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Elegy and Autobiography: "The Bracelet" and the Death of Henry Donne

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Although interest in John Donne's Catholic background and the motivation for his "apostasy" has intensified over the past twenty-five years, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the events surrounding the death in 1593 of his only brother Henry, who died in Newgate awaiting trial for harboring a Catholic priest. This absence of interest is the more surprising in that R. C. Bald noted as long ago as 1970 an allegation that the enmity of the Jesuits had played a part in the arrest of the priest, and therefore of Henry Donne. Perhaps because of the anonymity of the allegation, perhaps because it was published ten years after the event, Bald did not follow up his loaded speculation that "If Donne felt that Jesuit intrigue had any part in shaping the circumstances which led to his brother's death, the consequent bitterness could well have hardened into unflinching opposition."[1] The removal of that "If" would have far-reaching consequences for the interpretation of Donne's subsequent career. This paper proposes that it can be removed, that Donne very probably did believe that Jesuit machinations had indirectly brought about his brother's death, and that his anger, grief and sense of betrayal find expression in a number of early poems, in particular the elegy now usually called "The Bracelet."

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[1] *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 67.

"The Bracelet" had a high reputation in Donne's time. Ben Jonson told Drummond that he knew it off by heart, and it appears in more seventeenth-century manuscript collections (sixty-three) than all but two of the elegies. In Drummond's record, from which Jonson's direct speech can be plausibly reconstructed, he says, in effect, that it is one of the greatest of all poems, at least of a certain type: "He esteemeth John Done the first poet in the World in some things his verses of the Lost Chaine, he hath by Heart...affirmeth Done to have written all his best pieces err he was 25 years old."[2] "The Bracelet," then, was seen by one of the most demanding critics of his time as one of the best of the "best pieces" by one of the first poets in the world, worth learning by heart. Nobody since has offered quite so high an estimate. Indeed, it is left out of many modern selections, and modern criticism tends to emphasise its wit, blasphemy and flippancy, leaving its apparently disproportionate intensities unexplained. J. B. Leishman, still one of the best commentators on the elegies, saw it as Donne's "most astonishingly successful exercise in sheer wit" but warned against any reading that relates the poem to the historical Donne, his "convictions, morals, habits and general attitude to life."[3]

Although there have been other complaints that Donne is too often read as if his poems were autobiographical, Leishman's warning is in fact typical of most twentieth-century Donne criticism, which displayed a marked disposition to avoid such

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[2]For manuscript circulation, see *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne: Volume 2: The Elegies*, general ed. Gary A. Stringer (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 8; the text used here is from that edition. For Drummond's "Informations" see *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925-52), 1:135.

[3]*The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne* (London: Hutchinson, 2nd ed. 1955), pp. 81-3.

readings.[4] In part this was simply a result of the pervasive influence first of New Criticism, and then of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, but in the case of Donne it was given an inadvertent nudge just before the century began by Edmund Gosse, who traced in a number of otherwise unrelated poems a historical (and "deplorable") liaison between Donne and a married woman. Gosse's reading was so patently naïve in its relating of the poetry to the life that it was widely rejected as soon as it appeared, but it left a legacy of anxiety about any reading which related the poems to the life to which, until it was allayed by the coming of New Historicism, the studies by Edward Le Comte and John Carey provided the major exceptions.[5]

In relating "The Bracelet" to Henry Donne's death, I am offering the kind of "biographical" reading that Leishman and others warn against. By so doing I hope to account for the intrusions of powerful, apparently incongruous religious discourse into the "exercise in sheer wit," and the disproportionate intensity with which the apparently trivial subject is invested. For all its witty surface, this is a poem which resonates with rage, and appears to acknowledge the speaker's own guilt and anger in a transaction more serious than the loss of a bracelet. Carey noticed that this was so, suggesting the poem reflected Donne's crisis over Catholicism, and that the introduction of angels introduced "a level of punning religious allusion, unjustified by the main subject but quickly

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[4]See, e.g., John Shawcross, "Annihilating the Poet in Donne," *Review* 4 (1982): 265-73; Thomas Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 3-4, 11-12.

[5]Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne* (London: Heinemann, 1899), 1, pp. 62-9. For early criticism of Gosse's theory, see Herbert Grierson, *The First Half of the Seventeenth Century*, Periods of European Literature, ed. Saintsbury, vol. 7 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1906), p. 154; Le Comte, *Grace to a Witty Sinner* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965); and Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981).

dominant."[6] Carey's reading is, however, vitiated by his unrelenting emphasis on the time-serving character of Donne's apostasy. In contextualising the poem around Donne's particular predicament in relation to Henry's death, I will be offering an account that is in that respect different from Carey's, in that it presents an altogether less cynical motive for Donne's rejection of the new post-Tridentine Catholic Church.

Carey is right, though, in stressing the importance of Donne's decision. It is true that his course was the same as that taken by the vast majority of those many English adults who were faced with the choice between Rome and the Anglican church in the sixteenth century. But Donne's family background made the decision a particularly difficult one. Later, in an often-quoted passage from *Pseudo-Martyr*, he described with some pride the obdurate, often heroic tradition of Roman Catholic resistance which had distinguished his family over the previous three generations. He was, he said,

> derived from such a stocke and race, as, I beleeve, no family, (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done.[7]

Prominent among those who suffered was one of the most famous of all English martyrs, Donne's great-great-uncle, Thomas More. But at least eleven other members of his family died either in prison or in exile for their Catholicism during the years between More's execution in 1535 and Henry's death in 1593. Many others, including his mother, suffered less permanent exile or persecution at home. Not all were heroic: a decade after More's execution,

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[6]Carey, p. 39.

[7]*Pseudo-Martyr*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 8.

Donne's grandfather (and More's protégé) the poet John Heywood was sentenced to death over a Catholic plot in which four other relatives of More, and thus of Donne, were implicated. Heywood was reprieved at the last minute, on condition that he read a public recantation.[8]

As they grew up in London, neither John nor Henry can have relished the retelling of Heywood's humiliation in edition after edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. John's attitude is suggested by the bitterly ironic reference to Foxe's reliability in his satirical bibliography, *A Courtier's Library*, (*Catalogus Librorum Aulicorum*): "The Art of copying out within the compass of a Penny all the truthfull statements made to that end by *John Foxe*."[9] More, of course, was altogether less of an embarrassment. Donne continued to admire him as "a man of the most tender and delicate conscience that the world saw since St. Augustine," and family tradition preserved his memory with veneration, along with his writings, and various relics which Donne may have seen.[10] He himself owned the English version of More's *Workes* edited and published in 1557 by Donne's great uncle, William Rastell, and the *Lucubrationes* (in effect a Latin *Collected Works*) in which late in his life he made

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[8]Dennis Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 27; T.S. Graves, "The Heywood Circle and the Reformation," *MP* 10 (1912-13): 557-8. The other conspirators related to More were John Clement (Donne's great-great-uncle), William Roper, John More, and William Daunce.

