

## *The Lion, the Witch, and the King: Thomas Stapleton's Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II (1592)\**

One winter day in late 1591, the English Catholic exile Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598) happened to be strolling around the market in Antwerp when he spotted two friends standing away from the multitude. They were attentively reading what appeared to be a news pamphlet. When he greeted them and seemed about to pass them by, the men called on Stapleton to join them. ‘For we have here’, said one, ‘what we think you will be willing to read, and which we will be happy to share with you’. Stapleton halted, concluding that the news must be good, but was disappointed when they elaborated. ‘We have something new and splendid’, they said, ‘out of England, which you must read with us’. ‘What good’, exclaimed Stapleton in reply, ‘could come out of England, a pestilential hydra of so many evils with which we have been afflicted for so many years and are afflicted still, and which now, pregnant with heresy, appears always to give birth to some sort of monster?’<sup>1</sup> The news, which reported the Elizabethan regime’s delayed response to the failure of the Spanish Armada, confirmed his worst fears. The 1591 royal proclamation against ‘Seminarie Priests and Jesuits’ denounced not only the priests of the English Mission but also the actions of their patron, Philip II of Spain. It was principally in order to defend and exonerate the king (as the title of the work indicates) that a furious Stapleton composed his response, the *Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II* (1592).

In the context of English Catholic apologetics the *Apologia* forms a curious outlier, principally on account of the image it portrays of Queen Elizabeth. In 1935, the Catholic scholar Joseph Code identified the public respect shown to Elizabeth as ‘an unexpected feature’ of the writings of English

\* Early versions of this argument were presented at the European Reformations Research Group (ERRG) at Bristol University in 2008, the Early Modern European History Workshop in Oxford, and the European History Seminar at Cornell University in 2010. The author would like to thank all those present, in particular Katie Gibbons and Duane Corpis, for their comments. He is also grateful to Sarah Mortimer and Anthony Ossa-Richardson, as well as to the two readers of *The English Historical Review*, for their comments on final drafts of the article. The author also acknowledges the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the British Academy, the Institute for European Studies at Cornell University, and Balliol College, Oxford, during the various phases in which this article and its antecedents were written.

1. ‘Habemus enim hic ... dicebat alter, quod & te non illibenter lecturum opinamur, & tibi nos perlibenter communicabimus ... Ex Anglia (inquiet) habemus & novum & praeclarum quid, quod nobiscum legas. Ex Anglia, dicebam ego, quid boni esse potest, omnium fere malorum quibuscum tot annis conflictati sumus, & conflictamur adhuc, hydra pestifera, & quae nunc haeresi gravida aliquid semper monstri parturire videtur?': [Thomas Stapleton], *Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II. Hispaniae, & caet. Rege. contra varias & falsas accusationes Elisabethae Angliae Reginae* ([Antwerp or Leuven?], [1592]), pp. 1–2.

Catholic exiles.<sup>2</sup> More outspoken than any of his contemporaries', Stapleton formed an uneasy exception to this rule.<sup>3</sup> Code's work may be dismissed as latter-day Catholic apologetics, but, as this article will argue, there was a reluctance among polemicists to criticise the queen directly which has rarely been acknowledged in the historiography. Following Peter Holmes's influential study, published in 1982, historians have instead privileged the 'clearly defined chronological rhythm' in which the political thought of the exiles developed, in preference to considerations of geography, faction, or individual temperament, thereby emphasising the gradual emergence of a more implacable stance towards the Elizabethan regime.<sup>4</sup> While this approach undoubtedly has had its rewards, it has also led to the aggregation of denunciations of the queen rather than an appreciation of their atypical nature. Recent work on the subject has accordingly tended to amplify the significance of the few direct onslaughts in, for instance, Nicholas Sander's *On the Anglican Schism* (1585).<sup>5</sup> Consideration of these circumstances does not obviate the general, chronological thrust of Holmes's argument: exile writings in the late 1580s and early 1590s did indeed evince 'a new spirit of resistance and opposition'.<sup>6</sup> Rather, an appreciation of the isolated contexts in which exiles chose to attack the queen personally suggests why, as a general rule, they did not do so.

While Catholic apologetics in this period offered strongly voiced criticism of the Elizabethan regime, authors generally either excused the queen as being misled by her councillors (first the Earl of Leicester, later William Cecil) or ignored her. Even so carefully scripted a call for an international crusade as Richard Verstegan's *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* ('Theatre of Cruelties of the Heretics of Our Time', 1587) charged 'England', not its queen, with vomiting 'the poison [of heresy] onto neighbouring kingdoms and provinces'.<sup>7</sup>

2. J.B. Code, *Queen Elizabeth and the English Catholic Historians* (Leuven, 1935), p. xii.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 60. The same point was made by another Catholic scholar: G. Albion, 'An English Professor at Louvain: Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598)', in *Miscellanea historica in honorem Alberti de Meyer* (2 vols., Leuven, 1946), ii, 895–913, at 911.

4. P. Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 6.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 140–41, where Holmes notes that the 'typical' Catholic book 'does not directly attack the Queen', but then provides examples of criticism of Elizabeth from Persons, Sander, and Stapleton. See also C. Highley, 'A Pestilential and Seditious Book': Nicholas Sander's *Schismatis Anglicani* and Catholic Histories of the Reformation', in P. Kewes, ed., *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA, 2006), pp. 147–68, here at 161–4, which plays up the anti-Elizabethan imagery in Sander's work; and M.C. Questier, 'Elizabeth and the Catholics', in E. Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the Protestant Nation: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2005), ch. 4, at p. 70, distinguishes between polemicists, such as Cardinal William Allen and Robert Persons, who attacked Elizabeth, and 'the average seminary priest' who did not. Victor Houlston appears to represent the *Apologia* as yet another attack on William Cecil: *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons's Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 51–2.

6. Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 136.

7. 'in finitima regna & provincias venenum evomuit': [Richard Verstegan], *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp, 1588), p. 8. On the *Theatrum* and its (largely) implicit criticism of Elizabeth, see A. Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603* (Aldershot, 2002), ch. 5, esp. p. 273.

Localised outbursts aside, Sander (and his continuator Edward Rishton) perpetuated the standard theme of many works of Catholic apologetics by shifting responsibility for the regime's cruelty onto Elizabeth's councillors.<sup>8</sup> Verstegan, responding in 1592 to the same proclamation as Stapleton, labelled the Elizabethan regime 'a Cecilian government' and its proposed new anti-Catholic commissions 'the Cecillian Inquisition'.<sup>9</sup> In his reply, Joseph Creswell lamented that the queen, 'hedged in by adulators', was unable to hear the advice of pious men.<sup>10</sup> Robert Persons adorned the cover of his response with Revelation 17:6 ('And I saw a woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus').<sup>11</sup> But even this work, known as the *Philopater* after the pseudonym that Persons adopted, paid lip-service to the same well-worn tropes, maintaining that the queen had been 'deceived by the advice of the most unjust men'.<sup>12</sup>

To be sure, this studied silence indirectly implied a failure of monarchical leadership; Catholics after the 1560s rarely sang the queen's praises in print. Yet, even if silence speaks louder than words, the reasons behind this almost total absence of direct criticism warrant investigation, as do those few cases when scathing criticism of Elizabeth was offered. This article takes up a suggestion by Michael Questier that the study of Catholic attitudes towards their queen (and hers towards them) could help to decode contradictory myths concerning the obedience and treachery of English Catholics.<sup>13</sup> It uses a study of a rare direct and savage onslaught on the queen to throw light on exile views on questions of obedience. At the same time, it also makes the—perhaps somewhat mundane—point that published pamphlets

8. The most commonly cited outburst is a three-paragraph passage in the preface of Rishton's continuation: Nicolas Sander and Edward Rishton, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, trans. D. Lewis (London, 1877), p. 240, but Rishton largely refrains from such comments in the main body of the text. See, e.g., p. 243, where the 'unhappy queen yielded' to Cecil.

9. [Richard Verstegan], *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles, Presupposed to be Intended against the Realme of England* ([Antwerp], 1592; STC (2nd edn.) 10005), pp. 58, 73; cf. P. Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of the Catholic Reformation* (Leuven, 2004), p. 56.

10. 'adulatoribus circumcepta': [Joseph Creswell], *Exemplar literarum, missarum, e Germania ad D. Guilelmum Cecilium, consiliarium Regium* ([Rome], 1592), p. 178. Creswell denounced the 'impiis Tyrannis, qui Elizabethae nomine & autoritate gubernant': *ibid.*, p. 134.

11. 'Et vidi mulierem ebriam de sanguine sanctorum & de sanguine Martyrum Iesu': [Robert Persons], *Elizabethae Angliae Reginae haeresim Calvinianam propugnantis, saevissimum in Catholicos sui regni edictum, quod in alios quoque reipublicae Christianae principes, contumelias continet indignissimas* ([Antwerp], 1592) [hereafter *Philopater*]; listed in A.F. Allison and D.M. Rogers, eds., *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640* (2 vols., Aldershot, 1989–94), i. 121–2 (entry no. 885). The translation is taken from the King James Version. The verse is absent from at least one of the four 1593 reprints, under the title *Elizabethae Reginae Angliae edictum: Andreae Philopatri ad idem edictum responsio* ([Germany?], 1593); listed as entry no. 890 in Allison and Rogers, *Contemporary Printed Literature*, i. 122.

12. 'nequissimorum hominum consiliis decepta': [Persons], *Philopater*, p. 42. See also p. 136: 'pessimorum hominum consiliis decepta'. After a harsh preface, the first point under discussion in the pamphlet was 'An Regina huius edicti sit author' ('Whether the Queen could be the author of this edict?'), and the answer was no: *ibid.*, p. 10.

13. Questier, 'Elizabeth and the Catholics', p. 69.

do not transparently offer a window into the thinking of English Catholic exiles in the way that Holmes, relying on ‘the evidence of the printed books and the opinions they express’, seems to suppose.<sup>14</sup> What English polemicists thought and what they printed need not have aligned completely; the former can only be discerned by paying careful attention to the contexts in which these writings appeared and the authorial strategies that were deployed.

A brief analysis of one oft-cited denunciation of the queen, Cardinal Allen’s *Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland* (1588), suggests why context may have mattered more than Holmes allows. The *Admonition* went so far as to reproach Elizabeth for abusing ‘her bodie, against Gods lawes, to the disgrace of princely maiestie & the whole nations reproche by unspeakable and incredible variety of luste’.<sup>15</sup> The *Admonition* deviated so sharply from Allen’s general rhetoric that Catholics long questioned or denied his authorship.<sup>16</sup> Yet the departure from decorum makes sense when placed in context: the pamphlet was only to be distributed after the landing of the Armada on English shores and cannot be held as indicative of Catholic apologetics as a whole. Indeed, Allen moved quickly to have all copies destroyed following the Armada’s failure, but not before some had been salvaged by one of Cecil’s agents.<sup>17</sup> It is fairly evident, even to a Catholic reader such as Code, that the *Admonition* showed Allen’s ‘true opinion’ of the queen.<sup>18</sup> A later protestation of the Cardinal’s ‘great love for his fatherland and even Elizabeth herself’ consequently stretches the credulity of the reader.<sup>19</sup> Yet, for our understanding of Catholic apologetics, the latter protestation (made on Allen’s behalf in Persons’s *Philopater*) is as important as the former denunciation. Dismissing it as empty rhetoric leaves us with a one-dimensional picture. If the *Admonition* reveals the private attitudes of exiles towards their queen, an examination of the context of its appearance (or attempted disappearance) also reveals that, following the Armada’s failure, the Cardinal of England was keen *not* to express those views in print. That fact, too, must contribute to our understanding of English Catholic attitudes.

