

Vaughan, Cowley or Bradstreet. The book is not without its flaws, however minor. Major does tend to ask unhelpful or unanswerable questions of his texts, for example, whether geographic exiles experienced the themes of cavalier displacement more deeply than those left in England, or else whether there is a poetics and politics of internal exile in this period (an odd question to ask in a chapter of that title). Thankfully, Major often leaves these questions once he enters into his nuanced analyses of these complex and various reactions to the experience of defeat.

Writings of Exile in the English Revolution and Restoration is an impressive study of the exiles that numerous Englishmen and women underwent, one that scholars of the seventeenth century will find valuable for its close and nuanced investigation of lesser-studied texts and authors. In it, Philip Major has gone a long way toward filling the gaps in the literary historical record, gaps that are often occasioned by defeat and banishment.

Alice Dailey. *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. xv + 332 pp. \$38.00. Review by JONATHAN WRIGHT, DURHAM UNIVERSITY.

Early in her book, Alice Dailey announces that “martyrdom is not a death but a story that gets written about a death” (2). This, one imagines, would have come as a surprise to those who perished for their religious beliefs during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but behind the bold statement there is a sound point: the perception of martyrdom is hugely influenced by how it is reported. A more sober summation might have been that martyrology is not the same thing as the actual event of martyrdom. Or, as Dailey puts it, that “martyrology mediates historical events through literary form” (5).

The main task of this impressive volume is to trace the continuities and discrepancies between medieval and early-modern conceptions of martyrdom: to examine how “the unruly exigencies of history” (2) influenced, disrupted and transformed the genre of martyrology. Dailey begins with an insightful summary of the medieval inheritance, focusing on two main sources: the hugely influential *Golden Legend*

of Jacobus de Voragine and English passion plays.

The tropes of the *Golden Legend* are conspicuous and consistent: they include bloodthirsty persecutors, martyrs who are immune to pain and suffering, and martyrs who are unusually truculent and argumentative. Speech acts are also of great importance (verbal confession of belief is regarded as crucial) and, rather more controversially, the notion of actively seeking out martyrdom is not seen as illicit. It would have been beneficial to see Dailey exploring this last point in greater detail since a standard theological theme (ever since Augustine and the Donatists) was that trying too hard to get caught or secure death for the faith could be a hallmark of suicidal pseudo-martyrdom.

The themes of the passion plays are strikingly different. Christ, of course, was regarded as the model of all subsequent Christian martyrdom and, in the plays, he is “passive, suffering and largely silent” (11). He suffers pain and, unlike the heroes of the Golden Legend, he makes few verbal contributions. There are 2,151 lines in the five York trial and crucifixion plays but only thirty-one of them are given to Christ and, even here, he tends to be enigmatic and evasive.

The remainder of the book looks at how these two streams of influence developed in post-Reformation martyrology. In the works of John Foxe, Dailey identifies many continuities, despite the great man’s explicit disavowal of the earlier tradition. Many of Foxe’s martyrs exhibit joy and merriment at the prospect of death, the persecutors are every bit as fanatical and brutal as their medieval forebears, verbal confession is still key, and, crucially, the miraculous elements do not disappear. Foxe certainly adjusted the criteria for including miracles, demanding a higher level of historical proof, but the trope remains. Dailey makes the excellent point that this is not necessarily a cause of tension. Modern historians have tended to be uncomfortable with the miraculous in Foxe: it seems to dent his reputation as a forerunner of later historiographical skepticism. But this, perhaps, is a symptom of our attempt to claim Foxe as an exemplar of a new early-modern model of historical writing. There is a risk of anachronism, here, and Foxe and his readers all believed in a cosmos in the miraculous was exceptional but unexceptionable.

Next, Dailey turns to Elizabethan Catholic martyrology and she identifies a major stumbling block. As is well known, the Elizabethan

regime constantly insisted that it was prosecuting Catholic priests for treason rather than persecuting them for their beliefs. This was always a matter of debate, but it played havoc with attempts to write conventional accounts of martyrdom. Apologists for men such as Edmund Campion had no choice but to rebut the charge of treason and this took up valuable space and energy. There was an inevitable “discrepancy between the treason proceeding and its potential for martyrological recuperation” (2). Old paradigms did not apply or had to be shoehorned into a new model. How, for example, could martyr’s miracles be inserted into what was essentially a legalistic debate? The result was a “representational crisis” (135). Equally disruptive was the debate about the legitimacy of secrecy and equivocation under examination, which came to a head in the trials of Robert Southwell and Henry Garnet. Again, an old theme, frank confession, was hard to sustain and this necessarily altered, even impeded, the production of conventional martyrology.

One solution, the topic of the final sections of the book, was to adopt a new model of martyrdom: one that turned to the inner man or woman and “radical subjectivity.” Dailey explores this through an examination of *Eikon Basilike* and Milton’s ferocious response in *Eikonoklastes*.

This is an impressive contribution to an ever-expanding area of study and it tells us a great deal about the constant, often confusing interplay between historical events and literary production. One particularly intriguing idea is how the behaviour of potential martyrs was directly influenced by the realisation that their deeds and deaths were likely to become the stuff of written accounts. Did they consciously strive to fit the prevailing models of martyrdom? One has the feeling that most of them probably had more urgent matters on their minds. Pain tends to trump musings about posterity.