


The Conversion of Sir Tobie Matthew: Homosocial Bonds and Affective Networks in Early Modern Catholicism

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This article offers an in-depth examination of Sir Tobie Matthew's conversion as an attempt to understand not only the internal process of conversion for one individual, but also its meaning for the English Catholic community during the early seventeenth-century. Matthew was an extraordinary figure. He was both learned and extremely well-connected, with friends in the highest echelons of the Roman Catholic Church, and in English society, and this despite his conversion. He maintained those relationships to his benefit throughout his life. Officially he was at times an exile from England and at other times at court, nonetheless he was always at the centre of dynastic politics. He maintained loyalty to England throughout his life, but clearly felt a draw to Catholicism for its intellectual tradition, emotional appeal, his desire to travel; and, perhaps, also for reasons of sexuality. Sir Tobie's conversion reveals just how complex the relationship between religious and national identity could be after the Reformations.

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Dirty, dishevelled, and desperate, the mud-caked Tobie Matthew approached the Jesuit priest Lelio Ptolomei in Florence in 1606. The image of the exasperated and unkempt Tobie Matthew contravenes expectations for a well-connected Englishman, and even epitomises the many ways in which he defies norms. Nevertheless, Tobie's uncoiffed state makes one thing clear: he was on a mission, one with eternal life and death hanging in the balance. His was a quest for salvation, temporal and eternal, for himself and his English co-religionists. Thus, he anxiously arrived at Ptolomei's door seeking conversion and acceptance into the Roman Catholic Church:

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I told him that as I had been bred in Protestancy, so now, by God Almighty's grace, I had discovered the danger and falsehood of that religion; that I was resolved already that the Catholic Church, communicating with the Bishop of Rome, was the only true Church, and Spouse of Christ our Lord, as being purchased by his blood, adorned with infinite privileges, and assisted by the infallible Spirit of his truth, out of which there was no salvation. I therefore craved at his hands that, with all convenient speed, he would inform me what I was to do, before I might be incorporated into that Church.¹

It seems the aspiring convert did not have time to respect basic standards of decorum or civility. Sacrificing a reputation for polite manners was a small price to pay for a clean conscience, according to Tobie:

having dirtied my clothes extremely (for it had rained much) a temptation came upon me and said: That my action was not likely to be happy, and, howsoever, that I should do discreetly to put off the business till another day. But my Good Angel, I think, forbade me to allow of the notion; and so I liked better to wear a foul cloak upon my back than a filthy soul in my body.²

Thus, Tobie Matthew abandoned the faith of his parents for Roman Catholicism, an outlawed religion.

This article explores Tobie's life and change of religion by examining his autobiographical conversion narrative and related correspondence as well as his other works as author and translator.³ Yet, a close reading of the *Relation* coupled with sensitivity to Tobie's context, illuminates the motivations for conversion as a wider

¹ Tobie Matthew, *A True Historical Relation of The Conversion of Sir Tobie Matthew to the Holy Catholic Faith; with the Antecedents and Consequences Thereof*, A.H. Matthew, ed. (New York: Burns & Oates, Limited, 1904), 52, hereafter *Relation*. The most complete manuscript is at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C., see Tobie Matthew, *A True Historical Relation of the Conversion of Sir Tobie Matthew to the Holy Catholic Faith*, Washington 1640, V.a. 269.

² Matthew, *Relation*, 51.

³ For more on conversion in early modernity, see Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, eds. *Conversion: Old Worlds and New* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003); Bruce D. Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jan M. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum, and Arie L. Molendijk, eds. *Paradigms, Poetics, and Politics of Conversion*, (Dudley: Peeters, 2006); David M. Luebke, Jared Poley, Daniel C. Ryan, and David Warren Sabean, eds. *Conversion and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Molly Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature: Verse and Change from Donne to Dryden* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); W. J. Torrance Kirby, *Persuasion and Conversion: Essays on Religion, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Boston: Brill, 2013); Brooke Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, eds. *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Abigail Shinn, *Conversion Narratives in Early Modern England: Tales of Turning* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); Lieke Stelling, *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Chiara Petrolini, Vincenzo Lavenia, and Sabina Pavone, *Sacre metamorfosi: Racconti di conversion tra Roma e il mondo in età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2022).

phenomenon by emphasizing the religious, emotional, and even homosocial aspects of Tobie's conversion.⁴ Though subjectivity and contingency undergird conversion experiences, this article examines the wider impact of underappreciated emotional motivations by drawing special attention to the place of affective networks such as family and friendships. These highlight the ways that Matthew's conversion sheds light on the role of homosocial bonds in shaping a conversion, particularly significant in Catholic studies given the influence and power of single-sex orders. While the pious, spiritual, and theological origins of his conversion must not be denied, it is clear that Tobie, whose family life was riddled with strife, found solace in Catholicism's homosocial networks. Though his story is undoubtedly unique, and his setting and disposition created his distinct historical experience, his life remains a window through which a historical understanding of the conversion phenomenon becomes richer. Nevertheless, understanding the idiosyncrasies of Tobie's life, his conversion narrative, and his motivations will illuminate the investigation into the role of those affective networks in his turn.

⁴ There were many early efforts to account for his life, see Anthony Wood, 'Tobie Matthew,' in *Athenae Oxonienses. An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford from 1500 to the author's death in November 1695* (London, 1721), 2:194–196; George Oliver, *Collections towards illustrating the Biography of the Scotch, English, and Irish Members of the Society of Jesus* (London: C. Dolman, 1845): 139–140. Alban Butler's short biography relies on the *Relation* and Wood, see Alban Butler, *The Life of Sir Tobie Matthews* (London: J.P. Coghlan, 1795). More biographies have emerged in the twentieth century including A.H. Matthew, *The Life of Sir Tobie Matthew: Bacon's Alter Ego* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1907), hereafter *Life*; David Matthew, *Sir Tobie Matthew* (London: M. Parrish, 1950). John Phillip Feil made a more rigorous effort in his doctoral dissertation. He devotes the first 256 pages of his dissertation to Tobie's biography: John Phillip Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew and His 'Collection of Letters'* (University of Chicago, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1962). Others have taken on Tobie Matthew's life and his conversion. Yoggerst attempted to understand his literary contributions and make solid claims about texts attributed to him, see Sister Mary Hillary Yoggerst Ad. P.P.S., *Sir Tobie Matthew: Recusant Man of Letters* (Fordham University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1952), and Zink investigated insights about the role of gender in Tobie's work, see Sharon Louisa Zink, *Translating Men: Humanism and Masculinity in Renaissance Renditions of Patristic Texts* (University of London, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2001). Other studies briefly use Tobie as a point of comparison to explain some element of English Catholicism or conversion, see Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Peter Lake and Michael Questier, eds. *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660* (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2000); and Michael Questier, 'Like Locusts over all the World: Conversion, Indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England,' in Thomas McCoog, ed. *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits; Essays in Celebration of the First Centenary of Campion Hall, Oxford (1896-1996)* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1996), 265–84. Marotti dedicated three pages specifically to Tobie's conversion in a chapter titled 'Performing Conversion,' see Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology & Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 115–119. Nevertheless, we lack a modern critical biography of Tobie Matthews.

I. *Biographies of the Convert, the Conversion, and the True Relation*

To study Tobie Matthew is to study an intellectual, a convert, a statesman, and someone who had a unique liminal role in society both on the European continent and in England. Tobie was a controversial figure in a tumultuous time. He befriended or corresponded with many of western Europe's pivotal thinkers, theologians, monarchs, and ecclesiastics. His own father, Tobie Matthew, a staunch Protestant, was a significant figure in the Church of England, whose career found its apogee in York as Archbishop. Moreover, many of the other men in his family were high-ranking ecclesiastics. It is no wonder then that from the moment of his birth in 1577 he seemed destined to follow in their footsteps.⁵ That all changed when he converted to Catholicism in 1607, and thereafter took on an itinerant lifestyle, sometimes ensconced in the fabric of English society and other times an exile. It seems that when he was at the centre of the English court, his religion, by default, drove him to the periphery. When he was on the periphery, that is, exiled from England, he was at the centre of the continental effort to return England to the Catholic fold.

