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**Between theological debate and political subversion:
Meredith Hanmer's confutation of Edmund Campion's
*Letter to the Privy Council*¹**

SUMMARY: As has been observed, Edmund Campion's *Letter to the Privy Council* contributed to turn the 1580 Jesuit mission to England into a public challenge to the Elizabethan government. Yet it can be argued that the challenge was fundamentally theological and not meant to undermine either the authority or the legitimacy of the regime. By focussing on the Anglican confutation printed in 1581 by Dr Meredith Hanmer, this essay will discuss the context of the dispute and analyse how the text carved the image of the mission as an act of political subversion. Interestingly, moreover, while it popularised the *Letter* as a "brag and challenge", Hanmer's confutation was the first work to ever circulate it in print.

1. Introduction

The heated controversy that broke out in England in 1580 in connection with the arrival of the Jesuit evangelical mission sent from Rome has drawn considerable scholarly interest to the political implications of the enterprise. However authentically and purely evangelical the purpose of the mission may have been in the first place, the context in which it took place made it highly charged with political connotations, and led to the conviction and execution of the Jesuit priests Edmund Campion, Ralph Sherwin and Alexander Briant, found guilty of high treason by the English government.

In 1580, the relatively recently established order of the Jesuit, the "avant-garde of the Counter Reformation", as it has been called², was a new phenomenon that the English state encountered for the first time. This encounter took place against the backdrop of mounting sectarianism, fervent doctrinal debate and fear of a Catholic invasion. The controversy sparked by John Jewel's sermon at Paul's Cross, challenging the Catholics to justify their belief and practices in November 1559, encompassed over a decade of heated exchanges between the Elizabethan clergy and the community of English recusants in exile on the continent³, and strongly influenced subsequent generations of Protestants and Catholic theologians⁴. English Catholicism formally began to reorganise in 1568 through the foundation of the English seminary at Douai by Cardinal William Allen. The seminarians, trained with a sophisticated knowledge of the Scripture and controversial theology, began to be sent to England in the mid-1570s to administer the sacraments, preach and

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² H. Larkin, *The Making of Englishmen. Debates on National Identity 1550-1650*, Leiden – Boston 2014, 143.

³ P. Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age. A Survey of Printed Sources*, London 1978, 1-6.

⁴ T.M. McCoog, S.J. "Playing the Champion": *The Role of Disputation in the Jesuit Mission*, in *The Reckoned Expense. Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. S.J. T.M. McCoog, Roma 2007, 139-141; Milward, *Religious Controversies*, 6-8.

say Mass, in the anticipation of a restoration of Catholicism⁵. The outbreak of the Northern Rebellion in November 1569 in conjunction with the return to England of Mary Stuart magnified the perception of the potential danger that Catholicism posed to the safety of the state⁶. The promulgation of the bull *Regnans in Excelsis* in 1570 further complicated this situation by declaring the Queen Elizabeth I «an excommunicated heretic and supporter of heretics», practically freeing people from obedience to the English monarch while cursing her supporters⁷. As the seminars founded on the Continent trained a growing “army” of preachers loyal to the Pope, then, an actual army commissioned by Gregory XIII landed in Ireland in 1579, and was joined by papal reinforcements in 1580⁸ – precisely as the Jesuit mission led by Robert Persons and Edmund Campion arrived in England. By the late 1570s anti-Catholicism in England encompassed thus political implications.

Although the debate on the real intentions of the Jesuit mission continues, scholars agree that the context of 1580 England well explains why the arrival of the Jesuits could be immediately connected with treason and the safety of the monarch. Stefania Tutino, Peter Lake and Michael Questier devoted particular attention to the political context of the arrival of the mission, and challenged its reading as devoid of political implications⁹. Tutino argued that the Jesuit mission of 1580 was the central event that influenced anti-Catholic penal legislation much rather than the papal excommunication, whilst recognizing the importance of the bull of 1570 at a theoretical and argumentative level¹⁰. Gerard Kilroy maintained instead that the activities of Campion and fellows once in England do not justify a political reading of the mission, and proposed to restore centrality to the Irish invasion that was «not merely a backdrop to the first Jesuit mission: it was the stage on which it was unwillingly played, and the prism through which it was viewed»¹¹.

Important studies by John Bossy, Gerard Kilroy and Thomas M. McCoog have revealed that the risks of an evangelical activity in the dominions of Elizabeth I were clearly perceived, and that the opportunity of an evangelical enterprise in England was debated from within¹². The fear of the Father Superior Mercurian was that the mission might be interpreted as a political venture by the English government. Eventually the mission was authorised as an evangelical mission to preach and bring back to Catholicism «whoever may have strayed»¹³, with the explicit instruction that direct disputation with Protestants should be avoided. In addition, in a complex balance of politico-religious allegiances, the missionaries Edmund Campion, Ralph Emerson and Robert Persons travelled with the faculty issued by Pope Gregory XIII that moderated and explained the Bull declaratory of Pope Pius V against Queen Elizabeth¹⁴. Yet, only a few months after the arrival of

⁵ McCoog, “*Playing the Champion*”, 142; S. Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570-1625*, Aldershot – Burlington 2007.

⁶ S. Tutino, “*Liberty of Conscience in Religion*”: *Ricerche sul cattolicesimo moderato nell’Inghilterra di Elisabetta*, “*Studi Storici*”, 42 n° 2 (2001), 431-60: 433.

⁷ Norman L. Jones cited in J.J. LaRocca, S.J. *Popery and Pounds: The effect of the Jesuit Mission on Penal Legislation*, in McCoog, *Reckoned Expense*, 249-63: 330.

⁸ LaRocca, *Popery and Pounds*, 339.

⁹ P. Lake – M. Questier, *Puritans, Papists, and the “Public Sphere” in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context*, “*The Journal of Modern History*”, 72 n° 3 (2000), 587-627: 603-08. Tutino, *Law and Conscience*, 33-45.

¹⁰ Tutino, “*Liberty of Conscience*”, 434.

¹¹ G. Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life*, Farnham – Burlington 2015, 166-212: 172-73.

