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Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave* and Other Libels on Robert Cecil

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"Nothing in my L. of *Salisburies* death exercised my poor considerations so much, as the multitude of libells." Thus John Donne artfully begins a retrospective discussion of the late Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, in a letter from Spa on 26 July 1612.[1] Donne in this opening affects mild scandal at the news of many libels, and implicitly distances himself from the unnamed libellers. However, as some of his readers knew perfectly well, for many years libel had been Donne's own accustomed genre in writing about Cecil. In the last part of my essay I will return to this obituary letter, Donne's farewell to libel on Cecil, in which he scores a final few shrewd points against the late Lord Treasurer. But first I will explain several earlier examples of Donne's libelling Cecil in verse and prose during a period of more than a decade.

Throughout this period Robert Cecil was the dominant politician in England, fully capable of repressing libellous attacks and punishing their authors. Thus each of Donne's thrusts at Cecil was risky, none more so than his book *Ignatius His Conclave*. All Donne's libels on Cecil had to be furtive, disguised with a "functional ambiguity" or "indeterminacy."[2] In this way the text would seem ambiguous, or could seem to mean one thing to some readers, but quite another thing to different readers. A further effect of such indeterminacy was long ago defined by Quintilian:

> You can speak as openly as you like against . . . tyrants, as long as you can be understood differently, because you are not trying to avoid giving offence, only its dangerous repercussions. If danger can be avoided by some ambiguity of expression, everyone will admire its cunning.[3]

Using this kind of strategy, Donne could libel Cecil by making his text "serve a double function in order to comment with impunity on 'untouchable' politico-religious questions."[4]

For it is politics and religion, not merely personal animosity, that motivates Donne's hidden libels on Cecil. In order to detect these attacks, one needs to understand how Donne and some of his readers regarded Cecil and his policies. A context is established by twenty-five years of Catholic attacks on Cecil's father, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, beginning in the year of Donne's birth with the *Treatise of Treasons*. The Catholic point of view on Cecil (a point of view with which Donne retained sympathy after he had ceased to practice Catholicism) portrayed him as a "new man," without the authority of noble lineage, who had engineered the change of religions and other innovations in English public life, including domination of the Crown and nobility by common subjects. By Catholic writers Cecil was compared to Haman in the Book of Esther and to Sinon in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The anonymous author of the *Treatise of Treasons* asserted that Cecil had "by arte and cunning" contrived to gain for himself and his henchmen "more than Barons in Office & dignitie, more than Earles in possessions and wealth, and more then any Dukes in authoritie."[5] After the death of Burghley, Sir Robert Cecil inherited all these evil reputations and went on, in the view of Catholics and their sympathizers, to earn them anew on his own demerits.

i

Donne began defaming Robert Cecil at least as early as 1601, in "Metempsychosis." As Helen Gardner first explained, this poem is not what it seems—a fragment of an unfinished work—but is a complete, mock-epic "attack on some contemporary, disguised as the first canto of an epic."[6] Gardner's student, Malvern van Wyk Smith, later identified the contemporary attacked in the poem as Cecil—

> the great soule which here amongst us now
> Doth dwell, and moves that hand, and tongue, and brow,
> Which as the Moone the sea, moves us.[7]

These lines describe the soul of the Queen's First Secretary—"a power behind the throne: sinister, influential, but nevertheless rather ridiculous."[8]

The ridiculous premise of the poem is that Cecil's soul is identical to the vegetal soul of the apple Eve plucked. Built on this premise, the poem is an absurd narration about how the perdurable, persistent soul has restlessly succeeded from the apple to a series of plants and animals, finally passing through the last of these, an ape, into its first human body, Themech, Cain's sister and incestuous wife. As the "great soule" moves up the chain of being it simultaneously moves down the moral scale

until, by the time it enters Themech at the end of the poem, it has through experience "gained a knowledge of 'treachery, Rapine, deceit, and lust,'" and has accordingly "acquired 'ills enow To be a woman.'"[9] Themech is traditionally seen as the woman behind Cain's archetypal evildoing, which for Donne includes his invention of "plowing, building, ruling, and the rest."[10] This selective emphasis is meant to suggest a topical context in Cecil's activities around 1601: he had worked in Parliament for maintenance of tillage, opposing Raleigh's program for enclosure; he had built Cecil House and was involved in many enough other construction projects to be known as the "master builder"; and he had made himself the unchallenged power behind Elizabeth's throne.[11]

Further, since the time of Themech the soul has "liv'd when every great change did come,"[12] animating the revolutionary lives of Mohammed and Luther among others, before coming to reside in the body of the Queen's Secretary. Thus Donne's poem characterizes Cecil's inherited religio-political role as that of a revolutionist, in the line of predecessors who have tortured the histories of the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church. This depiction of the First Secretary as an innovator is one of the central motifs in Donne's series of libels on Cecil. In "Metempsychosis" Donne attributes to Cecil a penchant for evil innovation, supplying also in burlesque fashion an ancient lineage—something for the *lack* of which Cecil had been widely despised.[13]

Superimposed on this pointing of the narrative toward Cecil as a climax of evil innovation, the poem includes a number of allegorical beast satires meant to suggest various episodes in Cecil's career—such as his patient management of the Earl of Essex, widely supposed to have been finessed psychologically into political collapse. When the mouse in the poem climbs through the elephant's trunk to gnaw at its brain, one thinks of the puny but dangerous Cecil scheming against the valorous but vulnerable Essex: "Natures great master-peece, an Elephant, . . . (Yet nature hath given him no knees to bend)."[14] Similarly, the death of the wolf, and the passing of its soul into its own mongrel offspring, suggests the succession from William to Robert Cecil, ever more corrupt and dominant Councilors of the Queen: "This wolfe begot himselfe, and finished What he began alive, when hee was dead."[15] Donne's wolf is a variation on Spenser's fox in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, generally understood to be a libel on the elder Cecil. And in the final episode of the poem, Robert Cecil appears in his most usual contemporary caricature, as an ape, who in Donne's version attempts to seduce a daughter of Adam, lifting her leather apron and boldly manipulating her virginity: "He reached at things too high, but open way There was, and he knew not she would say nay."[16] Again we are put in mind of Cecil, innovatively

under a cloud that only darkened when a story surfaced years later that reaching beyond his common origins for control over the monarchy.[17]

