

Vol. 49

Religions and Discourse

Francesca Bugliani Knox

The Eye of the Eagle

John Donne and the Legacy of Ignatius Loyola

Peter Lang

Religions and Discourse

John Donne's family were committed Catholics. His two uncles were Jesuits. One of them, Jasper Heywood, was the leader of the Jesuit mission in England, while Donne's mother was a recusant who was forced to leave the country in 1595. In this detailed and historically contextualized study, the author argues that Donne was greatly influenced in his journey from militant Roman Catholicism to ordination in the Church of England by Ignatius of Loyola's religious ideals and in particular by his *Spiritual Exercises*.

The book describes the pervasive influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Catholicism and Protestantism. In this light, it offers a close reading of Donne's preordination religious poems and prose with constant reference to the sermons. These works are usually read through the tinted lenses of 'Catholicism' or 'Protestantism' or other religious '-isms'. The reading proposed here argues instead that Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* were for Donne a means to transcend the simplistic and perilous divisions of contemporary Catholicism and Protestantism.

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Edited by James M. M. Francis

Volume 49



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Nimium sapere



*COMINVS aduersum qui spectat lumine Phœbū,
Nititur & radiis vincere, cactus abit.
Vane quid affectas caelestibus addere lucem,
Ardentēque oculis sollicitare Deum?
Sola potest magni hoc ales præstare Tonantis,
Hac quoque visum acuit, non superare solet.
Alta nimis linque, & donata sorte beatum
Te dic, quòdque velis esse, fuisse puta.
Non bene conueniunt Phaëton tibi regna suprema,
Icarus optatis decidit atque polis.*

The emblem illustrates the contrast between striving to know too much, symbolized by the fall of Icarus, and recognizing one's limits, symbolized by the Eagle. The Eagle, as the text indicates, can see afar, but does not fly too close to the sun. From: Johannes Sambucus (János Zsamboki),

Emblemata. Antwerp: C. Plantin, 1584, p. 28.

They that fly high at matter of mysterie, and leave out matter of edification, They that fly over Sea for plat-formes of discipline, and leave out that Church that bred them, They that fly close to the service of great mens affections and purposes, and doe the work of God coldly, and faintly, They may be *Alati*, but they are not *Oculati*, They may fly high, and fly fast, and fly far, and fly close in the way of preferment, but they see not their end; Not onely not the end that they shall come to, but not the end that they are put upon; not onely their owne ends, but not their ends whose instruments they are. Those birds whose eyes are cieled, and sowed up, fly highest; but they are made a prey: God exposes not his servants to such dangers; He gives them wings, that is meanes to doe their office; but eyes too, that is discretion and religious wisdom how to doe it.

— JOHN DONNE, *The Sermons*

‘Siempre estava en si y sobre si’

— GERÓNIMO NADAL SJ

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Citations

All citations of Donne's poetry come from *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A.J. Smith. All citations from the *Spiritual Exercises* come from M. Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*. Citations from the Bible, when not otherwise stated, are from the King James Version. Citations from classical texts are from standard editions, e.g. Teubner and Oxford Classical Texts.

I have transcribed English sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prose texts without making any changes other than removing accents and expanding abbreviations. I have retained the original capitalization and italicization in quotations.

All translations are mine, unless stated otherwise.

Introduction

My first end in serving God, must not be my selfe, but he and his glory.
— JOHN DONNE, *The Sermons*

John Donne plays a major role as a poet and divine, both in literary and historical criticism. New biographies, new editions, critical essays and monographs inspired by different schools of criticism continue to be published. But despite – or perhaps because of – these scholarly endeavours, there still remain contrasting pictures of Donne: Jack Donne and John Donne, the love-poet and the divine, the libertine sceptic and man of faith. I believe we can restore a sense of unity and integrity to Donne and his writings by focusing on his spiritual formation through, above all, a life-long and ever tentative process of discernment. The roots of this discernment were in Ignatian spirituality.

This book discusses the influence of Ignatian spirituality on some of the poetical and theological works written by Donne before he was ordained as deacon and priest by Bishop John King on 23 January 1615.¹

- 1 By the term 'spirituality' I mean, in general, 'the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial'; see P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History. Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1995), 37, 52; id., 'Preface to the Series', in W.L. Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 9–11: 10; id., *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 1–11. In particular by 'Ignatian spirituality' I intend here 'el modo de proceder en la vida espiritual con una "logica ignaciana"' ('the way of proceeding in the spiritual life with an "Ignatian logic"') and 'the pattern of Christian discipleship which has its origin and inspiration in the life and legacy of Ignatius Loyola'; see, respectively, R. Zas Friz de Col, 'Espiritualidad ignaciana', in P. Cebollada et al. (eds), *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, Colección Manresa 37–8 (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2007),

It covers nearly all of Donne's religious poems assignable with reasonable certainty to 1607–12, or certainly no later than 1612, with the exception of the *Anniversaries*. The *Anniversaries* would require a study in their own right and they have anyway been interpreted by Louis Martz carefully, if not perhaps exhaustively, in the light of the Ignatian art of meditation. This book also examines Donne's *Essays in Divinity*. Compared to Donne's three other prose works of the same period, *Biathanatos* (1605–8), *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610) and *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611), the *Essays* investigate theological topics of wider scope relevant to Donne's religious views and his later ministry as preacher and theologian.