¹² McCoog discussed the complex evidence surrounding the approval of the mission reconstructing the contrast that emerged between Edmund Campion and the Father General Mercurian, on the one hand, and Robert Persons and William Allen, founder of the English seminary at Douai, on the other. While the former were not persuaded, Persons and Allen supported the enterprise (McCoog “*Playing the Champion*”, 143-46). On the figure of Robert Persons J. Bossy, *The Heart of Robert Persons*, in McCoog, *Reckoned Expense*, 187-208. Gerard Kilroy examined Campion’s own aversion from meddling with politics and his reluctance to embark on the mission through the reconstruction of Campion’s activity in the months preceding departure for England (Kilroy, *Edmund Campion*, see especially 131-141).

¹³ McCoog, “*Playing the Champion*”, 146.

¹⁴ Kew, The National Archives, *State Papers Domestic*, 12/137/43.

the Jesuit missionaries, a pamphlet was published by the Protestant cleric Meredith Hanmer, entitled *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion*, in which the Catholic mission was represented as «schisme, tumult, conspiracy and rebellion»¹⁵, or, in other words, as a conscious political act aimed at undermining the power of Elizabeth I as Queen and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. This paper discusses how the mission was represented as an act of political subversion by Meredith Hanmer, and considers his pamphlet in the context of anti-Catholicism and anti-Jesuitism in England and Europe in the late 16th century.

2. An early battle of the books

What triggered the dispute of 1580-1581 was the circulation of the famous *Letter to the Privy Council* written by the spiritual leader of the Jesuit mission, Edmund Campion¹⁶. In fact, shortly after the Synod held in Southwark in July 1580, it was decided that the missionary priests would each compose a declaration of the purpose of their mission that would be disclosed only in case of arrest, since, if captured by the English authorities, the Jesuits would be subject to seclusion and examination “and malignant reports would be spread abroad about their confessions, which no one would be able to answer”¹⁷. Yet, Campion’s *Letter* was soon circulated surreptitiously, the mission was made public, and the response of the Protestant establishment came within a few months¹⁸.

Meredith Hanmer’s pamphlet was printed in January 1581 as *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion (Bragge henceforth)*. While it popularised Campion’s *Letter* as a brag or challenge – and ridiculed Campion’s name as Champion. Hanmer was probably responsible for the popularity of the name which stuck to the *Letter*, i.e. the “challenge”¹⁹, although he was neither the first to label it as such nor to play the pun on Campion’s name²⁰. Hanmer’s work is then made especially compelling for its being the first to ever circulate the Jesuit text in print, and for the role it thus played in casting in the public sphere the controversy that will shape the Catholic-Protestant sectarianism in England in the following decades.

In 1580 instead, the relatively recently established order of the Jesuit, the «avant-garde of the Counter Reformation», as it has been called²¹, was an entirely new phenomenon that the English state encountered for the first time. Hanmer’s *Bragge* arguably played a role in setting the standards of the Protestant response to it, and it is worth studying for the way it met the needs of the Elizabethan government. As has been observed, in fact, the regime relied (also) on the circulation of polemical messages – and on the dissemination of images, symbols and assertions it entailed – as a way of developing its anti-Catholic propaganda, of legitimising its power, and of claiming the

¹⁵ M. Hanmer, *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion a Jesuite co[m]monlye called Edmunde Campion, latelye arriued in Englande, contayninge nyne articles here seuerallye laide downe, directed by him to the lordes of the Counsaile / co[n]futed & aunswered by Meredith Hanmer*, London, Thomas Marsh, 1581, F2.

¹⁶ The *Letter* survives today in two manuscript copies among the Foxe papers in London, British Library, Harley 422, ff. 132r-135r. The printed text of the *Letter* in Hanmer’s *Bragge* was collated with these two manuscript copies and is the version used for reference throughout this article.

¹⁷ J.H. Pollen, *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth 1558-1580*, London 1920, 384.

¹⁸ An exhaustive account of the genesis and circulation of Campion’s manuscript is given by Kilroy, *Edmund Campion*, 172; see also Milward, *Religious Controversies*, 54; Pollen, *English Catholics*; A.C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose*, London 1950.

¹⁹ Kilroy, *Edmund Campion*, 190.

²⁰ In a contemporary pamphlet published two months before Hanmer’s *Edmund Campion* was referred to as “a principal champion belike of y^e Popish religion” (W. Charke, *An answer to a seditious pamphlet lately cast abroade by a Iesuite with a discouerie of that blasphemous sect*, London Christopher Barker, 1580, A2). The terms “brag” and “challenge” had currency in Campion’s own text: “I would be loth to speake any thing that might soũd of any insolent bragge or chall|enge” (Hanmer, *Bragge*, F4).

²¹ Larkin, *Making of Englishmen*, 143. Larkin also stresses that the encounter with these “Religious peripatetic, ‘English’ by birth, continental by training” priests was “unsettling on every reckoning” (ibid.).

loyalty of its subjects²².

Printed by Thomas Marshe, an original member of the Stationers' Company²³, Hanmer's text sits alongside the official reactions of the Elizabethan establishment to the Jesuit missionaries. These include the royal proclamations of the 1580s, on the one hand²⁴, and another printed response to Campion's *Letter*, known as *An answer to a seditious pamphlet* (*Answer* henceforth), on the other. The latter work was authored by the Puritan controversialist William Charke, and published by the Queen's printer, Christopher Barker, thus suggesting that its publication was possibly orchestrated from the centre of power. There is no direct evidence to link Hanmer's own refutation to those of the establishment, and it is likely that he wrote on his own initiative.

The works published by Hanmer between 1577 and 1586 appear in fact to mark a career trajectory that brought him, a native of North Shropshire, increasingly close to the centre of power. Published in London, and ranging from the translation of the early Church fathers to anti-Jesuit propaganda and religious conversions they were all engaged with important aspects of the Reformation and the religious identities it inaugurated²⁵. The fact that fifteen years before the publication of the *Bragge* Hanmer and Campion were both "fellow studentes (...) at Oxenford" as Hanmer writes²⁶, casts an interesting light on Hanmer's coming to the fore to answer to Campion *Bragge* that is worth of further attention. When Hanmer began his career as a college chaplain at Oxford in 1567²⁷, Campion was already well known for his "most admirable orations, to the envy of his contemporaries"²⁸.