Before his conversion, he earned a B.A. in 1594 and M.A. in 1597 from Christ Church, Oxford. As early as 1598 he began traveling to the European continent, though this first sojourn was cut short when he became an M.P. Later travels brought him to Italy, against his parents' wishes, where the seeds of his conversion were planted, nurtured, and ultimately blossomed. Once his three-year travel license expired, he returned to England, where he undiplomatically, and inexplicably, revealed his conversion upon arrival in 1607. Thereafter he was subjected to a series of polemical conversations with the likes of Bishop Richard Bancroft, Lancelot Andrewes, and Christopher Perkins. Bancroft imprisoned him for his obstinacy, and he was banished from England in 1608. His travels in Europe began anew and most significantly, he was ordained a Catholic priest on May 20, 1614, by the hands of the Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine.⁶ He returned to England in 1617 only to be banished a second time in 1618 for refusing to swear the Oath of Allegiance. At this point, he undertook a serious campaign of writing and translating major works of Christian spirituality including Augustine's *Confessions*.

In the early 1620s Tobie's Catholicism made him a central figure in the dynastic politics of European monarchies, despite his ongoing

⁵ John Harrington remarked that Tobie 'was likely for learning, for memory, for sharpness of wit and sweetness of behaviour to have proved another Tobie Matthew,' in Rosamund Oates, *Moderate Radical: Tobie Matthew and English Reformation* (New York: Oxford, 2018), 130.

⁶ Toby writes precious little about his first banishment, and does not mention that he was ordained, see A.H. Matthew, *Life*, 70, 117. Yoggerst's dissertation reproduces Bellarmine's notice confirming Matthew's ordination, see Yoggerst, *Tobie Matthew*, 226.

banishment. In 1621 he assisted John Digby in the discussions through the Palatinate crisis, and in 1623 he accompanied Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham to Spain to arrange a marriage between the prince and the Infanta. For his efforts, James I knighted him on October 20, 1623. Thereafter, Sir Tobie enjoyed a long stay in England until he was exiled again in 1641 due to rumors that tied him to popish plots. It was in that precise context that he completed and signed his *True Historical Relation*. For that reason, the text bears certain pleas of his faithfulness to England and its history requires some examination to better understand its usefulness in analyzing Tobie's conversion.

While Tobie is forthcoming about his conversion in the text of the *Relation*, as a historical document the text is problematic. It is often opaque, and Tobie's self-revelation is guarded. Stylistically it flirts with autobiography, spiritual diary, confession, and polemic. It does not recount his entire life, but is an explanation, perhaps even a hagiography, of his conversion.⁷ The release of the narrative of his conversion in 1640 was no accident.⁸ During the first Bishop's War in 1639, Tobie was accused of being complicit in a popish plot. In some ways then his text is an apology, albeit an unsuccessful one, completed as he fled England fearing imprisonment, but its origins are much older. It first emerged in Paris around 1611, in the form of a letter addressed to Dame Mary Gage.⁹ Though unpublished, the text was never meant to be private, but to inspire others to convert and to act as a testament to Tobie's good behavior in matters ecclesiastical and civil. After 1640, Tobie returned to the continent where he spent most of his final days in the Low Countries, largely at the English Jesuit College in

⁷ In some ways, this likens Tobie's *Relation* to St. Ignatius's so-called 'autobiography', penned by Luís Gonçalvez da Camara, more a hagiography of the Society of Jesus than a biography of Ignatius. For more on the category of spiritual autobiography and its function, see Murray, *Poetics of Conversion*, Shinn, *Conversion Narratives*, Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Alan Stewart, *The Oxford History of Life-Writing, Volume 2: Early Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸ The manuscript is now in the Folger Library, since Henry Folger purchased it from Dobell. After Tobie wrote it, his relations owned it until it came into Butler's possession. Thereafter it was stolen and eventually found by Reverend Neligan at Cork until purchased by Edward Dowden who permitted A. H. Matthew to use it for his autobiography. Chiara Petrolini, 'Il giornale di conversione di Toby Matthew,' *Società e storia*, 160.2 (2018): 269–287, at 278, fn. 28. Lynch notes that it is not an autograph copy, but that it was signed by Tobie and that wherever his name appears it is in his hand, see Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 68–9.

⁹ See A. H. Matthew, *The Life of Sir Tobie Matthew*, 69–73. Matthew did not identify an autograph manuscript, but notes that portions of the autograph copy were known to Tobie's first biographers, Alban Butler and Anthony à Wood, see: A.H. Matthew, *The Life of Sir Tobie Matthew: Bacon's Alter Ego* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1907), vii–viii. Stewart calls the *Relation* 'the last surviving version of a life that was rewritten several times over multiple decades, as Matthew's own life underwent some startling changes,' Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 164. A copy of the letter that Tobie sent to Mary Gage survives in the Jesuit Archives in Britain as MS 949, see Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 168, fn. 10.

Ghent. He released his final publication *A Missive of Consolation*, sent to Catholics in England in 1647, and died in 1655 among the Jesuits.

Before delving into the importance of affective bonds in Tobie's conversion, it is worth uncovering his motivations for conversion in broad strokes. After all, as he reminds his reader, to convert was to risk almost everything he held dear, a fact he claims the devil tried to exploit moments before his conversion:

I proposed fully to become a Catholic...when the enemy of my soul...assaulted me yet in another kind...he laid before...the temporal vexations and afflictions which I was likely to incur...the confiscation of what I then possessed; the most certain deprivation of whatsoever I might expect in future times; the blasting of my poor reputation...the loss of my friends, of my liberty, and peradventure also of my country; yea, and perhaps...an odious and ignominious death.¹⁰

To this he adds 'mighty pieces of artillery were bought by that enemy of God and man to batter and beat down my good purposes—the love of my parents.'¹¹ His awareness of the risk begs the question: why risk it all for Catholicism?

Tobie insists that the reason he converted was his persuasion by intellectual arguments concerning Catholicism's legitimacy and authority. He notably describes his conversion as 'the opening of the eyes of my dark soul, which had never been able until then to see the fair face of Truth.'¹² Throughout his text, he consistently mentioned conversations with learned Catholics, and encounters with persuasive theological texts, ancient and medieval.¹³ He became devoted to Saint Augustine, whose writings demonstrated the ancient origins of the Church to Tobie, and became a model for understanding his own conversion.¹⁴ Yet, Tobie's conversion had a notable emotional element in his longing for community. Indeed, he was unsatisfied with Protestantism on these grounds for sowing the seeds of discord within

¹⁰ Matthew, *Relation*, 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26–30. He continued these studies as he traveled through Italy, reading ancient texts on his travels, including in Florence where they gave him 'sufficient assurance that Protestantism was not only a mere innovation, but a damnable kind of novelty in the judgment of the whole primitive Church', 37. Lynch notes that these arguments settled the question of his religious allegiance, Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 35. Catholics did not practice this strategy of intellectual conversion alone; Tobie received many books from his father, who collected an immense library of refutation literature over his lifetime, Matthew, *Relation*, 129. See also Murray, 'The Radicalism of early modern Spiritual Autobiography', in Adam Smyth, ed. *A History of English Autobiography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 41–55, at 48 and Danielle Clarke, 'Life Writing for the Counter-Reformation: The English Translation and Reception of Teresa de Avila's Autobiography', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 50.1 (2020): 75–94, 80; and Shinn, *Conversion Narratives*, 68.

Christianity following the break with Rome.¹⁵ He also laments that Protestants were engulfed in internecine theological debates.¹⁶ To Matthew, doctrinal cohesion was the foundation of an intellectual, spiritual, and emotional community. In contrast, Catholicism's communal orientation was appealing to Tobie, and desirable for giving him the ability to travel more broadly.¹⁷ In particular, Italy captured his imagination, and he describes being enchanted by 'the delicacy of its situation, the fertility of the soil, the beauty of the cities, and the policy and civility of the people.'¹⁸ Tobie's account confirms what Shinn identified as an English anxiety about the power of Rome itself to elicit a conversion.¹⁹

In these travels, Tobie encountered the flourishing sensuous and affective world of Catholic ritual, devotional practices, and liturgical customs, and there can be no doubt that Tobie emotionally responded to Catholic culture and Catholic piety as he encountered them.²⁰ Take for example a chance encounter at a church where his friends stopped to pray before the Blessed Sacrament during a trip to Fiesole. There, Tobie witnessed a simple man praying alone: 'and his eyes were not less busy than his words, for the tears flowed down apace from them'.²¹ Tobie was overwhelmed by the sight of this man participating in private devotion. He not only understood the man's affective response to be authentic, but also recognized that he lacked such piety, something he confirmed when he was struck with 'a kind of reverent awe' at the crypts of St. Sebastian and St. Pancratius.²² Visiting these holy sites, seeing these relics, and thereby participating in a pilgrimage was a critical step in Tobie's conversion.

¹⁵ Matthew, *Relation*, 36–37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 99. Unsurprisingly, Tobie fails to mention the Protestant rebuttal concerning the many internecine theological arguments Catholics waged, see J. Sears McGee, 'A "Carkass" of "Mere Dead Paper": The Polemical Career of Francis Rous, Puritan MP', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72.3 (2009): 347–71, at 356.

