INTRODUCTION

Canonicity and catholicity the universal church of literature

> And Gregory and John and men divine
>
> Who rose like shadows between Man and god
> Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven,
> Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode
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> For the true Sun it quenched.[1]

Samuel Johnson's "Life of Dryden" celebrates its subject in part as "the father of English criticism," but still more for his securing as a poet the triumph of "the new versification" over "savageness," a triumph emblematized in his "fix[ing] the limits of poetical liberty" in translation.[2] Before beginning the discussion of Dryden's literary significance, Johnson, noting the poet's frequent pecuniary embarrassments, speculates that his stipend as Laureate may have sometimes not been regularly paid, because "In those days the oeconomy of the government was yet unsettled."[3] This study takes as its subject that inauguratory juxtaposition, the simultaneous "settling" of poetry, of criticism, and of "the oeconomy of the government" in the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The interrelationships of ideology, theology, and literature form an essential but neglected dimension of this transition. Protestant prejudice against Catholicism in the England of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has suffered from the purloined letter syndrome: everyone can see that it is there, and assumes that what is so obvious can contain no mystery to explore or significance to expound. As England's pre-Reformation history receded into myth and Protestantism became identified with the English nation, Catholicism became doubly stigmatized as both alien, what the vain French and wicked Italians practiced, and frighteningly familiar as the accompaniment of absolutism. Catholics in Europe were foreign, different and hence necessarily (by the logic of nationalism) inferior, but instead of being distant and alluringly available for exploitation, like the indigenous

peoples of the Americas, they were close and threatening – Bloody Mary, Philip II, Louis XIV, James II. As Islam was to Europe at large, Catholicism was to England an unconquerable threat of externality, an unassimilable other: the cultural paranoia that manifested itself overseas in colonialism was deployed domestically in religious politics of persecution and plots.

This volume traces the history of anti-Catholic rhetoric in England in its last period of major political influence, from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the final failure of Jacobitism after the battle of Culloden in 1746. Catholicism began this period largely overlooked in the clash between a newly triumphant Anglicanism and a Puritanism that was just beginning to define itself as institutionally separate from the Church of England, following the purges of the ministry of the Interregnum and Restoration. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Giant Pope hides in his cave unseen, a vanquished evil like Giant Pagan, in contrast to the Anglican establishment's busy and murderous Vanity Fair. Under the pressure, however, of Charles's pro-French foreign policy, French expansionism under Louis XIV, and the conversion of James Stuart, heir presumptive to the crown, to Catholicism, in the 1670s fear of Catholic designs upon English Protestant liberty rose ultimately to the credulous fever of the Popish Plot, when London burned the Pope in effigy. In 1530 England was Catholic; in 1688 James II lost a throne undermined by popular loathing of Popery and tyranny, two words relentlessly linked by anti-government writers. The prejudice created by an intersection of religious fervor and political interest long endured. In 1745, Henry Fielding revived the familiar bugbear on behalf of his political patrons, dwelling on spoilation, slaughter, and foreign domination as the concomitants of Catholic rule to rally public opinion behind the Hanoverian regime when Charles Stuart, Bonnie Prince Charlie, approached London. A few years later, he set *Tom Jones* during "the '45." In her 1769 play, *The Sister*, when Charlotte Lennox wished to find a respectable reason for a young lady to escape from the care of an older female relative, an action requiring extraordinary justification to avoid being scandalous, she found a reason in the aunt's attempting to convert her charge to Catholicism. Gothic novels such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, along with such nonliterary events as the Gordon Riots in 1780 and the continuance of Catholic disability laws into the nineteenth century, reflect the persistence of a deep fear and hatred of Catholicism in England. The political significance of anti-Catholicism dwindled as the struggle for supremacy between crown and Parliament ebbed, but it remained available as a nationalistic topos.