[9]"Ars exscribandi omnia ea quae vere ad idem dicuntur in *Ioanne Foxe* in ambitu denarii" (Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948], p. 155).

[10]*Biathanatos*, ed. Ernest W. Sullivan (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), p. 62. For the relics, see Flynn, *John Donne*, pp. 21-4, 200. Donne's son John left "sir Thomas More's head" (perhaps a version of the Holbein portrait) to Sir Christopher Guise in 1663 (Bald, *John Donne*, p. 552).

marginal notes which offer, in the spirit of More, "a caustic private comment on the court of King Charles I."[11]

Both More and Heywood, who died in exile around 1578, were figures from the past. The arrest, torture and near-execution of their uncle Jasper, one of two of John Heywood's sons who became Jesuits, must have brought the dangers of "obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine" home to the Donne brothers much more sharply. It not only occurred during their own childhood, but John at least became directly involved. On his mission to England, Jasper Heywood was arrested and indicted for treason in 1583. Towards the end of his ten-month incarceration, the twelve-year-old John was taken by his mother, Jasper's sister, to visit him in the Tower, along with the disguised Jesuit William Weston. Jasper Heywood was deported soon after, before his trial had been completed, demanding to the last his right to justice.[12] If this makes him sound like one of those Jesuits hungry for false martyrdom whom Donne describes in *Pseudo-Martyr*, it's also worth considering that Jasper was not noted for his blind obedience. In an order based on submission to authority, he seems to have treated his superiors with a patrician and somewhat mocking intellectual contempt. Robert Persons, who is also the main target for Donne's animosity in *Pseudo-Martyr*, was Heywood's superior in England, and was in repeated conflict with Jasper, who had entered the order at a time when his hopes for an Erasmian accommodation were not out of step with either the Jesuits or the wider church. Persons by contrast was a leading exponent of the post-Tridentine policy which encouraged the

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[11]Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne Dean of St. Paul's* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); John B. Gleason, "Dr. Donne in the Courts of Kings: A Glimpse from Marginalia," *JEGP* 69 (1970): 599.

[12]*Pseudo-Martyr*, p. 46; Flynn, *John Donne*, pp. 123-30, answers Bald's doubts over this visit (*John Donne*, pp. 63-4). Gosse, I: 13-14, and Carey, *John Donne* (1981), p. 20, are both wrong in stating that Jasper was sentenced to death; see Bald, *John Donne* pp. 41-2, and Flynn, p. 125.

removal by force of the heretical Queen, and planned the return of Catholicism through a Spanish invasion. This policy was deeply unsympathetic to most recusant English gentry, who still believed in their duty of allegiance to Elizabeth. It was of great importance to them that she had been anointed by a Catholic Bishop in a traditional coronation service, and many still hoped, like Jasper, that she would eventually establish toleration.[13] Since he had been educated at court alongside the young Princess Elizabeth, Jasper himself may have had additional personal motives for rejecting the new, aggressive policies of the Roman hierarchy. Later he was to accuse Persons of plotting to assassinate the Queen.[14] It is likely that both John and Henry Donne inherited their uncle's hostility towards Persons and his supporters, as well, perhaps, as a less focused anger towards Jasper himself over the dangers into which he brought his family, not least by the flamboyant grandeur of his supposedly clandestine travels through England.

Jasper Heywood was to die in exile in Naples, where Donne may have visited him, in 1598.[15] But whatever the effects of the young Donnes' encounters with Jasper in the 1580s, by far the most distressing example for John of his family's suffering in the cause of Catholicism must have been the death of Henry in 1593.

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[13]For the anti-clericalism of the English Catholic laity, especially their hostility to the Jesuits, see John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), pp. 31-45.

[14]Flynn, p. 137. Cf. Flynn, "The "*Annales* School" and the Catholicism of Donne's Family," *John Donne Journal* 2 (1983): 1-9. See also Christopher Bagshawe's statement that the quarrel between Heywood and Persons begun in 1581 "grew to be hote, and had manie priests and others as partakers on either side" (*A sparing discouerie of our English Iesuits,* [London, 1601], p. 46).

[15]According to Izaak Walton in a passage added to the 1658 edition of the *Lives*, Donne travelled in his early years as far as "the furthest parts of Italy." See *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Robert Sanderson*, ed. George Saintsbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 26.

It is with this death that we come, I suggest, to the explanation of what Carey calls the "flippant intensities" of "The Bracelet."[16] Henry was John's only surviving brother. They had, despite about a year's difference in age, gone to Oxford together in 1584. Whether they stayed together throughout the subsequent nine years is not clear, but much shared experience seems likely. If, for example, John did go to Cambridge during these years, it is highly likely that Henry accompanied him. It is certain that by 1593, when John had entered Lincoln's Inn, Henry was at its nearby feeder institution, Thavies Inn, where John had spent the previous year. It was at Thavies Inn, in May of that year, that a Roman Catholic priest named William Harrington was arrested "in the chamber of one Mr. Harry Dunne, a young gentleman of the Inns of Court."[17] Both faced the death penalty. Since 1585 it had been treason for an English-born priest like Harrington to be in England, and a capital offence to support such priests. The two prisoners were kept apart, and interrogated separately by the arresting magistrate, Richard Young, a notorious hunter and torturer of both recusants and puritan non-conformists. Harrington maintained a silence for which his training had prepared him, refusing to confirm or deny his priesthood, but the nineteen year old Henry, not so intensively trained, and understandably showing more of the spirit of John Heywood than of Jasper Heywood or Thomas More, gave way. Young then brought him face to face with Harrington. Henry confirmed Harrington was a priest and had confessed him: "being charged in presence by one Henry Dunne that he said he was a priest and did shrive him, yet he will not confess it."[18] At around this stage of Henry's interrogation, sometime in the summer of

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[16]Carey, *John Donne* (1981), p. 39.

[17]The account is from a MS now at Stonyhurst College, transcribed with other documents by J[ohn] M[orris], "The Martyrdom of William Harrington," *The Month* 20 (1874): 411-423, p. 414.

[18]From Young's account of his examination of Harrington, *CSPD Elizabeth*, vol. 145, n.14, transcribed in Morris, pp. 417-8.

