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From Donne to Great Tew

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Did Donne's works of religious controversy, *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius his Conclave*, enjoy an afterlife beyond the initial responses that their topicality elicited? Did they, or either one, leave a mark on the religious landscape? Recent historical scholarship and literary scholarship of an historical turn has tended toward a greater engagement with Donne's thought—theological, political, economical, and ecclesiastical—than hitherto was usually the case, examining the contexts of his work as much as analyzing and cataloguing his aesthetic achievements. Even so, these works, especially *Pseudo-Martyr*, except for its brief but important autobiographical declarations, do not always find a niche in the narrative of confessional conflict.[1]

In an attempt to provide a partial answer to the question of their impact, and in keeping with the theme of this volume, this essay explores aspects of the epistolary introductions to these works, especially their witty expositions of the skeptical cast of mind that Donne brought to bear on the ferocious religious disputations of his times. These difficult, elusive, frequently ambivalent writings, and the works that they usher in, challenge scholarly interpretation. Not the least interesting feature is the tension to which they bear witness between the private and public domains of a man descended from a distinguished Roman Catholic lineage who is on his path to becoming, as Walton dubs him, a second St. Austin to the English Church. How, then, if at all, did the next generation, embroiled in the controversies and crises of the English

[1]For a discussion of Donne's deployment of a variety of genres in his argument, see Roebuck, "The Controversial Treatise," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 249–263.

Church—a generation on its way to the Civil Wars—receive Donne's letters and the works they herald?

Autorem quaeris? Frustra. Ignotior enim est Paparum olim Parentibus. Thus opens the letter "*Typographus Lectori*" of *Conclave Ignati*, translated, presumably by Donne himself, as "The Printer to the Reader" in Ignatius his Conclave: "Doest thou seeke after the Author? It is in vaine; for hee is harder to be found then the parents of Popes were in the old times."[2] Presently the "Printer" reports the existence of a "letter" sent to him from a "friend" of the author "to whom he [the author] sent his booke to bee read" (A3). This letter expresses the unwillingness of the author to have his work printed. This epistolary gambit is surely among Donne's most playful. It sets the tone for further jesting that involves veils of concealing fictions and paradoxes. And there is a further "letter," addressed "To the Two Tutelar Angels, protectors of the Popes Consistory, and of the Colledge *of Sorbon*," which is no letter: it is the body of the text of *Ignatius his Conclave*.[3] The work concludes in a single paragraph, "*An Apology for* Iesuites," scoffingly predicting that they will soon be rendered harmless and irrelevant. The Conclave has been aptly described as "in almost every way a radically unstable text."[4] The framing device of the mysterious identity of the author neatly initiates this instability.

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[2]*John Donne, Ignatius His Conclave*, ed., with introduction and commentary, T. S. Healy, S. J. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 3–4. Healy affirms that the Latin version, *Conclave Ignati* appeared first, early in 1611, and adds that a copy was purchased for the Earl of Northumberland before 2 February 1611 (p. xi). The title page of *Ignatius his Conclaue*, anonymous, as is the Latin version, gives a "London 1611" imprint, and notes that it is *Translated out of Latine*. See the facsimile edition (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977). Further quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically. Healy, noting the "greater rhetorical polish of the Latin text," concludes that Donne conceived his text in Latin and grappled with the problem of translating it (pp. xii–xiii).

[3]Healy notes that this mock address signals Donne's "playing with the traditional opposition between the Church in France, protecting its Gallican liberties, and the See of Rome" as well as his satirizing of angelology (pp. 101–102).

[4]Annabel Patterson, "John Donne, kingsman?," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 262. Patterson's discussion of *Conclave* is principally concerned with its perceived political "ambivalence." It concludes by emphasizing the extremely

The letter to the printer from the friend of the author, offering to explain why the author would not have his work printed teasingly withholds explanation. Paradoxically, although the matter is "weighty and serious," the lack of "grauity" in the author's own treatment of this matter has caused him to think it "vnfit . . . to descend to this kinde of writing." As if in an authorial nightmare, he tried, but failed, to find the appropriate weighty and serious register, nevertheless carrying on writing to the bitter end, to finally produce a book he would not allow himself to offer for publication. Yet he sent it to the friend to read. Is this alarming topos of inadequacy the confession of a failed writer? Well, yes and no, because in the middle of this tricky admission of failure—the most fundamental failure of any would-be author, that of not being able to find how to say it—is an advertisement of a signal success. In "an other booke formerly published," the "weighty and serious matter" met up with the gravity he both proposed and achieved. What was this book that has thus been advertised to the intrigued reader? The friend doesn't say; instead he enthusiastically rushes into the account of his own success in bringing *Ignatius* to the printer: having "mustred [his] forces against him [the reluctant author]" with "reasons and examples" in persuading the author to acknowledge, if not the value, then the utility of his descent into this present "kinde of writing" (A3v).

Ignatius his Conclave advertises its character on the title-page: "Wherein many things are min-*gled by way of a Satyr.*" This declaration marks a rare occasion of freedom from the constraints applied to the manuscript circulation of his verse satires. As Annabel Patterson remarks, "the *Conclave* allowed him to be witty, and to be witty in print, which may have served as something of a relief."[5] However, the introductory game of hide-and-seek suggests that there is to be no relaxation of Donne's characteristic wariness as expressed in his private prose correspondence—indeed, it often presents itself as anxiety—over

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"slippery" nature of a text "with the author absent and anonymous" (pp. 263–264).

[5]Patterson, "Satirical writing: Donne in shadows," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 127. Patterson discusses the hazards attendant on writers of satire, following the Star Chamber's 1606 definition of seditious libel (pp. 126–127).

the need to control the reception of his voice by the reader. This is summed up by John Carey as Donne's "jealous sense of identity."[6] One means Donne uses to mediate his identity is to present the recipient of a letter not as solitary and removed, but as audience to Donne's presence.

For example, in a letter "To S[r] G. M.," which starts with imagining writer and addressee (probably Sir Henry Goodere) together "here," in the same space, Donne announces, "Since then at this time, I am upon the stage, you may be content to hear me." But the performance is abruptly canceled, and the audience returned to the condition of solitary reader: "now I have nothing to say. And it is well, for the Letter is already long enough." This game, not unlike that in the *Ignatius* letter, leads to the anxious point: "let goe no copy of my Problems, till I review them. If it be too late, at least be able to tell me who hath them."[7] There are, of course, distinctions to be drawn between private, intimate correspondence and published epistles, and between those intended for a wide readership and those intended for privacy which, in the course of events, become public. This letter of Donne to "S[r] G. M." suggests some of the relevant grounds upon which distinctions could be made, but, as Carey persuasively argues, it does so only to reject "the models his culture made available," instead creating a new kind of letter.[8] The letter in question in *Ignatius* gains some of its fascination from mimicking the tones of intimacy heard in the familiar letters. As Arthur F. Marotti observes, Donne's prose letters "register a high degree of self-consciousness about the genre. In fact, they delineate a theory of

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[6]John Carey, "John Donne's Newsless Letters," *Essays and Studies* 34 (1981): 65.

[7]*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (1651; facsimile repr., Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974), pp. 105–108. Page numbers of further quotations from this edition are given parenthetically in the text. Carey is no doubt right to draw the conclusion from his analysis of the letter that this game or joke "gives a feeling of personal warmth and closeness, and that seems to be Donne's intent" (p. 53), but I argue that while the letter may be "newsless" it is not pointless. The anxious request for his "Problems" shows it is not literally the case that he has "nothing to say."

