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THE EMBODIMENT OF EXILE

Relics and suffering in early modern English cloisters*

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In May 1688, Mary Wigmore of the English Carmelite cloister in Antwerp wrote to Mary of Modena, Queen of England and wife of James II, sending the nuns' good wishes for the English queen's imminent confinement. She praised the queen's 'example and Illustrious vertues [which] are sufficient to reduce to the waie of truth & Sanctity the whole Nation', before reminding Mary of Modena that the nuns prayed 'incessantly' for her preservation, that of her husband, James II, and for 'a Prince to Inherit your Crownes and vertues'. But the Carmelites did not simply proffer prayers for a safe confinement, they also sent a gift. Noting the queen's devotion to 'our seraphique Mother S^t Teresa', Wigmore enclosed a

Relique a peece of her flesh I presume to present, beseeching your Majesty to weare it in your labour, it working daylie in effect miracles giving happy deliveries & preservation of the mother & child in like cases.¹

The Carmelite relic proved a double-edged sword. While the queen was safely delivered of a healthy son and heir in June 1688, by December the royal family was itself in what would become a permanent exile in France.

Enforced or self-imposed exclusion for religious or political reasons was not uncommon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the expatriation of kings was unusual, Protestant and Catholic minorities regularly sought refuge

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abroad from persecution and prosecution at home. While Calvinist migrations have been extensively documented, Catholic exile has received significantly less scholarly attention.² However, recent research has revealed that thousands of Catholics left their homelands for permanent or temporary respite in other territories, leading Geert Janssen to assert that 'the experience of exile should therefore be regarded as an integral part of the history of the Catholic Reformation'.³ In the historiography of post-Reformation English Catholicism, some groups have received more consideration than others. The emigration of men and women to found and join religious communities was documented in Peter Guilday's survey, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent, 1558–1797*, published in 1914. The Catholic Record Society progressively printed these institutions' registers, obituaries, and chronicles over the course of the twentieth century. Despite this evidence, scholarship on post-Reformation English Catholicism has focused predominantly on the experience of Catholics remaining at home, largely to the exclusion of the expatriate community—a lacuna that is being redressed in the twenty-first century.⁴

Earlier studies centred on the English exiles' subversion as pensioners of the Spanish and French crowns and as writers, plotters, and activists in favour of the overthrow of the Protestant church and state.⁵ While the political activism of religious émigrés rightly continues to attract attention, scholarship is expanding to investigate the expatriates' experience of exile, including the relationship between migrants and their host communities.⁶ The role of émigrés in disseminating Tridentine devotions and thereby connecting Catholics in England with the wider Church provides just one example of connections between Catholics on either side of the Channel and their joint participation in shaping the parameters of their faith at home and abroad.⁷ Thus, there has been a shift away from considering the exiles and stay-at-home Catholics separately and towards a tacit acknowledgement that they belonged to a single, albeit geographically dispersed and not always united, English Catholic community.

It is principally through the English émigrés' literary production that we can discern the mental world of exclusion, including the emotional dimensions of expatriation.⁸ Catholics, Protestants, and political exiles alike characterized dislocation from their homeland as a state of intense suffering, even something akin to 'Martyrdom', as Sir Edward Hyde termed the royalists' separation from their country in the 1650s on account of their loyalty to the monarchy and loathing of the Protectorate.⁹ Alison Shell's analysis of exile literature in the century from the accession of Elizabeth I identifies grief, consolation, and hope as common motifs in the verse, hymns, and drama of Catholics residing abroad in religious institutions and colleges.¹⁰ These are nicely encapsulated in Thomas Hide's *Consolatorie Epistle* of 1579, in which the seminary priest assures his readers that although exiled from home, income, and comfort, 'God ... turneth this temporal punishmente to your spiritual benefite'.¹¹ Implicit in such consolatory literature was the exiles' inevitable return to their homeland. The biblical models suggested the righteous would be rewarded, and there were the more recent

historical examples. The Protestant Marian exiles had returned to England, as had the royalists in the 1660s, so there was every reason to hope that Catholics suffering from kin and country would do likewise.¹² The motif of exile as a temporary state infused the writing of the English Catholic émigrés and underpinned their identity. Individuals and institutions alike saw themselves first and foremost as English Catholics who, although living abroad and practicing their faith as members of the universal Church, would ultimately return to their homeland, once their religion was restored there, or at the very least, was tolerated.¹³

Yet it is not only through the exiles' personal and institutional writings that we can understand their experience of dislocation, and the consolatory narratives constructed to endure it. The exile experience was also expressed through the material objects the émigrés used to adorn themselves, furnish their residences, and perform their religious devotions. David Morgan asserts it is through 'things' that 'human beings feel their way into their worlds, feel themselves, feel the past, anticipate the future, feel together'.¹⁴ If this is the case, then physical items constituted markers of identity for émigrés separated from the people, places, and things that defined their previous lives. As the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has suggested of worldly possessions, artefacts shape a sense of the self and stabilize identity. While operating as symbols of social status and relationships, they further provide continuity in time by offering 'foci of involvement in the present, mementos and souvenirs of the past, and signposts to future goals'.¹⁵ For religious exiles considering their expatriation as temporary, such objects grounded them in the present, while offering tangible evidence of England's religious past and hope for its Catholic future.¹⁶ One might even suggest they performed a consolatory function.

