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Patterns of Mischief:  
The Impact of the Gunpowder Plot on  
the Jacobean Stage 1605-16

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ON THE JACOBEAN STAGE 1605-16

SUMMARY

This thesis surveys the impact of the Gunpowder Plot upon the Jacobean stage 1605-16. While historians have long dismissed the Plot as a failed attack undertaken by a group of disenfranchised radicals, its influence on the cultural imagination of English dramatists has largely been overlooked. By surveying details of the Plot itself, and the non-dramatic texts circulating in its immediate aftermath, it becomes clear that non-dramatic Protestant authors responded to the Powder Treason with fear and panic, writing alarmist and inflammatory texts designed to demonise Catholics. These texts include ballads, sermons, and poetry. This circulating Protestant discourse developed specific linguistic Gunpowder paradigms and motifs, which subsequently began to appear on the London stage from 1606. With close readings of a number of plays produced during this period, this thesis demonstrates that playwrights incorporated specific Gunpowder tropes into drama, leading to the creation of a number of Gunpowder plays in the years 1606-16. Gunpowder plays include motifs of undermining, witchcraft, possession, demonic activity, equivocation, treason, and sedition. They also often include depictions of the two women from Revelation, known respectively as the Woman Clothed with the Sun, and the Whore of Babylon. In addition, this thesis reveals

that subsequent political events, such as the murder of Henry IV of France in 1610 and the Overbury Scandal of 1613-16, reinforced fear of Catholic terrorism, and were thus incorporated into drama during this period, often conflated with the Powder Plot by playwrights, and circumnavigated via the Gunpowder motifs established in 1606. Moreover, one Gunpowder play, *Macbeth*, emerges as the definitive dramatic response to the Powder Treason. This thesis seeks to establish that the Gunpowder Plot had such a profound effect on the Jacobean cultural imagination that it provoked a watershed in English drama.



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# Abbreviations

K.B	King's Book
D.V	The Divell of the Vault
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Online Edition)

I have not provided URLs to each individual electronic text used in the End Notes. I have however provided a date of access in the case of the ODNB since it is regularly updated. In the case of texts via EBBO I have provided the STC number in each case.

I have not standardised spellings in the seventeenth century texts.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

List of Abbreviations

Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: 'A prodiction without a match':.....	19
A Survey of Non-Dramatic Gunpowder Texts in Circulation 1605-6	
Chapter Two: 'I praise your plotte': .....	72
Gunpowder, the Devil, and Babylonian Whores in <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>The Whore of Babylon</i> , and <i>The Devil's Charter</i>	
Chapter Three: 'With them rose revenge': .....	118
Revenge and Corruption in <i>Volpone</i> and <i>Bussy D'Ambois</i>	
Chapter Four: 'These are troubled times': .....	162
Nightmare, Infection, and Tropes of Transgression in <i>Catiline</i> and <i>Cymbeline</i>	
Chapter Five: 'Enters the devil, Murder': .....	211
Black Papist Deeds in <i>The White Devil</i> , <i>All Is True</i> , and <i>The Witch</i>	
Conclusion: .....	277
Notes: ... ..	282
Bibliography: .....	312

## Introduction

‘To kill at one blow or with one blast’

*‘All forbidden books they get,  
And of the powder-plot, they will talk yet:  
At naming the French king their heads they shake,  
And at the Pope and Spain slight faces make’*  
Ben Jonson, Epigram XCII

This thesis began life as a question. Did the Gunpowder Plot have an impact on the work of Shakespeare? Intrigued, and working with the initial theory that an event as enormous as the Plot, indeed an event still celebrated annually over 400 years later in Britain, would almost certainly have been explored by literary scholars, I was surprised to discover that Catesby’s treason still largely belongs to the world of early modern historians. Endlessly documented in books and films, the events of 1605 have been so thoroughly covered that, as leading Gunpowder historian Mark Nicholls remarked in 2007, there is ‘little meat on old bones.’<sup>1</sup> In his view, the Plot has been so extensively researched that the actions of ‘terrorists’ on what Hugh Trevor-Roper refers to as ‘the idiot fringe of the indebted gentry’ ‘may nowadays raise a shudder, or perhaps a nervous chuckle, but they do not appear to demand a detailed reconsideration.’<sup>2</sup> Dr Nicholls’ own recent research into the Plot has, however, cast new light on old bones, and became the starting point for my enquiries. Therefore, while the Gunpowder Plot may have been exhausted by historians, for literary scholars the work may only just have begun.

In order to assess the impact of the Gunpowder Plot on the Jacobean stage, this thesis needs to answer several questions. Did the discovery of Guy Fawkes in a vault beneath Westminster register as noteworthy with the average Londoner?

How did the government react? What was the result of the conspiracy upon public imagination, and did play-going audiences of 1605-16 have any real interest in a failed attack on king and Parliament? If so, how did playwrights respond? Given the Gunpowder Plot was a Catholic conspiracy, was any aspect of anti-papery presented on the stage in relation to the event?

In order to answer these questions, my research needed to follow a logical progression and a chronological timeline. This involved close analysis of the non-dramatic texts produced in the aftermath of the Plot, followed by a survey of the drama that then began to follow. After an initial browse through the non-dramatic texts published in 1605-6, it immediately became clear that the response to the Gunpowder Treason was one of astonishment and horror; following the arrest of Guy Fawkes, 'anxiety was a long time dying' and a 'timeless mixture of ignorance and terror affected every level in English society'.<sup>3</sup> A useful contemporary analogy might be the terror attacks of 9/11. Ten years on from Bin Laden's assault on North America, semantic signifiers have evolved which are now often used as a shorthand to denote the events: 'Ground Zero', 'Twin Towers', 'Flight 93', 'World Trade Centre'. The event itself need not be described, the linguistic signifiers are enough to evoke the shockwave of fear that reverberated around the world. The same is true of the Gunpowder Plot. In 1605-6, words like 'Blow', 'Mine', 'Vault', 'Fawkes' rang with an equal topical resonance. And just as the western world struggled to assimilate the events of 9/11, as it eventually became absorbed into the cultural landscape through its incorporation into films, novels, documentaries, and stage plays, so too did Catesby's treason. Gary Wills, in his book *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*, arrives at a similar analogy, but since his book

was written prior to 9/11, he draws comparisons between the Gunpowder Plot and Pearl Harbour, and reflects on the long shadow cast by the atomic bomb in the 1950s. The catastrophic events of 9/11 changed the world. Fear and anxiety fuelled a global panic, which even today reverberates in western society. The resulting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were a direct result of the attack, and cultural production in the west began to reflect the shifts and changes of a society fearful of further terrorist action. Popular television shows such as *24*, while not making direct references to 9/11, are nevertheless products of the attacks, since they evolved as a response to western society's need to negotiate the issues of assault and siege. Television audiences wanted to explore new threats to society from a position of safety, and ultimately, to witness good triumph over evil in a world in which the authorities were reassuringly in control. A similar climate prevailed in London in the weeks and months following 5<sup>th</sup> November, and drama, as the foremost mode of entertainment, served to perform the same function in 1605 as television and films have done since 2001. That no play exists which openly transposes the events of the Powder Treason onto the stage is due to the conditions of censorship; as Wills states, even in a period of 'relaxed censorship it was against the rule to present living kings and contemporary issues' without at least some attempt at masking the subject.<sup>4</sup>

James I, like the authorities in 2001, was quick to distance himself from wholesale condemnation of a religious minority. In his speech to Parliament two days after the discovery of gunpowder beneath the Lords, he maintained a wholly moderate stance, highlighting the atypicality of the Gunpowder Plotters. They were, he concluded, evil and corrupt, blinded by greed and ambition, and not

representative of the vast majority of Catholic subjects. Yet within a month of the Plot's discovery, sermons and poetry had begun to shift away from this calm authorised response towards a polemic which was both alarmist and inflammatory. In texts such as *The Divell of the Vault*, printed within a few weeks of James' speech, the conspiracy had become 'dreadfull, foule, Chymera-like'. The Plotters are 'Tygrish blood-sworne Jesuits, / Spanized Brittish slaves',<sup>5</sup> and the Plot a stratagem of the pope/Antichrist, whose 'strict religion grounded false, / On proud rebellion stands.'<sup>6</sup>

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the Gunpowder Plot had an enormous short-term impact on the English cultural imagination. One specific means by which this impact can be traced is through popular drama produced for audiences on the London stage. I will seek to establish that drama at this time drew on the mythology and semantics of the Plot to negotiate not only the conspiracy of 1605, but also subsequent events. Events such as the death of Henri IV in 1610, James I's foreign and domestic policy, his choice of husband for the princess Elizabeth, and the vilification of the Catholic Frances Howard during her divorce and subsequent trial for murder in 1616. The abundance of allusions to the Plot on the stage 1605-16 demonstrates that playwrights were not merely referencing Gunpowder rhetoric in an effort to ensure topicality to their plays, they were introducing tropes of witchcraft, treason, infection, and sedition, all traditional memes in Jacobean drama, as a direct response to the events of November 1605. In addition, this thesis seeks to highlight the previously unrealised significance of the Whore of Babylon to Jacobean theatre. As a figure from Revelation, many scholars, including, most recently, Frances Dolan, have



discussed the relevance of the Whore of Babylon to the seventeenth century,<sup>7</sup> but her appearance on the London stage in the months following the Gunpowder Plot has largely gone unnoticed. Along with her religious opposite, The Woman Clothed With The Sun, the Whore of Revelation's appearance in drama during this period was not due to her theological importance following the Reformation, but to the specific and repeated couplings of the Gunpowder Plot with the Antichrist and the pope. As a result, characters such as Lady Macbeth, Middleton's Duchess, and Webster's Vittoria Corombona perform multiple functions. They highlight the infectious nature of corrupt Catholicism as figures for the Whore, and commit crimes reinforcing the satanic nature of the Gunpowder Plotters and Catholic treachery. Witches perform a similar function, indeed, often the role of the biblical Whore and the Witch intertwine; hence a play such as *Macbeth* becomes less drama designed to appeal to the king's interest in demonology, and more a deeply disturbed tragedy preoccupied with the sinister nature of Catholic menace.

In any study of anti-Catholicism in seventeenth century England, it is important to differentiate between well-established anti-Catholic rhetorical tropes, and specific paradigms that might emerge in response to a localised event. The Whore of Babylon existed as a meme for denouncing the Catholic Church long before Fawkes was discovered beneath Westminster, but she acquired a heightened topicality as a Gunpowder motif in the aftermath of 1605. Post-Plot paradigms certainly share some elements with accepted historical anti-papery, but Gunpowder rhetoric itself existed beyond general features of anti-Catholicism. As Peggy Munoz Simonds states, playwrights and authors in this period 'usually did

not make up new and original metaphors. Instead they employed conventional *topoi* appropriately and often varied them to suggest new meanings, or they combined them with others in a new way.’<sup>8</sup> A Jacobean playwright might choose to be ‘deliberately ambiguous in his use of *topoi*, for poetic, political, or religious reasons.’<sup>9</sup> As Janet Clare states, government intervention in the form of censorship ‘could not have failed to interact with the creativity of practising dramatists and to have introduced degrees of compromise, ambiguity and re-presentation of material.’<sup>10</sup>

This thesis thus seeks to demonstrate how imaginative tropes *specific to the Plot*, such as the undermining Jesuit, and the serpent beneath the flower, established new anti-papist nomenclature in the theatre as part of an acute cultural response to the events of 1605. The Gunpowder Plot was widely regarded as a Roman design. Arthur Lord Chichester, Lord Deputy in Ireland, for example, was informed specifically by Salisbury that the Plot was ‘an abominable practice of Rome and Satan’.<sup>11</sup> On November 13<sup>th</sup> 1605, the government passed an act for the perpetual remembrance of the anniversary of the Plot, an event it regarded as the work of ‘many malignant and devilish papist, Jesuits, and seminary priests’<sup>12</sup>

Robert Appelbaum stated in 2007, ‘when we look at the literature spawned by the Gunpowder Plot, we may now be disposed to find out how the literary world of the seventeenth century responded to terrorism and the terror it provoked. How did it approach the moral problem posed by the existence of terrorism? How did it

manage, or not manage, to put terror into words, and terrorism in its place?'<sup>13</sup> No substantial research into the connections between the Powder Treason and the production of drama in its aftermath has so far been undertaken. Martin Wiggins, in his book *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*,<sup>14</sup> seeks to locate Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the concrete realities of Jacobean theatre, as playwrights working within the shifting demands of genre, architecture, and audience.<sup>15</sup> However, he chooses to pay little attention to the political topicality of London drama during this period. Curtis Perry, writing on Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* asserts, 'it has even been suggested that we read *The Whore of Babylon* as a pro-Jacobean play written in the spirit of patriotic nationalism occasioned by James' triumphant evasion of the popish Gunpowder Plot in 1605. In this account Elizabeth's defeat of the Armada is seen, plausibly enough, as analogous to James' defeat of Guy Fawkes.'<sup>16</sup> However, Perry leaves this question open to further speculation and debate. Julia Gasper defines the fundamental theme of Dekker's play as 'the struggle of the True Church against the anti-Christ',<sup>17</sup> and Judith Doolin Spikes refers to it as a play in which 'England, the champion of Protestantism, is overtly cast in the role of the Angel of Light and Catholicism in that of the Fiend of Darkness in the timeless cosmic warfare'.<sup>18</sup> Neither however seeks to explore why Dekker may have chosen this particular subject matter in 1606.

Gary Wills broke new ground in this area by suggesting that some plays produced in the immediate aftermath of 5<sup>th</sup> November shared particular similarities in imagery and theme. He argues that these plays 'have reference to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the overriding matter of political interest in the

succeeding year, prompting sermons, treatises, ballads, pamphlets and satires, as well as plays.<sup>19</sup> Wills defines a Gunpowder play as follows: 'References to the Plot are essential. These references must be obvious, although indirect (the condition of even relaxed censors' rules). But some larger themes are also essential. The typical Gunpowder play deals with the apocalyptic destruction of a kingdom (attempted or accomplished), with convulsions brought about by secret 'mining' (undermining), plots, and equivocation. And witches are active in this process. When that pattern occurs, along with direct references to the Powder Treason, one has a Gunpowder play.'<sup>20</sup> Wills identifies four plays as Gunpowder plays: Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with which his study is concerned, *Sophonisba* by John Marston, Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Devil's Charter* by Barnabe Barnes. He states that there are other plays, both earlier and later, which deal with similar themes, 'but they do not have the particular constellation of all these factors, presented at the time of the Plot and in the language of the Plot.'<sup>21</sup> Wills' book, while undeniably of importance to this thesis, serves only as a starting point. He views Gunpowder plays as independent compositions with little relation to each other beyond the Plot, they are, in fact, simply exploring the same themes at roughly the same time. As such, his book poses more questions than it does answers. While Wills is content to leave his investigations to 1606, this thesis seeks to explore the wider impact of the Plot on the Jacobean stage. Since so little work has been undertaken into this subject, it is to be expected that Wills' investigations and my own will crossover. A response to some of the questions posed by Wills has recently been provided by Richard Dutton, in his book *Ben Jonson, Volpone, and the Gunpowder Plot*,<sup>22</sup> which moves the collective research

surrounding the Plot and Jacobean drama forwards. Dutton's work is pre-shadowed by that of B. N. De Luna, whose influential study on Ben Jonson and the Plot, *Jonson's Romish Plot*,<sup>23</sup> was one of the first to make a direct link between the Gunpowder Plot and the London stage. As such, it enriches our understanding of the field, but, like Dutton and Wills, De Luna is primarily interested in the significance of the Powder Treason upon Jonson's play. Richard Dutton makes the case that *Volpone* is indeed a written response to the Plot, and while his findings are extremely useful, they serve a limited purpose in terms of this thesis, since Dutton is preoccupied with *Volpone* as Jonsonian political satire rather than as part of a co-operative dramatic response to the Powder Plot. His book does of course enrich existing research, and demonstrates there is an increasing interest in the Gunpowder Plot and literary production, but like Wills' book, it chooses not to explore the wider picture. Rebecca Lemon, in her work on treason and law in early seventeenth century England,<sup>24</sup> also pays attention to the consequences of the Gunpowder Plot on aspects of absolute monarchy. She acknowledges the importance of the Oath of Allegiance to works such as Jonson's *Catiline*, and Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*, but she too is largely preoccupied with the political impact of the Plot upon James and his government. Alistair Bellany, in *The Politics of Court Scandal*,<sup>25</sup> notes the impact of the Plot on James' reign, and his research into news culture in early seventeenth century London is invaluable in shedding light on how rhetoric, discourse, and ballads about the Plot were disseminated. However, his focus is primarily on the Overbury scandal and the means by which Londoners negotiated that particular Catholic plot in 1613-15. Paul Quinn, in his recent doctoral thesis *Anti-Papistry and the English stage, 1580-1642*, also

considers the *impact* of the Gunpowder Plot on the Jacobean stage, and while there are some cross-overs between his research and my own, his discussion is preoccupied with the wider and more generalised context of anti-papistry on the English stage during the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup>

The failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was a watershed moment in English history.<sup>27</sup>

The discovery of Guy Fawkes in the vault beneath Parliament led to myth and legend which has reverberated throughout the succeeding centuries; for nearly four hundred years 'Gunpowder plot, an unsuccessful treason planned by a mere handful of men, has been the subject of bitter religious and academic debate, media controversy, popular speculation, and the wildest of gossip.'<sup>28</sup> Nicholls identifies many issues with the Plot which create difficulties for historians.

Conspiracy theories continue to abound, just as they did in 1605-6; Salisbury was behind the Plot, Catesby was seen leaving Salisbury's home some time before the 5<sup>th</sup> November, and Percy was seen leaving the same house at the dead of night by way of the back door. Tresham was murdered in the Tower, and the authorities knew in advance of the Plot yet failed to act.<sup>29</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is not the truth of the event that is important, it is what was *believed*.

The reality of whether Guy Fawkes was tortured, whether James actually read the Monteaagle letter, or whether the Earl of Northumberland was implicated for political reasons, is unimportant here. This study is not concerned with the facts about the conspiracy of 1605. It is concerned with how it was perceived and understood, and critically, how it was represented in popular discourse, since that representation subsequently found its way onto the Jacobean stage. The motifs

relating to the Gunpowder Plot depicted in the drama of the time enable us to broaden our understanding of how theatre functioned, and the degree of its cultural potency in the early years of the seventeenth century.

I have approached the plays in this thesis as individual dramatic compositions with literary merit, but also as historical documents. This methodology arises from the firm conviction that drama produced for an early modern London theatre audience functioned primarily as a form of popular entertainment. Playwrights were working in tough commercial theatres, and the high-minded conceits of the Elizabethan court poets were a long way from the brothels, bears, and immigrants of Jacobean Bankside. That is not to suggest the plays in question are not, in most cases, extraordinary works of literature, but to separate the cut and thrust of the theatre industry from the drama that it produced is to neglect to consider the plays as works which extend beyond poetics.

In the course of this research, some problematic issues have arisen. Firstly, many of the texts written in response to the Gunpowder Plot are now lost; the Stationers' Register records the titles of tantalising texts which would have greatly enhanced this thesis, such as a popular ballad on the executions of the Plotters, and scathing texts written about Henry Garnet. Having surveyed many plays written in 1605-16, the ones under consideration here offer what I believe to be the best cross-section for the purpose required. They are written by a variety of playwrights enjoying differing degrees of contemporaneous success; playwrights writing from both Protestant and Catholic perspectives, and several have not as yet been considered Gunpowder plays.

Secondly, I have relied on the Stationers' Register for dating non-dramatic Gunpowder texts, but there is always a margin for error, since texts were not always entered into the register, and were sometimes omitted. The Gunpowder sermon of Lancelot Andrewes is a good case in point. I have been unable to locate any record of its publication before 1610, so it must be regarded as an unreliable text. The decision to include it in this study is due to the fact Andrewes' sermons were extremely popular, and were regularly published and disseminated. This one in particular, given its subject matter, would almost certainly have been printed in 1606, since its message expounds that of the government view so closely. Nevertheless, since no evidence so far supports a print date in 1606, Andrewes' comments cannot be conclusively proven to have contributed to circulating Gunpowder discourse.

Lastly, I have relied on Andrew Gurr for the performance dates of all plays, but since these dates are in many cases difficult to establish absolutely, this thesis can only reflect the most contemporary dating research currently available.<sup>30</sup>

Chapter One forms a survey of the non-dramatic texts in circulation within the days and weeks following the discovery of Fawkes. It concludes with the thanksgiving sermon written to mark the first anniversary of the Plot. The first public airing of the Gunpowder Treason was on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1605, when William Barlow delivered a public sermon at St Paul's Cross. Borrowed largely from James' speech to Parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> November, and stage managed by Salisbury, Barlow's sermon was the first official version of events, and both the Montegale letter and Fawkes' confession were read aloud to the crowd.

Gunpowder texts, such as J. H's *The Divell of the Vault*, and Dekker's *The Double*



*PP*, subsequently seized on tropes established by Barlow, and began imaginatively coupling the Plot with the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, expanding and intensifying these Gunpowder paradigms, which are then reflected in, and adopted by, subsequent texts. In Barlow's sermon, he establishes a connection between the Plotters and Roman emperors such as Catiline, Nero, and Caligula. Fawkes and his circle are denounced as the Devil's servants; diabolical Jesuitical instruments; blood thirsty screech owls receiving their orders from Spain, Rome, Babylon, and the Antichrist. The language used to negotiate the Plot in circulating texts is inflammatory, alarmist, riddled with anxiety; England is reconfigured in a post-apocalyptic landscape awash with blood. These works, which include *King's Book*, the official published version of the Plot, demonstrate that authors writing in response to the Treason in 1605-6 established specific Gunpowder paradigms, which were adopted by dramatists in their theatrical negotiation of Catesby's ambitious conspiracy.

Chapter Two explores three plays in performance in the immediate aftermath of the Plot, plays which Gary Wills ascribes as Gunpowder plays in his definition; Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter*, and Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*. Close readings of these three plays establishes not only that their authors were familiar with emerging non-dramatic Gunpowder rhetoric, but the principal female characters in each play share specific similarities in language and imagery, suggesting that Dekker, Shakespeare, and Barnes were either working in some form of collaboration, or were drawing on a shared source. In addition, the association of the three female

figures with the Whore of Babylon reveals the emergence of the dramatic trope of female/Catholic transgression that seeks to bring about the collapse of the established order. This trope first appeared on the stage in John Foxe's 1556 *comoedia apocalyptica Christus Triumphans*, a chronicle history play based on the Apocalypse.

Chapter Three seeks to evaluate the themes of revenge and corruption in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*. Taking as its starting point the urgent appeal to recall the threat of God's vengeance on Babylonian Rome, which was issued to Protestants in Gunpowder sermons from 1606 onwards, the question of crime and retribution in these two Gunpowder plays is examined closely. Jonson's position, as a Catholic playwright embroiled in the espionage surrounding the Plot, enables a reading of *Volpone* which takes into account his personal religious position in relation to the staunchly Protestant Chapman, whose *Bussy D'Ambois* is a thoroughly violent Jacobean revenge tragedy. Both plays contest the nature of the corrupt foreign court, while covertly referencing the events of November 1605 to denounce both Protestants and Catholics respectively.

Chapter Four explores the political climate in England in 1610, immediately following the assassination of Henri IV by a radical Jesuit in Paris. Questions surrounding the Oath of Allegiance, James' foreign marriage policy, and growing anxiety in England, led to 'a paper warfare' in European theology.<sup>31</sup> Against this backdrop, two plays were performed in the same season at the Globe, Ben Jonson's *Catiline* and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Both reflect the tension and uncertainty of an unstable state, at a time when fear of further attacks on the

monarch was once again heightened. With references to Gunpowder paradigms as sites of contention between Catholic and Protestant, both plays seek to interrogate the nature of monarchy and government, and both reflect the growing dissatisfaction and unpopularity of James I in 1609-11.

Chapter Five provides readings of three plays performed 1612-16, John Webster's *The White Devil*, Shakespeare and Fletcher's *All Is True* or *Henry VIII*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*. Each play contains familiar Gunpowder memes, but in addition, each also makes covert reference to the emerging scandal surrounding Frances Howard, whose divorce in 1613 caused national outrage. By 1615, with the discovery of Thomas Overbury's murder, the Powder Poison, as it came to be known, reinforced the seditious nature of the Catholic threat, and reignited anxiety about popish plots. As a result, established Gunpowder paradigms were utilised by playwrights to scrutinise this latest Catholic scandal. This had the effect of not only coupling the Powder Poison to the Powder Plot, but also of linking them as public examples of Catholic treachery. Both the Powder Poison and the Gunpowder Plot epitomised the Antichrist's menace, and ensured Protestant England's nervousness would not quickly dissipate.

To celebrate England's deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot, the Dutch senate ordered the striking of a medal to commemorate both England's safe escape and the expulsion of Jesuits from Holland.<sup>32</sup> The medal featured a snake amid roses and lilies, symbolising Jesuit intrigue. This image, of a serpent beneath a flower, became the ultimate metaphor for post-Gunpowder Catholic deceit. It appears in the plays of Shakespeare, Jonson, Dekker, Webster, Barnes, Chapman, and

Middleton, and by 1615 it had developed into a fully-fledged dramatic motif, with the power to instantly recall the Gunpowder Plot and its satanic associations.

