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Equivocation, Cognition, and Political Authority in Early Modern England

Todd Butler

Writing at the opening of his voluminous *A Treatise Tending to Mitigation toward Catholicke-Subiectes in England* (1607) to, as he puts it, “all true-hearted English-men,” the English Jesuit Robert Persons lays out a scene of terrible religious conflict. Quoting the beginning of Lucan’s *The Civil War*—“Of wars across Emathian plains, worse than civil wars, / and of legality conferred on crime we sing, and of a mighty people / attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand”—Persons notes that one need only change Thessaly to England and poetic singing to “our weeping and wailing” to accurately describe the state of England in 1607.¹ Persons further explains that the religious divisions wracking his native land are more than simply civil; rather, they are also domestic, dividing villages, houses, and families in a conflict that had moved beyond debate into brutal action. “Whereof,” he notes, “our continual searches, privy intelligences, bloody and desparate conspiracies, apprehensions, imprisonments, tortures, arraignmentes, condemnations and executions are most loathsome and lamentable witnesses” (3). Persons’s catalog of searches and seizures, conspiracies and punishments, reflects the troubled position during the period of not only Catholics (and in particular Jesuits) but also the presumptively loyal and settled Protestant population and their magistrates. Written by a subject marked as a traitor and living in exile, Persons’s opening appeal to “true-hearted Englishmen” nicely identifies the complex challenges the Jacobean establishment faced in securing the population’s religious and political loyalties. In the wake of both the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the subsequent imposition of the Oath of Allegiance upon all royal subjects, inquiries into religious conscience had once again been radically intensified and transformed into matters of the utmost importance to the commonwealth.

That Persons should open a treatise containing an extended justification of equivocation by describing the ransacking of English minds and homes should perhaps come as little surprise. As a defense against the interrogation of conscience, equivocation laid out a scheme whereby, in

separating one's speech from one's interior thoughts, an individual might safely respond to questions of faith while endangering neither soul nor body. Though its approval and use were generally limited to a small segment of Catholics in England, the doctrine became a matter of intense public debate and obloquy owing to the 1606 trials of Henry Garnet and the Gunpowder Plot conspirators. The antagonism and even ridicule generated by this somewhat obscure Catholic doctrine is most famously demonstrated by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which at the opening of act 2, scene 3 the Porter declares: "Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either side; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven" (2.3.8–10). Literary critics have long focused primarily on reading *Macbeth* and a handful of rhetorical treatises for their investigations of the intersection of equivocation and literature, though their queries have generally been limited either to dating the play or to considering the broader relationship between language and treason during the early modern period (see Mullaney, Scott). The increasing critical interest paid to Roman Catholicism and in particular the place of recusancy within the political, religious, and literary world of early modern England, however, has begun to bring renewed attention to both equivocation and Robert Persons, its primary Catholic expositor.² Critics have begun to uncover the complexity of Persons's efforts in nurturing Catholicism, and in particular the Jesuit mission to England, from the late 1580s onward, recognizing that this project was not simply a matter of doctrine or politics but of writing, one in which the struggle for souls (and by extension for more temporal allegiances) was carried out through books, pamphlets, and manuscripts that themselves display some concern with the nature of text and practices of reading.³ Equivocation itself has experienced a similar growth in critical attention, with its focus on dissimulation being used to interpret the work of John Donne and Elizabeth Cary, as well as the position of Catholic women writers negotiating the constraints of politics and gender.⁴ Olga Valbuena in particular has situated equivocation within a larger trend toward what she terms "divorsive thinking," itself sprung initially out of the religious and political conflicts engendered by Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the Reformation that followed (xvii).

In this essay I wish to extend this cognitive focus to explore how, in responding to the legal and political pressures that catalyzed the debate over equivocation, writers both Protestant and Catholic struggled to develop theories of thinking and reading that bridge religious treatises, literary texts, and the individual conscience. In the main (and perhaps understandably), literary critics have tended to summarize rather than detail both the particulars of equivocation and the arguments presented in its defense, a habit that has tended to obscure the intriguing epistemological

complexities of this debate.⁵ Its primary English expositions originate in what became a five-year running exchange between Persons and Thomas Morton, a Protestant minister who later would become Bishop of Durham. Together the two men's texts on the dispute amount to more than a thousand pages of polemic. More than just theological compendiums, however, the period's voluminous writings on equivocation struggle with complex and divergent understandings of the relationship of interior thought to external expression, and by extension to the reception and interpretation of that expression by those not a party to its creation. These questions of interpretation and interiority mark not just the particular position of Catholics in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England, but the progress of religious conflict throughout the seventeenth century. After a more searching examination of both Protestant and Catholic doctrines regarding equivocation, I consider how the questions of religious and textual interpretation generated by the debates over equivocation run parallel to early modern considerations of counsel and *arcana imperii*, specifically in the work of John Donne and Francis Bacon. Equivocation is thereby revealed to be not just a theological expediency deployed at a particular moment of religious crisis, but an important component of the much larger early modern concern, both religious and secular, with how elements of individual and corporate thought—conscience, deliberation, counsel—index the workings of political power in the seventeenth century.

As perhaps the most famous literary instance of equivocation's influence on seventeenth-century English sensibilities, *Macbeth* offers a useful entry into the complexities of this doctrine. Warned of the marching "woods" that shield his advancing enemies, Macbeth, repeating the prophecy of the witches, notes that he begins to "doubt the equivocation of the fiend / That lies like truth" (5.5.41–42). Macbeth's statement highlights the two senses of equivocation operative during the early modern period. The first is primarily linguistic, reflecting the fluidity of words themselves. Even in religious texts, this is the most common sense of the word in the years immediately following the Reformation. Writing amidst a brief pamphlet exchange in 1565, John Jewel would note that, for example, the phrase "house of God" could signify at once both an individual church and the universal church of God (307). Such slipperiness, as Richard Huloet's 1572 dictionary would put it, was a matter of making "divers significations to one worde" (sig. Qv).⁶ Huloet's dictionary, however, does not cite the second and more complex sense of equivocation as "mental reservation," in which a speaker retains in his mind a thought crucial to understanding the full sense of a verbalized expression. Thus, in response to a would-be assassin seeking the Queen's whereabouts, one might answer, "I know not [to the end of telling you]," with the crucial explanatory phrase in brackets remaining unspoken, though not unthought, in one's mind. This sense of