[8]Carey, pp. 54–56.

epistolary communication that applies to much of Donne's other writings."[9]

The "Printer to the Reader" presents a struggle between author and the friend which is concluded only when the author yields, thus making the friend owner of the book—"At last he yeelded, & made mee owner of his booke"—which he, in turn, sends to the Printer to be "deliuered ouer to forraine nations" (A5). These—the friend's persuasive tactics—constitute a virtual *vade mecum* of the English Church's religious controversy. Firstly, Erasmus is invoked: "the great *Erasmus*" to whose "bitter iestings and skirmishings . . . our Church is as much beholden, as to *Luther* himselfe" (A3v–A4). Invaluable not only for the intellectual pedigree the name Erasmus confers and its sanctioning of the jesting tone, its prominence as the first name in the book signifies the dominant strategy of controversy *contra* the Roman apologists: that is, to pit authorities against each other in order to highlight disputes, especially unresolved ones, among Roman Catholics, and thereby undermine the papal claim to infallibility. His first example, Scribanius, the Belgian Jesuit and controversialist, who counts Erasmus an Anglican, is counterpoised with Coccius, the German Jesuit theologian who counts Erasmus a Roman Catholic.

The reader, as we have seen, has been forewarned of the apparent mismatching of tone to subject that characterizes this genre: "gravitas descending," I call it. It is now brought into play as the friend animadverts on the work of the pseudonymous "Macer" writing in defence of the papal Interdiction of Venice—widely unpopular in England—in which the mismatch of levity with "matters concerning the saluation of soules" (A4v) is grotesque. T. S. Healy, S. J. identifies "Macer" as Kaspar Schoppe, a Lutheran turned Catholic, a "bitter and railing controversialist"[10] whose defence is "as offensive as it is pompous."[11]

Precise calibration of the descent of gravity is the real art of this genre. The friend makes just this point about the work in hand: "the things deliuered in this booke, were by many degrees more modest, then

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[9]Marotti, "The social context and nature of Donne's writing: occasional verse and letters," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, p. 40.

[10]Healy, p. 164.

[11]Healy, p. 101.

those which themselues, in their owne ciuill warres, do daily vomit forth, when they butcher and mangle the fame and reputation of their *Popes* & *Cardinals* by their reuiued *Lucian*, *Pasquil*" (A4v–A5). *Ignatius his Conclave* is itself a pasquil or pasquinade, judged by the friend to be "many degrees more modest." The name *Pasquil* would likely prompt English readers to recall Nashe's famous triumphs in religious controversy over the "Marprelate" pamphleteers.[12] Schoppe and these other Roman disputants are judged by the friend to have gone too far, not content "to sport and obey their naturall disposition." Did Donne go too far? A 1636 petition to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Donne's eldest son, John Donne, protests against works published under his father's name without authority "which were none of his," including *Ignatius His Conclave*, publications which are "verie much to the griefe" of John Donne the younger, "and the discredite of y^{e} memorie of his Father."[13] This can be read to mean that Donne's fear that the work was "unfit" for publication was valid. But the younger Donne's complaint is surely disingenuous: he himself re-issued the work in 1652.[14] He might, however, be reflecting ecclesiastical opinion of the 1630s. The tenor of the English Church had changed on the accession of Charles I, a change intensified by the ascendency of William Laud, who was translated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 1633. The brief heyday of edgy, polemical wit in religious controversy on behalf of the English Church was over, but, as we shall see, not forgotten.

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Entering controversy, by penning a *Pasquil*, is a great deal easier, it seems, than making a dignified, timely exit with probity intact. The friend acknowledges that the difficulty for the controversialist so conversant with Jesuit writing is to "contract nothing of their naturall

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[12]Healy points out that Donne is not directly referring in the words "their reuiued *Lucian, Pasquil*" to the English authors such as Nashe and Breton who wrote under the name Pasquil (p. 101).

[13]Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne Dean of Saint Paul's* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 247. Keynes conjectures that *Conclave* was "too undignified a production to be publicly acknowledged" (p. 14).

[14]Keynes, p. 248.

drosses, which are *Petulancy*, and *Lightnesse*" (A5v). The author that we were warned we seek in vain, now reappears in the frame, albeit in shadowy guise, via the friend's report. There is no anticipation of any future work. He avows that this present work is the last he will write in "this kinde." The reader is emphatically referred to his "other book," its title, and its author's name still unrevealed. "Hee chooses and desires, that his other book should testifie his ingenuity, and candor, and his disposition to labour for the reconciling of all parts" (A5v). The serious reader must seek this author revealed in all his integrity and candor, there, not here.

The other sort of reader is free to enjoy this lusty Menippean satire, Donne's most vivid prose exposition of fashionable skepticism in the Pyrrhonist vein.[15] Numbered among these readers is Robert Burton whose prefatory letter "Democritus Junior to the Reader" in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, catches the vigor of Donne's opening trope:

> Gentle Reader, I presume thou wilt be very inquisitiue to knowe what personate Actor this is, that so insolently intrudes vpon this common Theater, to the worlds view. . . . I am free borne, and may chuse whether I will tell, and who can compell me?[16]

Burton, however, quickly divined the authorship of *Conclave Ignati*—to which he refers in *The Anatomy*[17]—inscribing the title page of his copy "John Donne 1610."[18] On the other hand, another significant reader seems to have failed to enjoy it to the full: "that impudent satire," wrote Kepler, who found himself ridiculed in its pages.[19] It is no surprise that Burton should find inspiration in Donne. For instance, J. B. Bamborough remarks on Burton's acquaintance with the vogue for satire,

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[15]See Anne Lake Prescott, "Menippean Donne," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, especially pp. 168–172.

[16]Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Lichfield, 1621), a3. The wording of this passage is slightly amplified in subsequent versions.

[17]Burton, p. 320.

[18]Healy, p. xi.

[19]R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 229 n. 1. Bald cites Kepler's Latin note on *Conclave* and Marjorie Nicolson's translation.

flourishing in the 1590s and associated chiefly with Donne, Nashe, and Jonson.[20] This literary vogue fed upon the resurgent fashion of philosophical skepticism deployed in religious controversy and associated especially with Erasmus and Montaigne. To these "famous spokesmen" James S. Baumlin in his pertinent study adds John Donne.[21]

The "other book," written in 1609 and published in 1610, a year before *Conclave Ignati*, is *Pseudo-Martyr*.[22] It is Donne's most extensive deployment in prose of what I shall call "strategic skepticism." The letter styled "Printer to the Reader" of *Ignatius his Conclave*, directs us to *Pseudo-Martyr*. If a seventeenth-century reader had neglected to purchase a copy of *Pseudo-Martyr*, and was now led by the tone of that letter to seek out a copy of that "other booke," expecting a similarly perverse and amusing introduction, he would probably have been disappointed. Nevertheless, *Pseudo-Martyr*'s "An Advertisement to the Reader" wittily initiates a similarly skeptical and Attic trope: "I purposed not to speake any thing to the Reader, otherwise then by way of Epilogue in the end of the Booke."[23] This "purpose" inverts the expectation of a letter to the

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[20]Bamborough, Introduction to *Robert Burton: The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 4:xxxii.

[21]Baumlin, *John Donne and the Rhetorics of Renaissance Discourse* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1991), p. 132. As Baumlin observes, "arguments first introduced by Catholic Pyrrhonists turn ultimately against them" (p. 133).

[22]Ted-Larry Pebworth, "The text of Donne's writings," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, pp. 24–25, in a consideration of Donne's attitude to print, notes that Donne allowed the printing of only nine prose works, six of which were individual sermons. Of the remainder he acknowledged authorship of only *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. The authorship of *Pseudo-Martyr* and of the Latin and English versions of *Ignatius his Conclave* "was known by some of their readers at the time of their respective publications." Patterson, "Satirical Writing: Donne in shadows," in the same collection (p. 127) concludes from their publication history that the "*Conclave* was much more popular than *Pseudo-Martyr*," satirical works having a market advantage over dogmatic.

