (10.1-4) was a common proceeding, says Simpson. He cites an account of some being

13 Published in 1867. It's second edition, 1896, is still an indispensable reference. Evelyn Waugh fictionalized and updated it in 1934, as he writes in his preface, when Campion Hall, Oxford, was being moved to its present site.

"dragged into the hall of York Castle, and there forcibly detained to hear Protestant sermons once a week for the space of one year or thereabouts." The last two lines of the stanza refer to Campion's disputations in the Tower in August, September, and October 1581, when the four state-sponsored interrogators were "sitting at a table and having their certain books about them," as a letter of 1590 reports, and "right opposite, upon a stool, was set Campion, Jesuit, having nothing but his Bible"; and "they only allowed him to answer, not to question, or to object; and they silenced him with brutal threats when he grew inconvenient." At this or a similar "dispute," Simpson notes, Thomas Pounce was present and made himself obnoxious to the authorities ("Keepsake" 375).

In stanza 11, Simpson names the victims: Alexander Bryant, Mark Typer, and John Cooper. Stanza 12 is business as usual for the regime's hitmen, but the last two lines seem to refer to a specific incident Simpson was not able to recognize. The next three stanzas refer to Cuthbert Mayne, Francis Tregian, and their companions. Maine was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Launceston in November 1577.

The torment represented by "coolestaffe steeds" in 17.4 is one I have been unable to identify. Simpson guesses these were "wooden horses . . . on which the victim was set a-straddle, naked, and dragged backwards and forwards till he was half-dead." Simpson's comment here illustrates the irony of which he was capable: "Perhaps the misery of being 'whipped to death by preachers' is a refinement even on this."

Stanza 17 refers to Stephen Vallenger, a printer who was condemned in the Star Chamber and lost his ears in the pillory for printing a booklet about Campion. Twenty-six pages, sextodecimo, it was part of the flood of publications pro and con that followed Campion's execution in December 1, 1581: *A true report of the Death and Martyrdom of M. Campion, Jesuite and priest . . . Whereunto is*

annexed certain verses made by sundry persons. Simpson thinks the book was edited by Pounce and that the poems were by Pounce, Henry Walpole, and Vallenger himself (*Campion* 495-96). In 1873 the poems were edited by Simpson and republished as part of F. J. Furnivall's *Ballads from Manuscript* volumes, including Pounce's amusing blast at "Kogging Munday"--the papist-hating Anthony Munday, one-time professed Catholic, sometime stage player, and collaborator-to-be with Shakespeare (Simpson, "Poems Relating to *Campion*" 158-59).

Simpson illustrates stanza 18 by the ms. letter quoted before, now describing the introduction of a prostitute into the chamber of the aged Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. Watson, then a prisoner at Wisbech Castle): "and when the decrepit old man was struggling to push the shameless creature out of the door, the rascals who had let her in threatened to whip him." This seems to have been a favorite amusement of Elizabeth's rackmaster Richard Topcliffe. "Each time Topcliffe, or some other persecutor, would write a letter full of virtuous indignation to the Council, begging them to devise some means of reforming the abandoned wretches who were shut up for their religion" ("Keepsake" 377).

Stanza 19 concludes Part II of Pounce's poem. Against the afflictions enumerated above, now summed up as "all these griefs . . . and thousands more," the poet offers the comfort that God's long arm -- an image of God's omnipotence recurrent in the Old Testament -- has not shortened. This is followed by the envoi--not the Chaucerian envoi of the "go little book" variety, but like the traditional envoi the lines adopt an humble tone, asking the reader to accept them in good grace not for their worth but for their "zeal."

The Envoy and a Conclusion

[20] Here with our Saviour's speech I will conclude,
 And you, renowned confessors,* do request sufferers
 In humble sort, my homely metres rude
 To take in gree*, and construe to the best. good grace
 For zeal, not skill, did make me take my pen,
 To stir myself by stirring other men.

[21] For as the trumpeter whose limbs be lame,
 To battle's broils encouraging the knight,
 Some comfort takes, partaking of the fame,
 If foes he foil and gain the spoil by fight,
 So I in hope that you of prey right sure,
 Will help with prayers my lamèd lines to cure.

The key word in defining the "you" the poet addresses is "confessors." He is using it in what the *OED* gives as the oldest English sense of the word, "One who avows his religion in the face of danger, and adheres to it under persecution and torture, but does not suffer martyrdom; *specifically*, one who has been recognized by the church in this character." Thus he addresses his fellow inmates and sufferers, who like himself may have longed for the *èclat* of martyrdom but, not being found worthy of that glorious condition, have to bear witness by continuing their tormented existence. When he speaks of his poem itself, it is to underline his motivation: "For zeal, not skill, did make me take my pen," perhaps the key statement in the whole poem for the reader's understanding of it. The sentiment chimes with that of Walpole in his lines on Campion:

Pardon my want*, I offer nought but will; lack of ability
 their* register remaineth safe aboue. saints like Campion
 Campion exceeds the compasse of my skill¹⁴

Like "zeal" in Pounce's poem, here "will" (good will, virtuous intent) is what the poet wants the reader to consider, and it returns us to the politics of plain style.

Diction and syntax, though the prominent features of plain style, alone cannot account for its effect. A stylistic analysis would reveal in Pounce's lines a high correlation between sentence subjects and the agents performing the verbal actions, a correlation that reflects the writers' concern with the personal in discourse. The subtext of this style, as in the prose of Swift and Orwell, asserts that in the human world the agents are human, and plain style in poetry demystifies Petrarchan wit — just as plain style in prose demystifies bureaucratese — by reasserting (reinserting) the human agency in the making of history (Pounds 102-03). Plain style is the language of witness (the root meaning of the word *martyr*). It says "I was the man. I was there. This is what I saw." We see the agents in our history, and we know them by their actions.

The point both Pounce and Walpole want to make is that, as Simpson says of other poets writing from prison, "it was not the inspiration of Helicon that drove them to write" ("Keepsake" 372). Writing outside the genre contexts of envois and elegies, Southwell is saying the same thing in his dedicatory epistle to the poetic sequence in the Waldegrave Ms. (a ms. of uncertain date but before 1595, when Walpole was hanged, drawn, and quartered). There he states, "I have here laied a few course thridds together to invite some skillfuller Wittes to goe forward in the same or to beginne some fyner peece wherein it mae be seene, how well Verse and Vertue suite together" (Southwell 1).

This epistle and the prose dedication, with their word-plays on "will," are likely addressed in part to Southwell's "good cosin" Will

14 "Upon the Death St. Edmund Campion," in Simpson, "Poems Relating to Campion," 166.

Shakespeare, a cousin by marriage and, more distantly, by blood (Milward 54-55). Southwell's chiding of his cousin--"Poetes by abusing their talent, and making the follies and feyninges of love the customary subject of their base endeavors, have so discredited this facultye that a Poett a lover and a lyer, are by many reckoned but three wordes of one significacon"—brings us back once more to Winters' polarization of plain style and Petrarchanism. Southwell is not part of Winters' tradition, but I think we do him no wrong by letting him speak from his own position to the Petrarchan poets in the name of that poetic stance, that "zeal," ably represented by Pound's poem. It is a stance that speaks of the rack as a material tool of the powers of this world, not a metaphor for the pains of unrequited love. When Auden said that "poetry changes nothing," he was thinking of lyric, not narrative. A strong narrative, we know, can be a force for resistance and for change. Not by wit — at least not by wit alone—but by will.

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