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Sion and Elizium: National Identity, Religion, and Allegiance in Anthony Copley's *A Fig for Fortune*¹

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This article uses Anthony Copley's poem A Fig for Fortune (1596) to examine Elizabethan constructions of national identity. Acknowledging that religious and national identities were symbiotic in the Reformation era, it argues that the interdependency of Protestant and Catholic narratives of "nationhood" must be appreciated. Analysis of Copley's text engages with previous critiques, including those of Clare Reid, Alison Shell, and Susannah Monta, in order to propose a more coherent interpretation of Copley's engagement with Spenser's The Faerie Queene. Copley did not merely defend Catholics as loyal subjects; he moved beyond debates about loyalty to reconsider ideas of nation, England, and Englishness more broadly, challenging the premises as well as the conclusions of Protestant statesmen and writers.

Cet article examine les constructions de l'identité nationale de l'Angleterre élisabéthaine à travers le poème d'Anthony Copley A Fig for Fortune (1596). En considérant que les identités religieuse et nationale étaient liées de façon symbiotique pendant la période de la Réforme, on avance que l'interdépendance des versions catholique et protestante des récits de nationalité devrait être mieux prise en compte. L'analyse du texte de Copley met à profit différents commentaires critiques, en autres ceux de Clare Reid, Alison Shell et Susannah Monta, afin de proposer une interprétation plus cohérente du travail de Copley sur The Faerie Queene de Spenser. Copley ne s'est pas contenté simplement de défendre les catholiques en tant que sujets loyaux, il en a également profité pour dépasser les débats au sujet de la loyauté, pour remettre en question les idées de nation, d'Angleterre, et plus généralement de ce que c'est que d'être anglais, et par conséquent aussi, les prémisses et conclusions des écrivains et hommes d'État protestants.

1. I would like to thank the Folger Shakespeare Library for supporting my research. I am grateful to Alison Shell, Brian Lockey, and Robert Carver for commenting on previous drafts of this paper; and to Susannah Monta for reading an early draft, and for a useful discussion in 2013. Monta's interpretation of *A Fig for Fortune* in the Introduction to her edition, published in 2016, coincides with mine on some points, in modification of the interpretation expressed in her 2005 *Martyrdom and Literature*. Susannah B. Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 100–11; Susannah B. Monta, ed., *A Fig for Fortune by Anthony Copley: A Catholic Response to The Faerie Queene* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), "Introduction," 1–62.

1.

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is driven by entwined constructions of nation and religion, which form his portrayals of England, Elizabeth I, Protestantism, and Catholicism. His imagined nation has been described as addressing his first readers "from the centre of their culture."² Studies of national identity in early modern England, while acknowledging competing narratives evinced by writers from Spenser to Milton, have tended to retain the one universal assumption of the canonical texts of the period: that the construction of English identity was a Protestant project. When Catholic texts are studied, it is usually as responses to this inevitably Protestant England. Yet Christopher Highley's *Catholics Writing the Nation*, itself building on Alison Shell's literary study, opened the way for a wholesale reconsideration of this hermeneutic.³ Critics have appreciated Spenser's sensitivity to conflicts within the Protestant polity, but possibilities other than England as a Protestant nation are customarily kept on the margins: contingent upon, rather than authentic alternatives to, that "centre" from which Spenser spoke.⁴ This article therefore takes up Highley's challenge, and the approach that to be understood, even central cultural constructions must be approached less as assumptions than

2. A. C. Hamilton, "Introduction," in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman 2001), 1. All references are to this edition.

3. Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Patrick Collinson, *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002); Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

4. See, for example, J. N. King, "Spenser's Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. A. Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 200–16. J. Rust, "Malengin and Mercilla, Southwell and Spenser: The Poetics of Tears and the Politics of Martyrdom in *The Faerie Queene*, Book 5, Canto 9," in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. L. Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 185–209, resists this tendency.

as propositions—debatable and debated. Anthony Copley's *A Fig for Fortune* (1596)⁵ is easily recognized as a Catholic riposte to Spenser's English Protestant myth, as developed in book I of *The Faerie Queene*. But, crucially, *A Fig for Fortune* deploys Catholic constructions of England and Englishness. Understanding how national identity shaped English culture requires appreciating that the narratives to which Spenser contributed were interdependent with those upon which Copley drew.⁶

To summarize the plot of *A Fig for Fortune*: the narrator—an anonymous knight—is riding through a wasteland on a steed called Melancholy, in exile from Elizium. He meets Cato's ghost, who tempts him to commit suicide, followed by another spirit, Revenge, who urges him to kill his enemies. With daybreak, Revenge vanishes, as does Melancholy, to be replaced by a new horse, Good Desire. The knight reaches the cave of Devotion, where a hermit, Catechrysius, exhorts him to prayer and patience. An angel re-arms the knight with virtues and sends him to the city of Sion. The evil Dobleassa and her "Babylonian" followers attack Sion, but are repulsed. As the Sionites celebrate, a heavenly lady appears to shower them with roses. The knight thinks it is his queen, Eliza, but is told it is not, and he then returns to Elizium. The poem is preceded by an "Argument" (sig.A4r-v) giving its plot—although there are discrepancies between the Argument and the poem's actual narrative.⁷

Copley's adaptation of Spenser is easily recognized. The knight is based on Spenser's Redcrosse Knight; for Despair in *The Faerie Queene* there is Cato's ghost; Archimago, the evil monk-like magician, becomes Catechrysius, the good monk, who is also Spenser's hermit Contemplation; Eliza parallels Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, a figure for Elizabeth I; Dobleassa replaces Spenser's Duessa. Copley's Sion refers either to Cleopolis, Gloriana's city, or to the heavenly Jerusalem which Redcrosse is shown in the distance (*Faerie Queene* 1.10.58–59).

Anthony Copley was the son of a Catholic exile, Thomas Copley; as a young man, Anthony fought for the Spaniards against rebels in the Netherlands,

5. Anthony Copley, *A Fig for Fortune* (London: Richard Jones, 1596), STC2:5737. All references are to this edition.

6. My current research works towards a broad study of English Catholic construction of national identity ca. 1558–1660.

7. Monta, in her "Introduction" to *A Fig for Fortune*, 59–60, suggests this was to deflect Protestant censorship.

for which he was briefly imprisoned on his return to England in 1590. He consistently maintained that he was loyal to Elizabeth I, while refusing to conform to her Established Church. He published *A Fig for Fortune* in 1596; in 1601–02 he produced pamphlets for the “Appellants,” a self-proclaimed loyalist Catholic faction, attacking the Jesuits. In 1603, he was involved in the Bye Plot (a conspiracy incompetently led by two Appellant priests, aiming not to assassinate but to kidnap the new king, James I, and force him to concede toleration for Catholics), and was banished.⁸

The importance of Copley’s work is increasingly recognized.⁹ It has been seen as exemplifying Catholic loyalism, an effort to uncouple Spenser’s loyalty to Elizabeth from his Protestantism. This brings Copley into intra-Catholic debates: Shell has argued that a central purpose is to criticize disloyal English Catholics.¹⁰ Monta also analyzed *A Fig for Fortune* as an exercise in Catholic loyalism, focusing however on conflicts within the text to conclude that Copley was finally unable to resolve the tension between being English and being Catholic. In a sense, this interpretation sees *A Fig for Fortune* as a failed exercise in imagining the nation.¹¹ Jeffrey Knapp, discussing the negative connotations of Copley’s use of Elizabethan imagery, suggested that Copley identifies that

8. M. A. R. Graves, “Thomas Copley (1532–1584),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6273; T. J. McCann, “‘The known style of a dedication is flattery’: Anthony Browne, 2nd Viscount Montague of Cowdray and His Sussex Flatterers,” *Recusant History* 19.4 (1989): 396–410; M. Nicholls, “Treason’s Reward: The Punishment of Conspirators in the Bye Plot of 1603,” *Historical Journal* 38:4 (1995): 821–42; see also Monta, “Introduction,” 9–22.

9. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 100–11; Shell, 134–38; Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 84–86; Clare Reid, “Anthony Copley and the Politics of Catholic Loyalty 1590–1604,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 43.2 (2012): 391–413; A. Hadfield and M. Dimmock, “Two Sussex Authors: Thomas Drant and Anthony Copley,” *Art, Literature and Religion in Early Modern Sussex: Culture and Conflict*, ed. A. Hadfield, M. Dimmock, and P. Quinn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 41–90. It has recently been edited: see Monta, *A Fig for Fortune by Anthony Copley*.