In this chapter, I want to examine the religious relic and what it can tell us about the emotional experience of exile in English convents located in France and the southern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Founded by the daughters of England's Catholic minority, these cloisters encapsulate many elements of the exile experience I have outlined. They were fiercely English, often to the point of excluding women of other nationalities, including the Irish, and their *raison d'être* was to preserve the monastic tradition for their countrywomen with a view to returning the convents to England, once it was possible to do so.¹⁷ Several cloisters embedded the narrative of temporary exile within their chronicles, liturgies, and ritual life. Women taking the veil in the Bridgettine convent in Lisbon vowed obedience to their monastic rule and superiors both in exile and upon their anticipated return to England.¹⁸ Intelligent, articulate, politically engaged, and above all respected for their piety, the nuns embraced the early modern enthusiasm for collecting saints' body parts and fostered devotions centred upon them. I want to argue, however, that convents' relics performed a much deeper spiritual and emotional function. Relics connected the nuns intimately with their homeland, kin, and patrons, their perceived spiritual potency was employed to achieve the exiles' hope for repatriation, and

importantly, they provided models and narratives by which individuals and communities could explain, perform, and overcome the desolation of exile.

English nuns, exile, and relics

Scholars agree that relics performed a range of functions in post-Reformation Europe. Many reflected the roles sacred artefacts had assumed since they became important in the early centuries of Christianity—as conduits of divine intercession, symbols of political authority, and signifiers of confessional and regional identity. Their stature was even enhanced amidst the emotionally charged debates between Protestants and Catholics surrounding their legitimacy. Sanctioned by the Council of Trent as valid objects for veneration by the faithful, relics were distinctly Catholic. As Simon Ditchfield has said of saints, ‘in a confessionally-divided world, devotion to saints was a highly visible badge of Catholic identity’.¹⁹ The same can be said of saints’ and martyrs’ remains and material items associated with them. These religiously charged artefacts became ‘sacred commodities’ to be sold, purchased, gifted, or stolen.²⁰ Possession of such items endowed their owners with spiritual capital that might be put to a range of pious, political, and confessional uses. Philip II bolstered his authority and promoted Catholic Spain’s victory over Protestants and Muslims via a large relic collection, located with his ancestral mausoleum in the palace monastery of the Escorial.²¹ If sacred objects legitimated the power of one of Catholic Europe’s leaders, they also raised the spiritual and civic profile of convents. Helen Hills draws a connection between the holiness of enclosed nuns incarcerated behind convent walls in Naples and the spiritual power of their relics encased in elaborate reliquaries.²² Nuns in other parts of Europe recognized the material, political, and spiritual advantages conferred by the possession of significant relics and did their utmost to secure them for their cloisters.²³

The remains of saints and martyrs became important symbols in areas reconverted to the Catholic faith and in those bordering Protestant territory. Alex Walsham has described them as ‘a vibrant hallmark of baroque piety in regions that remained loyal or were reclaimed to the faith of Rome’.²⁴ Trevor Johnson argued that in the re-catholicization of the Upper Palatinate, entire skeletons of catacomb saints became vital markers of confessional identity because of their ‘antiquity, martyrdom and Roman provenance’.²⁵ Relics performed a similarly restorative function in Bohemia.²⁶ It follows, therefore, that relics were significant for Catholic minorities, particularly for religious exiles. Through the relic, a Catholic community, whether an institution, local area, state, or even fragmented diaspora united in the belief that the holy matter connected them to the saint’s intercessory power, which could potentially resolve inter-faith conflict in their favour. It might even breach the geographical divide between émigrés and stay-at-home Catholics. Liesbeth Corens has suggested that the mobility of relics around Europe and across the English Channel and back connected a fragmented

Catholic community spiritually.²⁷ But, as Csikszentmihalyi's argument about the capacity of objects to evoke emotional connections to the past implies, antique remains collapsed temporal as well as geographic boundaries.

Corens argues that by sending parts of pre-Reformation saints from England to the expatriate community abroad, Catholics established a material connection with the past while preserving ancient remains that would be part of England's Catholic future, once the Protestants were vanquished.²⁸ There is evidence that exiled English cloisters engaged in such practices, collecting objects with direct links to their country's pre-Protestant past. Some members of the pre-Reformation Bridgettine monastery of Syon Abbey went into exile after the dissolution of their house and spent several peripatetic decades in the Low Countries and France, before finding permanent refuge in Lisbon in 1594. They reportedly transported 'Reliques and trinkets beyond the Seas into Flanders' when they left England. These included the arms of St Thomas Beckett, two heads from St Ursula's thousand virgins, and relics of St Bridget and St Augustine, as well as some of the Virgin Mary's milk and some of the Blood of Hales.²⁹ In 1737, the Poor Clares of Rouen were given 'a noble present of ancient antiquity' found 'inn the ruines of an old abbaye of Catholick times'.³⁰ The Augustinian cloister in Louvain possessed a more recent relic, but one no less representative of England's Catholic heritage, Sir Thomas More's hair shirt. The mother of the convent's former prioress was More's adopted daughter, Margaret Giggs, who had received the treasured relic from him on the eve of his martyrdom.³¹