Additional evidence of Donne's hidden purpose can be found in strategic position at the beginning and ending of the poem. Donne's language here calls attention to concealed meaning and at the same time points to Cecil as the object of satire. The prefatory "Epistle" opens with the observation that "Others at the Porches and entries of their Buildings set their Armes."[18] This beginning, functioning as a sort of Janus, is a sarcastic reference to Cecil's ostentatious design for the front of Cecil House, recently completed in 1601 and conceived in the same style as the later Hatfield House.[19] Like many of the family's buildings—Burghley, Theobalds, Hatfield, or Wimbledon—Cecil House featured a rather vulgar display of the coat of arms claimed by Burghley.[20] The elder Cecil had taken great pains in a fruitless effort to prove his descent from the Sitsilt family of Hertfordshire. Many people (including Donne himself) laid obscure claim to gentle lineage; but the Cecil arms, blazoned with crass insistence on the fronts of huge buildings, were held in contempt by some of the gentry and older nobility, who twitted the Cecil family as a lineage of innkeepers.[21]

Donne's "Epistle" further suggests satirical intent in its initial, devious disclaimer of any obscure purpose, followed immediately by a discussion specifically mentioning censorship, the distinction between readers who can and cannot understand, and some of the problems of interpretation posed by the poem to follow.[22] This kind of prefatory apparatus is a feature of the "functional ambiguity" by which poets and readers of Donne's time exploited the indeterminacy of language to defy and evade censorship.[23] For example, Donne concludes the "Epistle" with another teasing hint, rather darkly identifying the host of the "great soule" in 1601 as "hee, whose life you shall finde in the end of this booke." Since the last host appearing in the poem's narration is a she, not a "hee," Donne's sentence has remained something of a puzzle for interpreters. How is Cecil's "life" to be found "in the end of this booke"? The solution to the puzzle is the poem's concluding, epicurean triplet:

> Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
> Of every quality comparison,
> The onely measure is, and judge, opinion.[24]

The cynicism informing these three epigrammatic lines--so Donne's "Epistle" tells us—is the essence of Cecil's "life," to be read summarily "in the end of this booke."

ii

Further libel on Cecil can be found in Donne's Rabelaisian *The Courtier's Library*, where one of the satirical book titles is "*The Brazen Head of Francis Bacon: concerning Robert the First, King of England.*"[25] This has been interpreted as a reference to the Earl of Essex, whom Bacon had betrayed and helped convict of treason. But such an interpretation is merely an ambiguous blind behind which the true aim of the satirist is concealed. By the first few years of the reign of James I, when Donne was circulating this manuscript, a reference to Essex as pretender to the throne would have been dated. Astute readers would see through the name "Robert the First" to Bacon's cousin Cecil and to his dominant role at both the old and the new Courts, regulating access to royal patronage and appropriating the brazen wits of courtiers such as Bacon, who had by betraying Essex thrown his lot in with Cecil.

Worth mentioning here is another of the satirical book titles of *The Courtier's Library*: "*Anything out of Anything; Or, The Art of deciphering and finding some treason in any intercepted letter*, by Philips." As Evelyn Simpson notes, Thomas Phellippes had worked originally for Sir Francis Walsingham, forging and doctoring correspondence, generally to entrap the Catholic gentry.[26] But after Walsingham's death in 1590 Phelippes had worked for the Cecils; he was still doing so during the first decade of James's reign.

Considering the point of this book ascribed to Phelippes, we find a fairly risky example of Donne's libelling Cecil in a letter of 1609:

> I will tell you a story, which if I had had leasure to have told it you when it was fresh, which was upon Thursday last, might have had some grace for the rareness, and would have tried your love to me, how farre you would adventure to beleeve an improbable thing for my sake who relates it.[27]

What follows is a libel on Cecil, committed to the mail and thus truly an "adventure" for Donne and his reader at a time when letters were sometimes intercepted and turned to political use. Donne's "improbable thing" turns out to be a tall story to the effect that Robert Cecil has challenged the seventy-year-old Earl of Hertford to a duel.

Some background information is necessary to appreciate Donne's libel. Before Cecil was born in 1563, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, had already made himself notorious by his marriage to Lady Catherine Grey, an act which (though it was soon invalidated) had involved his lineage in the succession controversy. Hertford had thus long lived

his grandson would marry Arbella Stuart. Hertford himself tried to scotch this device, already having suffered enough through the mingling of his blood with royalty. In the next reign, King James overlooked Hertford's past disgrace and confidently entrusted to him the 1605 embassy treating peace with Spain at Brussels, a mission that is reported to have cost Hertford ten to twelve thousand pounds more than the King had allowed.[28] No doubt the King, financially embarrassed after his first two years of largesse, had been advised by Cecil to lay this honor upon Hertford.

