

Robert Southwell's Manuscripts as Relics:
Constructing Self as a Martyr in Early Modern England*

Kaoru NAGAI

In Protestant England under Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), persecution of Catholics grew more and more heated. Between 1535 to 1603, 239 Catholics suffered death for treason, and of that number, 189 were executed.¹ Of those executed, 125 were priests, and many of them were canonized by Pope John Paul II in the latter half of the twentieth century. Robert Southwell (ca.1561-95) was one of them. Southwell, the English Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, was martyred in February 1595 under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, when England was again a Protestant nation. He was captured and executed because of his missionary work in England, which was to convert his motherland.² He left 52 short as well as some long poems, such as *Mary Magdalens Funerall Teares* (1591) and *Saint Peters Complaynte* (1595). The popularity of the poetic works equaled that of other best-selling literary texts in the 1590s, including Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (seven editions, 1593-1602), Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (five editions, 1592-1603) and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalind* (five editions, 1590-1604).³ At that time, printed books served as the main distribution channel for literary works. Interestingly, Southwell's works were rarely published, but some exceptions were *An Epistle of Comfort* (1588) and *Mary Magdalens*, which were printed by a secret press during his lifetime. His manuscripts were still in circulation, although his collected poems were published after his death.⁴ Nevertheless, why did Southwell prefer the circulation of his writings to be in manuscript form? As far as poetry is concerned, it was general that poems were circulated in

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¹ *The Catholic Martyrs of England and Wales: A Chronological List of English and Welsh Martyrs who Gave Their Lives for Christ and His Church During the 'Penal Times' (A.D. 1535-1680) : the Saints, the Beati and the Eighty-five Venerable Martyrs Whose Cause of Beatification was Resumed* on 21 September 1978.

² Louis Lohr Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1965).

³ Arthur F. Marotti, and, Michael D. Bristol, eds. *Print, Manuscript & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, ca. 2000).

⁴ James H. McDonald, and Nancy Pollard Brown, eds. *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S.J.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

manuscript form by the seventeenth century.⁵ Presumably, it might have been to elude the Protestant authorities; however, he might have known that his manuscripts would be treated as relics after his martyrdom, and there is a distinct possibility that he deliberately aspired to become a saint through them. Furthermore, he might have planned to intensify coterie ties and construct himself as a martyr. In short, priests canonized over 400 years after their deaths might have begun to worship relics, saints, and martyrs; in other words, they started their own sanctification before the Catholic church canonized them. This thesis aims to further the study of literary remains as relics, focusing on Southwell's poetry on his manuscripts circulated without being printed before his persecution. I would like to examine the accomplishment of his literary project to achieve martyrdom because he had the foresight to treat his autograph papers as relics.

Generally, 'martyrdom' is defined as death or suffering on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one's religious faith. However, a 'martyr' is a person who displays or exaggerates their sufferings or discomfort to obtain sympathy or admiration. Particularly in Christianity, the original meaning of 'martyr' came from the Greek *martyria*, signifying 'witnesses' who were present at the Life and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the middle of the second century, the meaning gradually changed to mean the persons who defended to the death their faith against persecution.⁶ About the worship for martyrs, Christian church recognized them as saints, subjects of prayer, who could intermediate between God and men. Their bodies and belongings were considered as relics, and they were expected to cure diseases and possess miraculous powers. However, because of the miracles, the relics were traded at high prices, and the demand for saints and relics increased. Due to this trend, the legends of saints were often exaggerated. Anne Dillon points out that recent analyses overlook how the Catholic community utilized the symbol of the martyr and the concept of martyrdom in maintaining a recusant stance and in mediating the Catholic faith.⁷ Dillon focuses on the ways in which contemporary executions were transformed through text and image into martyrdom, with particular reference to those which occurred during the reign of Elizabeth I, and he insists that the potent images of martyrdom were constructed within broadsheets, engravings and

⁵ A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Circulation of English Verse in Manuscript after the Advent of Print in England', *Studia Neophilologica*, 83 (2011), 67-77.

⁶ G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, 1961.