the term was first fully developed by the Spanish theologian Martín de Azpilcueta, better known as Dr. Navarrus, who in several mid-century works of casuistry and moral theology explored the possible justifications for mental reservation and evasive speech (Zagorin 163–85). The writings of Navarrus and other Spanish theologians provided the material for much of the instruction in casuistry provided to English missionary priests and Jesuits at the Douai-Rheims seminary, the English College in Rome, and other continental training grounds, where the texts had not only a theological but also a practical import (Zagorin 186–93). For English Catholics, and in particular Catholic priests, the opportunity to mask one's ultimate beliefs and position offered a potentially lifesaving response to their uncertain if not illegal and treasonous position. Like the priest holes and other refuges that shielded the bodies of itinerant Jesuits from the prying eyes of the English state, equivocation might similarly shield the minds and consciences of Catholics from the unwanted and dangerous interrogations of England's judges and priest hunters.⁷ When faced with the query "Are you a priest?" a furtive priest resorting to equivocation might simply respond, "No, I am not," retaining in his mind some form of a modifying caveat such as "since I am not bound to tell you." Equivocation in this sense was not simply the product of slippery rhetoric or an ill-defined vocabulary. Indeed, as Banquo's initial query to the witches—"I' the name of truth, / Are ye fantastical, or that indeed / Which outwardly ye show?" (1.3.52–54)—suggests, the power and danger of such equivocation stemmed from the fundamental difficulty any listener might have in determining the ultimate meaning and intent of an individual speaker. To understand fully the witches' prophecy, Banquo would need to penetrate and understand their minds.

As both a theological doctrine and a practical response for Catholics subject to surveillance and oppression, equivocation as mental reservation offered a particularly complex understanding of an individual's cognitive existence, one in which one's interior thought was to be considered the ultimate determinant of meaning. Speech and other forms of expression, by contrast, served a secondary and essentially derivative function.⁸ Robert Persons would thus contend that affirmations or denials of any factual proposition depend primarily on the "internall actions and operations of the mind," with the particular expression of these actions through speech, writing, or other signs serving as "but signes of that which passeth within" (328–29). Though much contemporary criticism has rightly centered upon the divided subjectivity implied by the necessity to use equivocal speech, we should also note that, at least in theory, equivocation argued not for a split speaker but for a potentially powerful and fundamentally coherent one.⁹ Mixed propositions like those involved in mental reservation retain their expressive integrity precisely because, from the standpoint of the *speaker*, the mind and its expressions are fundamentally unified. By extension, then,

interpretative authority also rests with the speaker, who is best positioned to understand precisely what (and in what manner) a particular utterance signifies. Persons would thus insist that “the definition of a proposition or an enunciation nameth not the hearer, but that it be of his own nature *enunciative*, affirming some thing true or false, whether the hearer understand it or no” (329). Persons illustrates this claim with a variety of examples, including one perhaps designed particularly to irritate his Protestant opponents. When a man speaks directly to God, Persons asks, are not his words a true proposition, regardless of whether or not they are heard (much less understood) by any mortal man?¹⁰ As Persons’s example suggests, God’s inherent capacity to know a speaker and, by extension, that speaker’s utterances in their completeness provided a crucial theological bulwark for defenders of equivocation. Unlike a human listener or interrogator, who presumably must take an equivocating speaker at face value, God maintains access to the speaker’s entire thought and therefore affirms its truth, ultimately defending the speaker from *both* unwanted questioning and the sin of falsehood.¹¹

In practical terms, of course, such an expression of individual coherence was perhaps aspirational at best, especially when Catholics confronted not only the extreme elements of Elizabethan and Jacobean religious persecution (trial, imprisonment, martyrdom), but also the more subtle and constant demands of communal conformity, experienced perhaps most regularly in the decision whether or not to attend one’s local Anglican service.¹² Such a life might well have echoed Montaigne’s more general conclusions on human indecision:

This supple variation and easie-yeelding contradiction, which is seene in vs, hath made some to imagine, that wee had two soules. . . . I have nothing to say entirely, simply, and with soliditie of my selfe, without confusion, disorder, blending, mingling. (II.1.195)

But in more strictly literary terms we might consider, perhaps somewhat paradoxically given the critical emphasis on equivocation’s contribution to the anarchic play of language, how mental reservation instead offers a structure within which figurative language might be safely employed. What stabilizes such equivocation is precisely that which contains it, namely the assurance that God has heard and understood the entirety of the speaker’s spoken and unspoken utterances. God’s all-knowing presence ensures a singularity of meaning to utterances that might otherwise dissolve amidst the inherent slipperiness of language. Figuration is thereby simultaneously acknowledged—words may indeed mean different things to different audiences, and in certain limited circumstances a speaker bears no inherent obligation to ensure that a listener’s perception matches his own—and restrained by a God who hears all and knows all, utterly and completely.

Though written in an environment of anti-Catholic prejudice intensified by the trial of Henry Garnet and the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, Protestant responses to equivocation offered a similarly complex rebuttal to the cognitive position articulated by Jesuits like Persons. Where Persons emphasizes the speaker's mind as the primary source of interpretative authority, his opponents promote instead the consonance between *both* the mind and its external expression as the criteria for veracity. Drawing repeatedly upon Augustine and Aquinas, Thomas Morton would therefore define a lie as a man's speaking or otherwise signifying that which is contrary to his mind. "Truth and falsity," Morton explains, "doth consist only in the conformity or contrariety of the signification of the words, and direct intention of the mind. . . . But the indirect intention of the speaker [*Ut revelem tibi*] cannot alter the signification of his *outward words*, [*I am no Priest*], which his direct intention of conscience doth contradict. . . . Ergo our AEquivocating Priest cannot possibly reconcile such a contradiction of his hart and his tongue" (3.53). Morton's challenge importantly relies not just upon a disjunction between tongue and heart, though from the listener's perspective this is perhaps the most obvious difficulty. Morton also insists that equivocation divides and confounds the speaker himself, who faces an inherent conflict in attempting to speak truthfully while simultaneously desiring to evade the consequences such truth entails. In Morton's terms the equivocating priest must confront a potentially divided self, one in which the very act of mental reservation (the indirect intent) conflicts with the core dictates and understanding of one's conscience (the direct intent). Speech and conscience are unified here precisely because truthful words are meant to be complete moments of communication. In temporizing or obscuring, words become lies and selves become split.