1593, he was moved from the Clink prison, which was in Southwark, to Newgate. This may have been because his mother and step-father lived in Southwark, and the commissioners for recusancy were charged to move offenders from any prison where they might have "favour shown them." Jailers at the Clink were in any case well known to sell such "favour" to their wealthier inmates.[19] Newgate was less tolerant to its guests, and the terrible plague which had been intensifying since January 1593 seems to have been worse there than in the Clink. It killed Henry "within a few days."[20] He had become an involuntary martyr of sorts, his death at nineteen exhibiting a poignant quality of unheroic waste. Harrington survived prison, to be executed in the usual barbarous way the following February. He is said to have "struggled with the hang-man" as he was lowered from the gallows to be disembowelled.[21]

It is impossible to be certain about John Donne's religious allegiances in 1593. This was the year in which he came of age, and he may thus, even without anger over Henry's death, have felt himself free to "stand enquiring" about religion as he advocates in *Satyre III*. A new statute of 1593 "to retain the Queen's subjects in obedience" intensified the pressure on recusants by threatening them with imprisonment, exile and forfeiture of property. This must in itself have focused the attention of the newly wealthy Donne.[22] But even if he had, by May that year, already "betrothed himself to no Religion that might give him any other denomination than a *Christian*,"[23] he must have retained strong

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[19]See W[illiam] C[lark], *A replie unto a certain Libell* (London, 1603), ff. 14v-15r, for an account of the Jesuit Gerard's comfortable imprisonment there.

[20]Stonyhurst MS, Morris, p. 417.

[21]Bald, *John Donne*, p. 58.

[22]*The Tudor Constitution*, ed. G.R. Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 447-50.

[23]Walton, *Lives*, p. 25.

Catholic sympathies, if no more; and unless there had been a serious breach between the two brothers, he would have known about Harrington's presence. He may have visited him at Thavies Inn, or even sheltered him himself at Lincoln's Inn. As will be seen, Donne apparently came under suspicion at this period, and Thavies Inn was only a short quarter-mile walk from Lincoln's Inn.[24] Both brothers probably knew Harrington from an earlier visit in 1584, when he had been in London and in contact with Weston, the Jesuit who had visited Heywood in the tower with Elizabeth Donne and her son.[25] It is possible, of course, that there had been a breach between John and Henry, and John had not been told of Harrington's visit. If so, his motives for the guilt and anger exhibited in "The Bracelet" would have been different, but no less powerful.

It is not surprising to find a Catholic priest being given support at the Inns of Court at this date by one, or maybe two, members of a leading recusant family. Despite all efforts by the Privy Council, the Inns remained notoriously tolerant of Papists. A return of 1577 certified that twenty-five per cent of Lincoln's Inn were recusants, but other evidence suggests the true figure was "substantially greater" for all the Inns throughout Elizabeth's reign.[26] Much more surprising, and of much greater significance in understanding Donne's "apostasy" and subsequent career, is the accusation by another Catholic priest that the death of Harrington—and thus of

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[24]Its site was approximately that of modern Holborn Circus; Holborn was favoured by seminary priests, and Harrington had lodged there before in 1584-5: "There is a young man named William Harrington, came from Rheims about a month past, who lieth at a tailor's house next to the White Horse in Holborn, on this side Fetter Lane...The said Harrington was at the Mass at the Lord Vaux' aforesaid" (Morris, p. 422, from *CSPD Eliz* 173, n. 64). See Geoffrey de C. Parmiter, *Elizabethan Popish recusanncy in the Inns of Court* (London: University of London Institute of Historical Research, 1976), pp. 40-1.

[25]Morris, p. 422, from *CSPD Eliz* 173, n. 64.

[26]Parmiter, pp. 20-9, 53-4.

Henry—was a result of the Jesuits' hostility towards the seminary priests.

The allegation was described as anonymous by Bald, who only knew the author of *A Replie unto a Certaine Libell Lately Set Forth by Fr Persons* (London, 1603) as "W. C." The initials were in fact those of William Clark, like Harrington a seminary priest. He had written the book in collaboration with another such priest, Frances Barnaby.[27] It is important that Clark was in England in 1593, and was thus in a position to know about Harrington's arrest.[28] Many of these secular priests were sent to their deaths in England from the English College which had by then moved from Douai to Rheims. As a teenager Harrington had been inspired by the Jesuit Campion, but by 1593, like many of the priests trained in the English College, he was at bitter odds with the Jesuits. The main reason was the same as Jasper Heywood's: the newly-aggressive policy, supported by a contractual theory of monarchy espoused by Bellarmine and others, which encouraged violent action against the heretical Queen. Harrington, like Heywood, but unlike the "yeoman" Persons, was acutely conscious of his status as a gentleman who "lived...fitting my calling and answerable to my father's estate."[29] This "calling" was social, not religious. It included a loyalty to crown and country which he asserted passionately right up to his death, writing a long letter to the Lord Keeper which

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[27]William Joseph Sheils, "Barnaby, Francis (*b.* 1573, *d.* in or after 1621)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [accessed 27 Oct. 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67452].

[28]He arrived in April, 1592; see *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay*, ed. T. F. Knox (London: David Nutt, 1878), p. 298.

[29]Harrington, letter to Lord Keeper Puckering, *CSPD Eliz* vol. 145, n. 66; Morris, p. 419.

implicitly distinguished between the "treacherous practices" of the Jesuits and the loyalty of the seminary priests.[30]

In his 1603 attack on Persons William Clark defended the claim that the Jesuits "indirectly...cause Priests to be apprehended."[31] This they did, he wrote, by spreading rumours against the priests, whom they "sometimes reputed for espialls [i.e., spies working against the Catholic community], sometimes termed seditious, other-some taxed with ambition, others noted as factious, and some worse" (17r). It is "a common practice amongst them" he wrote, to "slander, defame and detract whomsoever they affect not, or that opposeth their proceedings" (18r). Clark cited Harrington as a leading victim:

> Ma. Harrington was so oppressed with such calumnies...that having honest means for his liberty offered him, he rejected it; saying, that then he should be accounted for no honest man, and that he must be hanged to prove himself honest, and free from such calumniations.
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> (17r-v)

The "honest means" may have been the offer of mercy if he would "go but to church," made by the Lord Chief Justice at Harrington's trial.[32] Since such attendance had been the norm among English Catholics during the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign, and was still common in the 1590s, Clark may have seen the offer as an "honest means" for mercy. He can hardly have seen as anything but dishonest another offer referred to in Harrington's letter to Lord Keeper Puckering of "bewraying—or rather, betraying—of my friends," an offer repeated by Topcliffe while Harrington was "in

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[30]Morris, pp. 419-20. For Harrington's opposition to Jesuit policies, see *A Replie unto a Certaine Libell*, f. 17r

[31]W. C., *A Replie unto a Certaine Libell*, f. 16v.

[32]Stonyhurst MS., Morris p. 415.

the cart...the halter about his neck."[33] It seems, however, that liberty for Harrington, even if only achieved through church attendance, would have confirmed calumnies spread by the Jesuits in the Catholic community to the effect that he was some kind of collaborator, himself a betrayer of Catholics.