⁷ Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, ca. 2002), pp. 3-8.

blockbooks. After the reign of Queen Mary (1516-58, r.1553-58), which produced many Protestant martyrs, *The Acts and Monuments* (1563) written by John Foxe (1516-87) handed down accounts of the sufferings and glory of martyrs. In opposition to Foxe, Richard Verstegan (ca.1550-1640) published *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum Nostri Temporis* (1587) and honored Catholic martyrs. Southwell was inspired by an engraving on *Theatrum* and wrote *An Epistle*.⁸ He developed his belief by reading a book. This process is equal to the reason for martyrs. However, papers touched and written by martyrs might have encouraged the faith and preserved it by being passed around and read hand to hand. Now let us focus Southwell's autograph as an example of a martyr's writing that was treated as a relic. His poems were written on the assumption that his manuscripts would become relics after his death. This fact will be turned out to investigate the manuscript circulation and contents of his poetry left in manuscript form.

Southwell was born in Horsham St. Faith near Norwich towards the end of 1561. He was raised in a Catholic family of the Norfolk gentry. His grandfather, Sir Richard Southwell, was a prominent courtier during the reign of Henry VIII. In 1576, Southwell was sent to the Jesuit school at Douai,⁹ where he boarded at the English College. He then entered the Jesuit novitiate in Rome on October 17, 1578 and continued his studies of priesthood. In 1586 he returned to England. Here, in the early morning of June 26, 1592, he was arrested by Richard Topcliffe, the notorious investigator and torturer, in the early morning of June 26, 1592. Until that time, Southwell had served Philip Howard, the thirteenth Earl of Arundel (1557-1595). In addition to the propagation of Christianity, Southwell devoted himself to writing poetry.¹⁰ In view of the fact that during his career, he was prolific in writing poetry before his arrest by the government, which sought to suppress Catholic missionaries, he considered the production of manuscripts and the propagation of his faith as equally significant. Southwell returned to England in 1585, soon after which An Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests was proclaimed. The act included all that was visible and tangible in Catholic worship. Churches, chapels and

⁸ Dillon, pp. 232-33.

⁹ This school was established by William Allen and produced 450 priests by the end of Elizabethan Age. See McCoog, T. M., *English and Welsh Jesuits, 1555-1650*. Vol. 2, Catholic RS, 74-5, 1994-1995.

¹⁰ Nancy Pollard Brown, ed. *Two Letters and Short Rules of a Good Life* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1973). See also Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

cathedrals were destroyed after the English Royal Proclamation.¹¹ In this severe situation, recusants were exposed to danger, and they were deprived of everything that was visible and tangible. Consequently, the only religious objects the Catholics had left were small, portable items such as the supposed relics of martyrs. I examine the possibility that Southwell's manuscripts would have been treated as relics after his martyrdom.

Although the suppression of recusants intensified in the 1580s, the citizens insisted on keeping relics. What is a relic? Originating in the Latin *reliquiae*, the word relic refers to something left by a martyr, such as a mummified corpse or body parts, blood, articles of clothing and rosaries.¹² Catholics believed that they could be blessed by a miracle and even cured of disease if they possessed such a charm. Henry More's account of the English Jesuit mission describes the way in which relic-seekers behaved at the execution of Edmund Campion (1540-1581):

While these martyrs were being torn asunder, the Catholics did their best to retrieve at least a few of their remains. But their enemies exercised great care to prevent this. One young gentle man, however, pushing through the people around him, let his handkerchief fall in order to get it soaked in Campion's blood, or at least that it might collect a few drops. But his attempt was instantly noticed and he was seized and put in goal. All the same, while he was being arrested, another took the opportunity in the general confusion to cut off Campion's finger and make off with it. That, too, was observed, but....it proved impossible to find the man who did it. Another young man secretly offered £20 of our money to the executioner for a single joint of Father Campion's finger, but he did not to give it. Their clothes were much sought after by Catholics,....but so far they have not been able to get anything. It is thought that their enemies tried to burn everything so that nothing should fall into the hands of the Catholics.¹³

¹¹ The English Royal Proclamation by Elizabeth I (1591) ordered officials to '[T]ake away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindles and rolls of wax, pictures, paintings and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, walls, glasses, window, or elsewhere within their churches and houses.' See *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, eds. by Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven, CT and London, 1964-9).