According to Donne's letter, in 1609 Hertford was expressing discontent, affirming that he deserved better of His Majesty's government:

> he expected better usage in respect not only of his cause but of his expence and service in his Ambassage: to which *Salisbury* replied, that considered how things stood between his Majesty and *Her[t]ford* house at the Kings enterance, the King had done him especiall favour in that employment of honour and confidence, by declaring in so publique and great an act and testimony, that he had no ill affections toward him. *Her[t]ford* answered, that he was then and ever an honest man to the King: and *Salisbury* said, he denied not that, but yet solemnly repeated his first words again.[29]

To this point Donne's story sounds rather plausible, Cecil sententious and authoritative in the assured righteousness he had learned from his father. One would expect old Hertford prudently to have held his noble tongue, schooled in decades of abasement beneath the upstart Cecils. However, the story here takes an unexpected turn:

> So that *Her[t]ford* seemed not to make answer, but pursuing his own word, said, that whosoever denied him to have been an honest man to the King, lyed. *Salisbury* asked him if he directed that upon him, *Her[t]ford* said, upon any who denied this. The earnestnes of both was such, as *Salisbury* accepted it to himself, and made protestation before the LL. present, that he would do nothing else, till he had honorably put off that lye.[30]

Already somewhat surprising, the story so far suggests mainly the dotage of old Hertford, to think talk of this kind could avail against the settled malice of Cecil. But the crowning improbability of the story comes next:

> Within an hour after, *Salisbury* sent him a direct challenge, by his servant Mr *Knightley*; *Her[t]ford* required

> only an hours leisure of consideration (it is said, it was onely to inform himself of the especiall danger, in dealing so with a Counsellor) but he returned his acceptation: And all circumstances were so clearly handled between them, that St. *James* was agreed for the place, and they were both come from their severall lodgings, and upon the way to have met, when they were interrupted by such as from the King were sent to have care of it. So these two have escaped this great danger. . . .[31]

Modern interpreters of this letter have taken it seriously, failing to appreciate its context in Donne's series of libels on Cecil. For example, G. B. Harrison reluctantly treats the preposterous encounter as a real occurrence in his *Jacobean Journal*: "The episode seems almost incredible, but it is recorded. . . ."[32] Harrison simply misses the joke. Augustus Jessopp is similarly puzzled: "that it can have been a mere invention, or that an event so extraordinary should have been hushed up and never found its way into the news-letters of the time, seem equally inexplicable."[33] But the incredible invention was easily explicated by those of Donne's readers personally acquainted with Hertford and Salisbury, or experienced in having to solicit royal favors through the all but unflappable Lord Treasurer. Such readers knew well enough how to appreciate Donne's farcical conclusion of aborted swordplay between the spent Hertford and the inglorious Cecil.

The conveyance of a libel as "news" in Donne's letter enables Donne to share his scorn and sense of irony under cover of conventional epistolary machinery. As if to seal off the possibility of detection, but at the same time to signal the letter's delicate matter, Donne concludes anonymously: "*Yours intirely. You know me without a name, and I know not how this Letter goes.*"[34] Not only in regard to "news" of Cecil, Donne's use of letters to conceal delightfully dangerous satiric barbs may be a chief reason his familiar letters were saved and later published. But Donne's most daring libel about Cecil was not a mere letter or circulated manuscript; it was a licensed publication.

iii.

Ignatius His Conclave has been read simply as a satirical contribution to the pamphlet war over the Oath of Allegiance. But if one reads the book this way, there are some unexplained puzzles in it. Some of these problems have been noticed before, but previous writers have treated them as unconnected points. I will connect five such problems, discussing them in order of their ascending generality and importance. Though

these points initially may seem remote from the theme of this essay, gradually in the course of my discussion the shape of Donne's libel on Cecil will become clearer. I will in this way propose a solution that integrates the problems and enhances our understanding of *Ignatius His Conclave* as a work with double purpose.

The first of these problems is an old and seemingly minor question, already answered to most people's satisfaction by Marjorie Nicolson, who noticed Johann Kepler's comment that Donne made use in *Ignatius His Conclave* of Kepler's then unpublished *Somnium*. The question Nicolson addressed was how Kepler can have supposed Donne had knowledge in 1610 of a work Kepler had then only drafted and never published before he died. Nicolson's plausible theory is that Kepler, who is known to have circulated an early draft of the *Somnium*, sent a copy to Thomas Hariot in England. Hariot was keenly interested in Kepler's work at this time and was corresponding with Kepler through a messenger whose identity and travel schedule are known. Moreover, during this period Hariot was frequently meeting with his patron Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, imprisoned in the Tower of London.[35]

Nine years earlier, a few months after the writing of "Metempsychosis" in 1601, Donne must have been a good friend of Northumberland. Izaak Walton tells us that the Earl delivered the letter informing Sir George More of Donne's clandestine wedding to More's daughter.[36] Donne scholars have never explained how Donne was able to enlist an Earl as a messenger, but clearly this is evidence of some more than casual friendship. Given this history, we may reasonably presume with Nicolson that Donne may well have been among the many gentlemen and scholars who regularly dined with the Earl during his confinement in the Tower beginning in 1606; and it is quite possible that Donne heard conversation between Hariot and Northumberland about Kepler's work. He may well have seen a copy of the *Somnium*, as Kepler supposed.[37]

To this problem I am now to connect a second problem about *Ignatius His Conclave*, the striking fact that in writing the book Donne must have had access to a rather specialized library. Donne's marginal citations in the book are almost exclusively from Catholic authors. Not one citation is from an Anglican or English author, and the only Protestant author cited is Kepler. This reliance on Catholic books indicates Donne's use of a library unusually strong and up-to-date in the areas of Catholic controversial theology, history, and hagiography. Donne himself is unlikely to have owned most of the books he cites because the vast majority of them were recent issues (thirty-seven dated after 1600, of which no fewer than eighteen are dated either in 1609 or 1610), and

Donne himself at this period had neither the resources nor the authority to arrange for purchase of so many Catholic books. "Someone was manifestly buying almost everything published under Catholic auspices."[38] Whose library did Donne use?