Thomas Stapleton’s *Apologia*, the longest denunciation of the queen in print by an Elizabethan exile, presents a greater puzzle, given the particular context of its appearance. The pamphlet appeared in response to a proclamation which charged exiles with treason; a frontal

14. Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 5.

15. William Allen, *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland* ([Antwerp], 1588; STC (2nd edn.) 368), p. xix.

16. See *Cardinal Allen’s Defence of Sir William Stanley’s Surrender of Deventer, January 29, 1586–7*, ed. T. Heywood, Chetham Society, xxv (1851), pp. lxxxix–xc and n.

17. T.H. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers: The Allen-Persons Party and the Political Thought of the Counter-Reformation in England, 1572–1615* (Chicago, 1964), p. 55.

18. Code, *Queen Elizabeth*, p. 40.

19. ‘ingentem erga patriam, & ipsam etiam Elizabetham amorem’: [Persons], *Philopater*, p. 207. Cited in *Cardinal Allen’s Defence*, ed. Heywood, p. xcii.

attack on the monarch in these circumstances might be considered counter-productive. The *Apologia* could be dismissed as a personal response; the work was certainly not part of the propaganda campaign co-ordinated by the Jesuit Robert Persons, who appears to have regarded Stapleton as a 'bookish recluse'.<sup>20</sup> Yet careful reading of the *Apologia* and consideration of the context in which it emerged suggest that the pamphlet is an exception that proves the rule: understanding its *ad feminam* attacks will also help us appreciate why exile writers in general preferred to adopt a different stance. In particular, this article points to a paradox, arguing that knowledge of the *Apologia's* authorship has caused historians to misunderstand the work. Aware that the pseudonymous text was written by an English Catholic, historians have read the text as if it was *transparently* written by an English Catholic. Instead, the work's title and authorial strategy suggest that the *Apologia* should first be understood within the context of the Spanish Netherlands, where it was written. When placed within an English context the *Apologia* becomes a curious outlier; one which the Elizabethan regime considered exploiting, and which Persons sought to neutralise. But this was not a straightforwardly English contribution to an English controversy; it was a text *seemingly* written by a Netherlander and with a Netherlandish audience in mind.

This article will first examine the *Apologia's* author, Thomas Stapleton, within that Netherlandish context. Historians in recent years have paid increasing attention to the international dimension of English Catholicism. Alexandra Walsham has argued that English Catholicism must be understood within the context of continental practice and the ideals set out by the Council of Trent;<sup>21</sup> while Katy Gibbons has pointed to the importance of the experience of exile for English Catholics in Paris and their integration into their host environment.<sup>22</sup> The Spanish Netherlands, where many of the English exiles lived, has been largely ignored. With the exception of Paul Arblaster's study of Richard Verstegan, Elizabethan exiles in the Spanish Netherlands have not been subjected to monographic study for a century.<sup>23</sup> Especially given the

20. M.R. O'Connell, *Thomas Stapleton and the Counter Reformation* (New Haven, 1964), p. 25. The label is O'Connell's.

21. A. Walsham, 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation', *Historical Research*, cci (2005), pp. 288–310.

22. K. Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Woodbridge, 2011), ch. 3.

23. Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World*. The two classic studies are R. Lechat, *Les Réfugiés anglais dans les Pays-Bas espagnols durant le règne d'Élisabeth, 1558–1603* (Leuven, 1914), and P. Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent, 1558–1795*, I: *The English Colleges and Convents in the Catholic Low Countries, 1558–1795* (London, 1914). English female religious experience in exile has received considerable attention of late. See *Who Were the Nuns? A Prosopographical Study of the English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, <http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/index.html>. As the first English convent was only founded in Brussels in 1598, the year of Stapleton's death, the results of this project fall outside the scope of the present article. The doctoral research of Liesbeth Corens and Victoria Van Hynning promises to shed a flood of light on English exile experiences in the Low Countries.

English involvement in the Dutch Revolt on the side of the rebels, the role of English Catholics in the Southern Netherlands remains a subject well worthy of exploration.

In addition, this article will investigate Stapleton's negative depiction of the queen. The *Apologia* has much to offer students of representations of Elizabeth.<sup>24</sup> It was, of course, inevitable that Catholic judgments of the queen were coloured by her sex, just as misogyny helped to discredit foreign Catholic queens and their supposedly weak English husbands in the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Standard Catholic imagery sought to represent Elizabeth as a weak figure; the queen was seduced rather than a seductress. By contrast, the *Apologia* not only presents us with an England which was pregnant with heresy and giving birth to monsters, it also—in often strikingly gendered language—represents her queen as a Jezebel, an evil genius, and a witch. This article argues that the image presented by Stapleton of Elizabeth as a strong, and hence subversive, figure was directed to a Netherlandish audience and was the product of his personal, perhaps idiosyncratic, attempt to align English and Netherlandish Catholic interests. It is also noteworthy, however, that Stapleton appears to have stepped back from this representation of the queen in the final pages of the *Apologia*, which suggests that it was neither entirely stable nor satisfactory. Taken together, these three factors—Stapleton's environment, his authorial strategy, and his Elizabethan imagery—will shed light on the question of English Catholic (dis)obedience.

## I

Even if he is little known today, in his time Thomas Stapleton enjoyed a reputation as an influential theologian. As a controversialist, his Catholic contemporaries ranked him alongside no less a figure than Robert Bellarmine.<sup>26</sup> In his conflict with the Cambridge divine William Whitaker, Stapleton, in the words of his early biographer Henry Holland, 'as a noble lion, attacks this most wretched young whelp of Calvin whose bark is worse than his bite for his importunity. He mangles and mutilates him, smashes and breaks his bones, as it were, so that no more is heard of Whitaker'.<sup>27</sup> Stapleton's pastoral writings were

24. The literature on Elizabethan imagery is extensive, and attention is increasingly being paid to negative representations of the queen. See e.g. J.M. Walker, ed., *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC, 1998).

25. F.E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 1999), ch. 3.

26. The judgment was put forward in Antonio Possevino's influential *Bibliotheca selecta* (Rome, 1593) and cited in 'Catholicorum, & Haeticorum aliquot de Stapleton iudicia', in Thomas Stapleton, *Opera omnia quae extant omnia* (4 vols., Paris, 1620), vol. i, sig. ē4r.

27. 'ut nobilis Leo, miserrimum hunc Calvini catulum, latrare valentem non mordere, ob importunitatem eius . . . exagitat, lacerat, discerpit, & quasi ossa eius comminuit atque confrigit, ut amplius de Whitakero non audiatur': Henry Holland, 'Vita admodum eximii viri Domini Thomae Stapletoni', in Stapleton, *Opera omnia*, vol. i, sigs. ā6r–ēiv, at ēiv.

also highly esteemed, and in 1610 they became obligatory reading for priests of the Antwerp diocese.<sup>28</sup> In an English context, Stapleton is best known for his translation of the Venerable Bede and for a biography of Thomas More through which a number of otherwise unknown letters by the martyred chancellor have survived.<sup>29</sup> He was sufficiently influential to be considered for a cardinal's hat following Allen's death in 1594.<sup>30</sup> Even when the post was left vacant, Clement VIII, who had Stapleton's works read to him over supper, was keen for the Englishman to come to Rome.<sup>31</sup> This was prevented only by Stapleton's death on 12 October 1598, at the age of sixty-three. In 1620 a four-folio-volume *Opera omnia* appeared. It weighs twenty-two kilograms—not including the *Apologia*.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the very bulk of the Englishman's thought has precluded serious consideration of his scholarship.

Stapleton stands out from the other members of the English Catholic exile community for two reasons. First, he is of interest for his distinctive integration within his host environment and his close ties to Netherlandish elites. Superficially, Stapleton might appear to be yet another English Catholic who owed his position to the patronage of the Spanish monarchy.<sup>33</sup> His academic path was a well-trodden one for the first generation of Elizabethan exiles. Rishton singled out the 'Belgian universities' as the place 'where a most abundant harvest is gathered, to be sown again in the barren lands of England'.<sup>34</sup> Leuven (or Louvain) in particular became, in the words of one modern

28. Lechat, *Les Réfugiés anglais*, pp. 200–1. Lechat reckons them among the few substantial contributions made by English Catholics to the culture of the Spanish Netherlands.

29. On the importance of Bede (and Stapleton's translation) for the Catholic narrative of the original conversion of England during the Reformation, see F. Heal, 'Appropriating History: Catholic and Protestant Polemics and the National Past', in Kewes, ed., *Uses of History*, pp. 105–28, esp. 117–18; R. Oates, 'Elizabethan Histories of English Christian Origins', in K. Van Lieke, S. Ditchfield and H. Louthan, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 165–85, esp. 172–3; Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More: Formerly Lord Chancellor of England*, trans. P. Hallett (London, 1928), published during the campaign for More's canonisation. For a study of Stapleton's *Tres Thomae* (1588), of which the last-named work was originally part, see W. Sheils, 'Polemics as Piety: Thomas Stapleton's *Tres Thomae* and the Catholic Controversy in the 1580s', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, lx (2009), pp. 74–94.

30. Lechat, *Les Réfugiés anglais*, p. 180.

31. The repeated letters to the papal nuncio suggest a certain degree of urgency: L. Van Der Essen, ed., *Correspondance d'Ottavio Mirto Frangipani, premier nonce de Flandre (1596–1606)* (3 vols., Rome, 1924–42), e.g. i. 64–5 (letter 50), 84–5 (letter 71), and esp. 94 (letter 80).

32. It is unlikely that the *Apologia*, critical as it was of Henry IV (who was only a claimant to the French throne when the work first appeared) could have received a royal licence in France, where the *Opera* were published. O'Connell estimates that Stapleton's Latin output approached five million words, with a further one million words in English: O'Connell, *Thomas Stapleton*, p. 211.

33. E.g. Code, *Queen Elizabeth*, p. 76.

34. Sander and Rishton, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, p. 261. In my own translations I have followed David Lewis in rendering the Latin 'Belgium' and 'Belgica' as 'Belgium' and 'Belgian' rather than offering more correct but equally anachronistic references to 'the Netherlands', 'Netherlandish' and 'Netherlanders'. The boundaries of the Low Countries were both elusive and elastic in this period: see, e.g., A. Duke, 'The Elusive Netherlands: The Question of National Identity in the Early Modern Low Countries on the Eve of the Revolt', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, cxix (2004), pp. 10–38.

historian, ‘a home-away-from-home’ for English Catholics.<sup>35</sup> It is true that Stapleton had obtained his doctorate in theology in 1571 as a matriculated member of the recently formed English College in Douai.<sup>36</sup> Yet, a brief visit to his parents in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign aside, Stapleton never returned to England, nor did he join the English mission. Instead, he became a professor of theology at the University of Douai. Tellingly, when the English were expelled in 1578, during the turmoil of the Dutch Revolt, Stapleton, as a member of the faculty, was exempted.<sup>37</sup> When the English College relocated to Rheims across the border in France, he remained behind.

