Introduction

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In the early modern period, many kinds of cultural and political struggles that would be articulated later in a more clearly secular vocabulary were couched in religious language and perceived as religious conflicts. After Henry VIII’s break with Rome, the more radical Protestant reign of Edward VI, and the accession of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, who succeeded her Catholic half-sister, Queen Mary, Protestant-Catholic hostility was exacerbated by the 1570 Papal Bull excommunicating the queen. Sectarian conflict continued with varying intensities, culminating in the 1688 “Glorious Revolution” against the last English Catholic monarch, James II. Anti-Catholic propaganda poured from the English presses, especially at times of political crisis such as the post-Armada era of the late 1580s and 1590s, the years immediately following the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, the events of the Irish Rebellion (1641–49) and of the English Civil Wars (1642–49), the 1678–81 “Popish Plot” era, and the political upheaval of 1688–89. Even as England’s identity as a Protestant nation was being forged throughout this period, a Catholic subculture survived in a religiously divided land. The “old faith” was sustained initially by nonconforming priests from Mary’s reign and later by missionary priests trained in the foreign seminaries that were at the center of a vibrant exile community. Despite the penal laws against Catholics and the waves of persecution, a steady
stream of Catholic texts circulated in England in manuscript and print—some produced and/or printed domestically, some produced on the Continent, some disseminated by being quoted at length or wholesale in Protestant polemical rejoinders.

Despite the strong presence of both a residual and continuing Catholic culture, a more or less official “Whig,” Protestant, anti-Catholic version of English history long flourished as the dominant one (although, building on earlier Catholic oppositional narratives, the early-nineteenth-century historian John Lingard and his successors offered a Catholic counternarrative). This teleological narrative of English nationhood and cultural supremacy celebrates the “inevitable” triumph of English Protestantism and of the anti-absolutist politics related to it. One of the consequences of this historical process and of its representation in a national mythology has been the marginalization of English Catholicism (except as a threat) both within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and beyond that era in historical accounts of that period. Partly in response to the serious and balanced reexamination of English Protestant history by Patrick Collinson and others, scholars are questioning the assumption that the Reformation was a decisive and wholly positive change and reimagining Catholics as participants in, rather than obstacles to or exiles from, post-Reformation English history.

This project, in which our volume participates, builds on determined efforts on the part of scholars to write the post-Reformation history of English Catholics, initially by collecting documentary materials necessary for the project. The monumental collection of English Jesuit records by Henry Foley, S.J.; the books on English Catholic martyrs by John Hungerford Pollen, S.J.; Richard Simpson’s nineteenth-century biography of Edmund Campion; Dom Bede Camm’s studies of Catholic houses and the experiences of early modern Catholics; Philip Caraman’s biographical and historical narratives; the volumes on Elizabethan and Jacobean religious controversies by Peter Milward, S.J.; A. C. Southern’s study of recusant prose; and the many volumes published by the Catholic Record Society over the last hundred years all testify to this activity. These scholars have assembled a rich body of evidence and brought a hermeneutic of suspicion to once-dominant assumptions, thereby forming the foundation for subsequent work.

More recently, John Bossy, Eamon Duffy, and Christopher Haigh have studied the complex manifestations of post-Reformation Catholic culture, with special attention to ways the “old religion” changed and adapted to sur-
vive in a hostile environment at a time when the authorities, if not the mass of the population, espoused the Reformed faith. Scholars such as Frances Dolan, Peter Lake, Michael Questier, Alexandra Walsham, and Anthony Milton have analyzed English Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in relation to both political struggles and cultural change, pointing out, for example, the multivalent uses of anti-Catholic codes in Protestant/Catholic polemical conflicts and in internal English Protestant factionalism. Anne Dillon, Susannah Monta, and Brad S. Gregory have reexamined the phenomenon of martyrdom, the last in a pan-European context. Claire Walker has reconstructed the remarkable histories of the many English women who entered English contemplative houses on the Continent after the Reformation. Alison Shell, Raymond Tumbleson, and Arthur Marotti have analyzed religious discourse and highlighted the importance of Catholic texts, situating them in the context of the religious conflicts of the period. Some recent essays and essay collections, part of a new turn to religion in literary studies, have signaled the renewed interest in both Catholicism and anti-Catholicism. Alison’s and Rogers’s bibliography of English Catholic writing and Rogers’s 374-volume facsimile series of Catholic writing—a collection that contains an even larger number of published texts, since many of the volumes contain multiple items—are now being exploited extensively by scholars. Increasingly, scholars have been using British, Irish, and continental archives for their rich trove of Catholic manuscript materials. New anthologies of early modern Catholic writing are in progress. The recent establishment of the Society for Early Modern Catholic Studies also signals increased scholarly interest in postmedieval Catholicism.