In emphasizing not just meaning but also intent, Morton articulates a fundamentally different understanding of expression's purpose, one centered not upon the mind of an isolated individual but upon how the self finds its coherence in the social reception of any enunciative proposition:

[T]he use of speech was not ordained for a looking glasse, whereby a man might see himselfe, but as the Interpreter of the mind, whereby he might be knowen of others . . . Now because there is no man of sound braines, but he knoweth before he speake, what his tongue uttereth, there can be no neede that by speech hee should interpret his owne meaning to himselfe, no more then a man may be properly said to steale his owne goods, or commit adultery with his own wife: because both these are actions *ad extra*, that is, without a man, and have relation to other then to our selves. . . . This were to distract a man from himselfe. (3.69)

In this passage Morton does not simply abandon Persons's focus on the individual speaker. Rather, he reorients it, casting listeners as the ultimate guarantor of individual integrity. To speak, he reasons, is to open oneself to accept a fundamentally external act of interpretation, and to claim otherwise is to divide rather than to maintain the speaker—it "were to distract a man from himselfe." Speech thus becomes not a mode of self-knowledge and self-reflection but a means to community. As Morton notes, requiring a man to interpret his own thoughts—the consequence of a divided self—is like accusing that same man of adultery when he beds his own wife. Both propositions make no sense because their objects are legally, if not inherently, indivisible from the man that possesses them. Like adultery and theft, interpretation fundamentally involves the possessions—thoughts, wives, goods—of another.

Lurking beneath Morton's formulation, and in particular his worries over self-distraction, lies a fundamental early modern anxiety over interpreting the meaning of religious testimony, much less behavior.¹³ Samuel Harsnet, for example, records the story of Anthony Tyrrell, a priest who after having participated in exorcisms recanted and detailed his practices to Elizabethan authorities, only to return to Catholicism, and then finally to reaffirm his earlier conversion. Where acts of conversion posited a fundamental change in both outward behavior and inward belief, Tyrrell's repeated lapses threatened to make a mockery of not only the process but also the means by which such change was announced and circulated.¹⁴ Tyrrell's final confession that, absent God's salvific grace, he might well fall again into Catholicism and thereby "be as ready againe to deny all that I now have affirmed upon my oath" nicely captures the fundamental instability of self and speech Morton's emphasis on communal reception strenuously labors to dispel (Harsnet 255).

Contrary to Protestant rhetoric aimed at casting Jesuits as inveterate liars, Catholic writers such as Persons were in fact willing to grant that the social nature of speech imposed severe and entirely proper restrictions on the use of equivocation. Equivocation was not permitted in moments both mundane (conversation, bargains, and commercial contracts) and highly spiritual, as in "matters pertaining to the cleare and manifest profession of our faith" (Persons 28). Rather, a Catholic might equivocate only when faced with a court without the proper jurisdiction or an examiner without the proper authority. Herein, of course, lay the problem for Protestants, especially those members of the Jacobean judiciary tasked with rooting out traitors to the realm. Absent a genuine acknowledgment of the king's supremacy in matters both civil and ecclesiastical, the words of suspected priests such as Garnet could simply not be trusted.¹⁵ To remedy this dilemma Morton proposes what we might term "vicarious competency," namely that "[t]he *competencie* of God, by whom we sweare, maketh every one

competent Judges and hearers, to whom we swear" (3.86). Persons, by contrast, rejects such arguments, reasoning by analogy that according to Morton's argument, should a king swear "to his Kitchin-boy by God," that same servant would thereby become the king's judge, able "both to examine and commaund him, and bynd him in conscience under sinne to answere him directly" (476). In dismissing such a manifest absurdity Persons turns the fundamental core of the Protestant position—its emphasis on expansive royal jurisdiction—against the very party that sought to defend it.

As Bradin Cormack has recently demonstrated, such conflicts over jurisdiction did more than simply define the institutional parameters of the English legal system. They "provoked a metacritical perspective on the management of legal meaning and literary meaning both" (12). To this pairing of legal and literary meaning I would add, at least in the case of equivocation, theological or even soteriological meaning. In one sense, of course, jurisdiction—what the "true Church" was, where it was located, and the scope of its power—was one of the fundamental questions of the entire Reformation and its aftermath.¹⁶ In Morton's text, perhaps the greatest moment of anxiety comes in its author's deep concern that the most important divine promise to human beings might be similarly subject to equivocation. Though God might swear salvation in Christ, Morton worries, should he equivocate, "then should the *Elect of God* not have any *strong consolation* . . . and though *his spirit witnesseth to the spirits* of his Elect, *that they are sonnes of God*, and that they shall not perish: yet might they suspect . . . that it is spoken with some secret reserved clause of delusion" (62–63). In response Persons scoffs that these newly elect Protestants foolishly operate under the "fond presumption" that God speaks absolutely, rather than with a "due reservation" dependent upon the continued performance by human beings of "those necessary conditions which alwayes are to be understood in Gods promises towards us for keeping his commandements" (455–56). To be sure, there is something of the perennial debate between works and grace that animates these texts, Persons's reply in particular. Yet more intriguing is the interpretative conundrum these texts expose and seek to resolve. Morton argues that even the potential for God to equivocate, when joined to the inherent opacity of heavenly intention, generates a potentially debilitating suspicion, if not outright despair, on the part of those most deserving of comfort. Initially Persons's response to this concern simply reiterates the distinction he maintains throughout his text between lying, which God cannot do, and mental reservation, which, like a human subject under judicial duress, God can employ while still maintaining a unitary and consistent message. Persons's larger answer depends upon this consistency of mind and message, which he crucially suggests is searchable and perhaps even discoverable. Persons offers the example of a verse from the prophet

Joel—“*whosoever calleth upon the name of our Lord shall be saved*”—that in the face of appeals to God by heretics and sectaries seems profoundly untrue, especially when arrayed alongside Christ’s insistence that “[n]ot every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdome of heaven” (454).¹⁷ Reconciling the two verses in the context of human experience, Persons explains, requires the reader to “seeke out the true reservation, or clause not expressed, whereby the whole proposition is made true” (455). The very confusion presented by the juxtaposition of texts and experience therefore results not in an interpretative impasse but in a catalyst to understanding what might otherwise seem utterly inscrutable.