At Douai, Stapleton grew close to his Netherlandish colleagues and pronounced funeral orations over two of their bodies.<sup>38</sup> His elevation in 1590 to the Regius Professorship of Scriptures at Leuven, the older of the two Catholic universities in the Spanish Netherlands, was a royal appointment; but it was made, as Stapleton himself noted in a letter of dedication, at the urging of Christophe d’Assonleville, an influential member of the Council of State in Brussels, and Willem de Pamele, the president of the *Conseil privé*.<sup>39</sup> The deanery of Hilvarenbeek which was subsequently bestowed on him was also a gesture of Philip II’s munificence; but its vacancy had been brought to Stapleton’s attention by an unknown member of the Council of Mechlin and, again, it was obtained for him through the intercession of d’Assonleville.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the publication of Stapleton’s pastoral writings had received the financial backing of Jean Sarrazin, the abbot of St-Vaast and another influential political figure.<sup>41</sup> After Stapleton’s death, d’Assonleville took charge of the publication of one of the Englishman’s works.<sup>42</sup> His academic orations, also published posthumously, were dedicated (by an English Catholic) to Jean Richardot, d’Assonleville’s younger political

35. C. Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2008), p. 32.

36. Stapleton obtained a licentiate in theology on 22 August 1570 and his doctorate on 10 July 1571: T. Knox, ed., *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay* (London, 1878), p. 273.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 136 (entry for 14 Mar. 1578).

38. The two men in question were Matthaeus Galenus and François Richardot, Bishop of Arras and founder of the theology faculty at Douai. The orations were published in Thomas Stapleton, *Orationes academicae, miscellaneae triginta quatuor* (2 vols., Antwerp, 1600), ii. 4[=3]98–422, 466–93 (orations 31 and 34). See the table of professors in G. Cardon, *La Fondation de l’Université de Douai* (Paris, 1892), p. 320, and the comments in O’Connell, *Thomas Stapleton*, pp. 38–9.

39. Thomas Stapleton, *Antidota evangelica contra horum temporum haeresis* (Lyon, 1595), sig. ā4v; the comment is echoed by Holland, ‘Vita’, sig. ē1r. On d’Assonleville, see M. van Durme, ‘Assonleville (Assonville, Dassonville), Christoffel d’’, *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek* (19 vols. to date, Brussels, 1964–), ii. 15–19; on De Pamele, see É. de Borchgrave, ‘Pamele (Guillaume de)’, in *Biographie nationale* (28 vols., Brussels, 1866–1944), xvi. 526–8.

40. Holland, ‘Vita’, sig. ē1v.

41. J. Machiels, ‘How (Not) to Get Published: The Plantin Press in the Early 1590s’, *Dutch Crossing*, xxxiv (2010), pp. 99–114, at 102.

42. Thomas Stapleton, *Vere admiranda, seu, De magnitudine Romanae Ecclesiae libri duo* (Antwerp, 1599), prefaced with a dedication by d’Assonleville to Clement VIII. See further below.

rival—Stapleton had pronounced the funeral oration of Richardot's uncle and patron François at Douai.<sup>43</sup>

Stapleton's academic career, then, had progressed almost entirely outside the English colleges which were being founded across Catholic Europe. Unlike Philip's tentative appointment of William Allen to the archbishopric of Mechlin, Stapleton owed his position not to the lobbying of exiles or Spaniards but to that of his Netherlandish hosts.<sup>44</sup> Stapleton never visited Spain; and when he was considered as a successor to Allen as Cardinal of England, there were those in Rome who doubted his loyalty to the Spanish monarchy.<sup>45</sup> His strong ties to the Low Countries, which he seems never to have left during the last two decades of his life, suggest that his *Apologia* should also be placed within a specifically Netherlandish context.

A second theme may help us to appreciate the individual flavour of the *Apologia*. While many of the exiles trained for the practical life of a missionary, Stapleton had a reputation as a theologian and a scholar—and a divisive one at that.<sup>46</sup> The latter observation may appear at odds with the support shown to him by members of the Netherlandish elites, but it should not be surprising that Stapleton, 'the noble lion', thrived in the pugnacious environment of Netherlandish Catholic theology—in 1567, Stapleton's predecessor at Leuven, Michael Baius, had seen almost eighty of his propositions condemned by papal bull.<sup>47</sup> Like Baius, Stapleton knew how to pick his enemies. An argument over the authenticity of an Athanasian hymn, for example, antagonised the famous Church historian Cesare Baronio.<sup>48</sup> One observer sympathetic to Stapleton reported that 'there are some who would think that so strong and strenuous an athlete and so firm and persistent a defender of the Church should preferably die'.<sup>49</sup> When the celebrated humanist Justus Lipsius published his *Admiranda, sive, De magnitudine Romana libri*

43. Stapleton, *Orationes academicae*, sigs. †2r–7r. The dedication was composed by Thomas Worthington, the president of the English College, which had returned to Douai in 1593, a few years after Stapleton's move to Leuven. On Jean Richardot, see H. de Schepper, 'Richardot (eigenlijk Grusset), Jan', *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek*, i. 762–75. On François, see V. Brants, 'Richardot (François)', *Biographie nationale*, xix. 269–73.

44. On Allen's appointment, see E. Duffy, 'Allen, William (1532–1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

45. See Knox, ed., *First and Second Diaries*, pp. 386–9 (document 56: Alphonsus Agazzari to Robert Persons, Rome, 25 Sept. 1596), 390–91 (document 58: Thomas Stapleton to Robert Persons, Leuven, 16 Apr. 1597). See also the comments by O'Connell, *Thomas Stapleton*, pp. 48–9.

46. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers*, p. 18.

47. On the Baianist controversy, a precursor to the Jansenist controversies of the seventeenth century, see, most recently, A.S.Q. Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 118–21.

48. See the letter printed in *Venerabilis Caesaris Baronii ... epistolae et opuscula* (Rome, 1759), pp. 311–18 (Letter 57: Cesare Baronio to Thomas Stapleton. Rome, 1 Nov. 1592), and the accompanying note for background information.

49. 'Non desunt qui tam fortem et strenuum atletam et Ecclesiae propugnatorem stantem et decertantem potius mori debere censeant': J. Machielsens and J. de Landtsheer, 'Recommending Justus Lipsius: A Letter from Martinus Antonius Delrio (1551–1608) to Leonardus Lessius', *Lias*, xxxiv (2007), pp. 275–86, at 283 (Martin Delrio to Leonardus Lessius. Liège, 30 May 1592).

*quattuor* ('Admirable Things or Four Books on the Greatness of Rome', 1598), Stapleton the theologian, 'estimat[ing] that it was similarly part of his duty', responded with the *Vere admiranda, seu, De magnitudine Romanae Ecclesiae libri duo* ('Truly Admirable Things or Two Books on the Greatness of the Roman Church', 1599; italics added), leading to considerable annoyance among Lipsius' friends.<sup>50</sup> At least one such intraconfessional squabble turned violent. In August 1590, Stapleton complained to the Bishop of Antwerp, Laevinus Torrentius, another of his patrons, 'about some insolence of his enemies, who had carried his books out of the office of his Douai printer by force'—these men were none other than fellow Catholic theologians.<sup>51</sup> Stapleton's biographer felt the need to excuse the strength of animosity that his subject aroused: 'Who among the wise has not experienced rivalry? Who among the saints was free from that ferocious beast, envy?'<sup>52</sup> An attempt in middle age to enter the Society of Jesus failed on account of Stapleton's health and 'character'—he was too headstrong, presumably—but this was welcomed by those who judged that he could 'with his writings be more useful to the Church outside religious orders' than having taken them.<sup>53</sup>

The first factor identified suggests that the *Apologia* should be seen as part of an effort by the exiled Stapleton to align his Anglocentric interests with those of his hosts—something equally apparent, as we shall see, in his other occasional writings. Yet the pamphlet should also be understood with reference to Thomas Stapleton's status as a particularly strong-willed controversialist, whose abrasiveness inspired a leonine reputation but also ruffled feathers. Only within these two contexts will the bridges that Stapleton built and burnt become apparent—and only then will his departure from traditional deference and his unique representation of the queen make sense. Religious and political considerations meant that Stapleton's audience would be particularly receptive to criticism of Elizabeth, but Stapleton's audience also dictated the form in which the argument would be cast.

## II

The presence of a vibrant English Catholic community in the Spanish Netherlands played an important role in shaping Flemish opinions of the English and their queen. Just as Netherlandish Protestants had made

50. 'sui itidem muneris esse existimavit': Stapleton, *Vere admiranda*, sig. \*3v. For a reaction to the work's appearance, see the letter by the Catholic polemicist Kaspar Schoppe to Lipsius, dated 7 Jan. 1600: J. Papy, ed., *Iusti Lipsi epistolae*, XIII: 1600 (Brussels, 2000), pp. 71–8, at 74.

51. 'de adversariorum suorum nescioqua insolentia, qui libellos eius ex typographi Duacensis officina per vim abstulissent': M. Delcourt and J. Hoyeux, eds., *Laevinus Torrentius: Correspondance* (3 vols., Paris, 1950–54), iii. 111–14 (Letter 760: Laevinus Torrentius to Ottavio Mirto Frangipani, Antwerp, 22 Aug. 1590).

52. 'quis doctorum non sensit aemulos? Quis Sanctorum liber fuit ab ista fera pessima, invidia?': Holland, 'Vita', sig. 8rv.