¹⁷ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 119.

¹⁸ Matthew, *Relation*, 1. '[T]he phenomenon of spiritual journeying used mobility as a means to bring about spiritual growth and conversion', see Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 107.

¹⁹ Shinn, *Conversion Narratives*, 137–138.

²⁰ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 110, 118. See also, Arthur F. Marotti, 'In Defence of Idolatry: Residual Catholic Culture and the Protestant Assault on the Sensuous in Early Modern England', in Lowell Gallagher, ed. *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 42. For more on the sensuous and the affective, see Robin Macdonald, Emilie K. M. Murphy, and Elizabeth L. Swann, eds. *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), and Giovanni Tarantino, 'Religion and Spirituality,' in Claire Walker, Katie Barclay, and David Lemmings, eds. *A cultural History of the Emotions in the Baroque and Enlightenment Age*, eds. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 35–53.

²¹ Matthew, *Relation*, 7–8. Perhaps Tobie was alluding to Augustine who was once similarly moved by a beggar, see Augustine, *The Confessions of the Incomparable Doctor* (St. Omer's: English College Press, 1620), 245, hereafter *Confessions*.

²² Matthew, *Relation*, 22.

In one of Tobie's more memorable encounters with Catholic piety he hears boys singing the Ave Maria below his windowsill:

And I know not by what chance, or rather Providence of Almighty God, the tune of that sweet verse, *Sancta Maria, Ora pro nobis*, came so often in at mine ears, and contented me so much that at length my tongue took it up . . . These would ordinarily fall out to be the last words before my sleep, and the first after it . . . I considered now and then what hurt there might be, in desiring the Mother of God to pray for us.²³

Hearing the music delighted Tobie, taught him about invocation, and moved him to appreciate the loving mother figure he had in the Virgin Mary and helpers he enjoyed in the communion of saints.²⁴

Thus, by embarking on a continental journey into the heart of Catholicism, Tobie entered a global, and supernatural community.²⁵ On a mundane level, Tobie also strove to connect with and help English Catholics in his efforts to convince the world of the compatibility between his Catholic and English identity as he navigated the Catholic community.²⁶ Even in exile he imagined himself as a minister and missionary to Catholics in England as the translator and author of spiritual texts. Take, for example, the *Missive of Consolation*, where he reminds readers that the Church of England was once the Catholic Church, and 'so are all Churches which remaine united to the Catholike communion.'²⁷ This appeal to Catholicism's universality underscores his commitment to the idea of one international Catholic Church.

In Catholicism he also found a preferred spiritual community in the Society of Jesus. Was Tobie Matthew a Jesuit? It is a vexed question. What is clear is that he frequently sought out Jesuits, lived with Jesuits, worked with Jesuits, and that the Jesuits played a major role in his

²³ Matthew, *Relation*, 14. Shinn argues that the senses were a locus for spiritual transformation and moreover that this passage charts Matthews trajectory from passive sensory reception to active participation in the Catholic liturgy, see Abigail Shinn, 'The Senses and the seventeenth-century English conversion narrative', in Macdonald, Murphy, and Swann, eds. *Sensing the Sacred*, 99–101.

²⁴ The parallels between this story and Augustine's moment of conversion hearing the voice in the garden should be noted, see *Confessions*, 395–6. Smyth comments on how autobiographies rely on 'a series of alignments and overlappings' with the *Confessions*, and this scene in particular, see Smyth, "Introduction," in *A History of English Autobiography*, 2–3.

²⁵ Foreign trained clerics like Tobie Matthews stand as a convincing example of the ways in which English Catholic history and European Catholicism were integrated, see Caroline M. Hibbard, "Early Stuart Catholicism: Revisions and Re-Revisions," *The Journal of Modern History* 52.1 (1980): 31, 34.

²⁶ See Corens, *Confessional Mobility*, 28–9; Emilie K. M. Murphy, 'Language and Power in an English Convent in Exile, c. 1621–c. 1631', *The Historical Journal*, 62.1 (2019): 101–25; Katy Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth-century Paris* (Rochester: Bodyell Press, 2011); Caroline Bowden and James Kelly, eds. *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture, Identity*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

²⁷ Tobie Matthew, *A Missive of Consolation: Sent from Flanders to the Catholikes of England* (Louvain, 1647), 75.

conversion. He first confessed to a Jesuit, was received into the church by a Jesuit, was ordained by the most influential Jesuit of the day, Robert Bellarmine, and willed his assets to the Jesuits shortly after his ordination. He spent the last days of his life with Jesuits at Ghent. Moreover, he was influenced by Jesuit spirituality, and translated many Jesuit writings, or texts of those in the Jesuit orbit like Teresa of Ávila.²⁸ According to Feil, Tobie also took a ‘fourth vow,’ of obedience to the pope, and advocated for the construction of Jesuit seminaries.²⁹ Though we do not have records concerning his entrance into the Society and subsequent standard process of formation, it must be noted that those standards were neither universally nor uniformly applied. For example, Robert Bellarmine bypassed parts of standard Jesuit formation. These idiosyncrasies certainly did not stop his enemies from identifying him as a Jesuit. Given his affinity and proximity to the Jesuits as well as the identification of him as a Jesuit, it seems legitimate to suggest he was a Jesuit unless it can be proved otherwise.

II. Kinship, Conversion, Emotion

Catholicism clearly appealed to Tobie for its intellectual rigor as well as its communal and affective nature. Tobie’s reasons for emphasizing the former over the latter are clear. First, his *Relation* was meant to convince others of the truth of Catholicism. Second, he may have wanted to reject Protestant critiques about Catholicism’s supposed inferiority as a more bodily and more emotional religion. Moreover, he may have wanted to conceal that his broken familial relations left him desperate for affection and support.³⁰ Still, Tobie claims that before his conversion he worried about the harm it might cause his parents, ‘who did so tenderly and dearly love me; that for me to become a Catholic was, after a sort, to take life from them . . . that it were more courtesy in me to cut their throats when they were asleep’.³¹ The proclamation distorts reality. The relationship was extremely troubled before his conversion, and Tobie knew it would only get worse afterwards.³²

²⁸ Teresa of Ávila, *The Flaming Hart* (Antwerp: Johannes Meursius, 1623). Tobie also translated several other lives in a practice Murray has called ‘spiritual autobiography by proxy’, see Molly Murray, ‘The Radicalism of early modern spiritual autobiography’, in Adam Smyth, ed. *A History of English Autobiography* (New York: Cambridge, 2016), 41–55, at 50.

²⁹ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 79, 212. Tobie also had a Jesuit confessor, see Petrolini, ‘Il giornale di conversion,’ 280–1.

³⁰ Feil makes this claim in the first page of his biography of Tobie, see Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 2, 6.

³¹ Matthew, *Relation*, 48.

³² Oates’ recent biography of Tobie’s father gives some indication to the troubled relations, see Oates, *Moderate Radical*, 104, 130–1.

Tobie's youthful profligacy had already spoiled his parents' affection.³³ These problems began as early as January 1596. Dudley Carleton claimed Tobie's father took the opportunity of his son's illness to 'shame his own house by . . . accusations against his son . . . skillfully laid down, and his faults from infancy enrolled.'³⁴ This was only an opening silo in a lengthy drama. Two years later, in January 1598 Carleton divulged to John Chamberlain that Tobie senior wrote scathingly that 'he had rather have heard of his son's death than his sickness . . . as he is a reprobate, a castaway, an example above of an irreverent and disobedient child . . . He says he impiously practised against his dear and chaste mother'.³⁵ The report of his father's letter drove Tobie into a terrible fit of depression, and he confided in Carleton that he was deeply troubled by his father's displeasure.³⁶ In May of 1598, Tobie revealed that his mother's anger abated, and tensions seemed to have eased.³⁷ Nevertheless, it seems that Tobie never forgot this early unpleasantness. In his translation of Augustine's *Confessions*, he draws special attention to each reference to the story of the prodigal son.³⁸ Was this perhaps a sign that all those years later he still hoped for a father's embrace? In the coming years the thawing continued, especially after Tobie gained a seat in parliament in 1599.³⁹ One wonders if Tobie had these happy days in mind when he remarked, 'A woful thing that parents care more for their childrens fortune then for their soules', in his commentary on Augustine's relationship with his parents.⁴⁰ These good terms reversed when Tobie converted to Catholicism.⁴¹ Surely, Tobie knew that this would irreparably sour the relationship, and it is altogether possible that Matthew Sutcliffe was alluding to Tobie's conversion, when he accuses

³³ It seems that the Matthews had even less hope for their second son John, who was neither intellectually capable nor judicious with his purse, see Oates, *Moderate Radical*, 104.