The commercial Tudor and Stuart theatres in which Shakespeare worked from the early 1590s onwards, 'performed plays that were frequently concerned with political events. These were represented allegorically through the use of historical material drawn from English history, foreign settings – often Italian – or plots drawn from contemporary romances. Arguably, the theatre existed as a particular location of public space where political debates, commentary and allusion could be made by those who were excluded from the ordinary processes of political life.'<sup>33</sup> What this thesis ultimately intends to demonstrate, is that the Gunpowder Plot evoked an anxiety and eschatology in English subjects so profound it forced playwrights to abandon traditional theatrical genres in favour of a new dramatic mode which could meet the growing demand from audiences for depictions of corrupt courts, witchcraft, demonic possession, murder, and treason. Playwrights writing in the shadow of the Gunpowder Plot were under pressure to rise to the challenge of incorporating Catholic threats and government instability into a new theatrical climate that demanded every-increasing topicality. In an effort to achieve this, playwrights mined circulating Gunpowder rhetoric and incorporated it into their plays. The result was that shoe-makers and school teachers, courtiers and prostitutes, could attend the theatre and witness a world in which characters overcame many of the issues facing Londoners on the streets of the capital. As Mark Nicholls states, in the immediate aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, 'Londoners were ready enough to celebrate their shared deliverance with bonfires and bells on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> November, but they

struggled to appreciate the true nature of that deliverance.<sup>134</sup> Whether through the overthrow of *Macbeth*, the sentencing of *Volpone*, or the restoration of *Innogen*, the London theatre rose quickly to respond to the threat of terror, and became an urgent site of universal assurance in a period of turbulence, sedition, and shadows.



*Gunpowder medal struck in 1605*

## Chapter One

### 'A prodiction without a match'

#### A survey of non-dramatic Gunpowder texts in circulation 1605-6

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 1605, William Barlow, Bishop of Rochester, addressed the assembled crowd from the outdoor pulpit at St Paul's Cross. His subject was the discovery of Guy Fawkes in a vault beneath Westminster. Fawkes, Barlow assured his listeners, was 'a vermine of the basest sort,'<sup>1</sup> who had been plotting to murder the king and all those gathered in Parliament with a great explosion of gunpowder: 'those which make religion the stawking-horse for treasons, pretend the Catholicke cause (as these conspirators now did) to murther the Lords anointed.'<sup>2</sup> Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury and Secretary of State, outlined the moment Fawkes was discovered in a letter written to Sir Charles Cornwallis, British ambassador to Spain, dated 9<sup>th</sup> November:

Into this vault Johnson [an alias of Fawkes] had at sundry times very privately conveyed a great quantity of powder, and therewith filled two hogsheads, and some 32 barrels; all which he had cunningly covered with great store of billets and faggots; and on Monday, at night, as he was busy to prepare his things for execution, was apprehended in the place itself, with a false lantern, booted and spurred. There was likewise found some small quantity of fine powder for to make a train, and a piece of match, with a tinder box to have fired the train.<sup>3</sup>

So it was that in November 1605, Guy Fawkes took centre stage in what has become one of the most unforgettable episodes in English history. Fawkes, who had spent twelve years fighting for Spanish forces in the Netherlands,<sup>4</sup> had been neither the inspiration behind nor the prime agent in the conspiracy, but in the

aftermath of the Plot's discovery, of the thirteen men linked to the Gunpowder circle, it was his name which became synonymous with Catholic sedition.

In the reign of Elizabeth I, English Catholics experienced many difficulties, particularly following the religious settlement of 1559-60, when the government, at the instigation of Lord Burghley, commenced a campaign of repression.<sup>5</sup> Father Weston, a Catholic priest imprisoned in the Tower in 1603, wrote of the persecution he believed the Catholic community to be experiencing: 'Catholics now saw their own country, the country of their birth, turned into a ruthless and unloving land.'<sup>6</sup> They had become objects of suspicion and derision. Men 'lay in ambush for them, betrayed them, attacked them with violence and without warning. They plundered them at night, stole their possessions, drove away their flocks, stole their cattle.'<sup>7</sup> Both priests and lay Catholics were rounded up and imprisoned, and their futures were bleak. If charged with treason, a Catholic priest was condemned to death by hanging, drawing, and quartering, and as a result, they often travelled under countless aliases to divert suspicion.

Estimates suggest that Catholics formed less than one percent of the English population in 1603, but this estimate conceals two important aspects of the English Catholic community: geography and class.<sup>8</sup> Some parts of the country were more likely than others to have a Catholic constituent, with Lancashire a particular stronghold; 6-7 percent of its population was either recusant or non-communicant in 1603. Yorkshire also had a large population of Catholics, as did the Welsh border counties, Sussex, and Hampshire. In this period, Catholicism was rapidly developing into a religion headed by the gentry.<sup>9</sup> In January 1581, a new bill made the 'presence of a Jesuit priest, whatever his purpose, a treasonable offence.'<sup>10</sup> It



was also a felony to offer aid to a Jesuit; anybody with information regarding the whereabouts of a Jesuit priest was obliged to inform the authorities, or risk a fine or imprisonment.<sup>11</sup> Under Elizabethan law, English Catholics were prohibited from baptizing their children in the Catholic faith, or marrying within the conventions of the Catholic Church. They were barred from employing Catholic servants or teachers, or sending their children to be educated in the Low Countries.<sup>12</sup> In 1593, an act against Popish Recusants was passed 'For the better discovering and avoiding of all such traitorous and most dangerous conspiracies and attempts,' which restricted convicted Catholic gentry from travelling more than five miles from their homes or estates.<sup>13</sup>

It is likely that many Catholics attempted to circumvent these laws. Evidence of extant priest holes, for example, points to the fact that many Catholics were prepared to risk imprisonment rather than abandon their beliefs. However, government legislation ensured that life for English Catholics was a constant challenge, and it was against this backdrop of persecution and intolerance that the seeds of the Gunpowder Plot were first sewn. Oswald Tesimond, in the years after the Plot's discovery, wrote of the bitter disappointment felt by Catholics after the accession of James I. 'The greatest of all evils, and that which has most completely destroyed all hope in the catholics, has been to see with how much readiness the king in his first parliament agreed to confirm all the laws and statutes made against them in the time of the queen.'<sup>14</sup>

The discovery of Guy Fawkes in the vault beneath Westminster in November 1605 provoked a near-hysterical reaction from the government. To gain an understanding of what was believed to have been planned by the Gunpowder

conspirators, an exploration of the events that took place in the months leading up to November 1605 is necessary. The logical place to begin is with the accounts of the Plot from some of the Plotters themselves, published in late 1605. However, several issues need to be taken into account when considering this testimony. Firstly, the confessions of Winter and Fawkes were possibly extracted under torture, thus rendering their accounts unstable as reliable historical sources. Secondly, Catesby and Percy died before the government had the opportunity to question them, so their accounts of the conspiracy did not come to light. Thirdly, it is possible the government doctored the extracted confessions in an attempt to maintain editorial control of the details surrounding the conspiracy. Nevertheless, whether the confessions are genuine or pure fabrication, and the truth in all likelihood is that they are genuine, is in this case something of an irrelevance, since the focus of this thesis is the dramatic references made to circulating Gunpowder discourse. The texts in circulation in the aftermath of 5<sup>th</sup> November provided a means by which Jacobean authors and readers were able to negotiate the treason, and thus form a printed commentary that need not rely on proven factual historical evidence. As Mark Nicholls states, a central element in the story of the Gunpowder Plot, 'is the process by which information, once acquired by the Government, was in due course filtered and disseminated to a wider audience.'<sup>15</sup>

The first published account of the Gunpowder Plot, known as *King's Book*, was printed by Robert Barker, the king's printer, and rushed into circulation within a month of the Plot's discovery.<sup>16</sup> *King's Book* comprises James' speech to Parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1605, an anonymous narrative of the Plot and the printed confessions of Guy Fawkes and Thomas Winter. As the authorized version

of events, the government hoped *King's Book* would crush rumours and gossip, because demand for news was enormous and 'statements were expected.'<sup>17</sup> The Elizabethan precedent for such a text 'culminates in Francis Bacon's official or semi-official *Declaration* of the Earl of Essex's treason in 1601, an event fresh in the mind, and with particular resonance for the inhabitants of the capital city.'<sup>18</sup> Prior to its publication, and aside from Barlow's sermon delivered on 10<sup>th</sup> November, information about the event spread via word of mouth.<sup>19</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> November, 'transmission of news was not the immediate priority. The fundamental obligation on statesman and citizen alike was the defence of king, court and capital against an as yet unidentified enemy. Guy Fawkes' strike against Westminster was framed as the first act in an intended military coup.'<sup>20</sup> The only information most Londoners had in the immediate aftermath of the Plot's discovery was the detail of the Monteagle letter.<sup>21</sup> There was much gossip. Carew, a recusant connected to Thomas Percy, and a prisoner in the Tower in December 1605, described hearing about the Plot from a servant, who sat 'at the Lower end of the Table with his Master, hat of (sic), and did discourse of theis thinges haveing bin as it seemed with the sherif in the service to suppress those Rebells'. This clearly demonstrates that news of the Plot had travelled widely by gossip and 'half-heard rumour'.<sup>22</sup>

Since the government found this rumour impossible to control, and since the demand for information was complicated by a lack of official news media, 'the happiest way forward was to get in first, with a detailed and credible version of events.'<sup>23</sup> The government anticipated *King's Book* would finally provide the truth about the Gunpowder Plot after weeks of anxious speculation by James' subjects, all of whom were keen to learn more about the treachery of Catesby and his

‘hellish societie’<sup>24</sup> *King’s Book* is an important and sometimes overlooked work. It is indispensable in understanding how the government navigated the events of November 1605, and ‘through a closer examination of this developing text, a reader comes to appreciate better both the inherent significance of the book itself, and also the extraordinary difficulties faced by those who investigated the Gunpowder Plot’.<sup>25</sup> What follows is a short overview of events leading up to 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605, taken from the confessions of Fawkes and Winter printed in *King’s Book*, since it was this version of events that provided the average Londoner with information regarding the Plot.

Thomas Winter was a scholarly man, and a good Spanish speaker. In 1601, he had been in Spain agitating for a possible Spanish invasion of England.<sup>26</sup> In his confession, taken in the Tower on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1605, he acknowledges that in 1603 he was in Worcestershire with his brother Robert, when their cousin, Robert Catesby, summoned him to London. ‘I desired him to excuse me for I found my selfe not very well disposed; and (which had happened never to me before) returned the messenger without my company.’<sup>27</sup> Shortly afterwards he received a second summons from Catesby, and this time he responded. ‘I presently came up [to London] and found him with Master John Wright at Lambeth, where he brake with mee, how necessary it was not to forsake our Countrey (for he knew then I had a resolution to goe over) but to deliver her from the servitude in which she remayned.’<sup>28</sup>

Catesby, a Warwickshire man, had been involved in the Essex rebellion of 1601 with Francis Tresham, and Lord Monteagle,<sup>29</sup> and was a natural and talented team builder.<sup>30</sup> By 1603, he was in the process of gathering a handpicked group of

men to implement his ambitious assassination attempt against the king.<sup>31</sup> Winter was prepared to both take action on behalf of English Catholics and to involve himself in Catesby's plans. 'I had often hazarded my life upon farre lighter termes, and now would not refuse any good occasion, wherein I might not doe service to the Catholicke cause; but for my selfe, I knew no meanes probable to succede.'<sup>32</sup> Catesby informed Winter of his plan:

He said that hee had bethought him of a way at one instant to deliver us from all our Bonds, and without any forraine helpe to replant againe the Catholicke Religion; and withal told me in a word, It was to blowe up the Parliament house with Gunpowder... I wondered at the strangenesse of the conceipt, and told him that true it was, this strake at the Roote, and would breed a confusion fit to beget new alterations.<sup>33</sup>

Although surprised by Catesby's plans to bring England once more back into the Catholic fold, Thomas Winter agreed that the plan could work, but, 'if it should not take effect ...the scandal would bee so great which Catholicke Religion might hereby sustaine, as not only our Enemies, but our Friendes also would with good reason condemne us.'<sup>34</sup> Although Catesby and Winter discussed the difficulties associated with such an ambitious enterprise, Catesby was emphatic that they should 'give an attempt, and where it faileth, pass no further.'<sup>35</sup> Catesby had also brought in John Wright, a wealthy and quick-tempered Yorkshire man; 'more the man of action than the man of letters.'<sup>36</sup> Winter and Wright were very different individuals, but both were experienced 'in intrigue, utterly loyal, and good lieutenants in their adopted cause. Moreover, they could keep secrets.'<sup>37</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Catesby and Winter agreed that Winter would travel to the Low Countries to 'informe the Constable of the state of the Catholickes here in England, intreating him to sollicite his Majestie at his coming hither, that the penall

Lawes may be recalled, and we admitted into the rancke of his other subjects.<sup>38</sup> The Constable in question was Don Juan de Velasco, Constable of Castile.<sup>39</sup> Winter 'passed the sea, and found the Constable at Bergen neere Dunkirke.'<sup>40</sup> After an unsuccessful meeting with Velasco, Winter returned to Dunkirk with a 'M.Owen', in fact, Hugh Owen, a Welsh spy and supporter of the Jesuits.<sup>41</sup> Owen had frustrated both Walsingham and Burghley, and Robert Cecil, who had 'developed a profound antipathy towards him.'<sup>42</sup> Owen's involvement in the Ridolfi Plot had caused him to escape abroad into permanent exile in the early 1570s.<sup>43</sup> According to Winter, Owen helped arrange a meeting with Guy Fawkes in Ostend: 'he told me the Gentleman [Fawkes]... was at Brussels, and that if hee came not, as happily he might, before my departure, he would send him shortly into England.'<sup>44</sup>

Guy Fawkes was another Yorkshire man, 'skilled in covert negotiations at the highest level.'<sup>45</sup> He had attended the same school as the Wright brothers, John and Christopher, and had travelled abroad to serve in the Spanish army in the 1590s.<sup>46</sup> Fawkes was a devout Catholic, and an intelligent man who had developed significant fame among soldiers.<sup>47</sup> By 1603, his career in the army under Sir William Stanley was prospering, and Fawkes was recommended for a captaincy.<sup>48</sup> However, perhaps, most importantly for Catesby, Fawkes had not been in England for ten years, and was thus unknown in London.<sup>49</sup>

Spending several days with Sir William Stanley, Winter and Fawkes travelled back to England, 'and so came up to London, and came to M.Catesby whom we found in his lodging'.<sup>50</sup> In the middle of the Easter Term (mid May), Thomas Percy arrived in London. Second cousin to the Earl of Northumberland, Percy was a controversial figure. He worked for Northumberland as Constable of

Alnwick Castle,<sup>51</sup> and in June 1604 became a Gentleman Pensioner to the King.<sup>52</sup>

Percy was quick to promise money for Catesby's venture, guaranteeing 'large sums from Northumberland's Michaelmas rents.'<sup>53</sup> According to Winter, the first words Percy spoke, '(after he came into our company) was, Shall we always (Gentlemen) talke, and never doe any thing?'<sup>54</sup> Catesby then took Percy on one side, 'and had speech about somewhat to be done,'<sup>55</sup> and the assembled men subsequently agreed to meet several days later 'behind S.Clements' to swear an oath of secrecy.<sup>56</sup>

This planned meeting is now thought to have taken place in a room in the Duck and Drake Inn, near the Strand, in London on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1604.<sup>57</sup> Winter testifies that those present were Catesby, Percy, Jack Wright, and himself. Having gathered, and 'upon a Primer given each other the oath of secrecy, in a chamber where no other bodie was,' they then went 'into the next roome and heard Masse, and received the blessed Sacrament upon the same.'<sup>58</sup> The priest who bestowed the sacrament is believed to have been John Gerard, an accomplished Jesuit who had been captured by the authorities and tortured in the Tower before escaping and disappearing into the shadowy world of the English Catholic gentry.<sup>59</sup>

As a consequence of this meeting, Thomas Percy was sent to rent a house from Sir John Whynniard, Keeper of the King's Wardrobe; 'a small dwelling in the precincts of Westminster.'<sup>60</sup> 'M.Fawkes underwent the name of M.Percies man, calling himself Johnson, because his face was the most unknowen, and received the keyes of the house, until wee heard that the Parliament was adjourned to the seventh of February. At this time we all departed severall ways into the country, to meete again at the beginning of Michaelmas Terme.'<sup>61</sup> Catesby's original plan had

been to dig a mine beneath the Palace of Westminster, through which the conspirators could transport gunpowder from the cellar of Whynniard's house to a cavity under the House of Lords.<sup>62</sup> Speculation about the actual existence of the mine has long been held. Fraser suggests it was probably 'a mythical invention, used by the government to spice up the official account of the narrowly averted danger,'<sup>63</sup> but others accept the mine's existence. Despite an unfortunate setback when Scottish commissioners took over Percy's lodgings in order to discuss the proposed union between England and Scotland, work had begun in earnest on the mine by the winter of 1604.<sup>64</sup> At this time the conspirators had also decided to acquire a second property, 'where we might make provision of powder and wood for the Mine,'<sup>65</sup> and as a result, they admitted another man into their circle, Robert Keyes, 'a trusty honest man'<sup>66</sup> to act as keeper of a house in Lambeth on their behalf.

Catesby also admitted other men into the circle to assist with the manual labour, namely Thomas Winter's brother, Robert, and John Grant and Christopher Wright.<sup>67</sup> In his confession, Fawkes describes the arduous and dangerous nature of the digging: 'When we came to the very foundation of the Wall of the House, which was about three yards thicke, and found it a matter of great difficultie, we tooke unto us another Gentleman, Robert Winter, in like manner with oath and sacrament as aforesaid... It was about Christmas when we brought our Myne unto the Wall, and about Candlemas we had wrought the Wall halfe through'.<sup>68</sup> During the underground excavations, Fawkes acted as a 'Sentinell to descree any man that came neare, whereof I gave them warning, and so they ceased untill I gave notice againe to proceede.'<sup>69</sup>



Throughout the winter, the Plotters proceeded with the mine but it was a frustratingly slow process.<sup>70</sup> As they chipped away at the rock, they discussed what action to take once the explosive event itself had taken place. Thomas Percy believed it was possible to kidnap Prince Henry, since as Gentleman Pensioner he could 'enter the Chamber without suspicion, & having some dozen others at severall doors... carry him away.'<sup>71</sup> Their eventual plan however, was to snatch Princess Elizabeth, who was then living near Coventry.<sup>72</sup> With this in mind, Catesby subsequently arranged a day's hunting for the Catholic gentry in the Midlands on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605.<sup>73</sup> After the establishment of peace with Spain, raising a regiment in England was an acceptable means to gather the necessary forces to fight in Flanders, so Catesby's hunt would not have been viewed with much suspicion. In addition, he probably intended it as something of a 'recruiting exercise'.<sup>74</sup> He also began stockpiling armour and weapons at his house in Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire.<sup>75</sup> After the explosion at Westminster, he planned to ride to Dunchurch on horseback and raise a rebellion, with members of the hunt leading the way to Coombe Abbey to grab the nine-year-old Elizabeth.<sup>76</sup>

Digging of the mine under the Lords came to a halt one evening when the conspirators heard 'a rushing in a Cellar of remooving of Coales'.<sup>77</sup> Ellen Bright, a coal merchant, was selling off her goods and vacating her premises in Westminster; her premises being the now infamous ground floor vault below the Lord's Chamber.<sup>78</sup> Percy was sent to hire the vault, and soon after the Plotters had moved twenty barrels of gunpowder into the vault, which they hid beneath billets and faggots.<sup>79</sup> The old House of Lords was a chamber occupying the first floor of a building that stood about forty six metres from the left bank of the Thames.

Beneath the peer's chamber was a large room commonly described as a cellar or vault, which ran beneath the chamber from end to end, measuring 77 feet by 24.<sup>80</sup>

According to official sources, the number of barrels of gunpowder found in the vault when it was eventually searched by the authorities was thirty-six.<sup>81</sup> In 2003, the Institute of Physics in London asked the University of Aberystwyth's Centre for Explosion Studies to estimate the likely effect of detonating thirty-six barrels of gunpowder under the old House of Lords.<sup>82</sup> The team estimated that thirty-six barrels probably equated to around 5,000lbs of gunpowder, and constructing a worst-case scenario, they calculated that an explosion of this nature would have 'caused structural damage within a radius of 500 yards [a yard equates to 0.9 of a metre, or roughly three feet].<sup>83</sup> All buildings within forty yards would have been destroyed, roofs and walls within a 100-yard radius would have collapsed, and even at 900 yards, some windows would have been broken. The Palace of Westminster, Westminster Hall, Westminster Abbey and the surrounding streets would have been obliterated.'<sup>84</sup>

By Easter 1605, Parliament had been prorogued until October, so the Plotters went their separate ways. Fawkes had been dispatched to the Low Countries to acquaint Sir William Stanley and Hugh Owen with news of the Plot, but according to Winter, when Fawkes returned in late August, he had only been able to confide in Hugh Owen: 'Hee told me that when he arrived at Brussels, Sir William Stanley was not returned from Spaine, so as he uttered the matter only to Owen, who seemed well pleased with the business, but told him that surely Sir William would not bee acquainted with any plot, as having businesse now afoot in the Court of England.'<sup>85</sup> Fawkes's confession corroborates this. It had also been

decided Fawkes should spend some time outside England, 'least by my longer stay I might have grown suspicious, and so have come in question'.<sup>86</sup>

Around the same time, Catesby and Percy met at Bath, 'where they agreed that the company being yet but few, M.Catesby should have the others authoritie to call in whom hee thought best.'<sup>87</sup> Between May 1604 and November 1605, eight further men entered into the conspiracy.<sup>88</sup> Some, like Christopher Wright, and Catesby's servant Thomas Bate, were recruited to assist with the mine, while others were needed for their wealth and support after the event; these included Ambrose Rookwood, Sir Everard Digby, and Francis Tresham, all of whom Catesby hoped would provide money for gunpowder and military supplies.<sup>89</sup> Winter asserts Digby promised 'as I heard M.Catesby say, fifteen hundred pounds' towards the funding of the Plot.<sup>90</sup> Digby, sworn to secrecy, was a reluctant conspirator who questioned Catesby about the proposed murder of so many people, 'especially Catholic friends and allies in the Lords'.<sup>91</sup> However, Catesby's assurances that 'such of the nobility as are worth the saving shall be preserved' appear to have convinced him.<sup>92</sup> Tresham also had doubts, and his brother-in-law, Lord Monteagle, would subsequently be rewarded for delivering an anonymous letter warning of the Plot into government hands.