While being the second to be published two months after Charke's, Hanmer's pamphlet was the first to print Campion's *Letter* in full. In the text, the cleric made a point of being the one to have laid in the open the «scroles of lesse credit», «sybilles leaves» or «torne papers» which contained the drift and enterprise of Campion's potential threat to the commonwealth, received from hand to hand and in «hucker and mucker»:

Whereas (Right Honorable) there came lately into my hands an insolēt bragge or challēge containyng nyne poyntes, or articles, and subscribed by M. Champion a Iesuite and (as he calleth himselfe) a Priest of the Catholike faith, latelye arriued here in Englande, and the same directed vnto-your Honours by waye of humble sute and petition: I thought it my duety vnder your Lordships fauoure, and correction, to peruse the same, to scanne his drift, and to answeare his bragges and challenge, as farre forth as it concernes my degree, and the common weale of the Clergie of England²⁹.

As he exploited the fact of having made the "insolent" letter public, forcing into the open what the Jesuits were trying to keep concealed, he ironically also ensured its wider circulation through print. Charke's *Answer* quoted instead from the Jesuit text, embedding it into the refutation.

A comparison of the two printed Protestant pamphlets shows that Hanmer and his printer were careful enough to mark out the separation between the foreign Jesuit "Papist" text and the domestic English Protestant one, by using Roman type for the former and black letter (then also known as

²² Lake – Questier, *Puritans, Papists*, 589.

²³ An original member of the Stationers' Company, in the business since 1555 (C.H. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing*, London, H. Johnson, 1839, 396).

²⁴ P.L. Hughes – J.F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations. Volume II: The Later Tudors (1553–1587)*, New Haven 1969, 481-91.

²⁵ M. Hanmer, *The Auncient Ecclesiasticall Histories*, London, Thomas Vautroullier, 1577, and *The Baptizing of a Turke, a sermon*, London, Robert Waldegraue, 1586.

²⁶ Hanmer, *Bragge*, B2.

²⁷ Oxford, Corpus Christi College, C/1/1/4 f. 127v.

²⁸ A. à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, I, London, Thomas Barker, 1691, 473.

²⁹ Hanmer, *Bragge*, A2.

English letter) for the latter³⁰. Each of the alternating sections in the *Bragge* is labelled “The Iesuite” and “The aunswere”, and Campion’s points are also signalled by Arabic numerals to the margins. A few weeks after Hanmer’s publication, Charke was to follow his example in a second edition of the *Answer*, published again by the Queen’s printer, which included Campion’s «whole letter or pamphlet, worde for worde, as I had it in many copies agreeing together», also alternating Roman and black letter³¹.

Another feature of Hanmer’s *Bragge* are the decorated and floriated initials dotting the text. With the exception of two images on sig. A3v and H3 which seem to draw from a more complex iconographic repertoire³², these are very popular antics³³. Though no tight connection with the text can be assumed, the images might tentatively be playing with the idea of “reversal” in general terms – as human figures are depicted upside-down, or morphing into animals. These images stand otherwise as decorative motives that would be highly familiar and recognisable by an early modern audience, and that through their suggested connection with the Italian grotesque bestowed on the work a slight air of sophistication³⁴.

The publication of Anti-Jesuit propaganda was hardly an exclusively-English phenomenon triggered by the mission of 1580. The polemic of the English Protestants can in fact be fruitfully situated within the broader framework of anti-Jesuitism in 16th century Europe: the official responses resulting from the Council of Trent and from the faculty of theology of the University of Paris; the activity of the printing presses in Geneva; and the abundance of vernacular anti-Jesuit prose from France, Germany and England especially in the 1590s shed light on the place occupied by the refutations of the early 1580s in the complex spectrum of anti-Jesuitism. The order was condemned by the theological faculty of the University of Paris in 1554, which stated that «This Society appears to be a danger to the Faith, a disturber of the peace of the Church, destructive of monastic life, and destined to cause havoc rather than edification»³⁵. In the preface of the first of four volumes of examination of the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, published in 1565, Martin Chemnitz, the eminent German Lutheran theologian, dealt with the Jesuits describing them as a “sect”, established only recently by the Pope «for the specific purpose of destroying the churches that embrace the pure teaching of the Gospel». Chemnitz traced the foundation and history of the order and warned to learn to distinguish «the true shepherd from the stranger»³⁶. Another early “most vociferous” propagandist was Lucas Osiander (1534-1604), deacon in Göppingen, priest and superintendent in Blaubeuren and Stuttgart, a court preacher and author of the work *Warnung vor der falschen Lehr und phariseischen Gleissnerey der Jesuiten in Tübingen* published in 1568³⁷. European printing presses soon abounded with works of anti-Jesuit propaganda. No less than six volumes of *The Doctrinae Iesuiticae* were published in the area of Geneva between 1580

³⁰ On Black-Letter as an English type and on its relation to the English vernacular see S.K. Galbraith, ‘English’ Black-Letter Type and Spenser’s Shepherdes Calender, in *Spenser Studies. A Renaissance Poetry Annual*, XXIII ed. W.A. Oram – A. Lake Prescott – T.P. Roche Jr., New York 2008, 13-40.

³¹ Charke commented “the rather, because the same is already published in print, in a book entituled, *The Great Bragge*”, but, readers warned, “with many faults, not of the writer, but by the negligence of the Printer (as I suppose)” (Charke, *Answer*, A2v).

³² On sig. A3v the address to Edmund Campion begins “Your scoles of lesse credit”; the image is of two human figures with bare feet, the one riding the other. On H3 the initial is decorated with what appears to be a hunting scene of a human hooded figure accompanied by a dog, holding a prey.

³³ They appear on sig. B, B2v, C4, G3, F in ESTC 12745.

³⁴ T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640*, Cambridge 1993. I am grateful to Dr. Chloe Porter for this reference and for her knowledgeable help with early modern iconography.

³⁵ J.W. O’Malley, *Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus*, “Journal of Jesuit Studies”, 3 (2016), 1-16: 1-2.

