

## Of Papistry and Prayer: Catholic Devotion in England, ca. 1600

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I want first to thank Victor Houliston for inviting me to address this conference. It is a real honour and a delight. The conference's theme is intriguing to me as I've worked extensively on martyrdom – which certainly falls under the rubric of persecution. I'll speak today about a subject that might fall loosely under "toleration", at least a practical sort. Specifically, I'll raise questions about the status of Catholic devotion in Protestant England, for devotional writing both followed the confessional demarcations carved in paint and blood by early modern martyrologists and also crossed those demarcations with popular success. I'll draw my remarks from research for an essay tentatively called 'Uncommon Prayer? Catholic Domestic Devotion in Post-Reformation England'.<sup>1</sup> I am usually rather title-challenged, but here I'll take my feeble witticism seriously in order to ask whether early modern English Catholic devotional practices and texts were uncommon. That is, were they both unusual and comparatively private, outside the parameters of the *Book of Common Prayer's* national and nationalizing liturgy, too narrow and too foreign to appeal to broad reading and publishing communities?

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<sup>1</sup> This is a selection from a lecture delivered at the 2008 SASMARS conference. The full essay from which the lecture was taken should be available in a collection on early modern Catholicism, edited by Lowell Gallagher and tentatively entitled *Redrawing the Map*, in 2010.

From the perspective of those who drafted Elizabethan recusancy legislation, Catholics who refused participation in the BCP's rites fell outside the newly-drawn political and religious boundaries of the nation.<sup>2</sup> In some modern scholarship, a less pointed but still distorting view of Catholic devotion persists. Ethan Shagan has criticized the scholarly tendency to concentrate on Catholics' private devotional lives, for to do so leaves much Catholic writing outside the literary and historiographical mainstream.<sup>3</sup> Yet Catholic devotion's supposed privacy should itself be called into question, for many Catholic devotional writers make pointed claims about public and political identities. Catholic devotion is not uncommon – as in anti-communal – for many Catholic devotional writers work to form and demarcate Catholic communities in new, unfavourable, and much altered circumstances; such writers make even household Catholic devotion broadly consequent in their understandings of what a Catholic community might be or look like.<sup>4</sup> How then might we read Catholic devotion without rendering it as a problematic but increasingly privatized remainder left after the BCP's powerful formative effects? In what ways did Catholic writers preserve and adapt forms of prayer and devotion (beyond the increasingly difficult task of sustaining the Mass itself) that would be capable of constituting and demarcating English Catholic communities? And why did so many of their texts, despite their

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<sup>2</sup> On the powerful nationalizing effects of the liturgy found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, see Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Ethan Shagan, 'Introduction' to *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Erica Longfellow, in 'Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 45.2 (April 2006): 313–34, has recently queried what "private" might mean with respect to Protestant devotional practices, arguing that for Puritans like Nehemiah Wallington and Puritan-leaning ministers like William Gouge there is a fundamental continuity between individual and communal devotion and prayer. Here, I suggest that English Catholic writers posited such a continuity as well, though modified by the added difficulties that anti-Catholic legislation presented.

emphases on religious distinction, cross relatively easily into the Protestant devotional mainstream?

In what follows, I explore cross-confessional reading communities through a popular English Catholic guide to domestic piety and regular prayer, Robert Southwell's *Short Rule for a Good Life*. Issuing from Protestant and Catholic presses in England and abroad, editions of Southwell's poetry and prose sold widely, and the *Rule* is no exception: it enjoyed at least seven Catholic and three Protestant printed editions.<sup>5</sup> Several early modern manuscript copies survive as well, which yield important information about the text's early readerships and reception.<sup>6</sup> This text's circulation in print and manuscript, between and across various Protestant and Catholic reading communities, suggests both the difficulty of demarcating a recusant Catholic devotional readership and the rather common status of Catholic devotional literature and practices.

