the ‘infernall kennell of Romish blood-hounds’:
discourses of persecution and pamphlet polemic in early modern England
to form a picture of what these terms meant to contemporary people.\(^1\) On the basis of the linguistic evidence provided by a selection of English polemical pamphlets from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I argue that the seventeenth century witnessed the growing dominance, rather than the progressive disappearance, of accusatory linguistic structures of persecution. This suggests that, if the seventeenth century did indeed see the production of tolerationist discourse, it was a discourse coloured by the rhetorical logic of persecution.

**historiographical overview**

The traditional Whig account of the development of toleration in England, which still retains a great deal of power, was one of emphatic progress — from a dark age of religious persecution to an enlightened era of tolerance, pluralism and freedom. Through this historical lens the early modern period was constructed as a watershed in the development of individualism and rational judgement. The Reformation, English Civil War and Glorious Revolution formed the crucible from which (predominantly English and liberal) civilisation emerged as the triumphant victor over ignorant barbarism. This story was begun in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by writers like Lord Macaulay, Samuel Rawlinson Gardiner, W. E. H. Lecky and W. K. Jordan, who charted the progress from a medieval period dominated by the ‘wild fictions’ of a jealous and irrational theology, to a seventeenth-century intellectual society animated by a rational ‘spirit of enquiry’, which eventually became ‘the very centre and seedplot of religious liberty’.\(^2\) The key actors in this drama were Puritan reformers of the 1640s and 50s who turned dissent into a universal principle of tolerance, and whose achievements were later cemented by the vision of great philosophers (especially John Locke) and the Act of Toleration.\(^3\) The Jesuit writer Joseph

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\(^{1}\) The term ‘rhetoric’ has itself, of course, been the object of immense linguistic and philosophical debate. I employ it here to refer to modes of language used to transmit agendas of persuasion or contestation. At the same time, I am moving away from classical conceptions of rhetoric by emphasising the broader operations of language beyond the designs of one individual author. We should also be alive to the use of metaphor and analogy within rhetoric: indeed, as my title indicates, it was through metaphor that persecution made many of its most striking contributions to pamphlet literature. For a concise summary of the debates over rhetoric, see J. Richards, *Rhetoric* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).


\(^{3}\) See for example, Jordan, iv, 468-9.
Lecler complicated matters somewhat by arguing that Puritan thought was in fact opposed to genuine tolerance, and that England was not first but last in extending toleration to religious minorities, but he nevertheless confirmed the general consensus that tolerance evolved in the early modern period from a combination of intellectual and political transformations.\(^4\)

In recent years, a considerable scholarly reaction has grown up against the Whig version of events, encouraged by the philosophical deconstruction of liberal tolerance undertaken by thinkers like Herbert Marcuse.\(^5\) Partaking in the eagerness of social history to accord importance to ordinary men and women, some ‘revisionist’ historians have refocused their study on the practical conditions of tolerance and intolerance ‘on the ground’, rather than focusing on grand optimistic visions. Benjamin Kaplan, for instance, looks at the reality of coexistence at a local level, as a ‘social practice, a pattern of interaction among people of different faiths’.\(^6\) This was a sort of toleration that did not require the elaboration of mighty principles, and existed side by side with the possibility of intolerance throughout the early modern period.\(^7\) On the other hand, Kaplan argues that neither the seventeenth century nor the Enlightenment itself saw any real decline in persecution.\(^8\)

This position owes much to the work of Ole Grell and Roy Porter, who have argued that despite some progress, toleration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was characterised more by fluctuations, regressions and half-measures than universal acceptance and implementation.\(^9\) In a 1991 volume, co-edited with Jonathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, Grell contended that the development of toleration had little to do with either philosophical principles or Puritanical enthusiasm, but relied rather on the \emph{politique} outlook of William of Orange and \emph{raison d’état}.\(^10\) The Act of Toleration of 1689 – often lauded as the

\(^7\) Ibid., 8.
\(^8\) Ibid., 336-343.
keystone of tolerationist achievement — was the outcome not of an evolutionary process but of a ‘peculiar concatenation of circumstances’, and needed to rely on its own intense ambiguity to survive.\textsuperscript{11} Having attacked the alleged achievements of toleration, revisionists also direct their critique against the attitudes of the earlier historiography toward the period preceding the seventeenth century. Cary Nederman and John Laursen challenge the conception of medieval and sixteenth-century Europe as a diorama of persecutions and religious repressions, arguing instead that toleration had a strong presence in the Middle Ages; in fact, ‘on all sides, one can identify apostles of toleration battling with exponents of intolerance’.\textsuperscript{12}