³⁶ M. Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent. Part 1*, I, transl. by F. Kramer, St Louis 1971, 25.

³⁷ P. Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization: depictions of Jews and Jesuits in Early Modern Germany*, in “*The Tragic Couple*”: *Encounters Between Jews and Jesuits*, eds. J. Bernauer – R. A. Maryks, Leiden 2013, 63-86: 73.

and 1589, showing the existence of a circle of Protestant printers active on an «anti-Jesuit project»³⁸. A steady increase in the number and fortune achieved by publications against the society characterises the 1590s. One of «the most effective and influential piece of anti-Jesuit propaganda» was published in France ten years after Hanmer's and Charke's rebuttal of the Jesuit mission in England: this was *Le catechisme des jesuites*, by the French Jurist Etienne Pasquier (1592), which portrayed the Jesuits as hypocrites full of bombast³⁹. Several other works were printed in Germany in the 1590s⁴⁰, and the production in England increased with the increasing number of seminary priests and Jesuits coming over from the continent in the 1590s⁴¹. Recurring ideas have been identified in Anti-Jesuit literature that indicate that European polemicists drew from a common repertory of images and *topoi* in their assault to the order⁴². In the following section an examination of Hanmer's pamphlet in comparison with his English contemporary and some continental authors will illustrate this point and shed some light on the place of this author in the landscape of late 16th century religious polemic.

3. The contents of Hanmer's pamphlet

Hanmer's argument is developed in nine points that reflect the organisation of Champion's *Letter* as it must have circulated between July and January 1580. The structure is outlined below with pagination:

- I. The epistle dedicatorie to The Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Lincoln "with the rest of her Maiestyes most honourable Counsayle" (A2)
- II. Address to M. Champion the challenger (A3v)
- III. Address of the answer unto the Christian reader (A4)
- IV. The Preface (B)
- V. The points (B2v)
 1. The first point is Champion's declaration of faith and vocation by Champion: "I confesse that I am [...] a Priest of the Catholicke church [...] into the *Society of Iesus*" (B2v)
 2. In the second point Champion lays down his voyage and presents the authority to whom he obeys (the Father General) (C4)
 3. Presentation of the "charge", or the reasons for his mission, which is "free to preach the Gospell" (E)
 4. Declaration that the Jesuit mission is not political (Fv)
 5. Challenge to a debate on religion with the Privy Council, the Universities and the doctors of "lawe spirituall and temperall" (F2v)
 6. No Protestant would beat him in disputation, so assured he is of his faith and doctrine (F4)
 7. He asks for a disputation before the Queen professing his loyalty to her (G3)
 8. The Catholics in exile are the true Church and the Protestants need conversion (G4)
 9. Should he be sentenced for his offer ("met with rigor") he recommends the cause of the Protestants to God and hope they shall meet in Heaven "where all iniuries shalbe

³⁸ T.G. Van Raalte, "Noster Theophilus": *The fictitious "printer" whose anti-Jesuit volumes issued from various presses in Geneva between 1580 and 1589*, "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance", 74 n° 3 (2012), 569-591. The first of these volumes (1580) amounted to about 500 pages and contained three distinct anti-Jesuit treatises, grouped under the title *Doctrinae Iesuitarum*, including Martin Chemnitz (Van Raalte, "Noster Theophilus", 571).

³⁹ J.W. O'Malley, *The Historiography of the Society of Jesus: Where does it stand today?*, in O'Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History*, Boston 2013, 1-36, 8.

⁴⁰ For instance Johann von Münster's *Christliche und wolgegründte Antwort* (1591) and *Ein schönes Gespräch eines Christen mit einem Jesuiten* (1592) discussed in Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 70-72.

⁴¹ Milward, *Religious Controversies*, 127.

⁴² The Anti-Jesuit tradition between 1540-1870 is charted in the first chapter of R. Healy, *The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany*, Boston – Leiden 2003, 21-50.

forgotten” (H2v)

The first four points may be summarised as a presentation of Edmund Campion’s faith, order, call and purpose: a priest of the Catholic faith, of the Society of Jesus, who travelled from Rome to England obeying orders from his Father General to embark on a mission to preach the Gospel. They are separated from the last four points – the more theologically provocative ones – by the “challenge” itself, which is expressed in point 5:

I aske to the glory of God with al humility & vnder your correctiō three sorts of indifferēt audience (...) wherein I vndertake to vowe the fayth of our Catholike church, by proofes inuincible, scriptures, counsell, fathers, hystories, naturall & morall reasons⁴³.

The moot issue of treason is brought forth in point 4 of Campion’s *Letter* stating explicitly that «I am straitly forbidden by our sayd Father that sent mee to deale in any relspecte with matters of state or pollicy»⁴⁴.

This structure is mirrored by Hanmer’s reply, which is an assault on the ethos of the priest and of the Jesuits in general in the first four points, and a clear refutation and reversal of the argument “religion not treason”:

What woulde yee en|treat of, without impaying of the state? what discourse will yee vse w'out preiudice to the go|uernment? what Religion, would yee establishe without derogatiō to the Lawes of y^e Realme & pollicie of the Land? If yee perswade her Ma|iesties louing Subiects to a mislikinge of y^e Rel|igion receaved, you cause Schisme, Tumult, cō|spiracy, and Rebellion: if yee pleade the Popes supremacie, it is the Pryce of your heade: if yee deface the truthe of the Gospell preached here in England, you wilbe founde a blasphemmer of God, and an enemy of his worde⁴⁵.

3.1. The Jesuits obey the wrong authority

Hanmer’s rapid series of questions and his elaboration of the terrible implications of Campion’s intended pursuit «if you plead the Pope’s supremacy, it is the price of your head» declares the public nature of the challenge. Pope Pius V’s bull *Regnans in Excelsis* by absolving English subjects from their oath of loyalty to Elizabeth I made the practice of Catholicism «a public challenge to the Elizabethan government»⁴⁶, and at the time when Campion was asking for a debate the matter had already been settled and it was too late⁴⁷. These implications went beyond the English context and concerned also the relationship between the secular and spiritual powers within Catholicism, their precedence, and respective boundaries. The very organisation of the Society defied national boundaries and identities: they were governed by a superior general with extensive authority who responded only to the Pope; with over 500 schools in early modern Europe their presence was “archipelagic”⁴⁸. If the members of the order appeared highly undesirable to

⁴³ Hanmer, *Bragge*, F2v.