As a guide to devotion, Southwell's *Short Rule* accommodates regular, daily devotional practices to the demands of running a busy Elizabethan household. The *Rule* contains general Christian principles by which to organize one's life, the implications of those principles for daily behaviour, and an overview of a secular person's ideal day. The text proposes, for instance, 'An Order How to Spend Every Day', with advice about hours of rising, hours and methods for prayer, daily examinations of conscience, virtuous ways of eating (none of which were followed at this conference), suggested variations for holy days, and guidance on confession and

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<sup>5</sup> The Catholic editions include those printed abroad (three, at Douai), on Garnet's illegal press (at least three, through 1605?), and one more edition in 1622 at St Omer. The three Protestant editions were printed in 1620, 1630, and 1636. On these editions, see Nancy Pollard Brown (introd.), *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1973), p. xlviii.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa McClain discusses the *Short Rule's* advice that readers turn their homes into sacred spaces separated from official Protestant society in *Lest We Be Damned: Practical Innovation and Lived Experience among English Catholics in Protestant England, 1559–1642* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 57–58. As I argue below, the popularity of Southwell's devotional texts complicates such models of devotional separation.

receiving the Eucharist.<sup>7</sup> Southwell's work comprises nostalgia for the religious habits of the good old days, an infusion of Tridentine-era spirituality, and a healthy dose of pragmatism as he adapts a new *Rule* for married Catholics practising their faith without regular access to the liturgy or priests.

Scholars have long recognized that Southwell's text is indebted to Loyola's *Exercises* and Gaspar Loarte's *The Exercise of a Christian Life*.<sup>8</sup> Yet the *Rule's* first edition, printed on Henry Garnet's illegal Catholic press, contains a preface framing the *Rule* not with Loyola or Loarte but St Benedict, author of the first monastic rule:

When that great servant of God S. Benet had in most fervent and devout prayers yielded up his holy soul unto God, two of his religious followers (as reporteth S. Gregory) being ignorant altogether of his death, although in places far distant, had the like vision. They saw out of their godly Father's cell directly towards the east a most beautiful way, adorned with gorgeous tapestry and shining with a multitude of innumerable lamps, to proceed even unto heaven. At the top whereof there standing a notable person in a venerable habit and demanding of them whose way it was which they beheld, they answered they knew not. But he incontinently said unto them these words: *Haec est via qua dilectus Domino coelum Benedictus ascendit*. This is the way by which God's well-beloved servant Benedict went up into heaven, meaning thereby, as S. Bernard noteth, the holy rule of

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<sup>7</sup> Gonville and Caius MS 218/233, p. 172. This work's textual history is vexed to say the least. I cite Gonville and Caius 218/233, the manuscript Nancy Pollard Brown, in 'Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word', in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1996), deems 'most authoritative' (p. 209), though without further explanation. As is evident below, I am more interested in this manuscript's place in the reception history of Southwell's text than its textual authority.

<sup>8</sup> Scott Pilarz, *Robert Southwell and the Mission of Literature, 1561–1595: Writing Reconciliation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 101–15; see also Brown (introd.), *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life*, p. 114. The title for Loarte's work is that of Stephen Brinkley's 1579 translation.

a religious life . . . whosoever of his followers would travel by the same should with like security arrive to the end of a most happy journey. The author of this little book, gentle readers, I nothing doubt but is very well known unto thee, as also for his learning, piety, zeal, charity, fortitude, and other rare and singular qualities, but especially for his precious death he is renowned in the world abroad. Neither needeth there any extraordinary vision, but the sound and certain doctrine of the Catholic Church is sufficient to persuade that he is a most glorious saint in heaven, he being such a one as hath confessed a good confession before many witnesses and made, as S. John saith, his garments white with the blood of the immaculate Lamb. But because thou shouldst not be ignorant of the way by which this valiant champion of Christ arrived unto so happy a country, he himself hath left behind him for thy benefit . . . the description of this most gainful voyage to heaven, bedecked with the most precious ornaments of all Christian virtues, and with the most pleasant and comfortable brightness of notable rules of spiritual life, every one of which may be as it were a lantern unto thy feet and a continual light unto thy steps.<sup>9</sup>

Written shortly after Southwell's martyrdom, the preface establishes twin ways to heaven: Southwell's work is positioned as an alternative *Rule*, another path to heaven for those unable to adopt Benedict's path, the 'rule of a religious life'. Following this *Rule*, one validated by Catholic doctrine, biblical texts (e.g. Psalm 119: 105), and Southwell's martyrdom, readers follow a new Benedict, despite their immersion in household duties.