Persons’s resolution of Morton’s concern over the promise of salvation reveals an element of equivocation not often recognized by modern critics. Though meant as shields for Catholics suffering the hostile scrutiny of the Elizabethan and Jacobean state apparatus, defenses of equivocation also offer, at least in theory, a method of accessing the presumptively impenetrable mind they ostensibly seek to construct. In doing so, equivocation becomes not just about disguise but about *reading*. Indeed, much like Persons’s insistence upon reading individual biblical passages in conjunction with other verses and other supplementary information, Catholic explications of the dynamic of equivocal speech—when it could be used, what it might mean—similarly foreground the crucial role that context has in determining both identity and meaning. One example of Catholic casuistry, designed to help priests understand when and under what conditions they might equivocate, makes this point particularly clear. When the priest, here imagined to be named Peter, is asked by a judge whether his name is in fact Peter, the case explains that “[t]he interrogation of a judge, by its very nature, means this: ‘According to the power I have and the jurisdiction I have in this case, I ask you to confess to me as your superior whether you are Peter’” (Halley 44). The expansion of the judge’s presumptively simple question to include the consideration of jurisdiction necessary for a moment of equivocation radically interpolates context into language, foregrounding how the query itself is defined by matters of law and identity. Similarly, the case explains, should the priest determine that the question is illegitimate, in denying that he is Peter, the priest denies that he is the “Peter who is bound to reply to you as to a judge endowed with the sort of power and jurisdiction which you have” (Halley 44). As Janet Halley rightly notes, “[T]his answer defines the speaker and audience diacritically,” a moment in which individual identities and speech exist not in isolation but in a dependent interrelationship (44). So too with Persons’s juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory moments of Scripture—taken individually they seem to mean one thing, but when placed in conversation with each other, they reveal an entirely separate understanding of God’s intent.

As this example suggests, debates over equivocation regularly involved extensive discussions of not only patristic but also biblical texts that must be thus read as more than just tortured and extended theological wrangling (though, of course, they are often that as well). How and to what end an individual in a biblical narrative speaks becomes for the opponents and defenders of equivocation the occasion to consider questions of intent, reception, and interpretation that are themselves profoundly literary. The biblical texts most often cited in these debates lend themselves to such work precisely because they are themselves moments in which individuals speak with potentially deceptive intent to an audience that may or may not fully understand the meaning, let alone the significance, of the words they hear.¹⁸ Returning to these moments as critics and interpreters placed readers like Persons and Morton at a double remove, at once sharing in the potential confusion of the original listeners and finding themselves bereft of the immediate contextual and narrative clues that might have aided those same listeners in interpreting what they heard. Especially for Morton, the response to such moments of confusion can devolve into what at best can be termed speculation. Discussing Christ's problematic statement to his disciples that only God the Father knows the end time—"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"—Morton explains that the listening apostles were surely aware that the true sense of Christ's words is not that he himself does not know.¹⁹ Such ignorance would fly in the face of a unified Trinity and Christ's godhead. Rather, the true sense of Christ's words, entirely apparent to the apostles, is that he may not *allow* them to know the date. Morton's initial proof of this claim ironically rests upon something entirely unrecoverable by a later reader rather than Christ's immediate audience: "For he maketh the sense of the word *Nescio*, I know it not, to be a figurative speech, and by the emphasis of pronunciation to signifie so much to his Disciples, as you *shall not know*" (3.74). Addressing the question of jurisdiction, Morton then contends that no reader can imagine that the apostles were not somehow fit to know that they were not to know Christ's true intent. "Yes doubtlesse," Morton concludes, "if that were the meaning of his words, they understood it, and then it was no concealed reservation; if it were not his meaning, there was no aequivocation" (3.75). The moment is an interesting Protestant version of what Margaret Ferguson has identified as the tendency of Catholic defenses of equivocation to place their readers ostensibly in the position of God while simultaneously recognizing that those readers lack "the crucial hermeneutic ability imputed by believers to God," namely the capacity to penetrate into the interior of those making, or writing, a particular utterance (280). Readers speculating on the mental capacities of the characters in a story, as well as a pronunciation they cannot recover and therefore must thus imagine—this is the substance of Morton's "doubtlesse."

Fundamentally at issue in such readings—both Protestant and Catholic—lay the nature of context, and by extension how the circumstances wherein words were produced might lead and inform the interpretation of a text. This is, we might consider, one of the dilemmas Macbeth faces, namely that the meaning of the witches' prophecies becomes apparent only within particular circumstances he has either neglected to conceive or cannot even imagine. The particular effect of circumstances on the status of a proposition, not surprisingly, frequently differs in tracts on equivocation. Morton, for example, emphasizes that an understanding of circumstances demonstrates the plain absence of equivocation—that is, that once one considers the particular circumstances of a divine utterance, one sees its clear and unequivocal meaning. Persons argues more restrictedly that a consideration “of state, place, time or condition of the persons speaking, or to whome they were spoken . . . [shows] the way how to seeke out reservation, or concealed sense in such ambiguous propositions” (376). The distinction turns on a difference between inherent meaning and interpretative—and presumptively fallible—method. It is not so easy, Persons wryly notes, to use circumstances as a means of interpretation, explaining that circumstances can demonstrate the presence of equivocal speech but not necessarily reveal its particulars. As evidence, Persons points to the various patristic explanations of John 15.15—“for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”—a text that seems contradictory to any number of other biblical verses, including Christ's aforementioned statement regarding the timing of the apocalypse. That Leotinus, Chrysostomne, Theophilactus, Euthemimius, Augustine, and Bede all interpret Christ's potentially reserved meaning differently, Persons contends, serves both to “utterly overthrow [Morton's] imagination” and to reaffirm that the source of interpretative authority must remain in the speaker rather than his listeners. Persons thus finds in circumstances not the catalyst to individual suspicion but a restraint reliant upon subordinating individual speculation to external conditions that themselves often signify only darkly. According to Persons, speech, including the speech of Christ, should not depend upon interpretations gathered from “every mans private imagination and will.” Rather they must be “gathered and truly applied according to the said circumstances of tyme, place, persons, &c. as clauses agreeable thereunto” (422–23). Indeed, as he subsequently concludes, if men like Morton truly understood the present circumstances of Catholics, they would not demand their testimony on matters of faith at all.²⁰

This emphasis on the inherently problematic nature of identifying meaning reminds us that the interpretative dilemma facing the Jacobean state regarding equivocation was not simply the product of language's inherent slipperiness. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, worries during the period over the failures of language, and in particular the political

implications of such failures, were symptomatic of a much greater and more troubling difficulty the period had in understanding the relationship between human cognition and human action (Butler, esp. chap. 4). Though Macbeth is tortured throughout the play by his desires and imaginings, for example, it is only as Malcolm's and Macduff's invasion of Scotland finally commences that he declares: "The very firstlings of my heart shall be / The firstlings of my hand. And even now, / To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done" (4.1.165).²¹ Ultimately, then, equivocation is at its core an epistemological rather than linguistic problem. How to discover meaning, how to know oneself and another, and what happens when one grants a subject the capacity to control the meaning of an utterance, were all remarkably complex questions in early modern England. To recognize the potential chasm between speech and thought, or between cognition and bodily action, was to admit the potentially dangerous impenetrability and inscrutability of the individual mind.