⁴⁴ Hanmer, *Bragge*, Fv.

⁴⁵ Hanmer, *Bragge*, F2. The reversal is characteristic of the pamphleteering of the establishment (Lake – Questier, *Puritans, Papists*, 606; P. Lake, *Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice*, in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, eds. R. Cust – A. Hughes, London – New York 1989, 72-106). Point 4 is the one where a direct confrontation as to the perceived boundaries between politics and religion emerges.

⁴⁶ D. MacCulloch, *Reformation. Europe’s House Divided 1490-1700*, London 2004, 334.

⁴⁷ McCoog, “*Playing the Champion*”, 152.

⁴⁸ O’Malley, *Distinctiveness*, 2.

Protestant communities, the Catholic perception of the Society was complex too⁴⁹. Areas of moderate Catholicism resisted the reforms supported by the members of the Society, as not all accepted the Jesuits insistence on the obedience to the Pope and separation from the English church; papal interference in secular matters set a potential threat to the sovereignty of secular powers and was seen with aversion even by the Catholic Philip II⁵⁰.

It is thus that while one of the most fearful embodiments of Roman Catholicism was the papal claim of the right to depose monarchs⁵¹, Jesuits were seen as the army of the Pope and minions of Catholic powers. Hanmer's text highlights these fears:

This Pope [Pius III] afterward beyng geuen to vnderstande how avayleable this order was for the vpholdinge of his kingdome (...) esteemed of this society as excellible all others. (...) they got them a place at Rome, where (as this Pilgrime cōfesseth) their Prouost is alwaies resident, & sendeth abrod his Pupills, as I may iustly say to deceaue the people of God⁵².

By your words I gather first your obedience to your generall Prouost. Secondlye your affiance and opinion of him and his auctoryty, beyng as ye say: a warrant to you from heauen, and an oracle from Christ⁵³.

[The Pope] hath set y^e mother against her own sonne, the sonne to take armour against his owne Father the Subiect agaynste the Prynce, and the Princes together at mortall warres (...) hath deposed Kyngs & Emperours, hee translated Empires, hee treades vpō Prynces Neckes, hee takes Scepters and Crownes frō Kyngs heads, and trāpleth them vnder foote, he taketh frō others y^t which is their right, & geueth away y^t which is none of his own⁵⁴.

Hanmer asks Campion – an Englishman, as he underlines – what Scripture he has that warrants his tying himself to «that order & trade of life», «to a forrain and a straunger (whom yee call your Prouost)». He accuses Campion of having pledged to the Anti-Christ: «you hold of your Provost, he of the Pope, and the Pope of the Devil» and «The Pope deceaued him, he deceaued you, and nowe you goe about to deceaue others»⁵⁵.

The argument against obedience is rich in reference to the Scriptures used to both prove the error and to show the true *auctoritas*⁵⁶. In obeying the wrong authority, Campion has also «forgotten your loyalty and subiectiō vnto her Royall maiesty, and her godly proceedinges»:

Haue you forgotten that euer yee read of the Ielousy of Prynces ouer their Subjects? What? Is y^e

⁴⁹ M. Questier, *“Like Locusts over all the World”*: Conversion, Indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in the Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England, in McCoog, *Reckoned Expense*, 347-70: 349.

⁵⁰ Tutino, *“Liberty of Conscience”*, 434. Cesare Cuttica discussed 16th and early 17th century anti-Jesuit polemic produced between Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572); the conflict between Henri of Navarre and the Catholic League (1580s-1610s); and the aftermath of the murder of Henry VI (1610). By English and French royalists Jesuits were identified as promoters of “a deleterious form of external political allegiance” which centred on the authority of the Pope rather than on the national monarch: cfr. C. Cuttica, *Anti-Jesuit patriotic absolutism: Robert Filmer and French ideas (c. 1580-1630)*, *“Renaissance Studies”*, 25 n° 4 (2011), 559-79: 577.

⁵¹ A. Marotti, *Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in early modern English texts*, Houndmills – New York 1997, 37.

⁵² Hanmer, *Bragge*, C.

⁵³ Hanmer, *Bragge*, C4v. See also William Charke's *Answer* on points 2 and 3: “If the Popes worde be to them a warrant from heauen, and an oracle of Christ, then at his word they must inuade kingdomes, throwe downe estates, change gouernementes, roote out the Gospell, and plant ignorance” (B2v).

⁵⁴ Hanmer, *Bragge*, Fv.

⁵⁵ Hanmer, *Bragge*, Dv, D3.

⁵⁶ Hanmer quotes the NT, Gospel of Matthew 22 (Render unto Caesar), Epistle to the Romans 13:1-7 (obedience to earthly powers), first Epistle of Peter 2 (submission to authorities). Patristic sources are also used, Saint Chrysostom homily on Rom 13 (let every soul be subject unto the higher powers) that specifies that these ordinance has authority over all, priests and monks included, Saint Ambrose on Corinthians (take heed not to be a slave to another man's superstition – obey with selection and exception).

pope a friend to Englād? Is your Prouost a fauorer of her maiesty? Were your cōpanions her louers? What are you your selfe, w^t your patience be it demaunded? Had yee licence to passe ouer? Now yee are comebacke, what obedience do you shew?⁵⁷

Since the Act of Supremacy practically identified the Church with the State, a crime against the Church of England would be a crime against the state. However, non-conformists had not yet been convicted for high treason at the time of Hanmer's writing, but were for the first time with Campion's trial and execution⁵⁸.

3.2. The Jesuits are false

Hanmer deploys a whole set of examples of the deceptive nature of the Jesuits and of their intolerable errors, contrasting their falsehood and anti-religion with the truth and virtue of the English Church, by means of an implicit set of binary oppositions – according to which each of the negative characteristics of the Catholic Jesuits finds its positive counterpart in English Protestantism. This is immediately foregrounded in the epistle dedicatorie and in the address to the Christian reader:

His drift (as farforth, as yet, it may bee perceiued) is to seduce her Maiestyes louing and faythfull Subiectes, with showe of Catholike Priesthood and profession. (...) His bragge is but bumbast, their religion is in showe not in substance, they haue wordes and not truth⁵⁹.