Yet Garnet's edition also indicates his slight unease with the text as he received it. His preface suggests, for instance, that readers 'must not understand that word *must*' as though 'bounde to the performance of anything there expressed, but only that those actions do belong unto the

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<sup>9</sup> *A short rule of good life: To direct the deuout Christian, in a regular, and orderly course* (London: English secret press, 1602–05?), sigs. A3r–A4r. I cite Garnet's third edition, the edition widely available through *Early English Books Online*.

exercise of perfection, without any farther bond than either the laws of God or of Holy Church do impose'.<sup>10</sup> Readers should not, that is, interpret Southwell's 'must' as though they were living under a vow. While in Garnet's edition the work's title, *Short Rule*, associates it with monastic regulatory documents, the running title is 'The *Rules* of Good Life'; the plural noun may again indicate unease with the idea that the text might function as a formal rule for its readers. Garnet's preface indicates the appeal of a laicized form of religious devotion for English Catholic readers as well as concern that such a model might cause spiritual frustration and even error.<sup>11</sup>

The work itself worries about the horizons of its authority. Recent scholarship has affirmed the important role books played in the English Catholic community.<sup>12</sup> But we still know relatively little about how exactly these books were used, and what sorts of religious authority they could legitimately claim. The *Rule's* own hesitations and qualifications indicate that even within Catholic circles such questions were not easily resolved. In characteristic first-person voicing, Southwell writes 'I muste sett downe with myeselfe some certayne order, in spendinge mye tyme, allottinge to everye hower in the daye some certayne thinge to bee donne in the same . . . which I muste (though not by vow) yet after a sorte bind mye self unto, when things of greater waight do not call me from them. Allsoe to keepe due tymes of ryesinge, meales, & goeinge to bedd . . . the observation whereof is most necessarie for a regular, & vertuous order of life.'<sup>13</sup> The space between a formal vow and binding oneself 'after a sort' is precisely

<sup>10</sup> *A short rule*, sig. A6v.

<sup>11</sup> Brown notes, in her introduction to *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life* (p. liv) and in 'Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word' (p. 209), that the printed text's editor, likely Garnet, apparently softened the text in many places; while the title page indicates that the text is 'Newly set forth according to the Author's direction before his death', the changes made are likely not authorial.

<sup>12</sup> Alison Shell's *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) stresses links between Catholicism and orality as well.

<sup>13</sup> Gonville and Caius MS 218/233, pp. 147–48.

the space missionary priests negotiated as they sought to ensure the fidelity of a religious community dependent upon domestic spaces and devotion for survival. This passage invites us to consider the kinds of guidance a text might give Catholic readers, the forms of authority it might or might not assume. Southwell's work does not claim the status of a monastic rule, but it does seek to bind its readers 'after a sort' to 'a regular and virtuous order of life'.