That equivocation and mental reservation were a concern not just of theological but of political epistemology is well demonstrated by John Donne, who in "A Litanie" asks of God a question that priests training in casuistry and survival prior to their journeys into England might well have asked regularly: "Good Lord deliver us, and teach us when / We may not, and we may blinde unjust men" (xix.8–9). When and how one might hamper the sight of presumptively unjust men is, of course, one of the key questions any equivocator must answer, and recent readings of Donne on the subject have emphasized the extent to which Donne, himself a former Roman Catholic and a member of a family retaining deep commitments to that faith, felt most personally the challenges facing those English Catholics struggling to reconcile their temporal and spiritual allegiances (e.g., Valbuena 38–78). Less studied, however, has been how Donne's complex working through of the relationship between equivocation and royal authority, primarily in his learned *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610) and the more satirical *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611), reveals a deep concern with how the liberty of thought—and the power to both disguise and penetrate the inner workings of the mind—characterize the possession and maintenance of political authority in early modern England.

Of those two texts, *Ignatius His Conclave* provides perhaps the more accessible, and certainly the more entertaining, entry into Donne's reading of equivocation, cognition, and politics. From the very outset of this text Donne displays his interest in the mind's power to penetrate boundaries both physical and mental. Rapt in what he terms an "Extasie," Donne's soul secures the "liberty to wander through all places," first outdoing Galileo, Kepler, and Brahe in surveying the heavens before finding "all the rooms in Hell open to my sight" (5, 7). Quickly passing over the more open portions of this infernal realm, Donne proceeds "therefore to more inward

places," uncovering a "secret place" wherein are gathered Lucifer and a select few individuals whose innovations in life had disquieted and altered the minds and consciences of the world (9). Chief among these innovators is Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order and apparent gatekeeper of those souls who might wish to reside in such a select region of Hell. Donne's satire proceeds as Ignatius, clearly jealous of his own position, rejects the claims of four potential entrants by demonstrating that their disruptive innovations pale before the chaos caused by the subversive schemes of his own Jesuits. Dismissing first the claims of Copernicus, for example, Ignatius redescribes the Fall and the subsequent changes in the heavens as Satan's choice to seize and shine within a new location, thereby giving "our Order a noble example, to spy, to invade, and to possess forraine kingdoms" (17). It is Machiavelli's subsequent entrance, however, that brings equivocation, dissembling, and the usurpation of monarchies to the forefront of Donne's satire. Sensing the Jesuit's role as gatekeeper, Machiavelli appeals for admission not to Satan but to Ignatius, first praising him and his order as model innovators in their new art of equivocation. As Machiavelli describes it, equivocation comes not from extensive historical arguments about the nature of speech and lies but from the very nature and thoughts of its originators, a claim that Morton and other anti-Jesuit polemicists would no doubt have applauded.²² "That is," he says, "out of the minds of *Lucifer*, the *Pope*, and *Ignatius*, (persons truly equivocal) have raised to life againe the language of the Tower of *Babel*, too long concealed, and brought us againe from understanding one an other" (27). Machiavelli then humbly advances his claim to join this august company of devilish innovators, suggesting that they might recognize that his own treatises on princely power made him something of a trailblazer for the Jesuits, a "schoolmaister in preparing them a way to higher undertakings" that reach their fruition in the international political machinations of Ignatius Loyola and his order (27).

While the initial juxtaposition of Machiavelli and Ignatius Loyola clearly trades on the period's stereotyping of both figures and their followers, as the text proceeds Donne complicates this comparison, offering a more subtle reading of the cognitive foundations of early modern political power. Perhaps surprisingly, Donne ultimately depicts Machiavelli—much to his detriment in the eyes of Satan and Ignatius—as one whose political advice enables rather than undermines the survival of those monarchs who astutely apply his ideas.²³ Ignatius, by contrast, presents the most profound challenge to European royalty, undermining kingly rule in the hopes of advancing the cause of both the Pope and his infernal master. As was the case with equivocation, and indeed with much of the struggle that marked James I's promulgation and defense of the Oath of Allegiance, the case turns in part on matters of jurisdiction, a battle within the period's

larger conflict between temporal and spiritual power that Donne depicts as motivating not only English resistance to papal intrigue but that of Spain and France as well. For Donne jurisdiction is as much a cognitive matter as an institutional one, its possession defined in large part by the capacity to control one's own mind and penetrate the thoughts and secrets of others. With a passing gesture toward the Gunpowder Plot, Machiavelli introduces this shift, noting that in moving from open warfare to more subtle means of subversion, the Jesuits "found meanes to open waies, even into Kings chambers, for your executioners" (29). As the text proceeds, physical boundaries collapse into mental ones as these royal "chambers" become as much chambers of the mind as rooms in Whitehall. In what is perhaps an echo of the biblical text that challenged both Persons and Morton—Jesus's claim that only the Father knows the exact end time—Ignatius describes his Jesuits as those "to whom it is given to know times, and secrets of state" while simultaneously dismissing Machiavelli, again with an echo of the Gunpowder Plot, as lacking the subtlety required to undermine royal authority most effectively: "This then is the point of which wee accuse *Machivell*, that he carried not his Mine so safely, but that the enemy perceived it still" (51). Much like the inability of Guy Fawkes and his coconspirators to disguise sufficiently the bomb beneath Parliament, the ease with which readers understand and critique Machiavelli's claims to monarchical subversion represents, at least to Ignatius, the Florentine's failure to manage both appearance and perception. To be seen, to be penetrated, and therefore to be understood is thus figured as a crucial flaw. By contrast, Ignatius's claim to innovation—and therefore to his privileged place in Hell—rests not upon equivocation per se, since he acknowledges that both Plato and many of the Church Fathers had already argued for the acceptability of lying. Rather, Ignatius explains, "we have supplied this losse [i.e., that lying to magistrates is not their creation] with another doctrine, lesse suspitious; and of as much use for our *Church*; which is *Mentall Reservation*, and *Mixt propositions*" (55). Doctrine and practice collapse, as the difficulty of reading individual minds practicing mental reservation seems to extend a certain obscurity and secrecy to the doctrine itself.