³⁴ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Elizabeth, 1595-1597*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869) (hereafter *CSP*), 168.

³⁵ *CSP, 1598-1601*, 4.

³⁶ *CSP, 1598-1601*, 4. The precise nature of these fits is unclear, but Feil and Stewart agree that he suffered an epileptic seizure in 1596, and Stewart also adds that he had a mental fit: see Feil, *Tobie Matthew*, 2, 9, and Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 171. It is also clear that Tobie was suffering from melancholy or depression, see Oates, *Moderate Radical*, 130-1 and Bod. Rawl MS A 369 fo. 52r. A letter from Chamberlain to Carleton reveals that these fits continued until at least 1602, see *CSP, 1601-1603; With Addenda 1547-1565*, 188. For Tobie's reaction to his father's letter, see *CSP, 1598-1601*, 8.

³⁷ *CSP, 1598-1601*, 97.

³⁸ See, for example, a marginal note where Tobie remarked 'He still alludes to the Prodigall Sonne.' *Confessions*, 172.

³⁹ Feil, *Tobie Matthew*, 12-13. See, *Confessions*, 60 where Tobie comments in a marginal note 'A woful thing that parents care more for their childrens fortune then for their soules.'

⁴⁰ Matthew, *Confessions*, 60.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that Bishop Matthew had scorned his own parents by his conversion to the Church of England, see Matthew, *Relation*, vi.

Matthew of being ‘so unkind to his Parents’.⁴² After all, his mother was as an unwavering a Protestant ‘much more fervent toward the Puritanical sole-Scripture way’, as his father was a fierce controversialist.⁴³

For these reasons, Tobie should not have been surprised that his conversion, concealed at first by disobedience and disinformation, would reanimate and redirect his parents’ ire towards him. When he asked for permission to travel to the continent his father forbade him to go to Italy or Spain, and his mother encouraged him to return home soon to be ‘settled in marriage’.⁴⁴ He secured his parents’ approval by promising that he would only venture to France, and that he would seek a wife upon his return, but confessed that he ‘meant nothing less than what [he] said.’⁴⁵ Tobie also intimates that his father worried that a sojourn to Catholic countries would yield a conversion.⁴⁶ When his father discovered that he travelled to Italy, he urged him to stay fearing an early return might confirm rumours circulating in London.⁴⁷ The next time Tobie wrote to reassure his father, he lied, denying that he had become a ‘papist’.⁴⁸

The enmity between parents and son reached its climax when Tobie returned home and publicly revealed his conversion.⁴⁹ Thereafter Archbishop Matthew would always blame his son for his slow political progress.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it remains shocking that in 1608 Archbishop Matthew confided in Robert Cecil that he ‘might wish he [his son] had never been born’.⁵¹ Years later, Tobie’s parents successfully attempted to lift his exile in 1617.⁵² When he was exiled anew in 1618, the

⁴² Sutcliffe, *The Unmasking a Masse Monger* (London: 1626), dedication, Av, see also Zink, *Translating*, 205.

⁴³ Matthew, *Relation*, 131–132. Tobie’s father was famous for refuting Edmund Campion, campaigned to ban Catholic works in England, and frequently preached against Catholicism, emphasizing obedience. Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17; W.J. Sheils, ‘An Archbishop in the Pulpit: Tobie Matthew’s Preaching Diary 1606–1622’, in Diana Wood, ed. *Life and Thought in the Northern Church c. 1100–1700: Essays in Honour of Claire Cross*, (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 1999), 382–398, esp 396; David Matthew, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 29; and Oates, *Moderate Radical*.

⁴⁴ Matthew, *Relation*, 2–3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3. He even asks God for forgiveness for lying to his parents, though he ensures the reader that he felt secure in God’s mercy for this sin. One wonders if he had this episode in mind when he created the chapter heading ‘How he deceived his Mother, and went to Rome’. *Confessions*, 198.

⁴⁶ Matthew, *Relation*, 3.

⁴⁷ Matthew, *Relation*, 5. Again, was Tobie thinking of this when he entitled a section of the *Confessions*, ‘He neglecteth the commandment of his Parents, through the desire he hath to play at ball’, *Confessions*, 26.

⁴⁸ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 26–27.

⁴⁹ Stewart compares this with Augustine who is reunited with his mother at the time of his conversion, see Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 170.

⁵⁰ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 4.

⁵¹ *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, preserved at Hatfield house, Hertfordshire*, eds. M. S. Giuseppi and G. Dyfnallt Owen (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1968), 46.

⁵² At least this was the impression Chamberlain gave Carleton, see *CSP, 1611–1618*, 465.

relationship hit another all-time low, that is, until James knighted Tobie for his role in attempting to procure the Spanish match in 1623: ‘my parents grew kind towards me, yea and careful of me, and bountiful to me; and expressed not only their love, but such a particular kind of respect as was very extraordinary for parents to show towards a son’.⁵³ As ever, the warm sentiments did not last, and the relationship became ‘less tender’.⁵⁴ The last episodes were as bitter as any. When the archbishop died in 1628, he left his son ‘a piece of old Plate’ and a ledger of all the money given to him over the years in lieu of an inheritance amounting to fourteen thousand pounds.⁵⁵ Similarly, his mother used her will to fondly remember many of Tobie’s relations, leaving him only a ring with eleven diamonds given to her by King Charles whereas she had left sumptuous gifts to other relations.⁵⁶

Tobie never forgot these slights. Not only did he leave nothing to his family in his will, but he forbade them from disposing of his earthly remains. He also responded most cruelly to his mother’s snub. Mocking her death Tobie says:

For when her last sickness assaulted her, she could not, with all her Scriptures, find in her heart to think of dying . . . instead of disposing herself for God, and preparing herself to die, she would be still diverting and entertain herself otherwise, and still be calling for her silks, and works, with other toys and trinkets of that kind, so that finally she went out of the world more like an ignorant child of four years old, than like a talking Scripturist of almost four score.⁵⁷

The sourness of his relationship with his parents provided fodder for Tobie’s commentaries on Catholicism for years to come. Tobie saw good and loving parents as ubiquitous in Catholicism as they were absent in his own life. On Teresa of Ávila he writes, ‘there was ever so great indulgence in her; towards them, and such a tender kinde of care, over the health, and contentment, yea and even, as it were, for the good humour of her Children, as that she might well deserve the name of a

⁵³ Matthew, *Relation*, 135.

⁵⁴ Matthew, *Relation*, 135.

⁵⁵ A. H. Matthew, *Life*, 282.

⁵⁶ A. H. Matthew, *Life*, 287, see also Feil, *Tobie Matthew*, 199–200.

⁵⁷ Tobie, *Relation*, 132. One commentator deemed that this passage was ‘A blemish upon the taste of the “Relation” for its ‘unsympathetic and almost inhuman account which Sir Tobie gives of his mother’s death’: see Arthur Henry Bullen, ed. ‘The Rise and Growth of the Memoir in England’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 300 (1906), 259–77, 274. Stewart connects this to Matthew’s sonnet on Augustine: ‘Matthew’s image of his mother—the “talking Scriturist” reduced to a preliterate child—has strong echoes of the sonnet he wrote to Augustine’s mother St Monica, in which he implored the saint to “let my mother they best daughter bee | and make her learne at last, that tis no shame | to put Christes crosse, before her A.B.C”’ see Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 175.

hundred thousand *Mothers*, all in one.⁵⁸ Moreover, in a sonnet to Saint Monica, Tobie identifies Augustine as his father and asks Monica to pray for his own mother.⁵⁹ Indeed, he relished comparing his mother to saintly women, whom he found so much more venerable.⁶⁰ Unlike his own mother, a talking Scripturist concerned with things of the world, Monica ‘went every day to Mass, & was glad in serving the servants of God.’⁶¹ In more general terms concerning Monica, Tobie has only praise for the ‘admirable woman’, who had ‘so massy and solid vertues of *Humility, Patience, Longanimity, Prudence, Temperance, Prayer, Industry, and Charity.*’⁶² In his final banishment, Tobie wrote that he had been ‘nursed with many several milks, and sucked but little at the breasts of my Mother; but for milk, which I have drawn from the breast of my spirituall Mother, the Roman Catholique Church.’⁶³ Thus the bitter strife between parent and child ended devoid of compassion, and rife with disdain for Protestant religion, and like his hero Augustine, Tobie could only conclude that ‘The Catholic Church is our Mother.’⁶⁴

III. Friendships

In abandoning the faith of his parents Tobie strained more than his familial relations. In fact, he worried that he might threaten his friendship networks. On the contrary, throughout the conflict with his parents, Tobie was able to lean on a vast network of influential and supportive friends.⁶⁵ Moreover, he expanded that network throughout the continent. Without his friends, Tobie probably would not have been able to survive financially or politically in Jacobean England.⁶⁶

Perhaps the most significant friendship of his life was with Francis Bacon. The two men first met during Tobie’s first term in parliament and by all accounts became fast friends.⁶⁷ Wood claims that Tobie’s reputation as a well-educated traveller attracted Bacon.⁶⁸ In short

⁵⁸ Teresa of Avila, *The Flaming Hart* (Antwerp: 1642) 1v, hereafter *Flaming Hart*.

