

Spring 2012

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The Redemptive Act of Reading:
Richard Crashaw & the Teresean Liturgy

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Senior Thesis

13 May 2012

In the preface to *Catholic Liturgy: It's fundamental principles*, the French Benedictine monk Gaspar Lefebvre considers the liturgy in terms of the relationship between body and soul:

Others again, without going so far, are content to look upon the liturgy as simply the organization of exterior and public worship paid by the Church to God – the carrying out *in extenso* of her rubrics and ceremonies, intended only for priests. To these last we reply that this is indeed the body, the visible part of the liturgy. But we must bear in mind that the liturgy has also a soul, which is invisible and for that reason, alas, too often ignored. This soul is the power of glorifying God and of sanctifying men which these objects, formulas and exterior rites possess.¹

Lefebvre explains that the liturgy, generally defined as a form of *public* worship, also involves a *private* aspect that is frequently overlooked.² While the congregation performs the prescribed motions of worship, each individual ought to experience personal transformation and the glorification of God. The “private soul of the liturgy” is the invisible, devotional spirit that should coexist with the external rites and rituals. In light of this model of the liturgy, this study analyzes a trilogy of poems written by the seventeenth-century religious poet, Richard Crashaw, that make a subtle comparison between the act of reading Saint Teresa of Ávila and the Christian liturgy.

Crashaw wrote the Saint Teresa trilogy between 1646 and 1652 during his gradual conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. The poems celebrate the state of ecstatic sacred love experienced by Saint Teresa de Ávila. The three poems entitled, “The Hymne,” “An Apologie for the fore-going Hymne” and “The Flaming Heart” were greatly influenced by the writings of this Spanish mystic; namely the *Vida*, her autobiography. This text was written before 1567 and provides a history of her life and first hand accounts of her

¹ Gaspar Lefebvre, *The Catholic Liturgy: It's Fundamental Principles*, trans. Benedictine of Stanbrook. (England: Staples Printers Limited, 1924), p. 11.

² “liturgy, n.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 1.

moments in ecstatic rapture. A second text, *El Castillo Interior* written in 1577, elaborates further the perfection of prayer through the metaphor of the soul as a castle containing seven mansions. J.M. Cohen's description of Saint Teresa in his introduction to *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila* as a "self-willed and *hysterically* unbalanced woman" strangely resembles John Richard Roberts' comment on Crashaw as a "hysterical poet."³⁴ The quality of hysteria is an uncontrollable emotion transmitted through experience, a medium of acquiring spiritual knowledge that is praised by Saint Teresa and Richard Crashaw.

While several critics dismiss Crashaw's tender verse as "indigestible," "perverse," "shocking" and "foreign," a few others, such as Kimberly Johnson, call him a neglected gem among the group of authors, such as John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell and Henry Vaughn, that are frequently referred to as the "metaphysical poets."⁵ In the essay "Note on Richard Crashaw," T.S. Eliot elevates Crashaw's overall poetic performance above the two esteemed romantics, Keats and Shelley. Eliot notes that the image of the speaker in Crashaw's "The Teare" who yearns to bring a pillow "stuffed with Downe of Angels wing" to the head of a tear is "almost the quintessence of an immense mass of devotional verse of the seventeenth century" that gives "a kind of intellectual pleasure" and sounds "a deliberate conscious perversity of language...like that of the amazing...impressive interior of St. Peter's."⁶ While Eliot enjoys Crashaw's perversity of language, a more recent critic, Maureen Sabine praises the hidden power found in Crashaw's

³ John Richard Roberts, *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), p. 27.

⁴ Saint Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila: By Herself*. Trans. J.M. Cohen. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1957), p.26.

⁵ Kimberly Johnson, "Richard Crashaw's Indigestible Poetics." *Modern Philology* 107.1 (2009): 32-51.

⁶ T.S. Eliot, "Note on Richard Crashaw" in *For Lancelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order*. (Garden City, N.Y Doubleday, 1929), p. 134-135. This essay helped to institutionalize the view first expounded by Mario Praz that Crashaw is the representative poet of the European baroque spirit.

feminine sensibility: “The male critical preference for the tougher and supposedly more virile stance of a poet such as John Donne has been challenged by readers who sense that the weak man’s feminine ways may contain hidden power.”⁷ The dichotomy of critical reception and esteem of his “perversity” and “feminine sensibility” are still under much debate.

Nevertheless, the great influence of Saint Teresa on Crashaw is exemplified in the trilogy. This essay analyzes the use of liturgical elements to describe the act of reading, which develops a unique type of ‘Teresean Liturgy.’ The relationship between the liturgy and seventeenth-century poetry is the main investigation of A.B. Chambers’ *Transfigured Rites in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. Chambers affirms that “as seventeenth-century poets make both abundantly and gloriously clear, the psalms and hymns of the church are often most wonderful when transfigured by personal devotion and heard within the temple of the heart.”⁸ The presence of the liturgy in the Saint Teresa trilogy, for once, shows Crashaw participating in an “English” predisposition, rather than a “foreign” one, alongside other poets such as Herbert, Vaughan, Donne, Milton and Crashaw. Another point made by Chambers regards the mode of liturgical poetry as “the simultaneous utterance of a private self and of a public congregation”⁹ The Saint Teresa trilogy reinforces the distinguishing union of the private self and the public congregation of liturgical poetry in the metaphor of reading, traditionally a *private* act, as a Teresean liturgy, a *public* form of devotion. Part one of this study establishes the connection between the practice of reading and the “body” of the liturgy in the first poem of the trilogy. “The Hymne” applies some external liturgical

⁷ Maureen Sabine, “Richard Crashaw: The Poetry Foundation.” *The Poetry Foundation*.

⁸ *Transfigured Rites in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. p. 4.