Not all historians are happy with the demolitions undertaken by the ‘revisionist’ school, and a group of so-called ‘post-revisionist’ scholars have launched their own criticisms.\textsuperscript{13} These historians recognise some of the problems in the Whig historiography raised by revisionists, but they also point out that the revisionist reaction tends to vitiate perceptions of historical change, leaving us without a coherent explanation for the different attitudes to toleration that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{14} The goal of many of these scholars is to provide a more complex picture both of the period preceding toleration, and of the modalities of change themselves, using this increased sophistication as a new buttress for the legitimisation of the rise of tolerance. Christopher Hill and John Coffey, for example, both take issue with some parts of the traditional narrative: Hill points out that the intentions of both persecutors and religious dissidents were rarely straightforwardly for or against toleration, while Coffey rejects the old emphasis on the development of secularisation in the growth of tolerance.\textsuperscript{15} However, both historians affirm that principles of toleration coalesced in the 1640s and 50s as a result of the Puritan assumption of power.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 12, 16.
\textsuperscript{13} The term is from John Coffey, \textit{Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689} (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 5.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{16} Coffey, 7, 159-60; Hill, 39-41.
Post-revisionists can rebut revisionist claims that religious harmony was in place well before the seventeenth century simply by following Coffey’s logic that the practices described do not really amount to ‘toleration’. It is evident, therefore, that a great deal hangs on definitions. By ruling out pre-seventeenth-century coexistence as tolerance ‘in its meanest and narrowest sense’, Coffey is reading back into history a very specific idea of conceptual completeness – the sort of criterion that always lends an air of historic trajectory to an argument. The effect is to produce the same erosion of historical contingency that the Whig narrative provided more directly with its grand presentist moralising.

Just what precisely constitutes ‘real’ toleration has thus far eluded consensus – though that has not prevented individual historians from setting out firm universalising definitions. Persecution, on the other hand (sometimes interchanged with ‘coercion’), is usually taken to be a simpler matter, seldom requiring explicit definition. It is normally understood as the antithesis of toleration; toleration is the ethical solution or alternative to persecution. Ultimately, although definitions and approaches differ, they all share a common foundation, in that they treat both ‘toleration’ and ‘persecution’ as stable terms with a static and self-evident relationship, which can legitimately be read back into the past. This confers upon historical study an essentialised frame of reference which places anachronistic expectations on the language and thoughts of past people.

In fairness, some scholars do make an effort to assess contemporary attitudes. Coffey, for instance, devotes two chapters to dissecting the ‘Protestant theory’ of persecution and toleration. Nevertheless, he continues to treat both as self-contained concepts commensurable to modern ethics – in effect, he uses them as stable yard-sticks with which to measure attitudes, rather than taking those attitudes as self-constructive in their own right. Alexandra Walsham is one of the very few historians in this area to have paid attention to the actual historical
usage of terminology. She notes the inadequacy of modern assumptions, particularly with regard to the near-universal positioning by historians of persecution and toleration as polar opposites. She points out that in early modern England ‘persecution and toleration, intolerance and tolerance, were concepts and terms underpinned by very different presuppositions and assumptions’. She argues persuasively that persecution and toleration were not ethically opposed in early modern thought. On the one hand, toleration of blasphemous religious behaviour and heretical doctrine was not generally idealised as a virtue – rather, it was considered by the majority as a sin, ‘a diabolical device’, and a design of the Antichrist. On the other hand, Walsham tells us that coercion was regarded as legitimate and necessary: it was both a moral duty to correct religious deviance, and an act of compassion – a ‘charitable hatred’ – because to leave people free to engage in sinful behaviour rather than correcting them (with force where necessary) was tantamount to resigning their souls to hell.

However, Walsham follows Coffey and others in unnecessarily assuming a relationship of equivalence between terms, thus perpetuating a modern ethical taxonomy. We cannot, in fact, say that the majority of early modern people regarded it as legitimate to persecute their contemporaries in order to correct religious deviance: they certainly thought it was appropriate to use force to encourage religious uniformity, but it is dangerous to say that they thereby condoned persecution, because they would not have referred to it as such. I am aware that this may seem to be a case of pure semantics, but the issue is in fact a pertinent one: definitively labelling certain early modern actions as ‘persecution’ often amounts to buying uncritically into one camp’s propagandistic rhetoric. We need to shift the epistemological emphasis from modern to early modern usages, and to treat the signifier as signifier, rather than as signified.

This is where a purely rhetorical analysis of pamphlet polemic comes into its own: by tracing formative evolutions we can get an impression of what contemporaries thought the appropriate terms of reference were, without seeking to reduce them to a single ontological standard or to Procrustean ethical beds.

23 Ibid., 1.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 4-5.
26 Ibid., 1-2.
I am taking as my evidence three pamphlets, two of which can safely be called Protestant anti-Catholic polemic; the third is a more enigmatic tract concerned with lamenting persecutions. Of course, such a limited evidentiary sampling makes firm conclusions on the broader situation difficult, and my inquiry therefore needs to be seen as an attempt to outline a new approach, rather than to provide a comprehensive survey. A careful examination of texts such as these allows us to gain some hints about changes in rhetorical forms, as well as to explore the ways in which persecution could manifest itself across a range of different writing contexts.