Chapter One assesses the arguments for and against the possibility of an Ignatian influence on Donne's works as proposed by critics during the last century and a half. Chapter Two illustrates the circulation, in Donne's times, of the concept of discernment – or 'discretion', as it was then more often called – and the reception of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* in England between 1579 and 1633, and of books inspired by them. Chapters Three and Four discuss the evidence of Donne's familiarity with the method, framework, contents and dynamics of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, as it appears, first, in 'Divine Meditations', 'La Corona', 'A Litany', and 'The Cross' and, later, in *Essays in Divinity*. Finally, Chapters Five, Six and Seven examine more specifically the contents of the *Essays* – Donne's exegesis, theology and ecclesiology, respectively – in relation to the Ignatian legacy. Each chapter highlights the role of spiritual 'discretion' and points at the consistency of Donne's theology as expressed in his *Sermons*.

The subtitle 'John Donne and the legacy of Ignatius Loyola' is also an indirect statement on the choice of method and on how this book relates to the wider context of Donne studies. There has recently been a lively debate on the methodology of spirituality as an academic discipline.²

vol. xxxvii, 811–20: 812, and D. Lonsdale, 'Ignatian Spirituality', in P. Sheldrake (ed.), *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 354–6: 354. For fundamental features of Ignatian spirituality, see Sheldrake, *A Brief History*, 126–8.

2 See E.A. Dreyer and M.S. Burrows (eds), *Minding the Spirit: the Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); particularly

This book is not intended to be a theoretical contribution to that debate. It shows instead how in practice Ignatian insights on knowledge, discernment and truth might fruitfully accompany a scholarly work of historical reconstruction, close reading and interpretation of Donne's poetry and prose. In addition to the documentary evidence for Ignatius's influence on Donne, the internal logic of the *Spiritual Exercises* has led me to engage in a critical dialogue with the texts, and eventually convinced me that it was a formative feature in Donne's religious life.³

My study relates to recent Donne scholarship, in two ways. First, it elaborates previous scholarly suggestions that Ignatius influenced Donne. Second, it contributes to a growing interest in Donne as preacher and divine. Such studies are not, in my view, always unprejudiced or perceptive about Donne's religious positions. His works are still often read through the tinted lenses of 'Catholicism' or 'Protestantism' or other religious '-isms'. My reading of Donne's works before his ordination aspires to correct this tendency to appropriate Donne by drawing attention to the formative devotional experience which, I believe, inspired his works and gave coherence to his exegesis, theology and ecclesiology. The expression 'the legacy of Ignatius Loyola' in my subtitle refers to this devotional experience.

M. Frohlich, 'Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method', in *ibid.*, 71–8.

3 On the importance of interdisciplinarity and critical dialogue in interpreting works of Christian spirituality, see P. Sheldrake, 'Interpretation', in Sheldrake (ed.), *The New SCM Dictionary*, 13–14.

John Donne Criticism and the Ignatian Legacy

All knowledge that begins not, and ends not with His glory, is but a giddy,
but a vertiginous circle, but an elaborate and exquisite ignorance.

— JOHN DONNE, *The Sermons*

Since Donne's rise to popularity in the late nineteenth century, several historians and literary critics have suggested that Ignatian spirituality influenced Donne. But they have done so fragmentarily, as a means of pinpointing Donne's presumed intellectual or temperamental weakness, or of reading his poetry from one particular literary viewpoint or of identifying his religious affiliation, rather than, as the present book proposes, as the key to understanding the man and his works.

Ignatian influence on Donne has been discussed in three phases. The first period (1880–1945) acknowledged Donne's Catholic background and the influence of the Jesuits but, in keeping with contemporary prejudice against 'Jesuitism' in literary history and the history of ideas, assesses its influence negatively. The first suggestion that Donne was linked to the Society of Jesus goes back to the nineteenth century, to Cambridge, where interest in Donne had come in the wake of the Oxford Movement and then developed among biographers, editors and literary critics.¹ Isaak Walton's biography, which had dominated the interpretation of Donne's works during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had not suggested

1 A. Jessopp, *John Donne, Sometime Dean of St Paul's*, Leaders of Religion Series (London: Methuen, 1897), vii. D. Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 89, seems to have overlooked this statement.

that the Jesuits influenced Donne.² According to Walton, Donne had been brought up a Catholic. At eighteen, however, he became a Christian without an inclination to any Church and began to study religious controversies because he was uncertain about which path to follow.³ Conversion from the life of a sinner to that of a holy Anglican, a 'second St Austin', came, again according to Walton, much later on, shortly before Donne's ordination in 1615.⁴

Around the middle of the nineteenth century the Anglican chaplain Augustus Jessopp started to revise this portrait of Donne. In several writings, which are now rarely cited, Jessopp brought to the fore important details of Donne's Catholic background and his contacts with the Jesuits.⁵ Of Donne's mother Jessopp wrote that she 'was a woman of some celebrity for her fanatical devotion to the Romish religion, and is spoken of as "a noted Jesuit", who brought herself in later life to great poverty and complete dependence upon her son, by her profuse largeness to those of her own persuasion.'⁶ He suggested that the young Donne must have had a Jesuit tutor who had also been a spiritual advisor, a 'Romish' priest who acted as a chaplain.⁷ Jessopp also believed that for a number of years between 1586 and 6 May 1592 Donne did not live in England.⁸ In his short biography, Jessopp set out the documentation in more detail. After listing the Catholic