Despite the increase in historical, as well as literary, attention to early modern Catholic culture and history, as recently as the year 2002 Christopher Haigh could say, “The study of Catholic history and literature is still an intellectual backwater.” Clearly there is much work to be done to bring to this subject area the attention it deserves. To this end, the editors of this volume organized the conference “Early Modern English Catholic Culture,” held at the Newberry Library in Chicago in October 2002. The term culture as used both in the conference title and in this volume is broad: in Raymond Williams’s discussion of it as one of his “keywords,” one of the three basic meanings he distinguishes is most relevant, culture as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general.” In relating the use of the word and its derivatives to particular disciplines, Williams notes
that “in history and cultural studies the reference is primarily to signifying or symbolic systems.” When we look at the various manifestations of early modern English Catholic culture, we encounter a complex entity, containing residual medieval practices (especially on the level of folk beliefs); newer forms of Counter-Reformation doctrines, rules, and devotional practices; and forms of social and religious hybridity. It has separate, but interconnected, social histories on the popular and elite levels: although English Catholicism found protection within the English aristocracy, it also, through the seventeenth century, grew within the lower social strata. Within the embattled English Catholic community, there were struggles for leadership and dominance (between, for example, the Jesuits and the secular priests), different rationales for the choices of open recusancy and church papistry, different degrees of acceptance of or resistance to coercion, local and regional variations of practical toleration and persecution, and distinctly different modes of private and communal practice of the faith on different social levels and in different regions. While a term like Catholic culture embraces all of these, it is clear that the variations within the field of observation are marked and many.

At the Newberry conference, a group of twenty-one literary and historical scholars from both sides of the Atlantic presented papers on a wide variety of topics, treating English Catholic culture in an international context and historically examining written texts as well as other material artifacts. The speakers, who included the eleven contributors to this volume, were all committed to widening the scope of what we mean by early modern English Catholic culture in its many religious, social, political, literary, visual, and material forms. They are therefore part of the ongoing project of writing the cultural history of post-Reformation English Catholicism, especially in relation to the symbolic forms in which Catholic culture expressed itself in the early modern period. This collection represents a selection of the papers presented at the conference, the authors having been asked to develop further their original talks. The result, we think, is a collection of studies that has scholarly originality, historical and geographical range, topical variety, and interdisciplinary richness.

Peter Davidson sets the tone for our collection’s aim of rethinking what we mean by Catholic culture by attending to its physical and material dimensions. He studies what might be termed early modern Catholic “places of identity,” positing a relationship between “spaces and structures” and “the
kinds of mental or interior space articulated in contemporary books of devotion.” His work is thus linked to essays in the collection by Mark Netzloff, Sophie Holroyd, and Anne Myers. Anticipating the argument of Netzloff, Davidson begins by locating an important version of Englishness in the chapels of the English Colleges in Rome and Valladolid. Both he and Sophie Holroyd identify Henry Hawkins’s *Partheneia Sacra* as an important guide to reading the symbolic language of space. Particularly suggestive is the range of Davidson’s investigation—from temporary spaces created by the use of hangings and inscriptions to Sir Thomas Tresham’s Triangular Lodge, which Davidson describes as a kind of protest building whose nearly invisible placement behind Tresham’s house at Rushton itself evokes a semihidden recusant subject position. Through its careful analysis of material evidence, Davidson’s paper produces new knowledge about active, oppositional signifying practices and self-fashioning on the part of early modern English Catholics.