⁹ A.B. Chambers, *Transfigured Rites in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), p. 1.

elements, such as the tabernacle and the use of incense, to the interaction between Saint Teresa and her readers. Part two focuses on the second and third poems, “An Apologie” and “The Flaming Heart,” that greatly emphasize the redemptive “soul” of the Teresean liturgy. The second includes a Teresean sermon and sacramental wine, while the third exercises the use of anaphora from the Litany of the Book of Common Prayer. Part three looks at structural patterns and progressions that are made throughout the trilogy. In general, the subtle comparison between reading and the liturgy allows Crashaw to exalt the transformative power found in reading the spiritual writings of Saint Teresa.

Part 1. Establishment of the Teresean Liturgy in “The Hymne”

The first poem in the Saint Teresa trilogy, “A Hymne to the name and honor of the admirable Saint Teresa,” was published in the 1646 edition of Crashaw’s collection entitled *Steps to the Temple*. This title invokes a collection of religious poems called *The Temple* that were published just thirteen years before by George Herbert. The main theme of “The Hymne” is the union between martyrdom and mysticism. Austin Warren observes that the two themes grow into one: “to live the mystical life is to die, not in a moment, but throughout life – to die at the hand not of an enemy but of a lover.”¹⁰ Since the religious ecstasies of Saint Teresa involve both spiritual torment and pleasure, Crashaw dramatizes the moments of rapture as a series of spiritual deaths that occur during earthly life and unite the saint’s roles as mystic and martyr. This union originates in the descriptions of spiritual ecstasy found in the *Vida*, the autobiography of Saint Teresa: “One seems to be on the point of death; only the agony carries with it so great a joy...It is a harsh yet sweet martyrdom.”¹¹

¹⁰ Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility*. (Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1939), p. 146.

¹¹ *The Life of Saint Teresa*. p. 140.

The poem shows how the life of a mystic involves a series of earthly deaths that foreshadow a final and eternal union with God. This reading of “The Hymne” focuses on the dramatization of the act of reading about the mysticism of Saint Teresa as a Christian mass through the uniquely liturgical elements of the tabernacle, the Church building, the congregation, the use of incense, and the Eucharist.

The three-part structure of the poem follows the life of Saint Teresa chronologically from early childhood up to her entry into heaven. The concluding lines envision the moment during which Saint Teresa walks into the light and up the white steps to heaven:

Thou with the Lamb, thy lord, shalt goe;
And whereso’re he settis his white
Stepps, walk with Him those ways of light
Which who in death would life to see,
Must learn in life to dy like thee. (178-182)¹²

This bright scene of Saint Teresa and Christ walking up the white steps to eternal life functions as a catalyst for readers, or those persons that aspire “in life to dy like thee.” The final emphasis of the poem highlights the opportunity of readers to learn from Saint Teresa’s personal sacrifice and devotion that have gained her the mystical experiences and eternal life. The structure of “The Hymne” reflects the theme of Saint Teresa as a medium and catalyst leading up to a shared glorification of God. The work is constructed in eighteen stanzas and the tenth stanza is the longest, consisting of twenty-eight lines. The tenth stanza describes Saint Teresa’s rare spiritual ecstasies that are precisely defined by George Walton Williams as “a union of the soul with God, which leads to intuitive knowledge of reality.”¹³ The ecstasies, described as “still-surviving funerals,” are placed in the center, thus operating

¹² Richard Crashaw, *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*. ed. George Walton Williams. (New York: New York University Press, 1972), p. 56. Further citations from the Saint Teresa trilogy will be cited from this source.

¹³ *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*. p. 56.

as the focus and turning point of the poem. Crashaw's centralizing of Teresa's ecstasies reflects the importance of Saint Teresa's ecstatic raptures and their fame in European seventeenth-century religious and artistic communities. One year after "The Hymne" was published, Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini was commissioned by Pope Innocent X to begin his sculpture *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. The central position also connects the first part of the poem, focused on her earthly life, and the third part of the poem, focused on her arrival into heaven. Just as Saint Teresa's moments of spiritual ecstasy bridge earth and heaven, so do their position in the poem.

Within the general structure, Crashaw integrates a variety of liturgical elements that convey a ceremonial tone. From the opening lines, the poem recalls the Christian mass: "Love, thou art Absolute sole lord / Of Life and Death. To prove the word" (1-2). The phrase "to prove the word" sounds like the profession of Scripture made by the priest after reading at mass. The priest says, "This is the Word of the Lord" to which the congregation responds "Thanks be to God." This verbal exchange acknowledges the authority of written Scripture. In the poem, the phrase "to prove the word" echoes the liturgical dialogue and refers to the first two lines, which state that love is stronger than life and death. The word is the strength of love and is exemplified by the life and mystical experiences of Saint Teresa.

From here, the first part discusses Saint Teresa's natural piety and early longing for martyrdom. This begins with the first stanza that employs war imagery and the soldiers convey their astonishment at the baby Saint Teresa's young, feminine religiosity. The next stanza enters the mind of young Saint Teresa who advocates for spiritual knowledge gained by experience, rather than rigorous intellectual study: "Scarse has she learn't to lisp the name / Of Martyr; yet she thinks it shame / Life should so long play with the breath" (15-

17). At a young age, she possessed an innate desire to praise Jesus Christ and confess her faith. Before her cognitive abilities have developed (“scarcely has she learn’t to lisp the name”) she intuitively that many beliefs “so long play with the breath,” or fiddle with theological doctrines, instead of simply saying, “I believe,” a phrase that “which spent can buy so brave a death.” This rejection of rational knowledge is established further in a second proposition that “Yet though she cannot tell you why, / She can Love, and she can Dy.” It is not a complete disapproval of religious intellectual vigor, but a rejection of the opinion that rational logic is mandatory in spiritual life. To know why one praises God is less important than to praise God oneself: “She never undertook to know / What death with love should have to do; / Nor has she e’er yet understood / Why to show love, she should shed blood” (19-22). Part one of the poem relays the mature immaturity of Saint Teresa’s childhood that is demonstrated by the anxious farewell to normal life caused by a mature desire for God that foreshadow her mysticism.