- 2 I. Walton, *The Life and Death of Dr. Donne. Late Deane of St Pauls*, in J. Donne, *Lxxx Sermons Preached by John Donne*, ed. J. Donne Jr (London: R. Royston and R. Marriot, 1640), sigs A5r–Civ. Walton's *Lives* were annotated by Thomas Zouch in 1796. A very rare edition, entitled *The Life of Dr. John Donne. Late Deane of St Pauls*, ed. T.E. Tomlins, The Contemplative Man's Library (London: H.K. Causton), appeared in 1852.
- 3 Walton, *The Life of Dr. John Donne* (1852), 15.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 65–7.
- 5 A. Jessopp, 'John Donne', in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xv (1888), 223–34; J. Donne, *Essays in Divinity*, ed. A. Jessopp (London: J. Tupling, 1855); Jessopp, *John Donne*.
- 6 Donne, *Essays*, ed. Jessopp, xi.
- 7 *Ibid.*, xii. The Jesuit William Holt, for example, might have taught Henry and John Donne before they enrolled at Oxford in 1584.
- 8 Jessopp, *John Donne*, 12.

confessors, exiles and Jesuits in Donne's family, he then recounted for the first time the episode concerning Henry Donne, John Donne's brother, who had harboured, in Gray's Inn, a priest very close to the Society of Jesus, William Harrington, who was later executed.⁹ This episode had been related anonymously for the first time in the *Catholic Magazine and Review* of 1833 and was later reported in *The Month* of 1874.¹⁰ Unlike Walton two centuries earlier, Jessopp felt confident enough to mention the sincerity and heroism of Catholic sufferers in Donne's times.¹¹

The influential Leslie Stephen too, at the end of the nineteenth century, agreed that in Walton's biography of Donne the facts were 'all wrong and the portraiture palpably false.'¹² Concerning Donne's early years, Stephen had little doubt. 'It would have been in the natural course of things,' he wrote, 'had he [Donne] been sent to Douay to become a seminary priest, and either attained eminence as a casuist or died as a martyr at Tyburn.'¹³ Above all, Stephen did not deem Donne's decision to join the Church of England as straightforward as Walton had suggested.¹⁴

Sir Herbert Grierson, who published his edition of Donne's poems in 1912, did not mention the role of Jesuits in Donne's life. Nor did he mention that in 1593 Donne's brother Henry was found harbouring Harrington in circumstances possibly connected with the imprisonment of Henry Walpole, who was later executed for treason in 1595.¹⁵ Grierson did, however,

9 Ibid., 4–5.

10 Clericus, 'Clericus on a Supplement to the Memoirs of Missionary Priests,' *The Catholic Magazine and Review* 3 (1833), 218–22; J. Morris, 'The Martyrdom of William Harrington,' *The Month. A Catholic Magazine and Review* 1 (1874), 411–23, especially 422–3; T.M. McCoog, *English and Welsh Jesuits 1555–1650*, Catholic Record Society Publications 74 ([London]: Catholic Record Society, 1994), pt ii, 201.

11 Jessopp, *John Donne*, 4.

12 L. Stephen, 'John Donne,' *The National Review* 34 (1899–1900), 595–613: 596.

13 Ibid., 597.

14 Ibid., 606.

15 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1591–94*, ed. M.A. Everett Green (London: Longmans, 1867). The documents relating to the Jaques plot, in which Lopez was also implicated, refer repeatedly to William Holt, Thomas and Henry Walpole, and to Harrington. In his letter to the Lord Keeper, Harrington confessed

mention the possibility that Donne might have been sent abroad before 1592 or entered a Catholic seminary or been in the service of a foreign power. Indeed, he went even further, writing that Donne 'was in the first place a Catholic.'¹⁶ 'Despite Donne's conversion and later polemical writing and preaching,' he commented, 'his [i.e. Donne's] most intimate religious poems indicate very clearly that he never ceased to feel the influence of his Catholic upbringing.'¹⁷

When, therefore, in his 1926 Clark Lectures on Donne, T.S. Eliot argued forcefully and at length on Donne's connection with the Society of Jesus, the subject of Donne's Catholicism and of his connection with the Society of Jesus was not new.¹⁸ What was new was Eliot's view of that connection, which remained unchanged, at least until 1933, when he delivered a revised version of the Clark Lectures in America. Eliot emphasized, as his contemporaries Grierson and William Courthope had not, the effects of the mysticism underlying and accompanying the phenomenon of 'Jesuitism'. To those effects Eliot ascribed the disintegration of Donne's thought. The Spanish mysticism of Ignatius, as well as that of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, was, in Eliot's not unprejudiced opinion, 'psychological' and 'romantic'. It was opposed to the 'ontological and classical mysticism' expressed by Thomas Aquinas, the Victorines and Dante, whose goal rested in 'the divine contemplation' and whose method was 'the development and subsumption of emotion and feeling through intellect into the vision of

he had contact with William Holt, a friend of Jasper Heywood, Donne's uncle, and William Weston. Harrington had returned from the Continent when Heywood was in London. John Gerard was caught in 1594 and questioned in relation to the same plot as Holt and Harrington. See H. More, *Historia missionis Anglicanae Societatis Iesu* (Audomari [St Omer]: T. Geubels, 1660), 254; tr. F. Edwards, *The Elizabethan Jesuits* (London: Phillimore, 1981), 318.