Many of the essays in this volume explore the roles played by women and concepts of gender in the English Catholic community and the Protestant imagination. The central figures for Catholicism in contemporary polemic were often feminine, whether the beloved Virgin and female saints or the reviled Whore of Babylon and Pope Joan. Certain historical persons such as Mary Stuart or Henrietta Maria came to stand as figureheads for all that was to be feared in Catholicism: its seductive power; its insinuation into families, households, and the court; its subordination of the intellect to the emotions and senses; its exoticism; its fecundity. Anti-Catholic discourses relied on gendered invective as an adaptable, resonant vocabulary for describing and condemning Catholicism as both the traitor within and the exotic, foreign seductress. The association of Catholicism with the feminine might also work positively, positioning the “old faith” as a mother, a nurse, or an object of desire. While it is important to recognize the positive associations that the feminization of Catholicism could activate, it is equally important to remember that such associations were unstable. Given the pervasive anxiety evoked by maternal figures, for instance, casting the church as a blessed mother raised as many questions as it answered. Some people in post-Reformation England must certainly have felt nostalgia for lost intercessors, such as the Virgin Mary. But it oversimplifies attitudes toward both Catholicism and women to suggest that such nostalgia was widespread or unambiguous.

Feminized figures seem to have populated the dreams and nightmares of those who longed for or feared Catholicism. But women were also important
players in the daily struggles of preserving and propagating the faith. As custodians of household religion, women presided over household worship, catechized their children and sometimes servants, and in some cases sustained a family’s identity as Catholic by recusing themselves from Church of England services while their husbands conformed. Women often took risks to hide priests from pursuivants. This was a felony and led to heart-stopping searches and architectural transformations of houses to accommodate priest holes. 

But harboring priests also involved a more mundane grind of finding secular roles for them to play in the household and keeping them fed and sheltered. While all of these contributions took place at home, recusant women also ventured outward: entering convents abroad or sending their children to seminaries or convents; founding orders; serving as abbesses, which in the case of someone like Mary Knatchbull, abbess of the English Benedictine convent at Ghent for forty-six years (1650–96), included actively supporting the Royalist cause and the Restoration; going to jail as prisoners or as visitors; in some cases, dying for their faith. Finally, women read, translated, wrote, and circulated devotional texts; in at least one case a woman harbored a press. 

Although scholars are aware of the importance of women in post-Reformation Catholicism, there is much more to be learned about specific cases. Several of the essays in this collection contribute to that project.

Jane Stevenson presents evidence for the influence of Latin culture on the formation of early modern Catholic Englishwomen. Her essay locates identifiable traditions of Latin education for women in a number of recusant families (not only that of St. Thomas More), and it opens prospects for further study of both convent life and marriage as experienced by early modern Englishwomen. The particular situation for Englishwomen aspiring to the religious life lends an international dimension to their acculturation and points to an understudied component of the Catholic diaspora, discussed in this collection by Mark Netzloff with respect to the English Colleges. Latin literacy appears to be yet another potentially empowering feature of early modern convent life that challenges assumptions regarding virginity and the cloister. Perhaps even more suggestive is Stevenson’s elucidation of a tradition in elite families of Catholic humanist marriage that supported the ideal of companionate marriage typically associated with Puritanism. Evidence that Catholic women’s education in such households depended on mothers, and that Latinity for women was not restricted to court circles, further enriches and complicates our understanding of women, literacy, and religion in the period.
Sophie Holroyd’s essay draws our attention to the fates of female relatives of the Gunpowder Plotters, many of whom entered convents, and pays particular attention to the remarkable achievement of Helena Wintour, the daughter of a man executed for his involvement in the plot. Wintour remained unmarried, lived in retirement, and dedicated herself to prayer, self-sacrifice, works of charity, and support of the Catholic Church through her remarkable, and remarkably well-preserved, group of vestments that used as its central conceit the notion of the Virgin Mary as garden. Participating in recent work about the needle, not as opposed to the pen but as a kind of pen or paintbrush, Holroyd shows how Wintour stitches a unique devotional vision that both resembles Henry Hawkins’s Jesuit emblem book *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) in its vocabulary and its set of emphases for Marian devotion and stands out as distinctive. Holroyd demonstrates the depth and inventiveness of Wintour’s devotion, the importance of her aesthetic achievement, the value of these vestments as historical evidence, and their complexity as texts. The vestments were not only rich material for scholars. They were also a valuable legacy her heirs disputed; as a result they were divided between the Jesuits for whom she made the vestments and her heir, the widow of her nephew. One question lingers at the end of this essay: How did Wintour, unmarried woman and the daughter of an executed traitor, obtain the “diamonds, rubies, garnets and hundreds of large pearls” with which she ornamented these vestments?