The first of my pamphlets was written in 1562 by Walter Haddon.27 Haddon was a well-known Latinist and a major proponent of the Reformation at Cambridge, where he was vice-chancellor in 1549-50.28 He ensured his own survival during Mary’s reign through careful manoeuvring, and played a key role under Elizabeth in creating new church services and calendars.29 His Dialogue agaynst the tyrannye of the Papistes of 1562 is a vitriolic attack on the practices and beliefs of Catholics, and above all, a condemnation of their persecution of Protestants. The actions of Catholic soldiers and leaders in the French Wars of Religion — just beginning in 1562 — form the focus for Haddon’s censure. He counsels England not to underestimate the strength and guile of ‘certaine Popysh Prynces, dwellinge at the nexte doore to thee, that be euen sworn & fully bent to doe thee a mischiefe’.30 Haddon does not make specific mention of developments in England, but the context of Elizabeth’s first years of rule (with the menace of a marriage alliance between Elizabeth and a Catholic prince), in which the return to Protestantism must still have seemed a precarious and reversible achievement, probably helped to facilitate this sense of Protestant vulnerability.

My second pamphlet, The black box of Roome opened, is dated 1641 and

29 Ibid.
30 Haddon, 15-16.
signed ‘Anon.’, but has been attributed to the dramatist Thomas Heywood. If Heywood was indeed the author of this pamphlet, then it must have been one of his last works; Allan Holaday states that ‘[o]bviously the dramatist, struggling in his last months against illness and destitution, cobbled it from the same scraps used in patching together nearly all his last pamphlets’. He links it to ‘Heywood’s other “pot-boilers”’, noting the inclusion of various tales of Catholic conspiracies which appear to have been common stock for the playwright.

This tract was written against the backdrop of great political and religious agitation. A decade of personal rule, with new taxes, forced loans, and many other burdens, had built up immense dissatisfaction with the reign of Charles I. This dissatisfaction became increasingly vocalised when Parliament assembled again in 1640. The outbreak of rebellion in Ireland, anger at Laudian religious innovations, residual resentment against the religion of Charles’ wife Henrietta Maria and the king’s own suspected Catholic sympathies were all important factors exacerbating the ‘deep wells of hatred and fear of Catholics at all levels of society’. Heywood’s retelling of countless Papist plots of the past echoes the dozens of contemporary plots reported at this time:

It would require a whole volume to write their practises; plots, & damnable Treasons...nay God knowes what they are plotting at this present, I doubt not but that their Engines are set on worke.

The third pamphlet, signed ‘A.N.’, has been attributed to William Penn, and


33 Holaday, 17.

34 Ibid.


36 Heywood, 13-14. The numbers of anti-Catholic riots, disturbances, and panics recorded by Clifton (encouraged by a few genuine plots) throughout England from 1640 to 1642 are simply staggering; see Clifton, 23-31.
bears the publication date of 1687. Penn was a religious rebel in his personal convictions from an early age, but he nevertheless had friends at court, and became increasingly closely associated with the government of James II in the 1680s. Penn frequently used his political acquaintances to secure support for Quakers in trouble and for his own campaigns. James, on the other hand, attempted to use Penn as a means by which to cement a friendship with the Dissenting sects, which constituted a powerful political force, and whose influence James needed to offset the declining support of Anglicans caused by his suspected Catholic agenda.

The 1687 pamphlet under consideration here must have formed part of Penn’s dual endeavour to simultaneously spread royal propaganda and advocate his personal views in favour of the abolition of penal legislation against minority sects. These efforts were vindicated in the same year when James issued his first Declaration of Indulgence, which suspended all penal laws relating to ecclesiastical matters, and ended the application of the Test Acts and oaths of allegiance and supremacy to office-holders (a particular boon for Quakers, who refused to take such oaths on principle). Penn led a delegation of Quakers to Whitehall to personally thank James for this measure. His association with the King grew closer at this point: a ‘News Letter’ in September reported that ‘Quaker Penn attends the King very close and preaches at the Bath at the Tennis Court...the King consults him in all matters of moment’. His increasing public support of the Crown in tracts of this time was no doubt influenced partly


39 Dunn, 1986, 8.


41 Ibid., 87-8.

42 Ibid., 88.

43 Ibid., 89.
by developments in America: from 1686 until the end of James’ reign private colonies were being progressively submerged into the Dominion of New England; in order to retain Pennsylvania’s independence Penn needed to keep on the best possible terms with the king.44 The 1687 tract has to be seen as part of the zenith of Penn’s career; the changed political climate of 1688 saw him dwindle in political significance, as a much disparaged and struggling figure.