This society passeth all other sectes in Hypocrisie & outward shew of holines. In weede monkish frierish, priestly and PharisaiCALL: in discipline austere, much like the Heretikes Flagellefiers, or Circumcellions, or Baals priestes, whipping and launcing themselues: in wordes humble, lowlye, dowking, and ready to kisse your fote, but in hart prowde, arrogant, bragging and bosting as this Iesuit doth, & challenging the combat with countries and kingdomes. I will at this present no more but warne thee: Beware of false Prophets⁶⁰.

«Beware of false prophets» is a key phrase pointing at one crucial aspect of the Protestant view of Jesuits: they are false in that they actually reverse truth, they subvert the Church, rather than merely representing a degenerate version of it. The inclination to deceit was one of the most disturbing features of the Jesuits. Their appearance and lifestyle was deceptive in several ways because they did not wear a distinctive habit, they retained their family names and lived in houses or colleges rather than monasteries⁶¹.

The hypocrisy of the Jesuits was attacked by Lucas Osiander, who also considered them in the context of a long list of heretical sects, and later by Christian Francke (1591)⁶², and it continued to be a common trope in French and German publications throughout the 1590s⁶³.

In the following century, the epitome of the bombast, self-congratulation, pride and arrogance of the members of the society became the volume of the *Imago primi saeculi* printed by the prestigious Plantin-Moretus press in Antwerp (1640) as part of the worldwide celebrations of the centenary of

⁵⁷ Hanmer, *Bragge*, Dv.

⁵⁸ The trial was followed by the proclamation of April 1, 1582 “Declaring Jesuits and non-returning seminarians traitors” (Hughes – Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 488).

⁵⁹ Hanmer, *Bragge*, A3.

⁶⁰ Hanmer, *Bragge*, A4v.

⁶¹ O'Malley, *Distinctiveness*, 2.

⁶² Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 74.

⁶³ For instance in Pasquier's *Le catechisme des jesuites* and Münster's *Christliche und wolgegründte Antwort* (O'Malley, *Historiography of the Society*, 8; Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 71).

the order⁶⁴.

3.3. A swarm of locusts

The potential public danger posed by the Jesuits underlies Hanmer's argument, who otherwise treats them as «a fond order never heard of» created «the space of fiftene hundred and odde yeares after Christ» – thus even more recent than the Protestants⁶⁵.

The Jesuits are but the newest of a long list of heretical sects. They are associated with the Family of Love by Hanmer⁶⁶, to make the case that on the one side there are the odious practices of Rome, on the other lunatics⁶⁷. Between these two evils the Church of England represented the only sound way.

Through this association, the Jesuits are represented as locusts – there is a visual quality to the way the swarm is described, like the plague of Egypt they devour the food and destroy social practices:

whereas there are many orders and sects vnder Abadon King of Locustes as [list of sects] and infinite other Locusts, hauing their originall, successe, & confirmation, by southsaying, coniuring, dreames, visions, fantasies, lies, illusions and fayned Miracles: you for nouelties sake haue found out a newe rule, and y^e lousiest order of all (...) You addict your selfe to a maymed souldier, and bringe forth vnto vs an hauling religion⁶⁸.

Many learned and Godly men, from tyme to tyme, haue lamented the miserable state of the Church, seyng the infinite number that in shew professe religion, the diuersity of orders, their varing in seruice, their addictyng vnto Saynctes, seruinge as it is written, rather the Creature then the Creator⁶⁹ [...] Kingdomes haue bene bepested wth these swarmes of locusts, eating the fatte of the earthe, and makinge as it were heauen of this world⁷⁰.

Similarly, William Charke's *Answer* treats the Jesuits as a plague, but the image is that of frogs and caterpillars: «But let vs yet further examine these Iesuites, that plague all nations where they come, as the Frogges and Caterpillers of Egypt did»⁷¹. Hanmer might in fact be the initiator of a long tradition of Protestant writers who compared the society specifically to locusts⁷².

The process of dehumanization through the attribution of animal-like or superhuman abilities to devour and destroy dots Anti-Jesuit literature. Since the Jesuit order was associated with manipulation and sophistry, its members appear to have been readily equated with snakes and

⁶⁴ O'Malley pointed out that the size of the book and its “splendid physical qualities”, including over nine hundred pages of poetry and prose and 127 copper-plate engravings were seen as “typical of the Jesuits’ worldliness” (O'Malley, *Distinctiveness*, 11).

⁶⁵ One of the main concerns for Protestant controversialists was to demonstrate the historical foundations of their church, to counter the Catholic argument questioning where their church was before Luther.

⁶⁶ Hanmer, *Bragge*, B3. See also William Charke: “let vs as manie as professe the Gospel, bring forth fruites worthie of the Gospel, least the Papists on the one side, and the godlesse familie of selfeloue on the otherside preuaile more and more against the trueth” (point 8, no sig.).

⁶⁷ In 1578 John Rogers described the Familists as “the drowsie dreames of a doting Dutchman” in the work *Displaying of an Horrible Secte*. The prosecution of the Familists was ordered in October 1580, in a royal proclamation that described their heresies as “in some part so absurd and fanatical as by feigning to themselves a monstrous new kind of speech [...] by which they do move ignorant and simple people at the first rather to marvel at them than to understand them” (Hughes – Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 474).

⁶⁸ Hanmer, *Bragge*, F4v.

⁶⁹ Rejection on the basis of the dichotomy between authority of man and authority of God, claims of the Church and dictates of Scripture, “the creature and the creator” (Lake, *Anti-popery*, 74).

⁷⁰ Hanmer, *Bragge*, C3.

⁷¹ Charke, *Answer*, H.

⁷² On the Protestant tradition of equating Jesuits with Locusts see Questier, “*Like Locusts*”, 348 and n. 3. The earliest source quoted by Questier is Theodore Beza (1592).

scorpions; the thirst for power made them wolves; submission to Rome made them asses of the Pope⁷³.