Helena Wintour worked alone for years on her vestments and left little evidence behind except for them; she is an artist whose work will be new to most readers of this collection. In contrast, Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, was one of the most visible and notorious Catholic women in Stuart England. Although there has been considerable scholarly work on the queen and how she was represented, much remains to be learned. Caroline Hibbard’s essay offers fresh insight into the much-maligned queen. Hibbard shifts our attention away from anxious fantasies about Henrietta Maria and toward the details of her presence and practices as a historical person and English queen who engaged in particular actions, held specific opinions, and imported particular objects and fashions. “Restoring contingency to the narrative,” Hibbard invites us to forget the end of the story in order to see the possibility that English political and religious conflict, and the queen’s role in it, might have unfolded somewhat differently. Hibbard also challenges us not to adopt the perspective of the queen’s enemies by overstating the threat she supposedly embodied and
oversimplifying its nature. Questioning the very notion of English Catholicism, Hibbard shows that Catholicism was inevitably and institutionally cosmopolitan. In what ways, then, did Henrietta Maria’s foreignness matter? How did its significance change over time? How did contemporaries associate it with her Catholicism and, later, her “Spaniolized” policies?

While the social/culturalist turn in early modern literary studies has tended to displace devotional literature and poetics from the center of scholarship on religion and literature in the period, several contributors to this volume return to the subject of devotion, influenced, to be sure, by more recent work on ideology and culture. Gary Kuchar’s essay on Southwell’s *Mary Magdalene’s Funeral Tears* is perhaps the piece most directly engaged with devotional writing, and it details at length the psychic conflicts in Southwell’s poetry and prose. Such an analysis of devotional practice departs from earlier studies of both Catholic and Protestant traditions of meditation that insisted that powerfully unifying theories and practices informed the literature of devotion. What is more, Kuchar argues for a connection between Southwell’s moving representations of Magdalene’s struggles with “radical self-division” and a recusant subject position. Kuchar’s essay, then, brings devotional writing into discussions of the process of subjectification. Kuchar complicates his assessment of Southwell’s politics by also arguing for a gendered resistance on Southwell’s part to Magdalene as a model of religious subjectivity. Drawing on both historical research on recusant women and contending Aristotelian and Augustinian ethics, Kuchar detects in Southwell’s devotions male anxieties regarding female desire and “the devotional power of women.” Thus the English Catholic devotional subject is doubly divided by politics and gender.

Heather Wolfe’s essay on the Benedictine nun Dame Barbara Constable is a case study illuminating some important aspects of the English Catholic exile community—here through the transcription and editing activities of an extraordinarily industrious woman. Though living a cloistered life distant from her English home, Constable—as Wolfe demonstrates—not only had a significant impact on her immediate religious environment and on the devotional practices of the exiled religious community but also maintained contact with her family and the Catholic community in England, serving them in a “missionary” role. Through her work, she forged links between the Catholic community abroad and the dispersed Catholic population in England, helping also to sustain a long tradition of English spirituality through an ambi-
tious antiquarian project of textual recovery whose purpose was to disseminate both medieval and contemporary works of devotion, meditation, and mysticism. Constable helped to preserve the valuable writings of the Benedictine Augustine Baker, who had been, before her arrival, spiritual director at her convent at Cambrai and who himself tried to maintain the devotional traditions of the medieval mystical writers Constable then compiled. Part of a collective effort on the part of exiled nuns “to provide the Catholics of England with an institutional memory” through transcription and compilation of these works, Barbara Constable transcended the physical and social limitations of enclosure and of female subordination to “contribute to the survival and flourishing of medieval English Catholic contemplative culture.” She even exercised moral and social authority in her fearless criticism of contemporary monks and nuns in positions of authority by “pointing them to examples from the past.” Finally, as Wolfe argues, she struggled “to justify her wide learning within a contemplative environment that stressed the exercise of the will over that of the understanding.” Although Barbara Constable might not offer the kind of example of female agency modern feminist scholars have traditionally sought, within the context of early modern English Catholic culture this intelligent and strong-willed woman had a crucial social and cultural role. Wolfe’s study of Constable, based on original research in American, English, and continental archives, helps broaden our understanding of the international scope of English Catholicism, of how the “old religion” was preserved in the face of efforts to eradicate all of its traces, and of the relationship of religious exiles to the community of Catholics in England.