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This study encompasses works both canonical and obscure because anti-Catholicism must function as both text and context in a study of so broad a phenomenon. The movement to historicize literary studies in recent years has been driven by a recognition that the gatekeepers of fame have acted not as benignly neutral arbiters of taste but as human beings who possess agendas beyond the placing of a period. Exclusions can reveal as much as inclusions; to rest content with reading a few selected works is to accept, without examination, the process by which those works came to eclipse their contemporaries. Further, one cannot discuss the relative positions of individual Restoration and Augustan works within a temporally localized canon without proceeding to the next level of generalization, to considering the position of that periodized canon within the larger canon of English literature as a whole. That position is still a secondary one. Although its editor, J. Paul Hunter, is an eminent eighteenth-century scholar, the current edition of *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* appears to have been composed in accordance with the old conviction that what falls between Milton and Blake is not poetry: Dryden, Swift, and Pope alone get a page each in a 500-page volume.[4] The Restoration and Augustan periods are what lie between the glory that is the Renaissance of Shakespeare and Milton and the grandeur that is the novel. They are the omitted, the disappeared. The question is why; why is this period incommensurable with "real" poetry, almost with literature? A strong hint lies in Jerome McGann's observation, following Terry Eagleton, that literature is "an ideological form *per se*."[5]

One might begin with the names: Restoration and Augustan. The Restoration was, of course, a political event, the end of England's only attempt at a republic, and the end also of a period of intense sociopolitical experimentation that resulted in something much like the institutional formations that still rule Britain.[6] (How an *English* republic led to *British* governing institutions has been much discussed among historians in recent years; this study specifically addresses England, noting the other three nations' internal politics only in the context of their effect on England, how the English saw them, not how they saw themselves, a limitation not intended to deprecate the value of the latter.[7]) What was restored, however, was the throne of the Stuarts, that is, of a monarchy possessing both an institutional and a popular basis independent of Parliament, of the political nation, of the "natural rulers," of the propertied. This independence of the crown, as distinct from the crown-in-Parliament, constituted

the principal institutional question at issue in Europe's intragovernmental conflicts of the seventeenth century, both in England, where Parliament won, and on the Continent, where the decision usually went the other way. Johnson's whispered remark to Boswell at a time of unrest that the present monarchy, the Hanoverians, had no friends, that the Stuarts had those who stood by them as late as 1745, may seem the eccentricity of the grand Cham of Macaulay's caricature; but Boswell gave final shape to and published his *Life of Johnson* after the French Revolution had made Jacobitism seem a whimsical relic of a past age, and even in his childhood "the '45" – or the last Anglo-Scottish war, as it might be called – was just a memory. Study of the Restoration was long deprecated because of the "immorality" of the period: J. Douglas Canfield and Robert Markley have observed that that immorality consisted largely of ongoing anarchic energies unspent and displaced in the Interregnum.

The term "Augustanism," with its Classical allusion to the man who found Rome brick and left it marble (and found it an aristocratic republic and left it a military dictatorship) encapsulates an aestheticizing of the political. "Neoclassicism" carries the aestheticizing process a step further by removing even the distant political allusion (in Latin, like one of Gibbon's dirty footnotes, lest the vulgar be corrupted/informed) of Augustus's name. A period of decisive change, of the formation of both the modern British polity and novel, is rendered into a marmoreal bust. The Restoration and Augustanism are what follow what Jonathan Dollimore calls the "demystification of political and power relations and the decentring of 'man'"[8] of Jacobean tragedy and the zero hour of civil war. The "long eighteenth century" functions in traditional literary studies to fit the systemic shock of the Civil War into a teleology of national and cultural redemption. In this view, Interregnum fanaticism and Restoration cynicism cancel each other out, eliding the triumphal progress of English literature, of Western Civilization, more or less directly from Shakespeare through a deified, and thus isolated and depoliticized, Milton to the rise of the novel. Restoration, Augustan, and Neoclassicism are terms less descriptive than deceptive; they operate as a rhetorical maneuver to substitute Whig history, a destiny of foreordained greatness, for history without an adjective to delimit possibilities of interpretive conflict.

The principle for the selection of subject texts in this study is to combine extended scrutiny of a few works with briefer incorporation of numerous others less central to the project of relating religious controversy to social and ideological evolution. The number of directly relevant theological