[23]*John Donne, Pseudo-Martyr*, ed., with introduction and commentary, Anthony Raspa (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 8. Further quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically. Although, as Keynes records, the "*Advertisement* was clearly

reader; it also refashions the concept of the "reader": no "man might well and properly be called a Reader, till he were come to the end of the Booke" (p. 8). As in *Ignatius His Conclave*, the revision of purpose results from a declared failure of sorts. The author has decided not to write the two final chapters, 13 and 14. Donne in the space of a couple of pages phrases his decision in four distinct ways: "respited the handling," "abstained from handling," "it became me to abstaine," and "chose to forbeare the handling." Yet the reader (such a reader who starts at the beginning) has already seen in "A Table of the Chapters" between the dedication to King James and "An Advertisement to the Reader," synopses of these chapters. In a sense, therefore, the reader cannot "come to the end of the Booke," as it has not yet been written. To push the joke a little further, one might say that the reader cannot be a reader—properly called a Reader—according to Donne's definition, because the book is unfinished.

Donne's maneuvering here seems to have little or nothing to do with establishing a jesting tone, the teasing play of "seek the author." His forewarnings in this prefatory matter do not anticipate possible misunderstanding of "weighty and serious matter" as a result of an indecorous tone, but signal his concern about readerly misprision, that might lead to readers being "either deceived, or scandalized" (p. 8). But more pressing than this concern are Donne's misgivings that cause him to "forbeare the handling of [chapters 13 and 14] at this time" (p. 9). The convoluted syntax in which these qualms are couched is designed more to conceal plain meaning than to "testify his ingenuity, and candor" of this, his "other book" as the "Printer to the Reader" boasts in *Ignatius* (A5). The opening sentence promises to give his "Reasons." To a reader uninitiated in the stages of the Oath of Allegiance controversy to the point at which Donne undertakes this defence of royal policy, the "reasons" would read as murky evasions. Yet such a reader negotiating the thorny syntax could scarcely avoid feeling the danger that pulses through these cryptic sentences. This territory is rife with treacherous or concealed demarcations, known only too well to the author. Thus the author ruefully anticipates the likely negative reception of the work he

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written after the rest of the book had been set up in print" (p. 9), this does not alter the effect on the reader of the Advertisement as an introductory letter.

has undertaken: "in men tender and jealous of their Honour, it is sometimes accounted as much injurie to assist, as to assault" (p. 9).

Baumlin's observations about Donne's "tortuously complex syntax and ambiguous equivocal language" in *Satyre III* could be equally appropriately applied to the "Advertisement to the Reader" of *Pseudo-Martyr*. Donne, he writes, "finds in obscurity a political safeguard."[24] Yet not everything in the first six paragraphs that grapple with the subject matter (the seventh and eighth address his scholarly method) is cloaked in obscurity. The third paragraph, beginning "And for my selfe. . . ," which is the much-studied revelation of his having "beene ever kept awake in a meditation of Martyrdome" (to which this essay will return), is direct and clear. That is also true of the two-paragraph "Epistle Dedicatorie" to King James. The first of these paragraphs is built on an elaborated military metaphor and the second on an elaboration of the commonplace of the King as the sun, that devolves into praise of the King's descending to converse with his subjects and the author's bold ascending to the royal presence.

The apparent discrepancies in tone and forthrightness in the introductory letters of *Pseudo-Martyr* have been read as symptoms of Donne's ambivalence, even distaste, for the assigned task. The most veiled passage in "An Advertisement" (paragraph 6) names Sir Edward Coke and alludes to attacks made upon him by "an ordinary Instrument"[25] of the devil, with "continuall libels, and Incitatorie bookes" which have been "iterated and inconculcated" (the sole recorded use of "inconculcate" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*) and which are responsible for more Catholic blood having been spilled than all Acts of

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[24]Baumlin, p. 130. See also Lynne Magnusson's discussion of Donne's understanding of the danger inherent in this kind of communication ("Danger and Discourse," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, pp. 743–755—especially the section "'Misinterpretable' Words: The Mutual Danger of Reader and Writer," pp. 752–755).

[25]Perhaps in the sense of "An officer in a religious fraternity" (*OED*, s. v. "ordinary," n., II.5, *obs.*). John Klause, "Hope's Gambit: The Jesuitical, Protestant, Skeptical Origins of Donne's Heroic Ideal," *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994): 181–215, at p. 191, glosses "ordinary" as "'ordinate,' 'appropriate to achieving an end'; and the appropriateness of 'prayer' and 'indifference' to making a 'choice of a way of life' was precisely what Ignatius had insisted on in the *Spiritual Exercises*."

Parliament. Readers initiated in the controversy would have recognized in this figure Robert Persons, S. J., the formidable controversialist who had also attacked the King's own defence of the Oath of Allegiance, *Triplici Nodo Triplex Cuneus*, dated 1607, which appeared in February 1608.[26] Thus Donne's task, if it was not to defend both King James and Coke against the attacks of Persons, was at least to attack their mutual antagonist and to do so by driving a wedge, as the King had attempted—a triple wedge applied to a triple knot as the title of James's book might be translated—between the Jesuits and English Catholics.

It has often been noted that the views of Attorney General Coke—designated by Donne as "Lord chiefe Justice of the common Pleas" (p. 9)—and of many others in the legal profession, on the rights and limits of monarchy that would become the political doctrine known as "mixed monarchy," were incompatible with those of James, which are designated by the term "Divine Right." Perhaps Donne resented the fact that Coke had not undertaken his own response to Persons,[27] thus adding a further cause of tonal disturbance in the Advertisement. For this and a range of other reasons proposed by modern scholarship, most notably the author's declaration of his Roman Catholic heritage, *Pseudo-Martyr* has elicited a wide divergence in interpretive readings. This interpretive divergence is the more remarkable because critical attention to this work, "arguably the most neglected of his writings,"[28] has been slight and often dismissive in the manner of Evelyn Simpson: "the dullest of Donne's works."[29]

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[26]A succinct account of the phases of controversy arising from the Oath of Allegiance and of the relationship of *Ignatius his Conclave* to *Pseudo-Martyr* is to be found in Healy, pp. xvii–xxiv. In the chapter "Controversy and Conflict" in *John Donne: A Life*, Bald provides a detailed context which includes Donne's relationship with Thomas Morton, the experienced controversialist, Walton's account of that relationship, and Donne's entry into the Oath controversy (see, especially, pp. 200–218).

[27]As Bald notes, "The right of defence, Donne felt, belonged to Coke, or to someone authorized by him" (p. 222).

[28]Johann P. Sommerville, "John Donne the Controversialist: The Poet as Political Thinker," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 74.

[29]Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 179.

Post Simpson, however, critical responses do not often find the work merely dull. More recent scholarship continues to acknowledge what earlier scholars identified as the most recalcitrant cause of its dullness: namely, the remoteness and the density of the seemingly endless citations of dogmatic authorities and controversies. Anthony Raspa, rejecting the judgment that *Pseudo-Martyr* is a failed piece of imaginative literature, draws an analogy between its intentions and those of modern journalism. It was exciting to readers then who would not have been overwhelmed with the references, but now, even with the diligent recovery work of scholarship, it is as stale as yesterday's news (pp. xiii–xiv).