¹² Johan Huizinga, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1996).

¹³ Henry More, editor and trans. Francis Edwards, S. J., *The Elizabethan Jesuits: Historia Missions Anglicanae Societatis Jesu (1660)* (London and Chichester, 1981), p. 137.

Though Campion was not canonized, the people pushed their way through the crowd and rushed to the gallows in order to gather his blood or fingers. Some sought them to commemorate martyrs and others sought their intercessory power. Moreover, Southwell's letter to Father General Claudio Aquaviva describes a major crowd around the gallows of one priest, William Dean.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the people persisted in their desire for relics. However, Protestants, who lacked interest in visible relics, interfered with the Catholic faith. The instinctive desire for a relic of the martyrs' bodies remained in their dispositions. Moreover, remarkably, Southwell mentioned 'Martyrs.' Regardless of whether they were martyrs or not, he considered the executed people martyrs.

Southwell also persisted in keeping his own relics, which he himself wore; therefore, he could have been aware that his manuscript poems might themselves become relics. As Basset claimed, 'Southwell apparently gave his cap to the Keeper of Newgate prison who treated it, in effect, as a relic....he cleaned his face with a cloth which he then threw to someone in the crowd....The third holy object was the rosary Southwell threw from the scaffold to a friend [Henry Garnet].'¹⁵ Henry Garnet, S. J., his friend and the Superior of the Mission, received the rosary that Southwell threw from the scaffold.¹⁶ Garnet gathered up the papers Southwell left, and preserved them with the rosary after his martyrdom.¹⁷ Furthermore, Lady Anne Dacre Howard, Countess of Arundel, who sheltered Southwell in England, possessed one of the small bones from his feet, and wore it on her person constantly, exerting herself in every possible way to follow his edicts indicated in *Short Rules of A Good Life*¹⁸ for more than 35 years after his martyrdom.¹⁹

¹⁴ See John Hungerford Pollen, collected and ed. *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs*, 5 vols (Dawson, 1969), pp. 326-7.

¹⁵ Bernard Basset, *The English Jesuits From Campion to Martindale* (New York, 1967), p. 119.

¹⁶ Arthur F. Marotti, 'Southwell's Remains: Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in Early Modern England.' *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, ed. by Cedric C. Brown and Arthur F. Marotti, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 51.

¹⁷ Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England.' *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, ed. by Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (Oxford; New York: B. Blackwell, 1989), 120-43.

¹⁸ Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word,' in Thomas M. McCoog, ed., *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 251-276 (p. 274).

¹⁹ In the observance whereof she [Anne] was always as carefull and diligent, as others are remisse, careless, and negligent; for that settl'd course of virtue and devotion to which he [Southwell] then advis'd

Moreover, Southwell knew that printed books were protestantized. The catholic words and elements were omitted and changed into protestant expressions. The publishers revised his prose in *Short Rules*, for the sensibilities of Protestant readers.²⁰ The original version has ‘virgin’ for ‘unmarried woman.’ According to Brown, neither phrase was related to Anne Howard, the Countess, and it appeared that once again Southwell avoided any reference that might have caused offense.²¹ Furthermore, the editors of printed books added Biblical and marginal annotations for Protestant readers.²² Thus, Southwell’s books were protestantized and reprinted. However, from 1620 onwards, when *Short Rules* was first published, the Catholic Aston family privately circulated Southwell’s verses and prose in manuscript form.²³ From 1635 to 1640, Catholic families and friends circulated famous works, such as those by Southwell, Henry King and Ben Jonson.²⁴ Catholic readers might have intensified their coterie ties by passing manuscripts around and reading Southwell’s real spirit privately. Though his works, written in the 1580s and 1590s under Protestant Elizabeth reign, were published and reprinted many times after his death, his works read among Catholic circles were not revised. His manuscripts were read and treated as relics which were inherited by the Catholic faith beyond generations.

her, she continu’d with great exactness and perseverance even to her death, which was more than five and thirty years after his imprisonment and glorious Martyrdom. (cited by Brown, *The Reckoned*, p. 273)

²⁰ Southwell, *Short Rules*, p. 186.

