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Richard Rambuss, ed. *The English Poems of Richard Crashaw*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. lxxxvi + 449 pp. + 22 illus. \$39.95. Review by JOHN MULRYAN, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

This welcome edition of *The English Poems of Richard Crashaw*, the first in more than forty years, restores the chronological sequence of the poetry and allows the modern reader to monitor the changes in the canon during Crashaw's lifetime, although it is not clear whether those changes were effected by Crashaw or his publishers. Rambuss modernizes the spelling but (for the most part) leaves the original punctuation intact. The text is accompanied by a helpful introduction and judicious documentation. Personally, I wish that Rambuss had included the Latin as well as the English poetry in this edition; he offers no explanation for this omission.

Although Crashaw is often described as a "Catholic" (in the sense of Roman Catholic) poet, almost all of his works were composed while he was still in the Anglo-Catholic communion. Barbara Lewalski (*Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, 1979) distorts his religious position, thereby "ejecting him from the Anglo-Protestant mainstream that she here sets out to delimit" (xix). In an unsavory comparison with George Herbert, H. C. Beeching (*Lyra Sacra: A Book of Religious Verse*, 1895) associates Crashaw with "tasteless" Rome: "If Herbert with his restrained passion represents the spirit of the Anglican communion, Crashaw with his fervor and want of taste may well stand for Rome" (xviii-xix). One is often unsure of whether the critics are attacking Crashaw or Roman Catholicism, or both! They also embrace a narrow view of what constitutes Protestantism, rejecting High Anglicanism (cf. Archbishop Laud) and any attempt to maintain the religious traditions formerly associated with Catholicism. (It is worth noting that Crashaw's father was an aggressive anti-Catholic polemicist).

Examining the poetry itself, one observes that much of it is derivative, often coming into existence as a translation of some other poet or artifact. For example, there are translations or adaptations of Horace, Virgil, Heliodorus, Martial, Catullus, St. Thomas Aquinas,

Grotius, Petronius, and Moschus (“Out of the Greek, Cupid’s Crier,” a famous rendition of “Love the Runaway,” also shaped by Spenser in his *Faerie Queene*). Occasional poems cover the Gunpowder Plot, the birth of Queen Elizabeth, the coronation of Charles the First, and the deaths of significant personages, as well as personal associates of Crashaw. In “Hope” Crashaw exchanges verses with the poet Abraham Cowley. From a generic standpoint, there are epitaphs, psalms, memorial poems, epigrams (mostly derivative), emblems (“On the baptized Ethiopian”), poems alluding to passages and events in scripture, hymns, and one epithalamium.

Crashaw has written some of the best [Cf. Francis Thompson, *Shelley*, London, 1912] and some of the worst [Cf. Edmund Gosse, “Richard Crashaw,” *Seventeenth-Century Studies*, London, 1914] lines in English literature. He has been praised by T. S. Eliot for his uniqueness (see below) and reviled for his alleged perversity by Frank K. Warnke [“Metaphysical Poetry and the European Context,” in *Metaphysical Poetry, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* II (1970), 265].

In *Sospetto d’Herode*, Crashaw presents a compelling image of industrious, endlessly busy Death: “Swinging a huge scythe stands impartial Death / With endless business almost out of breath.” In contrast, in “Upon Bishop Andrewes, His Picture before His Sermons,” he inserts an outrageous pun on the “grave aspect” of the picture that represents the dead Andrewes. Similarly, in a poem on the death of one Mr. Hennis, he puns on the period or cessation of life and the full stop or period that marks the “end” of a sentence. Thus because “of a cruel stop ill placed / In the dark volume of our fate/ . . . the total sum of man appears / And the short clause of mortal breath, / Bound in the period of death.” More successful is his witty epigram on marriage: “I would be married, but I’d have no wife, / I would be married to a single life.” The sadomasochistic element in Crashaw’s image of love is folded into an oxymoron in his hymn to St. Theresa: “O how oft shalt thou complain / Of a sweet and subtle pain. / Of intolerable joys.” “The Flaming Heart” plays on the iconography of St. Theresa in an account of her life, and the visual iconography of St. Theresa in spiritual or physical ecstasy. In “Prayer, an Ode,” Jesus is identified as the lover of the female protagonist: “How many heav’ns at once it is / To have her God become her lover.”