By the autumn of 1605, the core conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot were Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, Thomas Winter, Robert Winter, Guy Fawkes, John Wright, Christopher Wright, and Catesby's servant, Thomas Bate. Beyond this inner group were Rookwood, Tresham, and Digby, who knew of the Plot's existence; and others still, such as Percy's cousin the Earl of Northumberland, and Henry Garnet. Garnet, Father Superior of the English Jesuits, is a slippery figure in the

historiography of the Gunpowder Plot. On the run from the authorities for over twenty years,<sup>93</sup> he was famously executed for his part in the conspiracy, and equivocated endlessly before his death about his involvement, or lack thereof.<sup>94</sup> Garnet was the most 'influential individual interrogated by the commissioners investigating the plot,'<sup>95</sup> but he was also their most challenging witness; his 'evidence was difficult to evaluate and he infuriated his examiners – not least because they suspected, probably correctly, that he was cleverer than they were.'<sup>96</sup> In June 1605, Garnet had led several of the Plotters and their families on a pilgrimage to Wales, and in July, had heard of the Plot from Oswald Tesimond, who had in turn heard a 'walking confession' from Robert Catesby.<sup>97</sup>

While the plans progressed under Catesby in London, Thomas Winter and Guy Fawkes were stockpiling further supplies of gunpowder in the vault beneath Westminster. In October 1605, Parliament was 'anew prorogued until the fifth of November'.<sup>98</sup> As a result, Catesby, Fawkes, and Winter met at White Webbes, a house rented by Anne Vaux in Hertfordshire. 'Two dayes after being Sunday at night, in came one to my chamber, and told me that a letter had bene given to my L. Monteagle to this effect, That he wished his Lordships absence from the Parliament, Because a Blow would there be given; which letter hee presently carried to my L. of Salisbury.'<sup>99</sup> This letter marked the beginning of the end of the Gunpowder Treason. The following morning, Thomas Winter rushed back to White Webbes to inform Catesby, 'assuring him withal that the matter was disclosed: and wishing him in any case to forsake his Countrey. Hee told mee hee would see further as yet, and resolved to send M.Fawkes to trie the uttermost, protesting if the part belonged to himself, hee would trie the same adventure.'<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile members of the government were debating on the nature of the Monteagle letter; delivered by Monteagle himself, who was motivated perhaps 'by his own uncomfortably treasonous past, in which he had consorted with those involved in the rebellion of the Earl of Essex as well as with Jesuit priests and their supporters.'<sup>101</sup> However, in spite of the reports of treason currently in circulation, 'principally in the form of rumours out of France that Catholic priests were hatching some kind of plot',<sup>102</sup> Salisbury's first response to the letter was sceptical. It is clear from *King's Book* that he and Monteagle decided to wait for the king to return from hunting, and in the interim, to show the letter to 'some more of his Majesties Council.'<sup>103</sup> The Monteagle letter read as follows:

My Lord, Out of the love I beare to some of your friends, I have a care of your preservation. Therefore I would advise you as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift off your attendance at this Parliament: For God and man have concurred to punish the wickednesse of this Time: And thinke not slightly of this Advertisement, but retire yourself into your Countrey, where you may expect the even in safetie. For though there be no appearance of any stirre, yet I say, they shall receive a terrible Blow this Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. This counsell is not to be contemned because it may doe you some good, and can doe you no harme; for the danger is past so soone as you have burnt the Letter. And I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it: To whose holy protection I commend you.<sup>104</sup>

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October, Guy Fawkes checked the gunpowder in the vault as usual. Several accounts of the Plot insist that Fawkes was unaware of the existence of the Monteagle letter, but this seems unlikely. Instead it is reasonable to presume Fawkes was 'kept in the loop... Indeed, the implication is that he is with Catesby when Winter tells him about the Monteagle letter. Catesby and Fawkes are together at the Catholic refuge White Webbs on or around 26<sup>th</sup> October. After Winter's visit, Fawkes is sent by Catesby to check the cellar, and reports back that

nothing has been disturbed. Everyone is gambling that the authorities will dismiss the anonymous letter as spurious, and irrelevant.’<sup>105</sup> The fact Fawkes continued to check the vault given the real risk of discovery is perhaps an indication of just how committed the Gunpowder conspirators were to their cause.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October, the Monteagle letter was shown to the king. ‘The King no sooner read the Letter, but after a little pause, and then reading it over again, he delivered his judgement of it...considering the former Sentence in the Letter, *That they should receive a terrible Blow at this parliament, and yet should not see who hurt them...* did thereupon conjecture, That the danger mentioned, should bee some suddaine danger by blowing up of Powder’.<sup>106</sup> James, with the providential assistance of God, had rumbled the Plot. An immediate decision was taken to search ‘all the Parliament Houses, both above and below,’<sup>107</sup> but not to commence the search until shortly before Parliament was due to meet, in an effort to catch the conspirators in the act. This delay also had the added benefit of preventing the spread of idle rumours.<sup>108</sup>

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November, Thomas Winter and Catesby accused Francis Tresham of revealing the Plot to the authorities. Tresham denied the charges and urged them to abandon the Plot altogether.<sup>109</sup> The following day, a letter was found on the street with details of another plot to assassinate the king, and Francis Tresham was issued with a passport permitting him to travel abroad for two years.<sup>110</sup> On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November, Thomas Percy, his resolve undiminished, dined with his cousin the Earl of Northumberland to gauge emerging official reaction to the conspiracy.<sup>111</sup> That same evening, the Lord Chamberlain, with Lord Monteagle in tow, searched the vault beneath the House of Lords:

having viewed all the lower rouses, hee found in the vault under the upper House great store and provision of Billets, Faggots and Coales: And enquiring of Whyneard keeper of the Wardrobe, to what use hee had put those lower rouses and cellars; he told him, That Thomas Percy had hired both the house and part of the Cellar or Vault under the same, and that the Wood and Coale therein was the sayde Gentleman's owne provision. Whereupon the Lord Chamberlaine, casting his eye aside, perceived a fellow standing in a corner there, calling himself the said Perceys man, and keeper of that house for him, but indeed was Guido Fawkes.<sup>112</sup>

The suspicious Lord Chamberlain reported back to the king and Salisbury. Percy's name and religion were well known at court, and after much deliberation it was considered prudent to make a second search of the Westminster precinct.<sup>113</sup> Just before midnight, Sir Thomas Knevet, a Westminster Justice of the Peace, and a small group of men went back to the vault, and Guy Fawkes was subsequently arrested.

But before his entrie in the house, finding Thomas Percyes alleadged man standing without the door, his cloathes and boots on at so dead a time of the night, he resolved to apprehend him, as hee did, and thereafter went forward to the searching of the house, where he first found... one of the small Barrels of powder, and after all the rest, to the number of thirtie sixe, great and small: And thereafter searching the fellow whom he had taken, found three matches, and all other instruments fit for blowing up the powder.<sup>114</sup>

Hearing of the apprehension of Fawkes, Catesby and Percy fled London, and the following morning Thomas Winter, having travelled to Westminster to confirm the rumours were true, similarly made his escape, riding north to meet the other conspirators at Dunchurch.<sup>115</sup> It was at this time Catesby began telling 'wild lies about the king's death' and proposed 'open rebellion'.<sup>116</sup>

The quantity of documented evidence gathered from the days following the arrest of Fawkes, substantiates the fact that 'ignorance, embarrassment, even panic ran through the highest counsels in the land.'<sup>117</sup> The government had thwarted a catastrophic explosion but it had no way of knowing if further plots were at hand, or even if the insurgents themselves were planning a further attack.<sup>118</sup> Military men dashed to court, and within a few days 'a sizeable force had assembled there under the command of the Earl of Devonshire, prepared to face and repel a phantom enemy.'<sup>119</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> November, from hastily gathered information, a royal proclamation was issued for the apprehension of Thomas Percy. It is clear that Fawkes did not, at this stage, provide his examiners with any information about his colleagues, since had he done so there would have been similar warrants issued for Catesby and the others. The proclamation for Percy was a 'shrill alarm call, a prudent if wholly unimaginative response to an as yet uncertain problem.'<sup>120</sup> The king's men rode off in all directions carrying letters from the council ordering the closure of ports.<sup>121</sup> London was rife with gossip. Percy had been 'seen' fleeing in three or four different directions, and to refute a widespread rumour that the Spanish Ambassador had been involved in the conspiracy, the council hastily drew up an official letter to the contrary.<sup>122</sup>

Percy was the prime suspect in the hunt; he was well known to the government, and although the authorities were probably able to assume the identity of other likely Catholic conspirators, they were still largely reliant on Percy to reveal the full extent of the treason.<sup>123</sup> In the arrest warrant, Percy is accused of being privy 'to one of the most horrible treasons that ever was contrived, that is, to



have blown up this day, while his Majesty should have been in the upper house of the Parliament, attended with the Queene, the Prince, all the nobilitie and the commons, with Gun-powder (for which purpose a great quantitie was conveyed into a Vault under the said Chamber, which is this morning there found).<sup>124</sup> The warrant also provided his description: 'a tall man, with a great broad beard, a good face, the colour of his beard and head mingled with white haire, but the head more white then the beard, he stoupeth somewhat in the shoulders, well coloured in the face, long footed, small legged.'<sup>125</sup> The warrant included a specific order to capture Percy alive: 'to apprehend by all possible meanes, especially to keepe him alive, to the end the rest of the Conspirators may bee discovered.' As details of the Plot unfolded in the hours after Fawkes' arrest, it surfaced that Percy had abused his position in the royal household to ask suspicious questions about the royal children, and then came reports of 'horses and arms being stolen close to where the king's elder daughter, the nine-year-old Lady Elizabeth was staying'.<sup>126</sup>

Fawkes, held by the authorities in the Tower, was as yet the only source of solid information on the Plot, but for several days after his capture, the government was still unclear as to his identity, referring to him as 'John Johnson'.<sup>127</sup> James, compiling a list of questions to put to him, claimed 'I can never yet hear of any man that knows him'.<sup>128</sup> Fawkes refused to implicate his colleagues, 'apart from Percy, whose identity was part of Fawkes's own cover and would be clear to anyone who investigated the ownership of the vault'.<sup>129</sup> In addition, it was reported he slept soundly at night in the Tower.<sup>130</sup> *King's Book* describes Fawkes's alleged behaviour in the hours and days after his capture:

For notwithstanding the horreur of the Fact, the guilt of his conscience, his suddain surprising, the terrour which should have

beene stroken in him by coming into the presence of so grave a Counsell, and the restless and confused questions that every man all day did vexe him with; Yet was his countenance so farre from being dejected, as he often smiled in scornefull manner, not onely avowing the Fact, but repenting onely...his failing in the execution thereof, (hee said) the Divell and not God was the discoverer: Answering quickly to every mans objection, scoffing at any idle questions which were propounded unto him, and jesting with such as hee thought had no authoritie to examine him. All that day could the Councell get nothing out of him touching his Complices, refusing to answeere to any such questions which hee thought might discover the Plot, and laying all the blame upon himself; Whereunto he said he was moved onely for Religion and conscience sake, denying the King to be his lawfull Sovereigne, or the Anoynted of God in respect he was an Hereticke, and giving himself no other name then John Jonson, servant to Thomas Percy. But the next morning being carried to the Tower, he did not there remaine above two or three days, being twice or thrice in that space re-examined, and the Racke onely offered and shewed to him, when the maske of his Romaine fortitude did visibly begin to weare and slide off his face.<sup>131</sup>

James signed an order authorising the torture of Fawkes on 6<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>132</sup>

According to Nicholls, he was initially offered 'gentler tortures', but these seem to have been insufficient in persuading him to cooperate.<sup>133</sup> The two favoured methods of torture used in the Tower in 1605 were the manacles and the rack.<sup>134</sup> Both designed to be extremely painful, the manacles were 'iron gloves into which the hands of the suspect were placed, and from which he was hung up against a wall.'<sup>135</sup> Initially the suspect's feet would be propped on a pile of wooden billets for support, but these would eventually be removed 'to leave him dangling, sometimes for several hours. The gauntlets could also be tightened to heighten the agony.'<sup>136</sup> The rack was a device in which the suspect's body was stretched, leading to the dislocation of arms and legs, and usually causing permanent

physical damage.<sup>137</sup> Fawkes was almost certainly held in manacles, and, in all likelihood, racked.<sup>138</sup>

On 6<sup>th</sup> November, the first reports were reaching London of a rebellion in the Midlands, and the king's daughter was moved to safety in Coventry.<sup>139</sup> By 7<sup>th</sup> November, Fawkes was confessing his part in the conspiracy and naming names. His signature on the page of his final confession, 'tells the story of a man who had been physically and mentally broken.'<sup>140</sup> Fawkes was now officially the 'owner of that hand which should have acted that monstrous Tragedie,'<sup>141</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> November, at Holbeach House on the Staffordshire border where the conspirators were in hiding, an explosion of drying gunpowder caused fears of divine admonition and there was a subsequent mass desertion of rebels.<sup>142</sup> On the same day, a further proclamation was issued against the rebels, along with reassurance to the public that foreign powers had not been involved in the Plot or subsequent rebellion. By the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> November, Holbeach House was under siege, leading to the 'suspicious deaths of vital witnesses, including Percy, Catesby, and John and Christopher Wright.'<sup>143</sup>

Winter testifies:

About eleven of the clock came the companie to beset the house, and as I walked into the court, I was shot into the shoulder, which lost me the use of mine arme: the next shot was the elder Wright stricken dead, after him the younger M.Wright, and fourthly Ambrose Rookwood. Then said M.Catesby to mee (standing before the doore they were to enter) Stand by me Tom, and we will die together. Sir (quoth I) I have lost the use of my right arme, and I feare that will cause me to be taken. So as we stoode close together M. Catesby, M.Percy and my selfe, they too were shot (as farre as I could guesse with one Bullet) and then the companie entered upon me, hurt mee in the Belly with a Pike, and gave me other wounds, until one came behind, and caught holde of both mine armes.<sup>144</sup>

Rookwood and Thomas Winter were subsequently brought to London.

Between 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1605, the government issued three proclamations for the arrests of the Plotters. Many of them were killed in the gunfire at Holbeach House, but those captured were arraigned, along with Fawkes and Winter, on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1606. Robert Barker printed an account of this trial, along with an official account of the examinations of Henry Garnet, which occurred in late spring 1606.<sup>145</sup> It is an enormous work, which includes long speeches by Sir Edward Coke, and the Earl of Salisbury. However, prior to publication of the trial proceedings, an eyewitness description of the execution of the Plotters was published, entitled *A True and Perfect Relation*. It was entered into the Stationers' Register on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1606,<sup>146</sup> written by a 'T.W', who states his intention to 'disswade the idolatrously blinded, from seeking their owne destruction, in the way to damnation'.<sup>147</sup> This published commentary on the executions on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 1606, would have provided useful information to those not able to witness the executions first hand. In addition, the inflammatory language and dehumanisation of the conspirators adds to the plethora of condemnatory texts already in circulation. This dehumanisation is a common line of attack in Gunpowder rhetoric, isolating the Plotters, and, by extension, all Catholics; relocating them somewhere outside of society's margins. T.W describes the intended crime of the Gunpowder circle as so unimaginable it would have 'made a worlde to crie, and therefore the horror thereof, must needs bee hatefull to the whole world to heare of it.'<sup>148</sup> He defends violent execution, commenting that papists may consider it 'bloody', but the conspirators themselves

had 'entended to have shedde' blood.<sup>149</sup> Sir Edward Coke, at the Gunpowder trials, described the manner of execution for a convicted traitor:

hee shall have his judgement to be drawen to the place of Execution from his prison, as being not worthie anymore to tread upon the face of the earth, whereof he was made. Also for that he hath beene retrograde to nature, therefore is hee drawen backwards at a horse taile... hee must be drawen with his head declining downeward, and lying so neere the ground as may be, being thought unfit to take benefit of the common ayre: For which cause also, he shalbe strangled, being hanged up by the necke between heaven and earth, as deemed unworthy of both, or either: As likewise, that the eyes of men may behold, and their hearts contemne him. Then hee is to be cut downe alive, and to have his privie parts cut off and burnt before his face, as being unworthily begotten, and unfit to leave any generation after him. His bowles and inlayed parts taken out and burnt, who inwardly had conceived and harboured in his heart such horrible Treason. After to have his head cut off which had imagined the mischief. And lastly, his body to be quartered and the quarters set up in some high and eminent place, to the view and detestation of men, and to become a pray for the foules of the aire.<sup>150</sup>

It is immediately apparent from *A True and Perfect Relation* that T.W. is no impartial observer. He criticises the speeches and confessions of the conspirators at the scaffold, negates their sincerity, mocks their humanity, and reinforces the false nature of the Catholic Church. Digby was first up to the scaffold. Onlookers detected an 'inwarde feare of death, for his colour grew pale and his eie heavie.'<sup>151</sup> After giving a short speech, he 'went up the Ladder and with the helpe of the hangman made an end of his wicked daies in this world.'<sup>152</sup> Robert Winter was next, 'thinking himself halfe a Saint for his whole villanie,' and then John Grant, who 'asked little mercy.'<sup>153</sup> Finally, Bates, 'who seemed sorie for his offence'. The following day, 'being Friday, were drawne from the Tower Thomas Winter the yonger brother, Ruckewoode, Cayes & Faulks the Miner, justly called the Devill of the Vault: for had hee not been a Devill incarnate, he had never conceived so

villainous a thought'.<sup>154</sup> Winter 'with a very pale and dead colour went uppe the ladder, and after a swing or two with a halter, to the quartering block was withdrawn and there quicklie dispatched.'<sup>155</sup> Rookwood, who, praying to God to 'make the king a Catholicke,' 'went uppe the ladder, and hanging till hee was almost dead, was drawne to the blocke, where he gave his last gaspe.'<sup>156</sup>

Keyes, 'like a desperate villaine... wente floutelie up the ladder, where not staying the Hangmans turne, turned himself of with such a leape that with the swing he brake the Halter, but after his fall, was quicklie drawne to the blocke, and there was quicklie devided into foure parts.'<sup>157</sup> Finally, Fawkes, 'the great Devill of all,' whose body 'being weake with torture and sicknes, he was scarce able to goe up the ladder, but yet with much adoe, by the helpe of the Hangman, went hie enough to breake his necke with the fall', and then 'made his end upon the gallowes, and the blocke, to the great joy of the beholders, that the land was ended of so wicked a villanie.'<sup>158</sup> There is a macabre sense of delight in this account, a celebration of the triumph over the dark forces of papist Rome. The author focuses with relish on the deserved deaths of the conspirators; on their lack of repentance, on the gruesome aspects of their suffering. His account debases both the men and their faith, and wholly justifies their violent end; an end he implies to be similarly expected by anyone subscribing to the Catholic Church. 'Was there ever,' he asks of the Gunpowder conspiracy, 'such a hellish plot practised in the world?' Catholicism is a legion of evil, a 'Sinagogue of Sathan', determined 'to kil at one blow or with one blast, King, Queene, Prince and Peere Bishops, Judge, and Magistrate to the ruine of the land'.<sup>159</sup> The Plotters are seen as part of a on going papist conspiracy to 'kill princes; sewe seditions, maintaine bawdie houses, blinde

the simple, abuse the honest, breave the innocent.'<sup>160</sup> Catholic practices are referred to in bitter disparaging tones, reinforcing the dehumanisation not just of the conspirators, but all those of the Catholic faith: 'Their kissing of babies, their kneeling to wodden Ladies, their calling to Saintes that cannot heare them...their taking of penance, their pilgrimages to Idols, their shavings and their washings, their confessions and their crossinges, and their devilish devises'.<sup>161</sup> T.W concludes his commentary with a plea for all good Christian men work together to suppress the Devil, who has enchanted many into the Catholic Church, in the hope that he may 'never rise againe'.<sup>162</sup> Fawkes and his co-conspirators may be dead, but T.W nevertheless reminds his Protestant readers of the need for continuing vigilance.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1605, the king addressed Parliament, in a speech which is an 'authentic royal voice, speaking in a moment of apparent national crisis.'<sup>163</sup> This speech followed one delivered by the Lord Chancellor, who presented the House with a 'Relation of the most wicked and horrible Treason that ever was heard of, intended against his Majesty and the whole State.'<sup>164</sup>

James opened with a reference to his last address to Parliament, in which he thanked them, and in them, 'the whole Common-wealth (as being the representative Body of the State) for your so willing, and loving receiving and embracing of me'.<sup>165</sup> He then went on to speak of a 'farre greater Thanksgiving then before, which is to G O D, for the great and miraculous Delivery he hath at this time granted to me, and to you all, and consequently to the whole Body of this Estate.'<sup>166</sup> In the same manner that God had delivered Noah and his family from the great flood, he had also saved James, and by implication, England, from a destruction by fire; 'I may justly compare these two great & fearefull doomes-days,

wherewith God threatened to destroy mee and all you of this little world'.<sup>167</sup> James touched briefly on other plots that had sought to take his life, even 'while I was yet in my mothers belly',<sup>168</sup> and then moved on to the nature of the newly discovered Gunpowder Plot.

This speech is the first authoritative account of what had transpired on 5<sup>th</sup> November, and James refers to the Gunpowder Plot as, 'this great and horrible attempt, whereof the like was never either heard or read.'<sup>169</sup> Shock, at the enormity of what had been prevented, and the unprecedented scope of the Plot's ambition, is a theme that goes on to recur repeatedly in Gunpowder texts. The Plot is an unimaginable horror, a mind-blowing conceit, and texts struggled to assimilate the enormity of what had been averted. Indeed, so great was the horror, that authors writing on the Gunpowder Plot often aligned it with the catastrophic St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and the invasion of the Spanish Armada. In his speech to Parliament, James articulates three 'wonderfull, or rather miraculous events' in relation to the Plot.<sup>170</sup> The first is the cruelty of the conspiracy:

which was only for the destruction of my Person, nor of my Wife and Posteritie only, but of the whole Body of the State in generall; wherein should neither have been spared, or distinction made of yong nor olde, of great nor small, of man nor of woman: The whole Nobilitie, the whole Reverend Clergie, Bishops and most part of the good Preachers, the most part of the Knights and Gentry...The whole Judges of the land, with the most of the Lawyers and the whole Clerkes: And the wretch himself that is in the Tower, doth confesse, it was purposely devised by them, and concluded to be done in this house; That where the cruell Lawes (as they say) were made against their Religion, both place and persons should all be destroyed and blowen up at once.<sup>171</sup>

The second miracle is the fact Catesby and the others were acting on 'small, or rather no ground[s]', 'For if these Conspirators had only bene bankrupt persons, or



discontented upon occasion of any disgraces done unto them; this might have seemed to have beene a work of revenge. But for my owne part... So they cannot alledge so much as a pretended cause of griefe: And the wretch himself in hand doeth confesse, That there was no cause moving him or them, but meerly and only Religion.<sup>172</sup> Mark Nicholls argues that revenge was, in fact, a primary motivation in the Plot, and while the king here dismisses the idea, hatred and derision fuelled the treason and revenge was a motive 'shared by everyone in the Plot's inner ring.'<sup>173</sup> Fawkes, in the hours after his arrest 'made no secret of this in all that he said and did... the destruction of the House of Lords would have simply represented justice done.'<sup>174</sup>

In his Gunpowder speech, James adopted a tricky posturing rhetoric. He was aware that Catholics in England felt repressed and dissatisfied; he himself had entertained the lobbying of Thomas Percy on behalf of the Catholic cause in Scotland. Percy appears to have made three visits to Scotland before 1603, carrying Northumberland's secret correspondence to the king.<sup>175</sup> Oswald Tesimond, in his account of the Gunpowder Treason, claims James promised Percy toleration for the Catholics once he became king of England. 'He made Mr Thomas very generous promises to favour catholics actively, and not merely to free them from the bondage and persecution in which they were then living.'<sup>176</sup> Whatever James had told Percy in Scotland, and the consensus of opinion among historians is that James 'did give certain assurances, but that they were verbal,' it appears he had quite deliberately cultivated the high hopes Tesimond refers to.<sup>177</sup> At the same time, he had made equally encouraging noises to the English Puritans, 'who would have been mortally offended at the merest hint of toleration for the Catholics.'<sup>178</sup>

James' opposition to any outward religious diversity hardened in the later months of 1603, and his proclamation of February 1604, which ordered all Catholic priests to leave the realm, and which explicitly denounced those who had nourished 'a vaine confidence of some Innovation in matters of Religion to be done by Us, which Wee never intended nor gave any man cause to expect,' was a cause of dismay among optimistic English Catholics.<sup>179</sup> Hugh Owen, a Catholic intelligencer working closely with the English Jesuits, wrote in 1603, 'I perceive that there is no hope at all of amendment in this stinking king of ours.'<sup>180</sup>

The disingenuous position adopted by the king in this speech to Parliament was an attempt to distance himself from accusations of anti-Catholicism. His position was complex. On the one hand he needed to appease those elements in his government, like Salisbury, who had achieved political maturity in an atmosphere of powerful distrust and discrimination against Catholics, in an age in fact that made the very fact of being a priest treasonable.<sup>181</sup> As king of Scotland, James had been astute enough to realise that Salisbury's support 'was worth more than all the support of all the Catholics in England,'<sup>182</sup> which goes some way to explaining his anti-papist comments to Salisbury in their private correspondence. On the other hand, James had no history of persecuting Catholics, and in a letter to Salisbury before his accession to the English throne, he claimed: 'I am so far from any intention of persecution, as I protest to God I reverence their Church as our Mother Church, although clogged with many infirmities and corruptions, besides that I ever did hold persecution as one of the infallible notes of a false church.'<sup>183</sup> After the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, James was desperate to ensure the event would not become a weapon for the more Puritan elements in the country

because of the potentially dangerous implications for both England and Europe, yet he also realised the need to distance himself from suggestions that the Plot was a result of his domestic policies.<sup>184</sup> This ambiguous position is succinctly explained in his defence: 'I will never allow in my conscience that the blood of any man shall be shed for diversity of opinions in religion, but I should be sorry that Catholics should so multiply as they might be able to practise their old principles upon us.'<sup>185</sup>

James suggested to Parliament that the Gunpowder conspirators were blinded by superstition, and not representative of the majority of English Catholics; he 'recognises that there are in effect shades of belief, that many are held to Catholicism not through any devotion to what a good protestant might perceive as its iniquitous depths.'<sup>186</sup> He also takes great pains to remind his audience that the discovery of the Plot is not an opportunity for a wholesale backlash against Catholicism. 'It may very well be possible that the zeale of your hearts shall make some of you in your speeches rashly to blame such as may be innocent of this attempt; But upon the other part I wish you to consider, That I would bee sorry that any being innocent of this practice, either domestical or forraine should receive blame or harme for the same.'<sup>187</sup> He reminds Parliament that 'many honest men, seduced with some errors of Popery, may yet remaine good and faithful Subjects.'<sup>188</sup> This, in essence, is the message James wanted to disseminate; the conspirators were corrupt and acting alone, their horrifying treason had done nothing to alter his general views on religion: 'I would wish with those ancient Philosfers, that there were a Christall window in my breast, wherein al my

people might see the secretest thoughts in my heart, for then might you all see no alteration in my minde for this accident.<sup>'189</sup>

James I saw himself as one 'equipped by education and experience to preside over the reconciliation of Protestant and Catholic,<sup>'190</sup> and the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot presented him with an 'unparalleled opportunity to redesign his image.<sup>'191</sup> In this speech, he isolates extremism at both ends of the religious divide, a policy he adopted throughout his reign, and one that is 'almost entirely executed by means of official rhetoric.<sup>'192</sup> It was this rhetoric which subsequently found its way into printed sermons and pamphlets, and sparked a discourse on the Plot that was far removed from the tolerant position here adopted by James.