Possibly Donne wrote in a quasi-official capacity at a library under government control. In light of such a theory, the question becomes part of the larger question of Donne's relations with the Anglican controversialist Thomas Morton—in particular whether, as Augustus Jessopp speculated, Donne ever worked as a research assistant for Morton. According to this theory, Donne may have used the "private library in the Deanery House of St. Paul's."[39] The trouble with this is that there is no evidence either that Donne was officially employed at this time or that the library at St. Paul's was acquiring large numbers of Catholic books in 1609 and 1610. But another library in London, to which Donne probably had easy access without official connections, was buying mainly Continental books at the rate of about fifty pounds worth a year. This was the library of the Earl of Northumberland, who kept his books with him in the Tower and at his home Syon House, a former abbey on the Thames.[40]

Approximately 200 of Northumberland's books were removed from the Tower to Syon at the end of 1614. A document listing these books,[41] along with various other lists of Northumberland's books, suggests that he was not much interested in buying books by English authors but was especially interested in Continental works on theology, astronomy, medicine, voyages of exploration, and Italian literature[42]—all prominent topics in *Ignatius His Conclave*. Moreover, some of the titles listed in 1614 have a striking relation to books Donne is known to have used in 1609 and 1610. For example, among the books sent from the Tower to Syon House were a duodecimo printing in Italian of Machiavelli's *History of Florence* and octavo printings in Italian of *The Prince* and *The Art of War*. These sound like copies of the editions published by John Wolfe between 1584 and 1587. Working during the latter half of 1609, Donne cited Wolfe's edition of *The History of Florence* on sig. B4v of *Pseudo-Martyr*.[43] Also listed in 1614 was a five-volume edition of Aretino's *Letters*, another book licensed to Wolfe in the 1580s;[44] and a copy of Kepler's *De Iesu Christi Servatoris Nostri Vero Anno Natalitio*, published at Prague in 1606 and bound into the same volume with Kepler's *De Stella in Cygno*, to which Donne refers in *Ignatius His Conclave*.[45] This conjunction of books by Machiavelli, Aretino, and Kepler in the same library, in editions some of which Donne specifically cites, is better evidence than has yet been presented about the problem of whose library Donne was using. It suggests that Donne not only may have seen

a draft of Kepler's *Somnium* in the Tower, but that he also may have used (and written about) other books owned by the Earl of Northumberland.

A third puzzle about *Ignatius His Conclave* is the occurrence at various points of versified passages. Seven times in the course of the narration, passages of poetry appear.[46] Two of these verse passages seem to have special meaning, occurring as they do one at the beginning and the other at the very climax of the book. The first of these is part of Donne's front matter, his dedication "To the Two Tutelar Angels, Protectors of the Popes Consistory, and of the Colledge of Sorbon." Here Donne jokes about the opposition between ultramontane and Gallican Catholics, warning that except for his aligning them in this dedication they might never have met and might (and this line is the first verse passage in the book) "Resemble *Janus* with a diverse face."[47] Donne's stationing a Janus at the beginning of his book sets its tone of ambiguity. As in "Metempsychosis," this use of front matter with a hidden meaning was a common signal in texts of the period written in defiance of authority.[48]

The second verse passage is another intriguing puzzle. At the climax of the book's narration, Copernicus and Paracelsus have already been discomfited by Ignatius in their challenges to claim the place closest to Lucifer in Hell. Machiavelli has next made his appearance, and his is a much more serious challenge. Indeed, Ignatius notices that Machiavelli's insinuations are about to persuade Lucifer. To prevent Machiavelli's success, Ignatius throws himself at the devil's feet with a convulsive cry and "grovelling on the ground adored him."[49] At this point the text again diverges into poetry, drawing a striking analogy that calls for more than editorial silence. Donne compares the thunderous outcry of Ignatius at the devil's feet to the infamous explosion of King and Parliament that never happened on 5 November 1605. Ignatius cries out

> With so great noise and horror
> That had that powder taken fire, by which
> All the Isle of Britaine had flowne to the Moone,
> It had not equalled this noise and horror.[50]

At this point Ignatius begins a speech of over five thousand words, in which he aggrandizes his own claims by tendentiously evaluating Machiavelli's credentials. At length, by sheer weight of words, Ignatius establishes himself impregnably at the right hand of Lucifer. Ignatius's roaring fit of devil worship and his ensuing diatribe against Machiavelli are the turning point of the narration in *Ignatius His Conclave*.

What does Donne's crucially placed allusion to the Gunpowder Plot

signify? An aura of indeterminacy, of functional ambiguity already established in various ways throughout the early part of the book, leaves it unclear whether this comparison functions to make Ignatius's roaring at the devil's feet seem more horrendous, or if through this comparison the Gunpowder Plot is made to seem as ridiculous as Ignatius's fit. There is definitely something puzzling about this mention, in verse, of the Gunpowder Plot at the very climax of the book. Of course, Donne's comparison can be read as an attack on the suspected Jesuit fostering of the Plot and the regicidal policies of some Catholic writers. But the flippancy of Donne's reference ("by which All the Isle of Britaine had flowne to the Moone"?) is puzzling, as is the fact that Donne refers to the noise of a gunpowder explosion that had never been heard. Instead, after the plot was discovered, what people did hear was an explosion of accusations and anti-Catholic propaganda. Here we approach the hidden meaning of the book.

Consider the fact that in February 1611 a copy of *Conclave Ignati*, the Latin edition, was purchased by the Earl of Northumberland[51]—one of the Earl's very few purchases by an English author. Assuming that Nicolson's explanation about Kepler is correct, we may reasonably suppose Northumberland would have been personally interested in *Ignatius His Conclave*, if only because it was connected to his own conversations with Donne and Hariot in the Tower. If Donne also used Northumberland's library in writing the book, there is an additional reason why *Ignatius His Conclave* may have interested Northumberland. But in view of the climactic verses about the Gunpowder Plot, Donne's purposes in *Ignatius* and Northumberland's concerns in the Tower may have had a much more important convergence than either Hariot's information about Kepler, or Donne's sharing Northumberland's bookish preoccupations.