10. Shell, 134–38.

11. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 100–11; Monta, in her “Introduction,” 33, seems more positive about the coherence of Copley’s project: Copley “articulate[s] a Catholic loyalism that would be both unswervingly dedicated to an international vision of the church of Rome [...] and willing to grant Elizabeth I temporal authority” (33).

imagery with heresy and rejects it.¹² Clare Reid examined *A Fig for Fortune* as part of Copley's longer career; she posits a "qualified, dynamic" loyalty, which rejects violent resistance but criticizes the English state's demand for spiritual supremacy. Reid argues that Copley's later writings, part of intra-Catholic debates over ecclesial government and civil allegiance, propose limits to papal power in the temporal realm. Copley thus offers a "via media" between total obedience to either crown or papacy.¹³

Reid's interpretation is important: she asked what Copley meant by loyalty, rather than measuring his literary work (and life) against what many Protestants meant by loyalty and finding it does not fit. However, her study still tends to confine discussion to the negotiation of loyalty, rather than asking whether Copley, as an English Catholic, imagines his nation in broader terms, challenging the premises as well as the conclusions of Protestant patriots. To describe the poem as "dramatiz[ing] the conflict between [...] spiritual and temporal allegiances" aimed at addressing "how [Catholics] should maintain loyalty to a Protestant monarch—without endangering their souls and higher allegiance to God" is incomplete.¹⁴ Copley's reconsideration of loyalty develops within a radical reconsideration of the nation. Answering the question of how to be a good English Catholic offers the opportunity to define "English" as well as "Catholic."

In challenging a limited reading of Copley's poem, excessively focused on its loyalism or lack thereof, this article seeks to challenge a limited reading of English Catholic thinking on "England" and nationhood: too often scholars still seem to ask how English Catholics "reconciled" religious and national identity, or whether particular texts, writers, or movements prioritized religion or nation. But this assumes a pre-existing definition of the "nation" into which Catholicism had to be fitted. The role of religion in English national identity

12. Knapp, 84–86.

13. Reid, at 412. These intra-Catholic conflicts are known as the "Appellant" or "Archpriest" controversy. For a full account, see A. Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); important recent work includes Thomas M. McCoog, "Recognising the Archpriest: Seeking Clarification or Fomenting Schism?" in *British Catholic History* 32.4 (2015): 473–91; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Taking It to the Street? The Archpriest Controversy and the Issue of the Succession," in *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England*, ed. S. Doran and P. Kewes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 71–91.

14. Reid, 399–403, quotations at 399.

cannot be understood unless we realize that Catholics as well as Protestants were creating and re-creating “England” itself, and that the imaginative paradigms were contested.

2.

Previous interpretations of *A Fig for Fortune* have given prominence to the opening section, featuring Cato’s “Spirit of Despair” (sig.A4r). Shell and Monta discussed how the sequential passages on despair and revenge couple the temptation to suicide with the temptation to respond to persecution with rebellion.¹⁵

Monta contrasts Spenser’s characterization of despair with Copley’s: in *The Faerie Queene*, the temptation to suicide springs from “an imperfect belief in God’s grace and mercy,” but in *A Fig for Fortune* it comes from “persecution.” References to Fortune, who has reduced Cato to misery, function as “thinly-veiled” criticism of the Protestant regime’s treatment of English Catholics.¹⁶ But though Copley’s portrayal of suicide, carefully differentiated from Spenser’s, may include complaint against religious persecution (and criticism of wrong responses to persecution), his agenda extends beyond that. Shell argued that Copley pits his loyalism against disloyal Catholics. Cato’s ghost appears as “an agonizing beast, / Bleeding his venym blood out at his brest,” with an “upper shape [...] faire-Angelicall, / The rest belowe, all whollie Serpentine” (sig.B1r). The ghost stabs himself repeatedly, while “he vauntingly began to tell me / Of such his fortitude in aduersitie” (sig.B1v). Shell identifies the “midnight shape” as

any English Catholic who places papal claims before monarchical. [...] The fact that the character is a personification of despair points to Copley’s belief that all attempts to restore Catholicism by defying the monarchy are futile [...] a martyr who dies in defiance of the monarchy is nothing more than a suicide.¹⁷

15. Shell, 135; Monta, *Martyrdom*, 103–04.

16. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 103.

17. Shell, quotation at 135. As she observes, on this interpretation Copley anticipates arguments in the Protestant John Donne’s *Pseudomartyr* (1610). Cf. Reid, 399, 402.

The present analysis asks a question that probably strikes most readers first: why Cato? Copley's use of this character draws us away from a reading whereby suicide is mainly used to discredit "disloyal" martyrdom. His exploration of suicide and despair is, however, related to martyrdom—and to *A Fig for Fortune's* construction of nationhood.

As Shell observes, Cato's language parodies that of martyrdom, and such discourse is applicable to pseudo-martyr debates. Contemporaries agreed that not all the victims of Europe's religious struggles were true martyrs, only those on the "right" side; religious polemicists portrayed their opponents as hell-inspired pseudo-martyrs, rather than Christ-like martyrs.¹⁸ But pseudo-martyr debates could become intra-confessional. Five years after publishing *A Fig for Fortune*, Copley was writing tracts for the Appellant party among English Catholics—those who appealed for toleration through ostentatious loyalism, which included attacking other Catholics, especially Jesuits, as disloyal. Mutual attacks extended to questioning the martyr status of co-religionists—or at least observing that Jesuit disloyalty lent plausibility to accusations against their martyred colleagues.¹⁹ Copley's own work did not entirely exempt his martyred Jesuit cousin, Robert Southwell, from criticism.²⁰ Although Copley's later publications cannot be dissociated from *A Fig for Fortune*, they need not exclusively dominate interpretation; and the text of the Despair and Revenge episodes accommodates readings other than pseudo-martyr critique.

18. Although according to one major study, actually equating false martyrdom with suicide was uncommon: Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). However, suicidal temptations (and accusations) appear in Catholic martyrology: e.g., J. Morris, ed., *Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, 3 vols. (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), 1:92–93. I am grateful to Michael Questier for this point.

19. Reid, "Copley," *passim*; Thomas M. McCoog, "Construing Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1582–1602," in *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation": Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 95–127, especially 111–13; quoting Copley, *An other letter*, and Christopher Bagshaw, *A true relation of the faction begun at Wisbitch*, 119–20.

20. Anthony Copley, *An other letter of Mr A. C. to his dis-Iesuited kinsman* ([London], 1602) esp. sigs.G[4]v, K1v; Anthony Copley, *An answer to a letter of a Jesuited Gentleman...* ([London], 1601), esp. sigs.O2v–O3r.

Cato the Younger was a Roman statesman who opposed Julius Caesar's rise to power, and committed suicide on Caesar's victory.²¹ In Copley's poem, "Catoes Ghost" describes his action as "revenge desperate" on the "hell-blacke shape" which consumes him (sig.B1v). Suicide is his response to emerging tyranny, and he exhorts the knight, "if that Fortune be about thy might / Yet death is in thy power and readinesse" (sig.B2r). Death ends misfortune and guarantees "Fames eternitie" (sig.B3r). Casting any suicide as "a spirit of Despair" (Argument, sig.A4r) is apt, given that suicide is to Christian theology the ultimate sin of despair, and it reflects the parallel episode in *The Faerie Queene* 1.9.21–54. But the choice of Cato has further uses.

Cato and his suicide would have been known to anyone who had read Plutarch's *Lives of Greeks and Romans*, translated into English in 1579 by Thomas North,²² while Julius Caesar's career and eventual murder were equally well known. Brutus's and Cassius's assassination of Caesar could be seen as treason: a sovereign murdered by his subjects. Yet there was room for ambiguity. Caesar, rather than a prince, could be regarded as a tyrant, unlawfully dominating the Roman Republic, and his opponents as patriots. Plutarch, who did not wholly approve of Julius Caesar's career, made this ambivalent response available.²³ Furthermore, Cato the Younger did not plot against Caesar once he was established, but opposed his initial takeover: arguably, Cato fought Caesar not as a rebel against a prince, but as one factional leader against another.

Copley allows Cato to accuse Caesar in these terms: "Whilom I was a man of Romes rejoyce / Whiles happy Fortune my estate uppropped: / But once when Caesar ouer-topped all, / Then loe this mid-night shape did me befall" (sig.B1v). The prospect of "My Senatorie-pomp and libertie" subjected to "his Tyrant-whip" was unendurable: Cato's "mind was mighty against such

21. Reid states that using Cato to personify Despair attacks "Jesuit-style" martyrdom culture, because Thomas Stapleton's biography of Thomas More, the martyr, compared More to Cato (402). However, Stapleton compared More not to Cato the Younger, who appears in *A Fig for Fortune*, but to Cato the Elder: Thomas Stapleton, *The life and illustrious martyrdom of Sir Thomas More ...* (1588), ed. and trans. P. E. Hallett (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1928), 142–44.