²¹ Brown, *The Reckoned*, p. 273.

²² Robert Southwell, *St Robert Southwell The Collected Poems*, eds. by Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Carcanet, 2007) p. 72, ll.301-306.

²³ Marotti argues that the mid-seventeenth-century manuscripts associated with the Astons of Tixall contain a rich record of private manuscript circulation of verse and prose correspondence within an extended Catholic family. ‘The particular manuscript compiled by Constance Aston Fowler between 1635 and 1640 [...] for example, preserves the courtship verse [...] by friends and family members along with selected work of better-known writers such as Robert Southwell, S. J., Henry King, Ben Jonson, and Richard Fanshawe.’ See Marotti, *Manuscript*, 46, and La Jenijoy Bell, ‘The Huntington Aston Manuscript.’ *The Book Collector* 29 (1980), 542-567.

²⁴ Southwell’s verses were sung in the seventeenth century. ‘Elizabeth Grymeston’s *Miscelanea* (1604) includes sixteen verses of ‘Saint Peters Complaynt,’ which she usually sung and played on the winde instrument. Fragments of Southwell’s verse appeared in seventeenth-century songbooks.’ See Robert S. Miola, ‘Publishing the Word: Robert Southwells Sacred Poetry.’ *Review of English Studies*, 64:265 (2013), pp. 410-432 (p. 414). Moreover, Southwell’s verses were used in oral performances of the manuscripts: ‘[T]he widespread practices of oral recitation or performance of manuscripts in the period: reading or singing literary texts aloud, often to small groups of friends or family members, was a very common practice.’ See Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol, eds. *Print, Manuscript & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, ca. 2000) p.192.

There was a strong possibility that a sheet of paper would become a relic. Considering the original meaning of the word relic, the objects left by saints, include their manuscripts and the words that they wrote and said. Manuscripts served as important relics for devout Catholics. For instance, in the Middle Ages, the tale of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090?~1153) in *The Golden Legend* describes a miracle related to a piece of paper:

There was monk of his named brother Robert, nigh to himself as to the world, had been deceived in his childhood by the enticement of some persons, and was sent to the abbey of Cluny, and the honourable man left him awhile there. And he would call him again by letters; and as he indited the letter by clear day, and another monk wrote it, a rain came suddenly upon them. And he that wrote would have hid the parchment from the rain, and S. Bernard said: This work is the work of God, write on hardily and doubt thee nothing. And then he wrote the letter in the midst of the rain without being wet, and yet it rained all about them; for the virtue of charity took away the moisture of the rain from them.²⁵

This legend is based on the miracle of the letter that the saint mentions and the miracle of the autograph document, which is touched by the saint writing in his own hand. At the end of the Middle Ages, Catholics believed that portable prayer roll described prayers and the Virgin Mary could have sacred properties of easy deliveries.²⁶

Richard Topcliffe, the brutal and notorious investigator, took part in the torture and persecution of Catholics in Protestant England and searched desperately for Catholic books as well as the Jesuits, because he knew well the risk of manuscripts treated as relics. The State Papers record that Southwell's poetry was circulated among readers, among whom was John Bolt, a musician of Exeter, who was arrested. The following is the record of the actual judicial interrogation of John Bolt on March 20th, 1595:

Examination of John Bolt, of Exeter, before Edw. Vaughan and three others. Is 30 years of age. Sir John Peter, the last person he served, discharged him last Summer. Went then to Mr. Verney's house in Warwickshire, to teach Mr. Bassett's children to sing and play on the virginals. Has lodged since with Morgan Robins, in Finsbury Fields. Went last to Golden Lane, to fetch a pair of stockings he had left there. First went to Golden Lane from Mr. Wiseman's, of Broadoaks [or Braddox], Essex, last Hilary term, and came to Wm. Wallis; the book beginning with, 'There is no other

²⁵ Iacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend (Aurea Legenda)*. Englished by William Caxton 1483, vol.5.