With the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, Northumberland had been imprisoned on suspicion of complicity. His two years of friendship with King James ended, and he ultimately remained in the Tower for sixteen years. However well- or ill-founded, the suspicion grew in Northumberland's circle that the Plot had been in some degree a contrivance. The Earl's secretary, Dudley Carleton, wrote as soon as the government issued its report on the Plot that the whole thing was a "fable."[52] There could be no doubt that Northumberland's brief political eminence at the Court of James I quickly became a casualty in the aftermath of the whole affair.[53] Thus for Northumberland, reading his copy of *Conclave Ignati* in the Tower, the climax of the book had a special significance. Donne's linking Ignatius's frenetic outburst with the unholy explosion works in an uncanny way when understood from

Northumberland's standpoint. In this sense, Donne likens the roaring of Ignatius to the importunate outcry and flood of propaganda that helped bring down Northumberland and forever ruled out one of his long-standing political objectives: that the King should grant toleration to English Catholics.

A fourth problem in *Ignatius His Conclave* is the fact that Donne is so selective about biographical detail in his allusions to the life of Ignatius Loyola, the apparent villain of his piece. Donne omits to mention most of the annoyances carped at by the anti-Jesuit writers of Europe—such as the colorful story of Loyola's "conversion" and ensuing penances; his various visions and frequent ecstasies during Mass; his hob-nobbing with Rome's upper crust; and the long list of his miracles. Instead Donne comments only on the shortening of Loyola's early career as a soldier by his wound at the battle of Pamplona, and on Loyola's ignorance and other difficulties as a student in Paris.[54] Similarly puzzling is Donne's restraint in avoiding two main areas of attack by anti-Jesuit writers, despite his detailed knowledge of the Society of Jesus in its acts, writings, and policies. He never alludes to the name of the Society as blasphemous, presumptuous, or indiscreet; and he is comparatively gentle about the personal morality of Jesuits, making some sexual innuendoes, but avoiding the staples of controversial invective about ill-gotten wealth, treacherous disguises, and orgies. In fact, there are really only two charges Donne repeats again and again in many various ways: "that the Jesuits are avid innovators and anti-monarchists."[55]

George Williamson first pointed out the common emphasis on innovation in "Metempsychosis" and in *Ignatius His Conclave*.[56] Innovation is part of the premise in both works. To explain Donne's selectivity while satirizing the Jesuits in *Ignatius His Conclave*, it is vital we understand precisely what the book's focus on innovation has in common with the similar focus of the poem. At the beginning of the book the narrator, having explored hell, describes the infernal spot to which his attention at length was drawn:

> I saw a secret place, where there were not many, beside *Lucifer* himselfe; to which, onely they had title, which had attempted any innovation in this life, that they gave an affront to all antiquitie, and induced doubts, and anxieties, and scruples, and after a libertie of beleeving what they would; at length established opinions, directly contrary to all established before.[57]

Like the "great soule" of "Metempsychosis," the elite at Lucifer's Court in hell have earned reputations for engineering major change in the history of opinion. Mohammed, specifically mentioned in "Metempsychosis" as a forerunner of Cecil, is again noted as one of Lucifer's eager courtiers. However, nine years later and in a published work, Donne omits to put the Protestant Luther in hell, instead pairing Mohammed with Pope Boniface III, the two of whom seem "to contend about the highest roome. Hee gloried of having expelled an old Religion, and *Mahomet* of having brought in a new."[58] The two Cecils, some of Donne's readers would have thought, had managed to achieve both these ends in England. As Smith points out, such a view of the Cecils was widely held in various political quarters during the first decade of the seventeenth century, among others by the Earl of Northumberland.[59]

From Northumberland's viewpoint, the whole source of his trouble had been the enmity of Robert Cecil. Cecil had attempted, in secret letters to Scotland before King James came to the English throne, to alienate the King from Northumberland, whose own secret letters before 1603 were urging James to offer religious toleration to English Catholics. While Cecil's letters did succeed in prejudicing the King in advance against Sir Walter Raleigh, they failed against Northumberland. When the King came south he met and became friendly with the Earl. But Cecil finally prevailed. Following Northumberland's imprisonment in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot's exposure, Star Chamber proceedings were brought against the Earl. It was widely thought, as was reported by the Venetian ambassador, that Cecil was trying to ruin Northumberland.[60] Within the Earl's circle, Cecil was regarded as not only the discoverer but certainly also the exploiter and, perhaps, the innovator of the Plot.

Further, consider Donne's selectivity in regard to the details of Ignatius Loyola's personal history. The effect of this selectivity is that Donne's Ignatius is a character who bears limited resemblance to his historical namesake. This would make sense if Donne meant to figure someone else in Ignatius, someone materially similar to Loyola but not at all similar in most details—someone recognizable only to the part of Donne's audience sensitive to his material concerns as a satirist. Donne was shadowing Robert Cecil in the form of Loyola, expecting this parallel to be understood by the Earl of Northumberland, among others. The two details of Loyola's biography that Donne mentions are the shortening of his military career by a wound and his problems at the University of Paris. Cecil was held in contempt by Northumberland and others partly because of his complete lack of valor; to ward off the charge that he was congenitally deformed, he made it known that he had suffered a

deforming injury as a child when he was dropped by his nurse. Moreover, Cecil like Loyola had gone to Paris as a young man and encountered coldness and hostility.[61] These were the only two ridiculous, personal parallels Donne could draw between the real Ignatius and his Ignatius/Cecil. The rest of Ignatius/Cecil has little to do with Loyola but much to do with the Earl of Salisbury.