Whatever his own biography and family ties might suggest, Donne here situates mental reservation not as a defensive mechanism for harried Roman Catholics but as part of a larger Jesuit program meant to wrest control of royal minds—and by extension royal authority—from their rightful possessors. In a cascade of imagery that touches upon many of the most common charges leveled against the Jesuits, including their connection to (if not support of) assassins, Ignatius concludes that though the canons of the church forbid the clergy from bearing pointed weapons, the Jesuits maintain the sharpness of their knives because

our divination lies in the contemplation of entrails; in which art we are thus more subtle then those amongst the old *Romans*, that wee consider not the entrails of *Beasts*, but the entrails of souls, in confessions, and the entrails of *Princes*, in treasons; whose hearts wee do not believe to be with us, till wee see them. (63)

As was the case in the earlier gestures toward the royal chambers and the Gunpowder Plot, the physical disembowelment of princes via assassination here carries with it a more conceptual anatomization of royal politics, one in which, like souls wracked and examined through confession, the allegiances of princes can be revealed only through the most extreme form of exposure. That confession might be linked to treason is no mistake, especially when we consider that treason statutes required not a formal act against the monarch but simply the compassing and imagining of such a revolt (Butler 1–2). Both confession and treason speak to acts of the mind as well as acts of the body, especially when we consider, as Donne argues in *Pseudo-Martyr*, that “God inanimates every State with one power, as every man with one soule” (133).

In Donne’s text this Jesuitical challenge to sovereign power confronts not only earthly but also infernal rulers. Indeed, as *Ignatius His Conclave* continues, the devil becomes increasingly anxious that Ignatius will turn on him as well. For Lucifer, as Donne puts it, this is “a new Hell” (65). To counter Ignatius, Lucifer then attempts to call forward Philip Neri, whose order’s sermons on the saints and martyrs inspired considerable popular devotion in Rome during Donne’s lifetime.²⁴ According to Donne, Lucifer borrows this tactic from the Pope, who advanced Neri’s order in order to remedy his own fears of the Jesuits, fears caused primarily by their initial attempts “to publish their *Paradox of Confession and absolution to bee given by letters, and Messengers*, and by that meanes to draw the secrets of all Princes only to themselves” (73). The dispute over confession by letter arose from the assertion contained in Jesuit Manuel de Sá’s *Aphorismi Confessariorum* (1595) that an exchange of letters between a confessor and a penitent would constitute a sacrament equivalent to, and as effectual as, a formal spoken confession (*Ignatius His Conclave* notes 141–42). Sá’s text subsequently went through fourteen editions before Pope Clement VIII condemned the doctrine in 1602, requiring its removal from all subsequent editions. In *Pseudo-Martyr* Donne elaborates on the potential danger of such a doctrine in the hands of the Jesuits:

For if this opinion had been believed and authorized, the secrets of all states, and passages of all Courts, had had no other Register then the breasts of Jesuites; who are so wise Apothecaries of penances, and have so plentifull shops of those druggs of Indulgencies, that all those

Princes, to whom any of them had beene Confessor, would neither open their disease, nor seeke their physicke at any other place: when they might be delivered of the painefullest part of Confession, which is the personall shame of accusing ones selfe. (107)

In such a situation, Donne insists, Jesuits become more like drug dealers than physicians. Relief through indulgences and penance is magnified by a careful manipulation of the emotive anxiety that inevitably accompanies self-examination, all engineered by a Jesuit agent whose reassuring promise of secrecy becomes the means for a thorough penetration and possession of all that might be known of a prince and his court. Making matters more worrisome, Donne argues, is the order's requirement that its lower level members communicate to their superiors weekly (again by letter) information on both themselves and their actions, a fact which, when combined with the order's insistence that its own rules and privileges remain secret, renders the Jesuits less priests than "*Intelligencers*" (107).

Viewed in these terms, mental reservation and its associated doctrines become less a matter of theology than one of statecraft. As such it represents one iteration of a much larger jurisdictional struggle over cognitive subjectivity, variously expressed as conscience, deliberation, or counsel, that occupied *both* the secular and spiritual literature of much of the early modern period. The overwhelming anger and anxiety displayed by Shakespeare's Henry V upon the revelation of Lord Scroop's treason speaks directly to this competition. Apparently still stunned by Scroop's deception, Henry wonders,

What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop, thou cruel, Ingrateful, savage,
and inhuman creature?
Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels
That knew'st the very bottom of my soul . . . (2.2.94–98)

Against what we might term the almost Jesuitical depth to which Scroop knew the king, Henry can only exclaim against the inscrutability of his companion—even now, in full public view, "though the truth of it stands off as gross / As black and white, my eye will scarcely see it" (2.2.103–4). Even more than the other conspirators, Scroop is indeed, as the Chorus puts it, a "hollow bosom" (2.0.21). Scroop's hollowness is more than just a matter of loyalty or moral judgment. Rather, his physical and metaphorical emptiness underscores the fundamental dangers of the unknowable subject, one whose unreadable mind continues to frustrate Henry and his retainers long after his body becomes subject to the king's notice. By contrast, Scroop is Henry's "bedfellow," one who in counseling the king knew his monarch better than the king knew him.²⁵ As critics have long noted, it is only in Henry's spectacular revelation of the traitors—a moment in

which their inscrutability is mirrored, if not perfected, in the king's own careful stage-managing of the scene—that the potential threat posed by these previously unknown conspirators is even partially undone, their intents and plots ripped into full view in a foreshadowing of the physical disembowelment meted out to traitors. Ultimately, however, it seems that only God himself, acknowledged by Scroop and subsequently praised by Henry, can reveal such treason, albeit through the timely royal interception of presumably secret communications between the traitors and their foreign masters (2.2.151, 185–87). The moment thus becomes a dramatic enactment of the sort of “vicarious competency” that animates Morton's challenge to equivocation, for in joining to statecraft God's own revealed knowledge, Henry reaffirms for himself (and to his own ends) that “[t]he *competencie* of God, by whom we sweare, maketh every one competent Judges and hearers, to whom we sweare” (3.86).