3.4. The Jesuit's peripatetic nature arises a «vehement suspicion»

Hanmer sees St Paul's warning of a future apostasy concerning teachers and hearers fulfilled, «Men haue itching eares, endeuoring to procure thēselues teachers after their fond humors» (2 Timothy 4:3). He asks «What moued you to forsake your natiue Soile» (point 1) implying that Campion, just like the other English Jesuits, had to leave England to find a doctrine that would condone their lifestyle. England and Rome are contrasted. While England is the place where the Scriptures are «lernerly expounded»,

the fathers alleaged: the coūcells examined: the hystories deuine, & prophane, morall, and naturall, throughly perused: y^e lawes Ciuill, Canon, Statute, and temperal diligently scanned: iustice is put in vre: and y^t which cōfirmeth the right vsage of all y^e premises, God hath blessed this Land with peace these many yeres⁷⁴.

Rome is the home to the Antichrist which Campion preferred over his native soil, and the city chosen by the Jesuits as the well of their religion and the pillars of their faith. The Jesuits had to leave England to search for a doctrine that would condone their lifestyle⁷⁵. Hanmer demonstrates that lifestyle – as in *habitus*, i.e. disposition, values and taste – comes before belief for the Jesuits, and that lifestyle should determine the belief, rather than the contrary, is according to the *Bragge* a damnable instance of subversion, of reversal of the truth of the Scriptures and further incontrovertible proof that the Jesuits represent a false Church.

Arguably, Hanmer's elaboration on the peripatetic character of the Jesuits resonates with the anxieties raised by the arrival of the first generation of seminary priests from the English college at Douai, since 1574, which marked the reorganisation of militant English Catholicism. The college kept in fact on sending priests who actually replaced the aging Marian clergy with a new underground Catholic network.⁷⁶ Not only did the missionaries vow obedience to the Pope but they had also spent part of their lives in lands under the influence of the Spanish king, which provided sufficient reason for the Council to question their loyalty, made them appear as «foreign agents» or «minions of the Pope and the king of Spain», to the extent that Queen and Council did not know «what effect the new priests would have in organising the recusant community as a Spanish tool»⁷⁷. Similar suspicions were raised by the mobility of members of the society in early modern Germany, where Jesuits might be treated as foreigners, outsiders and conspirators, operating «beyond the community or nation»⁷⁸.

In sum, Hanmer's *Bragge* succeeds in casting the Jesuits as a plague; through their false religion they are agents of Satan and an offense to the true Church; through allegiance to the Pope they are enemies of the state; and their “foreignness” legitimated strong doubts about their loyalty to their native country.

There are noteworthy resemblances, repetitions and common imageries in the anti-Jesuit discourses

⁷³ Wiener, *Beleaguered Isle*, 43; Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 68; Healy, *Jesuit Specter*, 28.

⁷⁴ Hanmer, *Bragge*, Cv.

⁷⁵ Hanmer, *Bragge*, C2v.

⁷⁶ LaRocca, *Popery and Pounds*, 331; Holleran, *Jesuit Challenge*, 13; Milward, *Religious Controversies*, 39. The perception of the existence of a Catholic network is confirmed by contemporaries, as reported by Persons, who recalls how well received the Jesuits were in the shires and country out of towns (Kilroy, *Edmund Campion*, 168)

⁷⁷ LaRocca, *Popery and Pounds*, 331.

⁷⁸ Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 69 (and sources therein cited).

of France, Switzerland, Germany and England. As has been observed, there are some typical recurring features in processes of marginalisation, like the attribution of animal-like characteristics and consequent dehumanisation: wolves, frogs, snakes, scorpions, and locusts could all powerfully convey some of the disturbing aspects of Jesuitism. The parasitical and destructive character of locusts, in particular, establishes a link between anti-Jesuitism and anti-Judaism⁷⁹, casting this latter and much older discourse of marginalisation as one further shared repository of images available to European authors, alongside anti-Catholicism and the rich tradition of the confutation of heresies.

The connection of phenomena of marginalisation and polemics with identity building in early modern Europe has been investigated by several scholars: according to Bell stereotypes were recirculated and re-applied throughout the “period of confessionalization”, defined as the consolidation of the three major Christian confessions⁸⁰; Wiener argued that anti-Jesuitism had the same roots as anti-papery, which had become “part of the national ideology” to the extent that «by the time the Queen died, no good Englishman could have defined his national identity without some mention of his distaste for Rome»⁸¹. Similarly, Jesuits were alien to early modern Germany through their characteristic false reverence in opposition to the piety and devotion of Germans and Bohemians⁸².

With reference to the kind of world projected by Hanmer and Charke, and to the significance of these authors within the framework of Protestant nation building in the 1580s, it is relevant to consider the notion that marginalised groups and individuals functioned as a mirror of the marginalizing society, expressed by Roislin Healy; Dean Phillip Bell; Hilary Larkin and Peter Lake, among others. For instance, Peter Lake studied the series of binary oppositions produced by «the Protestant analysis of popish anti-Christianity» as a means to access the image Protestants constructed of themselves, since «every negative characteristic imputed to Rome implied a positive cultural, political or religious value which the Protestants claimed as their own»⁸³. Hilary Larkin observed that the English Protestant identity tended to be constructed in several instances reflecting upon what it was not «around an anti-Catholic, anti-Jesuit axis»⁸⁴.

If the images of enemies were simultaneously self-images⁸⁵, anti-Jesuit stereotypes helped express opposition to authoritarianism, tradition, and internationalism, in a way that transcended the real target⁸⁶. Dealing with the process of estrangement of English Catholicism Hilary Larkin pointed out that «It is principally from Hanmer’s treatment of Campion [...] that the first real articulation emerges of the ‘oxymoronic’ concept of an English Jesuit»⁸⁷. The international and peripatetic careers of Jesuits were in fact suspicious and incompatible with the stability of the true Englishman. The case of Edmund Campion was the epitome of the complete alienation caused by the choice of a false church: «An Englishman with impeccable educational credentials [...] had done the

⁷⁹ Dean Phillip Bell presented parasitical imagery as typically associated with Jews, treated as bloodhounds and worms. The example cited is that of the apocalyptic images used by the anonymous author of *Der Juden Erbarkeit* (n.p.: 1571) in which the destructive powers of the Jews hit Germany with a storm and deluge; the Jews are like a pestilence, “in their criminal behavior, the Devil has brought them as a plague against good people” (Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 78-79).