22. Plutarch, *Lives of the noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. Thomas North (from J. Amyot's French translation) (London, 1579), sig.[YYY6]r – sig.BBBB4v. Cato's death is sig.BBBB3v – sig.BBBB4r. See further Monta, "Introduction," 37–41, on the Cato passage and its sources.

23. Plutarch, *Lives*, sig.SSS4r–sig.XXX2v; cf. J. L. Simmons, *Shakespeare's Pagan World: The Roman Tragedies* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973).

miserie, / and rather would I die magnanimous / Then liue to see a Caesar ouer us" (sig.B2r). He laments the civil strife from which Caesar emerged pre-eminent, when "The Thessalian fieldes / Suckt up the mutuall blood-shed of our men" (sig.B2r). Cato explains that the monstrous lower half that has almost "subdu'd my upper albitude" (sig.B1v-B2r) is the "disgrace" of his country. His identification with his *patria* is complete: "Yet for my Countrey is a part of me, / And it is all subjected to disgrace, / Loe that's my serpentine obscuritie." But the bathetic, vindictive following line alienates our sympathies again: "For which I spight, and spit on Caesar's face," by killing himself (sig.B2r). Self-interest and patriotism are interlaced—Cato is incensed equally by the loss of his "pomp" and Rome's "libertie," possibly misled into equating the two.

Cato and his cause are not unambiguously endorsed; nevertheless, Copley provocatively suggests that opposing "Caesar" *might* mean treason against your prince; but it *might* mean defying some overweening politician who is perverting your country's commonweal to his own ends—a description that fitted Catholic perceptions of certain Protestant statesmen, as Peter Lake has recently explored. While Protestant political writers accused Catholics of subverting the English polity through treason—that is, attempts at violent regime change—Catholic writers accused Protestant statesmen of perverting that polity's proper nature into a tool for personal gain.²⁴ If Copley is suggesting a resonance between Caesar and (say) the Cecils, he is leaving the queen safely out of it; but because "Caesar" was so often used to refer to rulers—princes, not only their advisers—allowing sympathy for Cato's resistance of Caesar tiptoes up to the notion that the queen herself might be a tyrant. This possibility is taken up in the portrayal of Doblissa (see below).

If Cato's relationship to Caesar could have ambiguous significance, so could his suicide. That suicide was a damnable sin was not questioned in Elizabethan society. But early modern playwrights worked with Roman analogues in which suicide appeared as an act of heroic virtue; and while Copley's contemporaries might not have endorsed suicide as an extension of Roman *constantia*, they generally did not go out of their way to condemn it.²⁵ Copley, however, does. He makes close allusion to Plutarch's account: Plutarch

24. Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

25. Clifford Ronan, "Antike Roman": *Power Symbolism and the Roman Play in Early Modern England 1585–1635* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 87–107.

describes in grim detail how Cato's first attempt to stab himself failed, when his relatives fetched a physician to stitch up the wounds. Cato had to pull the wound open with his hands and start digging out his own guts in order to succeed in dying.²⁶ Having Cato's ghost stab himself repeatedly alludes to this, and undercuts Cato's encouraging, "slip out thy life at gloryes windoe, / One stab will send thee to eternity" (sig.B2v). Copley makes Cato's suicide less attractive than he might have done, but his cause more sympathetic. In so doing, he uses Cato, his enemies, and his despair to comment on Christian and worldly suffering, and on affinity with one's *patria*.

Although Cato identifies Caesar as his enemy, the adversary he mentions most is "Fortune." He observes, without originality, that Fortune is "a fickle Dame" (sig.B3r). The knight should "Blesse thou thy selfe, and if that Fortune curse thee, / Die in despite of her, and her discour'tsie" (sig.B3r). Deprived of worldly success, life is not worth living. Crawling to Fortune and begging for Caesar's mercy are rejected alike, in terms superficially similar to Christian exhortations to despise worldly ambition:

Oh what a base ingenerous sight it is,
to see men crooch and pewle at her vaine Altars,
Offring their presents to her peeuishnesse
And therewithall, their necks vnto her haltars:
(sig.B3r)

Deference to Fortune is imagined as idolatry. But Cato concludes, "Be thou subsistant of thy selfe alonely, / And if thou canst not liue, yet die with glorie" (sig.B3r): suicide restores Cato's lost fame and glory. Revenge similarly imagines the enemy as Fortune. Although her remedy differs, the motivation is still one that "skornes to brooke base infelicitie, / Or pocket vp degraded dignitie" (sig.C3v), one that cannot endure worldly loss.

In contrast to Spenser, who characterizes suicide as an act of hopelessness in response to self-hatred unrelieved by faith (see especially *Faerie Queene* 1.9.48–50), Copley imagines suicide as defiance, proposed by Cato as the means to positive reward. This lure, and its pagan nature, are central to Cato's parody of the language of martyrdom. He urges the knight to "off with" his fleshly life,

26. Plutarch, *Lives*, sig.BBBB3v – sig.BBBB4r. Cf. Monta, "Introduction," 39–40.

[...] and yeeld thy sweetes to Ioue,
And he will counter-sweet thee with his loue.

He will imbosome thee in his embrace,
And Ioye-embalme thee in his Heauen-delights

parodying the eternal bliss with Christ promised to martyrs (sig.[B4]v). The knight is offered a place among “Fames choiest Martyr”—Fame replacing God (sig.[B4]v). Cato invites the knight to “Number these willing woundes (my hartes defray),” recalling the numbered wounds of Christ’s passion; but Cato’s wounds are counted “To Glory [not God] sole land-ladie of this account; / They are the Tythes I pay to eternall Fame” (sig.B2v).

Copley’s characterization of Cato and Revenge creates a context for Catechrysius’s later discourse on martyrdom,²⁷ building linguistic bridges that illuminate the gulf between martyrdom and suicide.²⁸ In a sense, Cato and Revenge are correct in despising Fortune: Cato scorns to kneel at her “vaine Altars” (sig.B3r), and Revenge asks “What manhood is it still to feed on Chickins / Like infant nurse-boys in nice Fortunes kitchins?” (sig.C2v). But Catechrysius shows how both the suicide and the avenger enslave themselves to the Fortune they attempt to defy. The patient Christian—the martyr—genuinely defeats Fortune by refusing to be moved: “Thou art no part of Fortune, but thine owne” (sig.F3v). This echoes Cato’s “Be thou subsistant of thy selfe alonely”; but then Catechrysius changes direction: “Vertue thy fore-guide, Heauen thy attaine. [...] Contented mind thy glories after-gaine” (sig.F3v). The Christian finds joy in accepting suffering: the “content” of a good conscience makes him “a Bwoy aboute the bosterous waue / Dauncing to scorne the Seas ybillowy-braue” (sig.[F4]r).

Martyrdom briefly seems to veer close to heroic suicide: “Good death, not loftie life” is the “best Renowne” (sig.F3v). But the contrast is inherent: Cato cannot bear to live unless his life is “lofty”; the Christian prefers virtuous death *even* to a fortunate life. A subsequent linguistic echo underlines the point: to the virtuous, “holie providence” is “a sacred shrine / or Sanctuarie against all

27. Cato and Revenge as “rebels” may also be contrasted with Catechrysius’s loyalty: Shell, 135. But I argue that the theme outlined here is equally important.

28. Cf. Monta, “Introduction,” 46.

hels offence" (sig.[F4]r), whereas to Cato, death is the "Eternall Sanctuarie from unrest and woē" (sig.B2v).

A particularly striking parallel image is here:

Cato:

I tell thee Natur's like to Marygowldes,
Largely display'd to twentie thousand Sunnes,
Which if they cease to shine in Majestie,
It shuttes it selfe, and is content to die. (sig.B3r)²⁹

Catechrysius:

See how the Marigold against the Son
Displays and shuts it selfe at his dominion
Lessening at night her spred proportion
But nere disculloring her gold-complexion,
So to the soueraigntie of God aboute
With Fortunes night deminish not thy loue. (sig.G2v)

Suicide represents inconstancy and inability to suffer; martyrdom the ability to suffer, unaltered by good or bad fortune. Similarly, Revenge likens taking vengeance after a defeat to "a Phoenix of Adversitie / That faire results from her incinderment" (sig.C2r); Catechrysius explains that faith-filled contentment even after worldly disaster is "the Phoenix of fore-glories Embers: / Patience her wing, Heauen is her amount" (sig.F3v). A symbol sometimes used for Elizabeth I is deployed by Copley in two contradictory forms, positive and negative.³⁰

The futile attempts of suicide and revenge to escape from enslaving Fortune are contrasted with the true escape of Christian fidelity; but Copley then uses the dialectic between Fortune and Christianity to comment on allegiance, nationhood, and Elizabeth's England. Because the Roman Cato dies for worldly

29. Copley, *A Fig for Fortune*, sig.A4v, Corrigenda to "Pag 5. Ln 18": "It shuttes it selfe, and is" to "Doe shut themselues and are."