²⁶ *A Gathering of Medieval English Manuscripts The Takamiya Collection at the Beinecke Library* <<https://www.academia.edu/36446168/>> [accessed 19 August 2019].

name under Heaven,' &c., is his, and in his handwriting; another entitled 'St. Peter's Complaint,' he borrowed of Mr. Wiseman, but does not know the handwriting; another, on Campion's matter, he copied from one lent to him by Harry Souche, late servant to Mr. Morgan, now gone beyond the seas. Has had the latter book five or six years, and has not given a copy of it to any one.²⁷

Bolt had served various recusant Catholic families as a tutor. He was captured for possessing Southwell's poem, *Saint Peters Complaynte*, in his cloak-bag. Moreover, a letter by Father Blount recounts the execution of James Duckett.²⁸ Duckett had twenty-five copies of Father Southwell's *Supplication to the Queen*, and he had published them.²⁹ As a result, his house was searched, and he was executed. These records of Bolt and Duckett are evidence that Southwell's works were circulated in manuscript form after his martyrdom.

Southwell's works were preserved in Spitalfields, where a number of Catholic families and Catholic manuscript copyists took shelter after his death in the seventeenth century.³⁰ Who maintained Southwell's autograph papers preserved? A small volume of autograph papers was in the possession of Stonyhurst College and is now owned by the English Province of the Society of Jesus, Farm Street, London.³¹ After his martyrdom, Father Henry More (ca. 1587-1661) and Father Christopher Grene (1629-1697) preserved his papers.³² Grene collected the manuscripts of English and Welsh Catholic martyrs. For instance, he collected many autograph letters and epigrams written by John Ingram, who was a missionary born in Douai. Grene had twelve of Southwell's letters. One of these, a letter to Father John Deckers in October, 1580,

²⁷ Mary Anne Everett Green, ed. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1856-1872), p.467.

²⁸ Pollen, *Unpublished*, p. 390.

²⁹ John Hungerford Pollen, ed. *Acts of English Martyrs* (London, 1891), pp. 245-6.

³⁰ Susannah Brietz Monta, 'Anne Dacre Howard, Countess of Arundel, and Catholic Patronage.' *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500-1625*, ed. by Micheline White (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 59-81 (p. 65).

³¹ A small volume of autograph papers of the Catholic saint and martyr Robert Southwell, SJ, is preserved, traditionally at Stonyhurst College (MS A. v. 4), but now on deposit at the English Province of the Society of Jesus, Farm Street, London. It contains a rough draft of the *Peeter Playnt* (SoR 170), which is a forerunner of Saint Peters Complaint, and various devotional works in verse and prose, chiefly in Latin. Many of the papers remain unpublished, including an English prose piece — later developed into *Mary Magdalens Funeral Tears* (SoR 313). Another autograph item of considerable interest is a Latin notebook compiled by Southwell during his Jesuit training in Rome and now in the Bodleian Library (SoR 342). See Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London: Mansell; New York: Bowker, 1980), p. 495

³² Pollen, *Unpublished*, pp. 293-4.

records the sufferings of Catholics farmers in the lower strata of society.³³ In another letter written on February 3, 1584, Southwell also depicts the religious hunger of Catholic recusants.³⁴ Moreover, Southwell referred to the sacred and religious hunger among Catholics in a letter sent to Father General Claudio Aquaviva on February 20th, 1585:

I add this one thing only regarding myself, that there is nothing I desire more, or that can possibly be more grateful to me in this life, than as may seem good to your Paternity, that I may expand my labours at present upon the English; the more so as it seems, under Devine inspiration and by promise of the English themselves, the highest hope of martyrdom. And this indeed I cease not to implore from God; may He deign of His mercy to hear me, also for a long time to preserve your Paternity safe to us.³⁵

Southwell expressed his desire for the blessed end. Grene preserved his letters full of sufferings and a longing for martyrdom as the records of a martyr.