Molly Murray’s study of Catholic conversion accounts, which concentrates on the serial convert William Alabaster’s narrative of his sudden conversion to Catholicism in the late Elizabethan era, sets that remarkable document in two main contexts. The first is that of the responsa scholarum, the autobiographical answers to a set of questions posed to the would-be seminarians entering the English College, Rome. She cites a number of these short narratives to prove, among other things, the existence of a Catholic form of spiritual autobiography in the early modern period. The second context is that of St. Augustine’s Confessions, which offers an imitable model of conversion that involves responding to a particular text and that belongs to a tradition of conversion narratives from St. Paul onward. Murray contrasts Catholic conversion, which she defines as a kind of denominational shift or “revised outward affiliation” and a “fitting in” to a receptive church, with the
Protestant spiritual autobiographical model of inner spiritual change. As practiced by Alabaster and others, the Catholic conversion takes the form of, on the one hand, a “literary” experience of being “moved” by a particular text (rather than being convinced by particular arguments) and, on the other, an experience of being affected by “specific outward influences . . . family members, friends, and priests.” Catholic, as opposed to Protestant, conversion is an “adherence” (to a church) rather than an “aversion” (to the world). William Alabaster’s extended conversion narrative, which has not received either the literary or the historical attention it deserves, is a text “reflecting the unmistakable influence of the Confessions in form as well as ‘spirit,’” “a work of artful self-representation” designed both as a personal apologia and as a model for other readers’ experience. Murray attends closely to Alabaster’s imitation of Augustine’s narrative and to the intertextual continuity of such conversion accounts.

Anne Myers’s essay on the Latin autobiography written by the Jesuit priest John Gerard primarily for a Catholic audience on the Continent concentrates on the uses of relics and other objects circulated in the Catholic community as means of preserving the identity and continuity of English Catholicism in the times of persecution. Myers demonstrates how Gerard’s “preoccupation with the persistence and preservation of relics and other objects central to Catholic devotion” is related to “the continued survival of the Catholic community in England” and to “the special threats [especially of imprisonment and martyrdom] faced by Reformation Catholics in general and Jesuit missionaries in particular.” Gerard uses relics and other valued objects associated with both long-dead and recently martyred Catholics to prove the “survival and resiliency” of the persecuted English Catholic community within the context of the long history of English Christianity, but instead of focusing on the authenticity of these objects themselves he treats them as signs of the vitality of Catholic belief and religious resistance. Myers notes Gerard’s emphasis on the circulation of relics and related materials, including writings of martyrs, for belief in such objects “function[ed] like a language that identifie[d] its speakers as members of the Catholic community” and “[a]s long as Gerard ha[d] others to whom he [could] circulate the illicit objects of Catholic devotion, Catholicism [was] not a dead language in England.” Myers analyzes Gerard’s “coded orange juice writing” and his crafting in prison of religious artifacts such as rosaries from orange peels as material practices all of a piece with the traditional Catholic uses of physical objects in
devotional and religious social life — part of what has been called elsewhere an “incarnational aesthetic” at odds with a Protestant language-based religion and sensuous minimalism. In Catholic practice, holy or valued objects mediated not only sacred experience but also social relations within the Catholic community. Set in the context of its primary audience of continental Jesuit seminarians, many of whom were preparing for frightfully hazardous missionary service in England, Gerard’s Autobiography, as Myers shows, served to prepare these young men for the experience both by assuring them of a receptive English Catholic community and by idealizing the heroic deeds and models of those who had recently suffered and died for the faith.

The experience and consequences of exile for both lay and religious Catholics are recurrent issues in many of the essays in this collection. From early in Elizabeth’s reign, Catholic and Protestant propagandists struggled for control of how the exiles were perceived. In government proclamations they were labeled “unnatural subjects” or “Hispaniolized” Englishmen. Exiles themselves projected different self-images and expressed their condition in various ways. Gary Kuchar sees the predicament of Southwell’s Mary Magdalene before the empty tomb of Jesus as paradigmatic of the exile’s agony in having to choose between staying and going: “If I stay here where he is not, I shall never finde him. If I would go further to seeke, I know not whether. . . . I am left free to choose whether I will stay without helpe, or go without hope.” Many refugees expressed homesickness and nostalgic longing for an England often imagined in idealized ways: “I finde the saying so true Dulcis odor patriae,” wrote the exiled Thomas Copley at the thought of returning home, “that alreadie me seemith, the ayer I shall breathe on the hills neere to Roan, looking towards Ingland, wilbe sweeter than I can drawe from any other parte.” Displacement from an ancestral home was frequently understood by Catholic exiles as emblematic of the sinner’s distance — even banishment — from the presence of God.