Beginning with the tenth stanza, part two concentrates on Saint Teresa’s ecstatic raptures. God must correct her young hastiness for early martyrdom, before she can experience mysticism:

Blest powers forbid, Thy tender life
Should bleed upon a barborous knife;
Or some base hand have power to race
Thy Brest’s chast cabinet, and uncase
A soul kept there so sweet, o no;
Wise heavn will never have it so. (69-74)

The early death of a martyr would be devastating if not directed by God who is depicted as the “Blest powers” and “Wise heav’n.” God will not allow “a barborous knife” or “some base hand” to kill Saint Teresa. It would also eliminate the chance for Saint Teresa to fulfill the aim of mystical martyrdom, which is love and eternal life. For these reasons, God “will

never have it so” that her “tender life” and sweet soul be uncased by premature death. Saint Teresa’s love and ardent devotion are actively directed at God, while her will and vows are passive to God’s bidding.

Now that Saint Teresa has surpassed her stage of immaturity, the act of reading about her mature experiences of spiritual ecstasy is conveyed in external liturgical terms. The descriptions begin with a subtle indication from the previously cited passage that includes the image of Saint Teresa as a human tabernacle. Crashaw draws an analogy between her body and soul and the tabernacle and Holy Bread: “Thy Brest’s chast cabinet...A soul kept there so sweet.” The term “chast cabinet” describes the human dwelling place for the soul and alludes to the tabernacle. The breast of Saint Teresa that encases her sweet soul is thought of as a human tabernacle, which houses the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This represents Saint Teresa’s union with Divine presence during her moments of ecstatic rapture as written in the *Vida*. In 1559 on Saint Peter’s day, Saint Teresa had her first vision of Jesus, or what she calls locutions. She struggles to define this vision, because Jesus was not seen through the human senses:

All the time Jesus Christ seemed to be at my side, but as this was not an imaginary vision I could not see in what form. But I most clearly felt that He was all the time on my right, and was a witness of everything that I was doing.¹⁴

As indicated throughout her autobiography, the intuition of Divine presence was not uncommon in the daily life of Saint Teresa. During these habitual moments of ecstasy, the saint transcends the boundary between earth and heaven through love. Saint Teresa’s intimate union with Divine presence during the spiritual ecstasies allows Crashaw to depict her body as a human tabernacle for the Eucharist.

Next, Crashaw imagines this transcendence to occur during a funeral liturgy:

¹⁴ *The Life of Saint Teresa*, p. 188.

Thou art love's victime; and must dy
 A death more mysticall and high,
 Into love's armes thou shalt let fall
 A still-surviving funeral. (75-78)

Instead of a base hand uncasing the soul of Saint Teresa that so often enjoys Divine Presence, "wise heaven" has decided that she will now be "love's victim" and experience spiritual ecstasy, of "death" that is "more mysticall and high." Saint Teresa becomes powerless to love and falls into his arms, a type of "still-surviving funeral." The word "still" signifies the continuation of survival after the funeral and also the quietness of her soul during the mystical death. Crashaw chooses the word "funeral," a liturgical ceremony that honors the deceased, rather than "death" in order to express a ceremonial tone.

During this "still-surviving" funeral service, the hallowed breath of Saint Teresa is written by Love's dart on the roof of heaven:

His is the Dart must make the Death
 Whose stroke shall tast thy hallow'd breath
 A Dart thrice dip't in that rich flame
 Which writes thy spouse's radiant Name
 Upon the roof of Heav'n; where ay
 It shines, and with a sovereign ray (77-82)

Love's dart is dipped in the rich flame of Saint Teresa's hallowed breath and writes "thy spouses radiant Name" on the roof of heaven. Through Saint Teresa's mystical experience, her inner spirituality represented by her breath, is "hallowed" or made more blessed. Love's dart is dipped three times in the rich flame, representative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The dart, after tasting the hallowed breath of Teresa, writes thy spouses name on the roof of heaven. The phrase "thy spouse" is referred to in the autobiography as Christ. This action may symbolize Saint Teresa's suffering that is endured out of love in the name of Jesus' suffering on the Cross. The diction of the term "the roof" of heaven encloses Saint Teresa's

mystical experience in a church-like area, enclosing the devotional reading in an exclusively liturgical space.

The radiant letters of Christ's name are then read by a congregation of souls:

Upon the roof of Heav'n; where ay
It shines, and with a sovereign ray
Beates bright upon the burning faces
Of soules which in that name's sweet graces
Find everlasting smiles. (81-87)

The congregation of souls finds "everlasting smiles" in reading Christ's name upon the roof of heaven. The words of her hallowed breath shine "with a sovereign ray" and "beates bright upon the burning faces / of soules" in heaven. The reception of her martyrdom is felt by the souls with "burning faces" instead of being understood by the intellect. This is found in "that name's sweet graces" which most likely refers to Saint Teresa, for the word "name" is not capitalized. Thus, the souls are raised to a higher spiritual state through her "sweet graces" or spiritual writings. The writing of Christ's name on the roof of heaven is a metaphor for her body of works that praise Jesus Christ. This condensation of her writings into "thy spouse's radiant Name" constitute a Church-like ritual during which the souls read her name and are transformed into candidates for Redemption in Christ and eternal life.

In part three, the poem moves from the ecstatic raptures to a vision of Saint Teresa's final death. The burning of incense is associated with the consolidation of several "still-surviving funerals" into one crowning death:

When These thy Deaths, so numerous,
Shall all at last dy into one,
And melt thy Soul's sweet mansion;
Like a soft lump of incense, hasted
By too hott a fire, and wasted
Into perfuming clouds, so fast
Shalt thou exhale to Heavn at last
In a resolving Sigh, (110-117)