16 H. Grierson (ed.), *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century. Donne to Butler* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), xvii.

17 H. Grierson, 'John Donne', in A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (eds), *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, 15 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907–27), vol. iv (1909), 196–223: 198.

18 T.S. Eliot, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. and intro. R. Schuchard (London: Faber & Faber, 1993).

God.¹⁹ Eliot suggested that 'Jesuitism' and the Spanish mysticism underlying it left their legacy on Donne and produced an indelible impression on his poetry. Donne was, Eliot wrote, 'throughout his life in contact with Jesuitism; directly in his early family life, later by his studies, and not least by his battle with the Jesuits.'²⁰ If in Donne we have a legal mind rather than theological, as well as a psychologist, this, in Eliot's opinion, is because Donne's intellectual context was inevitably characterized, like 'Jesuitism', by the fragments of every philosophical system and the imaginative method of Ignatius 'in whose Exercises any student of Donne must saturate himself.'²¹

To the characteristics of Spanish mysticism Eliot attributed the fact that Donne was not a mystic in the true sense. He was not a true mystic because Ignatius was not a true mystic. 'Now if you read and study *The Spiritual Exercises*,' Eliot wrote, 'you will find a stock of images which reminds you, and by no mere coincidence, of Donne. Donne, as I shall try to show, was no mystic. And neither was St Ignatius. Mysticism is a gift of grace; you will never become a mystic unless you have the gift.'²² Here Eliot reveals his idiosyncratic view of the *Spiritual Exercises*. They were not aimed at making mystics, Eliot declared. They were 'a very practical handbook, like the late Lieut. Muller's handbook of physical exercises, to enable anybody to extend the intellectual conviction of the Faith to imaginative conviction [...] But this is not mysticism; it is merely confirmation of the Christian Faith. And we shall find the visual imagery of St Ignatius in Donne, whose childhood was passed under Jesuit influence.'²³

Ignatian influence, in Eliot's judgement, did not benefit Donne. The latter's subtle use of psychology and intensified personal self-expression,

19 Ibid., 103-4.

20 Ibid., 89.

21 Ibid., 78, 80, 292.

22 T.S. Eliot, 'Thinking in Verse: A Survey of Early Seventeenth-Century Poetry', *The Listener* 3 (12 March 1930), 441-3: 443.

23 Ibid.

both in poetry and spirituality, revealed a lack of 'spiritual discipline'.²⁴ In spiritual life, Donne, unlike Lancelot Andrewes, appeared to Eliot as a 'man imprisoned in the embrace of his own feelings' and therefore fell short of true mysticism.²⁵ In Andrewes's spirituality, Eliot found a continuity with the Middle Ages and that 'perfect' medieval mysticism of Richard St Victor which, as he had already suggested in the opening of the Clark Lectures, he always felt had been missing in Donne. Ignatian influence was decisive but deleterious.²⁶

Eliot's perspective was heavily coloured by his own poetics, religion and philosophy, as well as by contemporary interpretations of 'Jesuitism' and general assumptions, common in academic debate, on the continuity and discontinuity between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.²⁷ His emphasis on, and negative evaluation of, the connection between Donne and what he called 'Jesuitism' and 'Spaniard mysticism', was sub-

24 T.S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes. Essays on Style and Order* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), 20. Eliot, *ibid.*, suspects that in Donne's spirituality there 'hangs the shadow of the impure motive'.

25 Eliot, *The Varieties*, 114.

26 For Donne as 'the antithesis of the scholastic, of the mystic and of the philosophical system maker', see T.S. Eliot, 'Donne in our Time', in T. Spencer (ed.), *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 3-19: 8.

27 Eliot wanted to challenge the assertions of M.P. Ramsay, *Les Doctrines médiévales chez Donne* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1917), 3-4; see Eliot, *The Varieties*, 67. For formulations of 'Jesuitism', Eliot was influenced by a broad and general continental debate. See L. Settembrini, *Lezioni di letteratura italiana* (Napoli: Morano, 1877), vol. ii, 227; J.A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy, the Catholic Reaction*, 7 vols (London: Smith and Elder, 1875-86), vol. vi (1886), pt i, 246-322, especially 307; G. Lanson, 'Poètes et romanciers précieux', in *id.*, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1894, 2nd edn), 380-3; G. Saitta, *La scolastica del secolo xvi e la politica dei gesuiti* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1911), 101-10; W.J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, 6 vols (London: Macmillan, 1903), vol. iii, especially 105, 113; A. Graf, 'Il fenomeno del secentismo', *Nuova antologia di lettere, scienze ed arti* 119 (1905), 353-82: 372-3, cited by H. Grierson, *The First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Blackwood, 1906), 329.