The sensory nature of Crashaw's poetry is immediately apparent. For example, the liquid nature of the blood poured out at the crucifixion is directly related to the drops of blood extracted from Jesus at the circumcision. The tears of Mary Magdalen flow into the blood of Christ. The first "cutting" in the circumcision of Jesus moves to the extreme imagery of his poem, the "Dies Irae," in which Crashaw employs scatological wordplay to envision "the salvific purgative inner workings of the lower zone of Jesus's body as he suffers for us on the cross: 'O let thine own soft bowels pay / Thyself; and so discharge that day'" (45-46). In the poem "Upon the Bleeding Crucifix," Jesus is envisioned as swimming in his own blood. This is a bloodbath "of such proportions that Jesus himself must 'swim' to stay afloat in his own insanguination" (l.12).

One of Crashaw's most famous poems, "Music's Duel," is also a derivative composition, from a neo-Latin poem by the Jesuit professor of rhetoric, Famianus Strada, which is itself an attempt to capture the style of the Roman poet Claudian. Still, the contest between the gentle, vulnerable female nightingale and the boisterous male lute player, resulting in the nightingale's death, as she sings herself to pieces, is both dramatic and tragic in its own right. The poem is laced with musical terminology that enhances the auditory power of the poem and shifts the focus from drama to ecstasy. His poem "The Weeper" draws on the "literature of tears," popular on the continent in Crashaw's time. It also employs musical terminology to combine grief and song:

Does thy song lull the air?
 Thy tears' just cadence still keeps time.
 Does thy sweet-breathed prayer
 Up in clouds of incense climb?
 Still at each sigh, that is each stop:
 A bead, that is a tear, doth drop.

Thus the soporific pace of the song is "kept awake" by the "tears' just cadence," and each sigh is accompanied by the rhythmic fall of the tears. The sighs, functioning like the stops in music, are accompanied and marked by the single, beadlike tears, which fall in unison with the sighs. Such structured parallelism is reminiscent of the metaphysicals, particularly John Donne.

Truth be told, Crashaw is a bit “over the top” in his imagery, revved up to such a pitch of emotional intensity that one loses sight of the poem itself. As T. S. Eliot put it, “Crashaw is quite alone in his peculiar kind of greatness” (cited, xvii). Perhaps the most offensive comment made by Crashaw’s many detractors was launched by Frank J. Warnke, who referred to the poet as “a kind of sport in English literary history, an exotic Italian import like pasta or castrati” (xviii).

Rejected and marginalized for centuries, Crashaw is now suddenly popular because of his homoerotic themes and the sexually androgynous nature of his protagonists, particularly Jesus. Crashaw’s unbounded energy, focus on the ecstatic nature of religion, and commitment to an emotive vision of Christ all mark him as a student of John Donne and a hyperbolic advocate of Christianity. It is time to recognize his achievement and restore him to the canon of great seventeenth-century English poets.

Kevin Killeen, ed. *Thomas Browne*. 21st-Century Oxford Authors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xlv + 995 pp. + 13 illus. \$160.00. Review by JOSEPH L. BLACK, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST.

Sir Thomas Browne is hot. Or, as Browne himself might have put it, excandescent, incalcescent, fervescent, adurent, calent, even salamandrous. The 2005 quatercentenary celebrations of Browne’s birth generated two complementary essay collections that offer authoritative treatments of a full range of Browne’s writings and their influence both in his time and over the centuries since: *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, ed. Reid Barbour and Claire Preston (Oxford, 2008), and *A man very well studied’: New Contexts for Thomas Browne*, ed. Kathryn Murphy and Richard Todd (Brill, 2008). More recently, Reid Barbour has produced a full and definitive biography: *Sir Thomas Browne: A Life* (Oxford, 2013). A Clarendon edition of the *Complete Works* is in progress, to be published in eight volumes under the general editorship of Claire Preston: www.thomasbrowne.qmul.ac.uk/index.html. Published in Oxford’s recently launched “21st-Century Oxford Authors” series, this new and substantial selection of Browne’s works