The fifth problem about *Ignatius His Conclave* is the puzzle of Donne's intention in writing it. Clearly the book must be understood in the context of King James's pamphlet war with Cardinal Bellarmine over the Oath of Allegiance. But the puzzle of Donne's intention is not solved merely by recognizing this context of the book. Although in the dispute Donne evidently sides with the King against the Jesuit, he does so in a way that is unique and even bizarre to anyone conversant with the terms of the Oath of Allegiance controversy. Donne's impressive mastery of the highly technical points at issue between King and Cardinal is used, in *Ignatius His Conclave*, to trivialize the entire controversy. "His attack is a series of deliberate feints and glancing blows, not a direct assault on Bellarmine or defence of James."[62] Donne mocks and distorts the main points controverted, while emphasizing the most picayune. How did Donne expect this trivialization of the issues to be understood by "the serious and scholarly king or in the eyes of such honest battlers as [Thomas] Morton or such active ones as [Lancelot] Andrewes?"[63]

One way to explain this problem is to argue simply that the book is an attack on the Jesuits through "satirical mockery of Bellarmine's two works against James," employing "exactly those arguments in its mockery which the King had used in all seriousness."[64] But such a theory fails to account for the fact that satirical mockery of this sort must fall not only on Bellarmine. To use the King's arguments in this way reflects ironically also on the King and on the arguments. Donne's book does do this. A sense that Donne was not honestly and actively on the King's side may well prompt one to ask what Donne hoped to gain before the King or in the eyes of Morton or Andrewes. The answer to the question is that Donne did not write this book merely for the King or for honest, active Anglican controversialists. He had some other audience in mind, a reader or group of readers capable of viewing the King's pamphlet war from a vantage point outside the fray.

Donne himself calls attention to this flippant, irreverent tone of the book in his prefatory epistle, "The Printer to the Reader." Here the "Printer" tells us that the author, reluctant to have *Ignatius His Conclave* published, nevertheless was prevailed upon by a friend who cited the examples of Erasmus, Guillaume de Reboul, and Gaspar Schoppe. These three Catholic controversialists, in their "bitter jestings and

skirmishings," not only had dealt blows freely to both sides in the conflict between the religious but, going beyond attacks on merely rank and file Catholics and Protestants, also "have saucily risen up against *Princes*, & the *Lords Anointed*."[65] Something beyond the theory that the book is an attack on Bellarmine is clearly called for here. The point is that *Ignatius His Conclave* was made with a double purpose: puzzling or accommodating the predispositions of less discerning readers, Donne covertly wrote for Northumberland, and whoever else might understand, a functionally ambiguous attack on Ignatius, focusing on the relationship of Ignatius and Lucifer.[66]

Throughout the book, starting as the narrator arrives at Lucifer's Court, the focus of ridicule is not simply on Ignatius Loyola, not simply on the Jesuits, but also on a relationship between Ignatius and Lucifer which is materially the same as the relationship of Cecil and James in the eyes of Cecil's political opponents. Like Cecil at the Court of James, Ignatius wards off all his competitors. Copernicus, Paracelsus, Machiavelli, Aretino, Columbus, and St. Philip Neri—each takes a turn vying for the devil's favor, but all are prevented by Ignatius, who has "got neere his chaire, a subtile fellow, and so indued with the Divell, that he was able to tempt, and not onely that, but (as they say) even to possesse the Divell."[67] Ignatius takes full advantage of his strategic position near the throne, operating with a deftness like that of Cecil, who likewise in "Metempsychosis" had been portrayed "moving" and thus possessing the "hand, and tongue, and brow" of a monarch.

Among the weaknesses in Lucifer that Ignatius senses and exploits are a fear of physical harm and distaste for crowds, played up by Donne in such a way as to suggest King James's well-known phobias. Thus at Paracelsus's bombastic entrance, "*Lucifer* trembled," so that Ignatius ("who was just of the same temper as *Lucifer*, and therefore suffered with him in every thing and felt all his alterations"), comes to the devil's aid and expels Paracelsus as an impostor.[68] Later, after "being put into a heate, and almost smothered with this troupe and deluge of pretenders," Lucifer decides to make Ignatius "his *Lieutenant*, or *Legat a latere*," and entrusts him with "an absolute power of doing what hee would,"[69] much as James shortly after the opening of his reign entrusted Cecil with broad powers to carry on the dispensation of patronage and the government of England. But the devil grows uneasy at the "forwardnesse, and saucinesse" of Ignatius, whose very success in securing preeminence next to the King becomes a troubling concern even to Lucifer. The narrator tells us that

> looking earnestly upon *Lucifers* countenance, I perceived him to bee affected towards *Ignatius*, as *Princes*, who though they envy and grudge, that their great Officers should have such immoderate meanes to get wealth; yet they dare not complaine of it, least thereby they should make them odious and contemptible to the people.[70]

That "Donne could well have intended" this passage as a reference to Robert Cecil[71] is a suspicion confirmed by the thread of libels on Cecil running through more than a decade of Donne's writings.

iv.

But "any man's death diminishes me," and even for Donne the death of Cecil was no exception. In the letter on Cecil's death (with which we began), after his slight deprecation of libels on this occasion, Donne soberly turns to frank treatment of the man himself:

> It was easily discerned, some years before his death, that he was at a defensive war, both for his honour and health, and (as we then thought) for his estate: and I thought, that had removed much of the envy. Besides, I have just reasons to think, that in the chiefest businesses between the Nations, he was a very good patriot.[72]

This expression of compassion for the dead man's recent troubles admits nevertheless a damaging reservation about Cecil's good patriotism in other than "the chiefest businesses."