The phrase “thy Soul’s sweet mansion” refers to *El Castillo Interior*, Saint Teresa’s guide for spiritual development that describes the seven mansions, dwelling places that represent the seven stages of the soul that end with a final union with God. Since incense cannot be burned on its own, an outside source of heat is needed. The incense is “hasted / By too hott a fire.” Although the poem does not directly mention God as the source of this heat, it is likely that the reader is intended to make this connection. Moreover, the vision literally describes the dwelling place of Saint Teresa’s soul burned like incense by a Divine heat that is then exhaled into Heaven. In the Christian mass the burning of incense symbolizes the prayers of believers rising up to heaven. The description of the Christian symbolism by *New Advent: Catholic Encyclopedia* sounds almost exactly like Crashaw’s poem: “Incense, with its sweet-smelling perfume and high-ascending smoke, is typical of the good Christian’s prayer, which, enkindled in the heart by the fire of God’s love and exhaling the odor of Christ, rises up a pleasing offering in His sight.”¹⁵ In the poem, while the purified materials of “thy Soul’s sweet mansion” rise up to heaven, the congregation of souls, or readers, are inspired to follow close behind. The words “perfume,” “exhale,” “haste”/“enkindle” and “soul”/“heart” are present in the poem and the definition of the Christian symbolism of incense that is used during the Catholic liturgy. The poetic vision of exhaling the lump of dust from Saint Teresa inspires a congregation of readers: “The Moon of maiden starrs, thy white / Mistresse, attended by such bright Soules as thy shining self, shall come” (123-124). The Virgin Mary, “The Moon of maiden starrs,” is accompanied by a body of readers, or “bright Souls,” to welcome Saint Teresa into heaven. Thus, the bodies of readers have been transformed into a constellation of stars upon their entry into the afterlife: “Where ‘mongst her snowy family / Immortall wellcomes wait for thee” (126-128). The analogy of Saint

¹⁵ Kevin Knight, “Catholic Encyclopedia: Incense.” (*New Advent*, 2009).

Teresa's burned soul rising to heaven to form a "snowy family" of shining stars with her followers, like the smoke of incense, literalizes the Christian symbolism of the use of incense as the rising of devotional prayers.

Crashaw proceeds with the liturgical elements in the description of the kisses of Saint Teresa as "consecrated." The poem shows how the "consecrated kisses" possess a transformative power in moving the consecration of souls towards the glorification of God, and allude to the consecration of bread and wine during the Catholic mass:

O what delight, when reveal'd Life shall stand
 And teach thy lipps heav'n with his hand;
 On which thou now maist to thy wishes
 Heap up thy consecrated kisses. (129-132)

The stanza relays the influence of the life of Christ on Saint Teresa. She experienced a great "delight" when Christ "reveal'd Life" and taught "thy lipps heav'n with his hand." The phrase "reveal'd Life" is a double entendre. The word "reveal'd" can function as both an adjective and a verb. The first meaning is that the "reveal'd life" of Christ teaches heaven to the lips of Saint Teresa with his hand. The second meaning is that Christ "reveal'd" eternal life to all of humanity. The life of Christ is both an example for Saint Teresa, and the reason why she is able to eternal life. At first glance, the reader may be drawn to interpret the lines as an allusion to the Crucifixion of Christ. Since "his hands" were nailed on the cross, they could represent Jesus' pain and sacrifice on the cross; although this interpretation would not be considered a "Reveal'd life" of Christ, but rather revealed life in "death." Also, Christ does not "stand" on the cross. For these reasons, the poem most likely refers to a different moment in Christ's life, the Last Supper. This is supported by the description of Saint Teresa's love for God as "consecrated kisses," alluding to the Eucharist that was instituted at the Last Supper. The "consecration" of her kisses occurs when her eyes, now blessed, see Christ in heaven:

What joyes shall seize thy soul, when she
 Bending her blessed eyes on thee
 (Those second Smiles of Heav'n) shall dart
 Her mild rayes through thy melting heart! (133-136)

The scene envisions Saint Teresa darting the “mild rayes” of her eyes on “thy melting heart” of Christ with the accompanied “joyes” that “shall seize” her soul. The phrase “thy consecrated kisses” relates the purification of Saint Teresa’s love and dedication to God to the process of transubstantiation, established by Christ through thanksgiving and the breaking of bread. As explained by Archdale A. King in *Liturgy of the Roman Church*, it is “a *sentential catholica* that the consecration is effected by a repetition of the words uttered by our Lord at the Last Supper.”¹⁶ Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and the breaking of bread by his hands influence “thy lipps” of Saint Teresa to “heap” her “consecrated kisses.” Since the word heap denotes “to gather” or “to accumulate,” this part also echoes lines 110-11 that relate the “heaping” of spiritual ecstasies, or “thy Deaths, so numerous, / Shall all at last dy into one.” These moments of ecstatic rapture are accumulated and then consecrated upon her entry into heaven. They undergo a purification, or type of redemption, before the union with God. Overall, Crashaw’s celebration of the “consecrated kisses” reflects the celebration of the Eucharist during the Catholic liturgy, and functions as the celebration of the Ecstasy during the Teresean liturgy to celebrate in the memory of Saint Teresa.

By the end of “The Hymne,” the Teresean liturgy of the Saint Teresa trilogy is established through the dramatization of the life of Saint Teresa as a Christian mass, incorporating the strictly liturgical elements of the tabernacle, the Church building, the congregation, the burning of incense, and the Eucharist. The next poem, “An Apologie,”

¹⁶ Archdale A. King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957). p. 323.

takes a step back from the reading of Saint Teresa, and demonstrates Crashaw's reflections upon re-reading his own poem.

Part 2. "An Apologie" and "The Flaming Heart"

After the establishment of the Teresean liturgy in "The Hymne," the last two poems of the trilogy accentuate the redemptive "soul" of the act of reading. Another text by Gaspar Lefebvre, *The Spirit of Worship* ascertains that the mystery of Redemption is an integral part of the liturgy:

The liturgy is the public and official worship by which the Church avails herself of the priesthood of Christ and his mystery of redemption by means of formulas, rites and other external signs through which the Christian community is mercifully sanctified by God and renders filially to God the Father, through his divine Son and under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory.¹⁷

This definition states that the priesthood of Christ and the mystery of redemption come to praise God in all of his honor and glory during the liturgy. Likewise "An Apologie" expresses Crashaw's desire to redeem himself from the Protestant sentiments expressed in "The Hymn," while "The Flaming Heart" communicates his desire to correct a drawing of Saint Teresa in ecstatic rapture. These two poems maintain the "body" of the Teresean liturgy through the practices of the sermon, sacrament of wine and bread and the imitation of the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The second poem, officially titled "An Apologie for the fore-going Hymne as having been writt when the author was yet among the protestantes" is a short poem consisting of only two stanzas and forty-five lines. The first sixteen lines exact Crashaw's intention to correct the first poem, for writing about a Catholic saint while still associating with the

¹⁷ Gaspar Lefebvre, *The Spirit of Worship*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), p. 11.