As the exchange between Henry and the traitors suggests, confession in particular had not only spiritual but also secular referents, most particularly in the discourses of new humanists such as Francis Bacon. Writing in his essay “Of Simulation and Dissimulation,” Bacon details three increasingly complex forms of political dissimulation, beginning with secrecy (when an individual denies others access to who he is), negative dissimulation (when one allows another to think him something he is not), and simulation, “when a Man industriously and expressly, faigns, and pretends to be, that he is not” (21). As Bacon explains, secrecy

is indeed, the Vertue of a Confessour . . . if a man be thought *Secret*, it inviteth Discoverie And as in Confession, the Revealing is not for worldly use, but for the Ease of a Man's Heart, so *Secret* Men come to the Knowledge of Many Things, in that kinde; while Men rather discharge their Mindes, than impart their Mindes. (21)

Despite his caveat that confessions are not meant to occasion political opportunism, Bacon details precisely the same psychological dynamic as Donne does in his attack on the Jesuits in *Pseudo-Martyr*—reassured by the presumption of secrecy, a man renders to his confessor not only information but his very self. Rather than simply imparting one's mind, a term that suggests the speaker retains some agency and control over his self-revelation, the speaker discharges himself, figuratively emptying the entirety of his mind until nothing is left and all is in the minds of his listener. Despite the dangers this behavior might pose, Bacon insists that when viewed through the lens of policy, “*an Habit of Secrecy, is both Politick and Morall*,” an assertion Bacon buttresses with reference to Tacitus's *Historiae*: “*Livia sorted well, with the Arts of her Husband and Dissimulation of her Sonne: Attributing Arts or Policy to Augustus, and Dissimulation to Tiberius*” (21, 20). For Bacon,

Augustus often figures as an ideal example of the monarch whose power rests upon cognitive mastery, exceeding his father Julius Caesar in power precisely because he can control not only the minds of his subjects but also his own diverse desires (Butler 49–53). Donne, who like Bacon (and Tacitus) negatively critiques Tiberius in his *Paradoxes and Problems*, similarly insists in *Pseudo-Martyr* that deception, or at the very least closeness, possesses great utility for princes.²⁶ Indeed, he explains, “[I]t is impossible” that a prince will always be open in his doings, for with such openness “he shall certainly be frustrated of many just and lawfull ends, if he discover the way by which he goes to them” (57). In remedying this difficulty “these disguisings, and averting others from discerning them, are so necessarie” that their use in the maintenance of “lawfull authoritie” is completely justified (57). Secrecy of mind is thus not simply a form of passive resistance to the incursion of others. Rather, secrecy often must be actively exercised, a situation that leaves both texts dangerously close to endorsing the sort of deception that characterized Protestant understandings of equivocation and mental reservation. Bacon’s definition of dissimulation, “when a man lets fall Signes and Arguments, that he is not, that he is,” echoes claims by Jesuits like Persons that equivocating speakers are not responsible for the incorrect reception of their words (“Of Simulation and Dissimulation” 21). Bacon in fact suggests that secrecy of self demands such action, for “he that will be *Secret*, must be a *Dissembler*, in some degree” (21). Bacon’s justification for this claim rests upon the social dynamics—if not the expressly legal context—that similarly animates occasions for equivocation. Most men, Bacon astutely notes, will not suffer a fellow to be indifferent; rather, “[t]hey will so beset a man with Questions, and draw him on, and picke it out of him, that without an absurd Silence, he must show an Inclination, one way; Or if he do not, they will gather as much by his Silence as by his Speech” (21–22). Bacon’s text aptly, if perhaps unwittingly, describes what any Catholic, let alone a fugitive Jesuit priest, might have encountered at the hands of the Jacobean judiciary, especially after the imposition of the Oath of Allegiance and the expectation that all citizens, regardless of their interior conscience, would declare openly for the king. Even his critique of simulation and false profession, namely that it is less admirable and should be avoided “except it be in great and rare Matters,” contains precisely the same caveat defenders of equivocation would repeatedly emphasize (22).

When juxtaposed against this broader body of literature, equivocation and mental reservation become theories of not only religious but also political behavior more broadly. This more expansive understanding helps reveal precisely what was at stake in the debates of Persons and Morton, if not in the repeated interrogations and trials of captured priests and their lay Catholic sympathizers. To equivocate or reserve one’s mind meant assuming and exercising a fundamentally royal prerogative.

As Bacon explains, "*Princes* are not bound to communicate all Matters, with all *Counsellors*; but may extract and select. Neither is it necessary, that he that consulteth what he should doe, should declare what he will doe" ("Of Counsel" 65). Most importantly, Bacon explains, a prince must know the very nature of his counselors—their ambitions, jealousies, and motivations—while a counselor "should not be too Speculative into their Sovereignes Person" (66). That Ignatius of Loyola counters Machiavelli's claims to hellish innovation with the doctrine of mental reservation should thus come as no surprise, since rebellion is as much a state of mind as a form of external action. Indeed, as Thomas Hobbes would later suggest regarding the English civil war, cognitive corruption leads directly to political upheaval. Hobbes's familiar criticism of Presbyterian rhetoric, for example, points to a much greater failure in popular judgment, for in inveighing against carnality and pleasure—what Hobbes calls "the very first motions of the mind"—such firebrand preachers "became confessors to such as were thus troubled in conscience, and were obeyed by them as their spiritual doctors in all cases of conscience" (26). The Jesuit, it seems, has now become the radical reformer.

