Gaëlle Serena

D'Encre et de sang: les jésuites en Angleterre (1580–1610). Tours: Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2014. Pp. 396 . Pb, 25 euros.

This very impressive volume articulates the role of the written word in the Jesuits' efforts to restore the primacy of Catholicism in England during the reign of Elizabeth I. They rejected her legitimacy and hoped to convert Mary Stuart's son, James VI of Scotland. Serena provides ample citations from William Allen, Robert Southwell, S.J., and others to set the mood of the period. In her introduction, she acquaints the reader with the vast collection of written documents by Jesuits to be uncovered in the collections of Europe, as well as in the British National Archives, and the structuring role they had in the English Mission. The great diversity of Jesuit writings from the period also reveal their absolute necessity, Serena observes. This point is well made since in chapter 2, Serena underlines the imperative of Ignatius that "ours" on mission should routinely communicate clearly and factually by letter with the superior and with each other, although a missionary would sometimes write in a polemical vein, in a way designed to make more visible the Catholic community (communities plural, Serena insists) and its sufferings. Indeed, writing was seen as crucial by many Catholics since Catholicism was and is essentially a public and demonstrative religion and so writing, and in places architecture (such as the Triangular Pavilion at Rushton Hall, pictures, 65) helped to assuage the keenly felt need for visibility, despite growing dangers from the authorities. Excitingly, Serena carefully assesses the effect of Jesuit texts on Elizabeth's own varying approach to the recusant community, and suggests that the queen's own religious views require closer examination (she meditated with Southwell's poetry after his execution). Another very interesting passage is Serena's brief discussion of the psychological plight that could befall missionaries whose identity was necessarily doubled: using two or more names, without the familiar habit or clerical garb available to them. Similarly, Serena discusses the difficult question of the "I" in Jesuit correspondence, which, like the circumstances just described, could produce an quasi-schizophrenic experience for the missionary writer—wherein the first and third persons could often be one and the same. In brief, Serena paints a vivid description of the consequences of the clandestine condition for the missionaries and the recusant populations. As Southwell writes: "Our life is uncertain but our path is clear" (my translation, 104). Serena cites personal identification theory to suggest that the missionary uses his writing to, in a manner, rejoin his community *in diaspora* and thereby rediscover himself. Polemical texts by Catholics for Catholics were also an important source of self-assurance especially where priests were lacking.

The volume is also a significant contribution to studies of early modern invective. Serena provides rich descriptions of the animalistic and other sorts of rhetoric that the authorities leveled at Jesuits and other recusants. As Luc Racaut has noted in *Hatred in Print : Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), the violent rhetoric *ad hominem* and otherwise was often more pronounced on the Protestant side than on the Catholic, which tended to be more polemical. This seems applicable to the sources Serena presents.

In the face of execution, with death “as their only horizon,” Jesuits and other recusants would write as a means of avoiding anguish while edifying the community by reflection on their past. John Ingram used verse to these ends, while Chidiock Tichborne sent verses to his wife that, in Serena’s description, marked his passage from this life to the next (233). Jesuits on trial or facing execution were often impeded from speaking and so at times professed their faith by their bodily attitude or by donning an ostentatious cross or their religious habit. Thus body and other visuals became their text. In her conclusion, Serena observes that the Jesuit mission in England was always to have its critics, both Protestant and Catholic. Did the Society “cause” unnecessary suffering to the Catholic communities, due to their political intrigues with Spain? Are the Jesuit texts considered here destined, after all, to edify and shore up courage? Are they not at times a programmed and psychological, rather than a realistic assessment of events, which in the view of Jesuit superiors called for more martyrs—whose names would disappear from textual memory soon after the events.

This volume offers a very useful and fresh view of the Jesuit and other recusant writings. Serena provides a well-considered analysis of all sides of the Jesuit Catholic mission. The book will be helpful both to scholars of and newcomers to Jesuitica. The appendices offer further documentation and illustration to support the text.

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