Church of England, and also for not praising Saint Teresa enough. The opening thanks to Saint Teresa for inspiring his own religious fervor through her writings: “Thus I have back again to thy bright name / (Fair flood of holy fires!) transfus’d the flame / I took from reading thee” (1-3). The bright name signifies Saint Teresa who represents a flood, or spiritual sustenance, of holy fires, namely religious faith. This “flame” of faith is transfused into himself, simply through reading her works. While references to the writings of Saint Teresa are inferred in “The Hymne,” the writings become the principal theme of “An Apologie.”

The aim of “An Apologie” is to shed light on the enduring and all-inclusive quality of Saint Teresa’s writings: “tis to thy wrong / I know, that in my weak and worthless song / Thou here art sett to shine where thy full day / Scarse dawnes” (3-6). The image of a setting and rising sun is compared to the setting of his previous “weak and worthless song.” The new poem makes Saint Teresa shine like a full day that “scare dawnes.” This relates to the Divine light seen by Saint Teresa during her visions of Divine presence. George Walton Williams affirms that “the light of the love of God [is] incandescent in the mystic, glowing like the filament within the bulb.”¹⁸ In the poem, Crashaw conflates the natural rotation of the sun and the celestial radiance that emanates from the writings of Saint Teresa. Williams adds that the “sun is the feeble and inadequate embodiment of the light of heaven. It serves as a symbol Platonically for celestial illumination and may be regarded as a hieroglyph of the divine.”¹⁹ Apart from the sun as a suggestion of Divine revelation, Crashaw justifies the first “weak and worthless song” for recognizing the unprejudiced eloquence of love that he learned through reading Saint Teresa. With great humility and respect, Crashaw diagnoses

¹⁸ George Walton Williams, *Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1964). p. 58-59.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 59.

the central message of her works to be love: “O pardon if I dare to say / Thine own dear bookes are guilty. For them thence / I learn’t to know that love is eloquence.” Since Saint Teresa frequently admits to her own sinful human nature (“dear bookes are guilty”), it is not pure goodness that qualifies ardent faith and martyrdom, but love. The last lines of part one emphasize the all-embracing quality of the saint: “let no fond Hate / Of names and wordes, so farr prejudicate / Souls are not Spaniards too, one friendly floud / Of Baptism blends them all into a blood” (13-16). The message of Saint Teresa is universally Christian and includes all members of the church (“Baptism blends them all into a blood”), regardless of their national association (“Souls are not Spaniards too.”) Crashaw reiterates the message of many parts in one body of the Church from Romans 12:4-5: “For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”²⁰ This scriptural passage is the basis for the conception of the Church as the union of the faithful under one institution.

The second part of “An Apologie” continues with the influence of Saint Teresa on the body of the Church through the description of her writings like a sermon:

Christ’s faith makes but one body of all soules
 And love’s that body’s soul, no law controwlls
 Our free traffique for heav’n, we may maintaine
 Peace, sure, with piety, though it come from Spain.
 What soul so e’re, in any language, can
 Speak heav’n like her’s is my souls country-man.
 O ‘tis not spanish, but ‘tis heav’n she speaks! (17-23)

Christ’s faith and love for God unite the Church. The laws of state cannot control “our free traffique for heav’n.” It should not be a problem that the soul maintains peace and piety through the Spanish influence of Saint Teresa. This again highlights the universality of Saint

²⁰ *The New American Bible*, p. 1223.

Teresa's message that "speak heav'n" rather than Spanish. The teachings of Saint Teresa are considered his souls "country-man," making a parallel between the saint and a possible minister figure. The sermon-like writings of Saint Teresa share Christian beliefs that make her a preacher of the Church, rather than a national figure of Spain.

The third part of the poem offers up the sacramental wine of Saint Teresa: "Wine of youth, life, and the sweet Deaths of love; / Wine of immortal mixture; which can prove / It's Tincture form the rosy nectar;" (41-43). This wine tastes of the entire life of Saint Teresa: hasty youth, life, and "sweet Deaths of love" or ecstatic raptures. The immortality of the mixture is proven through tasting "the rosy nectar." The act of tasting the wine is an experience that proves an immortal flavor. The wine also has a second gift: "wine / That can exalt weak Earth; and so refine / Our dust, that at one draught, mortality / May drink it self up, and forget to dy" (43-46). The wine has the power to exalt our earthly life of dust. The exaltation of Earth and the refinement of our dust cause mortality to "drink it self up" and "forget to dy." This means that the wine instills in mortality the passing over of death into eternal life. This second poem of the Saint Teresa trilogy concentrates on the need for redemption in the act of reading his own artistic work, "The Hymne," and conserves the external liturgical elements through the sermon-like description of the saint's intercourse and the celebration of the sacramental wine.