The third miracle James shares with Parliament is the providential nature of the Plot's discovery. Not ordinarily a suspicious man, James had nevertheless been drawn to some 'dark phrases' in the Monteagle letter, which he instantly divined as a reference to 'this horrible forme of blowing us all up by Powder.<sup>'193</sup> As a result, the search was made of the vault and Fawkes apprehended. As a further example of providence, James cited the way in which Fawkes was arrested: 'in that also was there a wonderfull providence of God, that when the party himselfe was taken, he was but new come out of his house from working, having his Fireworke for kindling ready in his pocket, wherewith as he confesseth, if hee had been taken but immediately before when hee was in the House, hee was resolved to have blowen up himself with his Takers.<sup>'194</sup> This publicly reinforces the seriousness with which the Gunpowder Plotters took their conspiracy but, as Nicholls asserts, the truth is, when Fawkes declared that 'he would have exploded the mine rather than

submit to arrest', it was nothing more than 'bravado, and bravado reported second-hand.'<sup>195</sup>

James then moved on in his speech to an exposition on the nature of Parliament, dwelling particularly on the institution as an "'Eltonian" point of contact, as a means of channelling information and news from London back to the country at large.'<sup>196</sup> He announced a further proroguing of Parliament, encouraging MPs to return to their constituencies and do what was necessary to ensure the rebels at large were apprehended.<sup>197</sup> He makes it clear he and his council cannot manage both the 'apprehension and trial of these Conspirators, and also to wayt upon the dayly affaires of the Parliament.'<sup>198</sup> There is a strong conviction behind these words 'that England still faces a challenge extending far beyond the foiled plans of one man and his ton of gunpowder. The earliest section of *King's Book* [that is, James' speech to Parliament] is thus a statement of principles rather than news, an exercise in reassurance when confronted with the unknown.'<sup>199</sup>

Over the last 150 years, *King's Book* has been discounted by some as 'little better than partisan spin.'<sup>200</sup> Historians have dismissed the work as propaganda put forward by the government. But, when looking at the way in which 'the text was put together, an impression steadily emerges that the tale related here is substantially a true tale. There is little need, in this case, for exaggeration, for elaboration. In any narrative of the Gunpowder Plot, the actions of the Plotters spoke for themselves.'<sup>201</sup> *King's Book* was in circulation within a month of the Plot. However, James' speech, delivered to Parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> November, was probably not made accessible to the general public prior to its publication. There may have been oral rumours and speculation, but it was a month later before Londoners

were able to read the details of what had transpired. Therefore, while chronologically this crucial speech was delivered only four days after the discovery of the Plot, it was left to William Barlow, Bishop of Rochester, and tutor and chaplain to the Prince of Wales,<sup>202</sup> to deliver details of the conspiracy to the public. He did so on 10<sup>th</sup> November, in a sermon delivered at St Paul's Cross.

In the preface to Barlow's published sermon, entered into the Stationers' Register on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1605, the printer Matthew Law explains Barlow had already been scheduled to deliver a sermon on 10<sup>th</sup> November, but as a result of recent events, he thought it only fitting to preach instead on the Powder Treason. Law warns the reader that Barlow had only been given a few days to compose his sermon, and had had to rely on the king and Salisbury to supply him with the necessary details: 'unlesse the *Kings Maiestie* his most excellent *Speech*, with the right honourable Lord *Chancellour* his grave *Oration* (both of them in the *Parliament* house the day before,) and divers circumstances sensibly conceived and imparted to him over night, by the Earle of *Salisbury*, his *Maiesties principall Secretary*, had not succoured him, he had failed even in that slender *performance*, which was then offered to the *Eare*, and here is presented to thy *View*.'<sup>203</sup> Not only was time a factor in the sermon's composition, but Law also apologises for the fact that Barlow had been so horrified by the Plot he had barely been fit to compose his sermon: 'remember the *shortnes* of the time for the gratulation, the *dreadfulnes* of the *danger*, the *fresh escape* whereof could not but leave an impression of *horror* in the Preachers minde (able to have confounded his *Memorie*).'<sup>204</sup> Maximising on the horror of the Plot is a useful rhetorical strategy in Gunpowder texts, since it

guaranteed to unite the country and increase sales, and the government was keen to get its message out.

St Paul's Cross, an outdoor pulpit within the grounds of St Paul's, was regularly used by the government to disseminate news.<sup>205</sup> Salisbury realised the importance of this particular Sunday gathering, and he knew the pulpit was a powerful weapon for broadcasting government propaganda.<sup>206</sup> He was also keenly aware that the sermon be carefully managed, since what Barlow delivered from the pulpit would become the official government version of events. It seems reasonable to assume that much of the sermon came from Cecil, with 'bits and pieces borrowed from James' and the Lord Chancellor's speeches delivered before Parliament on the preceding day.'<sup>207</sup> Both the Monteagle letter and the confession by Fawkes were read out to the crowd. There are many echoes of James' speech to Parliament in Barlow's sermon, which reinforce in public the message given in private to the government: 'It seemeth by his Majesties speach yesterday; that his case & race hath bin the same with the Prophet, being preserued in Utero,... For no sooner was hee conceived in the wombe, but presentlie he was hazarded, no sooner delivered from the wombe, but invironed with daunger'.<sup>208</sup> James, Barlow suggested, may have been in danger throughout his life, but the hand of God had always preserved him, and on 5<sup>th</sup> November nowhere had God's interest in the protection of James been more evident. It was the king alone, claimed Barlow, through divine intervention, who had been able to deduce the danger contained in the anonymous letter and thus save England. 'By his Majesties apprehension, who though he walketh securely, in the sinceritie of his Conscience, and innocency of his carriage (which makes him lesse jealous and suspitious of daunger) yet his

heart gave him (by some wordes in that letter) that there might bee some fiery Engine, perhaps remembering his Fathers Case, who was blowne up with powder.<sup>209</sup>

Barlow's sermon is in three parts. The first is a long exposition on the Psalm of David, or the 'Triumphing Song' as Barlow refers to it. He recalls the many Biblical deliverances God has engendered, and the different means by which the righteous are saved from the enemies of the Lord. In the second section, he compared James' delivery with David's biblical delivery, refiguring the English monarch 'as something of a Christ figure'.<sup>210</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the '*inhumane crueltie... brutish immanitie...diuelish brutishnes*'<sup>211</sup> of the Plotters. Fawkes is singled out as the '*Divell of the Vault*'<sup>212</sup> who intended, '*beast-like*,'<sup>213</sup> to destroy king and Parliament with gunpowder, 'for the materials of the death intended (Gun-powder) which they say none but the divell, the King of the sulphurious pit did invent'.<sup>214</sup> Fawkes intended to 'make himselfe drunke with the blood of so many Worthies,' and it is at this point that Barlow gives the assembled crowd concrete information about the Plot:

(for by the reporte of militarie men) his provision was so large, that if fire had beene given, (beside the place it selfe at the which hee aymed) the Hall of Judgement, the Courtes of Recordes, the Collegiate Church, the Cittie of Westminster, yea, White-Hall the Kinges house, had beene crushed and overthrowne, such heapes hee had layde in, of Billets, Fagots, huge stones, Iron-crowes, Pike-axes, great Hammer-heades, besides so many barrels of Gun-powder, five and thirtie in number small and great, as I am credibly informed.<sup>215</sup>



Fawkes, Barlow claims, is worse than the Devil, because he 'contented himself not with the death of the bodie, but reached in his *Project* at the second death, of the soule; by taking away many, so suddenly in their *sinnes unrepented*, with their mindes *un-prepared*.'<sup>216</sup> Here Barlow reminded the listeners to be better prepared in future:

I trust that this escape will make many to like the better of the prayer against suddaine death, for though I doubt not, but if it had beene effected, that this *whirling blast* woulde haue beene vnto our *sacred King*, (*so Religious in his profession, so innocent from wrong, so cleare in his conscience*) as the Whirle-wind and fiery chariot of *Elias*, to haue carried vppe his soule to heauen, and that God in his mercy, woulde haue made this *Deluge of Bloode*, as *Baptismum sanguinis*, a *Baptisme of Martyrdome*, to haue *washt away our sinners*; and as a *Holocaust*, an whole burnt sacrifice, to propitiate his wrath for our *Transgressions*, yet as much as in this *Fury it lay*, he wold haue sent vs all to hell.<sup>217</sup>

In Barlow's sermon, Guy Fawkes is a 'vermine of the basest sort, a very Tenebrio, the slave of darkenesse, like a Mole under the ground, to subverte at one push as the Prophet speaketh... heade & tayle, braunch and roote, all in one day'.<sup>218</sup>

Fawkes is recast as an apocalyptic Antichrist; Caligula wished the execution of the citizens of Rome, but Fawkes, this 'Blood-sucker, not only wished it, but contrived it, prepared for it, and was ready to execute it.'<sup>219</sup> He was worse than Nero, 'which for his Crueltie got the name of Nero from all the rest, him hath he matched in Affection ... So ment Guy Faulkes (the true name of a false traytor) to have beheld as (hee said) the houses and bodies flying up; he living & laughing at it If hee had solde us for bond-slaves & hand-maides.'<sup>220</sup> One of Barlow's aims in this sermon is to horrify the assembled crowd into thanksgiving, and he succeeds, for it is this horror and revulsion more than anything else that is adopted by subsequent authors.

As Nowak states, the 'anger raised by these images of what almost came to pass quickly translated into religious prejudice; and beginning with the first anniversary celebrations of the plot's failure, and progressing steadily from there, the papacy, Jesuits and the Catholic Church as a whole came to be substitutes for Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators.'<sup>221</sup> In spite of his virulent attack on Fawkes, Barlow is careful not to employ anti-Catholic rhetoric in his sermon. Like James, Barlow emphasised the fact the conspirators were corrupt fanatics, atypical of true Catholics, and indeed Barlow's sermon, when compared with more than thirty-five Gunpowder sermons delivered over the following fifty years, is mild in terms of Protestant outrage.<sup>222</sup> This is almost certainly the result of the controlling hand of the government, since 'this first sermon was the one that was the most directly controlled by the monarchy and its agents, and although many of the future Gunpowder sermons were not "officially inspired" by the government, their primary purpose was the legitimization of the current power structure.'<sup>223</sup>

There are elements in Barlow's sermon of what is to come in future commentary. In considering what might have been, should the Plot have succeeded, Barlow paints a terrifying picture of an England without a monarch or government, without defences; citizens slaughtered and the world cast into the darkness of an apocalyptic hell. This idiom of disbelief and revulsion is a common motif employed in Gunpowder texts; by locating the Plot within armageddon-esque biblical tropes, authors are able to disengage their commentary from potential accusations of sedition. While Barlow's sermon does not preach anti-Catholicism, 'its inflammatory rhetoric was adopted by more zealous speakers,

who saw to it that England's burning fear of the Whore of Babylon would not quickly cool down.'<sup>224</sup>

Barely a month after Barlow's sermon, the playwright and pamphleteer Thomas Dekker published a work entitled *The Double PP*.<sup>225</sup> Dekker, who struggled financially throughout his life,<sup>226</sup> probably rushed this work into print in order to capitalise on the thirst for news in the weeks following the Plot's discovery. It was entered into the Stationers' Register on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1605.<sup>227</sup> Dekker liked to recycle and recirculate texts, remodelling his own works and those of others, in order to produce 'new' material for both printer and reader.<sup>228</sup> *The Double PP* is a good example of this practice. In 1587, William Segar, Portcullis pursuivant to Elizabeth I, published *The blazon of papists*, a short work in which he categorised the 'actions, gestures and natures' of the 'Sect of Papistry'.<sup>229</sup> Segar depicts nine specific papist types: Papist Couchant, Papist Passant, Papist Passant Gardant, Papist Variant, Papist Volant, Papist Seminant, Papist Saliant, Papist Rampant and Papist Pendant.<sup>230</sup> His pamphlet caricatures each of these types, using blazons to build an argument, which contends that ultimately, no papist can be a true and loyal subject to the queen. In the winter of 1605, Dekker took Segar's work and republished it, adding some of his own material, including his 'Picture of a Jesuite', and a description of foreign papists, which enabled him to reference various Catholic plots, including the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.

The massacre of thousands of Protestants in Paris in 1572 was still vivid in the minds of English Protestants. Charles IX of France, planning an invasion of the Netherlands in support of the Protestant Huguenot cause, had been embarrassed by the destruction of his forces in a Spanish ambush near Mons on the French/Low

Countries border in July 1572.<sup>231</sup> His mother, Catherine de Medici, subsequently ordered the assassination of Charles' military commander, Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, in Paris. An attempt to shoot Coligny with a musket on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1572, failed when it merely wounded him in the arm,<sup>232</sup> so on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, a second attempt was made on his life. Having stabbed Coligny to death in his bed, 'Catholic supporters of the Guise faction went on to murder an estimated two thousand residents of Paris.'<sup>233</sup> This massacre included all the leading members of the Huguenot party, as well as a number of Protestant intellectuals and public figures.<sup>234</sup> The violence continued into October in the provinces, and estimates suggest as many as 10,000 Protestants were murdered.<sup>235</sup>

English authors and dramatists were subsequently able to explore the event in plays such as Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*<sup>236</sup> because of their access to material written by European Protestants: 'increasing numbers of works from overseas, especially from France and mostly in translation, began to make their way into the hands of English readers.'<sup>237</sup> After the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, French Protestants began to exploit these open channels to disseminate their writings abroad in an effort to influence public opinion.<sup>238</sup> Dekker comments on the massacre in *The Double PP* with vitriolic distaste: 'Of him that is a Guizian Leaguer.../ And (for the Church, does Massacre / The church it selfe, whilst France does flame, / And then cuts Throates to quench the same.'<sup>239</sup> He reminds his audience of the murder of Henri III of France, stabbed to death by a Jesuit with a poisoned dagger in 1589: 'If you look upon that Truculent, Barbarous and Divellish torturing of Frenchman... in that Their Universall Guizian Massacre, setabroach by Jesuiticall Instruments'.<sup>240</sup> What black art, Dekker asks, did Jesuits

use to 'conjure up a divell in the likenesse of a Frier (Jaques Clement) whom these Exorcists armed to kill Henry the third.'<sup>241</sup> References to both the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the death of Henri III appear regularly in Gunpowder texts. Dekker, like other Gunpowder authors, also makes reference to attempted assassinations of Elizabeth I in his description of those 'Jesuited English' who sought to shoot their 'Romaine darts' as the late queen.<sup>242</sup> This too becomes a common staple of Gunpowder texts. Dekker denounces Germany as the breeding ground for the Gunpowder Plot, presumably because Guy Fawkes was believed to have spent time fighting in the Low Countries; 'In this Germaine Nest was this Diabolicall, horrid, and most impious late Conspiracy hacht'.<sup>243</sup> This statement reveals the understandable confusion in the immediate aftermath of the Plot; Guy Fawkes is figured as the Plot's mastermind, with his activities overseas absorbed into the Gunpowder Treason as evidence of foreign involvement.

Using the Gunpowder Plot as his locus, Dekker reconfigures Segar's *The blazon of papists* within *The Double PP*. His treatment is crude and inflammatory, enlarging each of Segar's blazons into two seven-line stanzas depicting the nine Papist types, and adding a tenth, the Papist Umbreant, or The Moldwarp. It is tempting to read Dekker's ten enlarged blazons as caricatures of the conspirators themselves; the Passant Gardant Papist might be an obvious figure for the Earl of Northumberland, for example, and the Papist Seminant, a figure for Henry Garnet. However, the only clear allusion to a member of the Gunpowder circle is the Papist Umbreant, or the Moldwarp. The Moldwarp sits 'like a Skreech-owle', having given his soul over to treason. In early modern England, a screech owl was an alternate term for a barn owl, the discordant screech of which was understood

to be an omen of evil.<sup>244</sup> 'Screech owl' thus became an emblematic image for those who presaged misfortune, and, after the Gunpowder Plot, it became a common analogy for Catholics and Jesuits. Dekker refers to Guy Fawkes as 'a Sprite / That deales in Fire-workes: Vaults are his delight, / Where for his close Traynes, hell does him prefer / To be Arch-Enginist to Lucifer.'<sup>245</sup> The Gunpowder conspirators, and by implication, papists, are 'Monsters' who intended to 'make Religion vile: / To have Kings Names no more hung on the Fyle / Of blest succession: But with fires (from Rome) / To rak't up quite at the Generall Doome.'<sup>246</sup> *The Double PP* is an obvious attempt to maximise on public interest in the aftermath of the Plot; Dekker recognising, like other authors, that public horror regarding the events of 1605 was leading to an increased demand for Gunpowder-related publications.

A month after *The Double PP*, a poem on the Plot entitled *The Divell of the Vault. OR, The Unmasking of Murther In a brief declaration of the Caco-licke-complotted Treason lately discovered*, appeared in print. It was entered into the Stationers' Register on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1606, and the furious nature of the verse, and a title lifted directly from Barlow's 10<sup>th</sup> November sermon, suggest it is was written immediately after the Plot's discovery. The identity of the author remains a mystery. The frontispiece to the work states simply 'J.H', and suggestions for the identity of J.H have included John Heath, an epigrammatist active in 1610, which has since been discredited.<sup>247</sup> A more likely candidate is John Hynd, a poet and writer of romances who flourished around 1604.<sup>248</sup> *The Divell of the Vault* is a curious work. The author explains to the reader he had only three hours in which to compose the poem, and thus apologises for its 'so naked a stile', and for not investing it 'with more polished roabes'; for 'times brevitie prohibited my

invention, and other accidentall occurrences intercepted my intention.<sup>249</sup> Written in iambic pentameter, the poem is crude in style. The author introduces his subject matter as 'dreadfull, foule, Chymera-like,<sup>250</sup> describing the Gunpowder conspirators as 'Tygrish blood-sworne Jesuites, / Spanized Brittish slaves'. Here are the beginnings of attempts made by Gunpowder authors to establish a direct link between the Gunpowder circle and foreign Jesuitical powers, associations deliberately omitted from Barlow's sermon and *King's Book*. The Plot, J.H claims, has been:

Extracted from the Stratagems,  
of Pope and Popish name:  
That every letter in these lines,  
may Character his shame.  
Whose strict Religion grounded false,  
on proud rebellion stands;  
Which dooth subborne his hel-bred troupe,  
with blood t'imbrue their hands.<sup>251</sup>

The alignment of the pope with the Antichrist is a commonplace Protestant trope, and one used repeatedly in Gunpowder texts. In his references to both the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and the invasion of the Spanish Armada, J.H, like Dekker, draws on English Protestant history as an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good (Protestantism) and the forces of darkness (Catholicism). He too describes the massacre in Paris, but his tone is more lurid and provocative:

Where cursed Guize rang deaths alarmes,  
in deepe of silent Night:  
Protesting to the Protestants, for God and them to fight.  
But his intent farre dissonant,  
depriv'd them all of life:  
And massacred three thousand soules  
with Murthers-slaughtering knife.<sup>252</sup>

By describing the sheer unimaginable horror of the event, J.H adopts Barlow's shock tactics:

These Papists tossed harmelese babes,  
upon their speares sharpe point:  
Then did their wombs eviscerate,  
and teare them joynt from joynt.  
Dragging their wofull scritchng mothers,  
through every street by th'haire.<sup>253</sup>

He catalogues Catholic attempts made to assassinate Elizabeth I, and describes a curious incident in which a German Senate House was 'blowne up in the ayre' during a Catholic plot to murder seven electors of the German emperor at the same time as the Gunpowder Plot 'should executed be.'<sup>254</sup> In addition to the German incident, J.H also outlines the murder of Henri III of France by the fanatical Jesuit, Jacques Clement, in 1589. He describes two Jesuits 'lurking close on Paris bridge, / like blacke incarnate Fiends; / Their glowing eyes bewraying still, / their murther-plotting minds.'<sup>255</sup> As in Dekker's *The Double PP*, the Jesuits await their victim like 'fatall Owles'.<sup>256</sup> A second reference to owls occurs when he likens good Christians to 'light-embracing Fowles,' in diametric opposition to papists, who are 'Nights Sun-shining Owles.'<sup>257</sup> Here is the beginning of a binary opposition between the forces of good/light and the forces of evil/darkness used by many Protestant authors to negotiate the Gunpowder Plot. Like Barlow, J.H imagines a world in which the Plot has been successful, and the pope as the Antichrist turning 'large Europe's Silver streames / to purple lakes of bloud.'<sup>258</sup> He paints a scene of devastation and carnage, employing the same rhetorical techniques seen in Barlow's sermon:

What dismall terror had it beene,



to each teare-trickling eye:  
To view dismembered corps dispers'd  
and dissipate lye.

To see such royall and Noble shapes,  
blowne up in th'whisking ayre,  
heere armes, there legges, dissevered quite,  
lie mangled every where.

Some ston'd with feare, some raging runne,  
some volley forth shrill cries:  
T'appall blacke hell, amaze the earth,  
and penetrate the skies.<sup>259</sup>

*The Divell of the Vault* depicts 'strengthlesse sucklings braines, / bedasht gaist flinty stones,'<sup>260</sup> and people 'wounded, deadly, dead-alive' in streets 'purplefied / with goares coagulate.'<sup>261</sup> In a further echo of Barlow, J.H refers to the conspirators as 'sight-deprived Moales,'<sup>262</sup> and specifically names Catesby and Percy as 'hels blacke fiends,' who have been 'rowz'd from the tenebrous deepes, / of Sulphur-flaming hell.'<sup>263</sup> At the end of his poem, J.H calls for the hearts of Christian kings to unite and 'drag that triple-crowned Beast, / from out his monstrous throne.'<sup>264</sup> Europe, he insists, can never be at peace until the 'bloud-bathed Romish Wolves, / quite extirpated be.'<sup>265</sup> J.H's position, like Dekker's, has advanced from that of Barlow and the government. Barlow was careful to confine his remarks about Catholicism to a discussion of the conspirators as atypical Catholics, and while attacking Fawkes, restrained himself from an outright call for the admonition of all Catholics. J.H however, freed from the constraints of government control, is able to equate the Gunpowder Treason with earlier European plots against Protestants, and locate it much more firmly within an armageddon-esque trope. As this thesis hopes to demonstrate, *The Divell of the Vault* went on to provide a model for many

Protestant writers wishing to interrogate the Gunpowder Plot both in print and on the stage.

Another text in circulation in early 1606 was the sermon *A Heavenly Voyce* by William Symonds, a lecturer at Greyfriars, and previous master of Magdalene College, Oxford.<sup>266</sup> This sermon, preached at St Paul's Cross on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1606, is a blistering attack on the Catholic Church that opens with a quotation from Revelation. Using Revelation as his source, Symonds delivers a violent condemnation of the Babylonian church, urging all good Christians and subjects to reject the Roman Church and follow the doctrines of revenge and separation.<sup>267</sup> Rome is Babylon, for all nations 'have drunken of the Wine of the wrath of her fornications. That is, all Nations have beene afflicted, with warres, treasons, cruelties, and divers other calamities, because they would not submit themselves to her abominable pride, idolatrie, and other spirituall fornications.'<sup>268</sup> Popish priests swarm the land, ready to seduce good Christians, and unless God sends a mighty wind, 'to take away these Popish frogs, which are the spirits of devils, these trayterous Jesuites and Priestes, and violently to cast them into the sea,' then English subjects may 'partake in the traitorous sinnes, of this Babylonian tyrannie.'<sup>269</sup> Rome has become a 'harlot, yea a Tyrant'<sup>270</sup> establishing schools in England to 'train up Gentlemens children, in this impious, & rebellious religion'.<sup>271</sup> Symonds warns his audience that by tolerating Catholics, England runs the risk of invoking the wrath of God, 'we must know that when the Land, or Cittie is punished with warres, or murthers, with famine or pestilence, or other mortalitie, it is for the sinne of such as partake in the Anti-christian sinnes, of the contempt of the Word of God.'<sup>272</sup> The discovery of the Gunpowder Plot is an indication of the

Antichrist at work; men are blinded 'by their Sacraments, to murther Princes, nobles, yea, the whole Parliaments, & the whole Church of God'. They have been corrupted to 'murther, and that in such a horrible manner, that they justifie the most abhominable persecutors: witnes be their indeavour to blowe up the Parliament house, & to fire cities, to pave streets with dead carcasses, and to staine great rivers with the blood of the slaine.'<sup>273</sup> The margin notes in the printed sermon refer to the 'massacre in Paris, anno, 1572'. Symonds ends with reassurance that God will punish Rome, the 'Babylonian Synagogue of Antichrist'<sup>274</sup> for her sinnes, but urges Parliament to awaken and enact laws to ensure that England is never again at the mercy of the dark forces of Satan.