Clark's charge that the Jesuits systematically undermined Harrington's position in the Catholic community, putting him and any who supported him in danger, is given weight by the testimony of one of the leaders of the seminarists, Christopher Bagshaw. Writing in 1601, Bagshaw appears to describe Harrington's predicament:

> They [the Jesuits] do not indeed directly cause Priests to be apprehended, but indirectly. That is, having spread some reports of them, whereby their good name is taken away, so as they stand suspected either of heresie, or of some other heynous offence, no Catholick entertayneth them, and so consequently, they are driven to povertie, how can they escape the hands of the hereticks? And albeit they lie in prison, and bonds, and are many ways tormented, if they be not crowned with the glory of martyrdome, they shal never be purged from that former suspition, but shall be accounted every day more and more, as hereticks.[34]

Clark and Bagshaw were both writing in the heat of the Archpriest controversy, but the rivalry had existed since the 1580s, and credence is lent to their evidence by the terms in which Harrington writes to the Lord Keeper, and by fact that he had only been in England for four months when he was caught in Henry's room. It may well be that he was indeed running out of safe refuges. In an earlier letter Clark had alleged that Persons and his supporters "by

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[33]Ibid., pp. 421, 416.

[34]*A True relation of the faction begun at Wisbich* (?London: 1601), pp. 73-4.

messages, letters, informations, and tracts...omitted no occasion to terrifye suche of our ffrendes as shoulde deale with us in matters of sacramentes" so that many English Catholics "forbare to deale with us."[35]

These accusations may be exaggerated by the intense hatred that culminated in the "Wisbech stirs" (a large number of seminary priests were imprisoned at Wisbech, along with William Weston) and by the fact that attacks on "Machiavellian" Jesuits could be expected to be well received by the Privy Council, and might therefore ease the predicament of the seminarists. But they cannot have been without some foundation. In any case, the important question is not so much whether the charge of Jesuit betrayal was well founded, as whether Donne shared Clark's analysis of Harrington's arrest and execution, and thus held the Jesuits as much responsible for his brother's death as Young or the Privy Council. If he did believe that Henry had been betrayed by the Jesuits it would fully explain his rejection of Roman Catholicism in its new, post-Tridentine form, and his later preoccupation with the issue of loyalty, an issue to which he was to return in *Pseudo-Martyr* when the question of Papal supremacy had been intensified for English Catholics by the disaster of the Gunpowder Plot. It would certainly counter the charge of time-serving apostasy that still, especially in Carey's account, hangs over him.[36]

It seems very probable that Donne did believe Clark's version. The allegations made by Clark seem to have been current at the time of Harrington's arrest, in which case Donne must have known

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[35]Thomas Graves Law, *The Archpriest Controversy*, Camden Society, new series, vols. 160, 162 (1896, 1898, 1898), I. 169, dated 20 Dec. [1600].

[36]Carey does in fact recognise that Donne was "genuinely exasperated by the hard liners...notably the Jesuits, who insisted that it was impossible to be a loyal Englishman and a good Catholic" (*John Donne*, 1981, p. 32), but he does not give much weight to this genuine exasperation in his reading of Donne.

of them. The very fact that his brother was hiding Harrington confirms that Henry at least had already committed himself to the side of the English traditionalists and the seminary priests against the Jesuits. Jasper's earlier clashes with Persons, which date from Jasper's first mission to England in 1581, would have made both John and Henry peculiarly aware of the bitterness of the struggle within the Catholic community from their early boyhood. Later, *Pseudo-Martyr* places John close to Clark's, and presumably Harrington's, position. Indeed, much of Donne's later anti-Jesuit rhetoric reads very much like that of the seminary priests writing in the Archpriest debate. In *Pseudo-Martyr* he criticizes the "rigid and severe" Jesuits who in their aggressive intolerance have lost sight of the true priestly function. If they are "fishers of men" he asks "why doth he which sends you first raise storms and tempests of treason and scandal, and expose you to a certain shipwreck?" They are "sent with no other nets, than such as must be stained with our blood, if they can get it, or if they miss it, with yours and their own" (p. 23). Later, they are characterised primarily by their divisiveness:

> that which is truly properly and peculiar to you...is, in kindling and blowing, begetting and nourishing jelousies in Princes, and contempt in subjects, dissension in families, wrangling in Schooles. (p. 106)

By the time Donne wrote this, Clark had himself been executed for his part in the "Bye Plot" of 1603, an episode referred to in *Pseudo-Martyr* in terms that may again look back to 1593. Donne is clearly alluding to the Jesuits' part in notifying the Privy Council of the seminarists' Bye-Plot when he writes that they

> will have propriety in treason, and will have proper and singular plots of their own, and not join with your

> priests, Watson and Clark in their plot, nor be traitors in common with them.[37]

It would not be surprising in the circumstances if anger against the Jesuits deflected the bitterness Donne must also have felt towards those directly responsible for Henry's death. Young and Topcliffe, the latter of whom had tortured Jasper Heywood, and who is alluded to in a number of MS versions of the fourth *Satyre* (lines 215-6), were of course widely hated. Young's success in scaring a nineteen-year old boy into betraying his guest can be set alongside Topcliffe's attempts to interrogate Harrington as he awaited hanging and disembowelling. Although Young was later to be a colleague of Donne's in the service of Egerton (who had himself played a part in Harrington's trial), both he and Topcliffe must have been primary targets of Donne's anger. So, no doubt, were those Privy Councillors who were most active in persecuting recusants; but as they acted directly for the Queen they posed a more complex problem, since loyalty to Queen and country was such an ideological and psychological cornerstone of the position of the more traditional English Catholics. A number of the seminary priests note that "the Jesuiticall persecution...is much more grievous unto us, then that which we are subject unto from the state," not only because they and the Jesuits are supposedly working to the same end, but because state persecution "can but chasten the bodie only; but the Jesuites wound both their bodies, and their good name."[38] Donne, too, is likely to have felt that

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[37]*Pseudo Martyr*, p. 110. Garnet had written to the Privy Council informing them of the plot, which in this case was so ill-conceived that the betrayal of his fellow priests was arguably more justifiable than that of Harrington. See Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War 1603-1642* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883-4), 1:113-4.

[38]Bagshaw, *A True relation*, pp. 67, 73. See William Watson's 1599 letter to the Attorney General: "my persecution hath bene more heavy & burdensome unto me by their tongues & such as are their followers then

Persons and his agents, as co-religionists, perpetrated a "more grievous" persecution.