30. Elizabeth was compared to the phoenix, during and after her reign; see Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 81–83, 104, 144; J. Watkins, "'Out of her ashes may a second phoenix rise': James I and the Legacy of Elizabethan Anti-Catholicism," in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. A. F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 116–36, esp. 120–21.

reasons, the glory he seeks is only a parody of Christian salvation. Yet he is also the patriotic opponent of a tyrant, devastated by his country's "disgrace." Cato exemplifies how pagans can be heroic—while their heroism remains limited by its limited goal. Copley's partial sympathy for Cato suggests a paradigm of progression rather than opposition:³¹ "not far enough" rather than "wrong direction." This notion of noble paganism is central to Copley's representation of "Elizium," and "Elizium" is the medium for his daring conception of England and English identity.

3.

Elizium, the exiled knight's native realm, is the happy land of his beloved queen, Eliza. It seems obvious that it stands for Elizabeth's England, and expresses the poem's loyalism. Catechrysius, the good hermit, praises Eliza and her realm. But "Elizium" is also the pagan paradise, and (as Knapp notes) it is first mentioned in *A Fig for Fortune* by Cato's ghost—suicide is the "bridge to sweet Elizium's eternitie" (sig.B2v); Revenge invokes Elizium as the destiny of those who expend their lives in vengeance (sig.D1v). Shell observes that Elizium is "not quite a paradise for pagans, but certainly one for those not of the true faith."³² I wish to explore the implications of Elizium's paganism, and how in comparing Elizium and Eliza to Sion, Copley compares Protestant to Catholic constructions of England.

Anthony Copley was not the only poet to allegorize England as Elizium, or to be aware of the word's pagan origins; but Copley brings Elizium as the fairyland realm of Eliza into the same text that uses the word in its original sense.³³ This colours Catechrysius's later praise, alerting us to its ambivalence.

Catechrysius is introduced as an admirer of Elizium. He assumes that Elizians are rarely seen abroad because "yee are a Paradized people / That so contain your selves in home-delights" (sig.E1r). He later endorses the highest pitch of praise for Elizabeth:

31. I am grateful to Brian Lockey for this observation. Lockey contrasts this with a Spenserian tendency to oppositional paradigms. Reid argues that Copley replaces a "pope or queen" opposition with a "pope and queen" "via media." Reid, 403, 413.

32. Shell, 134

33. Knapp, 82–87, especially 83, 85.

Say that Eliza is the Lords deere daintie,
 The Phaenix of true Principalitie
 The feast of peace and sweet saturitie
 Unto the people of her Emperie;
 Say that she is both Grace and Natures none-such
 I bend my knee, and say and thinke as much.

For I haue heard the woonders of her name
 Our coast is full of great Elizabeth,
 Yea, all the world is fertill of the same;
 Sweet Name that all mens tongues and pennes inableth,
 Sweet Sound that all mens sences lullabieth
 Sweet Marle that all the world imbatteneth.

However, this is followed by a disclaimer:

But such her glories are but eare-delightes
 And lip-sweets only to our far awayes,
 For we are no Elizium-bred wightes
 Nor haue we any such-like merrie dayes;
 Wee haue our joyes in another kind
 Ghostly innated in our soule and mind. (sig.I2r)

The first four lines might denote that those unfortunate enough not to live in Eliza's realm can only hear and speak of, not enjoy, her blessings. But, as Knapp observed, the closing couplet transforms the "ear-delights" and "lip-sweets" into suggestions that Elizium's pleasures are sensual (worldly), in contrast to the joys of "soule and mind" which Sionites possess (and which the next three stanzas outline sig.I2r-v).³⁴ Furthermore, this panegyric on Elizium occurs as Catechrysius leads the knight towards Sion, whose magnificent beauty is then described (sigs.I2v-I4r). Earlier, Catechrysius's explanation for the lack of travelling Elizians is similarly undercut:

Belike yee are a Paraded people
 That so contain your selves in home-delights

34. Knapp, 85-86.

As though that only under your steeple
 And no wher els were all May-mery Rights:
 A blessed people ye are, *if it be so*
 And yet me thinks thou seemst a man of woe
 (sig.E1r, emphasis mine).

The conditional creates uncertainty. The notion that bliss is found “only under your steeple” might be Copley’s swipe at the hubristic particularism of a national church. The text contains two possibilities: the Elizians are either uniquely blessed, or uniquely bigoted.³⁵ At least, Elizium is worldly, and therefore limited. Hence Cato’s role: Elizium is to Sion as the noble pagan is to the Christian—not bad, but insufficient.

The description of Sion leaves no doubt that the Catholic Church is intended. Sion is “a Rock in shining glorie” (sig.D3r), watered by “streams that trill from *Iesus* wounds / Into thy seuen-fold Cesternes” (a reference to the seven Catholic sacraments) (sig.[H4]v). The knight and Catechrysius are summoned to Sion’s gates by a sacring-bell (sig.I1r), the bell rung at the consecration of bread and wine during Mass; they reach Sion at the “time of high Oblation,” i.e., the Mass (sig.I4r). The ruler of Sion is the “high sacrificator” (sig.K1v):³⁶ a rendition of *Pontifex maximus*, “chief of priests,” a title used by Roman emperors as heads of the (pagan) state religion, but applied to popes since the fourth century. Sion is not heaven—where sacraments and priests are superfluous—but the church. The inscription above the “Temple” door underlines this: “*Una, Militans*” denotes the church militant, i.e., on earth. “Una” (One), is the lady Spenser’s Redcrosse Knight serves, representing truth or the true church. By including no corresponding character but inscribing “Una” above Sion’s Temple, Copley proposes that the true church is not a wandering lady, who must be lost, found, saved; not an invisible community of elect souls. She is as obvious, and immovable, as a city on a rock.³⁷

The description of Sion is similar to that of the “City of God” in *Faerie Queene* 1.10.55–57, although more detailed, as well as evoking biblical

35. Cf. Monta, “Introduction,” 50; this modifies Monta, *Martyrdom*, 107.

36. Imagining Sion in terms of the Mass echoes standard Catholic interpretations of the Book of Revelation. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 106–08.

37. Cf. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 108; on Una, see K. Walls, *God’s Only Daughter: Spenser’s Una and the Invisible Church* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

descriptions of the heavenly “New Jerusalem.” But (as Monta notes), Copley’s knight actually *reaches* Sion within the poem.³⁸ Sion may symbolize heaven *and* the true church; particularly through the rite of Mass, heaven is made present on earth.

Catechrysius has already prefaced his praise of Eliza’s realm (sig.I2r) by telling the knight that “all that faire Elyzium can yeeld youe” does not “countervayle thys hap / Fallen from faire Fortune into Graces lap” (sig.I1v): even if Elizium is good, Sion is better. As Copley’s knight reaches Sion’s gates, progression seems to give way to conflict. The narrator states abruptly that “The Temple-porter was a reuerend man / and was t’admit in no Elizian” (sig. I4v). The tension between Sion and Elizium is brought to a head; so (to some readings) is the poem’s fallacy. The knight’s subsequent entry into Sion means “temporary deracination.”³⁹ One cannot, after all, be English and Catholic. I argue against this (see below), but Copley certainly exploits the possibility of opposition between Sion and Elizium. This potential opposition between the true church and loyalty to England must be explored together with the resolution Copley suggests.

Copley draws out tensions between Sion, Elizium, and Eliza through Doblessa. Doblessa represents Protestantism. She slanders Sion’s glory, which “was ynough t’illumine all the world / But for the mysts that false Doblessa hurld” (sig.I3r), essentially how Catholics regarded Protestant propaganda. Doblessa, “ere this Temple was established / [...] had no being at all about the earth” (sig.K2v), expressing the Catholic contention that Protestantism depended on the Catholic Church it opposed for its self-identity. She “had no Altar, nor no Sacrament / No Ceremonie, nor Oblation,” a reference to Protestant rejection of the Mass (sig.K3v). Doblessa’s followers are “Babellonians,” and she is the “whore of Babylon” (sigs.K3v, L1r, L2v): Protestants had no monopoly on Apocalyptic images.