Yet, as More's hair shirt suggests, the English expatriate community's relationship with relics extended beyond connections with pre-Reformation holy figures, their bodily remains, and items linked to them. The convents accrued sacred objects that spanned the centuries from Christ to contemporary professors of the Catholic faith. The Poor Clares of Rouen owned a piece of the 'true cross', part of St Joseph's cloak, and bone fragments of 'all the apostles & several other saints'.³² The Lierre Carmelites possessed relics of the Virgin Mary and St Joseph.³³ The Antwerp Carmelites' extensive cache of holy objects included a reliquary containing 'fragments of the true cross, the veil of the Blessed Virgin Mary and bone fragments of St Paul the Apostle, St Teresa, St Francis Xavier, St Charles Borromeo, St Ignatius Loyola, St Joseph and St Peter the Apostle'.³⁴ This eclectic compilation not only affirmed an unbroken Catholic succession from Christ to early modern religious leaders, but it also encouraged devotees to embrace religious reform and missionary zeal in a new age of persecution. It further inspired them to fashion devotions to potential new 'saints' and 'martyrs', as we will see in the next section.

The wider question remains, however, as to what these relics meant. Did they perform the kinds of roles suggested by Morgan and Csikszentmihalyi? A closer analysis of certain items and their placement and use in the cloisters reveals how nuns subsumed material artefacts into their communities' quotidian and spiritual environment. The holy bones and objects in convents were part of

the communal fabric of the cloister: physically, through interment, display, and ritual use, and metaphorically, through the nuns' connections with secular kin and patrons as well as with the convent's spiritual family of founders, saints, and martyrs. They also performed a significant role in monastic devotions, many of which were directed towards the repatriation of the nuns, their convents, and their faith.

Relics and the communal fabric of exiled convents

The most obvious example of a relic's explicit connection with exile is the devotion surrounding St Justin the Martyr in the Paris Augustinian convent. Queen Mary of Modena gifted the second-century martyr's remains to the nuns in 1694. They accordingly instituted an annual feast, which over the course of the octave included public exposition of the relics and masses in the convent church, as well as a procession of the holy bones through the cloister grounds and private liturgical services in the nuns' choir. The archbishop of Paris made explicit the celebration's political intent, granting an indulgence to anyone who visited the church and, before the jointly exposed relics and Eucharist, prayed for 'y^e extirpation of heresie, y^e exaltation of y^e Faith, for y^e peace and union of Christian Kings & Princes, for y^e health & prosperity of y^e sacred Parsones of His Majesty and all y^e Royall familie'.³⁵ The nuns capitalized upon the indulgence, turning the feast into a Jacobite event that attracted large numbers of British Catholic exiles.³⁶ Given by the exiled queen, and previously housed in the royal chapel at St James, St Justin's relics were exactly the kind of holy matter that helped to orientate the nuns' sense of their place in Christian history. Other saints with explicit connections to England's Catholic past were similarly invoked to end the exile. The Augustinians celebrated the feast of St Edward the Confessor with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and that of St Gregory (whom they termed 'the apostle of England') with a High Mass. The liturgies for both saints were similarly dedicated to 'the conversion of England'.³⁷

The agenda to reconvert England, spearheaded by the clerical mission, provided another kind of relic. Robin Malo has argued that the torture and execution of priests 'occasioned *new* relic making' and their bodies became 'both wonder-working sacred objects and ... communicative signs' with the potential to return England to the Catholic fold.³⁸ The nuns, unable to participate physically in the mission, accessed its suffering by collecting the hagiographic narratives of executed priests and sometimes their body parts and clothing. The Bridgettines had wood from Tyburn, presumably stained with literal or figurative martyrs' blood.³⁹ The Antwerp Carmelite archive contains, in a box labelled 'English Martyrs', at least twenty-nine relics (bone fragments, cloth dipped in blood or other fabric, or straw associated with them) of priests executed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, along with linen relics of aristocrats executed during the Popish plot and Jacobite rebellion.⁴⁰ The nuns also possessed miniature oil portraits of ten English martyrs and bone fragments of them.

Painted in the 1640s, the images and relics were combined in an extravagant frame in the early nineteenth century. In another frame, the nuns mounted martyrs' relics, both clerical and lay, from the seventeenth century, combined with St Thomas of Canterbury and some soil from their burial ground.⁴¹ They also retained a letter reassuring them that the Jesuit, Henry Morse, had remembered them at his execution in 1645.⁴² While the relic compilations dated from a later period, the convent's earlier acquisition of these priests' remains, with pictorial and written mementos of them, suggests that they considered recent martyrs as important as earlier confessors of the faith. Malo has proposed that English Catholics who collected such relics at Tyburn and other sites of execution 'might themselves become sanctified through martyrdom'.⁴³ As exiled (and enclosed) religious women and thereby too distant from the missionary field to die upon the scaffold, the nuns accordingly framed dislocation from their homeland as a sacrifice for the Catholic cause and embraced monastic discipline as an alternative form of martyrdom. Convent relic collections, combined with individual and corporate narratives of suffering for Christ and the Church, intimately linked the nuns with the English martyrs and encouraged them to establish genealogies of present-day confessors of the Roman faith.