The third poem called "The Flaming Heart" was written in 1648, two years after "The Hymne" and "An Apologie." The title of the poem is said to have come from Sir Toby Mathew's English translation of the *Vida* published in 1942 as *The Flaming Hart or the Life*

of the Glorious S. Teresa.²¹ In “The Flaming Heart,” Crashaw critiques the common portrayals of Saint Teresa as a common nun, which is not an adequate portrayal of her infamous moment of religious ecstasy during which a Seraph stabs her in the stomach with a golden dart. Continuing with the tripartite structure as seen in the first two poems, “The Flaming Heart” also works in three parts. The first corrects the artistic portrayal of the male Seraph stabbing Saint Teresa; the second focuses on the ecstasy of Saint Teresa; and the third invokes the writings of Saint Teresa’s writings as a means of gaining eternal life and imitates the anaphora found in the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Similar to “An Apologie,” “The Flaming Heart” opens with the call for correction and then ends with a ceremonial prayer that sounds like the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The poem first invites readers to correct an erroneous drawing of Saint Teresa: “Well meaning readers! You that come as friends / And catch the pretious name this peice pretends; / Make not too much haste to’admire / That fair-cheek’t fallacy of fire” (1-4). Crashaw welcomes the reader to acknowledge the thematic accuracy of the drawing of Saint Teresa of what he considered the “fair cheek’t fallacy” of the flame of fire that stabs Saint Teresa. Next, he calls for a correction of the drawing which reflects the redemptive “soul” of the Teresean liturgy: “Readers, be rul’d by me; and make / Here a well-plac’t and wise mistake, / You must transpose the picture quite, And spell it wrong to read it right; / Read Him for her, and her for him; / And call the Saint the Seraphim” (7-12). Crashaw calls for the reader to transpose Saint Teresa and the Seraph in order to read the picture right. The error of the picture is not lamentable, and the correction of the picture is considered “well-plac’t” and “wise.”

²¹ *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*. p. 63.

The poem goes into a detailed criticism for having drawn the dart in the hand of the Seraph rather than Saint Teresa: “Painter, what didst thou understand / To put her dart into his hand! / See, even the yeares and size of him / Showes this mother Seraphim. / This is the mistresse flame; and duteous he / Her happy fire-works, here, comes down to see” (13-18). This correction would shift the power from the angel, a masculine figure, to Saint Teresa, a feminine figure. The strictly devout and mystical life of the Saint has earned her these mystical ecstasies; therefore the picture should not involve the Seraph in Saint Teresa’s acquirement of “the mistresse flame.” Instead, the corrected version would suggest that the angel has come to watch “her happy fire-works” rather than to deliver them himself. The traditional gender roles are directly challenged in the replacement of the dart: “Had thy cold Pencil kist her Pen / Thou couldst not so unkindly err / To show us This faint shade for Her. / Why man, this speakes pure mortall frame; / And mockes with female Frost love’s manly flame” (20-24). The pencil of the artist is described as cold and creating a “female Frost” over her Pen, or “love’s manly flame.” In Crashaw’s interpretation of the *Vida*, Saint Teresa demonstrates strength, typically viewed as masculine. The use of the word “kist” to describe the relationship between the artist’s pencil and the Saint’s pen represents his view on the acquisition of religious knowledge through the senses, rather than the intellect. If the artist had received her message with an emotional and spiritual vigor, he would not have understated her greatness.

After the main criticism, Crashaw gives a description of the corrected version of the artist’s drawing:

What e’re this youth of fire weares fair,
 Rosy fingers, radiant hair,
 Glowing cheekes, and glistering wings,
 All those fair and flagrant things,
 But before all, that fiery Dart

Had fill'd the Hand of this great Heart. (31-36)

This correction heightens the bodily luster of the Saint, imposes a “seraphicall” sheen over the original drawing that puts the dart in the hand of Saint Teresa’s “great Heart.” One issue the poem does not acknowledge is that the “correction” of the painting contradicts the description given by the Saint herself in her autobiography: “I saw, that he had a long Dart of gold in his hand and... thrust it, some several times, through my verie Hart, after such a manner, as that it passed the verie inwards, of my Bowells.” One resolution of this contradiction is that Saint Teresa only felt an internal manifestation, and that no physical dart actually existed. The moments of religious ecstasy are said to include hallucinations and heightened interior awareness. In this way, the reality of the religious ecstasy was in “the Hand of this great Heart” that felt as if a Dart was thrust into Saint Teresa. The correction of the drawing leads to the reversal of the traditional gender roles of masculine strength and feminine weakness and is presented as a necessary redemptive act for the artist’s error. The internal manifestation of the dart is a quiet, but potent experience that symbolizes feminine passiveness and emotion. In contrast, the external manifestation of the dart symbolizes the masculine action and physical strength. In a final demand, the gender roles are reversed in a rectification of the drawing that is paralleled with our final redemption in Christ:

Resume and rectify thy rude design;
 Undresse thy Seraphim into Mine.
 Redeem this injury of thy art;
 Give Him the vail, give her the dart. (38-42)

The “undressing” of the Seraph refers literally to stripping the artist of the glory associated with the dart of gold, and alludes to the souls undressing before a final union with God. The artist’s design may be associated with God’s design of humanity. Besides these two allusions, the speaker calls for redemption of the art (“redeem this injury of thy art,”) which links the correction with the redemption aspect of humanity’s entry into heaven.

Next, the correction of artistic error transitions into the sacrificial wounds of Saint Teresa that reflect the wounds of Christ with the fourth stanza. Crashaw makes this transition by turning the direction of the dart from outside of Saint Teresa inwardly towards the hearts of readers of her autobiography:

Give her the Dart for it is she
 (Fair youth) shootes both thy shaft and Thee
 Say, all ye wise and well-peirc't hearts
 That live and dy amidst her darts,
 What is't your tastfull spirits doe prove
 In that rare life of Her, and love? (47-52)

The image of Saint Teresa simultaneously shooting the dart into herself and into the readers motivates them to “live and dy,” which suggests a spiritual redemption and the attainment of the afterlife. It is seen that her writings are like “immortall Armes there shine! / Heavn's great artillery in each love-spun line.” (54-55). The writings are powerful, masculine prose that generate out of her great love.

