

Lunatique Satire: Jonsonian Audacity, Lunar Astronomy, and Anne of Denmark in Donne's Ignatius His Conclave.

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"*Lunatique*" Satire: Jonsonian Audacity, Lunar Astronomy, and Anne of Denmark in Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave*

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Ben Jonson, who practiced a satirical variant of Augustinian charitable reading that may be termed a "Beneficent" hermeneutic, was an appreciative reader of Donne's verse satires. A Beneficent reading of the moon mission episode in Donne's prose satire *Ignatius His Conclave* reveals the episode's multiple functions. It continues an assault, begun in an earlier passage, on the Jesuit astronomer Christopher Clavius. It looks askance at King James's consort Queen Anne, using language that evokes her

performances in court masques written by Jonson; it reinforces parallels, operative throughout the work, between the court of Lucifer and that of James I; and, deploying scornful paradoxes reminiscent of Donne's "Satyre 3" and "Satyre 4," it signals Donne's contempt for both sides in the Oath of Allegiance controversy.

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by Theresa M. DiPasquale

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JOHN Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611) is a satire set in Hell. The narrator, "in an Extasie," finds his soul able to wander among the spheres "and to survey . . . all the roomes, and all the volumes of the heavens"; he declines to describe what he sees, lest he "do Galilæo wrong by speaking of it, who of late hath summoned the other worlds, the Stars to come neerer to him, and give him an account of themselves. Or to Keppler, who (as himselfe testifies of himselfe) ever since Tycho Braches death, hath received it into his care, that no new thing should be done in heaven without his knowledge."¹ Then, descending, the narrator passes

¹ Donne, *Ignatius His Conclave*, ed. T. S. Healy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5, 7. All subsequent quotations from *Ignatius*, and from Healy's introduction and notes, are taken from this edition — which includes both the Latin and English versions of the



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