⁵⁹ Anthony G. Petti, ‘Unknown Sonnets by Sir Tobie Matthew’, *Recusant History*, 9.3 (1967): 123–158, 128.

⁶⁰ In contrast to his mother, who called for her silks at her deathbed, he underscores Theresa’s humility, see *Flaming Hart*, 503.

⁶¹ *Confessions*, 206.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 97–8.

⁶³ Matthew, *Missive of Consolation*, A4r–v.

⁶⁴ *Confessions*, 282.

⁶⁵ In one instance, William Prichard complained to Dudley Carleton that Tobie was not good about remembering his friends in his early travels to France in 1598, see *CSP, 1598–1601*, 4.

⁶⁶ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 115–116.

⁶⁷ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 13.

⁶⁸ Wood, *Athenae*, 2: 194. These sojourns distinguished Tobie from his peers, see David Matthew, *Sir Tobie*, 14.

time, Bacon's trust in the younger Matthew was unsurpassed.⁶⁹ Given their intimacy, it is unsurprising that Tobie used Bacon in 1607 as an intermediary to reach Robert Cecil soon after his conversion to explain what had transpired. In a letter addressed to Cecil and intended for Bacon as well, Tobie explains that he felt compelled to personally report his change of religion before news of it reached Cecil by other means.⁷⁰ Tobie confessed that he became a 'Roman Catholic, and ever meant to be so', and as such he 'most humbly begged the effects of his Lordship's compassion and favour'.⁷¹ Matthew's self-deprecation not only urged Cecil to interpret his conversion as an error in his own understanding, but also encouraged Cecil to respect his will, lamenting that a man should not be held accountable for saving his own soul 'in his own way'.⁷² Tobie must have been relieved to hear that Cecil was relatively unconcerned with his change of religion, and reported his response as: 'noble and kind . . . he knew nothing concerning me but well; that he was sorry to have heard before . . . that I was perverted in my religion; and he wished that I would recover myself'.⁷³

In these and other conflicts, Bacon vigorously defended Tobie, but the greatest testament to their friendship was Tobie's tribute to Bacon in his work. Tobie compiled and translated Bacon's essays into Italian and gushed about him in the preface.⁷⁴ Religious change did not impede their friendship. Bacon, in part because of his lukewarm religious feeling, was able to transcend polemics to sustain his friendship with Tobie. Similarly, John Donne wrote to Tobie, 'I have been sometimes glad to hear, that some of my friends have differed from me in religion . . . And be you pleased to be assured, that no man desires to renew, or continue, or encrease a friendship with you more'.⁷⁵ Tobie maintained these friendships after conversion, and counted on these friends to help him in times of trouble.

⁶⁹ David Matthew, *Sir Tobie*, 30.

⁷⁰ Matthew, *Relation*, 58.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷² Matthew, *Relation*, 59. It is worth noting the resonances between this belief and those of many people questioned concerning religious plurality by the Inquisition, see Stuart Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁷³ Matthew, *Relation*, 59–60. Why this clemency from Cecil? Perhaps because of his relationship with Archbishop Matthew? It is interesting to note parallels with Sir Oliver Manners, who, through the efforts of the Jesuit John Gerard, converted to Catholicism, and was later ordained.

⁷⁴ Tobie Matthew, *Saggi Morali del Signore Francesco Bacono, Cavagliero Inglese, Gran Cancelliero d'Inghilterra* (London: Giovanni Bilio, 1618), 3, see also Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 114.

⁷⁵ Tobie Matthew, *A Collection of Letters, Made by Sr Tobie Matthew, Kt* (London: Printed for Tho. Horne, Tho. Bennet, and Francis Saunders, 1692), 336–337.

He buttressed his network of powerful friends at home with an equally prominent multinational Catholic support system abroad. He was, as noted above, close with several Jesuits with whom he frequently resided. When in Rome, he often stayed with Bellarmine, and when in Spain he visited with Pedro de Ribadeneira, the Spanish chronicler of Elizabethan persecution.⁷⁶ Toward the end of his life he also relied on the Jesuits at Ghent where he lived out the remainder of his days. Perhaps the more important friendships that Tobie made abroad were with fellow Englishmen. Matthew's contemporary, George Gage, became an intimate friend and collaborator.⁷⁷ Tobie's first letter to Gage indicates that he was in the habit of making fast friends, 'though yet I have not the honour to know you I do and will exceedingly love you.'⁷⁸ In 1611, during Matthew's first banishment, he and Gage crossed paths, and their wanderlust bound them together. At that time, Matthew committed to supporting Gage financially, which he did for the rest of Gage's life. They became so close, that when Tobie fell ill on his way to Rome, he left Gage as the beneficiary of his 7,000 pound estate.⁷⁹ In Gage, Tobie found a spiritual counterpart and a companion who was similarly drawn to Catholicism by a fondness for travel and love of arts.⁸⁰ For Tobie Matthews, conversion rarely jeopardized existing friendships, and won him new friends.

IV. Consequences: Gender, Sexuality, Homosociality

Though Tobie was able to maintain and augment friendships, there is no doubt that his conversion damaged his status, reputation, and identity in England. Even if analysing the consequences of his conversion, especially those related to his gender and sexual identity, is to investigate the attacks against him, to do so still illuminates the important role that the relationship between gender, sexuality, and homosocial bonds played in his conversion, and conversions more broadly. Tobie's association with Catholicism, and especially the Society of Jesus, had serious consequences and invited questions (or

⁷⁶ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 64–67. For more on Ribadeneira's views on Elizabethan Persecution, see Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Pedro de Ribadeneira's Ecclesiastical history of the schism of the Kingdom of England: A Spanish Jesuit's history of the English Reformation*, ed. Spencer J. Weinreich (Boston: Brill, 2017). Giudice claims that Matthew was in 'constant contact' with Bellarmine. Franco Giudice, 'Tobie Matthew, Francis Bacon, and Galileo's Letter to Benedetto Castelli', *Galileana*, 17 (2020): 7–26, 18.

⁷⁷ Gage (1582–1638) was a diplomat and businessman, the son of Edward Gage. For more on this friendship, see J.P. Vander Motten and Katrien Daemen-de Gelder, 'Sir Toby Matthew and his "Fidus Achates" George Gage, 1607–1620', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews*, 23:1 (2010), 20–30

⁷⁸ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 53.

⁷⁹ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 75–76.

⁸⁰ The two were also collaborators. James I missioned each of them in the Spanish match. Gage went to Rome to seek a dispensation from Gregory XV, and Tobie to Spain. Both would negotiate with Peter Paul Rubens for his artworks.

outright assaults) concerning his gender and sexuality.⁸¹ These attacks played out consistently throughout his life, with a constant suggestion of his hypersexuality and effeminacy.⁸² At the same time, they may also point to some significant, albeit poorly understood, aspects of his conversion. Catholicism, and its world of homosocial relationships, especially within religious orders, provided Tobie with the type of affective network he greatly desired as well as the freedom to shed the yoke of familial responsibility.⁸³ That is, as much as commentary on his gender and sexuality provided significant fodder for his enemies, so too might they explain his conversion.

To Englishmen, Tobie was a type of bogeyman. He was a papist, ‘Jesuited’ at the very least, and seemed to spend too much time with ladies at court. Indeed, most of the vitriol aimed at Tobie was about his proximity to women, and thereby his womanish nature, according to some. These associations may have had an early antecedent when Charles I used a diminutive phrase to refer to Tobie as ‘littell prittie Tobie Matthew.’⁸⁴ Over time, the association became pointed attacks starting with Sutcliffe’s response to Tobie’s translation of Augustine published in 1626.⁸⁵ The very act of translating, deemed feminine, troubled Sutcliffe.⁸⁶ Moreover, Tobie’s deliberate choice of translating devotional texts, seen as reading material for women, further suggested the ways he transgressed gender expectations.⁸⁷ Tobie’s portrayal of women

⁸¹ Bray has demonstrated the association between Jesuits and ‘sodomites’ and Stewart has elucidated both the link between monastic culture and homosexual activity and Catholicism and sexual excess. Zink, *Translating Men*, 227–8, Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), 21 and Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 38–83, 47. Jessica Keene has shown that this association with religious orders and ‘lecherousness’ dates back to the Henrician reform and the dissolution of the monasteries: Jessica Keene, ‘“Furnaces of all lecherousness”: Narratives of Sexual Depravity and the Dissolution of the English Monasteries’, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 53.2 (2002): 379–403.