In January 1606, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, published *An Answer to Certaine Scandalous Papers, Scattered abroad under colour of a Catholicke Admonition*. An unusual move for Salisbury, who was no stranger to libellous attacks,<sup>275</sup> this pamphlet, his only published work, addresses a group of anonymous Catholics who had sent him a death threat via letter in the aftermath of the Plot. In this text, Salisbury rebuffs accusations that he was using the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot to 'roote out all memory of Catholicke Religion, either by sudden banishment, Massacre, imprisonment, or some such unsupportable vexations.'<sup>276</sup> Affirming the Gunpowder Plot was the work of a few misguided and corrupt fanatics, 'some few rotten branches, fallen from such decayed and withered Trees,'<sup>277</sup> he reminds his accusers he is under the direct authority of the king, whom he defends as a moderate and tolerant monarch: 'If those which use lawful meanes to prevent conspiracies, must be esteemed plotters and Subjects fit for proscription, howe shall his Majesty escape their censure, that was Gods chosen

minister upon earth for this particular Discoverie?’<sup>278</sup> The source of this letter is yet to be revealed, but it was probably written by supporters of the conspirators who wished to maximise on government uncertainty in the days and weeks following the Plot’s discovery. The anonymous letter itself, reproduced in Salisbury’s pamphlet, threatens that ‘there are five, which have generally undertaken your death, and have vowed the performance thereof, by taking already the blessed Sacrament, if you continue your dayly plotting of so tragicall Stratagemes against Recusants’.<sup>279</sup> Although the anonymous authors condemn the Gunpowder Treason as a ‘most wicked deseigne’ and a ‘barbarous project’,<sup>280</sup> Salisbury is nevertheless a ‘match, to give fire unto his Majestie.’<sup>281</sup> This text reveals a fascinating circulation of gunpowder semantics; phrases used by the government to condemn the Plotters adopted and redirected back against the government itself by further conspirators. Salisbury uses *An Answer* to reinforce the government position on the Plot by recalling James’ speech to Parliament. He dismisses threatened assassination attempts against himself with coolness: ‘these poor threats amaze no hopes of mine, I am none of these that believe with the men of the olde world, that Mountaines shakes, when the Moules doe cast.’<sup>282</sup> His use of ‘moules’ echoes both Barlow’s sermon, in which Fawkes and the Plotters are scheming moles ‘under the ground’, and *The Divell of the Vault*, in which they are described as ‘sight-deprived Moales’.

Another text in circulation at this time, William Leigh’s *Great Britaines great deliverance*, published in January 1606, also reinforces the government line. In an earlier sermon, Leigh had looked back with triumph to the defeat of the Spanish Armada: ‘the Lord had no sooner blown upon all their pomp and pride, but their

spirits were daunted, their armies were discomforted, the great Armada was scattered, beaten and broken.<sup>283</sup> In his Gunpowder sermon, he calls 1605 a year of revolution, for England had been 'endaungered, and yet thus delivered; endaungered by men, but delivered by God'.<sup>284</sup> Although the emphasis is on rejoicing and triumph, Leigh's sermon bears all the hallmarks of a Gunpowder text. It references the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, the murder of Henri III, and the attempted assassinations of Elizabeth I. Fawkes and his conspirators are Romish monsters and 'unnaturall and degenerate Englishmen', who sought the 'destruction of so benign a Prince, and so Royall an issue'. In locating the Plot within tropes of Revelation, he accuses the conspirators of trying to 'staineth the earth with blood, the aire with blasphemy, and the heavens with...abominable and luxurious incontinencies'.<sup>285</sup> Leigh imagines an England destroyed by gunpowder: 'how speedily the mischief wold have spred itself into the body & bowels of all the kingdoms wherein nothing should have bene heard, but rumbling of shot, and chrashing of armor, outcries of mothers, and yelling of children: nothing seen but sacking of cities, burning of towns, racing of towers, & wasting of land, with destruction of parts, and desolation of the whole'.<sup>286</sup> He warns his readers of the insidious nature of Jesuits, 'their blind guides, Jesuits, Seminaries, and Seedsmen, who to betray the truth, sowe the tares of all treasons, at all times, and in all places; they are the Frogs of Egypt, that leap into kings chambers, & busily possesse the Courts of Princes, & mightie men, either to poison their hearts with the enchaunted Cup of Romish superstition, or to bereave them of their lives'.<sup>287</sup> Like J.H, Leigh describes the Roman Church as the 'red Dragon, bloody beast, and whore of Babylon',<sup>288</sup> and advises Protestants to beware of the dangers of the

‘vermine of the Church’ and their ‘secret treasons’. This echoes T.W.’s warning of the need to remain vigilant against Catholics who seek to ‘sewe seditions, maintaine bawdie houses, blinde the simple, abuse the honest’.<sup>289</sup> Leigh denounces the Gunpowder Plot as the most despicable treason of all, ‘this last devise of Gunpowder to blowe up all, was most detestable, divellish, & damnable, as wherein hel was shaken, with all its furies, to have effected their thrice bloody practise, with this firy resolution.’<sup>290</sup>

By April 1606, Henry Garnet was in custody and subject to lengthy examinations by Sir Edward Coke and others. In the same month, William Hubbock, chaplain to the king, published an anti-Catholic tract entitled *Great Brittaines resurrection*.<sup>291</sup> It is a lengthy work in which Hubbock implores England to thank God for his great mercy in delivering her from the horrors of the Gunpowder Plot. He talks of a ‘new generation of gun-powder men in this place,’<sup>292</sup> who sought to dissolve Parliament with ‘one blast of powder’.<sup>293</sup> He describes the conspirators as ‘unmercifull bouchers of Rome,’ and ‘blood-thirstie Babilonians’ who sought to ‘destroy roote, and branche and fruite, parent and childe in one day: to kill damme and young in one nest: to extinguish present and future.’<sup>294</sup> Hubbock reinforces the message propounded by Barlow in his 10<sup>th</sup> November sermon; the Plotters, ‘Sulphurous helhounds’,<sup>295</sup> sought the utter doom of all, but were averted at the last minute by the providential hand of God. He also employs the rhetoric of apocalyptic fantasy seen in Dekker, J.H., and others: ‘when the foundations of the earth had beene discovered...death would have scaled every wall, and climde in every windowe... thick thick haile, pel mel would have swept away every vaine confidence... all should have beene trod downe by it: when it

passed over.<sup>296</sup> London would have been 'so cumbred with feares and fresh incounters at home, and newes of slaughters abroad, warres and rumours of warres, that thou couldest scarce seeke out the bodies of the dead to gather the Princes and the Nobles out of the dust.'<sup>297</sup> Hubbock chastises England, as Symonds had done, for being careless. He reminds her of the massacre in Paris, and reiterates how close she has come to an apocalyptic doomsday.<sup>298</sup> Garnet and the conspirators have afforded England a chance to glimpse into the shadowy world of the papist, Hubbock suggests, since they have opened the dungeons of their 'trayterous harts' and 'their owne bookes, writings, and confessions... and all the false dores of [their] equivocating soules';<sup>299</sup> enabling England to peer into 'the bottomless hell of Popish and Jesuiticall practise'. The conspirators are devils: 'they complotted, contrived, put in practise to their uttermost power, the most divellish murder, butchery, and massacre that ever Sathan hatched from the beginning of the world'.<sup>300</sup> In *The Divell of the Vault*, Jesuits are 'black incarnate fiends';<sup>301</sup> Dekker describes Fawkes as 'Arch-Enginist to Lucifer',<sup>302</sup> and Barlow denounces Fawkes as 'the *Divell of the Vault*'.<sup>303</sup> It is not difficult to imagine a government hand in Hubbock's piece, for it follows closely on from Barlow's sermon, and once again its thunderous rhetoric reinforces the power of the monarch through England's deliverance from the Popish Treason. Similarly, in John Rhodes's popular *A brief some of the Treason intended*,<sup>304</sup> written as an extended ballad on the Gunpowder Plot, there are parallels with circulating Gunpowder texts, including *The blazon of papists*, and especially Dekker's *The Double PP*. In the opening lines for example, Rhodes speaks of: 'Bands of PPP O: all degrees, / have sought still: / English Brittaines utor ruine / by their skill.'<sup>305</sup> The three Ps are listed in the margin

as 'Popes, Priestes and Papists.'<sup>306</sup> Rhodes clearly intended to write an accessible account of the Plot. He follows the basic narrative of events depicted in *King's Book*, interjecting anti-papist commentary and aligning the conspirators with the now-familiar figures of the Antichrist and the Devil; the prince of darkness, 'and hel's blacknes / was their leader';<sup>307</sup> Fawkes here becomes 'Sathans Sonne'.<sup>308</sup> Rhodes also employs the rhetorical strategies of other Gunpowder commentators, locating England in an apocalyptic landscape bathed in blood: 'But these killed, and Streetes filled, / with their bloud.'<sup>309</sup> He triumphs, as T.W. does in *A True and Perfect Relation*, in the deaths of the conspirators, 'Heads of Catesby, and of Piercy, / they were sent: / And sette upon, the upper house, / of Parlyament. / Bravely plodding, yea and nodding, / each to other.'<sup>310</sup>

In November 1606, on the first anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, Lancelot Andrewes delivered a sermon before the king. His sermons were immensely popular and a highlight of the court season; drawing large crowds, and often subsequently printed.<sup>311</sup> Andrewes earned 'royal accolades far greater than any known from James for other forms of literature'.<sup>312</sup> He opens by describing 5<sup>th</sup> November as 'this day of ours, this fifth of November, this day of God's making; that which was done upon it was "the Lord's doing"'.<sup>313</sup> This day, he says, was meant to be 'the day of all our deaths; and many were appointed as Sheepe to the Slaughter, nay, worse than so.'<sup>314</sup> He speaks of the sinister nature of the secret Plot 'and we might have gone to the Parliament, as secure as ever. The danger never dreamt of',<sup>315</sup> describing the threat to London from 'undermining, digging deep under ground, that none could discerne'. The 'conspiracy to destroy from below touched the most sensitive of places in the Jacobean psyche'<sup>316</sup> and Andrewes, like



Barlow a year earlier, is still concerned with the unimaginable horror of the Plot. The conspirators are a 'brood of vipers', an image seen on the Gunpowder medal. They are 'mordentes in silentio, still, not so much as a hisse, till the deadly blow had been given.'<sup>317</sup> Like Barlow, J. H, and other Gunpowder authors, Andrewes employs apocalyptic rhetoric; 'herein so much bloud as would have made it raine bloud, so many baskets of heads, so many peeces of rent bodies cast up and downe, and scattered all over the face of the earth.'<sup>318</sup> Fawkes and Catesby intended to strike at the root with a terrible blow, to sweep everything away and leave England with 'strangers called in; murderers exalted; the very dissolution and desolation of all.'<sup>319</sup> However, he reassures his listeners, 'God provided for our safety, even in that very place, where we should have been the burnt offering: from heaven, stayed the Blow.'<sup>320</sup> Not only that, 'God cast their own powder in their faces, powdered them and disfigured them with it; and their quarters stand now in pieces, as they meant ours should.'<sup>321</sup> Andrewes makes a point of linking Jesuits with the Plot: the conspirators undertook their plan 'with an holy oath, bound with the holy Sacrament,' and alludes to Garnet, 'these holy religious persons, even the chiefe of all religious persons (the Jesuits) gave not onely absolution, but resolution, that all this was well done; and it was by them sanctified as lawful sanctified as meritorious.'<sup>322</sup> He reminds England never to forget 5<sup>th</sup> November, 'this day should not die, nor the memorial thereof perish, fro, ourselves or from our seed; but be consecrated to a perpetual memory, by a yearly acknowledgement to be made of it throughout all generations'<sup>323</sup>

Whereas the king personally refrained from condemning all Catholics in his speech to Parliament in November 1605, subsequent Gunpowder authors

simultaneously reinforced both the overt official line, and covert unofficial line. The flurry of Gunpowder texts in print in the months following the Plot's discovery form a discourse of unofficial propaganda which provided the government with parameters from within which it could impose harsher penalties against Catholics and expel Jesuits. In the months following the discovery of Guy Fawkes, Protestant authors sought to negotiate the Gunpowder Plot through a series of near-identical tropes. These tropes, established by William Barlow's sermon, and subsequent Gunpowder texts, sought to explain the Plot as the work of the pope/Devil. The Plotters were evil engines of Satan, devils in vaults, papist moles. These authors moved away from the seemingly tolerant position adopted by James, and give vent to a sense of outrage, horror, and shock. Barlow urges his listeners to pray regularly 'against suddaine death'.<sup>324</sup> Dekker warns the Plotters sought to bring England to the End of Days, 'the Generall Doome'.<sup>325</sup> J.H describes the Plot as an event which sought to 'appall blacke hell, amaze the earth, / and penetrate the skies.'<sup>326</sup> James called for calm, but Gunpowder authors who contributed to post-Plot discourse in 1605-6 demanded retribution; they incited panic and fear, and in recalling the Armada and the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, located the Plot within an apocalyptic landscape that served to reinforce the ever-present menace of Catholicism. Each of the texts places England in a battle between the forces of Protestant good and Catholic evil; drawing the Plot into extant anti-papist tropes, but creating an imaginative nomenclature that isolates and extends the Plotters beyond even the established norms of Catholic denunciation. No longer is England under threat from simple papists. Fawkes and his circle are a brood of vipers; slaving hellhounds; butchers; bloodsuckers; screech owls.

In the immediate aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, the fear of Catholic unrest was 'a vivid reality'.<sup>327</sup> "Every day something new about the Plot comes to light, and produces great wrath and suspicion," wrote the Venetian Ambassador in late December 1605, "everyone is armed and ready for any event."<sup>328</sup> By the end of 1606, England had absorbed the initial shock of the Gunpowder Plot; anxiety still ran high, but immediate fears had given way to relief. However, Gunpowder texts formed a multifaceted discourse, which functioned in many ways and on many levels. It was a discourse of binary opposites, between government and public, reader and author, Catholic and Protestant, clergy and supplicant, England and Rome, God and the Devil, night and day. The commonalities between the texts get to the heart of what the Gunpowder Plot was, an *imagined* event, a supernatural horror, a terrifying mythical proto-Apocalypse; and as discourse developed, these authors intensified and blackened the very nightmare world about which they were writing.

## Chapter Two

### 'I Praise Your Plotte'

#### Gunpowder, Devils, and the Scarlet Witch in *Macbeth*, *The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Devil's Charter*

In 1606, England was awash with fear. The discovery of the Gunpowder Treason had sparked widespread anxiety, and the king himself, as the Venetian Ambassador remarked, was in terror: 'He does not appear nor does he take his meals in public as usual. He lives in the innermost rooms with only Scotsmen about him. The Lords of the Council are also alarmed and confused by the plot.'<sup>1</sup> James had good cause to be disturbed. As Gary Wills remarks, had the Plot been a success, then not only the king, but 'Parliament – all the Lords spiritual and temporal, the leading justices, and members of Commons' would have been 'consumed in a particularly horrible way.'<sup>2</sup> Gunpowder was especially feared in Jacobean England. Believed to have been the discovery of a friar-scientist, it was considered the invention of the Devil, and thus had the 'eerie and numinous reputation in the Renaissance that atomic weapons acquired in the 1950s.'<sup>3</sup> William Barlow, Bishop of Rochester, confirms this in his 10<sup>th</sup> November sermon, 'gunpowder, which they say none but the devil, the King of the sulphurous pit, did invent.'<sup>4</sup> For Barlow and his contemporaries, the Gunpowder Treason was 'a mother... of all crimes.'<sup>5</sup> Even after the initial panic, 'anxiety was long dying. The extraordinary hysteria that swept London in the spring of 1606, on a rumour that the king had been assassinated, touched the court itself and serves as a reminder that, months after 5 November, many Englishmen in high positions still stood on

their guard.<sup>6</sup> James used the discovery of the Plot as an opportunity to separate moderate Catholics from extremists in the minds of the public, and to this end, 'he had his propagandists stress the Plot was less the result of Catholic theology and more a specific intervention by the Devil using only the most corrupt or malevolent elements in the Catholic community.'<sup>7</sup> By insisting on the presence of the Devil, James was able to exercise some control over the potential backlash against Catholics, but the introduction of such a diabolical element to the Treason inadvertently generated an eschatological crisis in the hearts of his subjects, since if the Plot was, 'on one hand, a harbinger of the world's end... on the other hand, it proved that the end was not yet... If England could be defeated, Rome would have its way, and the foretold reign of the Antichrist could be initiated.'<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Apocalypse of Revelation might be right around the corner.

The concept of the End of Days was nothing new in Jacobean England: 'During the first half of Elizabeth's reign there developed a general consensus that the pope was Antichrist and that the end of the world was at hand.'<sup>9</sup> These ideas reached 'a wide public in pamphlets and almanacs, and the defeat of the Armada in 1588 fused apocalyptic excitement and patriotic fervour.'<sup>10</sup> One pamphleteer told his readers in 1588 that the 'invaders sought "their vile pleasure of your wives, your sons and daughters, they will utterly destroy you, that the name of our nation shall be no more remembered upon the earth,"' and commentators made the point that 'bloodthirstiness and lust were notoriously the marks of Antichrist and the Babylonian Whore'.<sup>11</sup> In the years that followed the Armada, some writers on the Apocalypse adopted an aggressive military style: 'Protestants were "a wing, or an old trained band of that army," which would defeat Babylon'.<sup>12</sup> As Andrew

Hadfield argues, for many writers, 'the European world could be divided into two hostile camps of Protestantism and Catholicism. Not everyone accepted that this was an apocalyptic battle between good and evil, but the all-encompassing nature of the conflict could not be avoided as it affected political strategies devised at every level.'<sup>13</sup>

In post-Reformation Protestant English tradition, the 'doctrine of the two churches' was the basis of most Apocalyptic exegesis. Earlier, historical interpretations of the biblical Apocalypse treated it as part of the history of the world; Joachim of Fiore in the twelfth century identified world history in three stages – The Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Age of Spirit.<sup>14</sup> His work influenced much thinking on the subject, but his 'expectation of a "pseudo-pope"' was transformed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to an application of notions of the papacy itself as the Antichrist.<sup>15</sup> By the 1540s, ideas surrounding the Antichrist in history had shifted yet again, and John Bale's *Image of both Churches*, published in exile after the execution of Cromwell, became the received intelligence on the Apocalypse. Bale's book was the first extensive work on apocalyptic tradition in English Protestantism, and the first commentary in English on Revelation.<sup>16</sup> As Richard Bauckham states, the doctrine of the two churches 'divided all mankind into two camps – "God's" and the "Devil's"'.<sup>17</sup> This dualism was historical, a dualism of:

history moving towards its end. Conflict between good and evil was taken to be the principle category for understanding history. On each side were supernatural forces, large historical forces, and individual human will. And on each side was a 'church', a term which meant both the complete sum of all men found on that side, and also specific historical embodiments in social and organisational form. In the 16th century, the intensity of conflict

was felt to have become so great that its end must be in sight.  
The final triumph of God was imminent.<sup>18</sup>

In Bale's view there were two churches and two collectives – the Church of New Jerusalem and the Church of Babylon, embodied respectively in two figures from the Book of Revelation - the Woman Clothed with the Sun and the Whore of Babylon. This view is reiterated in the glosses of the Geneva Bible.<sup>19</sup> There were many texts on Revelation and the Apocalypse published in England from the early 1500s to 1610 and beyond.<sup>20</sup> These include Bale's *The image of bothe churches*, Bullinger's *A hundred sermons vpon the Apocalips*, the glosses of the Geneva Bible, Fulke's *Praelections*, and Marlorat's *A catholike exposition vpon the Reuelation of Sainct Iohn*. The clergyman Arthur Dent's popular and influential *The Ruine of Rome*,<sup>21</sup> an exposition on Revelation which discusses the overthrow of the Antichrist, was first published in 1603, and went through multiple editions. It was still being printed as late as 1656, and is evidence that Revelation and the Apocalypse infused everyday ideas about life and death. In the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, both were developing a new and heightened currency.

In 1606-7, three plays were produced for the London stage which openly reflected the widespread tensions and anxieties prevalent in the capital: Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, and Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter*. In the early seventeenth century, censorship of books and plays ordinarily discouraged 'acrid theological and political controversy', but this ban was relaxed after the Gunpowder Plot in order to channel 'public wrath into approved reactions.'<sup>22</sup> All three plays therefore openly feature witchcraft, murder, plotting,

and devils. All three plays invert Catholic ritual, and refer directly to the diabolical stratagems of Satan or the pope. All three are the product of a post-Gunpowder England riddled with anxiety and paranoia. Of the three plays, Shakespeare's company performed two: *Macbeth*, and *The Devil's Charter*. Both were performed by the King's Men during the same season, so the 'same troupe put on the same two [plays] at roughly the same time with the same resources'.<sup>23</sup> John D Cox states the coincidence of two similar plays in the same company at the same time is 'worth noting, especially in view of parallels between them and the privileged position of the King's Men as the leading commercial acting company in London.'<sup>24</sup> Indeed the King's Men were the 'premier troupe of the day', regularly summoned to Whitehall to perform,<sup>25</sup> and this privileged status ensured that plays produced by Shakespeare's company were regarded as the leading theatrical productions in the capital. Cox supplies a specific date for the court performance of *The Devil's Charter* as Candle mass, or 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1607.<sup>26</sup> The dating of *Macbeth* has been open to much speculation. Paul Henry asserts the play was first staged at Hampton Court on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1606.<sup>27</sup> H L Rogers suggests a date after Henry Garnet's execution in May 1606, citing the fact that the clear references to equivocation in the play must relate to Garnet and the Gunpowder Plot, and thus he dates its composition to the summer of 1606.<sup>28</sup> Given it was in repertory in the winter season of 1606-7, a sensible assumption would be that *Macbeth* was written in the spring and summer of 1606, against the backdrop of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and first performed at the Globe in the winter of 1606-7.

The third play, Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, was almost certainly in performance in the same season as *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*.



According to John Twyning, Dekker had a disagreement with his usual acting troupe, Prince Henry's Men, in 1606,<sup>29</sup> and the frontispiece to *The Whore of Babylon* states 'as was acted by the Prince's Servants'. Andrew Gurr suggests *The Whore of Babylon* was performed at the Fortune,<sup>30</sup> and in the opening prologue to the printed play, Dekker refers to 'charms of silence' which 'through this Square be throwne',<sup>31</sup> perhaps also in reference to the Fortune. But, as with *Macbeth*, a definitive chronology of *The Whore of Babylon's* composition and performance is still to be established. The play was entered into the Stationers' Register in 1607,<sup>32</sup> although most scholars agree it was first performed shortly after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, in 1606-7.<sup>33</sup> Given Dekker's swift response to the Gunpowder Plot in the *The Double PP*, it seems likely *The Whore of Babylon* was indeed his dramatic rejoinder to the events of November 1605. Between all three plays, there is a degree of cohesion that extends beyond a shared theatrical season - numerous textual references to the Gunpowder Plot itself, a shared imagery and language, and an unmistakable sense of unease and anxiety, which reflects the mood enfolding much of England at this time. This chapter will thus consider specific textual references to both the Gunpowder Plot and Gunpowder texts in all three plays, and explore the figure of the Whore of Babylon as reflected in the representations of the Empress, Lady Macbeth, and Lucretia Borgia. It is hoped this will demonstrate that these three plays need to be approached within the context of apocalyptic disquiet prevalent in England in 1606-7.

*Macbeth*, *The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Devil's Charter* contain unsurprisingly similar themes. In all three plays there is murder or attempted murder, interactions with demonic forces, a tyrannical rule of terror, corruption

and betrayal, hell and damnation, and an all-pervasive darkness. In *Macbeth*, the Scottish lord Macbeth, spurred on by his ambitious wife and a trio of witches, murders King Duncan in order to seize the Scottish throne. He consolidates his position by further murdering those who stand in his way, harnesses black magic, and is eventually subdued and overthrown in battle by Macduff. In Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, the Empress of Babylon dispatches three kings to Fairyland (Protestant England) to form a marriage allegiance with Titania, Queen of Fairyland, and sworn enemy of the Empress. On arriving in Fairyland, the kings propose to Titania, and in turn, she rejects them all. The Empress then sends further agents into Fairyland to create disruption and unrest; when various attempts to assassinate Titania fail, the Empress launches a full-scale invasion of Fairyland using the Spanish Armada. In *The Devil's Charter*, the cardinal Rodrigo makes a pact with the Devil and is rewarded with the papacy. As pope, he serves as the Devil's agent in Rome. His daughter Lucretia murders her husband; his sons Caesar and Candy fight between themselves until Candy is murdered by Caesar; Caesar battles with the Queen of the Amazons; Alexander orders the death of Lucretia; murders two young princes, and poisons both himself and Caesar before being led away to Hell by the Devil.

The non-dramatic texts in circulation in the immediate aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot formed a multi-faceted discourse, which functioned to both reassure and alarm. These plays, produced for a London audience, are borne out of this complex negotiation of the events of November 1605. Each present a series of dark episodes, which threaten to throw the world into chaos and despair.