Copley also uses the word *Babel*: Doblessa is the “Babell-whore” (sig. [K4]v), her followers are “Babel-hildings” (sig.L2r), in Sion “All Babell-Biblers they did dead dislike” (sig.K2r). The Tower of Babel is the subject of an Old Testament legend: men decided to build a tower so high it would reach heaven. To frustrate their arrogance, God invented multiple languages, so that the

38. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 106–07.

39. Shell, 134; cf. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 108–09.

builders could not communicate and abandoned their project.⁴⁰ According to Thomas Cooper's thesaurus (1565), Babel was the predecessor of Babylon.⁴¹ Copley's use of "Babel" connects Protestantism with arrogance and disunity. The phrase "Babell-Biblers" can be read *Babble-bibblers* but is also an elision of "Babel" and "Bible." Copley suggests that, without the church's authority, Bible-reading degenerates into uncommunicative, anarchic, and hubristic babble. This impinges on the poem's attitude to nationhood and identity: the mention of Babel is a reminder that the diversity of tongues and nations is the result of sin, not the original order. Perhaps the bickering of nations, like the frangibility of heresy, can be resolved only through a transcending, unifying loyalty to Sion.

Descriptions of Doblessa provide specifically English allusions. Doblessa mimics Sion: she "could quaintly maske in Sions guize" and "Like Ensignes she oppos'd to Sions Ensignes" (sig.K3r). This recalls the Church of England's use of Catholic buildings, some Catholic ceremonies, and its alternative bench of bishops. English persecution is repeatedly evoked: "Manie Sionits of choise esteeme" have been sent "To teach Doblessa (Errors dreary Queene) / Their Temples sanctimonie and innocence" and have "dispenst their blood / To doe th'unkind Doblessa so much good" (sig.K2v). These are the English priests trained in Rome, sent back to England to minister, and often hanged as a result.⁴² The subjects of missionary efforts are "The Babellonians," Doblessa's followers (sig.L2v), which creates a tension: England is supposed to be Elizium, but here the "Babellonians" are the English. The knight's origins compound this tension. We know he comes from Elizium; we are also told he has escaped from Doblessa's power (sig.[K4]v, and see below). Is England Eliza's Elizium or Doblessa's Babylon? Or both? Copley will not conclusively say.

If Doblessa personifies Protestantism, the character enables Copley to demonize Protestantism while eulogizing Eliza/Elizabeth, somewhat as the "evil counsellor" rhetoric used by certain English Catholic political writers allowed them to excoriate the Elizabethan regime while maintaining loyalty to Elizabeth herself; Lake rightly observes that while they might seem to us

40. Genesis 11:1–9.

41. Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* ... (London, 1584), entries for "Babel" and "Babylon," Sig.Cccccc.2.v.

42. Studies covering the "English mission" include M. Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558–1829* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); P. Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, 3 vols. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1963), vol. 3.

convenient “legal fictions,” for many people these narratives became genuine “objects of belief” enabling them to “explain to themselves [...] how things could have got so bad without the monarch herself becoming a tyrant.”⁴³ But Copley’s text repeatedly invites a simultaneous identification of Elizabeth with Doblessa. Here, Copley pursues a path opened up by Spenser, who included apparent allusions to Elizabeth in his portrayal of *Lucifera*—suggesting the *potential* for Elizabeth’s court to be the location of pride and corruption.⁴⁴ Doblessa is the female leader of Sion’s enemies; she presides over the torture and death of captured Sionites (sig.L2v), while insisting on her benignity (sig. [K4]r). A Catholic reader could hardly avoid seeing resemblances with the actual queen. Stating that the murdered Sionites had come to “doe th’unkind Doblessa [in particular] so much good,” or that she “Would neuer yet beleuee, nor gree their grace / But still persisteth in her wretchednesse” (sig.K2v) reflects the rhetoric of missionaries who insisted that their very promotion of Catholicism was heartfelt loyalty, and also makes more sense as allusions to an actual Protestant monarch than to abstract Protestantism. As Spenser’s *Duessa* is the Roman church, but is also the Catholic Mary Stuart, Doblessa is Protestantism—but, uneasily, she is also Elizabeth. Yet as they prepare for Doblessa’s attack, Catechrysius sighs, “Oh that Eliza were / A Sionite today to see this geere” (sig.K4v), again separating the two. This sporadic slippage between Elizabeth/Eliza/Doblessa partly echoes the way “evil counsellor” literature could slip into direct criticism of the monarch;⁴⁵ its other liability was that the queen could end up “reduced to a mere cypher [...] alternately duped and cowed.”⁴⁶ Copley, however, by juxtaposing two possible figures for Elizabeth but refusing to fix on either, suggests that it lies in Elizabeth’s choice to be Eliza or Doblessa.⁴⁷

However, even the characterization of Eliza contains ambivalence. When Catechrysius calls “great Elizabeth” the

43. Lake, *Bad Queen Bess*, especially chapters 3, 5, 14; quotations at page 187.

44. S. N. Greenfield, *The Ends of Allegory* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 38–42, 81–82.

45. Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?* 72, 73.

46. Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?* 131.

47. A detail adding to this is the above-noted double use of the “phoenix”: if the knight is to choose whether to emulate Revenge’s type of phoenix, or Catechrysius’s, by implication so must Elizabeth.

Sweet Name that all mens tongues and pennes inableth,
 Sweet Sound that all mens sences lullabieth,
 Sweet Marle that all the world imbatteneth. (sig.I2r)

he echoes his own address to Christ:

Without thy grace my speech is all but aire
 And barraine Marle; it batteneth not the ground:
 It is thy grace that soysoneth all affaire
 That holie grace that floweth from thy wounds [...]
 (sig.H[2]r)

Words without Christ's power are "barren marle," a theologically uncontroversial proposition; but Elizabeth's name is "sweet marle," which "imbatteneth" the world. The text seems to equate Elizabeth's name with divine grace, which, taken at face-value, would be blasphemy. Creating this blasphemy is part of the irony with which Copley characterizes Eliza. In the final stanzas, "a Virgin in bright maiestie" appears over the ranks of Sion (sig.M1v). She is "invested in Orient-splender / As God's omnipotence and Loue could lend her"; she is "the Patronesse of Sion, and the Advocate / Of grace and mercie unto mortall men" (sig.M1v). Finally, she "showr'd downe Roses most odoriferous" (sig.M2r). By now, the reader is probably expecting the Virgin Mary—although the "Argument" identifies this woman as "the Grace of God" (sig.A4v). The knight has found her another name: "still I call'd upon Elizas name / Thinking those Roses hers, that figure hers" (sig.M2v). But it is not Eliza's, any more than Eliza's name can equal God's grace, and Catechrysius tells him, with "teares of the zeale he bare t'Elizas name," that "No; she was an Esterne Dame" (sig.M2v). This (as Monta says)⁴⁸ suggests the "Woman clothed with the sun" of Revelation, often identified with the Virgin Mary; but, primarily, she is not Eliza.

Monta concluded that "The displacement of the world's virgin by an eternal one is an apt metaphor for the poem's often contradictory articulation of would-be loyalism alongside an argument for Catholic supremacy."⁴⁹ Reid, however, observes that for Copley "Secular loyalty was not enough [...]"

48. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 109.

49. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 109.

amount of love for Queen Elizabeth could ever place her in the heavenly role [...] held by the Virgin Mary”;⁵⁰ displacing the eternal virgin in favour of a worldly one is the cause of conflict (not vice versa). The knight’s devotion to Eliza has gone so far that he cannot distinguish her from God’s grace. By pushing Eliza’s praise to the point of blasphemy, Copley suggests that the entire cult of Elizabeth, including as expressed by Spenser, smacks of idolatry. It is the strategy of *reductio ad absurdum*.

This invites the conclusion that Copley’s loyalist panegyric is satirical. Copley, as Knapp says, in “rewriting the first book of *The Faerie Queene* [...] decides that Elizium and Fairyland represent one and the same heresy.”⁵¹ Monta’s 2005 reading of conflicted loyalism suggested that Copley rejects “Eliza” in spite of himself, rather than intentionally undermining loyal imagery. I think Copley deliberately beckons his readers towards an interpretation of inherent conflict between being an Elizian and being a Sionite, being English and being Catholic; but he does not intend them to stay there.

4.

A Fig for Fortune’s satire is real, but is not its core. Copley points toward a resolution of the tensions he highlights. Crucial to Copley’s imagining of England is the knight’s identity: presenting him to the ruler of Sion, Catechrysius declares on the knight’s behalf, “My name, my nation and conversion” (sig. K4v). In order to understand how Copley’s critique of Protestant, “Elizian” Englishness serves his alternative interpretation, all three of these (conversion, name, nation) need to be considered.