Donne seems, then, to have had unequivocal motives in 1593 for his decision to move away from the Catholic Church as it had redefined itself after the Council of Trent. His attitude to Henry's death must have been complicated, however, by the fact that it had made him substantially wealthier, increasing his inheritance by half as much again. As has been said, Donne had come of age in the first half of 1593, and in June he received his share of his father's estate while Henry was in prison. The tortuous accounting system of the Orphan's Court makes the sum he originally received difficult to calculate, but it should have been around £500. Henry's death soon after meant that his portion, also about £500, was divided between John and his sole remaining sibling, Anne. In April 1594 they both signed receipts for £150, but should in the end have received about £250 each, a sum whose purchasing power would be equivalent to around £44,000 ($80,000) in today's values.[39]

Thus in 1593 Roman Catholicism, martyrdom, betrayal, loss, judgement and gold converge powerfully in Donne's life as they do in "The Bracelet." There is a clear consensus among Donne's editors and critics that the poem was written in 1593-4.[40] Although he never says anything explicit there or elsewhere about Henry's death, other poems from this period appear to refer to it obliquely.

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that which I felte (though it hath bene greate) by civill magistrates" (Law, *Archpriest Controversy*, 1:214).

[39]Based on figures at http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerbp/, 27 Oct. 2004. Donne's total inheritance of £750 would have been worth about £122,000, or $225,000, in 1594. This, Walton says, was by 1601 "the greatest part spent in many and chargeable Travels, Books, and dear-bought Experience" (*Lives*, p. 30). See also Baird Whitlock, "The Heredity and Childhood of John Donne," *N&Q* 204 (1959): 257-62.

[40]For a summary of evidence and opinions see *Donne Variorum: The Elegies*, pp. 513-14.

To Mr R. W. responds to a poem sent by Rowland Woodward by finding in it

> cherishing fyer which dryes in mee
> Griefe which did drowne me: and halfe quench'd by it
> Are Satirique fyres which urg'd me to have writt
> In skorne of all: for now I admyre thee.
> And as Ayre doth fullfill the hollownes
> Of rotten walls; so it myne emptines,
> Wher tost and mov'd it did begett this sound
> Which as a lame Echo of thyne doth rebound.
> Oh, I was dead: but since thy song new life did give,
> I recreated, even by thy creature, live.[41]

This poem belongs to the early 1590s, and Henry's death (or simply his arrest), especially if combined with the destruction of Donne's loyalty to the Roman Church, is by far the most likely cause of the overwhelming grief and abjection, the terrible emptiness and "skorne of all," whose source he apparently does not need to explain to Woodward. The suggestion here of an elemental balance between the fires of satiric scorn and the tears of grief is reminiscent of the opening lines of *Satyre III*, which may itself have been a product of this period of bewildering realignment following Henry's arrest.

That arrest also seems to have caused suspicion to fall on John himself. This at least is the best explanation of the complaint that he is being spied on which he makes in another verse letter ("To Mr. E. G."), this time to Everard Guilpin, who was spending the plague-ridden summer of 1593—the very period at which Henry died in Newgate—at his house on the hill at Highgate:

> There thou orerseest London: Here I have beene
> By staying in London too much overseene.

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[41]Text from *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 66.

This poem too suggests profound abjection, with the vacant city and its "Theaters...fill'd with emptines" functioning as a cityscape which mirrors the desolate psychological landscape described to Woodward.

"The Bracelet" does not invoke this emptiness explicitly, but it does display an inchoate anger that is another aspect of that abjection and "skorne of all" that are explicit in the two shorter poems. Most critics, however, reacting to the naïve biographical readings of Donne by such writers as Gosse, and following Leishman in eschewing any close relation of Donne's poetry to his experience, are predisposed to find the poem merely witty. Even Bald, who appears to think that a biographical interpretation of the poem would only be justified if it could be proved that Donne really did lose his mistress's bracelet and have to buy her a new one, pushes such a reading aside: the poem "may or may not be based on an actual event...we simply do not know." More sensitive readers, like Roma Gill, have noted the "accumulation of religious associations," but, with the exception of Carey, none have seen them as more than isolated examples of Donne's blasphemous wit: "All that stops the allusions here being offensive is their confusion; there is no scheme by which they are systematically employed."[42]

I agree with Gill on this last point, but draw opposite conclusions. "The Bracelet" is certainly not a systematic allegory on Henry's death, a poem *à clef* in which, for example, the lost chain signifies Henry, the mistress their mother, and the angels whatever it is that Donne has to sacrifice to atone for Henry's death. But confusion, inchoate anger, denial, and a lack of consistent analogy and symbol are predictable responses to the death of a younger brother in such circumstances. If the guilt and anger which "The Bracelet" displays do derive from John's survival,

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[42]Carey, *John Donne* (1981), p. 39; Bald, *John Donne*, p. 9; Gill, "*Musa Iocasa Mea:* Thoughts on the *Elegies*," in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed. A.J. Smith (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 69.

his profiting financially by Henry's death, and belief that the church for which Henry had died had betrayed him, it would not be surprising to find that he was unable to confront them systematically, especially if his anger was directed not just at himself, but at God, his dead brother and family, and the Crown to which such Catholics as Harrington and the Donnes proclaimed loyalty. A coherent allegory would imply a distancing, and some degree of resolution and acceptance. In "The Bracelet" Donne's feelings are handled obliquely, in language that is loaded with implications that are never worked out, and which are therefore impossible to refer explicitly to a larger scheme in the way that a systematic allegory could be. The witty surface and the implied plot of the dramatic monologue hold the poem together, while one image apparently leads to another by association rather than by preconceived plan (Gill's "accumulation of religious associations"). Such a process is common in the love poems, in for example "Love's Growth," but unlike such poems analogies here are imprecise, loaded with intensities whose implications Donne is not ready or able to tease out.

I believe that it is because of the impossibility of fully confronting Henry's death and its implications that the poem begins with a rejection of sentiment and love, a series of negatives. As in the whole of the poem up to line 83, the speaker is addressing the woman whose chain he has lost, but although there are intimations of the later "bracelet of bright hair about the bone" in the first two lines, there is at best only a limited tenderness in this address. The complaint is that he has to replace the chain, and must do so by having twelve angels melted down to do so. The angel was a gold coin then worth ten shillings, stamped with the image of the Archangel Michael overcoming the Dragon (an episode described in Revelation 12:7):

> Not that in color it was like thy haire
> For armelets of that thou maist let me weare;
> Nor that thy hand it ofte embrac'd and kist,

> For so it had that good, which ofte I mist,
> Nor for that sely old moralitee
> That as those Lincks are tyed our loue should bee
> Mourne I: that I thy seuenfold chayne haue lost
> Nor for the lucks sake but the bitter cost. (1-8)

The unexpected intensity of "Mourne" and "bitter cost" is suggestive, even as these words seem to underline the worldly cynicism. So too is the number symbolism. The lost bracelet was a "seuenfold chayne" of gold; the "bitter cost" will involve the sacrifice of "twelve righteous Angels." The numbers are arresting; they are related in that they are sum and product of those most meaningful numbers, 4 and 3, and as such one can be transmuted into the other as the coins are going to be.[43] Significantly for a poem about changing the form of gold, they are important alchemical numbers. Paracelsus describes how the seven proper metals are linked to the seven planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac:

> From Saturn, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Sol, nothing and no other metal than Luna could be made. The cause is that each metal has two good virtues of the other six, of which altogether there are twelve. These are the spirit of Luna, which thus in a few words may be made known. Luna is composed of the six spiritual metals and their virtues, whereof each possesses two. Altogether, therefore, twelve are thus posited in one corporeal metal, which are compared to the seven planets and the twelve celestial signs.[44]

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[43]See Julia M. Walker, "Donne's Words Taught in Numbers," *SP* 84 (1987): 56.