ordinated to his own theory of metaphysical poetry and of its historical development, which he derived for the most part from Grierson.²⁸

Idiosyncratic though they are from many points of view, Eliot's Clark Lectures are important contributions to the topic of Donne and Ignatian spirituality. Eliot elaborated on Spanish mysticism, which Grierson had touched on only in passing.²⁹ By associating Ignatius with a 'psychological' and 'romantic' Christian mysticism which paid more attention to the feelings, and by indicating the best example of that method, the *Spiritual Exercises*, Eliot's Clark Lectures paved the way for the exploration of the influence of Spanish poetry upon English poetry that Edmund Gosse had wished for.³⁰

Eliot's hints led, in the first place, to the pioneering work of Martz. In this second phase in the interpretation of Ignatian influence on Donne, literary critics – Catholic and Protestant critics alike at the outset, even if the latter subsequently rejected this line – sought to identify the influence of Ignatian meditation on the religious poetry of Donne. Following Eliot, but without Eliot's prejudice against Spanish mysticism and the Society of Jesus, Martz reconnected seventeenth-century English poetry, including Donne's, to sixteenth-century Spanish mysticism, in particular to Ignatian spirituality. He demonstrated that English seventeenth-century religious poetry epitomized the impact of a Catholic continental art of meditation upon English poetical traditions.³¹ In many poems of the period, and especially in Donne's, Martz found what he claimed were unmistakable traces of the art of Ignatian meditation: the technique of composition of place,

28 Ibid., 156–60, 371–5. For striking similarities between Eliot's and Grierson's definitions of metaphysical poetry, see H. Grierson, 'Commentary', in J. Donne, *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols, ed. H. Grierson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), vol. i, and Grierson (ed.), *Metaphysical Lyrics*, xiii.

29 Grierson, 'Commentary', 4.

30 E. Gosse, 'Metaphysical Poetry', in id., *More Books on the Table* (London: W. Heinemann, 1923), 307–13; 313; E. Gosse, 'Richard Crashaw', in id., *Seventeenth Century Studies* (London: Kegan Paul, 1883), 143–67; 156; id., *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, 2 vols (London: W. Heinemann, 1899), vol. i, 17–18.

31 L.L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, Yale Studies in English 125 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), especially 25–125.

the use of memory, understanding and will, and echoes of the preparatory prayer and petitions. 'The imprint of Jesuit methods of meditation,' he explained, 'stayed with Donne throughout his life, despite his violent attacks on the Jesuit order.'³²

Almost contemporaneously, another scholar had insights similar to Martz's. While Martz was studying at Yale the influence of meditative exercises on Donne and seventeenth-century English poetry, Helen Gardner in Oxford started studying and collating the manuscripts of Donne's poems. She, too, came to the view that Donne's religious poems were influenced by his familiarity with meditative practices, especially with 'systematic' meditation of Ignatius Loyola.³³ But Gardner disagreed with Martz about the source of Donne's habit of systematic meditation.³⁴ She thought it unlikely that Donne had completed Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*.³⁵ Above all, Gardner was not convinced by Martz's thesis that seventeenth-century English poetry in general, and Donne's in particular, was influenced by the continental art of meditation.³⁶ In her view there was a simpler way of understanding Donne's poems. Donne's habits of prayer had simply survived modifications of his intellectual position. Gardner found Donne's meditative method less strict than the original Ignatian method and argued that the elements of Jesuit spirituality that influenced Donne had been adopted in Protestant devotion.³⁷ At the close of the sixteenth century, she commented, many Protestants felt that, in the bitter theological controversies of the time, the Christian life of prayer and devotion was in danger of perishing. Catholic devotional books inspired by the Jesuit revival, such

32 Ibid., 146.

33 J. Donne, *The Divine Poems*, ed. H. Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), I–lv, especially liv and n. 1 there.

34 H. Gardner, 'The Poetry of Meditation' [review of Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation*], *A Review of English Studies* 8 (1957), 194–200: 198.

35 Ibid., 196–7.

36 Ibid., 197–8. L.L. Martz, 'Donne and the Meditative Tradition', *Thought. A Review of Culture and Ideas* 34 (Summer 1959), 269–78: 274–8, reiterated his idea of a meditative tradition in poetry and extended it to Eliot, Yeats and Hopkins.

37 Donne, *The Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, liv–lv.

as Gaspar Loarte's *The Exercise of a Christian Life*, which in its Protestant English dress converted Robert Green, were, with judicious pruning, she pointed out, 'easily made suitable for devout Protestants.'³⁸ Gardner concluded that Donne used, as the material of his poetry, devotional practices he had learnt as a child, and continued to do so as a Protestant loyal to the Anglican establishment.³⁹

Martz and Gardner, therefore, argued strongly, even if from different standpoints, in favour of the influence of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* on Donne's religious poetry. The topic of the Ignatian influence on some of Donne's works subsequently became a matter of some debate.⁴⁰ Those disagreeing with Martz's and Gardner's view of an Ignatian influence on Donne remained in the minority. Some critics developed Gardner's point that Ignatian meditation and Protestant principles had converged.⁴¹