Notwithstanding this disincentive, recent scholarly assessments of *Pseudo-Martyr* are as animated as they are diverse. Here follows a brief, illustrative sample. John Carey views it as temporizing and dishonest, "an uproarious saga of sanctified buffoonery." Dennis Flynn's close attention to Donne's ironies finds it to be itself a satire on religious controversy derived "from a point of view of apparent scepticism toward both sides." John Klause, likewise examining skepticism, finds Donne a temporizer, but a sympathetic one, who for good reasons discovers a spiritual refuge in "the certainty of doubt." Johann P. Sommerville argues that *Pseudo-Martyr* is Donne's "most lasting monument," "a weighty contribution to the debate on church-state relations." Also stressing Donne's political acumen, Tom Cain judges it to be Donne's "most explicit statement of political theory" at the core of which is Donne's account of the origins of monarchial power." Raspa concludes his examination of the meaning of *Pseudo-Martyr* by pronouncing Donne a "basically maverick" thinker who leaves many of his readers uncomfortable because he fails strangely to reinforce anyone's prejudices: "Donne's message in the final unwritten chapters of *Pseudo-Martyr* might have come perilously close to telling Christians to love one another as Christ had loved them." Healy, however, diverges from the "standard critical comment . . . that it is a charitable work filled with irenic sweetness." Although he acknowledges that Donne "believed in 'composing all parties'" and that he reached further than most of his contemporaries in this direction, Donne's treatment of the Jesuits in *Pseudo-Martyr* is harsher than even that in *Ignatius his Conclave*.[30]

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[30]Respectively, Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 34; Flynn, "Irony in Donne's *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-*

The vehemence of Donne's attack on the "ordinary Instrument" of the devil, noted above, and its seemingly premature placement in the "Advertisement to the Reader" signals his intention to focus the force of his polemic on the Jesuits rather than Catholics in general, whose blood has been spilled as a result of Jesuit books. "A Preface to the Priestes, and Jesuits, and to their Disciples in this Kingdome," which follows the "Advertisement," sets about this task in the first sentence noting Donne's acquaintance "with the phrases of Diminution and Disparagement, and other personall aspersions, which your writers cast, and imprint upon such of your owne side, as depart from their opinions in the least dramme or scruple" (p. 11). Although Donne forbears casting aspersions on his own "side" in this book, some of his private correspondence expresses intense irritation with divines of the English Church. A fascinating letter to Sir Henry Goodere written a little before the publication of *Pseudo-Martyr* reveals the depth of his feelings:

> To you that are not easily scandalized, and in whom, I hope, neither my Religion nor Morality can suffer, I dare write my opinion of that Book in whose bowels you left me. It hath refreshed, and given new justice to my ordinary complaint, That the Divines of these times, are become meer Advocates, as though Religion were a temporall inheritance; they plead for it with all sophistications, and illusions, and forgeries: And herein are they likest Advocates, that though they be feed by the way, with Dignities, and other recompenses, yet that for which they plead is none of theirs. They write for Religion, without it.[31]

Donne's strong words about Persons in "The Advertisement" can hardly have been provoked by sympathy for Bishop Barlow whose book, *The*

Martyr," *Recusant History* 12 (1973): 49–69, at p. 66; Klause, p. 207; Sommerville, p. 73; Cain, "Donne's Political World," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, p. 91; Raspa, p. liv; Healy, pp. xviii n.2.

[31]Bald, p. 216, following the 1651 edition of *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, published by John Donne, the younger. Further quotations from this letter are from the same source and will be cited parenthetically. Bald identifies the book as William Barlow's response to Persons's attack on *Triplici Nodo*, and notes the Jesuits, including Persons, "fell on Barlow . . . .with gusto" (p. 217).

Answer to a Catholike English-man Donne is here criticizing. His reaction is more likely a token of his recognition of Persons's polemical prowess—a tribute of sorts to a formidable adversary. How might Persons have responded to *Pseudo-Martyr*? Unfortunately for posterity, he died in Rome in the year of its publication.

This searching letter to Goodere exemplifies Donne's fair-mindedness, or put another way, his doubt about the controversy: "In the main point in question, I think truly there is a perplexity (as farre as I see yet) and both sides may be in justice, and innocence." He goes on to weigh the claims of royal prerogative and Roman supremacy, finding them equally persuasive and necessary to each. However, there is no inclusion of Jesuits in this scheme. It seems but a short step from this to the irenicism he expresses elsewhere, and from that to his ecumenical promptings, memorably expressed in a letter to "Sir H. R." written at Mitcham, between 1606 and 1611: "You know I never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion . . . nor immuring it in a *Rome*, or a *Wittemberg*, or a *Geneva*; they are all virtuall beams of one Sun" (p. 29). Do these candid admissions in private letters paint a true picture of Donne's mind? If so, then the inevitable tension between private and public roles must color the rhetorical anxiety in the introductory letters to *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius his Conclave* I have been discussing. The claim in "The Printer To the Reader" that his "other book" labors "for the reconciling of all parts," should be taken seriously.

In this letter to Goodere, Donne breaks off his line of thought on the identity of Christianity to turn to the urgent need for precise and punctilious scholarship in conducting religious controversy, the deficiencies of which in Bishop Barlow's work, leave the English Church's apologetics in a dangerous state.

> I looked for more prudence, and humane wisdome in him, in avoiding all miscitings, or mis-interpretings, because at this time, the watch is set, and every bodies hammer is upon that anvill; and to dare offend in that kinde now, is, for a theef to leave the covert, and meet a strong hue and cry in the teeth.[32]

[32]Bald, p. 217.

This may seem anything but irenical, yet Donne's ecumenical thought is characterized by the need for precision in controversy; the enterprise can no more be served by prevarication than by opprobrious imputations of slander to opponents, both of which defects he sees in Barlow's work. The intellectual and spiritual rigor given such vivid form in *Satyre III* is present in private correspondence and in printed treatise.

Turning again to *Pseudo-Martyr*'s "Advertisement to the Reader," one notes how Donne emphasizes the scrupulousness of his scholarly method:

> And in those places which are cited from other Authors (which hee shall know by the Margine) I doe not alwayes precisely and superstitiously binde my selfe to the words of the Authors; which was impossible to me, both because sometimes I collect their sense, and expresse their Arguments or their opinions, and the Resultance of a whole leafe, in two or three lines, and some few times, I cite some of their Catholique Authors, out of their owne fellowes, who had used the same fashion of collecting their sense, without precise binding themselves to All, or onely their words. This is the comfort which my conscience hath, and the assurance which I can give the Reader, that I have no where made any Author, speake more or lesse, in sense, then hee intended, to that purpose, for which I cite him.
>
> (p. 10)

This reassuring declaration of scholarly rectitude performs the auxilliary task of focussing the reader's expectation on Donne's method in deploying the ensuing quotations and references. The method, essentially humanist and skeptical, is to pit Roman authorities against each other, especially to find Jesuit assertions contradicted by non-Jesuit authorities. The significance of this method for future Anglican controversy I discuss later in this essay.

One other feature of the Advertisement, much scrutinized in recent scholarship, is Donne's self-revelation. His account of having been "ever kept awake in a meditation of Martyrdome" because of his Catholic lineage, brilliantly calculated to underwrite his credentials and authority for this special discourse, is also expertly positioned, as paragraph 3, to dash immediately any suggestion conveyed by the opening trope that this

might be a pasquil, or some scurrilous Pyrrhonic demolition work of Roman Catholicism in general. In the next section of *Pseudo-Martyr*, a "Preface"—in effect a third introductory letter—addressed to priests and Jesuits, Donne adds significantly to his self-revelation, his "declaration of my selfe" (p. 13). Now it is not so much the drama of martyrdom as the drudgery of scholarship and spiritual search. We seem again close to the passionate language of *Satyre III*, and its mental strife.

> They who have descended so lowe, as to take knowledge of me, and to admit me into their consideration, know well that I used no inordinate hast, nor precipitation in binding my conscience to any locall Religion. I had a longer worke to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken.
>
> (p. 13)

But Donne is careful to acknowledge the "learning and good life" of those who sought to rectify his understanding, as well as to represent the inconveniences of his "irresolution," during which period, he "survayed and digested the whole body of Divinity, controverted betweene ours and the Romane Church" (p. 13).

Sommerville notes that although *Pseudo-Martyr* is Donne's most neglected work, "it is arguable that Donne himself considered such works as *Pseudo-Martyr* his most lasting monuments."[33] It is not known to what extent such an appraisal was shared by readers of Donne in the decades following its publication. However, Dayton Haskin, recounting the vicissitudes of Donne's posthumous reputation, observes that in the nineteenth century, "among those who thought of Donne as a writer, *Pseudo-Martyr* was widely considered his most important work, because it exposed Catholic duplicity and self-deception."[34] It is not unreasonable to suppose that in the continuing strife of those years from Donne's death up to, and including the English Civil Wars, Donne's controversial works would be accounted at no lower rate. The stubborn fact remains,

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[33]Sommerville, p. 73.