53. 'plus prodesse posse Ecclesiae suis scriptis extra religionem': *ibid.*, sig. 8rr.

their way to England and Emden, so English recusants found shelter in the Spanish Netherlands after Elizabeth's succession to the throne. Roughly 4 per cent of students who matriculated at the University of Leuven during the 1560s were English, a sufficiently large number to lead to Oxford–Cambridge rivalries among the exiles.<sup>54</sup> Stapleton, a fellow of New College, Oxford during the reign of Mary, was among the first to arrive.<sup>55</sup> For their Netherlandish counterparts, English Catholics became something of a bad omen, offering a nightmarish vision of the future. In the autumn of 1577, at the nadir of Spanish power in the Low Countries, a small band of royal followers found themselves huddled together in the fortress of Namur and worried that, like the English Catholics, they would lose everything.<sup>56</sup> As the Counter-Reformation took hold in the Southern Netherlands, English history became a suitable subject for school theatre. The Leuven playwright Nicolaus Vernulaeus composed two neo-Latin tragedies on English themes: a *Thomas à Becket* and a *Henry VIII*, the latter featuring a chorus of English exiles.<sup>57</sup> Henry's remorseful death scene—'I cannot be saved. There is no hope for me'—moved the future Bishop of Namur, Engelbert Desbois, to tears when it was first performed in 1624.<sup>58</sup> A *Mary Queen of Scots* was premiered at Leuven as late as 1690 and was performed in many of the Jesuit Colleges that dotted the Spanish Netherlands. In that play there was no attempt to hide Elizabeth's evil genius.<sup>59</sup>

That said, there was good reason for anti-English and anti-Elizabethan sentiment to run at a particularly high pitch in the Spanish Netherlands in the mid- and late 1580s. The Treaty of Nonsuch, signed on 10 August 1585 (Old Style), committed England to provide the Dutch rebels with substantial financial and military aid.<sup>60</sup> Although these troops and their heavy-handed commander, the earl of Leicester, were not altogether popular even among the rebels, in the South they were regarded with deep suspicion. In October 1586 the Mechlin canon

54. This number is based on an analysis of the matriculation records published in A. Schillings, *Matricule de l'Université de Louvain*, IV: février 1528–février 1569 (Brussels, 1961). As student origins are not always identified and student names latinised, the real number may well have been higher. For a report on Oxford and Cambridge rivalries among the exiles, see P. Guilday, 'The English Catholic Refugees at Louvain, 1559–1575: Vatican Library, Ms. Regina, 2020, f. 445–446', *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Charles Moeller* (2 vols., Leuven, 1914), ii, 175–89, at 181.

55. Schillings, *Matricule*, p. 587. Stapleton matriculated in August 1559.

56. J. Lefevre, ed., *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas: Deuxième partie*, I: 1577–1580 (Brussels, 1940), p. 50 (letter 97: Don John of Austria to Philip II, 5 Sept. 1577).

57. Nicolaus Vernulaeus, *Henry VIII: A Neo-Latin Drama by Nicolaus Vernulaeus*, ed. L. Schuster (Austin, TX, 1964), p. 11.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 208, 286.

59. Details taken from the inventory in G. Proot, 'Spectacula Iesuitica Belgica Antiqua', CD-ROM supplement to *id.*, 'Het Schooltoneel van de jezuiten in de "Provincie Flandro-Belgica" tijdens het ancien régime, 1575–1773' (Univ. of Antwerp Ph.D. thesis, 2008). For a plot outline, see L. Van Den Boogerd, *Het Jezuietendrama in de Nederlanden* (Groningen, 1961), pp. 51–8.

60. On the reasons for English intervention, see S. Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the Sovereignty of the Netherlands, 1576–1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., xiv (2004), pp. 309–19; S. Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558–1603* (London, 2000), p. 42.

Nicholas Oudaert, in a letter to the printer Christophe Plantin, urged a prayer: 'May the gods and the guardian angel of the Belgians prevent the English from establishing their authority in Holland the way they once did in Calais, namely by cruelly expelling the populace and planting their own'.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the execution of Mary Stuart added further fuel to the fire, eliciting a number of Netherlandish pamphlets.<sup>62</sup> English involvement in the Revolt accounts for widespread support in the Spanish Netherlands for the Armada, 'the enterprise of England', which could also have been seen as a distraction from Spain's war effort in the Low Countries. Writing in the spring of 1588, Bishop Torrentius observed to a friend: 'I am unable to hope for peace unless the fleet of King Philip invades Britain itself. Because otherwise that deadly woman [i.e., Elizabeth] will not keep quiet'.<sup>63</sup> Torrentius' correspondent, Domenicus Lampsonius, secretary to the Prince-Bishop of Liège, was also wary of the English. In June 1591, Lampsonius told Justus Lipsius of a verse which his mentor, the late English Cardinal Reginald Pole, had often invoked: 'An Englishman is an angel [*Anglicus angelus est*] who you at no time should trust/ when he greets you beware of him as if he were a foe'.<sup>64</sup>

In this climate, English Catholics could count on a fair amount of sympathy from elites in the Catholic Netherlands. At the same time, the message of the Elizabethan exiles, geared as it was to an English audience, was not without its problems in Netherlandish eyes. The particular context of the Revolt of the Netherlands meant that English Catholics had a different perspective on political obedience than did their hosts. Confronted with the public abjuration of Philip II by the fledging Dutch Republic in 1581, Netherlandish Catholics moved to deny subjects the right to resist their 'natural' monarch, whatever the reason.<sup>65</sup> The exiled bishop of Leeuwarden, Petrus Cuner, maintained

61. 'Nam ut in Batavis quae olim in Caletibus [Anglis sint] imperii fundamenta—hoc est crudeliter expulsis incolis colonias in eos ducant—avertant superi et bonus B[elgii genius]': J. De Landtsheer, "'Die Wereldvreemde proffen van Leuven in hun Ivoren Toren": Een vergeten brief van Nicolaas Oudaert aan Christoffel Plantijn', *De Gulden Passer*, lxxviii/1 (2009), pp. 31–52, at 44.

62. *Waerachtich verhael, hoe ... de Coninginne van Schotland haer heeft ... begeuen ter doot, achter-volghende de sententie by de Coninghinne van Engelant ende haren Raet, den 16. Februarij 1587. gegeven* (Antwerp, 1587); Jan Bernaerts, *Warachtighe Beschrijvinghe vant leuen ende glorios Martirij der ... Princerssen Maria Stuart, Coninghinne van Schotland* (Antwerp, 1588).

63. 'Nec pacem possum sperare nisi Britanniam ipsam Philippi regis classis invadat. Aliter enim fatalis illa mulier non quiescet': Delcourt and Hoyoux, eds., *Laevinus Torrentius*, ii. 199 (10 Apr. 1588).

64. 'Anglicus angelus est, cui nunquam credere fas est/ Dum tibi dicit ave, sicut ab hoste cave': Petrus Burmannus, ed., *Sylloges epistolarum a viris illustribus scriptarum tomi quinque* (5 vols., Leiden, 1724–6), i. 139 (Liège, 4 June 1591). On Lampsonius, see 'Lampsonius', *Biographie nationale*, xi. 228–33, and, more recently: C. Nativel, 'Lampsonius (Domenicus)', in *Centuriae Latinae: Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières*, ed. J. Chomar and C. Nativel (2 vols., Geneva, 1997–2006), ii. 449–55.

65. B.A. Vermaseren, *De Katholieke Nederlandsche geschiedschrijving in de XVIe en XVIIe eeuw over den Opstand* (Maastricht, 1941), pp. 44–6; J. Andriessen, *De Jezuiteten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648* (Antwerp, 1957), pp. 40–42.

that evil monarchs were sent by God as a divine punishment for the sins of the people; prayer was the only permissible remedy.<sup>66</sup> With the *Apologia*, Stapleton sought to overcome concerns about political obedience. By framing his account as a defence of one monarch, Philip, by a native subject, he made his criticism of another a profession of loyalty. Among Elizabeth's crimes against Philip, her involvement in the Revolt of the Netherlands was, not surprisingly, given pride of place.

### III

The proclamation encountered by Stapleton on the Antwerp market was the 'Declaration of Great Troubles against the Realme by a number of Seminarie Priests and Jesuits', signed by Queen Elizabeth at Richmond on 18 October 1591 (Old Style) and published late the following month.<sup>67</sup> Despite its title, the proclamation's primary target was Philip of Spain, by whose 'wars only, and no otherwise' the peace in Christendom had been disturbed. The proclamation levelled three charges in particular against the king. It criticised Philip's 'most unjust and dangerous war' with Henry of Navarre, the leading (and Protestant) claimant to the French throne. It condemned his usurpation of papal authority, 'which [the king] hath now hanging at his girdle' following the recent election of his 'vassal', Gregory XIV, and attacked his collusion with leading Catholic exiles, 'unnatural subjects of our kingdom (but yet very base of birth)'. The latter included Robert Persons, 'a schoolman', and William Allen, 'now for his treasons honored with a cardinal's hat'.<sup>68</sup> It was in anticipation of a possible new armada that the edict appointed commissioners for the detection of priests and Jesuits—'venomous vipers'—in the realm.<sup>69</sup>

A copy of the proclamation reached Antwerp on 1 December (New Style), where Stapleton must have seen it shortly afterwards.<sup>70</sup> The

66. Petrus Cunerii, *De Christiani principis officio, et quae secundum conscientiam ex sacris literis ei debetur obedientia* (Cologne, 1580), ch. 8. See also Stapleton's praise of Cunerii's defence of the Catholic Church: Thomas Stapleton, *Principiorum fidei doctrinalium demonstratio methodica* (Paris, 1582), sig. ē4r.

67. 'Establishing Commissions against Seminary Priests and Jesuits', in *Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Later Tudors*, ed. P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin (3 vols., New Haven, 1969), iii. 86–93 (no. 738: dated Richmond, 18 Oct. 1591). Stapleton gives London, 20 November, as the place and date of publication; both Robert Persons and Richard Verstegan supply 29 November. The proclamation was published as *A Declaration of Great Troubles pretended against the Realme by a Number of Seminarie Priests and Iesuists, sent, and very secretly dispersed in the Same, to worke Great Treasons under a False Pretence of Religion* (London, 1591; STC [2nd edn.] 8207 and 8208). On the context of the emergence of the proclamation, see Houliston, *Catholic Resistance*, p. 50, and, most recently, T.M. McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1589–1597: Building the Faith of Saint Peter upon the King of Spain's Monarchy* (Aldershot, 2012), pp. 23–6.