The last detail that links Saint Teresa with Christ is in the fifth stanza that alludes to the “fortunate fall:”

But if it be the frequent fate
 Of worst faults to be fortunate;
 If all's prescription; and proud wrong
 Harkens not to an humble song;
 For all the gallantry of him,
 Give me the suffring Seraphim.
 His be the bravery of all those Bright things,
 The glowing cheekes, the glistening wings;
 The Rosy hand, the radiant Dart;
 Leave Her alone The Flaming Heart. (59-68)

The alliteration of “frequent fate” and “worst faults to be fortunate” draws attention to the first two lines of the stanza. Although not directly stated, the closeness in sounds and meaning calls to mind the “fortunate fall” that highlights the greater good arising from the fall of humanity in the garden by Adam and Eve. Although the original picture is faulty, the

correction of the placement of the causes Saint Teresa to be left alone with her flaming heart, a greater artistic portrayal. The allusion to the “fortunate fall” links the redemptive act of reading with the Redemption in Christ that originates in the fall in the garden.

While the first two sections of “The Flaming Heart” emphasize the redemptive “soul” of the Teresean liturgy, the last part enacts a “body” of external practices. As noted by George Walton Williams, the last section of the poem, “lines 85-108, the invocation to the Saint, by parallelism and anaphora echo the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*.”²² The Anglican prayer book contains the words of liturgical services of worship, including Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, the Eucharist and the Litany. The *Book of Common Prayer* made its first appearance in 1549 under the supervision of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer as a prayer book for the Anglican Church. It was written during the aftermath of the English Reformation that broke away from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and underwent more than 350 different imprints before the 1662 edition. In a new edition of *The Book of Common Prayer: The Tests of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, Brian Cummings explains that the prayer book was originally proclaimed as an “Act of Uniformity,” although it came to represent a vehicle for devotional change:

While it was proclaimed by parliament to constitute an ‘Act of Uniformity’ ... The first *Book of Common Prayer* is thus a quintessential Reformation book: an engine of change, imposed on congregations and causing riots through its perverse assumption of doctrinal oddity and destruction of the old ways of experiencing the divine; yet also at the same time a vehicle for new forms of religious devotion and a brilliant literary achievement in its own right.²³

By 1648, the date “The Flaming Heart” was published, Crashaw has already converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. The Crashavian litany uses the structure of the

²² *Ibid*, p. 61.

²³ *The Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Brian Cummings. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011). p. xiii.

Anglican litany to praise a foreign Saint. As reinforced within the poem, the Christian message should not be confined to one nation, but to the entire body of the Church, which transcends national boundaries. The following is an excerpt of the 1559 version of the *Book of Common Prayer* and lines 85-90 of “The Flaming Heart:”

Here foloweth the Letani to be used upon, Sondaies, Wednesdaies, and Fridayes, and at other tymes, when it shalbe commaunded by the Ordinarye...

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinitie, three persons and one god: have mercy upon us miserable synners.

*O holy, blessed, and glorious trinitie, thre persons and one god: have mercy upon us miserable synners.*²⁴

O sweet incendiary! Shew here thy art,
Upon this carcasse of a hard, cold, hart,
Let all thy scattere'd shafts of light, that play
Among the leaves of thy large Books of day
Combin'd against this Brest at once break in
And take away from me my self and sin (85-90)

In both writings, the prayer begins with the invocation of a holy person. In the *Book of the Common Prayer*, it is “O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinitie” and in “The Flaming Heart,” it is “O sweet incendiary” or Saint Teresa who has the power of a flaming heart. Secondly, the prayers ask for mercy in the judgment of sins. The first reads, “have mercy upon us miserable synners” and then Crashaw’s version asks the Saint to “Shew here thy art...And take away from me my self and sin.” The art of Saint Teresa is to break into our hearts and move us towards religious devotion as conveyed through “thy large Books,” which represents the act of reading. Besides the similarities in structure, Crashaw also transposes the content of the litany into his poem.

²⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer*. p. 117. The 1559 text is cited here.

A few lines later, Crashaw specifically adopts the anaphora of “By” from the litany. Again, the example shows the prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer* and then follows with “The Flaming Heart:”

By the misterey of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativitie and circumcison, by thy Baptysm, fastyng, and temptacion,
Good Lord, delyver us.

By thyne agonye and bloody sweate, by thy crosse and passion; by thy precious deathe and buriall; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the commynge of the holy Ghoste.
*Good Lord, delyver us.*²⁵

O though undanted daughter of desires!
 By all thy down of Lights and Fires;
 By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
 By all thy lives and deaths of love;
 By thy larg draughts of intellectual day,
 And by thy thirsts of love more large than they (94-98)

As modeled in the *Common Book of Prayer*, both texts list the “mysteries” of the holy persons, with the repetition of the phrase “By” at the beginning of each line. Crashaw describes the “mysteries” of Saint Teresa’s ecstatic rapture as the “Lights and Fires,” “eagle in thee,” “lives and deaths of love” and large “thirsts of love.” These Teresean mysteries are explained similarly to the Christian mysteries of the Incarnation and Resurrection. Just as the life of Christ moves us towards the glorification of God, so does the life of Saint Teresa. “The Flaming Heart” ends with a final clause that emphasizes Saint Teresa as a medium into the life of Christ and devotional inspiration to gain eternal life:

By the full kingdome of that finall kisse
 That seiz’d thy parting Soul, and seal’d thee his;
 By all the heav’ns thou hast in him
 (Fair sister of the Seraphim!)
 By all of Him we have in Thee;
 Leave nothing my Self in me,

²⁵ *The Common Book of Prayer*, p. 118.

Let me so read thy life, that I
 Unto all life of mine may dy. (105-108)

The ending draws attention to reading as an inspiration to model one's own life on the life of Saint Teresa. Just as Christ "seiz'd thy parting Soul" at the "finall kisse" and gains "the full kingdom," the reader prays for a similar death. The opening and the ending of "The Flaming Heart" both call for a response of the reader, just as the dialogue between minister and the congregation during the Christian mass. Crashaw's employment of the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer* ends the trilogy, as it begins, highlighting the ceremonial and dialogical ritual of reading Saint Teresa. Also, the reputation of the *Book of Common Prayer* as a "vehicle for new forms of religious devotion" suggests that Crashaw may be trying to popularize the reading of Saint Teresa and her religious mantra of religious devotion by love and the glorification of God. In short, the redemptive "soul" of the Teresean liturgy emanates from the second two poems "An Apologie" and "The Flaming Heart," while continuing the presentation of external liturgical elements of a sermon, the sacramental wine and bread and the imitation of the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Part 3. Conclusion of the Trilogy

While analyzing the Saint Teresea trilogy as one body of work, a series of consistencies arise. It is seen that the trilogy exhibits a tripartite structure, a call for correction during the act of reading, a final emphasis on the reader's desire for eternal life and a progression from external to internal manifestations of the liturgy.