[34]Haskin, "Donne's afterlife," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, p. 238.

however, that *Pseudo-Martyr* was not reprinted, whereas *Ignatius his Conclave* ran to four editions, the last of these in the Interregnum, and a steady flow of sermons, singly and in collections, appeared from 1622 to the 1640 folio, *LXXX Sermons*, and in 1649 a folio of fifty sermons. It may be the case that *Pseudo-Martyr* was perceived as bound to a single, specific issue—the Oath of Allegiance, to which there was some fine-tuning in a confirming act of 1610—as neither *Ignatius* nor sermons were. Although *Pseudo-Martyr* could be seen to have fulfilled its immediate mission, it remained a useable compilation of arguments and authorities in the continuing contest over the claims of Rome. Raspa offers the following plausible conjecture that would explain why, for example, as Haskin notes, *Pseudo-Martyr* enjoyed a nineteenth-century readership: the "eighty-two known surviving copies of the first edition of *Pseudo-Martyr* suggests that it had an extraordinarily heavy press run. Such a run would have probably eliminated the need of an immediate second edition and explain why, in fact, there was only one publication in Donne's lifetime" (p. lxiii).

I turn now to some aspects of religious controversy of the next generation of Anglican apologists in order to suggest Donne's potential influence on the skeptical thought of the Great Tew circle. Lucius Carey, born in 1610—the year of the publication of *Pseudo-Martyr*—took possession of estates inherited from his grandfather at Great Tew, a village some fifteen miles from Oxford. In 1633, on the death of his father, he became the second Viscount Falkland, and from about that time his great house at Great Tew became a regular meeting place for a wide array of the most accomplished intellects of the time. It flourished until obliterated by the storm clouds of the Civil War, in which several leading members, including Falkland himself, lost their lives and others their livings. The copious record and celebration of this time and place, itself a literary and historical masterpiece, is the work of Edward Hyde, later Lord Clarendon. It is contained in two principal documents, both published posthumously: *The History of the Rebellion* (1702–1704) and *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (1759).[35]

[35]See Graham Roebuck, *Clarendon and Cultural Continuity: A Bibliographical Study* (New York: Garland, 1981), especially pp. 149–159, for a detailed discussion of the manuscripts and publication histories of these works.

Clarendon characterizes the informal group at Great Tew as a *convivium philosophicum* or *convivium theologicum*. Falkland's friends, frequenting Great Tew, many connected with Oxford University, "dwelt with him, as in a college situated in a purer air; so that his house was a university in a less volume; whither they came not so much for repose as study; and to examine and refine those grosser propositions, which laziness and consent made current in vulgar conversation."[36] No doubt Falkland's extensive library, in which he composed *Of the Infallibilitie of the Church of Rome*, and several other pieces, all published posthumously, contained copies of Donne's published works.

This appealing evocation of lively discussion untrammelled by ideological conformity suggests the possibility of a great variety of intellectual pursuits from such diverse figures, to select only a few, as Suckling, Hobbes, Earle, Chillingworth, and Thomas Carew. As scholars of Great Tew necessarily point out, there was no formal group or fully defined membership, but rather a loose association of an impressive cross-section of the English intellectual elite over a number of years. J. C. Hayward in his important study of Great Tew, reviewing the disputed question of who to include as contributors to the Great Tew era, observes, "in writing of Great Tew we are dealing with an ethos, and not with a social unit."[37] Many of Falkland's associates also met in London literary circles. Some were, for example, "sealed of the tribe of Ben." The authority of Jonson was well respected at Great Tew. The memorial volume, *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638), was almost certainly conceived at Great Tew, and John Aubrey thought the title was devised by Falkland.[38] Hayward, who styles the members "Tevians," pronounces that "the circle was conceived under the gaze of Ben Jonson."[39]

Though poetry was well represented among Tevians by such celebrated practitioners of the art as Suckling, Waller, Carew,

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[36] *Clarendon: Selections from The History of the Rebellion and The Life by Himself*, ed. G. Huehns (Oxford: University Press, 1978), p. 51. Further quotations of Clarendon are from this edition. Page numbers are given parenthetically in the text.

[37] Haywood, "New Directions in the Study of the Falkland Circle," *The Seventeenth Century* 3.1 (1987): 14–41, at p. 20.

[38] Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 1:151.

[39] Haywood, p. 41.

Godolphin, and Cowley, other members who had no aspiration to poetic fame—such as Clarendon—could turn a verse when the occasion demanded. Yet poetry was less significant for them than their inquiry into religion and politics. Clarendon's autobiographical reminiscence of his friendship with Jonson illustrates the Tevian order of priority. Jonson "had for many years an extraordinary kindness for [him] until he found he [Clarendon] betook himself to business which he believed ought never to be preferred before his company" (p. 45).

Poetry certainly had a role in the life of Great Tew, and the problem of how to commemorate the death of Donne clearly occupied its members. The evidence furnished by the elegiac tributes to Donne in the 1632 edition of *Deaths Duell*—there were only two, both unsigned—and the 1633 edition of *Poems*, in which these two reappear, signed "H. K." (Henry King) and "Edw. Hyde." (Edward Hyde, Clarendon), joined by ten other elegies and an anonymous epitaph, suggests an Oxford-Great Tew collaboration springing into action after the presumably disappointing response in *Deaths Duell*. The elegy by "Edw. Hyde." opens with a reference to "those men, that knew thee well, / Yet dare not help the world, to ring thy knell." The list of contributors is not exclusively connected with Great Tew or Oxford: Izaak Walton, for instance, contributes. Robert Thomas Fallon has demonstrated the significance of an Oxford nexus with particularly strong ties to Christ Church. Sidney Gottlieb sees the elegists as "custodians of Donne's reputation," and Michael P. Parker recognizes that there were problems inherent in Donne's reputation for his successors. These reactions, and the significance of Falkland's elegy to the "Great Tew agenda," I have discussed elsewhere.[40] The most prominent characteristic of this gathering of elegists is the desire to claim Donne the churchman, Dean of St. Paul's, by distancing him from the stain of his lascivious poetry. Thomas Carew's magnificent elegy is the notable exception to this trend, praising in rather bleak terms the plain and sober precepts of the pulpit which make him an even more ardent admirer of the "flame / Of thy brave Soule."

Suckling's "A Sessions of the Poets" names, along with the acknowledged poets, figures from quite different spheres and

[40]Roebuck, "Elegies for Donne: Great Tew and the Poets," *John Donne Journal* 9.2 (1990): 125–135.

occupations. They include Sir Kenelm Digby, scientist, philosopher and naval commander; John Selden, jurist, antiquarian and orientalist; William Chillingworth, the theologian; and Sir Tobie Matthew, translator, priest, and, as the son of an Archbishop of York, a high-profile convert to Rome. The confluence of poetry and divinity, and simultaneously the tension between them, is best illustrated in the following lines:

> *Hales* set by himself most gravely did smile
> To see them about nothing keep such a coil;
> *Apollo* had spied him, but knowing his mind
> Past by, and call'd *Faulkland* that sate just behind:
> But
> He was of late so gone with Divinity,
> That he had almost forgot his Poetry,
> Though to say the truth (and *Apollo* did know it)
> He might have been both his Priest and his Poet.[41]

Here Suckling adapts Carew's final couplet of his "Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, D^r^. Iohn Donne,"

> Here lie two Flamens, and both those, the best,
> Apollo's first, at last, the true Gods Priest.[42]

This adaptation is surely intended to claim Falkland as, in some measure, a successor to Donne as defender of the English Church against the infallibility claims of Rome. That John Hales—the "ever-memorable" of Eton—is juxtaposed with Falkland in this stanza suggests that Suckling recognized their similarity of outlook. Clarendon, who concludes his character of Hales as "one of the greatest scholars in Europe," second only to Falkland in the breadth of his reading, stresses that "nothing troubled him more than the brawls which were grown from religion; and he therefore exceedingly detested the tyranny of the church of Rome;

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[41] *The Works of Sir John Suckling: The Non-Dramatic Works*, ed., with introduction and commentary, Thomas Clayton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 75, lines 95–102.