> But I meant to speake of nothing but the libells, of which, all which are brought into these parts, are so tasteless and flat, that I protest to you, I think they were made by his friends. It is not the first time that our age hath seen that art practised, That when there are witty and sharp libels made which not onely for the liberty of speaking, but for the elegancie, and composition, would take deep root, and make durable impressions in the memory, no other way hath been thought so fit to suppresse them, as to divulge some course, and railing one: for when the noise is risen, that libels are abroad, mens curiositie must be served with something: and it is better for the honour of the person traduced, that some blunt

> downright railings be vented, of which everybody is soon weary, then other pieces, which entertain us long with delight, and love to the things themselves. I doubt not but he smoothered some libels against him in his life time.[73]

But not all of them. We should recognize here a proprietary note in Donne's allusion to witty, sharp, elegant, deep-rooted, durable, entertaining, and delightful libels on Cecil. This is an allusion to his own efforts: "Metempsychosis," "*The Brazen Head of Francis Bacon*," "*Anything out of Anything*," the letter about the duel with old Hertford, and above all *Ignatius His Conclave*.

Next Donne recurs to the flat and tasteless libels that have come to Spa:

> But I would all these (or better) had been made then [i.e. in Cecil's lifetime], for they might have testified that the Authors had meant to mend him, but now they can have no such honest pretence. I dare say to you, where I am not easily misinterpreted, that there may be cases, where one may do his Countrey good service, by libelling against a live man. For, where a man is either too great, or his Vices too generall, to be brought under a judiciary accusation, there is no way, but this extraordinary accusing, which we call Libelling. . . . But after death, it is, in all cases, unexcusable.[74]

More than a decade of Donne's own libelling Cecil is here reviewed and vindicated as an effort to "mend" the powerful man and his policies—that they needed mending is Donne's tacit assumption. But there is also a mischief in Donne's pious disapproval of libels "after death." In this very letter, by reference to his own old libels and even afresh, Donne again is libelling Cecil though he be dead.

He concludes the discussion by referring to historical examples of the libelling of dead men:

> I know that *Lucifer*, and one or two more of the Fathers who writ libellous books against the Emperours of their times, are excused by our writers, because they writ not in the lives of those Emperours. I am glad for them that they writ not in their lives, for that must have occasioned

> tumult, and contempt, against so high and Soveraign persons. But that doth not enough excuse them to me, for writing so after their death; for that was ignoble, and uselesse, though they did a little escape the nature of libels, by being subscribed and avowed: which excuse would not have served in the Star-chamber, where sealed Letters have been judged Libels. . . .[75]

Here is a parting shot at Cecil, who was primarily responsible for Star Chamber proceedings. As Annabel Patterson observes in writing about this passage, its "sudden, and certain, and threatening topicality closes the gap between the letter-writer and his subject, as letters themselves become potentially libellous, or prohibited discourse."[76]

Thus Donne leaves off libelling Cecil, except for a sort of coda on the occasion of Northumberland's release from the Tower in 1622. After sixteen years in prison, the newly freed Northumberland was present at Hanworth, a manor owned by his son-in-law James Hay, Viscount Doncaster, as Donne preached on 25 August 1622 on a text from the Book of Job. The theme of the sermon is that for his elect God's mercy affords good and ill fortune alike—"Titles and places of honour in this world" and "afflictions, and crosses in this world"—to manifest His glory. The sermon thus reflects tacitly on Northumberland's fall from favor and imprisonment, experiences of a man who "through the calumnies that have been put upon himself, can see the revilings that were multiplyed upon Christ, that in his own imprisonment, can see Christ in the grave, and in his owne enlargement, Christ in his resurrection."[77] Cecil is not referred to directly but is implicit at a few points in the sermon, such as the closing sentence, which seems to be Donne's last word on the subject:

> certainly many woes, and invincible darknesse attend those, to whom neither the hand of God in his *works*, nor the hand of God upon *themselves*, neither the *greatnesse* of this world, nor the *crosses* of this world, can manifest God; for what picture of God would they have, that will neither have him in great, nor little?[78]

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Notes

[1] "To your selfe" in John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour (1651)*, ed. M. Thomas Hester (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977), p. 89.

[2] Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 14-15, 48.

[3] Patterson, pp. 14-15.

[4] Barbara N. De Luna, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of "Catiline" and its Historical Context* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 360.

[5] Quoted in Thomas H. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers* (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1964), p. 26. See also pp. 15, 24-28 and 168.

[6] "The 'Metempsychosis' of John Donne," *TLS*, 29 December 1972, p. 1587.

[7] *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 313.

[8] Malvern van Wyk Smith, "John Donne's *Metempsychosis*," *RES* 24 (1973), 143.

[9] Gardner, p. 1587.

[10] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 329.

[11] Smith, pp. 151-52.

[12] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 313.

[13] Smith, pp. 142-43.

[14] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 324.

[15] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 326.

[16] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 327.

[17] Smith, pp. 147, 150, 151.

[18] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 309.

[19] Algernon Cecil, *A Life of Robert Cecil* (London: John Murray, 1915), p. 165. See also the photograph of the front of Hatfield House in James Winny, *A Preface to Donne* (London: Longman, 1970), p. 107.

[20] J. A. Gotch, "The Homes of the Cecils" in *Historical Monograph: William Cecil* (London: T. C. and E. C. Jack, 1904), pp. 42, 60, 69, and 78-79.

[21] A. C. Fox-Davies, "The Genealogy of the Cecils," in *Historical Monograph: William Cecil*, p. 109.

[22] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, pp. 309-10.

[23] Patterson, *Censorship*, pp. 47-48.

[24] Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 329.

[25] John Donne, *The Courtier's Library, or Catalogus Librorum Aulicorum Incomparabilium et Non Vendibilium*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (London: Nonesuch Press, 1930), p. 51.