68. 'Establishing Commissions against Seminary Priests and Jesuits', pp. 87–9.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

70. A.G. Petti, ed., *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan (c. 1550–1640)* (London, 1959), p. 35 (Richard Verstegan to Robert Persons, Antwerp, 12 Dec. 1591). The date and place of sending are listed, but both sender and recipient are somewhat uncertain.

theologian finished his 320-page reply sometime in March, when it was published, equally hurriedly, in Leuven or Antwerp.<sup>71</sup> Despite the evident haste, Stapleton had given careful thought to the work. The chosen pseudonym, ‘Didymus Veridicus Henfieldanus’, or, as Robert Persons decoded it, ‘Thomas tell truth’, both alluded to the author’s real name and represented him as truth incarnated.<sup>72</sup> ‘Iniquity has lied to itself’, Thomas Tell-Truth concluded the pamphlet, ‘it is right that truth speaks for itself’.<sup>73</sup> The pseudonym contained an allusion to the author’s otherwise unacknowledged English origins: Henfieldanus was a reference to the small village of Henfield in Sussex, Stapleton’s place of birth. It is unclear how easily the pseudonym could be decoded. I have found no reference to Stapleton’s authorship prior to his public unmasking in Holland’s biography of 1620.<sup>74</sup> We may be inclined to think that Rome would have been less sceptical of Stapleton’s support for Philip II, if it had been aware of his authorship of this text. Persons, writing in English for an English audience which would more easily have picked up on the geographical allusion, chose to suppress the cognomen. According to Persons, Didymus was ‘a subiect of this kinge as he pretendeth ... [who] wrotte in flaunders as it semeth ... principally to defend the king his masters procedings towards Ingland’.<sup>75</sup> The pseudonym, then, suggested the presence of a mask and, to Stapleton’s circle of acquaintances at least, the Englishman hiding behind it. Yet Stapleton never allowed the mask to slip. At an important juncture in his account Stapleton feigned not knowing the English language.<sup>76</sup> Stapleton also claimed to have translated Elizabeth’s proclamation into Latin from an (otherwise unknown) Flemish version.<sup>77</sup>

71. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 275. ‘Mense Martio. Anno 1592’ concludes the main text and is followed by a Latin translation of the original proclamation. Leuven as place of publication is suggested by A. Pettegree and M. Walsby, *Netherlandish Books: Books published in the Low Countries and in the Dutch language abroad before 1601* (2 vols., Leiden, 2011), ii. 1246 (entry 28470); Antwerp by Allison and Rogers, eds., *Contemporary Printed Literature*, i. 155–6 (entry no. 1141). The supposed printer, Theodorus Samius, is not known to have printed any other work; the place of publication, Constance (‘Constantiae’), is perhaps a reference to the author’s constancy. The pagination (which includes five pages numbered 89) suggests a certain carelessness on the part of the printer. On Leuven and Antwerp as recusant print centres, see C. Coppens, ‘Challenge and Counterblast: The Book as a Weapon in the English Controversy during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century’, in F. De Nave, ed., *Antwerp, Dissident Typographical Centre: The Role of Antwerp Printers in the Religious Conflicts in England (16th Century)* (Antwerp, 1994), pp. 31–54. The *Apologia* is entry 421 in P. Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age: A Survey of Printed Sources* (London, 1977), p. 114.

72. [Robert Persons], *Newes from Spayne and Holland* ([Antwerp], 1593; STC [2nd edn.] 22994), p. 14v; it has been suggested that ‘veridicus’ (truth-speaking) can also be rendered as ‘stable-toned’: E. Burton, ‘Thomas Stapleton’, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (16 vols., New York, 1907–22), xiv. 249.

73. ‘Mentita est iniquitas sibi. Veritas ut pro se ipsa loquatur, aequum est’: [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 275. The first line is a reference to Psalm 26:12 (in the numbering of the Douay-Rheims edition).

74. Holland, ‘Vita’, sig. erv.

75. [Persons], *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, p. 14v.

76. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, pp. 200–1, where Stapleton references the writings by ‘multis Cath. Anglis’ which ‘in latinum versa mihi videre contigit’.

77. *Ibid.*, sig. 53r.

Unlike other replies to the proclamation, Stapleton's is presented as a defence firstly of Philip—'my most serene King'—and only secondly of the English people.<sup>78</sup> 'For what Belgian Catholic could suffer that his most merciful and best Prince, born to pursue peace and equity, is defamed as cruel, rapacious, and unruly?'<sup>79</sup> Stapleton considered it to be his duty, as Philip's subject, to respond. 'I considered it part of my obligation and duty, if I wished to be a good citizen and faithful subject, to protect the honour of my best and most just Prince'—a sentiment also expressed in an anonymous poem which prefaced the work.<sup>80</sup> The defence of the English emanated from the bonds of friendship and commerce that had tied the two nations together for a long time, as well as from the author's Catholic faith.<sup>81</sup> 'For when you are Catholic, you should consider nothing that is Catholic alien to yourself'.<sup>82</sup> Not only was Philip Stapleton's prince, but frequent references to 'our Belgium' (*Belgium nostrum*) and 'we Belgians' (*nos Belgas*) suggest that the Low Countries were the author's homeland.<sup>83</sup> In the *Apologia*, Stapleton sought to align the interests of his hosts with those of his native land. In this regard, his choice of title and genre would have constituted a clear allusion to one of the most famous texts issued by the Dutch rebels, the *Apologie* composed for William of Nassau, the prince of Orange.

Like Stapleton, Orange's adherents were responding to a royal proclamation. On 15 March 1580, Philip II had issued the Edict of Proscription, which publicly offered a reward for Orange's assassination.<sup>84</sup> The parallels between this and Elizabeth's proclamation were striking. Where Philip had charged Orange that 'he alone was the head, author, and promoter of all these troubles, the principal disturber of all our territories and countries, in short, the general plague of Christendom',<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth held Philip solely responsible for the current turmoil. The 1580 proclamation further charged that Orange's marriage to Charlotte de Bourbon, a former nun, was an act of sacrilege, and that

78. See *ibid.*, pp. 7, 8, 89, 273, 274, 'Rex meus serenissimus' and declined versions. Italics added. References to 'rex meus' (and variants) are also numerous, e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 9, 58, 96, 119, 121, 134[=5], 151, 184.

79. 'Quis enim catholicus Belga ferat Principem suum clementissimum & optimum ad pacis & aequitatis studia natum, ut crudelem, rapacem, turbulentum infamari[?]:' *ibid.*, p. 274.

80. 'officii ac muneris mei esse existimavi, si bonus civis & fidelis subditus esse vellem, Principis mei iustissimi atque optimi honorem tueri': *ibid.*, p. 3; see also the poem on sig. \*iv signed A.A.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

82. 'Catholicus enim cum sis, catholici nihil a te alienum esse censere debes': *ibid.*, sig. \*4r. The passage is an allusion to a famous quip by Terence. P. Terentius Afer, *Heautontimorumenos*, l. 77: 'Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto'.

83. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, pp. 12, 27, 91, 167. See also the references to 'our Belgian troubles', 'turbas nostras Belgicas': *ibid.*, pp. 74 and 83.

84. P. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), pp. 298–9.

85. 'hy alleen thoof, atheur ende promoteur is van alle dese beroerten, ende principaelste perturbateur van allen onsen landen ende staten, ende opt corste, die ghemeyn peste vander Christenhey': 'Ban ende Edict by Forme van Proscriptie', in J.G. Frederiks, ed., *De Moord van 1584: Oorspronkelijk verhalen en gelijktijdige berichten van den moord gepleegd op Prins Willem van Oranje* (The Hague, 1884), pp. 1–25, at 20.

Orange was also guilty of the murder and imprisonment of bishops and friars.<sup>86</sup> Orange's *Apologie* replied in kind, accusing Philip of having 'cruelly' murdered his wife Elizabeth de Valois so that he could marry his niece Anne of Austria, and of 'unnaturally' murdering his son and heir 'so that the Pope might have an opportunity to give a dispensation for so execrable an incest'.<sup>87</sup> Orange's proscription and death receive a passing reference in Stapleton's account.<sup>88</sup> The Englishman's defence of Philip, as well as his deployment of the strategy that attack was the best form of defence, would no doubt have been appreciated by his audience. But, as a statement of the king's many virtues, the *Apologia* also righted a ten-year-old wrong.

While the *Apologie* composed for Orange focused on Philip's domestic crimes, that is, those committed in the Low Countries, Stapleton's *Apologia* paid more attention to Elizabeth's crimes abroad—notably, but by no means exclusively, those in the Low Countries. As has been noted with reference to the writings of Sander and Rishton, such foreign-policy discussions by the exiles were often targeted at a European audience.<sup>89</sup> Unlike Richard Verstegan, who blamed Cecil's Machiavellian policies, or Rishton, who assigned responsibility to 'the queen and her politicians', Stapleton viewed all of Europe's misfortunes as the product of the queen's evil genius.<sup>90</sup> The preface of the *Apologia* had promised the reader, 'whether you are *Belgian*, or French, or English, or Scottish', an account of the origins of the evils befalling their respective nations.<sup>91</sup> The Revolt of the Netherlands provided a central theme, linking the plight of England and the Low Countries. It had been the queen's emissaries who had corrupted Orange and other noblemen to lend their support to her cause, who 'injected fear of the Spanish Inquisition, suggested the very rich resources of the monasteries as loot, and impelled them to revolt with promises of every assistance and resource'.<sup>92</sup> The *Apologia* does not belittle the role played by Orange, but gives pride of place to the queen. Orange may have provided the firewood, but Elizabeth had created the fire and fanned the flames.<sup>93</sup>

Although particular prominence is given to English involvement in the Low Countries, Stapleton saw Elizabeth as lurking behind the general affairs of Europe. Indeed, the queen went so far as to incite the

86. 'Ban ende Edict', pp. 8, 15.

87. A. Duke, 'William of Orange's Apology: A New Annotated English Translation', *Dutch Crossing*, xxii (1998), pp. 3–96, at 27–8.

88. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 83.

89. Highley, "A Pestilent and Seditious Book", p. 163.

90. [Verstegan], *Declaration of the True Causes*, p. 53; Sander and Rishton, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, p. 288.

91. 'sive Belga, sive Francus, sive Anglus, sive Scotus sis': [Stapleton], *Apologia*, sig. \*2r. Italics added.

92. 'inquisitionis Hispanicae metum iniecisse, amplissimas monasteriorum opes tanquam praedam propuisse, omni auxilio & ope promissis ad defectionem impulisse': *ibid.*, p. 72.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Turks to invade Christendom: 'There remains no room for doubt about the person by whose will, and under whose auspices, the Turks for a long time aggressively invaded the borders and provinces of Austria'.<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth was like the ancient goddesses of war: she was 'the Fury of the world and the Bellona of our times'.<sup>95</sup> One passage on Scotland, which has already received some scholarly attention, highlights the extent of Elizabeth's perceived evil genius.<sup>96</sup> It is worth citing at some length:

Who therefore first roused troubles in Scotland? Elizabeth. Who stirred up quiet subordinates to defection? Elizabeth. Who helped soldiers with money and supplies to expel French protection? Elizabeth. Who raised the illegitimate James to the government of the kingdom? Elizabeth. Who exterminated the Catholic religion with all its monuments of piety, substituted it with the Calvinist sect [and] profanely mixed sacred and secular things? Elizabeth. Finally, who, when Queen [Mary] returned from France, deceived her with new conspiracies, led her to almost lose her life, forced her to contest sovereignty, imprisoned her after her flight to England, kept her in captivity for twenty years, [and] finally killed her savagely? Elizabeth. And still we doubt who has troubled the world?<sup>97</sup>

Stapleton presented the queen as the king's exact opposite; 'the Catholic King [was] diametrically opposed to Elizabeth'.<sup>98</sup> 'He is a fair father to his subjects, she is an unjust stepmother; he is friendly towards neighbours and allies, she is difficult, insulting, and unjust; he is terrible to his necessary enemies, she is a perfidious, treacherous, [and] ignominious deserter'.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, Philip was 'as if God had chosen a second David to support the Kingdom of Israel subjugating the foreign tribes lying around him (that is, the infidel inhabitants of the New World) to the worship of the one, true God'.<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth, in contrast, was a second Jezebel, responsible for the death of the Lord's Prophets.<sup>101</sup> Their

94. 'Quibus ita constitutis, cuius nutu, atque auspiciis, Austriae fines & provincias non ita nuper Turca hostiliter invaserit, nullus iam ambigendi locus relinquitur': *ibid.*, sig. F6v.