[42] *Poems By J. D. With Elegies on the Authors Death* (1633; facsimile repr., Menston: Scolar Press, 1970), p. 388.

more for their imposing uncharitably upon the consciences of other men, than for the errors in their own opinions" (pp. 40–42). Hales's view of Rome's tyrannical imposition on consciences, widely shared at Great Tew, expresses exactly Donne's often repeated theme in *Pseudo-Martyr*.

H. R. Trevor-Roper, in his wide-ranging discussion of the intellectual currents flowing through Great Tew, stresses the supremacy of Erasmus. He "is cited by all the Great Tew writers." He adds that Clarendon kept portraits of Erasmus and More in his gallery.[43] The irenicism of Erasmus and More and of those who followed in, and amplified, this broadly humanist, skeptical tradition, especially Richard Hooker and Hugo Grotius, necessarily implied high hopes for the reunification of Western Christendom. More's zealous persecution of heresy does not seem to have affected this impression. As prelude to that eventual outcome it was possible in the early years of King James's reign to envisage the Church in England as the accommodating home for moderate Protestantism in charitable dialogue with moderate Catholicism, such as that represented by the Gallican Church—a hope alluded to in Donne's address to "The Two Tutelar Angels, protectors of the Popes Consistory, and of the Colledge of *Sorbon*" in *Ignatius his Conclaue* (p. 1). For many reasons, including the surge of counter-Reformation power that centered on papal infallibility and the collapse of the Synod of Dort into hardened Calvinism, ecumenical hopes weakened. The tenor of the English Church was changing. Under Laud it grew more zealous of orthodoxy, and, therefore, more challenged by millenarian and anti-ceremonial, Calvinist sentiments.

If there emerged a central purpose from the Tevians' examination and refinement of "vulgar propositions," it was their endeavor to refashion the English Church into a vessel capable of weathering the gathering storm. For them too, it might be said that "the watch is set and every bodies hammer is upon the anvill." But their *convivium theologicum* was a playground for unorthodoxy. As Trevor-Roper strikingly puts it, "In fact all who came there were in some way heretics."[44] For the most part, their "heresies" would probably not have been uncongenial to what has been

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[43]Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), p. 189.

[44]Trevor-Roper, p. 170.

called "liberal Anglicanism"[45] nor to Donne: their irenicism was founded on the anti-doctrinal doctrine of "matters indifferent"—their "uncertainty principle," I call it. They were broadly Erastian, rejecting equally firmly hard-line Calvinist determinism and theocratic tendencies and ultramontane Roman claims upon conscience and civil conduct. Donne gives a direct and forceful account in *Essays in Divinity*.[46]

Trevor-Roper's summary characterization of Great Tew as "sceptics who grappled with the problem of Pyrrhonism and sought to find, in constructive reason, a firm basis for belief"[47] captures much in little. It also suggests a paradox at the heart of this enterprise. Skeptical thought, deployed by the Roman Church and the Reformed Churches against each other, especially in its Pyrrhonist form, can be so corrosively powerful that no "certainty" withstands it unless it be the certainty of doubt. Donne also grapples with it, acknowledging its power. In an essay on "nothing" and the debate over God's creation out of nothing ["*Ex nihilo fecit omnia Deus*"] he comes to "the quarelsome contending of *Sextus Empiricus* the *Pyrrhonian*, (of the author of which sect *Laertius* says, that he handled philosophy bravely, having invented a way by which a man should determine nothing of every thing) who with his Ordinary weapon, a two-edged sword, thinks he cuts off all Arguments against production of Nothing, by this, *Non fit quod jam est, Nec quod non est; nam non patitur mutationem quod non est* [He does not make what now is, neither what is not; for what is not does not admit changes.]" (p. 28).

Donne's skepticism, I have suggested, is strategic: that is, its use is to demolish arguments for infallibility, not to destroy all grounds of knowledge in the manner attributed to Sextus Empiricus. There is no evidence that Donne's skepticism is a systematic program. It is an aspect of wit—even its underpinning. As with Montaigne, his skepticism "is not really a 'position' at all, like other philosophies, but rather a continual

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[45]See Robert Martin Krapp, *Liberal Anglicanism 1636–1647: An Historical Essay* (Ridgefield, CT: Acorn Press, 1944), for a tough-minded critique of the "rational enlightenment" of Great Tew.

[46]*Essays in Divinity by John Donne*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 28: the "unrectified Zeal of many, who should impose necessity upon indifferent things, and oblige all the World to one precise forme of exterior worship, and Eccliastick policie." Further quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

[47]Trevor-Roper, p. 227.

movement of thought."[48] "Doubt wisely," advises the speaker of *Satyre III*. To be able to exercise that virtue, however, entails a perilous religious experience of the power of skeptical reasoning to undermine belief: "Thou hast given mee a desire of knowledge, and some meanes to it, and some possession of it; and I have arm'd my self with thy weapons against thee," runs part of a prayer in *Essays in Divinity* (p. 97). Doubt and knowledge are faces of the same coin: both depend on the operation of reason. Donne remarks in a letter to Goodere that "none may doubt but that that religion is certainly best, which is reasonablest" (p. 43). Yet Klause judges Donne's rationalism to be "neither entirely cool nor secure."[49] Donne was wary of pursuing his skeptical reason much beyond the demonstration of "things indifferent" to conclusions that would corrode the essentials of faith and turn the contradictions of Scripture into stumbling blocks. The Tevians, however, were less restrained in this respect. As described by Clarendon the career of William Chillingworth, author of *The Religion of Protestants* (1638), brilliantly illuminates the danger of skepticism.

As a result of perfecting the techniques of doctrinal disputation, "he contracted such an irresolution and habit of doubting, that by degrees he grew confident of nothing, and a sceptic, at least, in the greatest mysteries of faith" (*Clarendon*, p. 42). Yet, when he converted to the Church of Rome, as Clarendon's account unfolds, it is precisely this disputatious habit of mind which, resisting the authority of Rome with his "incomparable power of reason . . . carried the war into their own quarters; and made the pope's infallibility to be as much shaken, and declined by their own doctors" (p. 43). Thus defeated in controversy, the Catholics, so Clarendon concludes, take up "arms and weapons of another nature than were used or known in the church of Rome when Bellarmine died" (p. 43). Donne considered Bellarmine the most able defender of the Catholic cause. It is possible Clarendon had this in mind.

Very few of those who employed skeptical arguments were cast in the Chillingworth mold of inherent, almost pathological skepticism. Engaged in a "too nice inquisition for truth," he was as Clarendon

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[48]Charles Larmore, "Montaigne and his Heirs," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayres, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2:1147–1148.

[49]Klause, p. 190.

perceived, "in all his sallies and retreats, his own convert." Arguments of adversaries made little impression upon him for "all his doubts grew out of himself, when he assisted his scruples with the strength of his own reason, and was then too hard for himself" (p. 43). Nevertheless, he was not wholly self-absorbed. Richard Popkin credits him with an important role in the exposition of "probabilistic theology": the willingness to settle for less than complete certainty in religious questions which is generally traced from Erasmus and Sebastian Castellio in the sixteenth century to the most influential seventeenth-century exponent, Hugo Grotius.[50] He had, of course, enormous influence on Great Tew. A necessary corollary to probabilism, if it is not simply to become the exercise of individual private judgment over what to believe, is that "an entire exemption from error was neither inherent in, nor necessary to any church" which was Chillingworth's view on quitting the Roman Church (*Clarendon*, p. 42). It is a view reiterated in the argument of *Pseudo-Martyr*.