The text also emphasizes communal demarcation: the piety it prescribes should coordinate external 'signs' or 'badges' with inward belief. When a guide gives Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, he teaches the exercitant how to interpret his (the *Exercises* were at this point given only to men) experiences and thoughts. Southwell asks his reader to become self-reading, self-monitoring: to read herself for signs of Christian 'affections' and then to show the world indications of her loyalty: 'I beeing a Christian not onely my fayth and all mye actions proper thereunto ought to be different from the fayth and actions of infidels: But even mye vearye ordinarye actions of eatinge drinkinge, playeing, workeinge, & such like ought to have a marke & bagge [badge] of Christianity.'<sup>14</sup> The context of English recusancy informs the text's advice. Readers should think of life as 'perpetuall warefare' against both 'gods enemyes, & myne'.<sup>15</sup> Southwell's section on 'how we ought to arme our minds against the temptations that happen when we seeke earnestly to serve god' imagines vividly the temptation to avoid persecution and reminds readers that suffering indicates God's love: 'ffor whome he loveth he chastiseth and proveth like gold in the furnace'.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123–24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 203. The biblical verse quoted here (Proverbs 17: 3) in the Douai-Rheims translation implies a literal trial by fire (Protestant and modern translations suggest that the trial will be an interiorized trial of hearts); the verse, again taken literally, also figures as a leitmotif in Southwell's *Epistle of Comfort* (1587).

text works to foster a devotional passion conducive to strict recusancy, the 'sign' that one is willing to suffer rather than compromise.

Manuscript evidence suggests that women readers were the initial audience for this focus on recusant devotion. According to her biographer, Anne Howard, Countess of Arundel, was the text's original reader, and there is a Catholic manuscript tradition suggesting that the *Rule* was thought particularly appropriate for women.<sup>17</sup> In four of the surviving manuscript copies the text of the *Rule* is followed by additional material written especially for Catholic wives. In 1600, one R.C. made a copy of the text followed by a preparation for confession targeting women; the text contains, for example, a form for confessing attraction to men other than one's husband: 'I have hed many uncleane thoughts, touchinge others then my husband, which I doute I have not so soone expelled as I ought.'<sup>18</sup> A second manuscript, now held at Durham Cathedral, contains a table of contents in which this confessional preparation is included, though the order for confession was ripped out after the table of contents was organized.<sup>19</sup> Two other manuscripts, held at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and at the Warwickshire Record Office, include the confessional preparation; in the Warwickshire copy a reader has marked passages for her special attention, including the sentence quoted above.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anon., 'The Life of the Right Honourable & Virtuouse Lady, the Lady Anne Late Countesse of Arundell & Surrey', Arundel Castle Archives (104 pages), 23. The Countess was Southwell's patroness and protector during much of his mission.

<sup>18</sup> York Minster Add. MS 151, fol. 44r-v.

<sup>19</sup> Durham Cathedral Hunter MS 108. While Brown suggests that this manuscript has been masculinized ('Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word', p. 209), the table of contents and material remaining in the binding indicate that the confession targeting women was originally part of the manuscript. The same is true for the Gonville and Caius and Warwickshire PRO copies; while the text of the *Short Rule* may show slight alterations, in both cases it is followed by the brief order for confession, suggesting an enduring association of the text with female readership.

<sup>20</sup> Gonville and Caius MS 218/233; Warwickshire PRO, Throckmorton Papers, CR 1998/Tribune/ Chest of Drawers/ Drawer 4.



In R.C.'s copy the text and the preparation for confession are followed by a copy of another important work, the latter part of John Mush's 'Life of Margarit Clitherow' (d. 1586), narrating this Catholic wife and martyr's imprisonment, interrogations, aborted trial, and martyrdom. R.C.'s manuscript pieces together an early modern Catholic ideal, first presenting a devotional guide for a wife and then a model of the martyr's glory this domestic devotion could yield. This composite manuscript indicates some Catholic readers' interest in embracing an alternative *Rule* for devout Catholic wives, a devotional structure capable of demarcating a firmly separate Catholic religious culture.