95. 'orbis furia, nostrique temporis Bellona': *ibid.*, sig. F5[=7]r.

96. Albion, 'An English Professor at Louvain', p. 910.

97. 'Quis ergo in Scotia primos tumultus excivit? Elizabetha. Quis subditos quietos ad defectionem sollicitavit? Elizabetha. Quis armatos pecuniis & copiis iuvit ad Gallicum praesidium pellendum? Elizabetha. Quis Iacobum nothum ad regni gubernacula evexit? Elizabetha. Quis religionem Catholicam cum omnibus pietatis monumentis exterminavit, Calvinismi sectam substituit, divina & humana profane miscuit? Elizabetha. Quis denique Reginam è Galia redeuntem, novis coniurationibus exceptit, in discrimen vitae adduxit; de imperio decertare coegit, in Angliam aufugientem carceri inclusit: per viginti annos captivam tenuit: tandem barbaramente iugulavit? Elizabetha. Ertamen dubitamus quis orbem turbarit?': [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 117.

98. 'Regem Catholicum Elisabethae ex diametro adversari': *ibid.*, p. 113. See also a very similar contrast on p. 161.

99. 'Ille subditis aequus parens; haec iniqua noverca; ille vicinis & foederatis placidus, haec molesta, contumeliosa, iniusta; ille necessariis hostibus terribilis, haec perfida, subdola, ignominiosa transfuga': *ibid.*, p. 113.

100. 'quasi secundum Davidem Deus elegerit ad firmandum regnum Israel, & allophylos circumquaque iacentes (id est infideles novi orbis incolas) in unius veri Dei cultum subiugandos': *ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*

respective treatment of English Catholics maintained this contrast: 'Clearly just as in the tyrannical regime of Elizabeth nothing is more shameful than that she fiercely vexes undeserving Catholics; therefore in the most praiseworthy government of the Catholic King, while all are valuable to the Prince, nevertheless nothing is more excellent than that he has shown himself munificent and liberal toward the Catholic exiles'.<sup>102</sup>

Elizabeth's gender and her transgression of conventional gender roles aided these comparisons. Her womanhood not only enabled her representation as a 'stepmother' but also underpinned throughout the account her treachery, her reputation as a poisoner, as a seductress, and as a transgressor of the laws of nature, as witnessed in both her foreign and domestic policy. The death of Charles IX of France was 'not without suspicion of poisoning (which, whether this in some way pertains to Elizabeth or not, the prudent reader will judge from what has been said and will be said below)'.<sup>103</sup> James VI of Scotland had even been attacked as an unborn foetus, 'in the maternal womb itself with treacheries'.<sup>104</sup> The queen was accused of seducing the Duke of Anjou, by promises of marriage, to convince him to aid the Dutch rebels, and of corrupting with her arts his brother Henry III, so that the French king would align himself with the Huguenots.<sup>105</sup> In short, the queen, whose mother was known for certain, but not her father, strayed 'as far as possible from her most noble and most Catholic ancestors, indeed from the common laws of nature themselves'.<sup>106</sup> In Stapleton's view, the Church of England was both a Satanic ploy and the queen's Minotaur-like offspring; Elizabeth 'mixed the natures and words of things, having mixed in evil fashion both spiritual and secular jurisdiction against nature, she gave birth to a certain notorious monster, almost half man-half bull'.<sup>107</sup> Stapleton declared Elizabeth's governorship of the Church a wish 'to invade the throne of God', likening her implicitly to Satan.<sup>108</sup>

Both the image of the witch, as Stuart Clark has famously noted, and Stapleton's image of Elizabeth were the product of an 'age of cognitive extremism', fashioned 'by a system of representational practices based on inversion'.<sup>109</sup> The witch-like image of Elizabeth which emerges

102. 'Certe ut in tyrannico Elisabethae regimine nihil est turpius, quam quod Catholicos immeritos tam acriter vexat, sic in laudatissima Regis Catholici administratione, cum omnia sint Principe digna, nihil tamen praestantius est, quam quod munificum se & liberalem in Catholicos exules praebuerit': *ibid.*, p. 160.

103. ': non sine veneni suspicione (quae utrum ad Elisabetham aliquod modo pertineat, nec ne, ex his quae dicta sunt & infra dicentur, prudens Lector iudicabit)': *ibid.*, p. 60v.

104. 'in ipso materno utero insidiis': *ibid.*, p. 82.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 61r-v, 64-5, 77, 81-3.

106. 'a nobilissimis & catholicissimis proavis, imo & ab ipsis naturae communis regulis quam longissime aberrat': *ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

107. 'naturas rerum & vocabula confudit, & utraque iurisdictione spirituali & seculari contra naturam nefarie commixta, monstrum quoddam infame, & quasi semibovem virum procreavit': *ibid.*, p. 15.

108. 'Dei thronum invadere': *ibid.*, p. 18.

109. S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 29, 39.

from the pamphlet is startling, even if it remains implicit (for reasons to which we will return). Stapleton's use of evocative language was suggestive: Elizabeth's religious settlement was a *maleficium*—either an evil deed or an act of witchcraft—and she protected herself using evil arts [*malae artes*].<sup>110</sup> Yet possibly most revealing is the passage in which Stapleton accused her of attempting to prevent the return to Scotland of the newly-wed James VI: 'Is it not also evident to everyone that [Elizabeth] attempted variously but without success to disturb the marriage of the King of Scotland and the sister of the Danish [King] and to intercept their return?'<sup>111</sup> In this passage, Stapleton was, in effect, suggesting that the queen consorted with witches. James had famously blamed the North Berwick witches for raising a magical storm to harm the royal fleet's return from Denmark in 1590, and their prosecution was well advertised by the Scottish government.<sup>112</sup>

While both positive and negative representations of the queen have been extensively studied, the image of Elizabeth as a witch has received little in the way of scholarly attention. Historians have noted claims of witchcraft levelled against the queen's mother, Anne Boleyn, the earl of Leicester (who allegedly died while brewing a poison intended for another), and Henry III of France.<sup>113</sup> Attention has also been paid to attempts to harm the queen by magic.<sup>114</sup> One of the queen's foreign agents reported witchcraft accusations made against Henry of Navarre, but no accusation against Elizabeth is recorded in the *Calendar of State Papers*.<sup>115</sup> In 1594, rumours reached the English court of a Scotsman alleging that the queen 'was cosened by the devile'.<sup>116</sup> Simmering resentment against the queen's half-hearted foreign policy in the aftermath of the Armada translated into some striking, if implicit, parallels between the queen and the figure of Joan of Arc on the English stage.<sup>117</sup> It appears, however, that the most explicit allegation of witchcraft made against Elizabeth emerged from Leuven and was made by a Flemish acquaintance

110. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, pp. 15, 252.

111. 'An non omnibus constat etiam [Elizabetham] ad nuptias inter Regem Scotiae Daniaeque sororem disturbandas, & ad utrumque in reditu intercipiendum varia sed sine fructu tentasse?': *ibid.*, p. 86.

112. S. Clark, 'King James's Daemonologie: Witchcraft and Kingship', in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London, 1977), pp. 156–81.

113. On Anne Boleyn, see C. Levin, "'We Shall Never Have a Merry World while the Queene Lyveth": Gender, Monarch, and the Power of Seditious Words', in Walker, ed., *Dissing Elizabeth*, pp. 77–95, at 78; on Leicester, see Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World*, p. 213; on Henry III, see J. Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1560–1620* (Waterloo, ON, 1999), p. 82.

114. L. Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago, 2006), pp. 176–7.

115. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth* (23 vols. in 26, London, 1863–1950), *January–July 1589*, p. 351 (John Welles to Francis Walsingham. Rou[eln], 10 July 1589 [New Style]): 'The King of Navarre is thought to do that he doth by sorcery, for all places do yield to him'.

116. John Harrington, *Nugae Antiquae: Being a Miscellaneous Collection of Original Papers*, ed. T. Park (2 vols., London, 1804), i. 165. Cited in L.S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 235, n. 56.

117. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, ch. 2, esp. pp. 81–3.

of Stapleton.<sup>118</sup> In the second edition of his *Disquisitiones magicae* ('Investigations into Magic', 1603), the Jesuit Martin Delrio discussed the queen's alleged gift of healing scrofula, the royal touch granted to her by God. The Jesuit concluded that this was either fictitious 'or [done] by a tacit or express pact with the devil, from which neither the genius nor the other circumstances of heretics differ much'.<sup>119</sup>

The *Apologia* therefore differed from mainstream English Catholic apologetics by representing Elizabeth as a strong and malignant influence. Within the context of English exile writings, as we shall see, Stapleton's representation was problematic; but an English audience was not the one which he had foremost in mind, as his use of Latin also indicates. Delrio's comment, as well as the earlier views by Oudaert, Torrentius, and Lampsonius studied above, suggests that the Englishman would also have had a receptive Netherlandish audience. No discussion of the *Apologia* in the Low Countries has survived, but it is clear from his career and writings that this was an audience for which Stapleton had been writing for an extended period of time. Moreover, the *Apologia* was not his only attempt to build a bridge between English and Netherlandish Catholic interests; in his academic orations Stapleton also turned to the subject of religious conflict, once more in strikingly gendered language.

#### IV

The *Apologia* had offered the example of England as a warning to the rebel provinces of Holland and Zeeland: 'we wished ... to supply a healthful document to our Hollanders and Zeelanders so that they do not subject themselves to the yoke of the English, and suffer the same tyranny to be introduced and the same evils to be brought into their provinces'.<sup>120</sup> Throughout his academic career, Stapleton delivered orations in front of academic, and hence largely Netherlandish audiences, in which he also linked the present or ever-present concerns of his audience to his own. On 30 August 1594, for instance, the Englishman gave an oration entitled 'Why has magic in our times grown together with heresy?'<sup>121</sup> Stapleton used the analogy as a warning against heresy. The parallels between witches and heretics were used to discredit the latter. Just as

118. On the Jesuit's sympathy for Stapleton, see n. 49 above.

119. 'vel ex pacto tacito vel expresso cum daemone; a quo nec haereticorum genius nec aliae quaedam circumstantiae multum ablundunt': Martin Delrio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* (3 vols., Mainz, 1603), i. 23. I am not alleging a direct relationship between Stapleton's *Apologia* and this passage; it was a response to William Tooker, *Charisma, sive, Donum sanationis* (London, 1597; STC [2nd edn.] 24118). Nevertheless, I would note the reference to Stapleton in Delrio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex*, i. 22.

120. 'Sed & Hollandis & Zelandis nostris ... salubre documentum praebere volumus, ne sic Anglorum se iugo subiiciant, ut eandem tyrannidem in provicias suas induci, eademque mala importari patiantur': [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 274.