tracts alone in the late seventeenth century is well up into the hundreds, while an extraordinary range of other works, perhaps most abundantly November 5 sermons, are also potentially apposite. Thus this volume necessarily arrives at both breadth and selectivity, a selectivity that sometimes consults considerations of canonicity, but that more often dispenses with such customs to focus on less-known texts that are more significant for the purpose at hand. Even when familiar authors are examined, the center of gravity of the examination is commonly not their more accustomed works, not by chance but precisely because sectarian polemicism has not comported comfortably with the emphasis on good breeding that has underwritten the aestheticist approach to literature: Arnoldian "touchstones" were indefinable yet unmistakable to the initiated in exactly the same fashion as whether one were a gentleman.[9] Milton's is a name known to all, but his *Of True Religion* is all but unknown because unlike *Areopagitica* it is difficult to enlist in a justification of the institutions of modernity according to standards developed over subsequent centuries; Defoe's *Religious Courtship* has similarly seemed flotsam from an unusable past. Middleton's pageants tend to be regarded, if at all, as minor appendages to his plays, which leads to oversight of their function within the larger currents of thought and action in his time, a function which their presence in this study highlights. Elkanah Settle, on the other hand, is simply almost entirely forgotten, a joke for his odd name, commonly noted, if at all, only for being attacked both in *Absalom and Achitophel* and in *The Dunciad* – and yet his corpus remarkably unites strands of religious, dramatic, and political history. In the first wave of 1980s new historicism, efforts at historicization often tended to combine historicist methodology with a continuing *a priori* assumption of the superior importance of the famous: Charles D. Tarlton, for instance, notes the inconsistency between Richard Ashcraft's presentation of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* as "just another Whig pamphlet" and his "unspoken acceptance of *Two Treatises*'s greater significance."[10] Eschewing such inconsistency, then, this volume deliberately addresses the obscure, not out of whimsicality, but because their far from purposeless obscuration has acted to conceal the ideological structure within which they operated, the anti-Catholicism that is an embarrassing cousin for secularizing modernity to have at its table.

The first chapter scrutinizes two phenomena of early modern nationalism as embodied in one formerly central text and one set of thoroughly obscure ones. These seemingly wildly opposite works function complementarily. The once-canonical text, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, has been marginalized by secular successors embarrassed by such a prototype

of modernization. This critique of religious authoritarianism relies upon secular authoritarianism as its agent of reform; it implies that the Romish independence of clerical from secular authority acts as the direct cause of the grisly persecutions obsessively portrayed through most of its two thousand folio pages, and in consequence exalts the role of the monarch as the only force capable of defying papal tyranny. The smaller and less familiar works are the brief librettos, as they might be called, for the pageants performed for the inauguration of a new Lord Mayor of London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the era of celebrity of any one pageant was far briefer than that of *Acts and Monuments*, they were performed and paraded yearly for all the capital to see for over a century and a half. The pageants of Thomas Middleton in the 1610s and 1620s reflect a covert struggle by the city to subjugate both the monarchy and the world to its nascent regime of metropolitan capitalism – in both senses of "metropolitan," city versus country and metropolis versus colony. The plotting Continental Papist functions as the obverse to the guileless, hapless (alien but exploitable) non-Europeans of City of London Mayoral pageants; both are opposed to the enterprising but honest Englishman, whose freedom is always threatened by the one and whose destiny is to conquer/civilize the other for their own good. The Tudor absolutism lauded for its decisive action in erasing the premodern Church becomes in turn itself an obstacle to the increasing ambitions of the Jacobean commercial classes. Religious disputes and commercial rivalries prove intimately related; the destruction of one enemy only generates more enemies.

The second chapter analyzes the functioning of anti-Catholicism as a political weapon after the Restoration by the use of two examples drawn from familiar authors and addresses the relationship between the fame of the poets, Milton and Marvell, and the obscurity of these polemics. In his last pamphlet, *Of True Religion*, Milton attempts to align his personal hostility towards hierarchy and orthodoxy of all sorts – monarchy, Catholicism, and Anglicanism alike – with popular hostility to Catholicism. Milton represents a transitional figure: in this tract he attempts to demonstrate the continued validity and vitality of Interregnum religious politics under the secularizing conditions of the Restoration. In contrast to the older writer, the younger takes the position of an ameliorationist reformer in a straightforwardly political opposition to the crown. Where Milton's object is religious and transformative, in *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* Marvell plays a realpolitiking gradualist who only fills his first few pages with religious animosity to draw the reader on to follow his account of intragovernmental maneuvers sympathetically.