In a poem ostensibly about persecution rather than religious conversion, mention of the knight’s “conversion” raises the question of what he has converted from.⁵² An answer is offered by the characterization of the two evil women who dominate the two parts of the poem: Doblessa and Fortune. Fortune is the fickle goddess against whom Cato and Revenge rail, and against whom Catechrysius teaches genuine resistance, a common allegory for the vicissitudes of worldly

50. Reid, 400.

51. Knapp, 85.

52. Monta, in “Introduction,” addresses the theme of the knight as convert (42), though her *Martyrdom and Literature* (102–04,106) discussed only persecution.

prosperity and disaster. Doblessa, representing Protestantism (and possibly Elizabeth I), attacks Sion in the poem's closing section. But the Argument tells us that Sion is defended against "the insults of Fortune; whome I have titled by the name of Doblessa."⁵³ So there is one villainess: Doblessa stands for Fortune, and—by implication—both stand for Protestantism. This lends support to readings of the poem's first section as a veiled complaint against persecution, and that is one inescapable resonance;⁵⁴ and Copley dedicated the poem to Viscount Montague, a Catholic who had suffered a certain amount of harassment after refusing compliance with the state church.⁵⁵ But the text also encourages other interpretations. For most of the poem, Copley refers to Fortune as Fortune, the alias Doblessa first appearing just before the description of Sion (sig.I2v). Identifying Doblessa as Fortune in the Argument, and then using her to characterize Protestantism, does not only provide cover for complaints about persecution; it enables Copley to elide slavery to Fortune with slavery to heresy (Protestantism).

Conversion implies that the knight is one thing at the poem's beginning and becomes something different by its end. Copley opens *A Fig for Fortune* similarly to the *Faerie Queene* (1.1.1–3): in the midst of a situation, the knight riding through a strange country. But while Spenser explains that the Redcrosse Knight is on a quest given him by Gloriana, Copley's knight has no quest: he is looking merely for "a propitious place, / where I might sit and descant of annoy" (sig.B1r). His first thought on seeing Catechrysius is that they might "Complaine in common our calamytie" (sig.D4r); he realizes only later that Catechrysius's are tears of devotion, not melancholy.

If he is an exile rather than a knight errant, we are not even told *why* the knight is exiled: he is "an Elizian outcast of Fortune" (Argument, sig.A4r). According to himself, he is "exil'd from Ioy" (sig.B1r), "faire Fortune" having "altered to disgrace." There is no indication at this point that he suffers for a cause, religious or otherwise. Cato and Revenge do not focus on justifying

53. Similarly, the "Letter to Raleigh" appended to Spenser's *Faerie Queene* identifies Gloriana and her realm with Elizabeth I and England. Copley, though, refrains from naming Elizabeth or England even in the Argument. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 716.

54. Cf. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 100–11, 101, 103, 106.

55. See M. C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), for Viscount Montague.

violence in a good cause. Cato laments his country's fate, but his main preoccupation is the loss of personal glory.

Revenge's villains are also personal enemies. Her exemplars include Caesar, who avenged "Pompey's scornfull altitude": vengeance ensured that "His sute deni'd him by the Senate-house, / Did cause me make him Rome-Emperious" (sig.C2r). The aim of revenge is Fortune's "despight" (sig.C3r), the pleasure of victory rather than of justice: "At least to die in well appeased wrath / And in suruiue of all thine enemies / Is stateley dying" (sig.D1v). If Cato and Revenge have read the knight correctly (and he acknowledges that Revenge's argument is "consonant to Nature," sig.D2r), he is a victim of evil Fortune meaning evil fortune—not necessarily Fortune meaning Protestant persecution.

Catechrysius makes similar assumptions. His consolatory discourse ranges through injunctions against suicide or vengeance, exhortations to transcend fortune, judgment day, some stanzas evoking martyrdom, ten stanzas on Christ's passion, and others on the Crucifix. Catechrysius interrupts the knight's complaint to explain that suffering is the natural condition of fallen man (sig.E2r–v). Sinfulness explains why "we couet counterfeit content, / Sublime mundanitie, and our Fleshes ease" (sig.E2v). As for immediate causes, Catechrysius suggests that the knight is experiencing God's chastisement for his or his ancestors' sins, either of which he should accept; or his misfortune might be training in virtue (sig.E4r–F2r). Only then is the possibility of suffering for a good cause raised (sig.F4r–G1r). In his exhortation to transcend "mundanity," Copley may have been influenced by Robert Southwell. A number of Southwell's poems similarly portray temporal ambition as ultimately confining, and re-orientation toward celestial goals as the only escape from Fortune's whims.⁵⁶

It is briefly suggested that the knight classes himself as a principled sufferer. On first overhearing Catechrysius declare (though not *to* him) that "The man is blest that for Gods justice sake / Sustaines with Patience reproch and ruth," the knight's

[...] heart exulted in my breast,
A faire presaging weale unto my woe;

56. Robert Southwell, *Collected Poems*, ed. P. Davidson and A. Sweeney (Manchester: Fyfield Books, 2007), especially 44–45, 56–58; cf. Monta, "Introduction," 34.

For why I was not vulgarlie distrest
 But, for a cause that bore an honest showe (sig.D4v–E1r)

But that is the first hint of this; and it is not how Catechrysius generally treats him. When Catechrysius closes his prayer on the knight's behalf asking that he may

[...] in this holie Cittie Sions light
 Abide, and faithfullie beleuee this Theame
Happie all that suffer for our Lord,
For he to such his heauen will afford (sig.H1r)

it is more aspirational than descriptive.

At Sion's gate, Catechrysius says the knight is "a Catechumen"—not a Sionite (sig.[I4]v); later the knight repeats that he is "a Catechumen / As yet ungrac'd with his alhallowed hand" (sig.[K4]v); a catechumen means a convert receiving instruction, but not yet formally initiated. The "high sacrificator" "applauds" the knight's journey to Sion, "Blessing my on-gate from Doblessa's fraud" (sig.[K4]v). Only as the poem closes does the knight consider himself "Be-Sioned against misfortune" (sig.M2v). *A Fig for Fortune* can credibly be read as a Catholic conversion narrative.

If Doblessa is Fortune, a convert from Doblessa (Protestantism) is a convert from Fortune, or from what is repeatedly referred to as "Mundanitie."⁵⁷ Linking moral conversion with confessional conversion was not atypical. The second was expected to include the first, but the first was also hoped to facilitate the second; sincerely orienting his soul to God would enable a person to see the truth.⁵⁸ Eliding these two kinds of conversion also connects the opposing religion with irreligious worldliness,⁵⁹ something Copley certainly intends. The knight, enveloped in the ambitions and frustrations of mundanity, was an

57. Copley, *A Fig for Fortune*, sigs.E2v, F[1]v, H[2]r, [H4]v, I1v.

58. V. Houlston, "Why Robert Persons Would Not Be Pacified: Edmund Bunny's Theft of the Book of Resolution," in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. T. M. McCoog (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1996), 159–77.

59. For example, the author's conversion in John Genning's *Life and Death of Edmund Geninges* (1614): Lucy Underwood, *Childhood, Youth and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 122–23.

involuntary “outcast of Fortune” before becoming a convert from Dobllessa’s fraud. Fortune and Dobllessa, worldliness and heresy, are two names for the same Babylonian whore.

Lord Montague, too, could plausibly be described as a “convert”—not from Protestantism but from conformity to open, recusant⁶⁰ Catholicism. Montague’s conversion was precipitated by worldly disaster: his firstborn son’s death just before the glittering, socialite, Protestant christening Montague had planned.⁶¹ Montague’s example illustrates how permeable the categories of convert and non-convert were. Whether a person’s spiritual journey was described as “conversion” to Catholicism could depend on how he chose to narrate it, as much as on objective criteria.⁶² Reading *A Fig for Fortune* as a conversion narrative is not mutually exclusive with reading it as a persecution narrative; Copley may intend both.⁶³ However, the conversion element is crucial to his construction of Fortune and Elizium.

As a convert, the Elizian knight learns that Fortune—worldly struggles—are just not *worth* it. This is the literal meaning of the poem’s title. “Not to give a fig” for something was to rate it very low: with an incongruous flippancy, Copley’s religio-political epic is called *Stuff Fortune* (and that omits the phrase’s obscene connotations). This succinctly (if irreverently) summarizes Catechrysius’s homily, but—given the instability of his allegories—it raises the question of what else Copley is saying “Stuff” to. Dobllessa? Protestantism? Certainly. Queen Elizabeth? If she insists, just perhaps. The knight’s “conversion” indicates that his problem was not that he was a Sionite in Elizium (i.e., a Catholic in England), but that he was *not*. He was only an Elizian.