⁸² In this, Tobie was no different than other converts as hypersexuality and effeminacy were categories used as terms of abuse used across confessions, see Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, ‘Introduction’, in Ditchfield and Smith, eds. *Conversions*, 4, and Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

⁸³ Boswell encouraged many scholars to delve more deeply into this question. Boswell argued that religious life and especially life in monastic communities offered a sort of safe-haven for so-called ‘sodomites’: John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 243–266.

⁸⁴ See Richard Ince, ‘Littell Prittie Tobie Matthew’, *The Contemporary Review*, 144 (1933): 342–7. Zink has linked this to an overt attempt to feminize a man in his forties, Zink, 220.

⁸⁵ Matthew’s translation was highly polemical in nature and Protestants like Sutcliffe already opposed it on these grounds for making claims on Augustine’s status as a monk, see Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion*, 77.

⁸⁶ See Zink, *Translating Men*.

⁸⁷ See Kathleen Curtin, ‘Augustine in the Lady’s “Closet”: Gender, Conversion, and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century English Translations of the Confessions’, *Studies in Philology* 115, no. 3 (2018): 524–543, 524.

within the text was even more perturbing. Sutcliffe ridiculed the way Tobie genders Saint Monica's soul as 'manly.'⁸⁸ Notably, Tobie made similar claims regarding all the women whose lives he wrote or translated.⁸⁹

Sutcliffe's attacks only became more vicious where issues of sexual license were concerned. He scoffs at Tobie's dedication of the text to the Virgin Mary asking 'how could so holy a Virgin accept of such an impure Christian?'⁹⁰ He mocks Tobie's belief in the Immaculate Conception, explaining that Tobie's judgment was 'overwhelmed with Mistes and Fogges of Lust and Concupiscence.'⁹¹ Sutcliffe underscores Tobie's promiscuity when he comments on Tobie's translation of Augustine's retreat from sensuality, to which he says 'the Apostate [Tobie] and his consorts are admirably addicted, being Heretikes by profession, and sensuall Epicures in life and confession.'⁹² With these observations, Sutcliffe emasculates Tobie asking, 'why may not the Apostate have a female soule, being so much addicted to the feminine gender?'⁹³ He redoubles this accusation by asking Tobie as 'the Translator himself' to 'write what he did in the Brothels of *France, Italy, and Spaine*, when he was younger then now.'⁹⁴

This image of Tobie as lusty and overly fond of ladies' company would come to plague his reputation in the coming decades. Perhaps Sutcliffe's vitriol drew on Tobie's own correspondence with James I. Indeed, it is possible to read Tobie's description of Donna Maria as brimming with overexuberance:

She is fayr in all perfection; her favour is very good, & fayr; far from having any one ill feature in it, her countenance is sweet, in an extraordinary manner . . . both her head is rarely set on to her neck and so are her excellent

⁸⁸ Sutcliffe, *Unmasking*, 57. In Zink's view, Sutcliffe and others saw this as too 'feminine', see Zink, *Translating Men*, 203–4. Indeed, in a later translation of the *Confessions*, written as an emendation to Tobie's, William Watts insists that Tobie had primarily written the text for 'The *collapsed Ladies* he knew had no skill to examine the *Latin*', see *St. Augustines Confessions Translated: And With some marginal notes illustrated Wherein Divers Antiquities are explained; And the marginal notes of the former Popish Translation, answered*, trans. William Watts (London: 1631) V, xiii, 258, see also Zink, *Translating Men*, 205.

⁸⁹ For example, he says that Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi was 'by sex a woman, but in spirit & strength of mind, more then a man', see Vincenzo Puccini, *The Life of the Holy and Venerable Mother Suor Maria Maddalena de Patsi* (St. Omer's English College Press, 1619), preface 3, hereafter *Suor Maria*. Perhaps these examples reflect Crawford's argument that 'unstable notions of gender lie at the heart of early modern conversion narratives': Hannah Crawford '“A father to the soul and a son to the body”': gender and generation in Robert Southwell's *Epistle to his father*', in Ditchfield and Smith, eds. *Conversions*, 62. This confirms the instability that Bouley claimed in his findings concerning the gender and body of saints: Bradford Bouley, *Pious Postmortems: Anatomy, Sanctity, and the Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 109–128.

⁹⁰ Sutcliffe, *Unmasking*, 31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, *Unmasking*, 57.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59, and see Zink, *Translating Men*, 206.

hands to her arms, & they say that before she is dressed she is incomparably better than afterward.⁹⁵

Perhaps this description helped form the caricature of Tobie found in the ca. 1630 anonymous play, *Hierarchomachia, or the Anti Bishop*. This cemented the image of Tobie by portraying him as a stock sexual villain called Bitomattus, as evident by his exchange with Nivetta, a Catholic woman. Responding to Nivetta's confusion about his exuberance for courtship, Bittomatus insists that courtship is a form of prayer, explaining he can offer prayers to saints or even better 'To women, images of God'. He even parries her accusations of idolatry claiming that 'from outward beauty that in women shines,/I take a scantling of their molded souls/Into Gods liking; thence I find a way/ To court the Deity, so make my prayer.'⁹⁶ Elsewhere Bitomattus continues 'Unto a modest Lady that her breasts/(Which then she would have covered) were not made By nature to be canopied or hid,/ But rather were laid open to invite/The Curious eye to feast it with delight'.⁹⁷

Tobie's perceived predatory sexuality was especially horrifying to his countrymen over the perception that he was using sex as a means of conversion. As early as 1607, Dudley Carleton wrote to Thomas Edmonds that he already believed Tobie's preoccupation was with converting others, and insinuates that he used sex rather than theological persuasion to convert women: 'What betwixt, the visible church and the *sensible steeple*, our women even to the highest fall that way very fast.'⁹⁸ These complaints resurfaced in the days leading up to Tobie's banishment in 1618. Thomas Larkin wrote to Thomas Pickering in December 1618 explaining that 'Toby Matthew was yesterday, now a second time, banished the land, as a dangerous man for our collapsed ladies.'⁹⁹ The phrase, 'collapsed ladies', oft-repeated by Tobie's other enemies, not only denotes spiritual failure, but also could have insinuated a moral failing.¹⁰⁰ To clarify, John Gee also disparaged the efforts of Catholic priests on sexual grounds, 'their

⁹⁵ In A. H. Matthew, *Life*, 212–3. Matthew believes that this reference to undress refers to full court attire, but notes that Seccombe 'seems to have placed a different construction on the words', 213. Yogerst clarifies that Seccombe thought the description was licentious, see Yogerst, 'Sir Tobie Matthew', 173.

⁹⁶ Suzanne Gosset, *Anon, Hierarchomachia, or the Anti-Bishop*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Toronto: Associated University Presses Ltd., 1982.), II. 1827–1836. I am thankful for the ability to draw on Michael Questier's analysis from an unpublished chapter on the *Hierarchomachia*, which he kindly shared with me.

⁹⁷ *Hierarchomachia*, IV.1.11.1871–1877.

⁹⁸ BL Stowe MS 169 fo. 158, see also Murray, *Poetics of Conversion*, 110.

⁹⁹ In A. H. Matthew, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 158–9. In a letter from Trumbull to Carleton dated February 12, 1618, Trumbull also explains that he had been told by Trumbull that he [Tobie] had been sent away 'for conversing with some greate Ladyes', Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Flanders, 1585–1780, doc ref number: SP 77/13 f.165.

¹⁰⁰ See Zink, *Translating Men*, 205, and Curtin, 'Augustine in the Lady's "Closet"', 539.