Governments and institutions are on the brink of collapse, the Devil stalks the

stage, and the future is uncertain. Just as the citizens of London unwittingly faced annihilation at the hands of the Gunpowder circle, so too the inhabitants of these plays stand helpless in the face of demonic tyranny. The ending of each play appears positive, with order restored and dark forces defeated, but below the surface, the triumph of good over evil is shaky, reflective of a society still coming to terms with an unpredictable future. All three plays are concerned less with the murderous events themselves and more with the outcome of such events. The Gunpowder Plot was dismissed as a failed affair by a group of radical fanatics,<sup>34</sup> but its impact, and the climate of fear and anxiety which prevailed in its aftermath, became a primary preoccupation. As a result, in the paranoid atmosphere of 1606-7, Shakespeare, Dekker, and Barnes chose to explore a dramatic world in which catastrophe is *not* averted.

One of the biggest horrors for the citizens of London in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot was the concept of Satan, labouring in secret, underground, to bring about the destruction of king and Parliament. Jesuit priests were alleged to skulk and hide. Fawkes had been discovered in the dark, late at night. Neighbour was suspicious of neighbour, and spies everywhere sought to uncover further plots. It comes as no surprise therefore that Satan is either directly referenced or appears on the London stage at this time. In *The Devil's Charter*, the Chorus mention him initially, when it describes how he made 'offer of the triple crown' to Rodrigo (Prologue),<sup>35</sup> who goes on to become Pope Alexander the Sixth. Barnes overtly conjoins the pope and Satan; Alexander is Satan's instrument on earth. In *The Whore of Babylon*, King 3 asks, 'Is not the good and politique Satyrant / (Our leagued brother, and your vassaile sworn) / Even now (this very minute) sucking

close / Their fairest bosomes?’ (3.1.55-60). Satan here is the ‘leagued brother’ of the Whore of Babylon; again, a direct alignment of the seat of the Catholic Church with the Antichrist. In *Macbeth*, Satan actually appears, as Seyton, servant to Macbeth, bringing him his armour at the climax of the play.<sup>36</sup> By making Satan/Seyton servant to Macbeth, Shakespeare highlights the utterly dark and unnatural nature of Macbeth. He further couples Satan with the Macbeths, when he has Seyton deliver the news of Lady Macbeth’s death, ‘The queen, my lord, is dead’ (5.5.16).

This idea of the Antichrist on ‘Death’s black stage’<sup>37</sup> introduces one of the most central paradoxes of Gunpowder texts - ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’.<sup>38</sup> Drama at this time is preoccupied with dissembling and equivocal behaviour; foul and fair permeate these plays with the same degree of intensity with which they permeate post-Gunpowder discourse. At the beginning of *Macbeth*, the witches pronounce, ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair. / Hover through the fog and filthy air’ (1.1.10-11). This establishes a deliberate inversion of reality within which Shakespeare and his audience can negotiate what James I called a ‘fearfull doomes-day’ from a position of safety. Barnabe Barnes, at the beginning of *The Devil’s Charter*, also draws on this paradox when he has Charles, King of France, state ‘Fair is the way, fair fortune and fair weather’ (1.1). Shakespeare and Barnes treat the pervading sense of danger similarly in the opening of both plays. Barnes opens with the lines ‘Our subject is of blood and tragedy, / Murder, foul incest and hypocrisy. / Behold the strumpet of proud Babylon, / Her cup with fornication foaming full’ (Prologue). Shakespeare uses three witches for his prologue and they introduce the subject matter as effectively as does the Chorus in Barnes’ play. To a backdrop of thunder

and lightning, they warn the audience of 'hurly burly' and 'battle', 'fog' and 'filthy air'; presaging 'fair is foul, and foul is fair', to generate a sense of trepidation for the dark and bloody subject matter which is to follow.

Dekker, like Barnes, opens with a Prologue in which he promises that his play will 'from Graves / Raize up the dead: upon this narrow floore / Swell up an Ocean, (with an Armed Fleete,) / And lay the Dragon at a Doves feet'.<sup>39</sup> In the first scene, he introduces his subject matter - the schematic plotting of the diabolical Whore of Babylon. In a speech full of ironic defiance the Empress declares: 'From our mouth flow rivers of blasphemy / And lies' (1.1.31-2). The world of the Empress at the start of the play is just as contaminated as that of the pope in *The Devil's Charter*, and after the initial meeting between the witches and Macbeth, Scotland is similarly polluted. When Macbeth claims 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen' (1.3.39), he consolidates what is really at the heart of all three plays, and this paradoxical duality reflects the wider view in England that normality may have been resumed, but there is still something distinctly foul in the air.

This foulness is represented in the imagined sulphur present in Gunpowder texts. Dekker refers directly to sulphur in the opening act of *The Whore of Babylon*, when King 3 states, 'that sulphure boyling o're celestiaall fires, / May drop in whizzing flakes (with scalding vengeance)' (1.1.41-43). Dekker's image calls forth the streets of London in the aftermath of an explosion, with blasts of sulphur raining down in scalding retribution. Conjoining the Plot and Hell is a common theme in Gunpowder texts, and by allocating such lines to an agent of the Whore of Babylon, Dekker further aligns the Gunpowder Plot with Rome and the papacy, reinforcing the perceived danger posed by the pope and his legions of Catholic

activists. A further reference to sulphur occurs when King 3, planning his seditious activity in Fairyland, promises that 'Whilst I melt Sulphure here: If the sweet bane / I lay be swallowed, oh! A kingdome bursts' (1.2.280-81). Had the 'sweet bane' or gunpowder of the Plotters been 'swallowed' or fired, then the kingdom of England would indeed have burst. A preoccupation with blasts and detonations, disturbance and fire, is replicated on the Jacobean stage with heavy use of thunder and lightning. As Jonathan Gil Harris, commenting on *Macbeth*, states, 'The controlled detonation of fireworks would have helped to create not only the necessary sound and light effects for the opening scene, but also the poor air quality described in the three witches' bizarre incantation, "Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.11). In its first performances, then, the play most likely started not just with a bang, but also a stink, which would have persisted through the first scene as the fireworks' thick smoke wafted across the stage and into the audience.'<sup>40</sup> *The Devil's Charter* opens with the cardinal Rodrigo seated on a chair around which a monk circles. The stage directions read: the monk, after 'semblance of reading with exorcisms', conjures up in 'lightning and sulphurous smoke', a devil, 'in most ugly shape'. After more 'thunder and fire', a second devil appears, and after yet more 'thunder and fearful fire' a further devil arrives, this time dressed in papal robes. After bloodletting and ritual, the devils descend 'with thunder and lightning' (Prologue). In the opening scene of *Macbeth*, the witches enter to thunder and lightning, a device employed again at the beginning of Act 3.

This association of diabolical agency with thunder and disturbance is echoed in all three plays. The opening scenes of *Macbeth* provide a warning from the Sergeant that 'ship-wrecking storms and direful thunders break' (1.2.26). The

use of a disturbance in nature to highlight a metaphysical disturbance in *Macbeth* is woven throughout the play, and the subsequent murder of Duncan serves to unleash psychic confusion and an inversion in nature in Scotland. Lennox describes the night Duncan is killed: 'The night has been unruly. Where we lay, / Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say / Lamentings heard i'th air – strange screams of death, / And prophesying, with accents terrible, / Of dire combustion and confused events ' (2.3.52-56). Such an insidious discharge of darkness parallels the fear and apprehension experienced in London when James I and Parliament were themselves delivered from similar 'dire combustion and confused events'. Shakespeare here recalls *The Divell of the Vault*, which describes 'murther, furies, fates and death, / beclad with bloody weede: Would all concurre with Nights blacke hours, / to plot some dismall deede'.<sup>41</sup> This poem also features the 'confusion with hels horride howles'<sup>42</sup> so prevalent in *Macbeth*.

Thunder is a powerful dramatic device used to underscore turmoil and unrest. The Pope in Barnes' play, in a soliloquy addressed to the Devil, hopes his sons will 'dart down fire and thunder' on their foes (1.4), and in *The Whore of Babylon*, King 3 threatens Fairyland with 'three-forkt thunderbolts' (3.1.2.278). This pun on Fawkes - 'forkt' - occurs in the same speech in which King 3 promises to be a 'Devill'; not only a devil, but 'Devil's forreners, / With Devils within hel freedome, Devils in Vaults' (3.1.275-6). Here is a direct intertextual allusion to Guy Fawkes in his post-Gunpowder status as the 'Devil in the Vault', a phrase coined initially by Barlow in his 10<sup>th</sup> November sermon, and subsequently adopted by J.H in his poem of the same name. Parimel, in *The Whore of Babylon*, also puns in a similar vein when he warns Titania of those that 'shot forked stinges' at her

(4.2.155). And King 3 describes shooting 'whole sheaves of forked arrows at the Sunne' (3.1.188). The witches in *Macbeth* include an 'Adder's fork' (4.1.16) in the list of devilish ingredients entering their cauldron, an obvious pun on 'Fawkes', and a reference to his Catholicism. There is a further allusion to Guy Fawkes when Macbeth claims 'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself' (1.7.26-27). Using 'vault' within any context at this time invokes the Gunpowder Plot, and taken within the framework of the rest of Macbeth's speech, it is evident Shakespeare is referencing the Plot, for Macbeth speaks of 'striding the hot blast' and 'heaven's cherubim, horsed / Upon the sightless couriers of the air, / Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye'. (1.7.22-24). Shakespeare uses 'vault' again when Macbeth claims, 'the wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees / Is left this vault to brag of' (2.3.94-95). These lines are not only an indication of the depths to which he himself has sunk, to the very 'lees' or dregs, but coupled with 'vault' may also seek to denounce Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators as little more than the 'lees' of society.

With his use of 'blow the horrid deed,' Shakespeare echoes Macbeth's earlier hope that 'this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all' (1.7.4). The word 'blow' comes directly from the Monteaule letter printed in *King's Book*: 'they should receive a terrible Blow at this parliament, and yet should not see who hurt them'.<sup>43</sup> 'Blow' is littered throughout Gunpowder texts, and here, Macbeth's speech recalls the sermon delivered by Barlow on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1605. Barlow testifies: 'but this design, with one blast, at one blow, in one twinkling of an eye, should have been crushed together, the Gouvernment, the Councell, the wisdom, the Religion, the Learning, the Strength, the Justice of the whole land',<sup>44</sup> which



would have led to what he calls 'a cloude of darkenesse, a darkenes of confusion'.<sup>45</sup> It is possible Shakespeare had either attended Barlow's sermon at St Paul's Cross or had subsequently read a printed copy, for the actions of Macbeth in Scotland lead to exactly the darkness and confusion imagined by Barlow. At the beginning of the play, the witches refer to ports that will 'blow', and in the same lines refer to 'all the quarters' (1.3.16-17), which evokes the recent execution of the Gunpowder Plotters. There is a further reference to 'blow' when Murderer 2 declares, 'I am one, my liege, / Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world / Have so incensed that I am reckless what / I do to spite the world' (3.1.110-13). The first Murderer makes a similar statement, and Shakespeare is here perhaps using 'vile blows' to align both the murderers with the Gunpowder Plotters, who had also been incensed enough to plot to destroy king and Parliament.

Further uses of 'blow' are found in both *The Whore of Babylon* and *The Devil's Charter*. In Dekker's play, King 3 makes an obvious allusion to the mine initially dug under Westminster by the Plotters: 'When mines are to be blowne up, men dig low' (3.1.112). Similarly, when discussing the plans to seize control of Fairyland, Cardinal 1 declares 'weele at one blow strike the heart through' (1.1.141). This is another direct echo of Barlow's sermon, which follows an earlier speech by Cardinal 1 in which he threatens to 'shake, / The trees by the root, twi'll make the branches blow, / And drop their mellowed fruit' (1.1.214-6). Barlow uses this image of a tree laden with fruit to cast James I as a biblical olive tree, and his children the fruit: 'for withall, was delivered both his fruitful vine, and his Olive branches...his Queene, and children'.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to a more general comment on the swift nature of justice, the Empress' line 'their owne blowes digge their graves' (5.2.108) seems to be a specific allusion to those members of the Gunpowder circle who were killed when their drying gunpowder exploded at Holbeach House. In *The Devil's Charter*, the Pope seeks to 'blow'; Prince Astor, kept prisoner by Alexander and fearful for his life and modesty, asserts that Alexander, 'he that with guileful baits, gilded untruth, / So seeks to blast the blossom of my youth' (3.1). This reinforces Alexander's immoral sexual proclivities and his power to destroy; here the head of the Catholic Church longs to sexually defile a prince. With his use of the word 'blast', Barnes also recalls the Gunpowder Plotters' attempts, at the perceived behest of the pope, to 'blast' James I and his own princes 'up in th' whisking ayre'.<sup>47</sup>

The Gunpowder Plot was 'A Trecherie so with bloud replete, / so Nero-like devis'd, / As it through th' earths immensall Globe, / nere can be equaliz'd'.<sup>48</sup> Many Gunpowder texts feature rivers of blood in their imagined post-Plot England. *Macbeth* is awash with it, as is *The Devil's Charter*, and in *The Whore of Babylon* the perceived threat from the Empress is a cause of great anxiety about a Fairyland in which blood is spilled indiscriminately: 'red Seas will flow again: The Devill will roare againe' (1.2.204-5). This image also echoes Macbeth's fear that 'this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red' (2.2.59-61). Dekker, by locating the reign of Mary Tudor within this blood-infused nightmare, is able to refer to the 'black and poisonous waters' which 'drownd our fields in Marianaes daies' (1.2.200-01), and thus highlight the Catholic nature of these same black waters. This image occurs in another speech by the Cardinal, in which he foretells the fall of Fairyland and imagines the consequences: 'in a

deluge / Of innovation, rough rebellion, factions, / Of massacres, and pale  
 destruction / Swallow the kingdome up, and that the bloud / Even of Titania's heart  
 should in deepe crimson / Dye all these waters' (1.2.195-200). The Jesuit Palmio  
 speaks of a plot to 'cure all those / Through Fairie land, that are diseas'd within, /  
 And he will doo't, by letting one veine bloud' (3.2.37-40); imagery which parallels  
 the texts of Barlow and J.H, who refer to the destruction of king and Parliament  
 with a single deadly act. 'Letting one veine bloud' also recalls the prologue of *The  
 Devil's Charter*, in which Rodrigo is bled by a devil. The stage directions dictate  
 one of the devils 'strippeth up Rodrigo's sleeve and letteth his arm-blood in a  
 saucer', after which 'the remainder of the blood the other Devil seemeth to sup  
 up'.

*Macbeth* contains many references to blood. In Act 1, Duncan asks 'What  
 bloody man is that?' The 'bloody man', an injured Sergeant, arrives on stage to  
 describe a scene of carnage and bloody massacre: 'Brave Macbeth – well he  
 deserves that name – / Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, / Which  
 smoked with bloody execution' (1.2.16-19). These lines introduce the audience to  
 the bravery of Macbeth, but there is also dramatic irony; Macbeth is described as  
 fixing a 'head upon our battlements' (23), which foreshadows his own brutal  
 beheading at the end of the play. Use of the word 'execution' so early in the play  
 also serves to recall the recent executions of the Gunpowder Plotters and Henry  
 Garnet, events still fresh in the minds of the audience. Macbeth's actions on the  
 battlefield echo the method of hanging, drawing, and quartering reserved for  
 traitors, and his status as executioner resonates later, when he refers to his hands as  
 'these hangman's hands' (2.2.26). The issue of summary justice and execution

pervades Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 1, when he speaks of 'even-handed justice' which 'commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice / To our own lips' (1.7.10-12). In this speech he states 'that but this blow / Might be the be-all and end-all' (4-5), once again recalling the Montague letter. Combined with Macbeth's meditation on 'bloody instructions' which 'return / To plague the inventor' (9-10), it seems clear that Shakespeare is not only exploring the morality of murder, but making oblique references both to the Plot, and to those members of the conspiracy who were killed by powder at Holbeach house; their gunpowder becoming their 'poisoned chalice'.

Macbeth does not wrestle with his conscience, as Alexander does in *The Devil's Charter*; he is not preoccupied with the morality of killing, but with the practicalities of its consequence. His motive is ambition, and his only concern is the potential implication for himself, unlike Hamlet, who agonises over the morality of what he contemplates. This singularity of purpose does much to locate Macbeth as a Luciferic figure, alike in intent to the Pope in *The Devil's Charter*. Both unleash blood and murder in an abuse of absolute power. However, this lack of conscience makes Macbeth an extraordinarily dark protagonist, more diabolical than the Pope in Barnes' play. In *The Devil's Charter*, Satan bewitches the Pope, but Macbeth is under no spell. He sees before him his dagger 'and on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood, / Which was not so before. There's no such thing. / It is the bloody business which informs / Thus to mine eyes' (2.1.45-48), however, since he has murdered on the battlefield, and is familiar with blood, it is not the sight of his dagger which disturbs him, so much as the consequence of its use beyond the authorised context of soldiering.

Similarly, in *The Devil's Charter*, Frescobaldi, also plotting murder, declares 'This is the black night, this is the fatal hand, / These are the bloody weapons which must be / Witness and actors of this tragedy' (3.5). In both cases, the killers regard the act of murder with a clinical detachment. The urge to escape the consequences preoccupies both men. In an interesting echo of Macbeth's dagger scene, Baglioni in *The Devil's Charter* asks Frescobaldi:

Art thou that fightest with thy father's soul,  
Or with some subtle apparitions  
Which no man can behold with mortal eyes?  
Or art thou ravished with Bedlamy,  
Fighting with figments and vain fantasies,  
Chimeras, or black spirits of the night?  
(3.5)

After a lengthy comic speech in which Frescobaldi cites countless witches, spirits, prostitutes, and villains, he pauses and demands of Baglioni no further questions, 'My meditations are of blood and murder. / I have jested too long, prithee be gone' (3.5). There are further similarities between *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter* when the bodies of both Duncan and Viselli are discovered. In *The Devil's Charter*, Barbarossa, on finding Viselli murdered by the unknown hand of Lucretia, calls 'Santa Croce! / This dagger grasped in his fatal hand / Reveals some violence' (1.5). In *Macbeth*, Lennox reports 'Their hands and faces were all badged with blood. / So were their daggers, which unwiped we found / Upon their pillows ' (2.3.101-3).

The Sergeant at the beginning of *Macbeth* questions whether Macbeth and Banquo 'meant to bathe in reeking wounds, / Or memorize another Golgotha' (1.2.39), foreshadowing Macbeth's murderous activity as king, and insinuating his potential for mass slaughter. Golgotha, the site of the execution of Jesus, is described in the Bible as 'the place of the skull',<sup>49</sup> and here Shakespeare is aligning

Macbeth from the very beginning with the murder of Christ to cement his Antichrist status. Coupled with imagery of blood and daggers, both *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter* recall J.H's description of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in *The Divell of the Vault*, in which Catholics massacre Protestants with 'Murther's slaughtering knife'.<sup>50</sup> The murder of Duncan echoes the murder of the Protestant Gaspard de Coligny, stabbed to death in bed by the Catholic Guise faction, and also recalls J.H's description of the murder of Henri III in Paris, when a Jesuit 'with poysoned knife, / stroke him with furious hate'.<sup>51</sup> This same tyranny is explored in *The Devil's Charter*. Alexander, giving advice to his sons, tells them 'Learn this one lesson, look ye mark it well: / For princes – forc'd by mere necessity / To pass their faithful promises, again / Forc'd by the same necessity to break promise' (1.4). This evokes the comparisons made between a good king and a tyrant in James I's *Basilicon Doron*.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, in all three plays there is usurpation, or an attempted usurpation of a 'good king' by a tyrant. Given the political context of the plays, and the fact that in both *The Devil's Charter* and *The Whore of Babylon*, the tyrant is the head of the Catholic Church, it becomes clear just how close tyranny is conjoined with the demonic forces of evil and Catholicism in the minds of Protestant authors. Satan is the ultimate tyrant, and the Pope, Macbeth, and the Empress his agents of darkness.

In *Macbeth*, Malcolm refers to the king of England as having 'a heavenly gift of prophecy, / And sundry blessings hang about his throne / That speak him full of grace' (4.3.157-9), reflecting the accepted belief that England had been delivered from the Gunpowder Plot through the prophetic and astute observations of the king. This allusion to James and his role in the plot is also echoed in *The*

*Whore of Babylon*. Titania asks 'How many plots were laid to barre us hence, / (Even from our Cradle?)' (1.2.3-4), in an almost verbatim quotation from James' speech to Parliament, in which he makes reference to other plots which had sought to take his life, even 'while I was yet in my mothers belly'.<sup>53</sup>

Some scholars have noted a probable reference to Henry Garnet in the Porter Scene of *Macbeth*.<sup>54</sup> The Porter acts as keeper to Macbeth's castle, but alludes to being the Porter of Hell gate. 'If a man were porter of Hell gate' (2.3.1-2), he cries, on hearing a knocking at the gate. He imagines the visitor to be an equivocator: 'Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the / scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven' (2.3.8-10). Given the other allusions to the Gunpowder Plot in *Macbeth*, it is clear the equivocator the Porter refers to is Henry Garnet. Prior to the Gunpowder Plot, Jesuits were known to use the art of equivocation. The Jesuit 'Treatise of Equivocation' permitted a man suspected of a crime to answer doubtfully under oath to avoid incriminating himself or others,<sup>55</sup> but the doctrine itself was little understood.<sup>56</sup> Garnet famously equivocated throughout his trial in 1606, so much so that he was reprimanded on the scaffold, and warned not to equivocate with his last breath.<sup>57</sup>

Less well documented is the fact that Garnet used 'Farmer' as one of his many aliases. The warrant for the arrest and capture of Garnet issued by the government describes Garnet variously as 'Henry Garnet, *alias* Walley, *alias* Darcy, *alias* Farmer'.<sup>58</sup> When the Porter hears a second knock, he refers to 'a farmer, that hanged himself on the / expectation of plenty' (2.3.4-5). This could also be an allusion to Garnet. As H L Rogers also points out, the use of 'farmer' may well

reference Garnet's alias of that name, and he further suggests the Porter's final reference, to an 'English / tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose', whom he entreats to come and 'roast your goose', may be a *third* reference to Garnet. After Garnet's execution, one of the relics rescued by a John Wilkerson was the so-called 'miraculous straw'.<sup>59</sup> This was a straw onto which had fallen a drop of Garnet's blood, said to resemble his face. Anne Vaux, after her release from prison in August 1606, was partly responsible for publicising 'Garnet's Straw',<sup>60</sup> and Rogers claims that Hugh Griffin, an English tailor, played a central role in the protection of the straw. Wilkerson delivered the relic to Griffin's home, and as a result, Griffin developed a certain notoriety.<sup>61</sup> The author Robert Pricket detailed the events surrounding the straw in a poem published in 1607 entitled *The Jesuits Miracles, or new Popish Wonders. Containing the Straw, the Crowne, and the Wondrous Child, with the Confutation of them and their follies*. Pricket writes:

For when he [Garnet] died, oh thing most strange to tell,  
To a Taylors wife, a scipping silkman beares,  
A straw whereof, bloud from a traytor fell.  
She thereon weepes, ruthfull devotions teares,  
To sight thereof she then her husband brings,  
And ouer it, a mournfull durge he sings.

This holy rellicke, whilst (they say) she kept,  
Some craftier knave, then her poor plaine goseman:  
To see that straw, devoutly stealing crept.  
(B.v)

To quote Rogers in full: 'A tailor's "goose" is a smoothing-iron (O.E.D., s.v., sb., 5); Pricket calls the tailor a "goseman" - or rather, he calls him his wife's "goseman", which may suggest the same obscene play upon "goose" (O.E.D., s.v., sb., 3) as in the Porter's "roast your goose"'.<sup>62</sup> All of which suggests Shakespeare is alluding to



Henry Garnet in each of the three imaginary visitors who come knocking on Hell's gate.<sup>63</sup> The first half of this scene serves no real purpose in the play (it was perhaps included in order to allow for a change of costume) but it does give Shakespeare the opportunity to make further topical references to contemporary events.

When the Porter answers the gate to Macduff and Lenox, Shakespeare maintains the theme of equivocation:

Macduff:	What three things does drink especially provoke?
Porter:	Marry, sir, nose painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes. It provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: It makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep and giving him the lie, leaves him. (2.3.25-33)

There are several images in this exchange which act as further allusions to Garnet. It was known he enjoyed a drink; as a prisoner in the Tower he is said to have comforted himself with enough sack to drown his sorrows.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, after his execution, 'popular calumny harped on Garnet's love of wine as if he were a drunkard'.<sup>65</sup> His relationship with Anne Vaux also sparked widespread gossip: 'Whatever the nature of their love, there seems little doubt that that is what it was. The authorities occasionally suggested their love was physical, only to retract in embarrassment and apology.'<sup>66</sup> The speech by the Porter here is riddled with contradiction and paradox. Alcohol can 'provoke' lechery but it 'takes away the performance', so drink becomes 'an equivocator with lechery'. Garnet's position as

Head of the English Jesuits was unequivocal, but if it was believed Garnet was conducting a relationship with Vaux, and the gossip suggested he was, then here he becomes a 'lecherous equivocator'. Garnet's status as a martyr among the Catholic community was undisputed, and Rogers argues that in alluding to him, Shakespeare was providing 'a counter-blast to the increasing glorification of the Jesuit as a martyr to the Catholic cause.'<sup>67</sup> A more reasonable suggestion might be that Shakespeare was simply having some topical fun at Garnet's expense.