The imperative to connect with contemporary martyrs led some cloisters to seek relics of people whose eligibility rested more upon the political exile of the Stuarts than execution for the faith. The Paris Augustinians had the heart of James Radcliffe, Jacobite earl of Derwentwater, executed for his part in the 1715 rising. Derwentwater bequeathed the 'precious gift of his Noble hart' to the convent, although the sisters did not gain custody of it until 1732 when they ceremoniously placed it in a monument in their choir.⁴⁴ Although dying for the Jacobite cause might not qualify him for Christian martyrdom, the nuns considered him as such and established what might be considered a shrine in their choir. They similarly revered the royal family, installing a piece of James II's arm, embalmed by the prioress, in their choir in 1701.⁴⁵ When Maria Clementina Sobieska, the wife of James Francis Edward Stuart (whom the nuns called James III) died, various cloisters sought objects associated with her to venerate 'her Magestys memory'.⁴⁶ Locks of Clementina's hair were accordingly added to the relic collections of several cloisters.⁴⁷ The placement of these objects within the parts of the cloister deemed most sanctified—the church and nuns' choir—suggests that they performed a devotional function, but it also points to their metaphorical standing as markers of exclusion. Nuns attended mass and performed their religious obligations in these 'emotionally heightened spaces' where the relics were tangible reminders of exile and the causes that united the sisters with those who had suffered for it.

To enhance the physical and spiritual connection between the convents and their saintly patrons, holy matter was literally embedded in the physical structure of monastic buildings. When in 1719 the Rouen Poor Clares extended their chapel, dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, the abbess placed 'some relicks' in the new foundations, along with the saint's picture, all the nuns' names, and

those of important benefactors, 'to put ourselves anew under the protection of that glorious Archangel'.⁴⁸ Likewise in 1724 during further renovations, the sisters consecrated the four corners of their new cloister with relics and holy medals of the house's patron saints, and they placed a piece of the 'true cross' and other sacred objects under a crucifix.⁴⁹ Like the body parts of English martyrs, such relics became part of the material structure housing the exiled religious community and formed what I would term its 'holy fabric'. Like other medieval and early modern concealed objects, these items might have had an apotropaic, or protective, function.⁵⁰ However, they were also significant for the cloister's spiritual identity. David Morgan has argued that 'religion happens not *in* spaces and performances as indifferent containers, but *as* them, carved out of, overlaid, or running against prevailing modes of place and time'.⁵¹ By incorporating holy matter within the architecture of the convent, the exiled religious women united with Christ, and his saints and martyrs, as constant adherents to Catholicism, bound by a tradition of suffering for the faith, which was entombed in the very foundations and walls of the convent.

A strong sense of attachment to family, both natal and spiritual, appears to be at the core of the nuns' relationship with their relics and their desire to assimilate them within their enclosures. Helen Hills has noted that the "domestication" of conventual devotional life assumed the form ... of desire for the ancestral body'.⁵² The nuns commonly possessed relics of their founding fathers and mothers. In 1741, the Poor Clares in Rouen installed a relic of St Francis's cloak, enclosed in a 'cristal hart' in their choir. A piece of linen 'dipt in the blood of his sacred stigmats' in a little gold reliquary was placed 'upon the image of our Blessed Lady' at the altar of St Francis.⁵³ The nuns' relic of Francis's cloak 'enchas'd in a crystall hart', had been bequeathed by the brother of the duke of Norfolk in 1723. This sacred cloth fragment adorned the saint's statue, which went on procession on his feast day. They likewise had a cloth relic of St Collette's habit in a silver reliquary.⁵⁴ The Antwerp Carmelites had been given a piece of St Teresa of Avila's heart in 1642, which was encased within a new gold reliquary in 1644.⁵⁵ Prioress Mary Augustina More of the Augustinians in Bruges bequeathed to her cloister a vertebra from the neck of her ancestor, Sir Thomas More, along with his rosary.⁵⁶ Many nuns were noted for their devotion to these saints in obituaries, pointing to a close emotional relationship with their spiritual forebears.

Religious communities also sought to establish similar familial ties with saints and relics not immediately related to them or their order. The Paris Augustinians connected St Justin's relics with their patrons, St Augustine and the Virgin Mary (the convent was called Our Lady of Sion), via the annual procession of the martyr's relics through the convent garden that stopped at their shrines.⁵⁷ They likewise merged objects obtained from the Stuarts with their order's saints. In 1705 the nuns ceremonially hung a picture of St Monica (St Augustine's mother) in their choir 'betwixt y^e monument of y^e late King James of happy & holly memory, & y^e picture of St John drawn by ou^r present young King James y^e 3^d'.⁵⁸

Patrick Geary suggested that medieval monastic communities formed a familial relationship with their saints, who as *paterfamilias* protected them and supported their prosperity.⁵⁹ We can see the same imperative at work in the English cloisters where the order's saints were prominent in personal and communal piety. The acquisition, display, and devotional function of such sacred matter also illustrated the nuns' production of a devotional aesthetic in which 'convent, relics, and the bodies and names of apostles and nuns were closely identified with each other ... to deploy new holy identities across place and time'.⁶⁰ Such practices were particularly significant for exiled religious women, separated from former worlds and selves not only by enclosure walls and grilles, but also by confessional difference and geographic and cultural distance.