[44]*Coelum Philosophorum, Part 1, the SixthCanon* (http://www.sacred-texts.com/alc/coelum.htm, 11 Oct. 2004).

The seven planets and the seven metals are paralleled by the seven sins, virtues, days of creation and, notably in this context, the seven archangels. Seven angels also operate as the intelligences which govern the movement of the seven planets. They drive them through the twelve houses of the Zodiac, symbol of cosmic order and salvation. Twelve is, as another alchemist, William Ramesey pointed out,

> so compleat a number, as none is to compare with it; having more particular divisions then any other number, there being therein three fours, and four threes; two sixes and six twoes: besides they are so constituted from the division of the Heaven (as you have heard already) divided into twelve parts.[45]

Twelve is also the number of the hours in a day and the months in a year, of the tribes of Israel and of the Apostles. In the vision brought to St. John by "one of the seven angels which had the seven phials full of the seven last plagues" (Rev. 21:9) the holy Jerusalem is seen to have twelve gates of pearl, guarded by twelve angels, and twelve "foundations" (Rev. 21:12-14, 21). Partly for this reason, partly because it is "so compleat" it came also to signify the Universal Church, that entity which might well seem to have been lost to Donne with Henry's death.

For obvious reasons, the chain itself commonly stands for the strong bonds of concord and friendship, meanings apposite enough to the situation I have described.[46] But the meaning most relevant to "The Bracelet" that was given to it in Donne's time is found in an emblem apparently designed by one of his closest friends. It is among those "invented or adapted" by "HG" in 1618:

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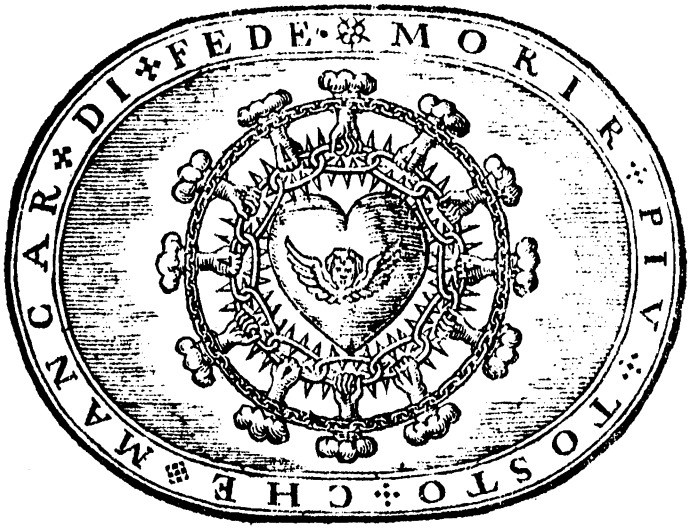
[45]*Astrologia Restaurata* (London: Robert White, 1653), 2:83.

[46]Picinelli, Philippo, *Mondo Simbolico* (Milan, 1580), p. 674, citing Seneca, *Ep.* 9, and Ovid, *Ex Ponto*, 2.5.59-62, on friendship and concord.



"HG" was Henry Goodyere, recipient of many of Donne's surviving weekly letters. He had gone to the Middle Temple in 1589, and almost certainly knew Donne before 1593.[47] His emblem, accompanying a poem addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, represents the chain (here a twelve-link one, possibly still signifying the Universal Church, perhaps more mundanely the twelve bishops in the archdiocese of Canterbury) as "engirding religion," maintaining its strength despite the "sharp conflicts" which assail it.[48]

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[47]He was not at Gray's Inn, as Bald states (*John Donne*, pp. 163-4); see *Middle Temple Records*, ed. Charles Henry Hopwood, K. C. (London: Butterworth & Co., 1904), 1:305.

[48]*The Mirrour of Maiestie* (London: W.I., 1618); the editors of the facsimile edition, Henry Green and James Croston (Manchester and London: A. Brothers and Trubner & Co., 1870), suggest the emblem is designed by HG himself (p. 90).

One could hardly find a better symbol for the unified church which had been lost to Donne with the deaths of Henry and Harrington. Goodyere sees "Holy concord's unison" or "Truth," the subject of search in *Satyre III,* as protected by this chain. Donne wrote more than once to Goodyere about Christian unity. The competing versions of Christianity were, he said, "all virtuall beams of one Sun...connaturall pieces of one circle" separated by human weakness: "Religion is Christianity, which being too spirituall to be seen by us, doth therefore take an apparent body of good life and works."[49] Goodyere would certainly have known "The Bracelet," and his design and interpretation of this emblem my well have been influenced by it. The Italian motto he chooses is suggestively close to the Spanish one which Donne was sporting just before Henry's death: Goodyere's "*morir piu tosto che mancar di fede*" ("better to die than to lose faith") is very near Donne's "*antes muerto que mudado,*" "sooner dead than changed." Donne would argue that the Roman Church, not he, was "*mudado*" with the Council of Trent. Later he contrasted this new man-made Church with the old, appealing, as he had in *Satyre III,* to the authority of the paternal line: "Men, that fall from *us,*" he told an Anglican congregation in 1627, "(whose fathers were of that Religion) put themselves into more bondage and slavery to the *Court of Rome* now, then their fathers did to the *Church of Rome* then; They sacrifice to gods, whom they know not, and whom their fathers feared not." Anglicanism was now "in possession of the ancient Religion, of Christ, and his Apostles."[50]

Whatever the significance of Henry Goodyere's choice, the resonant emblematic and numerological symbolism Donne employs suggests that what has been lost is greater than the trivial piece of jewellery described by the narrator. Beyond that,

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[49] *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (London: Richard Marriot, 1651), p. 29.