Shakespeare evokes Garnet later in *Macbeth* in a further reference to treachery and equivocation:

Son: 'What is a traitor?'

Lady Macduff: 'Why, one that swears and lies.'  
(4.2.46-7)

In one of the final scenes, Macbeth himself states 'I pull in resolution, and begin / To doubt the equivocation of the fiend / That lies like truth' (5.5.42-3).

Equivocation also occurs in *The Devil's Charter* when Alexander warns his son Candy that 'things are as they seem, / Not what they be themselves. All is opinion' (1.4). Dekker, like Shakespeare, may also be figuring Henry Garnet in *The Whore of Babylon*. The curious character of the Jesuit Palmio at times bears more than a passing likeness to Garnet, and his counterpart, the scholar Parimel, is easy to read as a figure for one of the Gunpowder Circle, or perhaps as a composite of them all. For example, in Act 2 Parimel speaks of his imprisonment: 'The law / Hath fastened on me only for attempt, / It was no actual nor commenced violence / That brought death with it, but intent of ill' (2.1.155-58). When taken in

conjunction with the rest of his movements in the play, it is difficult not to see echoes of those members of the Gunpowder circle who had taken part in the botched Essex Rebellion and were subsequently sent to the Tower. In Act 3, Parimel meets with the Jesuit Palmio and they discuss their plot to destroy Fairyland:

Parimel: Still father *Palmio* still, and to relieve them  
I dare doe what I told you.

Palmio: Noble valour!

Parimel: So that I might but read on yonder scrolls,  
A warrant writ under the seale of Heaven,  
To justifie the Act.

Palmio: You have my hand!  
And shall have more. Y'are reconcil'd (Sonne?)

Parimel: Yes

Palmio: Who did confesse you?

Parimel: Father Anniball.

(3.2.9-19)

It is possible here that Dekker is depicting the accusations made against Garnet, that he was not only aware of the Gunpowder Plot, but was *complicit* in its inception and planning. Palmio openly supports the plot to bring down Titania in favour of the Whore of Babylon, which corresponds with the authorities' belief that the Gunpowder Plotters were planning 'the advancing and enlargement of the pretended and usurped Authoritie and Jurisdiction of the Bishop of *Rome*, and for the restoring of the superstitious Romish Religion within this Realme of England.'<sup>68</sup> The government also suspected the principal offenders were 'seducing Jesuits, men that use the reverence of Religion, yea even the most Sacred and blessed name of

Jesus as a mantle to cover their impietie, blasphemie, treason, and Rebellion, and all manner of wickedness.<sup>169</sup> At his trial, Edward Coke referred to Garnet as being 'by profession a *Jesuite*, and a Superior, as in deed he is Superior to all his predecessors in devilish Treason, a Doctor of *Jesuites*, that is, a Doctor of five Ds. as Dissimulation, Deposing of Princes, Disposing of Kingdomes, Daunting and deterring of subjects, and Destruction. Their Dissimulation appeareth out of their doctrine of Equivocation.'<sup>170</sup> The interrogation continued; 'And Catesby doubting of the ficklenesse of mens affections, in cases that concerne the soule, used your admittance as a charme, or spell, to keep quicke spirits within the circle of combined faith, which otherwise perhaps when hell brake loose, would have sought libertie.'<sup>171</sup> Here, Garnet is openly conjoined with witchcraft. Given these accusations, it does not come as a surprise that authors such as Dekker used existing Gunpowder texts, including the *Arraignment* of the Plotters, as a source of inspiration. Parimel himself refers directly to the Gunpowder Plot when he tells Titania of the plots against her: 'some, that shot forked stinges, / At your most God-like person' (4.2.155-6).

In addition to the many accusations levelled at Garnet was the fact he sought 'a great gaine by fishing in streames that were more troubled: and sitting on a bare bough like a Raven'.<sup>172</sup> Bird imagery, particularly of the raven and the owl, features heavily in Gunpowder texts; J.H, in *The Divell of the Vault* pleads that 'Christian hearts hold them [Catholics] at gaze, / as Nights Sun-shining Owles, / Are wondered at by warbling Birds, /and light-embracing Fowles'.<sup>173</sup> These particular birds were considered an ill omen, or harbingers of darkness. Macbeth ironically refers to himself as a 'harbinger' when he promises the King he will

make haste to announce his impending arrival to his wife. Lady Macbeth reinforces her husband's harbinger status when, hearing the news of Duncan's visit, she announces darkly 'The raven himself is hoarse, / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements' (1.5.38-9). In *The Whore of Babylon*, the Empress refers to her agents in Fairyland as nothing more than:

leane hungry Crowes that tyre  
Upon the mangled quarters of a Realme?  
And on the house-tops of Nobilitie  
(If there they can but sit) like fatall Ravens,  
Or Skrich Owles croake their fals and hoarsely bode,  
Nothing but scaffolds and unhallowed graves?  
(3.1.110-15)

Dekker here figures the Gunpowder Plotters as 'hungry Crowes' perched on the roof of Westminster, 'like fatall Ravens or Skritch Owles', with ultimately nothing to reward them but 'scaffolds and unhallowed graves', that is, execution and eternal damnation. The Empress' dismissal of them as dishevelled birds locates the Plotters outside even the care of the pope, in a form of imaginative spiritual emasculation. Dekker makes further references to ravens when King 3, planning his treacherous visit to Fairyland, promises to 'lurke, / And in a Dove-like shape raven upon Doves' (3.1.269-70). Here raven is used as a verb rather than a noun. The king will 'raven' upon the innocent Protestants, just as the Huguenots were ravened, or massacred in Paris.

Lady Macbeth, fresh from drugging Duncan's guards, pauses suddenly: 'Hark, peace/ (*she listens*) It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman, / Which gives the stern'st good night' (2.2.3-4). In the same scene, she says to Macbeth 'I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry' (2.2.15), further enforcing the sense of abounding evil. The lines of the Old Man too contain references to birds: 'On

Tuesday last / A falcon, towering in her pride of place, / Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed' (2.4.10-12). This alone would call to mind the Gunpowder Plot, a 'falcon', or James I, hawked at by an 'owl', or the Plotters. However, Shakespeare specifically refers to a precise day of the week, a Tuesday. The 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605 also fell on a Tuesday. Parimel, in *The Whore of Babylon*, describes to Titania, an 'Owle, that did not love your sacred light, / Stole or'e the Seas by darknes, and was held / In Babilon a bird of noble flight: that tourn'd him to a Goshawke' (4.2.84-7), and a further reference to an owl occurs in *Macbeth*, when the witches place an 'owlet's wing' into the cauldron, reinforcing the association of the owl with demonic forces.

In *The Devil's Charter*, the villain Frescobaldi describes 'my plot (mining below the rampier) / We gave th' obgoblins leave to scale our walls; / And being mounted all upon the place, / I with my linstock gave fire to the train' (3.2). This appears to be a direct allusion to the discovery of Fawkes, match in hand, ready to fire the gunpowder. A similar image occurs in *The Whore of Babylon*, when King 3 states 'We have torches ready in her land / To catch fire' (1.3.218-223). Titania refers to 'Close traines and dangerous you did discover / To fire which you were praid' (5.2.45-6). All three dramatists explore the chaos and fear unleashed by plotting. Ross, in conversation with Lady Macduff, acknowledges the world of *Macbeth* is one of which he hardly dare speak 'But cruel are the times, when we are traitors, / And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour / From what we fear, yet know not what we fear, / But float upon a wild and violent sea' (4.2.17-22). Barnabe Barnes also includes a similar statement, when Gentleman 2 states 'pit these times, by whose malignity / We lose our grace' (1.2). It is possible that

Shakespeare and Barnes are here not only remarking on the atmosphere of intense suspicion and fear which pervaded England in 1605-6, but are also making specific reference to the rumour which abounded in March 1606 that James I had been murdered; a rumour so strong it caused widespread panic.

In *The Whore of Babylon*, Titania speaks of terrible spirits which 'at midnight rise, / To blast our Faery circles' (5.2.61-2). Further allusions to this climate of fear occur in *Macbeth*, when Ross describes Scotland: 'Alas, poor country, / Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot / Be called our mother, but our grave, where nothing / But who knows nothing is once seen to smile, / Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air / Are made, not marked' (4.3.164-9). This nightmarish anxiety is epitomised by Macbeth at the end of the play, when he reflects on the nihilistic futility of life. Like the Gunpowder Plotters, his life too has ultimately become an agony of fretting. The Gunpowder Plot failed just as Macbeth has failed:

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

(5.5.22-28)

The existential preoccupation with heaven and hell is a central duality at the heart of Gunpowder texts. In both *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*, sleep serves as one metaphor for this duality. In Barnes' play, Alexander uses serpents to murder the sleeping princes he has been holding prisoner. Before he takes their lives, he contemplates the nature of sleep: 'Sleep both secure upon your fatal bed, /

Now that the God of silence, Morpheus, / Hath with his signet of black horn seal'd up / Your languid eyelids, loaden with pale death; / Sleep, until you draw your latest breath' (4.5). By murdering the boys, Alexander is delivering them from the evils of life into the bliss of an everlasting existence in paradise. Sleep is Heaven, and waking life, Hell. This holds true in *Macbeth*, when having killed Duncan, Macbeth exclaims: 'Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep" – the innocent sleep, / sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, / The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, / Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, / Chief nourisher in life's feast' (2.2.33-45). Macbeth is condemned to a waking hell as a result of his actions, and this duality of waking and sleeping, heaven and hell, night and day is evident throughout the play. From the very beginning, the witches foretell his demonic insomnia when they claim 'Sleep shall neither night nor day / Hang upon his penthouse lid' (Witch 1, 1.3.20-1)

In the closing scene of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare once again reinforces Macbeth's status as bloody executioner, but now he has become a 'dead butcher' (5.8.69), like the Plotters, who were described as 'bouchers of Rome'.<sup>74</sup> He is 'bloody, / Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful, / Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin / That has a name' (4.3.57-60), in short, a devil. A term equally applicable to the Pope in *The Devil's Charter*, the Empress in *The Whore of Babylon*, and the Gunpowder Plotters themselves.

It is clear that in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, England was preoccupied with the apocalyptic battle between good and evil. As the non-dramatic Gunpowder texts reveal, the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November were incorporated into the on



going Protestant war with the forces of darkness. The Plot also served to highlight both the ever-present danger of the End of Days, and the threat from the Whore of Babylon; the dark figure from Revelation who was widely synonymous with the pope in Protestant writings and sermons. Little has been written on the literary uses made of the Whore of Babylon in early modern England. Frances Dolan, surveying the means by which the concept of the Whore was negotiated and contested within literature and drama, states that tension created by theological duality at this time overflows into notions of strangers and others. Thus the Whore of Babylon becomes widely used after the Reformation to 'denounce the Roman church, the pope, and particular Catholics, especially women... this epithet conjoins the familiar language of gender abuse and a reference to an exotic place.'<sup>75</sup> She concludes that the Whore of Babylon is 'one of the usual suspects and an outlandish stranger, a person and an abstraction'.<sup>76</sup> Barbara L Parker notes that the Catholic Church, and more particularly Rome, was 'openly perceived as "the corrupt popish Babylon of Foxe's martyrology", the seat of the Catholic Antichrist, whose ostensibly heretical doctrine was tantamount to spiritual whoredom.'<sup>77</sup> The association of Rome with the Whore of Babylon was therefore 'a Protestant commonplace, an elemental not only of the Geneva glosses but of the sermons and tracts of the day.'<sup>78</sup>

In his *Image of both Churches*, Bale comments directly on the Whore of Babylon: she is 'overset with blood drinking or outrageous murdering of innocents,' she is 'boarishly decked with gold' and holds in her hand 'a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her execrable whoredom'. He refers to her as 'the original mother, the cause, the beginning, the root, the spring, and the

foundation of all spiritual fornications, and in a manner of all fleshly abominations also done upon the earth.'<sup>79</sup> Bale's volume 'exerted considerable influence on later English Protestant literature, history, and hermeneutics.'<sup>80</sup> It was assimilated, into many works, including the marginalia of the Geneva Bible, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, 'in which Una and Duessa personify the "true" and "false" churches.'<sup>81</sup> Bale's influence continued on even further in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, with motifs from his *Image of Both Churches* finding their way into the imaginations of Jacobean dramatists and thus directly onto the London stage.

Playwrights made use of motifs from Revelation in two ways, in order to reflect heightened fear of the Apocalypse itself, potentially ushered in with the discovery of Fawkes, and to make covert reference to the Plot, since the Whore of Babylon was an interchangeable trope for both the pope and Catholic treachery. Several Gunpowder texts directly align the Plotters with the Scarlet Whore of Revelation. In *Mischeefe's mysterie*, a poem originally written on the Plot in Latin and published in 1606, and reprinted in 1610 and 1617, Guy Fawkes is described as a 'base-born *Brat of Rome*', who solicited the other Plotters, men whose 'hearts already *Babels Whore obeyd*'.<sup>82</sup> In *A true and perfect relation*, the conspirators have 'the voyces of Babel' which 'confounded their owne Plots'.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, an anonymously published ballad of 1606 describes the Gunpowder Plotters as the 'graceless children' of the Devil and the 'Whore of Babylon'.<sup>84</sup> In this text, they are depicted as five 'papist types' in a direct echo of both Segar and, more particularly, Dekker. In Dekker's *The Double PP*, a work written specifically in response to the Plot, the Italian Jesuit is described as one who 'waites upon / (As Bawd) the Whore

of Babilon.<sup>85</sup> It is clear, therefore, that imaginative links between the Plotters and the Whore of Babylon were established in the minds of the public in the aftermath of the Plot, thus lending her a definitive topicality on the stage. In many texts written about the Plot, Babel and the Whore are interchangeable tropes used to represent the cosmic enemy that the Protestant Church must resist. Fawkes, Catesby, and the others thus become part of this trope, but they also complicate it, since it is now no longer just an established component of anti-papist rhetoric, but a new motif by which authors can reference the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Dekker states in his introduction to *The Whore of Babylon*: 'The Generall scope of this Drammaticall Poem is to set forth... the inveterate malice, Treasons, Machinations, Underminings, and continual bloody stratagems, of that Purple whore of Roome.'<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein, Barnabe Barnes brings to life Lucretia Borgia, daughter of Pope Alexander VI, an open figure for the Antichrist. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare creates Lady Macbeth, a queen who invokes the demonic forces of the Antichrist in order to achieve her murderous ambitions.

John Foxe, long-time friend and colleague of Bale, set the precedent for a theatrical Whore of Babylon in the 1560s. His play, *Christus Triumphans*, written in 1566, was designated a *comoedia apocalyptica* in the vein of Bale's *King John*.<sup>87</sup> The author, like Dekker, states his intention in the Prologue: 'to transfer as far as possible from the sacred writings into the theater those things which pertain primarily to ecclesiastical affairs.'<sup>88</sup> In other words, 'to write a chronicle history based upon Apocalypse.'<sup>89</sup> Julia Gasper has already noted that Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* bears some resemblance to Foxe's earlier play,<sup>90</sup> and it is clear Dekker was familiar with the work. However there are some distinct differences in

Dekker's treatment of the Whore. In Foxe's play, *Pornopolis, Whore of Babylon*, and mistress of the persecutor Dioctes, is a quiet menacing presence. She moves through the action as a representative of the Antichrist during his enforced absence, but she has no real authority in the play and is restricted to operating as Satan's catalyst - her purpose: to bewilder the population and convince them she is the True Church. Satan authorises her to be given a 'cup of / fornication with which to intoxicate kings with the poison of harlotry. You'll infect everything with lechery and pleasures. So it will happen that you'll sink these people into ignorance' (Act 4.iv).<sup>91</sup> However, the apocalyptic Whores of 1606 have developed significantly. No longer passive catalysts like Foxe's two-dimensional stereotype, the central female characters in these three Gunpowder plays are active agents. They corrupt and contaminate, intoxicate and bewilder. They are secretive, and wicked, and use dark magic to realise their ambition. In this way, they represent the demonic activity of the Gunpowder conspirators and reinforce the dangerous nature of Babylon.

Following Foxe's play, one of the most widely known representations of the Whore of Babylon in the early seventeenth century was Spenser's Duessa, the witch of *The Faerie Queene*. There are some intriguing similarities between Duessa and the Gunpowder Whores. Dekker borrows directly from Spenser in the *Whore of Babylon*, setting his play in Fairyland, and Lady Macbeth, the Empress, and Lucretia all present behavioural traits seen in Spenser's 'witch' stereotype. It is plausible that all three playwrights, either collectively, or separately, had *The Faerie Queene* in mind as a source for the Whore of Revelation when it came to composing their plays.<sup>92</sup> Spenser introduces her as 'A goodly Lady clad in scarlot

red, / Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay',<sup>93</sup> a lady who 'represents the principles of falsehood';<sup>94</sup> 'I that do seeme not I, Duessa am'.<sup>95</sup> Spenser aligns his witch with the Whore of Babylon in several ways. Duessa rides 'high mounted on her manyheaded beast'; she is full of 'wrathfull spight' and carries a golden cup 'replete with magick artes / Death and despeyre did many thereof sup'. In the castle of Orgoglio, Duessa's temporary home, the floor is strewn with the 'bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew, / Which there were slaine, as sheep out of the fold'.<sup>96</sup> These 'guiltlesse babes' foreshadow the imagery of murdered innocents in *Macbeth* and *The Whore of Babylon*. Duessa practises witchcraft, 'her hellish science', in order to 'win by guile';<sup>97</sup> she dissembles and flatters, adopting a fair disguise to hide her 'misshaped parts'.<sup>98</sup> This behaviour is also seen in Lady Macbeth, Lucretia Borgia, and Dekker's Empress, aligning them firmly with the image of the serpent under the flower depicted on the Gunpowder medal. In these three plays, audiences are presented with three powerful, ruling women, all calling on demonic forces in order to complete their ends. Duessa uses 'magick artes', 'charmes and some enchantments', to spread 'Death and despeyre',<sup>99</sup> and by utilising black magic and demonic arts, she is able to complete her task. Lady Macbeth, Lucretia, and the Empress also need the 'secret poison' of a 'golden cup' in order to realise their ambitions, which firmly affixes the image of contaminated women seeking to corrupt to the ritualistic act of Communion and Transubstantiation as witnessed in the Catholic Mass. 'The surface glitter of popish ceremonies and images were all intended to appeal to "the heart of carnal man, bewitching it with great glistening of the painted harlot." Popery was a religion based on illusion and trickery. The mass itself was compared to conjuring or

magic, as were the false miracles and powers of exorcism claimed for saints and the priesthood respectively.<sup>100</sup>

Lucretia Borgia first practises her witchcraft when planning the murder of her husband: 'now prove Caesar's sister, o deep in bloody stratagems as he'. She invokes the spirits of darkness: 'You grisly daughters of grim Erebus / Which spit out vengeance from your viperous hairs, / Infuse a three-fold vigour in these arms, / Immarble more my strong, indurate heart, / To consummate the plot of my revenge' (1.4). She calls on the daughters of Erebus, god of the underworld, to fill her with the necessary cruelty to commit her crime, and 'immarble', or harden her heart, so she might 'consummate the plot' and despatch her spouse.

Lady Macbeth makes a similar speech. She calls on 'spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts' to release her from her gender, 'unsex me here', and like Lucretia, to fill her 'from the crown to the toe, top full / Of direst cruelty!' Lucretia needs her heart to be 'immarbled' in order to commit her crime, and Lady Macbeth calls on the spirits of darkness to 'fill' her with 'direst cruelty'. She too wishes to be hardened - 'stop up the access and passage to remorse' - to stem the sense of guilt that presents a threat to her intended actions; 'no compunctious visitings of nature shake my fell purpose' (1.5.40-6).

Dekker's Empress waits until she has inverted the natural order of the universe, until the planets, 'goe out of order' before enjoying the catastrophic results of her plot. She calls forth 'dreadfull eclipses,' 'dire plagues', and a 'universall hot calamitie'. She too will be filled with vengeance - 'Aetna burns in us', 'our breath is lightning, thunder our voice' (3.1.5-16). The Empress directly invokes the power of Satan, who is 'the trew set clocke' by which she goes. His

dark instruments are at her disposal, making her far more dangerous than either Lucretia or Lady Macbeth – not only is she able to harness the disturbing forces of nature, she is also able to yoke the power of Satan himself; a claim which both Lucretia and Lady Macbeth are unable to match. Where they seek to undo an individual, the Empress seeks to undo the world: 'That Satiran is this hand: his braines a forge / Still working for us, / he's the trew set clocke / By which we goe, and of our hours doth keepe / The numbered strokes, when we lye bound in sleep' (3.1.61-4). Her longing for a 'universall hot calamitie' recalls the imagined destruction of England by the Gunpowder Plotters, and her invocation of Satan reflects the imaginative links made in Gunpowder texts between the Plot and the Devil. Fawkes, the Devil of the Vault, was, like the Empress, working to bring about the death of a king and the fall of a nation. In this way, then, all three playwrights not only align their female protagonists with the biblical Whore, but in doing so reinforce her connection to the Gunpowder Plot, and to her 'brat[s] of Rome'<sup>101</sup> who 'desire / Their Countries glory extinct with sword and fire.'<sup>102</sup>

Lady Macbeth, in an unsettling and inverted corruption of both the Mother image and the Catholic Church, offers to 'feed' evil spirits, substituting her life-giving 'milk' for 'gall'. 'I have given suck, and know / How tender tis to love the babe that milks me. / I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out' (1.7.54-8). This image is also used by the Empress when she entreats her murderous minions to 'Blow up, pull downe, ruine all, let not white haire, / Nor red cheeks blunt your wrath, snatch babes from brests, / And when they crie for milke, let them sucke blood' (4.4.121-3). Both women take the image of breast-feeding and invert it. In the

Empress' case, she substitutes milk for blood, just as Lady Macbeth substituted milk for gall. Moreover, in a provocative, unnatural image, Lady Macbeth is prepared to tear a child from her breast and dash its brains out, while the Empress is willing to snatch a child from the breast and nurse it with blood. There are many complex allusions at work in these two speeches; obvious parallels between the nursing mother and the Catholic Church; a distorted and defiled image of the Virgin Mother; and a reference to the Gunpowder Plot in the Empress' use of the word 'blow', which in turn reinforces those Gunpowder texts describing the slaughter of innocents in the St Bartholomew's Day massacre. J.H, in his poem, recalls how:

Papists tossed harmeless babes,  
Upon their speares sharpe point:  
The did their wombes eviscerate,  
And teare them joynt from joynt.

Dragging their woefull scritchng mothers,  
Through every street by th'haire<sup>103</sup>

*The Divell of the Vault* refers to 'strengthelesse sucklings braines, / bedasht gaist flinty stones',<sup>104</sup> which bears an uncanny similarity to Lady Macbeth's plucking of her nipple from the 'boneless gums' of a babe and dashing 'the brains out'. This might suggest Shakespeare had read *The Divell of the Vault*, or that he and the poem's author were drawing on the same source. In poems and texts about the Gunpowder Plot, the image of the Whore of Babylon destroying women and children, and particularly 'harmless babes' occurs repeatedly, echoing the imagined destruction of Westminster on 5<sup>th</sup> November, and the actual violence perpetrated by Catholics in Paris during the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. As Dolan states, in anti-Catholic polemic of the time, images of pregnancy and



childbirth were flexible yet confusing: 'Sometimes the mother is the Whore of Babylon, her pregnancy revealing her sinfulness and deflating her pretensions to virtue. In such cases, the whore mother transmits her own corruption to her offspring.'<sup>105</sup> Not only is the Whore of Babylon a sinful mother, she also contaminates. In his speech to Parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> November, James speaks of the Gunpowder conspirators as unnatural; they have been blinded by superstition into committing errors in the name of religion; seduced and contaminated by popery.<sup>106</sup> Bale described the Whore of Babylon as 'the original mother, the cause, the beginning, the root, the spring'<sup>107</sup> of sin, and in Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, Cardinal 1 reinforces this sense of corruption when he orders the Empress to 'leave the Mother / And be the stepdame; wanton her [Titania] no more / On your indulgent knee' (3.1.35-7). The Empress must cease behaving as a natural mother, and begin behaving like an unnatural one.<sup>108</sup> At Henry Garnet's trial, he was asked, 'What spirit moved you and yours (M.Garnet) to dissolve the quiet of a State, that never conceived you in her wombe, with a purpose that (like the broode of Vipers) you should make your issue into life by eating out of the bowels of the Damme that gave you both creation and nourishment?'<sup>109</sup>

In both *The Whore of Babylon* and *Macbeth*, there are direct references to the motif of the serpent under the flower depicted on the Gunpowder Medal. In *The Whore of Babylon*, the Empress counsels her kings on their behaviour in Fairyland:

Therefore go you three,  
 Draw all your faces sweetly, let your browes  
 Be sleekd; your cheeks in dimples, give out smiles,  
 Your voices string with silver, wooe (like lovers)  
 Sweare you have hills of pearle: show her the world,  
 And say shee shall have all, so shee will kneele

And do us reverence: but if shee grow nice,  
 Dissemble, flatter, stoope to licke the dust  
 Shee goes upon, and (like to serpents) creepe  
 Upon your bellies

(1.1.102-110)

They must equivocate, and dissemble, use their charms to woo while creeping in the dust, reinforcing the 'foul and fair' paradox at the core of all three plays.