Until the recent increase of attention given to their prose, as the traditional segregation of the literary from the political has come into question, Milton and (especially) Marvell were long better known as poets than as polemicists, nor is this distinction yet extinct; particularly in university literature departments, they often remain primarily literary figures, fundamentally different in kind from the myriad of other pamphleteers contemporary with them. Milton's notoriety in his own day was, however, that of a radical agitator and Cromwellian apologist, while until the nineteenth century Marvell was remembered chiefly as the principled M.P. from Hull. The de-emphasizing of their political activity at the moment of their emergence into canonicity, for Milton three centuries ago, for Marvell one, reflects the need of the progressive Enlightenment conception of modernity they helped establish to erase its historical origin in the Protestant sectarian critique of Catholicism. To operate in the canonical economy, a poet must be departicularized.

In the third and fourth chapters, pamphlet wars of the Restoration receive an extended scrutiny as an essential bridge between what might be called the late premodern situation of the first chapter and the oppositionalist position of anti-Anglican anti-Papism in the second, on the one hand, and on the other the predominance which anti-sacerdotalism commands by the early eighteenth century. These two chapters operate complementarily because the battle between Dissenters and Anglicans of the third chapter, as to which is more distant from Catholicism under Charles II, produces the redefinition of Anglicanism articulated in the pamphlet warfare between Anglicans and Catholics under James II. The third chapter examines competing logics of religio-political conspiracy, particularly the intensifying cycles of anxiety culminating in the Exclusion Crisis. In a cultural movement coding the evolution of kingship from Dryden's baroque vision in *Absalom and Achitophel* to Addison's depersonalization of sovereignty, a multiplicity of uncanonical and frequently antiliterary texts enact one of two narratives of deception and betrayal: to Dissenting pamphleteers the Church of England is a crypto-Papist design for clerical dictatorship, while Anglicans make counteraccusations that Nonconformists, like Catholics, endanger order by placing religious above civil authority, and suggest Jesuit infiltration of sects. Reflecting a social embedding of paranoid narrative, both maneuver to smear their opponents as less perfectly opposed to Papism than themselves. The fourth chapter carries this examination forward to the more elaborate pamphlet warfare between Anglican and Catholic clergy under James II. Under a Catholic king, Anglican clerics were unable to concentrate on the ongoing

struggle against Nonconformism; caught in a two-front war, they found that as they held off the Papists the Dissenters outflanked them to obtain toleration. Instead of being able to rest confident that the gagged Papist menace was more distant than the Dissenter challenge, Anglicans had to rearticulate a coherent theological justification of Protestantism against its primordial enemy. One method by which they did so was by bringing the reason of experimental science to the aid of theology, turning a full circle only a generation after the founders of the Royal Society had relied upon plenary theology to validate the premises of their scientific reason. This chapter examines what "reason" represented and its role in simultaneously justifying the Church of England and undermining its monopoly of worship, as well as validating and subverting monarchy.

The ferocious audacity of Restoration drama was intimately related to the violence of the period's intertwined religious and political divisions; consequently, it was following the political resolution of the Glorious Revolution that a moral reform campaign began to gag the stage, to tame its potential for social disruption. As de Tocqueville observed, the invisible coercion of public opinion, where "the body is left free, and the soul is enslaved," proved at least as strong as the open censorship of absolutism before it.[11] In the fifth chapter, this interrelationship of polemic and drama is exemplified in the career of Elkanah Settle, a varied writer of theatrical and controversial works who took a central role in both the pamphlet and stage wars of the Exclusion Crisis and the moral-reform struggle that began in the 1690s, but who has become thoroughly decanonized precisely for his intermingling of the political and the aesthetic. While divisions by genre were recognized at the time by no less an authority than the censor, Roger L'Estrange, who in the Term Catalogues separated works by type, critics should perhaps be wary of a classification system with such a precedent. Although clerical writers dominated argumentative controversial literature, poets and playwrights chose sides as well, Thomas Shadwell and Elkanah Settle writing for the Whigs, Dryden, Behn, and Nathaniel Lee for the Tories. (The terms Whig and Tory originated at this time.) To distinguish between a literary realm of atemporal formal concerns and a nonliterary of ephemera is to belie the reality in which the two commingled. The decade from 1678-1689 generated a tremendous outpouring of argument and produced the constitution under which the British government still functions. All issues were religious issues; the modern world of "economists and sophisters" that Edmund Burke denounces in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was in the late seventeenth century as yet nascent. Questions of faith and

works incorporated also those of control of taxation and the military. Paul Kleber Monod has claimed that "The [1688] Revolution was the victory, not of timeless conceptions of 'liberty,' but of virulent anti-Catholicism."[12] A nationalistic Protestantism generated popular support for dynastic change that the gentry co-opted to impose the supremacy of a landed oligarchy which endured in full force as the "English ancien regime" until 1832, and to a considerable degree into this century. What has made this ancien regime difficult for liberal scholars to identify as such is that, defining itself against Catholicism and French absolutism, it founded its legitimacy upon the same bases of modernity and reason as liberalism itself.