Yet despite its ostensible purposes, the *Rule* also became popular, in slightly altered form, with Protestant readers, for whom the text's basic devotional advice and suggestions apparently obviated its goal of promoting lay Catholic devotion linked to staunch recusancy. The *Rule* was first printed by an English commercial press in 1620 in William Barrett's collected edition of Southwell's works.<sup>21</sup> Barrett's edition replaces Garnet's preface with a new preface containing advice on godliness. Yet all but the first sentence is adapted from a letter Southwell wrote to his father urging him toward strict recusancy, a letter first printed with the *Short Rule* in Garnet's illegal edition of 1597.<sup>22</sup> The preface itself shows that sharply recusant Catholic texts could and did move into Protestant editorial hands. The preface's new first sentence defends the publication of a text not previously printed legally in England by noting the 'uniformity to be propounded in ayiming at the true course of vertue.'<sup>23</sup> Such 'uniformity' in the quest for virtue both resonates with the BCP's desire for liturgical uniformity and contrasts ironically with the 'signs and badges' Southwell's

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<sup>21</sup> *St Peters Complainte Mary Madgal. teares with other workes of the author R.S.* (London: for W. Barrett, 1620).

<sup>22</sup> For a modern edition of this letter, see *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life*. ed. Brown.

<sup>23</sup> *St. Peters complainte . . . with other workes of the author R.S.*, ed. Barrett, sig. T8r.

readers were to show of a clearly demarcated Catholicism. In the Barrett edition's changes we can trace the boundaries and limitations of uniform devotion by discerning which areas of Catholic piety were marked as uncommon, by virtue of their excision, and acceptable, by virtue of their maintenance.

Predictably, Barrett's edition expunges many markers of Catholic theology and devotional practice, including saints' intercessory prayer (saints are maintained only as models for good living), all mention of Mary, most references to visual meditation, and material on confession, holy days, and corporal punishments; the chapter 'Of my duty to my [religious] superiors' is cut entirely. Several of Southwell's closing prayers are replaced with new material that accommodates Puritan preoccupations (e.g. material on distinguishing three sorts of men: the open wicked, hypocrites, and the godly).<sup>24</sup> In the section 'Of my duty to my self' the text retains the implication that the reader must bind him- or herself after a sort 'though not by vow' – here that phrase reads more as a dismissal rather than a valuation of the religious life – and replaces 'order of life', perhaps smacking too much of monasticism, with 'kind of life'. Other changes are less consistent: the text generally but not always cuts distinctions between mortal and venial sins; it cuts a reference to free will in the first chapter but maintains a volitional theology in 'Rules following of this [the first] foundation' and 'the sixth affection'.

The Barrett edition, then, revises Southwell's text heavily at some points while allowing a few markers of Catholic belief to stand. The Durham manuscript discussed above went through a rather crude editorial expunging of its own. A previous, presumably Catholic, owner seems to have copied the entire text with the order for confession; this is evident from a table of contents at the end of the manuscript. A later, presumably Protestant,

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<sup>24</sup> Only on Y3 is a reference to visual meditation maintained; otherwise, the edition removes this marker of Ignatian piety.

reader wished to retain the text itself but cut out of the commonplace book into which it is copied the more obvious markers of its Catholic provenance. The order for confession has been removed, though the excisor left just enough material in the binding and in the table of contents for the removal to remain legible. That later owner also removed pages that would have contained Southwell's suggestions for devotion to saints and his 'Another exercise of devotion', an Ignatian exercise involving the imaginative placement of different saints in household rooms.<sup>25</sup> Within the pages that remain, containing the bulk of Southwell's *Rule*, the later owner allowed markers of Catholic piety to stand, including references to the *Ave Maria* and, more ambiguously, suggestions for making confession in the absence of a 'ghostlie father', a 'godlie thinge' though not 'a sacramente'.

Some Protestant readers were even more accommodating. The provenance of a manuscript held at the Folger suggests the *Rule's* ability to cross and recross confessional lines. The treatise seems to have been copied by a Catholic scribe (ca. 1608–12) from another copy silently amended by a Protestant. The Catholic scribe seems either unaware of or unconcerned about the Protestantizing changes made to his copy-text.<sup>26</sup> Those changes purge some Catholic associations, though what is surprising is what remains. The Protestant copyist struck distinctions between mortal and venial sins sometimes but not always; Catholic references to the accumulation of merit were retained in some places and expunged in others. Even Homer nods; maybe this copyist did, too, or maybe he or she was unclear about what exactly counted as Catholic devotion.