In pointing the way to examining such larger concerns, equivocation as a field of study helps remind us that political and religious subjectivity during the early modern period was defined not simply by a clash of bodies, whether individual or institutional, but by an attempt to shield or penetrate the processes of thought and composition. In 1660, for example, this conceptualization at its most extreme would lead to the somewhat awkward assertion that the execution of King Charles I was in essence a secondary offense, one that demonstrated the more profound and pre-existent condition of rebellion that inhered in the hearts of the regicides (Butler 1–2). Indeed, one might argue that the control one has (or does not have) over the processes of mind offered a crucial marker by which the period distinguished full political citizenship from a more derivative, dependent subjecthood. In this postmodern era we are accustomed to thinking of the body as the site upon which political power is constructed and conditioned, most dramatically so in the process of hanging, drawing, and quartering that marked the formal execution of an early modern traitor. Yet we should also think upon the portion of the body that *remained* after such a gruesome affair, the heads that would be driven onto pikes, in the case of the regicides to be prominently displayed atop Westminster Hall. It is as if the originary organ of rebellion might finally be mastered, rent from the body that might effectuate its thoughts and subsumed in service to the authority that it opposed.²⁷

NOTES

1. Persons offers the citation solely in Latin. This translation is taken from Susan Braund's translation of the same text (3).

2. The study of early modern English Catholicism has generated an increasingly rich literature. Among this body of work see in particular Corthell et al.; Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy* and *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*; Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*; and Walsham.

3. See Corthell, "Writing Back," and "Robert Persons and the Writer's Mission." Persons has also been the subject of two recent biographies (Carrafiello, Houliston). Of the two Houliston's more directly focuses on the literary dimensions of its subject's work.

4. On Donne, see Price, "'Offending without Witnes,'" and Valbuena. On Cary, see Ferguson. Megan Matchinske has also offered an intriguing reading of gender and equivocation.

5. For a historical overview of the relationship of dissimulation and lying to religious conflict, see Zagorin.

6. Huloet offers as an example "Aries," which might signify at once an "instrument of warre, a signe celestiall, and a Ramme" (sig. Qv).

7. On priest holes as symptomatic of the divisions in subjectivity experienced by Jacobean Catholics, see Valbuena, esp. 20–33.

8. Expression for Persons exists on a continuum whose boundaries encompass a variety of formats. As an example Persons offers the case of a man who, on his deathbed, begins to verbalize his final wishes, only to find his voice failing him. Switching first to writing and then simply to pointing about his chamber, the man ultimately offers a series of signs intelligible only as the outward expression of a single, uniform intent to bequeath his property to its proper inheritors (326).

9. From the listener's point of view, of course, there is a practical and confusing division of the speaker, who is perhaps better understood as two individuals, one who speaks aloud and one who does not. Recognizing these realities, however, should not entirely obscure the theoretical wholeness defenders of equivocation sought to ensure. On the various divisions of self-engendered practices of mental reservation, see Halley.

10. Persons's other examples include speakers talking to themselves or speaking in a language (Greek, Hebrew) that their audience might not understand. In each case, Persons explains, the failure of listeners to understand a speaker does not fundamentally change the nature of the statement (329).

11. By extension, of course, God is similarly well positioned to detect any lie, confirming the Porter's claim that one cannot equivocate to heaven. God's penetrative capacity bears upon the process of confession, which will be discussed later in this essay.

12. As John Bossy notes, especially for the Catholic gentry, "to cease to attend one's parish church must appear, to oneself and to neighbours whose opinions one respected, a grave dereliction of social duty and a shocking example to sectaries and separatists" (124).

13. As Michael Questier notes, "True religion was always endangered by the corruption and decay of its external expression" (*Conversion, Politics, and Religion* 7).

14. Tyrell was imprisoned for his religion at least four times by the Elizabethan authorities (1574, 1581, 1586, 1588) and subsequently announced changes of his beliefs six times (1586, 1587 [twice], 1588 [twice], 1605). See Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion* 56–58. Changes in religious beliefs were of some concern in the debate over equivocation, especially for Morton, who vigorously defended the shifts of Luther, Calvin, and others away from Catholicism as the recognition of error rather than examples of equivocation (3.129). Studies of multiple conversions include Devlin; Questier, “Crypto-Catholicism”; and Shell, “Multiple Conversion.”

15. Speaking of the Oath of Allegiance, Morton would thus insist, “How shall his Majesty be persuaded that these words, *without all aequivocation*, are not spoken in some doubtfull sense and aequivocation? How can you free your selfe from this jalousie, seeing your doctrine is in protestation of not aequivocating to aequivocate?” (3.99).

16. Halley usefully analyzes how the seven basic preconditions for proper equivocation all work to determine jurisdictional boundaries (43).

17. The verses appear in Joel 2.32 and Matthew 7.21.

18. For an example of one Catholic writer relying upon the interpretative uncertainty of biblical narratives to secure the private conscience, see Matchinske 340.

19. Matthew 24:36. Unless otherwise cited, all quotations of Scripture are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

20. Persons also worries deeply over the Catholic use of equivocation, especially in an era already rife with Protestant suspicion: “[Y]et considering the tymes, and condition thereof, wherin Catholicks at this day liue in England . . . my wish and counsel to Catholickes should be to use the benefit of this liberty most sparingly even in lawfull things, and neuer but upon great and urgent causes and occasions” (546).

21. Siward similarly echoes Macbeth’s assertion: “The time approaches / That will with due decision make us know / What we shall say we have and what we owe” (5.4.16–18).

22. Timothy Healy reviews positively, though not conclusively, the evidence for a direct connection between Morton and Donne in appendix C of his edition of *Ignatius His Conclave*.

23. On Donne’s more positive presentation of Machiavelli, see Tutino.

24. On Philip Neri, see Türks and Gallonio. The latter is an account by one of his contemporary adherents, first published in 1600 and subsequently reprinted.

25. Exeter reinforces the close connection of the two men at the start of the scene, in which he takes particular umbrage at the treason and ingratitude of this favored “bedfellow” (2.2.8). The emotions inherent in Scroop’s treason are especially well illustrated in Kenneth Branagh’s film, in which the camera moves to a close shot in which the two men’s lips are almost embracing. The moment is one of intimate anxieties.

26. On Donne’s consideration of state secrecy in *Paradoxes and Problems*, see Price, who usefully demonstrates that a theoretical appreciation for the importance of princely secrecy need not mean that Donne fully supported James I’s interests in this regard.

27. Presumably seeking to shift the terms of the debate—and by extension the authority of the state—onto more accessible areas of the body, Thomas Morton would similarly argue that as perjury by equivocation is a sin worse than murder

(in that the former directly offends the God, who guarantees one's oath), any individual found guilty of both offenses "for the one, he hang by the neck, for the other, he may hang jointly by the tongue" (3.61).

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