121. Stapleton, 'Cur magia pariter cum haeresi hodie creverit', in *Orationes academicae*, i. 1–24.

the power of witches was derived from a demonic pact, so were the powers (as it were) of the heretics. Heretics seduced first by flattery and then resorted to violence. 'This our unhappy England has taught us very much, and ... Holland also begins to teach us'.<sup>122</sup> These were the same strategies by which the devil had created *his* subjects, the witches. The self-evidently necessary struggle against witchcraft, then, served as a model and a spur for the persecution of heresy. Just as no Christian could let magicians walk free, he should not let heretics go free either. And, 'just as no sane person would want to be under a powerful prince-magician, it should be thought the greatest madness to submit to the yoke of heretics'.<sup>123</sup> Stapleton thus used the spectre of witchcraft to urge his Netherlandish audience to continue the fight against heresy.

In other orations, Stapleton also held up England as an example to be avoided. A 1585 oration, 'On the return of heresy in Belgium', expressed disquiet about the presence of unreformed heretics in towns recently taken by royal forces. Stapleton pointed to the dangerous example of his homeland 'returning to [its] vomit' under Elizabeth.<sup>124</sup> He spelled out suggestions 'so that if you Belgians could not with the example of England guard against heresy itself [i.e., the first time around], you may at least with the example of England guard against the return of heresy'.<sup>125</sup> In 1589, following the assassination of Henry III of France, Stapleton denounced as false Christians the (French) moderates or *politiques* supporting the Protestant claimant Henry of Navarre.<sup>126</sup> Here, too, a connection with England and the Netherlands was made. The *politiques* acted as Catholics in Belgium 'because access to honours, dignities, and increase in private property in Belgium is available only to Catholics', but they would more gladly serve princes who did not restrain the lust of their subjects, 'as Elizabeth today in England, and most recently Henry of Valois in France', than they would the truly Catholic King.<sup>127</sup>

In 1565, Stapleton had dedicated his translation of Bede to Elizabeth, his 'most gracious Souverain', holding up to her the example of God's love for David.<sup>128</sup> By the 1590s, after thirty-three years of Babylonian

122. 'quod una nostra infaelix Anglia luculenter nimis docuit, docere quoque incitit Hollandia': *ibid.*, p. 16.

123. 'sicuti Principi magno ac malefico nemo sanus subesse vellet, sic haeticorum iugo se subiicere, summa insania censenda est': *ibid.*, p. 24.

124. 'ad vomitum rediens': Stapleton, 'De haeresis recidiva in Belgio', in *Orationes academicae*, ii, 101–38, at 117. Cf. Proverbs 26:11. I am grateful to Anthony Ossa-Richardson for pointing out the biblical reference.

125. 'ut si vos Belgae ab ipsa haeresi Angliae exemplo cavere non potuistis: saltem ab haeresis recidivae Angliae exemplo caveatis': *ibid.*, p. 133.

126. Stapleton, 'An politici horum temporum in numero Christianorum sint habendi', in *Orationes academicae*, i, 49–105.

127. 'quia ad honores, ad dignitates, ad augendam rem familiarem aditus in Belgio non patet nisi Catholicis'; 'ut hodie in Anglia Elisabetha, nuperrimeque in Francia Henricus Valesius': *ibid.*, pp. 66, 60.

128. Thomas Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande: Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman* (Antwerp, 1565; STC [2nd edn.] 1778), sig. \*6v.

exile, his attitude had hardened and he had come to redirect his energies from English into Latin, and from an English audience to a principally continental one. His academic orations show him counting his years in exile, and by 1591, as we have seen, Philip had become his king and a new David.<sup>129</sup> Both the orations and the *Apologia* were imbued with a vision of Christianity as a religion of holy warfare. Christ, he reminded both his academic audience and the readers of the *Apologia*, came not to bring peace but to bring a sword (Matthew 10:34).<sup>130</sup> The peace of Christ was ‘peace with God and peace in God’; not ‘worldly peace, not happiness in the present life’.<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth’s was the diabolical peace in the parable of the strong man (Luke 11:14–28), ‘when one who is heavily armed guards their palace, all his goods are in peace’.<sup>132</sup> Elizabeth was this strong man but Christ the stronger man: ‘it belongs to Christ therefore to disturb this peace’.<sup>133</sup> The exiles were placed under Christ’s banner when Stapleton returned to the parable a few pages later: ‘If your kingdom (Elizabeth) cannot stand except by destroying the orthodox faith ... you not only accuse the Illustrious [Cardinal] Allen and the Catholic exiles of sedition but assign the same crime to Christ himself who declared that he had come for the purpose that he might destroy the works of the devil’.<sup>134</sup> In Stapleton’s hands the appeal of peace became a siren call; the reasons for peace are ‘appealing but harlot-like; clearly soft and feminine, not worthy of a man, still less a Christian: *For who is this false uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?*’ (referring to 1 Samuel 17:26).<sup>135</sup> Much of this language was drawn from the historical books of the Old Testament. While her eulogists likened Gloriana to the figure of Deborah, and to the Virgin Mary, it is not surprising that in Stapleton’s thinking the queen should emerge as another Jezebel, and Philip as a second David.<sup>136</sup> Within Catholic apologetics this image of the queen was problematic on account of the power it arrogated to her. An even greater problem for the exiles, however, was the challenge of obedience that it posed.

129. e.g. Stapleton, ‘De haeresis recidiva’, ii. 117.

130. Stapleton, ‘An politici horum temporum’, i. 63; Stapleton, *Apologia*, p. 165.

131. ‘Pacem cum Deo, pacem in Deo ... Non mundi pacem, non vitae praesentis gaudia’: Stapleton, ‘An politici horum temporum’, i. 62.

132. ‘cum fortis armatus custodit atrium suum, in pace sunt omnia quae possidet’: [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 165.

133. ‘Est ergo hanc pacem turbare, Christi proprium’: *ibid.*

134. ‘Sed si regimen tuum (Elisabetha) stare nisi cadente orthodoxa fide non potest ... non iam Illustrissimum Alanum, non exules Catholicos, seditionis incuses; sed in ipsum Christum illud crimen conferas, qui ideo se venisse profitetur, *ut diaboli opera dissolueret*’: *ibid.*, p. 173. The final words, italicised in the original, are a partial paraphrase of 1 John 3:8.

135. ‘Speciosa oratio, sed meretricia; certe mollis & faeminea, nec viro digna, nedum Christiano. *Quis enim spurius iste Philistaeus & incircumciscus, qui exprobat acies Dei viventis?*’: Stapleton, ‘An politici’, i. 92. Italics in the original text. The words are David’s, describing Goliath.

136. A.N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558–1585* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 23–31; H. Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Basingstoke, 1995).

## V

As has already been noted, few sources are available to measure the reception of the *Apologia*. Almost thirty years after its appearance, Stapleton's biographer Henry Holland reported that the work 'pleased men so much that with copies immediately sold [out], it is said to have been reprinted in Germany'.<sup>137</sup> There is no evidence, however, of such a second edition; perhaps Holland was taken in by the false imprint under which the pamphlet had appeared.<sup>138</sup> But two known responses suggest the unease with which fellow exiles must have received it. Robert Persons, as we have seen, was keen to stress the Flemish authorship of the pamphlet. In the web of forged letters spun by Persons, in which gentlemen travellers and government informers purportedly reported continental reactions to the Elizabethan proclamation, the Jesuit summarised the argument of the *Apologia*, but did so only in part. According to Persons, the *Apologia* 'waxeth very sharpe many tymes not only against my lord Treasurer [Cecil] as Philopater doth, but also agaynst *the whole state* which greaveth me to reade'.<sup>139</sup> The summary mentioned Elizabeth only once, as the recipient of a letter from 'the greate Turke', thereby effectively bypassing Stapleton's criticisms of the queen.<sup>140</sup> A second response shows that the difference was also noted in England. In a letter to Robert Cecil, the chancellor's son, the former Jesuit Christopher Perkins proposed playing 'Didymus' and Persons's 'Philopater' off against each other. Perkins suggested publishing a purported correspondence between the two men 'each of them signifying what the one hath heard of the other's book, for they are both of one argument, diversely handled'.<sup>141</sup>

Stapleton's charges differed little in content from those of other Catholic apologists; only their targets differed. It is unlikely, if Allen's *Admonition* is any guide, that Persons would have objected on a personal level to Stapleton's venomous representation of Elizabeth. A different, structural reason must be sought to explain why Persons was so careful to avoid making reference to Stapleton's anti-Elizabeth rhetoric. I suggest that Stapleton's imagery presented two difficulties and that, as we shall see, these already had become apparent to the author himself in the pamphlet's concluding pages. Firstly, even if the devil was lurking

137. 'Haec ita placuit hominibus, ut statim distractis exemplaribus, dicatur in Germania denuo imprimi': Holland, 'Vita', sig. erv.

138. See n. 71 above.

139. [Persons], *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, p. 14v. Italics added. On Persons's strategy, see Houliston, *Catholic Resistance*, pp. 54–6.

140. [Persons], *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, p. 18v.

141. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury* (24 vols., London, 1883–1976), iv. 422–3, at 423 (Christopher Perkins to Robert Cecil. Harrow Hill, 26 Nov. 1593). The idea was not followed up. According to Houliston, this letter marked the end of the controversy surrounding the royal proclamation: Houliston, *Catholic Resistance*, p. 56.

behind the actions of all heretics, Stapleton's representation of the queen was also an unintended form of praise. Elizabeth was 'the fount of sedition across the whole Christian world', the evil genius who had 'disturbed the whole Christian world for so many years and immersed it in so many evils'.<sup>142</sup> She was, as we have seen, behind the actions of Ottoman forces in Eastern Europe and responsible, or so it seemed, for storms over the North Sea. As a modern Bellona, a Jezebel, a seductress and a poisoner, whose realm resembled Satan's, the readership of the *Apologia* would have found Stapleton's image instantly recognisable. Elizabeth, as a symbol of the destruction of life, family and fertility, had not merely transgressed gender roles; she had turned womanhood upside-down. As a symbol of insatiable avarice, she was unrestrained by her gender and wielded enormous power in consequence.

This image of a strong Elizabeth, however negative, was unsatisfying. Catholic polemicists generally employed gender conventions to divest the queen of most or all responsibility, representing her as a weak woman easily swayed or deceived by her councillors. Richard Verstegan, for example, likened William Cecil to the serpent in the Garden of Eden who seduced 'the first woman and Queene of the world'.<sup>143</sup> In contrast, elements emphasising Elizabeth's weakness as a woman are a muted presence in the *Apologia*: the queen was, for Stapleton, a 'delirious woman' who indulged in 'womanly petulance' and whose 'womanly heart led to every excess'.<sup>144</sup> The incongruity of such elements becomes apparent in the text itself, when Stapleton compares Elizabeth's transformation 'from maiden into beast, from Prince into butcher' with that of Henry of Navarre.<sup>145</sup> 'No clearer image can be painted of the future desolation of the Most Christian Kingdom [France], if (God forbid) a heretic is admitted to the rule of the kingdom, than the pitiable condition of the English people'.<sup>146</sup> As a man, Henry would naturally surpass Elizabeth in every respect:

If Elizabeth, a *woman*, by nature timid, not accustomed to wars, desiring leisure and thus not overflowing with troops and resources was able to bring into the Christian world so many storms that there was almost no hook immune from trouble, what must Catholic neighbours hope of [Henry of] Navarre, a *man*, a warrior, ambitious, accustomed to fighting, and capable of work, if he were to obtain the very great dominion of the Most Christian Kingdom? And if a girl, of tender age, wavering in religion, honoured by Catholics and peacefully admitted to the helm of the commonwealth, put

142. 'seditionum fons per totum christianum orbem'; 'universum Christianum orbem tot annis perturbatum, tot malis immersum': [Stapleton], *Apologia*, pp. 161, 130.