The knight’s conversion thus has implications for his “nation.” He is exiled from his home, later named as Elizium; Elizium is claimed by Cato and Revenge as the reward for their (worldly) aspirations. The knight’s nation becomes the location for the mundanity that has proved disastrous to him, temporally and

60. Recusancy meant conscientious (and illegal) refusal to attend Church of England services.

61. Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, 234–38. Montague later refused Protestant baptism for his next child, saying he believed this tragedy had been a divine judgment.

62. See for example Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lucy Underwood, “Youth, Religious Identity and Autobiography at the English Colleges in Rome and Valladolid, 1592–1685,” *Historical Journal* 55:2 (2012): 349–74.

63. See Monta, “Introduction,” 42–43.

spiritually. Knapp observes that Copley inverts the literary trope used by some Elizabethan poets, of portraying England's material smallness and "trifling" nature—for example, in contrast to the wealth of Spain—as signifying a truer greatness. Copley suggests that the Elizians are really the worldly ones.⁶⁴ The knight's journey, then, may be the rejection of Elizium, in order to become a "man of Sion" (sig.[K4]v); the rejection of England for the Catholic Church. In relation to this possibility, the textual identification of the knight—exactly when and how he is described as "Elizian" or as English—is key to Copley's construction of England and Elizium.

The knight-narrator is first identified as an Elizian when Catechrysius addresses him, "Welcome (Elizian-man)" (sig.E1r); the knight confirms that he was "brought up on fayre Elizas bankes" (sig.E1v). But what is an Elizian? The Argument identifies the narrator as an Elizian and Elizium as Eliza's realm, but this is the first use of *Elizian* in the poem itself. *Elizium* has appeared: meaning, as noted, the pagan paradise offered by the tempters Cato and Revenge. Since Eliza is first named four lines later when Catechrysius observes how rarely "Eliza's subjectes" now pass his way (sig.E1r), the only prior connection for *Elizian* is the hitherto negative one of *Elizium*; Catechrysius's subsequent praise of Eliza's realm constitutes a distinct shift (and is itself ambiguous).

"Elizian-man" is next used during Catechrysius's multi-faceted sermon, when discussing the pain of having "thy name defam'd among the just" (sig.G1r). Highlighting Elizian identity here indicates that the knight's fellow-Elizians are "among the just." But Catechrysius's remedy again limits their virtue: one should consider "the sand-blind errors even of justest men / How much from Gods intuitie they differ," and "Blesse God who sees thee inly what thou art" (sig.G1v). The Elizians' judgments err because (like those of the great pagans) they are those *only* of "the justest men," unaided by divine insight.

The angel who invests the knight with heavenly armour also calls him "Elizian"; offering a crucifix, he says "Hold heer (Elizian-man) thy Sauours image" (sig.H3v), suggesting both that Christ is Elizium's saviour, and that the knight continues to be Elizian in his new status as a Christian soldier. This balances Catechrysius's exclamation: "O Elizian / See what it is to be a Christian" (sig.I1v), which implies contrast, if not contradiction. Catechrysius's

64. Knapp, 84–85.

comparison of Elizium to Sion (sigs.I1v–I2v, and see above) follows this claiming of the knight as Christian.

“Elizian” next appears as a hindrance at Sion’s door: the porter “was t’admit in no Elizian.” This statement closes the stanza, as it apparently closes a door. But in the following stanza, Catechrysius gains the knight admission, describing him as a “Catechumen.” We are not told whether he denies he is an Elizian, but this stanza ends “The Temple gates were fower and this was it / Which none but Europe-spirits might admit.” This isolated use of “Europe” is striking, particularly juxtaposed with the rejection of Elizians. It seems to denote that the four gates admit different kinds of people (different races?) and Elizians—the English—come under Europe. But the connotation is that entry to Sion depends on Elizians accepting their place among the other nations of Christendom, or Europe. Later, the ruler of Sion “wept for joy that an Elizian / Would come to be of his Metropolitan” (sig.[K4]v). Again, this permits an Elizian identity within Sion, while connoting an international or supra-national identity: the “high Sacrificator’s” “metropolitan” jurisdiction embraces multiple realms.

Copley invokes a “cosmopolitan” view of nationhood: Brian Lockey has explored how Catholic writers, including English ones, imagined nations as part of a “Christian commonwealth,” which limited the authority of individual secular rulers. The ecclesiastical hierarchy, under the pope, manifested the religious authority that maintained this supra-national Christian nation. It was a vision opposed to the royal supremacy by which a secular prince “usurped” spiritual authority within his particular realm, and to an insular national identity. Lockey has argued that, with modifications, such concepts crossed confessional divides to influence Protestants such as John Harington and Anthony Munday.⁶⁵ They were also a powerful component of English Catholic constructions of nationhood.⁶⁶

In *A Fig for Fortune*, the knight is twice described as “English,” momentarily breaking the allegory. Spenser, towards the end of *The Faerie Queene* book 1, also breaks the identification between Elizabeth’s England and Gloriana’s realm

65. Brian Lockey, *Early Modern Catholics, Royalists and Cosmopolitans: English Transnationalism and the Christian Commonwealth* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); cf. Brian Lockey, “‘Equitie to measure’: The Perils of Imperial Imitation in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10.1 (2010): 52–70, especially 60–62.

66. Cf. Highley, 168–80.

by introducing the “real” equivalent: the hermit Contemplation tells Redcrosse that he is really St. George, and therefore English. He ended up in “Faery lond” because he is a “changeling” (*Faerie Queene* 1.10.50–57). Redcrosse exclaims, “Thou hast my name and nation redd aright, / And taught the way that does to heaven bownd!” (*Faerie Queene* 1.10.57): Copley’s similar phrasing—Catechrysius declares “My [the knight’s] name, my nation, and conversion”—indicates how he follows Spenser, but makes his own use of the “reality” behind his metaphor.

Catechrysius, who introduced the term “Elizian,” calls the knight “dear Englishman” as he begins his lecture on patience (sig.E2r): “Englishman” is used as the knight is drawn out of his obsession with exile from Elizium. The second use belongs to the ruler of Sion. The stanza which closes “He wept for joy that an Elizian / would come to be of his Metropolitan” (see above) is followed by the knight’s enrolment in Sion’s defending army, and this stanza ends “And for I was an English-Ilander / He [the “high sacrificator”] prickt me down under Saint *Georges* banner” (sig.K[4]v).⁶⁷ Replacing the *alias* with its referent questions the allegory as much as reinforces it. “Elizian” may be one possible allegory of Englishness, but being a real Englishman means fighting for Sion. Catholicism enables the knight to supersede the limited values of “Elizium,” discovering a truer English identity within “Sion.”

We are never told the knight’s own name. Rather than confront Spenser’s St. George with his own, Copley makes his knight an English *follower* of St. George. Omitting a personal name, and thus offering the narrator as a universal figure each reader can identify with, may be part of Copley’s attempt to reach beyond allegory.⁶⁸ He is not weaving a fantasy (however didactic) about St. George; he is tracing a spiritual path for actual Englishmen. The withholding of a personal name may also imply that *English and Sionite* is offered as a sufficient identification in itself.

Copley’s interweaving of “nation” and “conversion” establishes a correspondence between Elizium and England, but deliberately destabilizes it,

67. Monta, in *Martyrdom*, argued that the Temple porter’s non-admission of Elizians indicates the “stark” “supremacy of spiritual loyalties,” and “raises the question of whether transfigured zeal can exist [...] without [...] affecting political behaviour” (106). In contrast, Monta, in her “Introduction,” now notes that “[...] the pope allows knights to retain, even celebrate, their national identities as they enter the church. [...] Sion does not obviate but welcomes national identities, national saints” (56).

68. See further, Monta, “Introduction,” 42–43.

and this combines with both positive and negative portrayals of Elizium. *A Fig for Fortune* suggests that Protestant England may be the realm of Fortune's caprice and Dobllessa's malice; but Protestant England is not the only England.

5.

If that is Copley's resolution to the Sion/Elizium/England problem, it is a controversial one. One may also ask whether—as a solution to the problem of being Catholic in Elizabethan England—it has coherence.