But if exile was a cause for lamentation and grief (and analogized to the diaspora of the Old Testament Jews), it was also a culturally enabling and productive condition, providing Catholics from all parts of the British Isles and Ireland with opportunities to organize, fund-raise, write, and publish. As Alexandra Walsham has argued, post-Tridentine Catholicism was as much invested in print culture as Protestantism, the so-called religion of the book. Exiles had access to Catholic presses across Europe at St. Omer in northern France, and at Louvain, Antwerp, Douai, and elsewhere. Some of the texts
discussed in this volume remained part of a system of manuscript circulation and publication that existed alongside print culture. William Alabaster’s conversion narrative, composed at the English College in Rome, was subsequently translated by Robert Parsons from the vernacular into Latin for a larger European readership, although never printed. John Gerard’s manuscript Autobiography was written at Louvain as a guidebook for the circumscribed audience of future Jesuit missionaries, warning them of the dangers that awaited them in England but also reassuring them about the survival of a robust Catholic subculture there. We might think of the Benedictine nun Dame Barbara Constable as doubly exiled, her enclosure inside the walls of a convent superimposed on her external exile from England. Yet Constable, too, made exile an opportunity for outreach, collecting texts, reading, transcribing the works of others, and composing her own devotional works for circulation beyond her immediate enclosed community at Cambrai.

Mark Netzloff’s chapter addresses most directly the experience of exile by examining the English Colleges on the Continent. Netzloff is interested in how “the Catholic polemical texts written from the position of continental diaspora offered their own formulations of English identity.” As the writings of three prominent exiles—William Allen, Robert Persons, and Richard Verstegan—reveal, these formulations were varied and nuanced. Allen, who established the first college at Douai in 1568, defended the colleges against Protestant characterizations of their members as vagrants, deviants, and traitors. Netzloff shows how Allen defends travel from Protestant associations of it with error and spiritual waywardness, conceiving of Englishness not in ethnic or geographical terms but as an adherence to certain religious and legal principles. Robert Persons, on the other hand, constructs in his writings on diaspora a Catholic identity based on “cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity,” a conceit that refuses the Protestant emphasis on English “isolationism and exceptionalism.” In Persons’s accounts, the colleges, far from being novel innovations, help restore England’s historical ties with Iberia and the rest of Europe. Netzloff uses the cosmopolitanism of the English Colleges to challenge influential modern narratives about nation formation. Citing the speeches delivered in multiple languages to Philip II by the English students at Valladolid, Netzloff questions Benedict Anderson’s equation of the modern state with the dominance of the vernacular. Netzloff’s final case study is of exiled Catholic Richard Verstegan and his antiquarian work A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities. For Netzloff, Verstegan’s racialized view
of English identity as Germanic-Saxon in origin stressed England’s ties to continental Europe and preserved an essential identity for Catholics that could not be invalidated by geographical displacement or religious and political affiliation. Such a racialized imagining of English identity, however, did little to encourage cooperation between English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish Catholics. Indeed, Verstegan’s work fueled English Catholics’ conviction in their pre-eminence over co-religionists from neighboring regions.