⁸⁰ Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 65.

⁸¹ C.Z. Wiener, *The Beleaguered Isle. A study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism*, “Past and Present”, 51 n° 1 (1971) 27-62, 27.

⁸² Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 69.

⁸³ Lake read the phenomenon of anti-papery in Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England as “the most obvious and important example of that process of binary opposition, inversion or the argument from contraries which, we are increasingly being told, played so central a part in both the learned and popular culture of early modern Europe” (Lake, *Anti-papery*, 73-4)

⁸⁴ Larkin, *Making of Englishmen*, 127.

⁸⁵ Healy, *Jesuit Specter*, 16.

⁸⁶ Healy, *Jesuit Specter*, 21.

⁸⁷ Larkin, *Making of Englishmen*, 144-5.

unthinkable and turned ‘traitor’ to all this»⁸⁸. The English Protestant identity would be constructed reflecting upon what it was not, so that Hanmer’s *Bragge*, alongside the works of his Protestant colleagues, would have functioned simultaneously as public propaganda and a repository of images and concepts that worked to help defining what being English stood for.

4. Concluding remarks

The image that English Protestantism carved of the Jesuits came to be fully accomplished in the following decades, and it is vividly summarised in the words of Michael Questier, who, building on the anti-Jesuit polemic literature produced since the 1590s states that:

To their Protestant opponents they certainly seemed to have all the qualities of locusts. They were ubiquitous; they swarmed; they were entirely parasitical and brought nothing but destruction. They did not distinguish between those whom they approached; they were content to devour all. In this respect as in the type of Christianity which they peddled, it was easy for Protestants to see them as representatives not just of a debased Church, but of a false one; a total inversion of the true religion. Their proselytising zeal was purely for the purposes of political domination, the accumulation of wealth, and self-aggrandisement⁸⁹.

The *Bragge* by Meredith Hanmer reveals how much of the picture given by Michael Questier was already present in the reasoning of controversialists as early as ten years before than generally considered.

Addressed to the authorities of the regime, Hanmer’s *Bragge* was possibly aimed at a wide audience, as suggested by its demotic style, by the use of popular illustrations, and by its possible relatively wide circulation⁹⁰.

From a visual and material point of view, it appears that Hanmer was thinking of print more than his contemporaries, amongst whom a similar use of print and images does not seem to have been widespread⁹¹. Compelling evidence that his work might have set a precedent or reference is provided by Charke’s second edition of the *Answere*, imitating the visual presentation of the *Bragge*. Through the bishop of London John Aylmer and his link to Lord Burghley, Charke was perhaps called to take part in the debates in the Tower and in the trial against Campion⁹². His written response too might have been orchestrated from the centre of power. However, Hanmer was probably not. It looks like that there was a degree of coordination but that part of the response to the arrival of the Jesuit mission was also spontaneous, or uncoordinated.

Dean Phillip Bell maintained that the discourse of marginalization did more than providing an opposite against which to define one’s own identity, as «it allowed a pointed method for engaging with secular authorities, who could be criticized somewhat indirectly, especially when they knowingly or unwittingly harbored such religious others»⁹³. Whilst the aspect of critique of the

⁸⁸ Larkin, *Making of Englishmen*, 145.

⁸⁹ Questier, “*Like Locusts*”, 348.

⁹⁰ The *Bragge* survives today in twenty copies worldwide, five more than William Charke’s *Answere*. Both received refutations by Robert Parsons and Hanmer published another work in 1582 entitled *The Jesuits Banner*. A letter by the Jesuit father Henry Fitzsimon to the Father General Claudio Aquaviva in 1614 suggests that Hanmer’s *Bragge* was still well known in the 17th century (E. Hogan, *Words of comfort to prosecuted Catholics*, Dublin 1881, 80).

⁹¹ Decorated initials are present, but not systematically; the alternation of Roman and English type might be present but embedded in the text, as in A. Nowell, *A true report of the disputation or rather priuate conference had in the Tower of London, with Ed. Campion Iesuite, the last of August. 1581*, London, Christopher Barker, 1583.

⁹² Bishop Aylmer had reportedly entreated Burghley to send him to preach to Catholics: cfr. R.L. Greaves, *Charke, William (d. 1617)*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edition (Jan 2008).

⁹³ Bell, *Polemics of confessionalization*, 86.

secular authorities would require deeper treatment, reading the English pamphlets as a means for their authors to engage with political authority nuances our understanding of their role in the debate of the early 1580s.

It is interesting to try and place these early polemicists within the system that served the regime with the «packaged stories about popish conspiracy» described by Lake and Questier: while Charke might feature amongst the antipapists near the establishment⁹⁴, Hanmer rather stands as a would-be servant to the state, one of the hangers-on, but both contributed to create that «echo chamber of public interest»⁹⁵ around the Jesuit mission.

In January 1581 a royal proclamation ordered the arrest of Jesuits «under the colour of a holy name to deceive and abuse the simpler sort [...] with the intent not only to corrupt and pervert her good and loving subjects in matter of conscience and religion, but also to draw them from the loyalty and duty of obedience» and in April the following year they were declared traitors⁹⁶.

If the Jesuits who arrived in England in 1579 were the “avant-garde” of Catholicism, William Charke, but even more so Meredith Hanmer may be described as the “avant-garde” of the English Protestant polemic against them. As one of the earliest printed examples of anti-Jesuitism in English, Hanmer’s *Bragge* set the tone for the propaganda that would follow; and, in conjunction with William Charke, contributed to cast the evangelical mission in the public sphere, drawing from a common European repertory and providing new images and assertions that could be exploited by their successors until well into the 17th century.

⁹⁴ Lake – Questier, *Puritans, Papists*, 592-94.

⁹⁵ Lake – Questier, *Puritans, Papists*, 605.

⁹⁶ Hughes – Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 483, 489.