In addition, Grene rendered a great service to historians, such as More, by collecting the scattered records of the English and Welsh Catholic martyrs and by preserving other materials relevant to the history of Catholics in England. Because Southwell was martyred at the end of the sixteenth century, and Father Grene was active in the middle of the seventeenth century, the historian Father More, might be an appropriate intermediary. It is clear that Grene and More corresponded, because the latter preserved Garnet's letters as well as a letter that was written by Southwell to Claudio Aquaviva. These two Jesuits, Grene and More, kept Southwell's autograph papers as relics.

There is further evidence which suggests that Southwell's manuscripts and autograph papers were treated as relics. One of three extant manuscripts in Southwell's own hand is kept in the library of the Jesuit College at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, under the pressmark A. v. 4. The fragments comprise eleven sections. They are in the same hand (an imperfect secretary hand for both Latin or English texts), which, as we are assured by inscriptions of an early date at the head of sections 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 11, is Robert Southwell's autograph, 'P. Rob. Southw. Martyris autographum' (Figure 1) According to Janelle, however, the ink seems more recent

³³ Pollen, *Unpublished*, p. 305.

³⁴ Pollen, *Unpublished*, p. 312.

³⁵ H. Foley, ed. *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*. 3 vols (1878), p. 318.

As I have pointed out, there was sufficient possibility that autograph papers could be treated as relics. Afterwards, I examined, the evidence that autograph was actually preserved as relics. I would now like to investigate what kind of poetry Southwell wrote and the part and effect of his manuscripts. It is noteworthy that his poems admiring martyrs were omitted from *Saint Peters Complaynt* (1595); on the other hand, the circulation of the poems in manuscript form was useful in preserving the martyr in mass memory. Richard Verstegan also admired Mary, Queen of Scots as a last martyr and kept her memory alive in *Theatrum* published in Antwerp.³⁷ *Theatrum* could spread widely and quickly how cruel Catholic recusants were executed because it was reprinted many times on the continent. On the other hand, at the end of the sixteenth century when people relied on the relics of martyrs and religious books, Southwell, who left poetry without expecting publication, predicted the potent effect of manuscripts containing religious poems. He also might have known that citizens had religious hunger and sufferings and confirmed that his manuscripts must have been their new and great support.

The concept ‘love is the fire’ is expressed in *Christs Bloody Sweate*. In the Middle Ages, fire was viewed as illuminating objects, purifying them, renewing them and producing good fruit.³⁸ In this poem, the speaker burns with the fire of love for God, washes his impure soul away, and devotes himself to God. The attitude reflects Southwell’s purpose and spirit. Southwell, the future martyr, expresses the speaker’s willingness to sacrifice himself:

Elias once to prove gods soveraigne power
 By praire procur’d a fier of wondrous force
 That blood and wood and water did devoure,
 Yea stones and dust, beyond all natures course:
 Such fire is love that fedd with gory bloode
 Doth burne no lesse then in the driest woode.
 O sacred Fire come shewe thy force on me
 That sacrifice to Christe I maye retorne,
 If withered wood for fuell bee,
 If stones and dust, yf fleshe and blood will burne,
 I withered am and stonye to all good,

³⁷ *Theatrum* was first published in 1587, the French 1588 edition describes the book as being already well known in Flanders, Germany, Spain and France. Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Lenven: Lenven University Press, 2007). See also Dillon, p. 269.

³⁸ Diana Marie Shaw, ‘ “Such Fire Is Love” : The Bernadine Poetry of St. Robert Southwell, S.J.’ *Christianity and Literature*, Vol. 62. No. 3 (2013, 333-354), 344.

A sacke of dust, a masse of fleshe and bloode.³⁹

The speaker wishes to become the stone and the wood consumed by Elijah's fire so that he might repay Christ's sacrifice. Southwell expresses his desire for martyrdom and burning in the fire of his love for God and becoming a sacrifice. He was martyred for Catholics and for God in order to attain his purpose.