Chastity becomes charity, for the relieving collapsed Ladies wants.¹⁰¹

This image dogged Tobie throughout his remaining years in England. In an anonymous deposition of 1632 a critic derides Tobie as the frequenter of ladies' chambers, who praised, in one:

crimson of the cheeks, in others the pallor of the brows, the milk of the neck, the ivory of the teeth, and the coral of the lip, and who, if one attempted to conceal her charms, would cry out "... That neck, those breasts are the creator's glories; unveil that bosom and those eyes, that they may be seen and praised."¹⁰²

So ubiquitous were these claims that the condemnations of Matthew did not come from Protestants alone. In fact, one anonymous Jesuit complained that Tobie lived in splendour, 'attending banquets... publicly kissing and fondling ladies... calling a lady's bosom the milky way through which the gods would wander'.¹⁰³ Perhaps it was this link between sexuality and conversion that hastened Tobie's final banishment from England in 1641; however, one of the striking features of a later petition was that 'certaine Jesuites had seduced himself... and his brother'.¹⁰⁴ Whether or not this particular petition pointed to homoerotic activity on Tobie's part, there is some substantive evidence to suggest that Tobie was comfortable in homoerotic, or at least homosocial, spaces and that such encounters featured in his conversion and Catholic life.

¹⁰¹ John Gee, *The Foot out of the Snare: With a Detection of Sundry Late Practices and Impostures of the Priests and Iesuits in England. Whereunto is added a Catalogue of such books as in this Authors Knowledge have been vented within two years last past in London, by the Priests and their Agents* (London: 1624). See also Zink, *Translating Men*, 205.

¹⁰² Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, A Series, vol. XXVI, p. 195 (endorsed 'A Fragment about Sir Toby Matthew'), translated by J.P. Feil: Feil, pp. 192–3. With thanks to Michael Questier for sharing these citations from the AAW from an unpublished chapter on the *Hierarchomachia*. William Case made a similar accusation in 1632: Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 194, citing AAW, A XXVI, p. 194. Feil refers to another document titled 'Characteres Tobia et aliorum', AAW, A XXVIII, p. 223, Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 194–5. Stewart identifies this woman as Lucy, countess of Carlisle and notes that Matthew's intimacy with Lucy 'was grist to the gossip mill': Stewart, *Life-Writing*, 177.

¹⁰³ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 214–215. Feil citing Vatican Library Barberini Latini 8633/216ff and PRO 31/9/17/202–212. The issue of Tobie's extravagant lifestyle and dress had also long been a topic of conversation as a letter of 1617 from Chamberlain to Carleton indicates: 'I heare he [Tobie] is grown very gay or rather gawdie in his attire which I should not have expected of his yeares and judgement': *Letters of John Chamberlain, Memoirs XII, Part 2*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 105, hereafter *LJC*. One wonders if Tobie's extravagance stands as more evidence of his Jesuit training. As Tutino points out George Gilbert had penned a set of instructions on how to convert the English people based on the experience of the great authorities of Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion. From their example he claimed it was best for missionaries to have 'several luxurious outfits', see Stefania Tutino, 'Jesuit Accommodation, Dissimulation, Mental Reservation', in Ines G. Županov, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 216–240, at p. 220.

¹⁰⁴ *The journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the Earl of Stafford*, ed. Wallace Notestein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), 125. Though it is possible that 'seduced' did not necessarily have a sexual connotation, there was a campaign comprised of 'gossip and innuendo' circulating regarding Tobie in the days before his banishment. Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 66–7.

Tobie's Homosocial Context

There is some reason to dismiss the rumours of Tobie's hyper-sexualized relations with women as mere polemic and not reflective of Tobie's experience or sexuality: Tobie's life was largely spent in the company of men. For example, it remains plausible that his relationship with Bacon surpassed mere intellectual intimacy and entertained a certain homoeroticism.¹⁰⁵ Even if this were not true, many observers commented on the striking closeness between the two. In 1617 John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton expressing his shock at the intimacy between them:

he hath ben ever since (I thincke) at Goramberrie, being so exceedingly favored and respected by that Lord that yt is thought *aliquid nimium*, that a man of his place should give countenance to one so affected, and some sticke not to say that former private familiaritie shold geve place to publike respects.¹⁰⁶

Their proximity alone is suggestive, as Alan Bray has already suggested that to distinguish between the 'sodomite' and the 'world of masculine friendship' was very difficult.¹⁰⁷ Closeness and public displays of intimacy hint at, but cannot confirm, the possibility of sexual activity.¹⁰⁸

Even if there is reason to doubt the sexual nature of Tobie's relationship with Bacon, some of Tobie's other relationships hint more credibly at the place and importance of homosocial relations in his life and conversion. The most notable, are his relationships with the two English men he tried to convert in Italy, William Cecil, Lord Roos, and William Paulet, Lord St. John. Tobie met both men when they were unmarried and eighteen, and ultimately, both were derided for impotency with their wives. Tobie spent years following Roos around the continent, always trying to convert him, and consistently updating Paul V on his progress.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, in England, anxieties that Tobie might be successful were rising. In a September 1608 letter to Robert Cecil, Henry Wotton describes Tobie as the 'principal' of a 'knot of bastard Catholics.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 116 and Alan Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship', *Queering the Renaissance*, Jonathan Goldberg, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 54.

¹⁰⁶ *LJC*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 201.

¹⁰⁸ Chloë Houston, "'I wish to be no other but as he": Persia, masculinity, and conversion in early-seventeenth-century travel writing and drama', in Ditchfield and Smith, eds. *Conversions*, 216–235, at p. 226.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, 'Delli duoi Baroni Inglesi [Roos and Wentworth] convertiti ultimamente in Roma – Copia della relatione mandata al Papa alli 22 di Maggio 1609', AAW, A VIII, p. 513.

¹¹⁰ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, vol. I, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), 434–5.

Tobie was also involved in a particularly charged homoerotic episode involving Roos a few years later in 1611. While Tobie was escorting Roos throughout travels in northern Europe, according to Sir Thomas Puckering's tutor, Thomas Lorkin, Roos put on an unusual display 'taking out his privy member in the presence of divers men and woemen he showed them open by 5 or 6 tymes together . . . and not contented this with, layd them affoward upon Mr. Matthew his shoulder.'¹¹¹ This was the most overt homoerotic activity recorded between Matthew and Roos, and it gives pause, especially considering that immediately following the description of this event, Lorkin admits to his addressee, Adam Newton, that Roos was Catholic saying, 'of what religion his Lordship is, I suppose you understand by the company he hath kept, and may further by his choise of his servants or rather Mr. Matthew's choise of them, who are all strangers and noted catholiques.'¹¹² It is as if to say, that the homoerotic activity itself, and his association with Tobie, were signs of Roos' confession.

Among the servants in question was one Diego, a Spanish cupbearer. According to Feil, one of Tobie's tactics was to find attractive Catholic servants for Roos. In return, Roos exclaimed that 'no drink tasted good unless it was served by his Spanish cupbearer.'¹¹³ Ultimately, Diego was at the center of Roos' highly shameful marriage to Anne Lake, whom he married in 1615. Shortly thereafter, Anne complained that Roos had never consummated their marriage and his impotency became common knowledge. George Gerrard revealed to Dudley Carleton in 1617 that Anne and her family had shamed her husband into turning over a sum of 800 pounds a year in order that 'she and her family might conceale from hys Grand father an eminent imperfection in him.'¹¹⁴ At about that same time, the rumour mill reignited with claims that Roos was participating in an ongoing affair with his servant John Duppa. As John Chamberlain relates, Duppa was Roos' 'cheife man . . . and some say his bedfellow.'¹¹⁵ In any case, according to the testimony of Sara Swarton, Anne never forgave Roos for the attention he paid to Diego.¹¹⁶ By August 1617, George Gerrard wrote to Dudley Carleton explaining that Roos 'has sold his house in charterhouse yard, pawned his plate and jewels, and gone off secretly, with his Spanish servant Don Diego.'¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ British Library, London, Harl MS 7002/199-202, 200v. See John Walter Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad 1604-1667* (London: Alden Press, 1952), 51-55.

¹¹² Harl MS 7002/199-202, 200v.

¹¹³ In Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 70.

¹¹⁴ George Gerrard to Carleton, June 4, 1617, SP 14/92 f. 162r, The National Archives, London.

¹¹⁵ *LJC*, II, 80.

¹¹⁶ Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 117 citing STAC 8/111/26.

¹¹⁷ *CSP, 1611-1618*, 482.