Yet feelings of exclusion were not only the province of the exiled nuns. Their families, likewise expatriated for religious reasons, sought similar solace by donating relics to the religious houses. Lay and clerical Catholics gifted holy remains to female kin and their monastic communities. The Lierre Carmelite, Catherine Stanislaus Joseph of the Mother of God Thorpe, was given '31 Holy Relicks' in the 1770s (presumably for the jubilee of her 1728 profession) by her cousin, the Jesuit John Thorpe.⁶¹ Relics of the 'true cross', apostles, and saints were given to the Rouen Poor Clares by their confessor but were said to have previously belonged to James Francis Edward Stuart.⁶² We might consider such gifts evidence of the desire of families and patrons for a presence in cloisters. Along with the chalices, monstrances, candlesticks, and other ornamentation for use in the sacred space of the choir and church during liturgical ceremonies, fellow exiles provided relics and other sacred objects for stimulating communal and personal piety.⁶³ They were also investments in the sanctity of cloisters, which like the relics themselves, remained in a liminal space between England's religious past and its anticipated Catholic future. These artefacts were employed in formal and private devotions directed towards the end of exile and the re-establishment of the faith, its objects, and rituals, across the Channel. It is possible that gifting such things to the convents for this purpose might also have performed a consolatory function for families dislocated from their homeland.

If the convents, with the nuns and their sacred objects, functioned as repositories of English Catholic piety, actively maintaining the faith in exile, they were also spaces of refuge where other expatriate co-religionists might reside to await their homecoming. Many cloisters accommodated lay boarders, who were commonly relatives and almost invariably English exiles. These women attended the nuns' public religious services and assisted the convent with gifts of church plate, linen, and ornamentation to enhance devotion.⁶⁴ But guests sought refuge with their monastic kin in death, as well as in life. Convents provided the final resting place for many expatriates. In 1714, the Nuns of the Immaculate Conception in Paris (known as the Blue Nuns) had a plot in their garden blessed as a burial ground. Various benefactors and pensioners were interred there, including Lady Catherine Melfort, who died suddenly in 1735 when visiting the convent in order to receive the sacrament of confession. The Blue Nuns'

confessor, John Massey, was buried in their church in 1715. Massey had lived at the convent for seventeen years and had asked to be laid to rest among the sisters.⁶⁵

Other cloisters similarly welcomed deceased exiles into their community. Indeed, they integrated family and patrons within the monastic environs in much the same way as they incorporated relics. The Paris Augustinians embalmed body parts. In November 1718, the heart of the prioress's deceased niece was given to the nuns to embalm. After a requiem mass, the heart was set into the wall of the choir. Nine years later, similar ceremonies prefaced the interment of Lord Teyhnam's heart.⁶⁶ The Blue Nuns likewise entombed the heart of Lord Stafford in the wall of their choir in 1734.⁶⁷ While monastic establishments had long been popular burial sites for family and patrons, the fervour with which the English nuns sought and interred the remains of martyrs, kin, and patrons suggests that exile fostered a strong desire for the presence of compatriots within the enclosure. Their exiled relatives similarly craved permanent refuge in spaces identified as English and Catholic. The relics of holy men and women connected them with not only contemporary martyrs and saints, but also monastic ancestors, the holy family, and their own flesh and blood.

Relics, exile, and the performance of martyrdom

Surrounded by the bones, flesh, and artefacts of saints and martyrs, and versed in the stories of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the faith, the monastic environment provided the ideal material setting for the performance of martyrdom and its prototype, Christ's passion, in the devotions of individual sisters. Pascal Eitler, Bettina Hitzer, and Monique Scheer have called for an examination of the 'concrete emotional practices that were instrumental in shaping the religious self', such as confession, conversion, prayer, and so on.⁶⁸ Rituals linked to the narratives and materiality of martyrdom encouraged women to embrace suffering as a core element of their religiosity. It is not surprising then to find nuns embracing the rigours of monastic obedience and mortification of the self and passions as a medium by which they practiced piety. They similarly adopted the physical discomfort of illness or separation from kin and country as forms of martyrdom.

Elizabeth (in religion, Teresa of Jesus Maria) Worsley, who was professed a Carmelite at Antwerp in 1620, later becoming prioress at Alost, practiced a piety steeped in the language and physicality of martyrdom. She would take physical discipline on the feast days of martyrs, flagellating herself so harshly that 'the place where she stood would be all swiming in blood'. In her final illness she likened her pain to being 'stretchd upon a Glowing gridiron', being pierced with nails, and as if her 'flesh and internals were pulld to peeces'. Nearing death, she fully embraced martyrdom. The end she most feared was by choking. She was unable to breathe, and her confessor encouraged her to liken herself to a priest being hung in England, thus fulfilling her wish to die a martyr.⁶⁹ David

Morgan reminds us that 'forms of materiality—sensations, things, spaces, and performance—are a matrix in which belief happens as touching and seeing, hearing and tasting, feeling and emotion, as will and action, as imagination and intuition'.⁷⁰ In a cloister amassing relics from the English mission, the spiritual formation of Sister Teresa of Jesus Maria was grounded in the artefacts surrounding her, in the rituals that focused on those objects, and in the stories of sacrifice they imparted. She accordingly dreamt of martyrdom, performed it, and felt its pain.