The final chapter discusses the last stages in the process whereby anti-Catholic sentiment evolves from an instrument of destabilization under the Stuarts to a bulwark of the Hanoverian status quo. It begins with Swift's failed effort to return the High Church position to its strength under Charles II by, ironically, secularizing public discourse, a paradoxical strategy rendered necessary by the loss of sacramental kingship to the Protestant Succession. Whig writers are less constrained. In *Religious Courtship*, Popery defines the boundary of Defoe's regime of domesticity. In a 180-degree turn from the agitprop of Milton and Marvell, Fielding employs anti-Catholicism, from the wartime scaremongering of *The True Patriot* to the subtler measures of *Tom Jones*, to align the government with virtue. The subversive has become the conservative; as with Communism in this century, a rhetoric of radicalism becomes a mystification of rule. Picturesque and sentimental writers occasionally invoke the Catholic bugbear in their task of consolidating the new order, with its supplanting of the court by the country manor as the center of culture and of public man and public spaces with the cult of domesticity. By identifying and tracing the progress of this ideological inversion, this work is locating in a specific historical process and period the transition from the Renaissance to the modern world which Stephen Greenblatt identified as a general, unlocalized matter in his *Shakespearean Negotiations*. A key point of rupture in the ideological coherence of the new Whig order is its dependence on intolerance in the name of tolerance, its suppression of Catholicism on the not entirely baseless grounds that unrepressed Catholics would repress Protestants. As England becomes more confident of its strength as a world power, and as the machtpolitik of domestic policy and international relations ceases to be defined in sectarian terms, the hatred of Catholicism loses its day-to-day political centrality; nonetheless, at moments of crisis, most notably 1715 and 1745, Papism remains available as the ultimate evil against which the Georges guard.

The scope of this study, then, is considerable, but, in Pope's revised words, "not without a plan": at its center lies the role of Restoration contestations between Anglican and Dissenting rhetorics of Christianity in the development of the distinction between modern and premodern across all of intellectual life, from politics to science, from theology, once the queen of sciences, to the birth of literature as something antithetical to theology and theory alike.[13] One item necessary to define before proceeding further is what is meant by Protestantism. Besides confining itself to the British Isles, this study additionally must distinguish not only between the Church of England and the Nonconformists but also between the often doctrinally conservative pre-Civil War Anglicanism of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, or Archbishop Laud and the post-Interregnum Church that shifted its ideological basis significantly if quietly (as discussed in the fourth chapter) so as to avert the accusations of proto-Papism that had so damaged its cause under Charles I. By the later seventeenth century, the evil of Popery was so entrenched in the popular mind – compare one of Shakespeare's friars to even courtier-laureate (and later Catholic-convert) Dryden's Spanish Fryar – that the Church of England could not afford to be identified with that other apostolical church: that way lay the fate of Laud. In Restoration England, Catholicism and Protestantism did not function in a dyadic system, but rather in a triangular one where the tension between those two poles was frequently of less immediate political importance than the antagonism between the Church and the sects. Both Anglicans and Dissenters sought to delegitimize each other by asserting their rivals' similarity to Catholicism, with the result that "true religion," true Protestantism, tended to equal the faith of the person doing the defining: like today, Protestantism was already a house with many mansions, but unlike today few of its tenants acknowledged each other's right to live there. In the language of Michel Serres, if Catholicism acted as the "other" to the Church of England, Dissent acted as its "other self." The self produces the other as a projection or externalization of scapegoated aspects of the self; the "other self" generates a confirmation of this model, although this figure – the "parasite" – can also serve as the "other," in which case Catholics and Protestants might, as in the royalist army, "otherize" the Protestant Dissenters.[14] The widespread popular fear of "popery and tyranny" was not unfounded; the Catholic Church of the seventeenth century was not gentle towards Protestants within its power, and across the Continent monarchs were aspiring towards absolutism; but behind the calls for a united front (to borrow a phrase) against the Popish menace operated a political and ideological dynamic less benign than its inheritors have portrayed it.