In 1973, however, Barbara Lewalski struck a very different line.⁴² Discounting the influence of Ignatian meditation, but allowing an early presence, in Donne, of what she called 'Ignatian themes', Lewalski turned to contemporary English Protestant theory and practice of meditation in order to understand better Donne's *Anniversaries*, 'Divine Poems' and *Devotions*, and extended the same approach to seventeenth-century English religious poetry in general.⁴³ No convergence of Ignatian meditation and Protestant principles was, in her view, possible. Protestant meditation was characterized by a conflation of sermon with meditation and was totally

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 The focus of interest shifted from the *Anniversaries* and 'Divine Meditations' to *Devotions upon Emergent Occasion*; See T.F. Van Laan, 'John Donne's *Devotions* and the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises', *Studies in Philology* 60 (1963), 191–202: 194.

41 R.S. Jackson, *John Donne's Christian Vocation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 3–4; A. Raspa, 'Donne as Mediator', *Recusant History* 10 (1969), 241–3; W.H. Halewood, *The Poetry of Grace. Reformation Themes and Structures in English Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 71–87.

42 B.K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), *passim*.

43 Ibid., 147–8, 253–82. B.K. Lewalski, *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise. The Creation of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 6–7.

different from the Roman Catholic meditative tradition.⁴⁴ She contrasted 'Protestant poetics' with 'Tridentine aesthetics.'⁴⁵ Lewalski claimed that her point of view was a counterpoise to the several important studies which had emphasized Roman Catholic influences upon Donne, as well as a response to the need for greater attention to Donne's Protestantism.⁴⁶ Taking the opposite view to Gardner's, Lewalski believed that Counter-Reformation influence was not filtered and absorbed by English Protestants but rather undermined by bowdlerizations of, for example, Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio* and Robert Persons's *Christian Directory*, as well as by the early growth of indigenous Protestant devotional and meditative tracts.⁴⁷

Lewalski detected strong differences between Counter-Reformation and Protestant meditation. In her own view, the latter highlighted, contrary to the former, the importance of the Word, the reading of Scripture and the 'application to the self'. In the first stage of their meditative tradition, Lewalski admitted, Protestants had revised and altered Catholic manuals, but by the end of the century, she explained, they had tracts of their own. There existed a Puritan practice of meditation clearly different from the Catholic. Donne should, in her opinion, be aligned with the former.⁴⁸ She was able to mention, however, only two examples: Richard Rogers's *Seven Treatises* (1603) and Joseph Hall's *Art of Meditation* (1606).

Many critics were unconvinced by Lewalski thesis, and continued throughout the 1970s to follow and elaborate Martz's and Gardner's suggestions. In particular, Anthony Low noted, and Horton Davies implied, that Donne used Ignatian devotional habits and Jay Parini highlighted the Ignatian method of meditation, showing the similarities between John Donne's and Gerard Hopkins's poetry.⁴⁹

44 Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 149–78.

45 Ibid., 427.

46 Ibid., ix, 5, 13.

47 Ibid., 147–9.

48 Ibid., 5.

49 A. Low, *Love's Architecture. Devotional Modes in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 41. H. Davies, *Worship and Theology. From Cranmer to Hooker 1534–1603* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975),

The third phase, however, running roughly from 1980 to the present, played down the importance of Ignatian spirituality as a literary influence. The 1980s opened with John Carey's new and controversial portrait of Donne. It challenged all previous interpretations of Donne, the man and the divine.⁵⁰ Carey's Donne was not the English divine with strong Catholic or Ignatian roots. Nor was he the convinced Anglican nourished in a reformed Ignatian meditative tradition. Still less was he the Protestant Calvinist who divorced himself from Roman Catholic theology and devotion, Ignatian method of meditation included. Carey's portrait of Donne was that of a Roman Catholic who, in full awareness, betrayed the Church he believed in. He became an apostate because he was ambitious – the *Anniversaries* exemplify his ambition – and because he found it offensive to his intellect that the Roman Catholic Church exacted 'blind obedience from its votaries [...] something the Jesuits were particularly keen on.'⁵¹ He was exasperated, Carey wrote, by Jesuits who insisted it was impossible to be a loyal Englishman and a good Catholic. Donne could not forgive the Jesuits for their intransigence. They did not allow compromise, and Donne was attracted by compromise.⁵² Donne entered the Church of England, Carey explained, at the expense of his inner happiness, since to reconcile the two traditions was impossible and certainly could not be done without inner tension and pain. Carey suggested that Donne had made a choice that was not free and had made it for the wrong reasons. His controversial portrait of Donne pays little attention to the complexity of loyalties in religion during Jacobean times. Behind it, too, lies Carey's intention to challenge Lewalski's and even Gardner's interpretations by portraying Donne's experience of injustice and victimization under the Catholic penal laws and intimidating

405–42, identifies similarities in Catholic, Anglican and Puritan spirituality. See also J. Parini, 'The Progress of the Soul: Donne and Hopkins in Meditation', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 13 (1977), 303–12.

50 J. Carey, *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), especially 49–51, 169; see also J. Carey, 'Introduction', in J. Donne, *John Donne*, ed. J. Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xix–xxxii.