143. [Verstegan], *Declaration of the True Causes*, p. 8.

144. 'delirans foemina'; 'muliebrem petulantiam'; 'cor muliebri ad omnem excessum ductile': [Stapleton], *Apologia*, pp. 126, 152, 239.

145. 'de puella in feram; de Principe in carnificem': *ibid.*, p. 241.

146. 'Nulla pingi potest expressior imago, futurae Christianissimo Regno desolationis, si (quod absit) haereticum ad regni gubernacula admitteret, quam Anglicani populi miseranda conditio': *ibid.*, p. 242.

on such savagery in such a short time that she erased every memory of the Catholic religion, not only from her kingdom but (to the extent that she could) from the whole world, what then is to be expected by French Catholics, from a heretic, an experienced practitioner, obdurate, relapsed, provoked, desiring of vengeance, [who] in the past was an enemy of all French Catholics and is now the open enemy of all important nobles, provinces, and towns?<sup>147</sup>

Stapleton observed that ‘there is no more effective argument for all Catholics to fight against heresy than the one and near example of the Elizabethan regime.’<sup>148</sup> But, in offering Elizabeth as a portent for a man’s behaviour, Stapleton brings out the tension within his image of Elizabeth; the queen’s hyperbolised accomplishments had, incongruously, become the product of her leisurely inclinations. If Elizabeth had disturbed the whole world with the lack of effort expected of her gender, how could Henry hope to surpass her?

Stapleton’s representation of the queen in the *Apologia*, then, was unsatisfying because it credited her with a power and influence which Elizabethan Catholics were keen to deny her. But it was also problematic because it laid bare the tensions within the rhetoric of obedience which the exiles espoused. The problem, in essence, was that, while Stapleton’s Elizabethan imagery was unusual, his account of the obedience owed to the queen by her subjects was entirely conventional. Stapleton made the standard distinction between political and religious obedience—disobeying Elizabeth’s religious ordinances was no disobedience.<sup>149</sup> Thus he asked the queen whether she knew that ‘obedience is a most beautiful virtue, which is tempered by reason and forced within its limits so that it does not tend more to one extremity than the other?’<sup>150</sup> Properly conceived, there were none as obedient and as ‘prepared to every command (which is not against God)’ than those ‘whom Elizabeth falsely accused of having sworn and promised their obedience to the king of Spain’.<sup>151</sup> Even ignoring the obvious fact that the claim was put forward on behalf of English exiles by an exile who pretended

147. ‘Si Elizabetha, foemina, natura timida, bellis non assueta, otii appetens, copiis & opibus non adeo redundans, tantas in orbem Christianum procellas invhere potuit, ut nullus fere angulus a motu immunis fuerit, quid de Navarrae, viro, bellatore, ambitioso, pugnis assueto, laborum patienti, si Christianissimi Regni amplissimo dominio potiretur, a Catholicis vicinis sperari debet? Et si puella, aetate tenera, religionis anceps, a Catholicis ornata, & pacifice ad clavum reipublicae admissa, tantam brevi feritatem induit, ut omnem Catholicae religionis memoriam, non e regno suo tantum, sed & ex orbe toto (quoad potuit) deleverit, quid Catholicis Gallis expectandum est, ab haeretico, veteratore, obfirmato, relapso, irritato, vindictae cupido, omnibus olim Catholicis Gallis inimico, & nunc primariis nobilibus, provinciis, urbibus, hoste aperto?’: *ibid.*, pp. 240–41.

148. ‘Nullum est ergo efficacius argumentum ad Catholicos omnes in haeresim armandos, quam unum & vicinum Elisabethicis regiminis exemplum’: *ibid.*, pp. 241–2.

149. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–200.

150. ‘Nescis obedientiam, pulcherrimam quandam esse virtutem, quae ratione temperatur, & infra suos limites coercetur, ne magis in unam extremitatem quam in aliam propendeat?’: *ibid.*, p. 223.

151. ‘ad omnem nutum (qui Deo non adversatur) paratos; quos Elisab[etha] obedientiam suam deierasse, & eandem regi Hispaniae spondidisse calumniatur’: *ibid.*, p. 228.

to be Philip's faithful subject, this last assertion stretches the reader's credulity. If Stapleton had written the *Apologia* as an English Catholic, rather than as Philip's Netherlandish subject, his denunciation of the queen would not only have been treasonous, but would also have confirmed the government's charges against its 'unnatural subjects'.

More importantly, however, if the *Apologia's* portrayal was true, how could an ordinary subject obey such a monarch? As Stapleton had noted in his witchcraft oration, 'no sane person would want to be under a powerful prince-magician'.<sup>152</sup> Yet English Catholics still had to obey their queen, and hence she could, despite everything, not be completely beyond the pale. In the final pages, then, Elizabeth was offered the opportunity to leave the Minotaur's labyrinth, as Theseus had done, but only by retracing her steps and returning whence she came.<sup>153</sup> The same logic of obedience dictated that blame should ultimately be placed on the queen's adviser. A short—six-page—final admonishment to Cecil therefore returned to the conventional wisdom of Cecil's responsibility, but it also suggested the author's personal distance from this thesis. It was the 'Christian world' (and not the author) who ascribed 'to you [Cecil] alone, or certainly for the greatest part, all the guilt for the seduction of the Prince' and the destruction that followed.<sup>154</sup> Hope for his conversion was as rhetorical as that for Elizabeth; Cecil was said to have sucked his 'inveterate hatred of the Catholic faith' with 'his mother's milk'.<sup>155</sup> English exiles already had one eye on the succession, but if obedience to Elizabeth was, at least rhetorically, to be maintained, Stapleton, too, had to retrace some of his steps.

## VI

Knowledge of its authorship has caused Thomas Stapleton's *Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II* to be misunderstood. Its striking and remarkably gendered portrayal of Elizabeth must be understood within a Netherlandish context. The work was written, if not exclusively, then at least in large part, for a Netherlandish audience; it therefore also voiced Netherlandish concerns, and was composed ostensibly by a Netherlandish subject defending his king. Didymus Veridicus or Thomas Tell-Truth, the subject of Philip II of Spain, could say what Thomas Stapleton, 'unnatural subject' of the queen of England, could not. Within an English context, the *Apologia* was an exception. Stapleton's pseudonym had not provided the exiles with a panacea. It

152. Stapleton, 'Cur magia', i. 24.

153. [Stapleton], *Apologia*, p. 264.

154. 'Nosti Christianum orbem, tibi soli, aut certe potissimum, omnem Principis seductae, patriae direptae, civium oppressorum, finitimorum Principum vexatorum, Christianae reipublicae turbatae, culpam ascribere': *ibid.*, p. 267.

155. 'inveteratum Catholicae fidei odium, quod cum ipsa matris lacte suxisse dicitur': *ibid.*, p. 249.

had not resolved the tensions within the English Catholic position, nor did it express a love of country in the way that Persons's pseudonym Philopater did. It also did not allow for his pamphlets to be composed in English. When Persons adopted the different persona of a 'Gentleman travelour borne in the low countreyes', writing in English, this gentleman had to have been 'brought up from a child in England', a country 'which for diuers causes also I may wel cal myne'.<sup>156</sup> Consequently, the gentleman reporting news from abroad adopted a more measured tone than Stapleton. Finally, it would also be more difficult for Didymus to intervene in other English Catholic matters that did not also involve his king. Stapleton's authorial strategy, then, suited a particular time and place. The importance of geographical location can perhaps best be illustrated by the very different *Humble Supplication* offered by the Jesuit missionary Robert Southwell to England's 'most almighty and most merciful, most feared and best beloved Princesse'.<sup>157</sup> The Jesuit's meek response to the Elizabethan edict was written in England. Unlike the exiles, the missionary never lost sight of the dangers that sharp-tongued apologetics might pose to England's Catholics or the English Mission.

This article has studied one atypical English Catholic pamphlet, arguing that appreciation of one particularly unusual feature—criticism of Elizabeth, both direct and lengthy—sheds light on the underlying parameters that dictated the ordinary structure and course of Catholic apologetics. Certainly, study of the *Apologia* vindicates Peter Holmes's original observations that exile writings of this period evinced 'a new spirit of resistance and opposition', but that one 'has to look fairly closely' to discover a defence of the right of resistance—by writing as a foreign subject, Stapleton had simply exempted himself, he had not embraced resistance as a right.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the *Apologia* also puts Holmes's attempts to distinguish between political and religious forms of obedience and disobedience under some strain. Obedience is not easily subdivided. Nor should we conceive of it as only a matter of obeying orders, but as part of an author's self-perception and self-presentation. Writing as a Netherlander, Stapleton did not need to claim obedience for his own part. But, seen as the writing of an Englishman, his indictment of Elizabeth strains the language of loyal opposition. By contrast, the strategy, favoured by many English Catholics, of holding evil councillors responsible for government cruelty not only safeguarded obedience but could be seen as the duty of any loyal subject. This argument had also been successfully deployed in the Netherlands in the 1560s against Cardinal Granvelle and the Duke of Alba, and in the 1570s against Don John of Austria. It was discarded only when independence

156. [Persons], *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, title-page and p. 1.

157. Robert Southwell, *An Humble Supplication to her Maiestie* (1600; STC [2nd edn.] 22949.5); on Southwell, see McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, pp. 29–31.

158. Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 136.

and abjuration appeared real possibilities. Perhaps the argument was disliked by Stapleton precisely on account of these precedents.

For Elizabethan exiles, writing as loyal Englishmen, direct and explicit criticism of the queen could only be voiced when her deposition or demise was an imminent possibility, as it briefly was in 1588. Persons's reworking of Stapleton's response and the exemption of Elizabeth from criticism in the other pamphlets of 1591–2 suggest that obedience and disobedience needed to be held in an uneasy equilibrium. After the Armada's failure Catholics could not hope to depose their monarch, as Philip's Protestant subjects once had. In exile, and confronted with a royal proclamation alleging treason, they could not but affirm their loyalty. The need to lay claim to obedience meant that English Catholics could not publicly make Elizabeth their main target. But, even if public writings do not transparently offer insight into English Catholic views of their queen, the absence of such denunciations can still teach us much about the problems they faced. Their obedience could not be a matter of drawing a dividing line between politics and religion, because such matters as resistance or compromise, loyalty or treason were never simple either/or choices. Instead, the contradictory demands of obedience confronted the exiles with an insoluble dilemma which their representations of the queen helped to mediate. Only by careful study of individual authors can the nature of their views, and their dilemmas, be identified.

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