It is clear that Southwell knew the poetry of William Shakespeare, who wrote about carnal love in *Venus and Adonis*. Southwell opposed Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's poem, the fire of love is different from the fire that Southwell describes.⁴⁰ Shakespeare praises the fire of secular love, in other words, the passion of secular lovers. His perspective is exactly the opposite of Southwell's attitude, which is expressed as burning in the fire of his love for God. The priest devotes his life as a writer for God. He considers his own body, which he desires to make the relics of a martyr, a sacrifice to his love for God. In *Christs*, it is obvious that Southwell's love for God appeals to readers' emotions. Nonetheless, *Christs* was not printed, and readers continued to circulate the manuscript from the end of the sixteenth century to the seventeenth century. This manuscript was also passed from hand to hand as if it was a relic of the Jesuit poet.

As mentioned above, at the time that Southwell returned to England after his training in Rome, the domestic Catholics were under a miserable situation due to the Proclamation by Queen Elizabeth. He announced *An Humble Supplication to Her Majestie* (1591) against Elizabeth. Furthermore, he wrote poems on manuscripts which worshipped Mary, Queen of Scots as a Catholic martyr and encouraged secular Catholics. For example, *Decease Release* depicts a dangerous celebration of the death of Mary, who was executed by order of Elizabeth I on February 8, 1587. This poem did not appear in *Saint Peters Complaynte, With other Poems* (1595) in order to avoid severe censorship by Protestants; however, they were circulated in manuscript form:

THE pounded spice both tast and sent doth please,
In fadeing smoke the force doth incense shewe,
The oerisht kernel springeth with increase,

³⁹ Southwell, *The Collected Poems*, p.17, ll. 13-24.

⁴⁰ For example, 'The Sun that shines from heaven shines but warme, / And loe, I lie betweene that Sun and thee: / The heat I have from thence doth little harme, / Thine eye darts forth the fire that burneth me; / And were I not immortal, life were done, / Betweene this heavenly and this earthly Sun.' (William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, London, 1627, ll.194-199)

The lopped tree doth best and soonest growe.
Gods spice I was and prouning was my due,
In fading breath my incense savored best,
Death was the meane my kyrnell to renewe,
By loppinge shott I upp to heavenly rest.

[. . .]

Alive a Queene, now dead I am a Sainte,
Once M [Mary]: called, my name nowe Martyr is,
From earthly raigne debarred by restraint,
In lieu whereof I raigine in heavenly blisse.

[. . .]

Rue not my death, rejoyce at my repose,
It was no death to me but to my woe,
The budd was opened to lett out the Rose,
The cheynes unloo'sd to lett the captive goe.
A prince by birth, a prisoner by mishappe,
From Crowne to crosse, from throne to thrall I fell,
My right my ruche, my titles wrought my trapp,
My weale my woe, my worldly heaven my hell.
By death from prisoner to a prince enhaunc'd,
From Crosse to Crowne, from thrall to throne againe,
My ruth my right, my trapp my stile advaunc'd,
From woe to weale, from hell to heavenly raigne.⁴¹

The martyr is compared to the scent of a spice that remains in the memory of the people. In the middle of this poem, the soul of the Catholic Mary laments: 'Once M [Mary]: calld, my name nowe Martyr is, / From earthly raigne debarred by restraint, / In lieu whereof I raigine in heavenly blisse' (ll.14-16). Southwell expounds the need for the martyr to acquire power in heaven. The memory of the martyr is universally recorded in the minds of believers.

Southwell hoped that he, like Catholic Mary in *Decease Release*, would die a martyr's death. Consequently, his writings surpassed the ambitions of other poets such as William Shakespeare who pursued fame and honour, and his work justified his existence as the Jesuit in his poetry. Southwell was admired as a martyr, and his manuscripts were treated as relics through his martyrdom and encouraged readers to hold on their Catholic faith. This process was a part of his self-consecration project. Particularly, Southwell empathizes the eternity of spirit in *I die alive*:

⁴¹ Southwell, *The Collected Poems*, pp. 41-42, ll.1-8, 13-16, 25-36.