It is not improbable that Donne met Grotius during the latter's visit to London in 1613. Bald examines Walton's statement that Donne's "acquaintance and friendship was sought by most Ambassadours of forraign Nations, and by many other strangers, whose learning or business occasioned their stay in this Nation" and observes that "Grotius was such a man as Donne would have been eager to meet." It is as likely that Donne knew Isaac Casaubon, to whom a copy of *Pseudo-Martyr* had been sent, when, at King James's invitation he arrived in England to work towards healing the schism of Christendom.[51] Donne cites Casaubon in *Pseudo-Martyr*, "a great learned man of this time" (p. 92). Trevor-Roper sums up this ecumenical project: "Casaubon was, for Grotius, the ideal ambassador at the Court of King James, and it was to him, especially, as 'another Erasmus', that Grotius now unfolded his plans for a new united Christendom, with King James as its political head."[52]

The rationalism of Great Tew, as I have suggested, being less restrained than that exhibited by Donne, took directions that anxious

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[50]Richard Popkin, "The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 1:389–400.

[51]Bald, pp. 283–284.

[52]Trevor-Roper, p. 53.

contemporaries outside the circle were apt to construe as the heresy of Socinianism. Given the hindsight of history, it is clear that Socinianism, evidently very attractive to seventeenth-century rationalists, especially in Holland and England, is a step—a considerable one—in the direction of Deism and Unitarianism. But whether the Tevians regarded themselves as headed in that direction is doubtful.[53] As scholarly discussions of religious labeling, especially in that period, point out, labels were more often employed for denigration than for precise designation. An interesting commentary on Great Tew in this connection is Suckling's discourse, *An Account of Religion by Reason* first published in 1646 in *Fragmenta Aurea,* but written in 1637. His epistle to the Earl of Dorset comes straight to the point: "I am not ignorant that the fear of *Socinianisme* at this time, renders every man that offers to give an account of Religion by Reason, suspected to have none at all: yet I have made no scruple to run that hazard, not knowing why a man should not use the best Weapon his Creator hath given him in his defence."[54] A witty and genial comparative treatment of some religious beliefs and practices of Christians, Jews, and heathens, in a manner reminiscent of Sir Thomas Browne, it comes by and by to the "mistery of the Trinity" (p. 179). Denial of this doctrine, on the ground that it has no firm biblical basis, is a Socinian hallmark. Concluding his discussion of metaphysical aspects of this doctrine, which does nothing to make it amenable to rationality, Suckling neatly avoids giving offence to orthodoxy with the paradoxical trope, "So far is it from being unreasonable, because I do not understand it, that it would be unreasonable I should" (p. 180). Suckling is one of the members of the circle least likely to be "gone with divinity." That he went this far is some token of his respect for Falkland.

"One of the most wittie, and most eloquent of our Modern Divines, Doctor *Donne*," writes Falkland in the course of praising one of the

[53]See H. John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: University Press, 1951). Subsequent studies draw on this classic account.

[54]*The Works of Sir John Suckling*, p. 169. Further quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

Doctor's scriptural glosses.[55] There is no doubting the presence of Donne in the Great Tew library where Falkland "diligently studied the controversies, and exactly read all, or the choisest of the Greek and Latin fathers, and having a memory so stupendous that he remembered, on all occasions, whatsoever he read." This "indefatigable industry" entailed his foreswearing visits to London "which he loved above all places, till he had perfectly learned the Greek tongue . . . that it will not be believed in how short a time he was master of it, and accurately read all the Greek historians" (p. 51). Hayward's fine discussion of Great Tew affirms Clarendon's claim, pointing out that Chillingworth owed much to the references in Falkland's *Discourse* and *Reply*. Of the former Hayward writes that it "runs circles around much professional theology" and deserves to be better known today.[56]

Like Donne's industry described in his self-declaration in *Pseudo-Martyr*—surveying and digesting the whole body of divinity controverted between the Roman and English churches—Falkland's was dictated by personal, spiritual necessity. It is worth returning to Donne's self-revelation to compare his condition with that of Falkland:

> I had a longer worke to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde upon my conscience, both by Persons who by nature had a power and superiority over my will.
>
> (p. 13)

In Falkland's case, as Clarendon recalls,

> Many attempts were made upon him by the instigation of his mother . . . to pervert him in his piety to the church of England, and to reconcile him to that of Rome; which they prosecuted with the more confidence, because he declined no

[55]"The Lord of Falklands Reply," in *Sir Lucius Cary, Late Lord Viscount of Falkland His Discourse of Infallibility, with an Answer to it: And his Lordships Reply* (London, 1651), p. 288.

[56]Haywood, p. 21.

> opportunity or occasion of confidence with those of that religion, whether priests or laics.
>
> (p. 51)

As did Falkland, Donne declined no conversation with "others who by their learning and good life, seem'd to me justly to claime an interest for the guiding, and rectifying of mine understanding" (p. 13). The similarity of the circumstances in which they arrived at their religious allegiance and the pressures dictating their choices are striking.

Clarendon returns to the way Falkland, Donne-like, surveyed the writings controverted between Rome and England:

> He had read all the Greek and Latin fathers; all the most allowed and authentic ecclesiastical writers; and all the councils, with wonderful care and observation; for in religion he thought too careful and too curious an enquiry could not be made, amongst those, whose purity was not questioned, and whose authority was constantly and confidently urged, by men who were furthest from being of one mind among themselves; and for the mutual support of their several opinions, in which they most contradicted each other.
>
> (p. 66)

This was the strenuous preparation for his discourse against the infallibility of the Roman Church that, in Clarendon's words, is "evidence of his learning, his wit, and his candour" (p. 66). Perhaps these words echo Donne's in *Ignatius his Conclave* in which he commends his "other book" that "should testifie his ingenuity, and candor, and his disposition to labour for the reconciling of all parts."

Falkland's discourses, written in the mid 1630s, must have been circulated a considerable time before his death according to Falconer Madan's account of their publication history.[57] Falkland died on the battlefield at Newbury in 1643. The first pamphlet, *Of the Infallibilitie of the Church of Rome*, was published at Oxford in 1645, which was then the beleaguered royalist headquarters. Clarendon, unaware of this and of the

[57] *Oxford Books: A Bibliography of Printed Works Relating to the University and City of Oxford, or Printed or Published there* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895, 1912, 1931), vol. 2, item 1844.

1651 publication, wrote of their "sharpness of style, and full weight of reason," adding "that the church is deprived of great jewels in the concealment of them" (p. 52). What follows is a brief consideration of these works that Clarendon regarded so highly, with some comparisons drawn to *Pseudo-Martyr*.

As in *Pseudo-Martyr*, Roman authorities are posed against each other demonstrating the impossibility of determining authoritative truth. Falkland moves from this demonstration to the position that reasonable doubt is the only reasonable, and irenic position to take. Some of the authorities that Falkland cites are found in Donne, but not all; and Falkland shows a marked attraction to the Greek texts. Like Donne, he is firm on the importance of scholarly accuracy. He quotes in the original language, translates, and gives appropriate marginal references. The argument proceeds by questioning the three grounds of religious knowledge: scripture, reason, and tradition composed of the ancient writers (A2). In questioning the latter, Falkland introduces an argument he is to use repeatedly: claims concerning tradition cannot be guides to ignorant people who cannot possibly understand the texts to affirm the validity of any such claims, and the learned, who can understand them, actually disagree about them. Possibly following Falkland's lead, Suckling also employs this argument. Donne took the same line in undermining the Roman practice of administering oaths in matters of doctrine: "For, how ignorant soever he be in controverted *Divinity*, every one which takes that oath, must sweare, *That there are seven Sacraments instituted by Christ*; which any of their Doctors might have doubted and impugn'd an houre before" (*Pseudo-Martyr*, p. 243).