Teresa of Jesus Maria's older sister, Anne of the Ascension Worsley, presents an even starker example of the centrality of suffering in the exiled nuns' quotidian and devotional lives. The daughter of English Catholic parents who were forced into exile in Antwerp, Anne was conscious of the difficulties inherent in separation from country and kin. In an autobiographical account, she recalled at the age of fifteen or sixteen: 'I was troubled that my Parents could not maintain me as I desired and that we were in a Strange Country [and] had no friends nor kindred as I saw others had'.⁷¹ She entered a Carmelite cloister in Mons, where she was professed in 1610, her dowry provided by the Infanta Isabella. A year later, Anne of St Bartholomew, one of Teresa of Avila's companions, became prioress at Mons. Anne of the Ascension formed a close attachment to her and later went with her to establish a Spanish Carmelite house in Antwerp. In 1616, after successfully opposing the Carmelite friars who sought to change the convent's original Teresian constitutions, she was separated from her beloved mentor. Following three years in Mechelen, she became a founding sister in the first English Carmelite convent established in Antwerp, where she was elected prioress.⁷²

Anne of the Ascension's writings emphasize her suffering at these key junctures in her life and point to 'separation' as the consistent trigger for anguish. Her early attachment to Anne of St Bartholomew was so intense that being parted from her would be 'harder then any Martirdome I could think of'. When her worst fears were realized, she described 'being in extreemity of grief'.⁷³ Yet she settled in the Mechelen cloister, only to suffer the pain of separation anew when sent to found the English cloister in Antwerp. She embraced her distress as crosses, yet struggled to overcome the poverty of the new convent and to negotiate with its irascible lay founder, Lady Mary Lovel, whose plans did not sit easily with Worsley's understanding of Teresian government. As if these issues did not cause enough difficulty, she engaged in another battle with the Carmelite friars who again sought to change the nuns' Constitutions.⁷⁴

Anne of the Ascension Worsley did not willingly embrace suffering. When elected prioress in Antwerp at a youthful age, her anguish stemmed largely from the fear of failure. She wrote, 'the most grief I had for being Superiour, did proceed from pride and fear of Suffering'. After encouraged by a Jesuit to resign herself to God's will, she determined that she would do her best 'tho I should Suffer disgrace for it'.⁷⁵ Worsley's acceptance of affliction emboldened her for the fight to preserve 'the custome and practice of our Blessed Mother', which

she believed had been passed to her from Teresa of Avila through Anne of St Bartholomew. Although trained in the principles of monastic obedience to superiors, Worsley was adamant her nuns would not to be separated from the direct inheritance of St Teresa, despite feeling 'much conflict in nature' to defy the friars.⁷⁶ She wrote

I knew if the fryers did prevail that I should suffer all my life for what I did, of which I had no apperhension [*sic*], because God made it seem delightfull to me if I might have sufferd for the mantaining of our Blessd Mothers Institution, for this was the only Inclination I had in the business.⁷⁷

In her final years, she similarly embraced the agony of illness. A devotee of Christ's Passion, she had a vision of him 'with a heavey Cross upon his shoulders and [he] told her that before she dyed she should feel something of what he Sufferd in that misstery'. Before her death, she was 'seased with a violent pain in her Shoulder, and then said to the Religious now I am certain I shall not be long'.⁷⁸

The prioress's application of the suffering motif to explain difficult moments in her life implies it was a central plank in her spirituality but also in her understanding and resolution of daily trials and tribulations. Apart from her vision of Christ, which suggests that she overcame her fear of affliction through devotion to the Passion, the rationale for the motif is never explained. It is possible that this Christological piety was inspired and supported by the collection of images, crucifixes, and relics of it in her convent. The nuns had a reliquary supposedly containing fragments of the table from the last supper, column of the scourging, scourge, Holy Sepulchre, nails, shroud, towel, purple garment, crown of thorns, sponge, two bones of Mary Magdalene, and clothing of the Virgin Mary, St Joseph, and St Teresa.⁷⁹ Moreover, Anne of the Ascension's appropriation of suffering was also grounded in her feelings of exclusion. Her formative experience was exile. It propelled her into the cloister and ultimately shaped her ongoing narrative of exclusion from homeland, parents, mentor, religious communities, and potentially her good name and reputation. Yet, just as martyrs' relics encouraged the expatriate nuns to labour towards a Catholic future for their homeland, so the anguish of separation empowered Worsely to struggle for what she felt was important, namely the constitutions of St Teresa. For the prioress, this document, the heritage of her spiritual mothers, Teresa and Anne of St Bartholomew, was a blueprint for surviving exile. It bound her to her new religious family, in which the past wisdom of the founder guided the spiritual travails of present sisters towards a future in which exile would be vanquished and they could transport the Carmelite order to England.