In summary, these contexts not only allow us to place each work in a particular chronological, historical and political setting, but they also provide valuable indications of the occasions for writing and the intentions of the writers. However, it is important to note that none of these contexts by themselves ‘explain’ the content of the pamphlets, because each writer also had to work within a broader context of language and form. Each had a pool of rhetorical strategies and associations to draw upon ‘to enact or negotiate social identities and to accomplish social goals’, which developed over time, and which can at no point be reduced merely to an immediate context, religious affiliations, or the personality of an individual.45

**analysis of the primary sources**

An examination of the nature and role of persecution in the sources is vital to historical inquiry in this area, both for its own value in explaining the cultural workings of early modern society, and because persecution holds such an important role in the historiography. The juxtaposition of two polemical pieces with Penn’s tract provides us with the opportunity to: firstly, suggest changes over time concerning persecution in response to the narratives offered in the historiography; and, secondly to contrast two apparently separate types of document: on the one hand the Protestant polemic, and on the other something which seems (for reasons which I will discuss) to bear the hallmarks of the tolerationist literature, which many accounts continue to insist came into prominence in the late seventeenth century. In fact, I argue that the remarkable continuities between these tracts indicate that the latter form of writing cannot be accorded the comfortable distance from polemical literature that post-revisionists and others would suggest. Indeed, even if the 1687 pamphlet

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44 Ibid., 84-5.
is not quite a polemic *sensu stricto* (although the boundaries are actually not at all clear), it is nevertheless still very much a part of the *story* of the early modern English polemic.

In the saga of the rise of toleration, persecution counts as the defining characteristic of pre-tolerant (especially sixteenth-century and medieval) society, and even for most revisionists it represents an antithesis to the ideal of tolerance. On the other hand, if Walsham is correct, we should find persecution portrayed in my sources as a positive action. This constitutes a good starting point for my investigation, because the first thing that one notices in analysing the pamphlets is that they do not bear out this contention. All three tracts, from the earliest to the latest, characterise persecution as inherently negative and inexcusable. In fact, negative persecution is the most important theme in each, around which all the other arguments and entreaties are formed. Walter Haddon’s chief concern is to paint the Catholic persecution of Protestants in France in terms as garish as possible:

> Satan so rageth, and his Ministers bestirre them w’ fier and sword, most pitifully tormenting Chryst in his poore members, spoilinge and murtheringe them by all meanes most cruelly.46

He explicitly compares the deeds of the Catholics with the persecutions of the early Christians by the Romans and of Abel by Cain, all of which, he says, pale in comparison with ‘this most horrible cruelte, that these Romish Tetrarches have vsed toward this godlye people of Christ’.47 Similarly, Thomas Heywood declares that Catholics ‘propagate their Sect with fire and Sword and all manner of violence’.48 He claims that Catholics have encouraged, and played the principal part in, every war and rebellion in Christendom and lists an enormous string of murderous Catholic conspiracies.49 The individual persecutions in both sources are listed as distinct episodes, many of which follow a narrative format remarkably similar in its details: armed Catholics surprise unarmed and innocent Protestants and proceed to massacre them, heedless to all entreaties.50

At first glance the Penn pamphlet appears to resemble a more modern perspective: it does not seem to attack any particular religious group, and it deplores

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46. Haddon, 3.
47. Ibid., 7, 18-19.
49. Ibid., 7, 18.
50. A good illustration of this can be seen in Haddon, 4-7.
the violence done against all in a long exposition of the evils of ‘persecution for
meer religion’. This universality is indeed a significant change. Nevertheless,
upon closer examination it continues to follow the same persecution logic as
the earlier works. We are presented with the same exhaustive catalogue of
wicked deeds – even though these are described as having come from all the
major religious camps rather than any specific one – each of which occupies
a distinct episodic narrative in much the same style as the earlier writings.51

All of these writers, therefore, treat persecution as sinful and entirely negative.
The difference between the earlier and later pamphlets concerns the use and
direction of the accusation of persecution, rather than a change in the nature
of the persecution concept itself. Whereas Penn deplores persecution in all
its forms, Haddon and Heywood use the allegation specifically as a rhetori-
cal weapon to attack Catholicism. This purpose is consistent with Walsham’s
observation that accusations of persecution constituted a tactic to discredit
the enemies of the accuser.52 It was a ‘potent element of the lexicon’, used to
‘rally the faithful and to proclaim their integrity against the forces of evil and the
devil’.53 Walsham further characterises it as a victim’s creed: the tool of those
who were (temporarily) out of power.54 I would add, however, that it was also
the tool of those who chose to portray themselves as victims, even if they held
the reins of power in the country at the time. The self-construction of powerless-
ness enabled Protestants to draw upon a sophisticated rhetorical weaponry,
securely founded on Biblical authority, and enlarged by a formidable arsenal
of contemporary and early Christian precedents.