[50] *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter & Evelyn Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-62), 7:421, 6:98.

something strong and complete has gone, a loss that involves friends (still used in early modern English to signify close relatives) and concord in all areas of experience, especially what Goodyere calls "Holy concord's unison." This loss incurs a "bitter cost," that of the sacrifice of twelve righteous angels. In this respect, it is worth noting that Donne's title was probably that which Jonson used, "The Lost Chain," a title which emphasises the symbolism in a way that "The Bracelet," probably wished on it by a copyist, and never used within the poem, does not.[51]

As to the twelve angels, critics point rightly, to the numismatic side of Donne's puns on good and bad angels, on the high quality of the restored English coinage of the second half of the sixteenth century (seen by Camden as Elizabeth's "greatest glory"[52]), and the debased foreign coins which circulated as "bad angels." But there are wider associations than a pun on coins and disembodied spirits. The twelve righteous angels are suggestive not only of the angels who guard the heavenly city, but also of the twelve apostles, twelve "faythfull guides" (14), "innocents" who bear man's (or Donne's) "sins great burden" (17-18).[53] This is important in that it alerts us to the suggestion of Judas, as well as of Adam and the fallen angels, in the lines that follow:

> Oh shall twelve righteous Angels which as yet
> No leauen of vile sodder did admitt;

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[51]For the authenticity of titles of Donne's poems, see John T. Shawcross, "But is it Donne's? The Problem of Titles on his Poems," *John Donne Journal* 7 (1988): 141-9; and Helen Gardner, "The Titles of Donne's Poems," in *Friendship's Garland: Essays Presented to Mario Praz on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. V. Gabrielli (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1966), I.189-207.

[52]William Camden, *Annales, or the History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth*, trans. R[obert] N[orton] (London: Benjamin Fisher, 1635), pp. 35-6.

[53]See *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, rev. ed., 1967), p. 398.

> Nor yet by any taint have stray'd or gone
> From the first State of their Creation. (9-12)

The bitter cost of the chain's loss involves innocence and betrayal, the vile solder being both the lead used in debased coins and the silver paid to Judas; the "taint" ("fault" in another MS tradition) is that which led to Adam's expulsion from the garden and Satan's from heaven. These twelve angels had been appointed "to prouide / all things" (13-14) to the speaker, to be faithful guides, and to comfort his soul.

It is at this point that Donne first invests the woman whose chain it was with the qualities of God the father, the dread judge, and the twelve angels with those of Christ as redeemer of man's sins. The associations here are unmistakeable, and several critics have noted they are blasphemous. I would suggest they are used as a way of attacking the un-attackable:

> Shall these twelue innocents, by thy seuere
> Sentence, dradd Iudge, my sins great burden beare?
> Shall they be damn'd, and in the furnace throwne
> And punisht for offenses, not their owne.
> They saue not me, they doe not ease my paynes
> When in that hell they'are burn'd and tyed in chaynes.
> (17-22)

This is "a flippant use of [the] doctrine of the Atonement," says Gardner,[54] but Donne's ability to be flippant and serious at the same time is a critical commonplace. The allusion in "severe / Sentence" is unmistakeably to that of the God who is in Isaiah "dread" and "our judge" (Isaiah 8:13, 33:22), and to the *juste judex* of the Catholic Mass for the Dead. The furnace is similarly not just that of the goldsmith who will melt the coins, but of Rev 9:2: "And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of

[54] *John Donne: The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 114.

the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." Here again there is an echo of the *Dies Irae* from the Mass for the Dead, where the cursed are to *flammis acribus addictis.* The chains too recall Revelation, also in the bottomless pit and associated with an unnamed punishing angel who may be St. Michael: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon" (Rev. 20:1). As has been said, the episode represented on the coin itself comes earlier when "St Michael and his angels fought against the dragon" (Rev. 12:7), but the angel coin is nevertheless clearly associated with this subsequent descent of an angel into hell. What is important here, however, is that, amidst all these associations of atonement and the Last Days, the unjust condemnation of these angels to the furnace will not save the speaker. The atonement will be wasted as far as he is concerned, his pains left uneased. In the Mass for the Dead, Christ is asked to deliver the dead from these pains and the deep pit—*de poenis inferni et de profundo laco*—and St. Michael the standard bearer is associated with this prayer, but here, paradoxically, his golden image is to be cast into the pit to no apparent purpose. The ostensible purpose, of course, is the replacement of "The Bracelet," but this does not at this point in the poem present itself as an acceptable argument. The emphasis is strongly on waste, "bitter cost," and anger at this state of affairs.

The speaker allows that such a transaction would be acceptable were the angels "crownes of France" (23) or "Spanish Stampes" (29), debased coins which did indeed circulate in London, and which were worth considerably less than the face value of the English angel. Misshapen Spanish coinage in particular has, he says, permeated Western Europe, corrupting those countries it has entered. The allusion is, as Grierson noted, to Spanish bribery in the cause of both Spain and Catholicism, but here it is important to note that Loyola was Spanish, and the English Jesuits under Persons were rightly seen as being pro-Spanish, a particularly telling charge only five years after the Armada. In the light of what

Clark says about Harrington's betrayal, the statement that Spanish coins "enforce...iustice from her course" (35-6) takes on a very specific meaning. Spanish gold is indeed "guilty of much haynous sin" (48). At the very least it is an agent of corruption throughout Europe; at worst, it is an agent of betrayal. The loss of his "harmlesse Angels," by contrast, entails the loss of "my guard, my ease, my food, my all" (49-50). With them will vanish "much hope" and "Much of my able Youth and Lustihead"(52). These are, again, losses more significant than the central conceit of the melting down of coins can easily bear, losses more associated with family and youthful belief than with money, but entirely credible if read as an expression of the same sort of loss and abjection as that which Donne describes in his verse letter to Mr. R. W.

The speaker then appeals to the "dradd iudge" to use a crier to advertise the chain's loss, or a conjurer, the latter a massively corrupt figure who is nevertheless another "dradd" judge (59). His anticipated judgment ("doome" [67]) is ostensibly addressed to the mistress, but again the angry wit and the intensity of the language implies that this is a larger injustice with which Donne himself is struggling:

> .... Oh be content.
> Receaue the doome from him vngrudgingly
> Because he is the Mouthe of destiny. (66-8)

If the "doome," the loss of the chain and the sacrifice of the innocent angels to replace it, is associated with Henry's death, then the specious comfort offered in the following lines makes sense. It is similar to that commonly offered at death: the gold will still be gold, the mistress says, "Though it be changd and put into a Chayne" (70), a solace close to Paul's view of the Last Judgment, when "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). Such comfort will not do in this context, and the speaker counters with a new angel analogy, that of the fallen angels. They retained angelic qualities of wisdom and

knowledge, as the gold coins will retain the qualities of gold when melted and recast. But just as the fallen angels used their qualities for ill, so will his angels, once melted. They "should do good works and should prouide / Necessityes, but now must nource thy pride" (73-4). Moreover, he says (as if this analogy had been offered by his mistress and not introduced by him), the fallen angels at least retained their form as angels, whereas his coins will not, and "forme giues being; and their forme is gone" (76). As Carey points out, this direct quotation from Aquinas on the soul giving form "makes explicit Donne's equation of the coin's stamp [the image of the archangel] with the soul";[55] but in the context of Henry's recent death, the being which form gives suggests the body of the living man, rather than his disembodied soul.