Thus still I die, yet still I do revive,
My living death by dying life is fedd:
Grace more then nature keeps my hart alive,
Whose Idle hopes and vaine desires are dead.
Not where I breath, but where I love I live,
Not where I love, but where I am I die:
The life I wish, must future glory give,
The deathes I feele, in present dangers lie.⁴²

Southwell stresses not profane love but the importance of everlasting love for God with eternal spirit. This love is the fittest theme, and he considered the subject that could intensify readers' faith by circulating manuscripts. Southwell was quite different from his contemporary poets, who published their poetry to achieve honour and fame, with the exception of the courtly poet Phillip Sidney, who was one of the most prominent figures of the Elizabethan Age. Sidney refused to print his poetry or to publish it in public society. He wrote his works for English aristocracy, and his poetry was accepted in his closed social circle in manuscript form. By contrast, Southwell, according to his credo, obviously had no intention to print and publish his lyrics. Therefore, although printed books became popular in the Reformation, Southwell was convinced of the power of poetry to survive in manuscript form.

Moreover, Southwell considered printed books unworthy because they were secular products. He avoided publication and did not plan to publish his works. As Brown argues, Southwell rebukes those whose lives were regulated by passion and particularly the pursuit of profane love:⁴³ 'Passions I allow, and loves I approve, onely I would wishe that men would alter their object and better their intent.'⁴⁴ He wrote about the theme 'fittest for this time' in *The Epistle Dedicatorie*. He criticized those who regulated their lives by passions and searched for impious love, and he tried to improve their ways of life. Furthermore, in his address 'To the Reader' of *Mary Magdalens*, he expressed his criticism of contemporary writings on frivolous subjects:

[T]he finest wittes loose themselves in the vainest follies, spilling muche Arte in some idele phansue, and leaving their works as witnesses, howe long they beene in travaile to be fine delivered of a fable. And sure it is a thing greatly to bee lamented,

⁴² Southwell, *The Collected Poems*, p.46, ll.9-16.

⁴³ Brown, *The Reckoned*, p. 261.

⁴⁴ Robert Southwell, *Mary Magdalens Funeral Teares* (1591). A facsim. reproduction / with an introd. by Vincent B. Leitch. Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975, ca. 1974, sig. A 3.

that men of so high conceite should so much abase their habilities, that when they have racked them to the uttermost endeavour, all the prayse that they reape of their employment, consisteth in this, that they have wisely tolde a foolish tale, and carried a long lie very smoothlie to the ende.⁴⁵

He criticizes sensual love, which his contemporaries Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe preferred to religious love. Southwell detested the publication of books with irreligious themes. In other words, he did not intend to publish his works in printed form.

Southwell drew a clear line between Verstegan who told the miserable persecution of Catholics by using the latest printing techniques and Shakespeare who expressed secular love in many plays. He stuck to the circulation on manuscript form which survived poetry admiring Catholic martyrs. His manuscripts played a potent part in growing readers' faith by passing his words down from one generation to another and being treated as relics, because these manuscripts more easily bypassed strict censorship than printed books.

In Protestant England under Elizabeth I, Southwell's manuscripts provided visible belief for many Catholics, who still persisted in keeping visible and tangible objects, and readers were brought up through the saint's words. In particular, the two poems, *Decease Release* and *I die alive*, which did not appear in print, expressed admiration for martyred saints and love for God. Catholic readers were comforted by his poems. Thus, Southwell's poetry and manuscripts functioned as relics that retained the memory of his sainthood. Southwell could not convert his native land to Catholicism, however, he supported Catholicism and pursued his own martyrdom through his writings, intent on becoming a saint. Ever since he aimed to convert his motherland, and designed his literary project to end in martyrdom, it took on great significations throughout his life and after his martyrdom. After 300 years, he was beatified in 1929 and canonized in 1970, thus becoming a saint. It is possible that his autograph and some evidence will emerge; however, his existing manuscript relics clearly demonstrate that he intended to encourage the spread of Catholicism after his death, because priests preserved his manuscripts as relics. Thus, Southwell accomplished his literary project to achieve martyrdom as a part of constructing self.

⁴⁵ Southwell, *Mary Magdalens Funeral Teares*, 'To the Reader' sig. A 7-7.