However, this leaves us with an apparent paradox, because although all of the
sources loudly condemn persecution as an evil, the Haddon and Heywood pam-
phlets also call vociferously for aggressive action to be taken against Catholics.
Haddon berates the inaction of his fellow Protestants in the face of the Catholic
menace, saying that ‘[t]he holye Scripture doeth detest that person (who euer
he bee) that is negligent, and slowe in the workes of the Lorde’; ‘it is time for

51 Penn, see for example 6-9.
52 Walsham, 2.
53 Ibid. Ethan Shagan descr bes it as ‘a permanent opposition rhetoric, a store of powerful
images and ideas which was always available to Protestants’ from the sixteenth century
onwards’; see Ethan Howard Shagan, ‘Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and
1997): 16 (original emphasis).
54 Walsham, 2-5
vs to play the menne, yea it is high time for vs to remoue by commen aduyse, the commen disturbers of all godlines. Heywood is more eloquent, if on the whole less violent, with his own exhortations:

let no other Nations accuse us of remissenes or stupidity, in giving them so large a liberty. Let us consider if they get the upper hand, what will become of us, our Prince, Country, wives, Children, Friends, we have tryall more then enough of their good-wills towards us, and are like to have more dayly; if the heads of these Brats be not dashed against the stones.

Again, this seeming hypocrisy is consonant with Walsham’s observation that those who denounced the actions of their enemies as unwarrantable persecution did not see it as inconsistent to mete out the same treatment: ‘[w]hen the tables were turned, the persecuted became persecutors, who vigorously defended their right to restrain their erstwhile oppressors’. However, Walsham’s emphasis on positions of dominance is again inapplicable to my sources; the accusations of persecution do not occur at separate situations or in different circumstances to the calls for action, as she seems to suggest. The rhetoric is not bound up to actual circumstances of oppression or freedom to act; rather, the exhortations follow on in logical succession from the persecution motif.

It seems evident from these sources that the relative positions of persecution and tolerance need to be refigured. Most importantly, we can no longer see toleration as the opposite of persecution. Persecution was regarded as a sin, but, as noted, toleration was also seen as an evil for the most part. If we are to draw a set of opposites, it should rather be between persecution and righteous aggressive action. However, a modern observer notices that both appear to comprise the same actions (aggression, exclusions, sometimes violence). The difference is therefore purely rhetorical and imposed, not objective or self-evident. That the possibility of confusion between the two existed is suggested by the need for the former to be righteous; violence was not commendable in every situation. Haddon spends a good deal of time explaining that violence was a last resort, an act justified by the doctrines of defence and necessity (which also extended to pre-emption) on the basis of clear threats.

(Thou chieflye of Englande) looke aboute thee, and take dilygent heede, for

55 Haddon, 13, 16-17.
56 Heywood, 14.
57 Walsham, 3. Penn seems to confirm this view, saying that every sect complained bitterly of the injustice of persecution until it was in power, whereupon it inflicted the same cruelties on the others; see Penn, 9-20.
58 Haddon, 20.
besydes the common quarrell of Relygion, thou hast certaine Popysh Prynces, dwelldinge at the nexte doore to thee, that be euen sworn & fully bent to doe thee a mischiefe.59

It is the immediacy of the threat of Catholic persecution that exonerates Protestant action and protects it from a counter-claim of persecution in its turn. Yet because Catholics often worked in ‘subtil and wilye’ ways, the true Protestant should be ready to act even without visible provocations.60 Heywood exhorts Englishmen to be perpetually suspicious and work actively to root out hidden Catholic plots: ‘let every true patriot and lover of his Country not endure to see the bowels of his deare Mother Country to be gnawne out by these Vipers, but as much as in him lyeth, discover, and oppose all such traitor-hearted adversaries’.61

The resort to doctrines of defence and necessity relate to both the old theological justifications for violence and the framework of the English Common Law (which had been much influenced by the former during the Middle Ages). In fact, the legal analogy is a useful one for distinguishing persecution and righteous aggression, not only because ‘lawe and auuthoritye’ were important considerations for the pamphleteers,62 but because the criminal law could distinguish between rightful and wrongful actions, which were prima facie identical, by employing its concept of intent or state of mind, mens rea often rendered as the ‘guilty mind’, ‘evil mind’ or ‘evil will’, and closely linked to ‘malice’.63 The persecutor was not characterised primarily by the essence of his actions but rather by the malicious evil and savage blood-thirstiness that crept into his soul prior to acts of violence.64 Penn, for instance, points to ‘the Bloody Intentions which those il Men had in their Hearts, who were engaged in the wicked powder-Plot’.65 Haddon describes the Maréchal Saint Andrew as ‘gaping after bloude’, with a ‘bloody purpose’, which drove him to persecute the ‘meeke and miserable multitude’ of Blois.66