51 Carey, *John Donne*, 34.

52 *Ibid.*, 21.

that at the time it was impossible to fuse or confuse Roman Catholicism with Protestantism.

Carey admits that we do not know for certain what happened in Donne's life between 1584 and 1592. He believes that Donne was probably still of the old faith in 1591 and that the Donne brothers were useful contacts at the Inns of Court in London for Catholic proselytizers. In his view, after the Harrington episode, Donne came under scrutiny and chose Hell. In 1597, when he became secretary to Egerton, 'he must have been ready to pass himself off as an Anglican.'⁵³ 'There are still Catholics four centuries later,' Carey remarked, 'who believe that in doing so he damned himself.'⁵⁴ Donne was an apostate, Carey stated rather categorically. He was sure that Donne 'in full knowledge committed a mortal sin against the faith,' and added that Donne 'persuaded himself that the saved would come from all churches.'⁵⁵ No wonder, then, if *Pseudo-Martyr* reveals both Donne's pity and resentment. '*Pseudo-Martyr* reads like a compromise,' Carey wrote, 'and a dishonest one.'⁵⁶

Carey's few comments on the influence of the Jesuits and Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* on Donne are best read in the context of his unflattering view of Donne's personality. As for Donne's attitude to the Jesuits, Carey repeated Gardner's view that, while writing attacks on Jesuits, Donne was nourished by what they had taught him.⁵⁷ Concerning the *Spiritual Exercises*, he suggested that Donne did not find in the Exercises a way to freedom, but used them for his own purposes. Donne, who felt guilty for not being hungry for martyrdom, 'to rouse his soul from its torpor, had recourse to the programme of Spiritual Exercises which had been devised by St Ignatius Loyola, and which were frequently prescribed to Catholics by their confessors. [...] The aim was to stimulate emotion.'⁵⁸ 'The Exercises

53 Ibid., 30.

54 Ibid., 25.

55 Ibid., 25, 29.

56 Ibid., 33.

57 Ibid., 51.

58 Ibid., 49.

provided,' Carey added, 'a routine of concentration.'⁵⁹ 'Whether Donne took the whole of this affecting course, or even approached it in a systematic way,' he concluded, 'we do not know.'⁶⁰

With the exception of Raspa, by the mid-1980s critics were rejecting, diluting or ignoring the effect of Ignatian spirituality on Donne.⁶¹ In 1986 Arthur Marotti could write: 'by now the emphasis on the importance of Ignatian meditation for Donne's religious poetry found in Martz's *Poetry of Meditation* has been corrected by a counteremphasis on Augustinian Protestantism.'⁶² When Kate Frost readdressed the issue in 1990, she did so only to discard Ignatian spirituality as a possible key to interpreting Donne's *Devotions*.⁶³ In the same year that Frost published her book, John Booty, an Anglican divine, edited, with an introduction, a selection of Donne's works for the Classics of Western Spirituality. In contrast to Frost, he highlighted the fundamental importance of meditative and devotional tradition in Donne, but Booty's interest in Donne's spirituality did not find followers in the academic circles.⁶⁴

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed ever more frequent attempts, by academics, to appropriate Donne's religious affiliation and to define his theology at the expense of spiritual formation. Until at least the early 1970s there had been an almost common agreement on the line of Evelyn Simpson, who regarded Donne as an 'orthodox Anglican

59 Ibid., 169.

60 Ibid., 50.

61 A. Raspa, *The Emotive Image. Jesuit Poetics in the English Renaissance* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1983) especially 1–2, and *ibid.*, 74–5, 112–14.

62 A.F. Marotti (ed.), *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 345, n. 262.

63 K.G. Frost, *Holy Delight: Typology, Numerology, and Autobiography in Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 6–11, 14.

64 J. Donne, *John Donne. Selection from Divine Poems, Sermons, Devotions and Prayers*, ed. and intro. J. Booty, with a preface by P.G. Stanwood (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 35.

divine of the school of Andrewes and Laud.⁶⁵ After Lewalski's thesis on the influence on Donne of 'Protestant poetics', Paul Sellin's study on Donne and Calvinism, and several essays indicating the uncertainty of Donne's Anglicanism, Donne was instead identified more and more as a 'moderate conformist' because of his piety centred on the Word, and his sharing of the 'evangelical vision' with Puritans.⁶⁶ In the mid-1990s the debate on Donne's religious affiliation became a matter of controversy. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances Malpezzi suggested that we should read Donne in terms of general religiousness rather than debate which religion was Donne's exclusive affiliation.⁶⁷ Yet the book itself turned out to be another instance of just that debate – complicated by the more general problem of distinguishing between Anglicans and Puritans in King James's time.