What the Roos affair indicates is how Tobie may have been comfortable with a certain amount of homoerotic activity, and more important, that he understood he could make Catholicism appealing to Roos by pointing toward opportunities for homosocial bonding. It must also be noted that in his wider context, Tobie was familiar with two courts remarkable for their homosocial relationships. The first of these was that of James I, who was long-rumoured to have sexual affairs with his so-called ‘favourites’, including George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, a close associate of Tobie.¹¹⁸ Second, Tobie, who was familiar with Paul V, and knew Scipione Borghese, was surely aware of the papal *nipote’s* great scandal.¹¹⁹ For some time, the cardinal openly carried on an affair with another cleric, Stefano Pignatelli, the climax of which occurred when Paul V banished Scipione’s lover to control the scandal. Scipione’s ensuing depression forced Paul to recall Pignatelli to Rome and consecrate him a bishop, for pity of his woeful nephew.¹²⁰ In another striking chapter, Tobie defended a Milanese Jesuit, Tommaso Ceroneo, who, rumour had it, was banished from England because ‘he grew scandalously debauched with boyes and otherwise.’¹²¹ It seems Tobie was comfortable in, and even exploited, homosocial circles.

Simultaneously, it must be underscored that Tobie did not seem comfortable with the idea of spending his life married to a woman. Recall that he knowingly lied to his mother spurning the fortune she promised him, if only he would come home and marry: ‘I made a promise . . . to my mother, that her desires concerning me should not be frustrated long . . . though yet, I must confess, I meant nothing less than what I said.’¹²² Similarly, Christopher Perkins’ joke that Tobie converted to Catholicism over a nun in Florence was distasteful to him: ‘To this I told him that I would hope he was but in jest; for otherwise it would be too unworthy a thing even for any inferior dull creature to tempt so much as any prentice with such trash as that’.¹²³ What does Tobie’s aversion to women and delight in men suggest for his conversion? It is possible that he felt constrained by the Protestant emphasis on marriage promulgated by Luther and promoted in the Church of England. Perhaps he knew well that the world of single-sex orders in Roman Catholicism offered an escape from this fate.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ For more on James’ sexuality, Michael B. Young, ‘James VI and I: Time for a Reconsideration?’, *Journal of British Studies*, 51.3 (2012): 540–67.

¹¹⁹ For Matthew’s relationship with Scipione, see Giudice, ‘Tobie Matthew’, 15.

¹²⁰ See Franco Mormando, *Bernini: His Life and His Rome* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 48–50.

¹²¹ *LJC*, XIII vol 2, 101. For Tobie’s defense of Cerroneo see, Feil, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 115–6.

¹²² Matthew, *Relation*, 3.

¹²³ Matthew, *Relation*, 71.

¹²⁴ Boswell, *Christianity and Homosexuality*, 293.

Tobie would have known through his association with Scipione Borghese that the Church frequently turned a blind eye to anti-sodomy legislation, and that the accusations of sodomy levied against Renaissance Popes, artists, and nobility were indeed verifiable.¹²⁵ Whether or not Tobie engaged in sexual activity with other men is unknown, but he shuddered at the thought of marriage.¹²⁶

There remains one final and underexamined element of Tobie's sexuality related to his yearning for Catholicism, that is chastity. Since his own time, almost every commentator has drawn attention to his extremes, whether they be with women, men, or general flamboyance in appearance and custom. This undermines a very real part of his conversion, which was piety. As Yoggerst notes, 'if we had only Sir Tobie's writings, most of which are profoundly religious, we should draw a picture of him as a venerable ascetic'.¹²⁷ Indeed, Tobie's life and works gives readers reason to concur. First, he describes his life before conversion as 'overshadowed by the clouds of heresy and sensuality'.¹²⁸ Furthermore, he explains that after his conversion he became freed of an unnamed vice.¹²⁹ A confession in a letter written after his conversion suggests this vice could have been lust as he explains that he 'left swearing and lying and whoring and gaminge'.¹³⁰

Moreover, the type of spirituality he espoused and promoted through his translations, which was highly consistent with early modern Catholic piety, emphasized severe penitential rigour. See, for example, a description of Maria Maddalena de Pazzi's mortifications, in which, he highlights,

she gathered together rugged sticks, and thornes, & she tumbled therein so long stark naked, that the paine served to quinch that divellish fire. Sometimes

¹²⁵ See Helmut Puff, *Sodomy in Reformation Germany and Switzerland, 1400-1600*, Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 31, and Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 118-119.

¹²⁶ Simply put, there is no strong evidence for it. Bray takes this a step further suggesting that one would be greatly mistaken to assume a softness toward sodomy on the part of these writers. Sodomy for Tobie Matthew was one of 'those crimes which are against nature . . . ever to be detested and punished,' and the sodomite for John Lyly was 'a most dangerous and infectious beast'. Bray, 'Homosexuality and Male Friendship', 46. What Bray misses is that these are not Tobie's words at all, but Tobie's translation of Augustine's words in his edition, see *Confessions*, 108-9. In fact, Tobie makes no special note of this passage whatsoever, a curious omission given that he frequently comments on passages concerning sexual sin. If anything, the passage does *indeed* suggest a softness concerning sodomy on Tobie's part.

¹²⁷ Yoggerst, *Sir Tobie Matthew*, 13.

¹²⁸ Matthew, *Relation*, 4.

¹²⁹ Matthew, *Relation*, 53. In his marginal notes in the *Confessions* he complains that heresy and sensuality were the main 'plagues' of his day and seems to suggest that he succumbed to them, see *Confessions*, 33; was sensuality the vice to which he refers?

¹³⁰ Tobie Matthew to [Unknown], July 22, 1606, SP 98/2 f. 107v-108r, State Papers, The National Archives, London. To this he adds in the *Confessions*: 'I humbly beg that in the sight of God, thou wilt still be pleased to assist my soule. And that neyther the mist, or fog of sensuality may deteyne me; nor the syde-wind of vanity divert me; nor the contrary wind of impatience tosse me'. *Confessions*, 11.

she would afflict her with disciplines of iron, and girde herself about with a most terrible girdle, which in coursest canvas, she had imbrodered with piercing nays, in such sort, that in truth the only fight thereof maketh them shrinke and even tremble, who looke upon it.¹³¹

It must be noted that Tobie added mortifications in this translation, which were not present in Puccini's original.¹³² This may leave us with two more possibilities regarding his sexuality. First, it may suggest that Tobie had a particular sadistic or masochistic sexuality, of which there is no strong evidence beyond modern psychoanalysis of his texts.¹³³ Second, he clearly feared the sin of lust, and attempted to avoid it using the strictures of Catholic mortification practices. At the same time, perhaps he was aware that such a domination of the will was not wholly achievable, as he reminds the reader of his translation of Puccini's life of Suor Maria, 'Catholikes must be sober, and not venture to freely upon the imitation of every thing, wherof they find an example in the life of saints.'¹³⁴ Tobie understood that saints were exemplary characters, whose feats inspired faithful people even if they fell short of their holy ideal. Likewise, in his translation of the *Confessions*, he adds a 'Note' in the margins where Augustine claims 'I was so foolish, as not to know it to be written: *That no man can have Chastity, unless thou give it.*'¹³⁵ Pinning down Tobie's sexuality with any certainty may well be impossible, but we can discern that, one way or another, it was a major part of his conversion, and his efforts to draw others to the Catholic fold.

Conclusion

Intellectual theological polemics, movements of the will, and miraculous moments of clairvoyance have long been a part of conversion narratives. More recently, these and corresponding emotions have been considered fundamental to changes in religion. Calls to consider the place of emotion in conversion are well-defended in Tobie's conversion. Wanting for love following serious turmoil in his kinship bonds, Tobie found it everywhere in Catholicism. The ability to travel and explore new cultures was physically and emotionally freeing. The discovery of Catholic piety, and the devotion of Catholics to the Eucharist overwhelmed Tobie. In Catholicism he

¹³¹ *Suor Maria*, 108.

¹³² Tobie also mistranslates *ecessos* not as 'ecstasies' but as 'excesses' to suggest her excessive rigor: John R. Yamamoto-Wilson, "'O that mine Adversary had written a Book!'" Translations of Catholic Literature and the Eroticization of Pain in Seventeenth-Century England,' *Translation and Literature* 20.2 (2011), 175-90, 183-4.

¹³³ For an approach to this sort of analysis, see Frank Graziano, *Wounds of Love: The Mystical Marriage of Rose of Lima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹³⁴ *Suor Maria*, 3v.

¹³⁵ *Confessions*, 269.

felt embraced by a wider community including a supernatural one with saintly intercessors. On a more mundane level, conversion also offered Tobie greater liberty to pursue the affective bonds that interested him most. He was not drawn to the model set forth by Luther to marry and minister. Instead, he was nourished by his homosocial relationships, which likely played a significant role in his conversion. Moreover, he seems to have understood the strong pulls of same-sex attraction and used this as a means of conversion amongst his friends. This leaves two important conclusions. First, that sexuality was undoubtedly a factor in Tobie's conversion. Second, that the affective networks of homosocial bonding may have played a larger role in conversion than realized.