A last plea for pity is made, on the basis that, as archangels, these angels "Passe Vertues, Powers, and Principalityes" (78) in their status. It is the way Donne describes the refusal of this plea that provides one of the most charged lines in the poem, but one which is less surprising in the context I have been describing: "But thou art resolute, thy will be donne" (79). The spelling of the MS sources closest to Donne suggests he intended the same pun on his name as was to recur often in later poems, most tellingly in the refrain of "Hymne to God the Father." Whether this is so or not, there is no ambiguity about the reference to God the Father as addressed in the Lord's Prayer. It has been noted by many critics, but only as part of that sequence of confused and ultimately inconsequential religious references that Gill described. Louis Martz pointed out that this and the next three lines taken by themselves "might almost form a part of some devout prayer,"[56] but did not note the way in which those following lines invoke both the images of the entombment that were commonplace in Catholic

[55]"Donne and Coins," in *English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 161.

[56]"John Donne: the Meditative Voice," *Massachusetts Review* 1 (1960): 335.

iconography (and in which Mary was traditionally the most prominent mourner, along with the disciple John) and a scene which applied closely to the circumstances of Donne's family:

> Yet with such anguish, as her only Sonne
> The Mother in the hungry graue doth lay,
> Vnto the fyre these Martyrs I betray. (80-2)

Only Carey has mentioned the obvious relevance to Donne in the 1590s of what he calls "the apparently arbitrary introduction of a mother and a dead son in the context of martyrdom.... Donne's mind is running on subjects close to his conscience, and the wit of the poem may be seen not just as a dazzling excursion but as the answer to a spiritual need."[57] The fact that Henry was not the only son may be set against the apparent guilt inherent in the word "betray," and perhaps also against the recognition that John is now the only son. What, in relation to Henry's death, such a betrayal might have involved, if indeed it was of any material kind, can never be recovered, but the poem is certainly suffused with guilt. Earlier, the angels have borne "my sins great burden" and been "punisht for offenses, not their owne"; later, the speaker is "guilty of [their] sad decay" (18, 20, 89). In terms of Donne's own experience at this time, the convergence of gold and death may in itself have been enough to leave him feeling anguish at profiting from a death that he had, at the least, failed to prevent. If, as has been suggested, he had also known of Harrington's presence, but had only been "overseen" rather than arrested himself, the guilt would have been multiplied.

Having accepted the doom and imagined the burial, the speaker now stops addressing the woman, turning first to the "Martyrs" (82) themselves, as if in farewell, and then cursing the finder of the chain. The farewell to the coins opens with the sacerdotal ring of a memorial address:

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[57] *John Donne*, p. 39.

> Good Soules, for you giue Life to euery thing,
> Good Angels, for good Messages you bring. (83-4)

Athough the person who might have looked after them better, who would have suffered "hunger, nakednes / Yea deathe eare he would make your number les" (88-9), is a miser, the by now familiar mixture of wit and seriousness is still operating. On one level, the speaker is about to give up twelve gold coins (worth about £1,000 in modern terms) as a miser would not have done. On another, he has betrayed twelve martyrs to atone for his earlier loss. And he remains "guilty of [their] sad decay."

The long and extravagant curse on the finder of the chain echoes the curses found in Ovid and other Latin elegists. It is also a serio-comic version of the *anathema*, the formal excommunication rite of the Roman Catholic church, and as such its use parallels the earlier use in the poem of the Mass for the Dead. It also, as Robert A. Bryan notes, makes of the lost bracelet a holy relic on which the finder has laid profane hands.[58] It functions both as a vehicle for Donne's powerful but unfocussed anger, and as a displaced expression of his own sense of rejection and guilt. The finder of the chain is the only person who has profited from its loss, just as Donne was (with his sister) the only one to profit from Henry's pointless death. He is cast out, "wretched" and cursed by his gold. The finder (rather than Henry or Harrington) will be, in another echo of the chain of Revelation 20.1, "Here fetterd, mannacled, and hangd in Chaines...then chaind to hellish paynes" (95-6). He will have his brain rotted by the "nimble fume" of poison (100), his body rotted and made impotent by "Lust bred diseases" (103). The curse uses gold to wish punishments ludicrously in excess of anything deserved by the person who has pocketed the chain:

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[58]"John Donne's Use of the Anathema," *JEGP* 61 (1962): 311.

> May all the hurt which euer gold hath wrought,
> All Mischiefs which all deuills euer thought,
> Want after plenty, poore and gowty age
> The plagues of trauailers, Loue and mariage
> Afflict thee, and at thy lifes latest moment
> May thy swolne sinnes themselues to thee present.
> (105-10)

The poem ends with a forgiveness that turns again to a scarcely disguised curse, the curse of gold at the heart; but before that comes one curse which has, like the lines on the mother and her martyred son, an apparently arbitrary specificity about it. Between brain-rotting poisons and body-rotting diseases comes the wish that the finder of the chain will casually pick up something containing "Libells, or some interdicted thing / Which negligently kept, thy ruyne bring" (101-2). This has been taken to refer to Kyd, who, in the same month that Henry was arrested, was charged with having in his rooms "a libell that concern'd the state." Kyd attributed the atheistic papers to Marlowe, rather unconvincingly blaming his filing system: Marlowe's papers had, he claimed, been "shufled with some of myne (unknowne to me) by some occasion of our writing in one chamber twoe yeares synce."[59] Marlowe was killed two weeks later. This certainly fits Donne's lines very closely, but so does Henry Donne's case. He too was keeping an "interdicted thing," perhaps negligently, in the shape of a Catholic priest. That Donne should have been drawn to this peculiarly apposite curse seems almost as significant as his image of the mother burying her dead son.

If the licenser, Henry Herbert, the son of Donne's patron, Magdalen Herbert, and brother of Donne's protégé, George, had known, as he well might, that these were the origins of "The Bracelet," then he may also have felt that it was still politically

[59]Kyd, letter to Sir John Puckering, transcribed in Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 181-2.

sensitive, certainly angrily blasphemous, in 1633. And Ben Jonson, a friend and admirer who was himself a Roman Catholic for several years, who was frequently at odds with authority, and constantly searching for ways to write about the state without being censored, may have rated "The Bracelet" so highly not because of its virtuosity in ringing the changes on angels—not an achievement Jonson would have greatly admired—but because he recognised beneath its wit a profound anger at the personal consequences of religious persecution.

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