To start off, each individual poem within the Saint Teresa trilogy employs a three-part structure. This can be analyzed in terms of a Trinitarian Theology of the liturgy. In *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, Edward Kilmartin notes the dialogical structure, the address of the three-part God and response of a believing congregation found in the

liturgy. In this way, the Christian mass can be conceived as a realization of the economic Trinity, which is the doctrine concerning the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit and the world:

There is a real correspondence between the way God exists in God's self and the way God reveals self in the economy of salvation through the life, death, and glorification of Christ and the sending of the Spirit to establish the Church...Liturgical celebrations are a medium of participation of the faithful in the economic Trinity, a medium of Trinitarian self-communication. Liturgy is, above all, the work of the Trinity in its *execution* and *content*.²⁶

The systematic model employed here in this Trinitarian explanation of the liturgy is typical of modern Catholic theology; therefore it is unlikely that Crashaw had direct contact with this idea. Nevertheless, the three-part structure of the trilogy reflects the concept of the liturgy as a medium of Trinitarian self-communication. Also, the content of the three parts in "The Hymne," the first poetic response to the saint, reflects the economy of salvation. Each one is focused on the life, death and the eternal life of Saint Teresa reflecting the economy of salvation that God reveals to establish the Church and leads to a final glorification of Christ, just like the closing lines of the poem that emphasize the profound influence Saint Teresa can have on readers towards personal devotion to God. The three-part structure of "The Hymne" suggests a correlation between the study of Saint Teresa, and the Christian Liturgy and inherent spirit of salvation.

Another consistency is that each one of the three poems in the Saint Teresa trilogy includes a need for correction that reflects the redemptive "soul" of the Teresean liturgy. In "An Apologie" Crashaw expresses his desire to correct the first poem, for praising a Catholic saint before his conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. He justifies

²⁶ Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*. (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988), p. 101-102.

the first “weak and worthless song” in the second for having taught the “hopefull maxime” that “love is eloquence.” The third poem, “The Flaming Heart” criticizes a picture that was drawn in response to the autobiography of Saint Teresa, along with another desire for correction. He calls for the painter to “Resume and rectify thy rude design; / Undresse thy Seraphim into Mine. / Redeem this injury of thy art; Give Him the vail, give her the dart” (33-36). Crashaw demands that the painting of the ecstatic rapture is corrected so that the dart is transferred from the hand of the angel, to the hand of Saint Teresa. Each poem calls for a correction, or redemption of what has been written before, creating a derivation of redemptions. The series of redemptions originate in “The Hymne” with “wise heav’n” who corrects the young Saint Teresa’s hastiness for martyrdom. This brings about the general redemptive “soul” of the act of reading Saint Teresa that coincides with the “body” of particular external liturgical elements.

The last similarity between the poems is that the ending of each encourages the continuation of life into a death that brings about eternal life. This parallels the role of the Catholic liturgy as marked by Gaspar Lefebvre that is “to establish official relations between heaven and earth.” This is one Christian liturgical principle that is not altered to fit the Teresean liturgy.²⁷ “The Hymne” ends with “to dy like thee” – referring to ecstatic death in Life – “The Apologie” ends with “and forget to dy” – referring to Life beyond earthly death – and “The Flaming Heart” ends with “that I / unto all life of mine may dy” – referring to natural death. The final lines of each poem emphasize the influence of Saint Teresa on the reader’s devotional practice, and desire to gain eternal life moving from ecstatic death, to eternal life to natural human death.

²⁷ *Catholic Liturgy: It’s Fundamental Principles*, p. 24.

Another progression in the trilogy is from the external towards the internal manifestations of the liturgy. As the trilogy progresses, the poems become farther removed from the text, which augments the need for correction: “The Hymne” is a poem on the writings of Saint Teresa; “An Apology” is a poem on the first poem on the writings of Saint Teresa; and “The Flaming Heart” is a poem on the a picture of the writings of Saint Teresa. The last two poems that are farther removed from the primary writings utilize less external liturgical prompts and incorporate the redemptive “soul” of the devotion, as symbolized by the internalization of the dart in the “Flaming Heart.”

In conclusion, the dramatization of the Teresean liturgy allows Richard Crashaw to exalt the transformative power that he finds in reading the writings of Saint Teresa. One question that remains is *why does Crashaw put such an emphasis on reading, while favoring knowledge by experience and love, rather than the intellect, the human faculty normally associated with reading?* Upon further investigation, I came across James Simpson’s *Burning to Read*, a historical and theological text published in 2007 about the practice of evangelical reading in sixteenth century England. In the book, Simpson explores the irreversible gains of the Protestant Reformation that lay the foundation for “individual reading capacity, liberty, and resistance to institutional disciplines” that are “all foundational elements of the liberal tradition’s self-understanding according to which the sixteenth century Lutheran moment is the turning point that generates what was to become the liberal tradition.”²⁸ Richard Crashaw, a seventeenth-century poet very much influenced by the repercussions of the Protestant Reformation, may have had the conception of the progressive “individual reading capacity” in mind while writing the Saint Teresa trilogy. In a sense, the

²⁸ James Simpson, *Burning to Read*. (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). p. 2-3.

references to the act of reading Saint Teresa turn the principle of “individual reading capacity” to understand the exact truth of evangelical readings on its head by putting an emphasis on the inherent faults of spiritual writings, and praising the utility of textual correction, rather than the discovery of irrefutable truth. Whether these contributions to the conception of evangelical reading are conscious or not, Crashaw indubitably resists the act of reading with the mind, and advocates an unconventional, quite possibly perverse, type of reading with the heart.

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