59 Haddon, 14-15.
60 Ibid., 15.
61 Heywood, 19.
62 Haddon, see for example, 13-15, 19-20, 24.
63 As, for instance, in ‘malice aforethought’ – still the mens rea for murder in some jurisdictions. It is surely no coincidence that Peter Lake describes a remarkably similar rhetoric in his analysis of murder pamphlets; see his ‘Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England, eds Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994).
64 Thus Penn characterizes the Biblical prohibition on violence as the ‘shedding of Blood Unlawfully and Malitiously’, at 23 (my emphasis).
65 Ibid., 15.
66 Haddon, 6.
This unquenchable thirst for blood is something inhuman, animal-like in its mindless ferocity. Comparisons of the generic Catholic persecutor (quite often the Pope himself) with an animal litter the texts; he is a ‘Romish hell hound... whetting his teeth, casting out his thicke smoky threatnings, shaking his fire brandes, yea kicking & spurning on every side’, a ‘cruel and bloudye wolfe [that] raungeth vppe and downe spoiling thy flocke’, a ‘Romish foxe’ who ‘thyrsteth after youre bloude, and woulde (if he wist howe) roote quite out of the earth, both your name, & al maner of remembraunce of you’. Wherever treason was being plotted could be found an ‘infernall kennell of Romish blood-hounds’. As a maddened beast, the persecutor cannot be reasoned with, entreated for mercy, or accorded mercy in return. Penn takes these themes further and develops them into something almost resembling a conscious philosophy: he states that it is human nature for Passion (the Beast) to wrestle with Reason (the Man) for supremacy over the mind and body:

But it were happy for Mankind, if the Beast were less imperious and cruel: In truth, it is rare to find where the Man is allowed to have any power in Acting; every thing seems too much to be governed by the Beast, and by the Tyranny of its inordinate Passions and Senses.

The Beast-man, the ‘butcher’, is impervious to moral restrictions and virtually Bakhtinian in his insatiable appetites. He is the ultimate transgressor of normal, intellectually-sanctioned society, practising a ‘horrible and straunge kynde of crueltye’ that defies understanding.

In contrast to the ‘cauterized conscience and immarbled heart’ of the Beast-man stands — in the earlier pamphlets — the ‘courage of mynde’, ‘cherefulnes of harte’ and righteous anger of the defender of the faith. The ‘common fyer’ of persecution is battled by ‘the heate of godliness’. Though the Beast revels in violence, the true Christian is also ever-ready for ‘holy Combate without feare or shrinking pusillanimity’. He knows that his actions are justified because he fights on God’s behalf — this is a certainty when combating Catholics, because they are God’s enemies: ‘[t]hey be thine enemies, and thine is the quarrell that
we have in hand’. God hates the Pope ‘as a thief & a murderer, because he entered not in by the doore, but thrust him self in a by way’. This holy hatred of God’s enemies was the principle that animated and legitimated righteous aggression.

**change over time in the primary sources**

Taking the Haddon, Heywood and Penn pamphlets as examples of the possibilities of rhetoric at the time in which each was written — respectively 1562, 1641 and 1687 — we can perceive some changes in form and discourse over a fairly broad period. Following the reasoning of historians who argue the case for the rise of tolerance, we would expect to see the decline of reports of (and fixation on) persecution, and a growing expression of pluralistic ideals. The last pamphlet in particular should, if these exponents of seventeenth-century change are correct, serve as a good example of such tolerationist ideals in print. This is so for at least three reasons. First, the pamphlet is explicitly about the ‘odiousness of persecution for mere religion’. Second, its author is renowned today as a forward-thinking reformer whose greatest achievement (at least as Pennsylvanian mythology would have it) was the creation of a pluralistic religious society. Third, and most importantly, the date is suggestive — this pamphlet is a near-contemporary of the most famous works of John Locke (that chief apostle of tolerance), only a short step away from the Glorious Revolution and the Act of Toleration itself. Penn emphatically characterises all religious persecution as an evil and sinful practice. He also claims that this view is, at least superficially, a universal one: ‘the whole Nation appears professedly to dislike [persecution]’.