It was from continental centers of resistance like Louvain, Rome, and Douai that exiled Catholics took on Protestants in ecclesiastical arguments about the origins, continuity, and identity of the true church and its relation to Rome. John Jewel’s Protestant *Apology for the Church of England* (1564), the work that ignited this polemical battle, drew responses from exiled Catholic intellectuals like Thomas Harding and Thomas Stapleton, who conscripted the Venerable Bede for the modern Catholic cause by translating and publishing an edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Intimately related to arguments about the history of the church as an institution were the attempts by different factions to claim Christianity’s roll call of saints and martyrs. The Catholic writing of hagiography, like the collecting, preserving, translating, and transcribing of medieval spiritual texts, was a way of safeguarding a religious heritage that the passage of time and the iconoclastic phases of the reformation threatened to erase. In her chapter “The Lives of Women Saints of Our Contrie of England: Gender and Nationalism in Recusant Hagiography,” Catherine Sanok shows how Catholics were just as invested as Protestants in forging national narratives and myths designed to validate their status as custodians of an authentic Englishness. While Reformation governments revised the religious calendar and drastically curtailed the number of officially recognized saints and their festivals, Catholics produced legendaries of native saints that asserted the antiquity and legitimacy of their faith and insisted upon England’s status as a Catholic nation. Sanok further shows how the legendary’s reconciliation of Catholic and nationalist discourses is inflected by issues of gender. Overturning the misogynistic stereotypes found in anti-Catholic polemic (the church as the Whore of Babylon, for instance), the Catholic hagiography that Sanok studies celebrates these pious women as representatives of a distinctly English Catholic nationalism. Ironically, this hortatory vision of an ancient Catholic England figured as feminine is used to shame and thus motivate the present-day English Catholic community of timid and backsliding men. Sanok shows how in *The Lives of Women Saints*
England’s identity as a Catholic nation transcends political formations but is inscribed on the land itself—a land in which the bodies of martyred virgins are interred and from which springs of fresh water issue, miraculously marking the site of these martyrdoms.

Just as stay-at-home recusants looked outside England for support from Europe’s Catholic powers, so, argues Donna Hamilton, writers like Anthony Munday insinuated a Catholic agenda into their writings by looking outside England to texts from a continental Catholic literary tradition. Discussing works that have been all but ignored by recent scholars, Hamilton shows how Munday’s translations of a cluster of Iberian romances, including *Palmerin of England*, constituted interventions in ongoing controversies about confessional practices and England’s ties to an idea of Christendom embodied in Catholic Europe. Hamilton’s treatment of Munday is all the more remarkable in that it represents a bold reassessment of a figure who has until now had a reputation as a staunch anti-Catholic for works like *The English Roman Life* (1582) and his continuation of John Stow’s *Chronicles*.30 Scholars have long recognized the political implications attending the act of translation; Munday’s translations are notable, however, for preserving more than they change in their originals. Munday’s translations might have excised obvious references to Catholic devotional practices, but they retained an essentially Catholic worldview, thus unobtrusively importing heterodox ideas and fantasies into a Protestant state that tried to seal its borders against such infiltration. Munday’s translation project implicitly rejected myths of England’s exceptionalism and status as a Protestant *hortus conclusus* by inviting readers to remember in a positive light their country’s earlier connections to the wider world of Christendom and the loss of community and security that had resulted from severing those ties.

Hamilton’s study raises many fascinating questions that require further study, not the least of which is what religious label we should give Munday. Catholic loyalist and church papist are two that might fit, but they are only two possible ways to name the multiple, shifting, overlapping, perhaps uncategorizable subject positions that Catholics could occupy. The case of Munday—a figure once firmly rooted in the Protestant camp and now claimed for the Catholic—should remind us of the problems inherent in trying to fix individual religious identity in this period according to a single set of binary categories.31 Recent scholarship is creating an increasingly complex account of early modern English Catholic culture. In this collection alone, we encounter
a broad range of Catholics—laymen and laywomen, a queen, a Benedictine nun, Jesuit missionaries, and Catholic exiles; recusants, church papists, and loyalists—working and writing within widely varying contexts and communities. Catholic activities and cultural products emerged from special combinations of conflicts that contributed in a positive, not just oppositional, way to the construction of new religious identities in early modern England. It is our hope that the essays gathered here will encourage an ongoing reappraisal of early modern English Catholic culture and the complex religious orientations of the men and women of the period.

Notes

1. See the discussion of Whig historiography, for example, in Kevin Sharpe, Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4–9. See Lingard’s multivolume, multiple-edition, expanding History of England (the first through fifth editions published during his lifetime in 1819–51, the sixth and seventh published posthumously in 1854–55 and 1883 respectively).


10. These include not only some eighty volumes in the Records series, six volumes in the monograph series, and two occasional publications but also the journal *Recusant History* (called *Biographical Studies* during its first three years of publication).


15. Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Raymond D. Tumble-


18. Both Annabel Patterson and Robert Miola are compiling soon-to-be-published anthologies of early modern Catholic writing, the former in the context of a large collection of religious writing from the period. These would be the first such anthologies since Louise Guiney’s *Recusant Poets* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939) and John Roberts's *A Critical Anthology of English Recusant Devotional Prose, 1589–1603* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966).


21. Ibid., 91.