In the meantime, the nuns directed their efforts towards expediting that much-hoped-for moment, and their relic collection was integral to ending their exile. Just as the Paris Augustinian canonesses in the eighteenth century would

employ their relics of St Justin in an explicitly Jacobite liturgical feast, the Antwerp Carmelites strategically dispatched their 'peece' of St Teresa's flesh to England in 1688 to assist the safe delivery of a Catholic heir. The export of a Teresian family relic, which was such a crucial piece of the cloister's holy fabric, suggests that it was exactly the type of marker of space, temporality, and identity discussed by Morgan and Csikszentmihalyi. Like so many other relics, it was gifted by a cherished patron and displayed in the convent for communal and individual devotion. It linked the sisters with their order's founder, legitimated their religious life within the convent, and inspired them to resist the friars' efforts to change Teresa's constitutions. The relic also consoled the émigré nuns and, through prayer and devotion focused on it, connected them to their secular and spiritual families beyond the enclosure walls. It also performed a vital mnemonic function. As Alexandra Walsham observes regarding Catholics, 'Hallowed remains operated ... as mechanisms for establishing the legitimacy and authenticity of their religion, for demonstrating its material and institutional continuity from antiquity to the present, and for keeping alive hope for a glorious future'.⁸⁰ As the embodiment of exile, relics were strategically significant in confessional politics, and accordingly the nuns deployed them to precipitate the re-catholicization of England.

Notes

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- 2 David van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Timothy G. Fehler, Greta Grace Kroeker, Charles H. Parker, and Jonathan Ray, eds, *Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe: Strategies of Exile* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014); Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andrew Petegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
- 3 Geert H. Janssen, "The Exile Experience," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 73; Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- 4 Peter Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent, 1558–1795* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970); Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop, and Judith Pollmann, eds, *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c.1570–1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Katy Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011); Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly, eds, *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture and Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
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- 6 Paul Arblaster, "The Southern Netherlands Connection: Networks of Support and Patronage," in *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570–1720*, ed. Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop, and Judith Pollmann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 123–38; Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles*; Katy Gibbons, "Religious and Family Identity in Exile: Anne Percy, Countess of Northumberland in the Low Countries," in *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500–1800*, ed. Jesse Spohnholz and Gary K. Waite (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 39–50.
 - 7 Alexandra Walsham, *The Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Gabriel Glickman, *The English Catholic Community, 1688–1745: Politics, Culture and Ideology* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009).
 - 8 Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nicky Hallett, "'So Short a Space of Time': Early Modern Convent Chronology and Carmelite Spirituality," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no.3 (2012): 539–66; Jenna D. Lay, "The Literary Lives of Nuns: Crafting Identities through Exile," in *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture and Identity*, ed. Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 71–86.
 - 9 Cited in Marika Kublusek, "A Tortoise in the Shell: Royalist and Anglican Experience of Exile in the 1650s," in *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and its Aftermath, 1640–1690*, ed. Philip Major (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 87.
 - 10 Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, 172–87.
 - 11 Thomas Hide, *A Consolatorie Epistle to the Afflicted Catholikes* (Louvain, 1579), sig. j8v.
 - 12 Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles*, 118–19.
 - 13 Walker, *Gender and Politics*, 38–42; Caroline Bowden, "The English Convents in Exile and Questions of National Identity c.1600–1688," in *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603–1688*, ed. David Worthington (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 297–314.
 - 14 David Morgan, "Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religions," in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. David Morgan (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010), 71–72.
 - 15 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Stephen Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 23.
 - 16 Howard Louthan, "Tongues, Toes and Bones: Remembering Saints in Early Modern Bavaria," *Past and Present*, Supplement 5 (2010): 174–76, 180; Liesbeth Corens, "Saints Beyond Borders: Relics and the Expatriate English Catholic Community," in *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500–1800*, ed. Jesse Spohnholz and Gary K. Waite (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 25–38.
 - 17 Walker, *Gender and Politics*, 38–40; Bowden, "Convents in Exile."
 - 18 Bowden, "Convents in Exile," 308–9.
 - 19 Simon Ditchfield, "Tridentine Worship and the Cult of Saints," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 218.
 - 20 Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 194–218.
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 - 22 Helen Hills, "Nuns and Relics: Spiritual Authority in Post-Tridentine Naples," in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Whye (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 11–38.