Yet this pamphlet is in fact not concerned with tolerance as an active ethic. Penn spends a great deal of time lamenting historic and continuing persecutions, but he does not once actually call for ‘toleration’ by name, nor do his ethical prescriptions tally obviously with what the historians and thinkers listed above would describe as tolerant policies. Indeed, despite condemning persecution on the basis of religion, he also resolutely denies the legitimacy of any sort of societal solution – political, legal or otherwise – that would prevent intolerance. His reason for this is that there is in fact only one Truth, and ‘if this Power of judging

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75 Haddon, 22.
76 Ibid., 22.
77 Penn, see for example 5.
78 Ibid., 3-4.
79 Ibid., 2.
should be allow’d to the Civil Magistrate, there would be as many Faiths as there are Governments amongst Christians.\textsuperscript{80} Penn’s rhetoric is not concerned with producing a framework for the accommodation of religious pluralism, it does not celebrate diversity; instead, it condemns and restrains. If we are to categorise this pamphlet as part of the ‘tolerationist’ corpus that Coffey refers to as being produced in the seventeenth century, then it is a tolerance characterised first of all by a passive acceptance of unfair impositions, which would ordinarily be decried by recipients as the actions of a religious enemy.\textsuperscript{81} Penn sees the cycle of revenge (as each party in turn manages to attain state dominance) as the most detrimental part of religious conflict. He advocates that the downtrodden dispassionately attempt to regard their antagonists as impelled by evil ‘passions’ rather than the principles of their religion.\textsuperscript{82} This passive ‘charity’, he tells us, is the only alternative to ‘those additional Injustices, and Cruelties, which the contrary way of rash Judging must involve’.\textsuperscript{83} Penn appears to believe that by removing the persecution weapon out of its traditional rhetorical circuit, it will cease to function as a legitimator of aggressive counter-action, and that as a result revenge will be morally unavailable as a course of action.

It is quite likely that some of the impetus for Penn’s advocacy of passivity derived from his Quaker allegiances, yet I would stress that this does not simply make it a ‘Quaker principle’: in manifesting itself in the language and form of pamphlet literature, it presented itself as – and became – a part of that wider framework. Moreover, the Quaker language of political inaction was not an inherent attitude of the sect; rather it was itself the result of the rhetorical transformation of Quakerism in the late seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{84} In reality, neither Penn nor Quakerism existed in a linguistic vacuum, and both responded to and interacted with developments in the language around them. It is also worth emphasising that Penn himself could hardly be characterised as a pacific figure before the 1680s. In 1669 he wrote a letter to Lodowicke Muggleton in the following terms:

Boast not, thou Enemy of God, thou Son of Perdition, and Confederate with the unclean Croaking Spirits reserved under the Chaines of Eternal Darkness;...

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Coffey, 23-4.
\textsuperscript{82} Penn, 22-25.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 24-5.
\textsuperscript{84} Barry Reay adds that ‘there really is no such thing as a Quaker attitude to politics’, and not all Quakers considered violence and political action to be illegitimate. See Barry Reay, \textit{The Quakers and the English Revolution} (London: Temple Smith, 1985), 107-8. For a discussion of the frequently militant tone of early Quaker language and its evolution in the seventeenth century see Hill, 32-35 and Reay, 134.
on you I trample in his Everlasting Dominion, and to the bottomles Pit are you sentenc’d,...where the Endles wormes shall gnaw, and tortur your Imaginary Souls to Eternity.85

The gradual change from an aggressive to a passive style, which both Hugh Barbour and Mary Dunn remark on in Penn’s writing in the 1670s and early 1680s, cannot be easily attributed either to spiritual or political contexts, and it needs to be considered in tandem with the contemporary rhetorical evolutions in Quakerism and pamphlet writing more broadly.86

Although Penn is concerned to remove persecution from its traditional circuit, this does not mean that he has eschewed the *topos* entirely. The persecution accusation is in fact more powerful than ever, but instead of verbally battering one foe with it, Penn is able to direct it against *everybody* – everybody, that is, except Quakers, those people who have demonstrated such an ‘Invincible Patience in Suffering’.87 If this brand of rhetoric is indeed the progenitor of a type of tolerance, then we may describe that tolerance as possessed of a dicephalous and antagonistic nature, which disguises subjective interests under the cloak of an assumed objectivity. Persecution, now universalised, is no longer confined to a limited function as one part of the dialectic of religious conflict; it is instead a more flexible weapon admirably suited to the needs of minority groups like Quakers, who can use it both to stain a wide variety of larger groups with guilt and to hamstring their actions.

Therefore, rather than disappearing or declining (which histories charting the growth of tolerance might lead us to expect), by Penn’s time the reportage and complaints of persecution, with their attendant narrative logic, had expanded. This is a development that can be traced through the 1642 document as well. Whereas Haddon’s Protestant victims are in general anonymous pious masses (crowds, huddles and groups) caught in the midst of large-scale military actions, Heywood relates smaller-scale incidents that are more intimate and can be better imagined in the context of ordinary life. There is a change in rhetorical emphasis