The close of *A Fig for Fortune* has been commented on as the epitome of Copley's controversial resolution. The heavenly lady and the knight's error raise the possibility that his devotion to Eliza blinds him to the Grace of God. Copley's implicit accusation of blasphemy would not be surprising. Not only did Catholics draw attention to similarities between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and panegyric to Elizabeth, accusing English Protestants of hypocrisy and blasphemy,⁶⁹ but the Royal Supremacy could be seen as idolatrous; the monarch's claim to exclusive authority, spiritual as well as temporal, claimed the place of God—hence Copley's "Her owne behest [Dobllessa] did Idolatrize" (sig.K3v). Disabused of his mistake, the knight returns to Elizium still blessing Eliza's name, but firmly identified with Sion's victory over Dobllessa (Protestantism). Monta observed that Copley's solution to religious conflict, the victory of Sion, "is not an argument that Elizabethan officials would have been likely to recognize as loyalist."⁷⁰ But Copley's poem is constructed to challenge the idea that Elizabethan officials' definition of loyalty is the only possible one.

Copley opens possibilities for the knight's continued Elizium identity. The Argument leaves the knight in error: "the Grace of God [...] showr'd down Roses amongst them [...] and for he thought it was his soueraigne Ladie Eliza, and those Roses hers, he was suddenly in ioy therof rapt home againe to Elizium" (sig.A4v)—and away from Sion. His return "home" resolves his initial exiled state, but he has also condemned himself to achieve no more than a pagan can promise.

69. Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), *passim*. Hackett argues that Elizabethan panegyric with similarities to Marian imagery is not primarily an attempt at replacement; however, Catholics made the accusation (207–09).

70. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 109.

The poem itself ends slightly differently. Catechrysius reluctantly corrects the knight (sig.M2v). The knight then “cast mine eye into the East,” but all that is left is the after-glow of the lady’s presence: “Oh, deer God / Why made she not with us more long abod” (Sig.M2v), the knight wonders. Perhaps the knight, deluded into giving Eliza the homage due to the “grace of God,” drove grace away. But the knight returns to Elizium “be-Sioned against misfortune” and “wrapt in virgin Roses” (sig.M2v): although his last, Elizian error has deprived him of the sight of “Grace,” he has her gifts, and, no longer attributing to Eliza what is God’s, he can safely pray “God blesse the same [Eliza]” (sig.M2v). As for his motive, “importune / Of home-ward zeale, and of Elizas name” induces him to leave “these reposes” (sig.M2v). This lexical choice is odd, given that Sion’s walls have just been a battle-site; but it characterizes Sion as the place of rest and preparation, and his home (no proper noun is used here) as the site of action. At the knight’s reception into Sion, he was “sanctified with a holie salve” (sig.[K4]v); this recalls the sacrament of confirmation, but also that of ordination, creating the possibility that the knight has become a priest, one of those risking Doblessa’s fury to “do her good.” He can return home blessing Eliza because he is now a Sionite and an English-islander of St. George. England is only incompatible with Sion when it is made into Elizium: that is, the pagan paradise Elysium in competition with the Christian “New Jerusalem.”

One could argue that, while disturbing myths of Protestant England with audacious Catholic imagery, Copley leaves the practical dilemma unresolved. None of this tells Catholics what to do when Elizabeth’s government and the Catholic Church demand contradictory things. Copley’s own career has been used to illustrate this: Monta discussed both Copley’s loyalist/Appellant affinities and his fighting for Spain in the Netherlands, for which he was imprisoned—obtaining freedom by informing against fellow-Catholics.⁷¹ With the Bye Plot (see above) Copley turned to treason; when the plot was revealed through other Catholics (notably supporters of the Jesuits), Copley confessed everything he knew, escaped hanging, and was banished.⁷² Reid avoids an interpretation of chronic conflict between religion and nation, arguing that Copley constructed

71. Monta, *Martyrdom*, 100–11, especially 102, 109–10.

72. Graves, “Thomas Copley (1532–1584),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, online), doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6273; McCann, “The known style of a dedication is flattery”; Mark Nicholls, “Treason’s Reward: The Punishment of Conspirators in the Bye Plot of 1603,” *Historical Journal* 38.4 (1995): 821–42; Monta, “Introduction,” 9–22.

a paradigm of loyalty to church and state, but not to the excessive demands of either. His idea of loyalty was not inconsistent just because it coincided only sometimes with the ideas of Protestant officials.⁷³ Copley's confessions of 1590–91 do not indiscriminately betray Catholics; he insists on the loyalty of many Catholics exiled “for conscience” (a category the government was unwilling to admit existed), but willingly accuses conspirators and traitors.⁷⁴ Copley apologized for fighting against his queen's forces in the Dutch war, but continued to be a recusant. Even Copley's treason stopped short of attempting to kill or dethrone the monarch, and therefore did not entirely contravene his loyalist ideals.⁷⁵ Copley's life does not necessarily demonstrate the impossibility of his literary project.

Furthermore, poets rarely provide practical instructions for individual decisions. Spenser suggests many things about dangers for Elizabeth's polity, or causes she should espouse, but he does not detail the correct policies, still less what becomes of his critical loyalty if Elizabeth does not follow them.⁷⁶ Copley does not explain exactly how Catholics should respond to each political dilemma that may arise as long as Elizabeth I declines to become a Sionite. What he does is to redraw the imaginative parameters. He constructs a provocative, alternative paradigm: one in which tensions between national and religious loyalty are created by the excesses of Elizabethan Protestantism, and in which England's true nature is to be part of the Roman pontiff's flock.

Copley's uses of Sion are challenging because they go beyond debating Catholics' loyalty. Two of the other works Knapp quotes, which used the Eliza/Elizium trope in loyalist allegory, made a link with “Fairyland” also found in Copley. According to Knapp, “in equating Elizium with Fairyland the Catholic Copley only seconds the Protestants Dekker and Weever,” though responding to

73. Reid, “Copley.”

74. Hadfield and Dimmock, “Drant and Copley,” 51–52; J. Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion ...[...] and other various occurrences in the Church of England*, 4 vols. (London, 1725), 4:9–11, 4:277–82, for Copley's 1590 statements (the second mis-listed under 1596); K. Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011), 84–142.

75. Reid, 411–12.

76. See A. Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170–201; A. Hadfield, “Duessa's Trial and Elizabeth's Error: Judging Elizabeth in Spenser's *Fairie Queene*,” in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. S. Doran and T. S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 56–76.

the notion negatively.⁷⁷ But Weever's *Epigrams* appeared in 1599, and Dekker's play *Old Fortunatus* in 1600 (the latter was first performed in 1596 but, since *A Fig for Fortune* was entered with the Stationers' Company in January 1595/96, probably did not pre-date it; and the original *Old Fortunatus* did not certainly include the Elizium references).⁷⁸ Copley cannot have been "seconding" Dekker and Weever; if anything, it seems they were "seconding," or replying to, him. Their need to reclaim Elizium may testify to Copley's effectiveness; Knapp's assumption (despite the chronology) that a Catholic writer must be "seconding" Protestant writers is revealing of the interpretative framework that has dominated English literary criticism.

6.

Cumulatively, *A Fig for Fortune* suggests that, like Cato's Roman pride and patriotism, Elizian devotion is all very well in its place. Cato's virtue tips into damnation when he fails to see beyond it, making worldly fame the end goal of life and death. If one makes Elizium, or England, its own consummation, binding spiritual and physical existence within the bounds of one human state, devotion to it becomes idolatry—and further, it is no longer truly England. Elizium is not enough; and only a damned pagan could think it was.

Copley's response to *The Faerie Queene* does not succeed in showing how to be loyally English despite being Catholic; instead, it proposes that one is truly English *because* of Catholicism. The heresy of Elizabeth's polity compromises its Englishness. Alertness to this radical re-imagining is crucial to understanding not only the Catholic constructions of English national identity with which Copley engaged, but the inter-dependency of Protestant and Catholic narratives of nationhood.

A Fig for Fortune does not tell us exactly what its English Sionite knight does in Elizium. The suggested response is to convert Elizium to Sion, a

77. Knapp, 86.

78. David Kathman, "Weever, John (1575/6–1632)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 25 April 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28971>; John Weever, *Epigrammes in the oldest cut, and newest fashion* (London, 1599, STC2 25224) sig.B1v; Thomas Dekker, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. Bowers, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953–61), 1:107–08; Arber, *A transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London ...* 5 vols. (London, 1875–77), 3:57.

righteously inoffensive Catholic stance—though no more acceptable to the Elizabethan state than rebellion, and not rigidly adhered to by all English Catholics. But then, as a poet, Copley was not obliged to guarantee the practical results of his literary creation. What he did was to present his readers—Catholic and Protestant—with a potent, alternative, “imagined England.”