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978-0-521-11387-8 - The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature: Verse and Change from Donne to Dryden

Molly Murray

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THE POETICS OF CONVERSION
IN EARLY MODERN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Christians in post-Reformation England inhabited a culture of conversion. Required to choose among rival forms of worship, many would cross – and often recross – the boundary between Protestantism and Catholicism. This study considers the poetry written by such converts, from the reign of Elizabeth I to that of James II, concentrating on four figures: John Donne, William Alabaster, Richard Crashaw, and John Dryden. Murray offers a context for each poet's conversion within the era's polemical and controversial literature. She also elaborates on the formal features of the poems themselves, demonstrating how the language of poetry could express both spiritual and ecclesiastical change with particular vividness and power. Proposing conversion as a catalyst for some of the most innovative devotional poetry of the period, both canonical and uncanonical, this study will be of interest to all specialists in early modern English literature.

MOLLY MURRAY is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She has published articles on medieval and Renaissance literature and culture in *English Literary History*, *Studies in English Literature*, and a variety of edited collections, including *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, edited by Ronald Corthell, Frances Dolan, Christopher Highley, and Arthur Marotti (2007).

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for E. L. M. and J. H. M.

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Note on the text

In quotations from primary sources I have silently modernized i/j and u/v, as well as superscripts and subscripts, but have otherwise preserved original spelling.

I have used the following abbreviations throughout:

BL:	British Library
ELH:	<i>English Literary History</i>
HJ:	<i>Historical Journal</i>
JEH:	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
MLQ:	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
MP:	<i>Modern Philology</i>
PMLA:	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association</i>
PQ:	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
RH:	<i>Recusant History</i>
SEL:	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>

I have used the following editions of poetry, with line numbers quoted in the text:

Alabaster, William, *The Sonnets*, ed. G. M. Story and H. Gardner (Oxford University Press, 1959).

Crashaw, Richard, *The Complete Poetry*, ed. G. W. Williams (New York: Norton, 1974).

Donne, John, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Everyman, 1994).

Dryden, John, *Works*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–2000).

Eliot, T. S., *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

Southwell, Robert, *The Collected Poems*, ed. P. Davidson and A. Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007).

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Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (New York: Longman, 1977).

Spenser, Edmund, *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems*, ed. W. A. Oram (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Unless otherwise noted, I have used the Authorized Version for all Biblical quotations.