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85 Dunn, 1986, 7.
86 Hugh Barbour, ‘The Young Controversialist’, in *The World of William Penn*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 28; Dunn, 1967, 135. Keeble argues that Penn deliberately eschewed recognisable Quaker rhetoric in favour of Protestant linguistic forms so as to avoid the ridicule of the Protestant establishment, and notes that his Protestant education was one of the chief influences on his writing – see Keeble, 123.
87 Penn, 14.
which allows for the expansion of the persecution motif from the extraordinary to the ordinary. Evil enemies operate secretly even in the places thought safest: Jesuits ‘can come with God-morrow Madame into a Ladyes Chamber before she be stirring’.88 The overwhelming focus on secrecy and plotting implies that the enemy could be anywhere, even right under one’s own nose. This ubiquity of the persecutor is made explicit through the impressive geographical spread of the related incidents, which range throughout Britain and the Continent. Heywood’s accusations do not have the all-encompassing nature of Penn’s, since they are still solely directed against Catholics, but their scope has remarkably increased when compared with the 1562 pamphlet. These observations do not necessarily imply that the older pattern simply terminated - after all, language does not follow neat sequences and old styles rarely disappear completely - but nevertheless these changes gave writers like Heywood the opportunity to work within a new set of rhetorical possibilities and constraints.

This inflation and refinement of the persecution *topos* was not the only major change experienced by the rhetoric of these pamphlets, because as the discourse of persecution expands in these sources, the counter-weight of righteous aggression correspondingly shrinks. Even Heywood’s tirade seems rather muted in comparison with Haddon’s thunderous call for action. While the latter explicitly authorises the use of violence, Heywood mentions actual physical force only once, more often conveying his exhortations through comparatively restrained metaphors, such as the story of Silurus’ sons.89 He even states that he does not wish legal punishments to be increased for Catholics – simply that they be ‘discovered’ and ‘opposed’.90 Aggressive counter-action is still the logical antidote to persecution, but even at the outbreak of the Civil War, its scope has been diminished and disembodied – the element of *personal* aggression, that staple of the righteous defender of the faith, is largely missing. In the 1687 pamphlet personal aggression is linked predominantly with the hated persecutor. The *mens rea* of righteous action is completely absent from Penn’s writing, and its place has been taken by the guilty mind of the Beast, who has grown in

88 Heywood, 13.
89 Ibid., 18. Of course, as Anthony Milton points out, a comparatively restrained rhetorical stance does not necessarily imply either sincerity or a corresponding restraint in the actions and attitudes of the author (or his audience) - see Anthony Milton, ‘A Qualified Intolerance: the Limits and Ambiguities of Early Stuart Anti-Catholicism’, in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti, (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1999), 90.
90 Ibid., 19.
stature, and is now said to live in every human rather than just in enemies. In this rhetorical structure, religious violence is primarily characterised as barbaric, bestial persecution; positive representations are simply unavailable.

Thus, even in Penn’s time we are confronted by a rhetorical culture in which a fixation on violence and oppression still flourished. The description I have provided suggests that, if we can call the changed language of the late seventeenth century ‘tolerance’, then this tolerance was articulated within a framework steeped in the language of the persecution topos and its adversarial usages, and as such it confers upon us a mental image of the early modern period that is considerably less wholesome and reassuring to the modern mind that of the traditional narrative. It is an image filled not by the march of progressive ideals toward the light of toleration, but by the onward tread of the Beast-man, whose goal remains a mystery.

**Conclusion**

A detailed investigation of early modern persecution rhetoric such as I have presented here is, to my knowledge, something fairly novel. However, it is always wise to acknowledge the limitations of a study conducted on the basis of a very small evidentiary sampling; my account should be taken primarily as a suggestion for a new historical direction, and an example of what a study in this new direction might look like. It is an area that deserves more attention, because although studies of toleration and persecution have yielded many useful insights, historians have not yet learned to fully examine the mentalities involved on their own terms. We need to be alive to the details of linguistic patterns, and to the remarkable continuities to be found between texts which, following modern definitions, we might expect to be quite different in character.

On the basis of my study of the pamphlet literature I have found that, contrary to the traditional story of the ‘rise of toleration’, attitudes towards persecution were negative throughout the period; and rather than being replaced by a benign commitment to religious pluralism, the adversarial assault manifested in the persecution accusation remained the key determinative element of the pamphlet structure. This observation has led me to suggest three key changes over the period: that persecution as a rhetorical mechanism increased rather than decreased; that its initial counterpart of righteous personal aggression

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91 For the all-pervasiveness of the Beast see, in particular, Penn, 4, 23-24.
diminished in legitimacy; and that sanctified counter-action was replaced by a form of passivity.

The investigation of linguistic patterns such as these should serve to contribute to a more nuanced picture of the development of ‘tolerationist’ rhetoric than has usually been provided; one which allows for transformation, and yet is less ethically reductive than that given by Whig and post-revisionist scholars. By subjecting the rhetorical structures of pamphlet literature to serious examination, we may open a new window onto an old debate, and in so doing reshape the assumed Polydeucian architecture of persecution and toleration into a new and dynamic historical relationship.

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