- 65 E. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), 75; I. Husain, *The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938); H. Grierson, 'John Donne and the "Via Media"', *Modern Language Review* 43 (1948), 305–14, especially 313; D. Baker-Smith, 'John Donne's Critique of True Religion', in A.J. Smith (ed.), *John Donne: Essays in Celebration* (London: Methuen, 1972), 418–32; D. Chanoff, 'Donne's Anglicanism', *Recusant History* 15 (1980), 154–67: 166; E. McNees, 'John Donne and the Anglican Doctrine of the Eucharist', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 29 (1987), 94–114: 111; R.V. Young, 'Donne's Holy Sonnets and the Theology of Grace', in C.J. Summers and T. Peabworth (eds), *Bright Shoots of Everlastingness: The Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyrics* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 38–9.
- 66 D.W. Doerksen, "Saint Paul's Puritan": John Donne's "Puritan" Imagination in the *Sermons*', in R.J. Frontain and F.M. Malpezzi (eds), *John Donne's Religious Imagination. Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross* (Conway, Arkansas: UCA Press, 1995), 350–65: 361; P.R. Sellin, *John Donne and 'Calvinist' Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983), 49. On Donne's alleged Calvinism, see also D.W. Doerksen, *Conforming to the Word. Herbert, Donne, and the English Church Before Laud*. (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), especially 101–12.
- 67 R.J. Frontain, 'Introduction. "Make all this All": The Religious Operations of John Donne's Imagination', in Frontain and Malpezzi (eds), *John Donne's Religious Imagination*, 1–27, 19–22.

If 'Anglican' at all, it has been suggested, Donne must have been a 'proto-ecumenical Anglican'.⁶⁸

From within this recent debate Paul Oliver and Daniel Doerksen spoke against the influence of any meditative tradition on Donne, and defined him as a Calvinist.⁶⁹ 'But the real harm,' Oliver added, 'seems to have been done when Martz and Gardner followed White's lead and connected Donne with the Jesuit founder, Ignatius Loyola [...] so extensive a debt to Loyola ought to strike us as an oddity, given Donne's rejection of Catholicism some ten or more years before the composition of the poem.'⁷⁰ Less biased and more moderate books and articles on Donne published recently give little or no space to Ignatian meditative method and spirituality.⁷¹

The most recent study of Ignatian influence on Donne's works is that of John Klause who points out that Donne did not argue with Jesuits in matters of justification, grace, faith and works, the Eucharist and Purgatory, or the spiritual authority of the Pope.⁷² He did disagree with them, however, on the matter of martyrdom. Donne's wish was to work, not to die. This, Klause believes, was Donne's disagreement with the Jesuits. He loved the

68 Ibid., 20.

69 P.M. Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing. A Discourse of Feigned Devotion* (London: Longman, 1997); D.W. Doerksen, 'Polemist or Pastor?: Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity', in M.A. Papazian (ed.), *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2003), 12–34: 27.

70 Ibid., 110. H.C. White, *The Metaphysical Poets. A Study in Religious Experience* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 121–35, highlights the role of self-consciousness in the seventeenth century.

71 R.V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry. Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Vaughan* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), for example 102–6. Although Young readdressed the topic, it was primarily as a tribute to Martz's perspective.

72 J. Klause, 'Hope's Gambit: The Jesuitical, Protestant, Skeptical Origins of Donne's Heroic Ideal', *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994), 181–215, especially 188–207.

cross but had a 'Protestant humanist's distaste for asceticism.'⁷³ Could it be, asks Klause, that Paolo Sarpi was the hero of Donne the Catholic who chose to survive and hope?⁷⁴

73 Ibid., 201.

74 Dennis Flynn defines Donne a 'survivor'. See especially D. Flynn, 'Donne's Catholicism I', *Recusant History* 13 (1975), 1-17; id., 'Donne's Catholicism II', *Recusant History* 13 (1976), 178-95; id., 'Sir Thomas Heywood the Parson and Donne's Catholic Background', *Recusant History* 15 (1979-81), 325-7; id., 'Donne the Survivor', in C.J. Summers and T. Peabworth (eds), *The Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing Donne* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 15-24; id., 'A Biographical Prolusion to the Study of Donne's Religious Imagination', in Frontain and Malpezzi (eds), *John Donne's Religious Imagination*, 28-44.

CHAPTER TWO

Discretion and Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* in Donne's Times

Confession is sound wisdom and then, discretion is, to wash, and discern, and debate and examine all our future actions, and all the circumstances, that by this spirit of discretion we may see, where the sting, and venome of every particular action lies.

— JOHN DONNE, *The Sermons*

Are there any historical or biographical reasons for thinking that Donne might have known and been influenced by the Catholic tradition of discretion and Ignatian spirituality? This chapter suggests that there are. The first part explains how the idea and practice of discretion circulated among sixteenth-century Catholics and that facets of the Catholic tradition of discretion merged in Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*.¹ The second outlines

- 1 I use 'discretion' with the meaning that it had in Donne's times. It included, but was not limited to, the discernment of spirits. The modern concept of discernment, as found in M. Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1998), 205–9, and M.A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth. Spirituality and Theology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 5–25, is very similar to 'discretion' as used in this chapter; see B. Ward, 'Discernment: A Rare Bird', *The Way Supplement* 64 (1989), 10–18: 10. For historical or contemporary general studies on aspects of discretion/discernment relevant to this chapter, see the entries on 'Discretio' and 'Discernimiento' in Cebollada (ed.), *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 623–36, 607–11; 'Discernement des esprits' and 'Discrétion', in M. Viller (dir.) et al., *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–95), vol. iii (1967), 1222–91, 1311–29; D. Lonsdale, 'Discernment', in Sheldrake (ed.), *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*; id., *Listening to the Music*