Even more puzzling is the Gonville and Caius manuscript copy; it survives in a commonplace book in which Southwell's text is preceded by

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<sup>25</sup> The excision is clear from the next sentence following the missing page, a sentence from the penultimate paragraph of that exercise. In *Lest We Be Damned*, Lisa McClain discusses the sacralizing of household space through Southwell's 'Another exercise of devotion' (p. 58).

<sup>26</sup> My assessment follows Brown's in her 'Textual Introduction' to *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life*.

excerpts from John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish propaganda, and a Latin parody poem on the Catholic Eucharist. Yet the manuscript's copy of the *Rule* makes no Protestantizing changes. The first section, containing the Foxean material, is written in a different hand from the Southwellian material and in a separate gathering, though the Southwell copyist must have seen the Foxean material, as commendatory sonnets for the *Rule* begin on the final page of the first section. The terminus for this commonplace book is 1597, as the ages of the 'Sky' family in that year are listed on one of the final leaves. The family members listed belong to the family of William Skinner, a staunch Catholic.<sup>27</sup> This odd combination of material was given to Gonville and Caius by William Moore, who attended Caius College from 1606–13 and was Cambridge University Librarian from 1653–59. Moore seems to have remained faithful to the Church of England through the years of the Protectorate; he wished to be buried in Caius College, but its master would not permit his burial there 'by the liturgy' of the Church of England.<sup>28</sup> How Moore acquired the manuscript is unknown, though the catalogue of his collections reveals his interest in the preservation of monastic manuscripts in particular.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the *Short Rule* seemed a natural extension of that interest.

Brown has suggested that the first, Foxean section of this manuscript was 'bound in to mislead a searcher'.<sup>30</sup> While it is certainly possible that the Foxean material was included as a blind, the commonplace book may also bear witness to intra-familial or intra-communal crossings: the Catholic

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<sup>27</sup> Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England', in *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, vol. 1, ed. Peter Beale and Jeremy Griffiths (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 134–35.

<sup>28</sup> Julian Roberts, 'Moore, William, bapt. 1590, d. 1659), librarian, collector of manuscripts' (*ODNB*).

<sup>29</sup> For the catalogue of his library, see Cambridge University Library MS. Dd.iv.36.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, 'Paperchase', p. 134.

copyist had to come into possession of the extensive Foxean material, already copied, before beginning work. As the Folger manuscript suggests, such confessional crossing is not uncommon in the period. The manuscript, then, bears witness both to the Catholic community's interest in Southwell's text, including Catholics like William Skinner, and to the crossing of devotional and polemical material between Catholic and Protestant communities, perhaps prior to the copying of the *Short Rule* and certainly after, as the material passed into Moore's hands.

These manuscript editions of Southwell's *Rule*, if we may so term them, reveal that drawing religious distinctions through devotional practice, something Catholic authors favouring recusancy laboured to do, could be complicated by cross-confessional similarities in and perhaps confusions over devotional habits and preferences. The afterlives of Southwell's *Short Rule* blur the boundaries of "Catholic" devotion even as the text itself, along with other Catholic material on domestic piety, bears witness to English Catholic efforts at demarcating precisely those boundaries.

Is English Catholic domestic devotion, then, uncommon? I've suggested that in at least three senses it is not. Writers like Southwell who were interested in promoting recusant Catholicism shaped an alternative, resistant community through allusions to a light life of vowed religion designed to prevent the domestic from sliding into a Protestant state, updating holy houses for current circumstances, even as the compilers of the Protestant or Protestantizing print and manuscript editions of Southwell's *Rule* labour to reconcile Catholic devotion with Protestant religious and national formation. In their work to mark and cross borders, those promoting recusant Catholicism and those reading Southwell from the unsteady vantage point of Protestant piety together demonstrate that those religious borders are not necessarily any more clearcut than the wavering lines supposedly dividing private from communal prayer.