Similarly, Falkland deploys the witty observation that a lawful belief one moment becomes damnable the next moment if a General Council decrees so (p. 6). *Pseudo-Martyr* expands instances of the same point (e.g., p. 101). In places Falkland's discourse reads as if he has *Pseudo-Martyr* at his side. For example, in just one paragraph (paragraph 27 on p. 10) Falkland discusses the Circumcellions, that bizarre sect which sought martyrdom by provoking others to kill them, and the "ill care of *Christianity*, to seeke to hold it up by *Turkish* meanes," while in *Pseudo-Martyr*, within the space of a few paragraphs, Donne expatiates on the Circumcellions and the witness of martyrdom against the Turks (pp. 34–36). However, the directions they take on these matters differ and Falkland adduces an authority, Synesius, not present in Donne. Briefly

put, Falkland has his own voice, which is more restrained than Donne's for the most part. However, at times we hear Falkland's candid exasperation at the persistence of nitpicking controversy when reason would better serve: "I take no pleasure in tumbling hard and unpleasant bookes and making my selfe giddy with disputeing of obscure questions," and he pleads for a more agreeable way "then to endure endlesse volumes of commentaries, the harsh *Greeke* of *Evagrius*, and the as hard *Latine* of *Irenæus*" (p. 13).

Occasional flashes of the sharpness that Clarendon noted illuminate the dry rigor of Falkland's argument. For instance, discussing the Roman claim that Protestants fall out among themselves whereas Catholics are "alwayes at *unity*," he retorts: "when there is *fire* for them that *disagree*, they need not bragge of their uniformity who *consent*" (p. 14). Yet Falkland is far from descending into a pasquil: the satirical itch is either slight or carefully suppressed by his insistence on civility towards opponents in controversy, indeed towards all who hold views differing from his own. This is true of his extant writing and, according to members of the circle, of his conversation at the rural retreat of Great Tew. His speeches in Parliament against bishops and especially, as Clarendon concedes, "sharp expressions he used against the archbishop of Canterbury" (p. 56), belong to a different narrative. The differences between Falkland's irenical tone at the *convivium philosophicum* and his political speeches as Member of Parliament in 1640–1641, lie outside the scope of this essay.[58]

Insofar as his controversial pieces were influenced by Donne, they display none of the authorial elusiveness of Donne's "letters" in *Ignatius his Conclave* and *Pseudo-Martyr*. One does not expect Falkland to echo Donne's "They who have descended so lowe, as to take knowledge of me, and to admit me into their consideration" of *Pseudo-Martyr*. The preamble to "The Lord of Falklands Answer to a Letter of Mr. Montague," stresses that Falkland, like Montague, had experienced "inducements" to convert to Rome, and that as "a Lay man, a young

[58]See David L. Smith's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for a succinct account of Falkland's dramatic but short parliamentary career which saw him first a moderate reformer, then calling for the execution of Strafford and, in short course, reluctantly becoming privy councillor and, in January 1642, secretary of state.

man, and an Ignorant man," not a learned disputant, he can answer Montague on an equality of understanding (p. 279). But it is no self-revelation. Falkland's assured forthrightness, contrasted with Donne's anxious acknowledgment to Goodere that "both sides may be in justice and innocence," reflects the differences in social rank, in aspirations and, of course, in intellectual subtlety of the two men. Falkland lived as if in "*republica Platonis, non in faece Romuli*, [in Plato's republic, not in the refuse of Rome]" wrote Clarendon (p. 55). Of Donne the reverse might be true.

A work such as *Ignatius his Conclave*, in the mocking spirit of Nashe, would have no place in the Great Tew of the 1630s. Not until the increasingly acerbic pamphlets heralding civil war did that tone revive, and with it the memory of Nashe's triumph in controversy over Martin Marprelate.[59] *Pseudo-Martyr*'s style of learned controversy, however, was acceptable and there are indications, as I have argued, of its influence in Falkland's writings. "Mr.Walter Montague's Letter concerning changing his Religion" contains a passage that appears to illustrate the effectiveness of *Pseudo-Martyr*'s insistence that English Catholics should conform to the sovereign authority: "I know the Kings wisdome is rightly informed, that the Catholique Faith doth not tend to the alienation of the Subject, it rather super-infuseth a Reverence and Obedience to Monarchie, and strengthens the bands of our obedience to our Naturall Prince" (p. 277). Falkland is skeptical about "super-infusing loyalty . . . as if Popery were a way to obedience." He concludes his reply with a flourish: he knows many good Roman Catholics, "yet Popery is like to an ill aire, wherein though many keep their healthes, yet many are infected, (so that at most they are good Subjects but during the Popes pleasure) and the rest are in more danger then if they were out of it" (pp. 296–298).

The effectiveness of polemical pamphlets is very hard to gauge, especially religious polemic when everybody's hammer is upon the anvil. We may suppose that an argument could change an opponent's point of view. A declaration of personal experience adds plausibility and a sense of dramatic urgency, as in *Pseudo-Martyr*. Falkland's sincerity is apparent in

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[59]Roebuck, "Cavalier," in *The English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), pp. 23–24, for a discussion of the revival of Nashe's reputation in the civil-war era.

his reply to Montague concerning his experience of the same inducements: "I thought that what satisfied me, might possibly have the same effects upon him" (p. 279). A probable outcome is that striking arguments contribute to the stock of ammunition available for the next round of controversy. Even Nashe's supposed vanquishing of Martin Marprelate occurred only in the eyes of those who adhered to the governance of the *via media* Church as prescribed by Hooker. In post civil-war England the Marprelate spirit revived with a vengeance. Episcopacy appeared extirpated, "root and branch." Custody of the remains of the Anglican Church fell to the scattered remnants of Great Tew. The opening sentence of Clarendon's *History*, the work he commenced only when the cause seemed wholly lost, vividly evokes Hooker's opening sentence: "Though for no other cause, yet for this; that posterity may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to passe away as in a dreame. . . ."[60] Continuity and influence are in such a case vigorously affirmed by the address to posterity. Controversy, by contrast, usually has an immediate readership in view.

Trevor-Roper's study, "The Great Tew Circle," to which this present essay owes a debt, traces in detail the intellectual pedigree of Great Tew stemming from Erasmus, and to its depth and continuity he attributes the preservation of the English Church. Yet from Trevor-Roper's detailed account of contributors to this intellectual tradition Donne is absent. This is a lacuna to be remedied, as I have attempted to do in this essay, by considering the potential afterlife of Donne's polemical writings. To recapitulate several points in this discussion, Donne's persona, the Printer, in *Ignatius his Conclave* writes of Erasmus that "to his bitter iestings and skirmishings in this kinde, our enemies confesse, that our Church is as much beholden, as to *Luther* himselfe" (A3v–A4). This surely signals Donne's awareness of his place in the continuity of the English Church. Baumlin's discussion of how skepticism became "an intimate part of European intellectual culture," asks "Why does it find

[60]Clarendon's first sentence opens, "That posterity may not be deceived, by the prosperous wickedness of these times, into an opinion, that less than a general combination, and universal apostasy in the whole nation from their religion and allegiance, could, in so short a time, have produced such a total and prodigious alteration and confusion over the whole kingdom. . . ."

such famous spokesmen as Erasmus, Montaigne and Donne?"[61] Sommerville's view of *Pseudo-Martyr* as Donne's lasting monument and its contribution to the debate on church and state must raise the question of how, if this is so, it could have failed to register with the sensibility of Great Tew. If not a second Austin to the English Church in the eyes of Great Tew, Falkland's Doctor Donne—"one of the most wittie, and most eloquent of our Modern Divines"—must be accorded a significant role in the transmission of the Erasmian skepticism that proved invaluable to the survival of the English Church.

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[61]Baumlin, p. 133.