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- 25 Trevor Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no.2 (1996): 293–94.
- 26 Loutham, "Tongues, Toes and Bones," 174.
- 27 Corens, "Saints Beyond Borders," 25–38.
- 28 Corens, "Saints Beyond Borders," 30–33.
- 29 Thomas Robinson, *The Anatomy of the English Nunnery at Lisbon in Portugall* (London, 1622), 11–12.
- 30 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters Book II Rouen 1701–1780," in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, vol. 1, *History Writing*, ed. Caroline Bowden (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 256.
- 31 Elizabeth Shirley, "The Lyfe of Our Moste Reverent Mother; Margrit Clement," Archives of St Monica's, Louvain, MS, fols. 4–5, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
- 32 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 256, 270.
- 33 "Receipts and Benefactors' Book," in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, vol. 5, *Convent Management*, ed. James E. Kelly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 168.
- 34 Gold tin with praying hands on lid, Lanherne Archives, CA/VI.E. Relics and Authentication Certificates, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
- 35 "A Relation of some Remarkable Things that happened to my Lady Abbess in her Latter Dayes," Paris Augustinian MS, fol. 174, Westminster Diocesan Archives (hereafter WDA).
- 36 Claire Walker, "Political Ritual and Religious Devotion in Early Modern English Convents," in *Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe, 1200–1920: Family, State and Church*, ed. Merridee Bailey and Katie Barclay (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer International Publishing, 2017), 221–39.
- 37 "Diurnall of the English Canonesses Regulars of St Augustin's Order established in Paris," Paris Augustinian MS, 1: fols. 332, 340, 350, 355, 364, WDA.
- 38 Robyn Malo, "Intimate Devotion: Recusant Martyrs and the Making of Relics in Post-Reformation England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44, no.3 (2014): 531, 542.
- 39 Robinson, *Anatomy*, 12.
- 40 Brown engraved box labelled English Martyrs, Lanherne Archives, CA/VI.E. Relics and Authentication Certificates, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
- 41 Frames in Plan Chest, Lanherne Archives, CA/VI.E. Relics and Authentication Certificates, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
- 42 "Fragment of a torn letter," Lanherne Archives, Unnumbered Items from Boxes 1–3, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth centuries, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
- 43 Malo, "Intimate Devotion," 534.
- 44 "Diurnall," Paris Augustinian MS, 1: fols. 324, 326–27, 354, 358, 364; 2: fols. 48, 50, WDA.
- 45 "Diurnall," Paris Augustinian MS 1: fols. 72, 76, WDA.
- 46 Mary Rose Howard to James Edgar, 11 December 1736, Stuart Papers 192/60 (microfilm), Royal Archives, Windsor Castle.
- 47 Mary Rose Howard to James Francis Edward, 11 November 1735, Stuart Papers, 184/25 (microfilm), Royal Archives, Windsor Castle; Pink Box with Formal Lid, Hair of Queen Mary Sobieska, given 1737, Lanherne Archives, CA/VI.E. Relics and Authentication Certificates, Douai Abbey, Berkshire. For a further discussion of Stuart "relics", see Claire Walker, "When God Shall Restore Them to Their Kingdoms': Nuns, Exiled Stuarts and English Catholic Identity, 1688–1745," in *Religion and Women in Britain, c.1660–1760*, ed. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 93–96.

- 48 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 231.
- 49 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 238.
- 50 Sarah Randles, "Material Magic: The Deliberate Concealment of Footwear and Other Clothing," *Paregon* 30, no.2 (2013): 109–28.
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- 52 Helen Hills, "The Housing of Institutional Architecture: Searching for a Domestic Holy in Post-Tridentine Italian Convents," in *Domestic Institutional Interiors in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Silvia Evangelisti (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 136.
- 53 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 256.
- 54 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 236, 270.
- 55 "Short Colections of the Beginings of Our English Monastery of Teresians in Antwerp with Some Few Particulars of Our Dear Deceased Religious," in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, vol. 4, *Life Writing II*, ed. Katrien Daemen-de Gelder (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), xvi, xxiv, 30; J. P. Vander Motten and Katrien Daemen-de Gelder, "A Cloistered Entrepôt: Sir Tobie Matthew and the English Carmel in Antwerp," *English Studies* 92, no.5 (2011): 555n39.
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- 57 "Diurnall," Paris Augustinian MS 1: fols. 7, 80, 92, WDA.
- 58 "Diurnall," Paris Augustinian MS 1: fol. 115, WDA.
- 59 Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 171.
- 60 Hills, "Searching for a Domestic Holy," 137.
- 61 "Receipts and Benefactors' Book," 163–64.
- 62 "Chronicles Poor Clare Sisters, Book II," 256.
- 63 Hills, "Searching for a Domestic Holy," 127–33.
- 64 Walker, *Gender and Politics*, 94–96.
- 65 *The Diary of the "Blue Nuns" or Order of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady at Paris, 1658–1810*, ed. Joseph Gillow and Richard Trappes-Lomax (London: Catholic Record Society, 1910), 67–70, 98.
- 66 "Diurnall," Paris Augustinian MS 1: fols. 260, 305, WDA.
- 67 *Diary of the "Blue Nuns,"* 97.
- 68 Pascal Eitler, Bettina Hitzer and Monique Scheer, "Feeling and Faith—Religious Emotions in German History," *German History* 32, no.3 (2014): 351.
- 69 "Short Colections," 85, 87, 89–90.
- 70 Morgan, "Introduction," 8.
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- 72 Nicky Hallett, "Worsley, Anne [name in religion Anne of the Ascension] (1588–1644), founding prioress of the English Carmelite convent, Antwerp," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-105826.
- 73 "Short Colections," 8–9.
- 74 "Short Colections," 11–14.
- 75 "Short Colections," 12–13.
- 76 "Short Colections," 13.
- 77 "Short Colections," 14.
- 78 "Short Colections," 32.
- 79 Gold tin with praying hands on lid, Lanherne Archives, CA/VI.E. Relics and Authentication Certificates, Douai Abbey, Berkshire.
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