[26] Donne, *Courtier's Library*, pp. 45, 61.

[27] "To Sir G. H." in Donne, *Letters*, pp. 213-14.

[28] Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, abridged ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 212.

[29] Donne, *Letters*, p. 214.

[30] Donne, *Letters*, pp. 214-15.

[31] Donne, *Letters*, p. 215.

[32] *A Second Jacobean Journal* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 250.

[33] "Cecil, Robert," *DNB*.

[34] Donne, *Letters*, p. 217.

[35] Marjorie Nicolson, "Kepler, the *Somnium*, and John Donne," JHI 1 (1940), 270-72.

[36] Izaak Walton, *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), p. 28.

[37] Nicolson, pp. 272-73.

[38] See the Introduction and Appendix C in John Donne, *Ignatius His Conclave*, ed. T. S. Healy, S.J. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. xviii and 171.

[39] Donne, *Ignatius*, pp. xxix, 170-71.

[40] G. R. Batho, "The Wizard Earl in the Tower, 1605-1621," *History Today* 6 (1956), 334-51.

[41] Edward Barrington De Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Clay, 1887), II, 626-30.

[42] Batho, pp. 349-50.

[43] Sydney Anglo, "More Machiavellian than Machiavel" in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 358-59; and A. Gerber, "All of the Five Fictitious Italian Editions of Writings of Machiavelli and Three of Those of Pietro Aretino Printed by John Wolfe of London (1584-1589)," *MLN* 22 (1907), 2-3.

[44] Gerber, p. 5.

[45] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 7.

[46] The Oxford editor T. S. Healy has no real explanation for these transitions into verse beyond his only partly successful efforts to annotate some of the passages as borrowings from other writers or as original compositions by Donne. This is not the place for detailed discussion of all the passages; but, briefly, the seven verse passages occur on *Ignatius*, pp. 5 (two of them), 7, 31, 35, 63-65, and 97. The second passage on p. 5 was first identified, as Healy notes, by Evelyn Simpson. It is a quotation (in the Latin edition) and translation (in the English edition) of the Emperor Hadrian's verses said to have been uttered on his death bed after a painful and lingering illness. The passage on p. 7 is incorrectly identified by Healy as versification and translation of a prose passage by Albert the Great, which he quotes (p. 103). Comparison of Donne's twenty-seven Latin words in five lines of verse to Albert's thirty words of Latin prose shows that they have only one word in common (i.e., "subito"), suggesting that Donne was not merely versifying Albert the Great. The passage on p. 35 is quotation and translation from a book Donne cites in the margin at the place. The passage on pp. 63-65 Healy speculates is original (p. 137). He may be right. But the passage on p. 97, which Healy also thinks original, is actually a translation into Latin and English of four lines from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 2, lines 127-30. This is pointed out by a marginal annotation in a Houghton Library copy of the 1652 printing of *Ignatius His Conclave*, in Donne's *Paradoxes, Problems, Essayes, Characters*. Dayton Haskin suggested to me that the marginal annotation is in the hand of Charles Eliot Norton, who once owned this copy.

[47] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 5.

[48] Patterson, *Censorship*, pp. 47-48.

[49] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 31.

[50] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 31.

[51] I. A. Shapiro, "Publication Dates Before 1640," *TLS*, 6 February 1953, p. 96.

[52] *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, James I, 1603-1610*, ed. M. A. E. Green (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1857), p. 255.

[53] Gerald Brenan, *A History of the House of Percy*, 2 vols. (London: Freemantle, 1902), II, 109-43.

[54] Healy remarks on this peculiar selection; see Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xxxvi.

[55] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xxxvii.

[56] "Donne's Satirical *Progresse of the Soule*," *ELH* 36 (1969), 260-63. See also Smith, p. 142.

[57] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 9.

[58] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 9.

[59] Smith, p. 146.

[60] *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, 1603-1607*, ed. R. F. Brown (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1894), pp. 301-02.

[61] Phyllis M. Handover, *The Second Cecil* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1959), pp. 5 and 41.

[62] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xxiv.

[63] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xix.

[64] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xxvi.

[65] Donne, *Ignatius*, pp. 3 and 5.

[66] In a telling passage about this relationship, Healy observes: "Lucifer's sole purpose is to serve as a foil for the real villain, Ignatius. In this function he is perfect. His emotional states are all those of a born coward. Frightened, ashamed, perplexed, and jealous, he is impressed by Copernicus and Machiavelli, shaken by Paracelsus, and smothered by the crowds" (Donne, *Ignatius*, p. xxxv). This is the precise role, these the precise characteristics attributed, by political enemies of Cecil like Northumberland (and, for that matter, by many modern historians seemingly without a political axe to grind), to none other than King James. These are also the characteristics attributed to King James by Donne himself in his "The Character of a Scot at the First Sight." (See my "The Originals of Donne's Overburian Characters," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 77 [1973], 63-69; and "A Problematic Text," *John Donne Journal* 3 [1984], 99-103.) Can "Tom. Thorney" in this work be Cecil?

[67] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 15.

[68] Donne, *Ignatius*, pp. 19-21.

[69] Donne, *Ignatius*, pp. 69-71.

[70] Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 65.

[71] So Healy speculates (Donne, *Ignatius*, p. 137).

[72] Donne, *Letters*, p. 89.

[73] Donne, *Letters*, pp. 89-90.

[74] Donne, *Letters*, pp. 90-91.

[75] Donne, *Letters*, pp. 91-92.

[76] "Misinterpretable Donne: The Testimony of the Letters," *John Donne Journal* 1 (1982), 45.
[77] *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953-62), IV, 174-75.
[78] *The Sermons of John Donne*, p. 177.