Lady Macbeth offers similar instructions to Macbeth:

Your face, my thane, is a book where men  
 May read strange matters. To beguile the time  
 Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue. Look like the innocent flower,  
 But be the serpent under't

(1.5.61-4)

Both women use the simile of a serpent – '(like to serpents) creepe / upon your bellies' and 'Be the serpent under't'. Both use imagery of the face to reflect the 'foul and fair' paradox - 'draw your faces sweetly, let your browes be sleekd, your cheeks in dimples', and 'bear welcome in your eye, your hand, your tongue'. Macbeth is told to look like an 'innocent flower', the kings to look like 'lovers'. Just as the serpent of Catholicism slithers beneath the lilies on the medal, so too do the men in these plays. The similarity of language in these two speeches is startling, suggesting perhaps a possible collaboration.

Evidence of potential collaboration is also found in two further speeches made by Lady Macbeth and the Empress. In Act 1, Lady Macbeth comments 'The raven himself is hoarse, / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements' (1. 1.5), and the Empress, in an allusion to the Gunpowder Plotters,

states 'And on the house-tops of Nobilitie / (If there they can but sit) like fatall Ravens, / Or Skrich Owles croake their fals and hoarsely bode' (3.1.114-15). The importance of bird imagery in Gunpowder texts has already been noted, but what is important here is the almost identical nature of the lines ascribed to the two characters. Both use the words 'fatal', 'raven', 'croak', 'hoarse/ly'.<sup>110</sup>

To strengthen the dramatic connections between the three women and the Whore of Babylon, all three playwrights align their female protagonists with the foaming cup of intoxication described by Bale. Lady Macbeth, plotting the murder of the King, intends 'with wine and wassail' to ply 'his two chamberlains' until 'memory, the warder of the brain, / Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason / A limbeck only' (1.7.61-7). Once drunk, the grooms will be incapable of either preventing the murder, or remembering any aspect of the evening; the words 'fume' and 'limbeck' strengthening the sense of inebriation and distillation, and creating a powerful image of the stupefied, bewitched grooms.

In *The Whore of Babylon*, the Empress, in an echo of Satan's speech about Pornopolis in *Christus Triumphans*, states: 'Defame me, call me Whore of Babylon. / Give out that I am common: that for lust, and hire / I prostitute this body: that to Kings / I quaffe full bowles of stronge enchanting wines' (1.1.83-86). Again, the image is of intoxication. The Empress will 'quaffe full bowles' of strong wine to beguile the male sex - men will be 'by us undone' as a result of being 'drunke'. Dekker couples this with the sin of lechery. Just as Lady Macbeth will intoxicate the grooms with 'wassail', a euphemism for 'lust', so the Empress will 'for lust, and hire... prostitute this body'.

Lucretia Borgia, admiring herself in the mirror before intending to dine with the Lord Cardinal of Capua, reflects in a lengthy monologue on the men she has enticed and enchanted with her beauty and cunning: 'Sweet mouth, the ruby port to paradise / Of my world's pleasure, from whence issue forth / Many false brags, bold sallies, sweet supplies' (4.3). Like Duessa, here the Whore of Babylon is revealed in her duplicity. Just as the Gunpowder Plotters worked in secret, underground, to bring about destruction, Lucretia, as a figure for the Catholic Church, uses her mouth, as sweet as the 'ruby port to paradise', to intoxicate unsuspecting men and thus expose them to her 'false brags' and 'bold sallies'. The paranoia and fear of contamination revealed in Gunpowder texts demonstrates just such an anxiety about the Devil's 'hel-bred troupe'<sup>111</sup> stalking England; 'cursed Catilines, / t'affirme their vowes with blood'.<sup>112</sup> Behind them, always lurking is the 'forraine force' of the 'triple-crowned Beast'.<sup>113</sup>

This deliberate conjunction of wine with fornication and corruption locates all three women within the trope of the Whore of Babylon. To reiterate Bale, she is the 'foundation of all spiritual fornications and in a manner of all fleshly abominations also done upon the earth'.<sup>114</sup> Dekker openly reinforces this when the Empress claims:

From our mouth flow rivers of blasphemy  
And lies; our Babylonian Sinagogues  
Are counted Stewes, where Fornications  
And all uncleannesse Sodomitically,

(Whose leprosy touch'd us never) are now daily acted  
(1.1.31-5)

The corruption at the heart of the three women manifests itself in a physical affliction, in what Bale termed 'fleshly abominations'. This 'leprosy' or contamination emerges in all three plays, most notably in the blood that Lady Macbeth cannot wash from her hands, and in the marks left on Lucretia's face after she is poisoned. In the seventeenth century, there was a belief that spots were evidence of the Devil, and people arrested for witchcraft did their best to remove moles or blemishes that might be used as evidence against them.<sup>115</sup> Lady Macbeth and Lucretia are revealed as agents of the Devil by virtue of spots, and both women echo each other. Lucretia cries 'Out, out, for shame! I see the blood itself / Dispersed and inflam'd! Give me some water!' before going on to recognise she has been poisoned:

What, have I caught you, Sforza?  
 Who painted my fair face with these foul spots?  
 You see them in my soul, deformed blots!"  
 (Act 4.3)

Lady Macbeth, scrubbing her hands in vain, declares 'Out, damned spot. Out, I say! - One, two - why Then, tis time to do't - Hell is murky' (5.1.31-2). A reference to water and blood in *The Whore of Babylon* also echoes *Macbeth*; Titania says 'When drops of water are so spilt, / That they can wash out murders guilt' (1.2.35-6), perhaps further evidence of collaboration between the playwrights. The Empress refers to 'spots' when, riding upon the Beast, she declares 'Tell: We feare / No spots'. It is tempting to see this little throwaway line as Dekker's metatextual nod to Barnes and Shakespeare, since the Empress is indeed as spotted as Lady Macbeth and Lucretia:

Truth:            my Skins not spotted

With foule disease, as is that common harlot,  
That baseborne trueth that lives in Babylon

P Dealing: Why? Is shee spotted?’

Truth: All over, with strange ugliness, all over.  
(3.3.9-12)

Shakespeare and Barnes explore this pollution with deliberate irony. In two very similar scenes, Lucretia and Lady Macbeth ‘discover’ the respective deaths of Versilli and Duncan. Lucretia is warned ‘Approach not near this ruthful spectacle, / Approach not near this spectacle of blood, / This ruthful spectacle of blood and death. / Lest sudden horror of these bleeding wounds / Wound thy distracted spirits to pale death’ (1.5). Macduff warns Lady Macbeth ‘O gentle lady. / ‘Tis not for you to hear what I can speak. / The repetition, in a woman’s ear, / Would murder as it fell’ (2.3.83-6). Both women, as unsuspected instigators of murder, have their ‘innocence’ protected from foul deeds by men who believe it will otherwise be contaminated.

The similarities between all three female characters in these Gunpowder plays are beyond coincidence, not only in their figuring as types for the Whore of Babylon, but in the ways in which they echo and mirror each other. They are interchangeable characters. Lady Macbeth would be no more out of place in the corrupted world of Alexander the Sixth’s Rome than the Empress would be in Scotland. All three whisper like scorpions in men’s minds. They each spring directly from ‘Murther in Myrrors’<sup>116</sup> as imagined in *The Devill in the Vault* ‘Glaunce but on stories pristinate / (Murther in Myrrors see / And there perspicuously discern / what Romes religion be’,<sup>117</sup> and from the ‘mirroure of

women' in *The Whore of Babylon* (5.2.70). Just as Macbeth sees Banquo's line stretching forth 'to the crack of doom', so too the Whore of Babylon's place in the past, present, and more particularly the future, is here a serious cause of anxiety. All three women instigate murderous activity, unleash the forces of darkness onto an unsuspecting world, and are ultimately undone by their own demonic contamination. Foxe's Whore is nothing more than a figurehead in opposition to Ecclesia, with Satan the embodiment of diabolical power, so Dekker transfers all of Satan's powers onto the Empress and dispatches him from the scene altogether. Barnes portrays the pope as the Antichrist, with Lucretia an obvious figure for the Whore, while Shakespeare, like Dekker, makes Macbeth a Luciferic figure, encircled by the witches and the dark power of Lady Macbeth. The connection between all three women and the Whore of Babylon makes for some complex allusions. The women are aligned with the trope from Revelation in order to reinforce their diabolical natures, however they can also be interpreted as interchangeable figures for the Gunpowder Plotters, since their acts of undermining and witchcraft, and their corrupt contaminated natures, reflect contemporary beliefs about Guy Fawkes and his associates: 'Fiends, rowz'd from the tenebrous deepes, / of Sulphur-flaming hell.'<sup>118</sup>

While *Macbeth*, *The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Devil's Charter* undoubtedly fit within Gary Wills' definition of a Gunpowder Play, they also go beyond it in their incorporation of Protestant exegesis of the apocalyptic battle between good and evil, and they thus share similarities which take them outside Wills' categorisation. That Barnes and Dekker should choose to write plays with apocalyptic motifs in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Treason is no surprise; both

playwrights were acknowledged Protestants, and Dekker's publication of *The Double PP* in 1606 is a strong indication of his theological and ideological leanings. With *The Whore of Babylon* he has taken the 'characteristic devices of apocalyptic literature – "prophetic" visions, symbolism, deliberate obscurity, interpreting angel (Truth) – and adapted them to the machinery of the history play, creating a historical allegory in which England, the champion of Protestantism, is overtly cast in the role of the Angel of Light and Catholicism in that of the Fiend of Darkness in the timeless cosmic warfare.'<sup>119</sup> In *The Devil's Charter*, Barnes openly and violently portrays the pope as the Antichrist.

The question is, what motivated Shakespeare to figure the Whore of Babylon in *Macbeth*? It could be argued that Lady Macbeth is simply a complex female character who happens to have corresponding attributes with the Whore of Babylon. If so, then what of the textual similarities between the speeches of the three women? Why did Shakespeare choose to align himself with such radical Protestant authors as Dekker and Barnes? It may of course be the three plays just happened to be in repertory in the same season, and Shakespeare had little interest in the more militant views of his two associate playwrights. His motivation for writing during the 1606-7 theatre season may have been purely financial. But in conjunction with the other two plays, *Macbeth* does suggest that Shakespeare, like Dekker, and Barnes, was not only aware of the work of Bale, Foxe, and Spenser, but was also preoccupied with the Gunpowder Plot and the impact it had upon the citizens of London. The staging of *Macbeth* alongside the militant *The Devil's Charter*, and in production in the same season as *The Whore of Babylon*, does prompt the view that Shakespeare had a stake, if only financial, in the radical



Protestant ideas which were finding voice and favour in the bleak months of 1606-7.

## Chapter Three

'Your soul to the devil tender for lust'

Revenge and Corruption: Catholic sparks in Ben Jonson's  
*Volpone* and George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*

William Symonds, in his 1606 Gunpowder sermon *A heavenly Voyce*, calls on Protestants to recall the threat of God's vengeance upon Babylonian Rome.<sup>1</sup> This was a common motif in the aftermath of the Plot, and one that reinforced the concept of retribution. Divine vengeance was one of the most important conceits to exert influence on sixteenth century thought, and it became a pervasive theme in Tudor-Stuart tragedy.<sup>2</sup> It provided 'comforting reassurance that even the apparent triumphs over evil and depressing failures of human justice had their place in the Divine Plan, and would, in God's time, be reversed... the Reformation was seen by protestant thinkers as the providentially ordered visitation of God's vengeance upon the Satanic forces which had corrupted the Church.'<sup>3</sup>

The strategy behind the Gunpowder Plot has often been dismissed as obscure or unrealistic;<sup>4</sup> to counter this, Mark Nicholls offers the view that the one motive shared by all those involved in the Plot was revenge; 'hatred, contempt, and their consequences seemed to ignite the treason. Evidence against Catesby is tainted by the natural temptation for surviving Plotters to lay guilt on a dead colleague, but it remains obvious that Catesby was animated by detestation of the Protestant regime, that his thinking was dominated by the desire to revenge thirty years of religious persecution.'<sup>5</sup> Catesby's treason was shored up by anger, and by

‘an apocalyptic vision of the future for Catholicism’,<sup>6</sup> his internal logic of revenge demanded action, punishment. Catesby’s focus was on Westminster as an institution, and his revenge directed ‘at erstwhile friends as well as professed enemies. Rather than suffering from inadequate support among the peerage, the energy and drive of the Gunpowder Plot depended on an “us against the world” mentality.’<sup>7</sup>

Taking private revenge in the early seventeenth century was regarded as an ‘evil of the age’, and therefore to be actively discouraged, but the extent to which an individual should live by a code of honour was nevertheless a ‘very live issue’.<sup>8</sup> The action of an individual seeking revenge was not regarded as adherence to a form of divine retribution, but instead a means of survival adopted by the ‘alienated and dispossessed’.<sup>9</sup> However, this sense of estrangement, of marginalisation by an oppressive authority, makes for a problematic paradox. In one sense, the individual experiences the ‘futility and worthlessness of the existing social order’, on the other, the estranged subject is dependent on the social order, so to be reintegrated into it ‘is to embrace destruction.’<sup>10</sup> In the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, when the threat of personal death and loss of power seemed to lurk around every corner, the concept of revenge, and particularly divine revenge, took on a new and more potent currency, but for a population obliged to attend church every Sunday, the absolutism of obedience to authority was non-negotiable; ‘to transgress was to risk dire punishment from God’.<sup>11</sup>

One technique, by which the government sought to maintain absolute authority in the immediate aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, was the introduction

of the Oath of Allegiance, one of a series of measures designed to maintain stricter control over England's Catholic subjects. These measures included an act forbidding recusants from living in or close to London, an act banning them from practising the law or holding public office, and an act which enabled the government to seize two-thirds of recusant lands rather than impose the established monetary fine of £20. However, it was the mandatory Oath of Allegiance that caused perhaps the most discomfort to Catholics, since it required them to formally swear 'I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure, as impious and heretical, this damnable doctrine and position, that princes which be excommunicated or deprived by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects'.<sup>12</sup> In essence, James was pushing Catholics into a position of enormous spiritual difficulty. Either pledge allegiance to the English monarch and head of the English Church, or deny him by upholding the rightful authority of the pope. The Oath referred to the powers of the pope as 'impious', 'heretical' and 'damnable',<sup>13</sup> and while some regard the Oath as evidence of James' consistency in 'splitting the radicals from the moderate majority', and thus being part of a 'balanced and unfanatical approach to the Catholic problem' in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot,<sup>14</sup> it still nevertheless divided and weakened the Catholic clergy and laity in England.<sup>15</sup>

The extent to which those Catholics who swore the Oath actually believed in its sentiment is of course open to debate. It has been estimated that there were about 40,000 Catholics in England in 1603, which accounts for less than one percent of the population.<sup>16</sup> However, this figure may be misleading, since Catholicism was by this time an underground faith; it existed as flexible religion

in which 'absolute recusancy (unmoderated nonconformity) and moderate or moderated recusancy (partial or occasional nonconformity) were both expressions.'<sup>17</sup>

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 1606, the same day the Gunpowder Plotters Robert Winter and Stephen Littleton were rounded up and brought to justice, Ben Jonson and his wife Anne were summoned to appear at the London Consistory Court to face charges of recusancy.<sup>18</sup> The written accusations included the charge that Jonson, a noted 'poet', was 'by fame a seducer of youth to the Popish religion.'<sup>19</sup> Jonson's political and religious position during 1605-6 was a difficult one. A Catholic convert and suspected spy, he had dined with several of the Gunpowder Plotters on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1605, and prior to this, had occasionally provided Salisbury with evidence about London Catholics.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Jonson's close friend, Sir John Roe, was recorded in a report by one of Cecil's spies as being at the Horns tavern in Carter Lane in Lent 1605, 'in the company of a number of the Gunpowder conspirators, including Robert Catesby, Francis Tresham, and Thomas Winter.'<sup>21</sup> Although Roe may have been privy to the conspirators' plans, he was in the Low Countries in October and November of that year, and was thus 'spared any involvement in the repercussions that followed.'<sup>22</sup> Whether or not Roe had shared information about the Plot with Jonson is unknown, but in 1606, he died of the plague '(so Jonson reported to Drummond) in his very arms: an astonishing testimony to the intimacy of their relationship, given the justly feared virulence of the disease.'<sup>23</sup>

Jonson's relationship with the authorities in this period was a troubled one. Whether a deal had been struck with Salisbury to secure his release from prison

in the summer of 1605 (Jonson, along with several playwrights, had been imprisoned following the satiric *Eastward Ho!*), or whether Jonson was engaged in spying for financial reasons, is uncertain.<sup>24</sup> J.M Archer asserts Jonson was 'allied to both sides at once in 1605... Even as late as 1611 his attitude towards spying was still marked by the ambivalence of the double agent.'<sup>25</sup> Double agent or not, the Privy Council lost no time in issuing a warrant for Jonson after the discovery of the Plot, which he received on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1605: 'A warrant unto Benjamin Jonson to let a certain priest know, that offered to do good service for the state, that he should securely come and go from the Lordships, which they promised in the said warrant upon their honours.'<sup>26</sup> Jonson was quick to respond. Writing to Salisbury on 8<sup>th</sup> November, he confessed he had been unable to locate the priest and so could not escort him to the Lords as requested.<sup>27</sup> The identity of this priest is uncertain, but it may have been the same Jesuit who converted Jonson to Catholicism in prison, and while Jonson here offers his services to Salisbury, the tone of his reply suggests he is simply paying lip service to the demands.<sup>28</sup>

After the 9<sup>th</sup> January summons, the Jonsons were subsequently ordered to appear before the court in late April to answer the charges before them. The prosecution alleged that while Ben Jonson and his wife 'refuse not to come to divine service' in the Parish of St Anne's, Blackfriars, they had 'absented themselves from the communion, being often-times admonished, which hath continued as far as we can learn ever since the King came in.'<sup>29</sup> Jonson responded that he and his wife did 'go ordinarily to church and to his own parish church and so hath done this half year', and that his wife 'for anything he knoweth, hath

gone to church and used always to receive the communion, and is appointed to receive the communion tomorrow'.<sup>30</sup> This suggests Jonson was not living with his wife at this time. As for himself, he asserts he has maintained theological doubts, and 'hath refused to receive the communion until he shall be maketh therein.'<sup>31</sup> Donaldson states that Jonson was here gambling on the Protestant 'persuasion through conference', in which the clergy were duty bound to engage in 'disputation with wayward Catholics'.<sup>32</sup> Further hearings of the same charges were heard in May and June; the Jonsons were fined 'a total of thirteen shillings for persistently abstaining from communion, before processings were "stayed at seal", that is, halted without a final decision being taken.'<sup>33</sup> By 1610, against the fear of these sorts of harsh penalties, many Catholics had come to regard government measures as an effective end to their professional careers, 'forcing them to either leave the Church of Rome or to leave the country'.<sup>34</sup>

In 1606-7, against the backdrop of the Oath of Allegiance, two plays were produced for the London stage. Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, and *Bussy D'Ambois* by George Chapman. Both plays seek to negotiate the complex issue of power, authority, and revenge in the aftermath of the Plot, at the exact moment when Protestants were urged to consider both divine revenge and retribution in response to Catesby's treason: 'Revenge tragedy enabled conflicts to be identified and formalised within the conventions of an established dramatic form, opening for the audience the possibility of resolution on both the intellectual and emotional levels.'<sup>35</sup>

The Jacobean theatre was concerned with the 'dramatic treatment of the special shape in which evil revealed itself',<sup>36</sup> and deliverance from the

Gunpowder Plot concretised this evil, not as an abstract concept, but as a harsh reality. *Volpone* is a comedy, but its central theme is that of revenge. It was produced by the King's Men and in repertory at the same time as *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*. *Bussy D'Ambois* was in production across the water at Paul's during the same season.

According to Richard Dutton there is compelling evidence to suggest that *Volpone* was first performed in 1606. Dutton cites the colophon of the 1616 folio text, which states the play was 'first acted' in 1605 (but this is written under the Old Style dating).<sup>37</sup> Jonson started writing 'in the second half of January 1606', and *Volpone* was completed 'late in February or early in March, in time (with rehearsals) for a first performance before 25<sup>th</sup> March, New Year's Day, Old Style.'<sup>38</sup> Jonson states in the Prologue, 'Tis known, five weeks fully penned it - / From his own hand'.<sup>39</sup> With such close and personal proximity to the events of November 1605, it is perhaps not surprising Jonson chose to write a play littered with references to the Gunpowder Plot, and *Volpone* certainly belongs within the definition of a Gunpowder play as defined by Gary Wills. Situated in Venice, *Volpone* obsesses on the themes of plotting and equivocation. It features devils, witchcraft, and revenge, and explores attempts made to undermine and destroy Venetian society. In this regard, the play shares many similarities with *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *The Whore of Babylon*, and it adopts many of the same Gunpowder tropes and motifs used in these contemporaneous tragedies.

*Volpone* 'the fox', the titular character of the play, is a Venetian miser. Old and wealthy, he has managed to acquire great riches, purportedly via largely immoral means. Together with his servant, Mosca, he unscrupulously entertains



the attentions of three men all determined to become his legal heir after his death. The play follows the intrigues and dissembling of Volpone and Mosca as they attempt to defraud the three would-be recipients. An Englishman, Sir Politic Would-be, and his wife become embroiled in the action, as does Celia, the chaste wife of Corvino, one of the three legacy-hunters. After feigning illness, attempting to seduce Celia, and becoming temporarily possessed by evil spirits, *Volpone* ends with a defeated protagonist being hauled off to prison.

In *Volpone*, Jonson makes heavy use of beast analogy. The play 'presents itself as an Aesopian tale of foxes and crows, vultures and flies, mountebanks and parrots, mordantly satirical, morally bracing.'<sup>40</sup> That Jonson should choose to adopt beast analogy for *Volpone* does suggest his desire to distance the play from contemporary events, at least in the eyes of the state. The two late sixteenth century beast fables Jonson almost certainly knew<sup>41</sup> were Edmund Spenser's *Prosopopoia* or *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and Thomas North's translation of Doni's *Moral Philosophy*.<sup>42</sup> While neither appears to be an outright source for the play, 'there are features of both texts that might well have suggested themes, motifs or plot twists for *Volpone*.'<sup>43</sup> In addition, Jonson's own heavily annotated 1617 edition of *Mother Hubbard's Tale* features the words 'Lord Treserors' written to identify the 'false fox' at line 1148.<sup>44</sup> Although Dutton acknowledges the impossibility of proving Jonson knew the poem in 1606 when he was composing *Volpone*, he does argue Spenser's poem, withdrawn from sale, was available as late as 1596: 'given its notoriety, it seems inconceivable that Jonson did not know of *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, at least in general terms.'<sup>45</sup>

The use of beast appellations as a means of abuse and derision was a familiar device in the court of Elizabeth I.<sup>46</sup> Burghley's principal nickname, 'which, coming from his enemies, ranks almost as a compliment, was "the old fox"'.<sup>47</sup> Pauline Croft notes the fact that scholars frequently make a link between the character of Volpone and Cecil, but suggests that in 1606 the Earl of Salisbury was still providing Jonson with the occasional commission, so it is unlikely Jonson would have risked offending him. However, she does concede that the 'frequent use of fox imagery in the posthumous libels [aimed at Cecil] strengthen the view that the play was seen by the theatre-going populace as referring, however obliquely, to Salisbury.'<sup>48</sup> Whether Jonson intended to conflate the character of Volpone with Robert Cecil is open to speculation. It is a risky strategy on his part, in spite of the prefatory verses and statements to the play, in which Jonson is careful to obfuscate his political position. Some scholars have proposed Jonson was satirising other public figures in *Volpone*, such as Thomas Sutton, founder of London's Charterhouse hospital.<sup>49</sup> Whatever the truth, in more general terms at least, it is clear from the Epistle that Jonson is drawing 'on a whole sequence of traumas and confrontations with authority, dating back to *The Isle of Dogs* affair',<sup>50</sup> affirming to his readers that his position as playwright and poet is just as open to attack and slander as any public figure in government. Samuel Calvert, writing in 1605, contends that playwrights are not afraid to portray 'the whole course of the present Time, not sparing either King, State or Religion, in so great Absurdity, and with such Liberty, that any would be afraid to hear them.'<sup>51</sup> Dramatists and poets were subject to imprisonment and persecution by the authorities, and they risked falling foul of the law 'outside as well as inside the

theatre; sedition, atheism, homosexuality and espionage are among the charges made against them.<sup>52</sup> It was this complex relationship between Church, state, and individual which became 'the very subject matter which the whole machinery of censorship and control had been devised to license and suppress.'<sup>53</sup> Irrespective of the playwright's intent to figure individuals in *Volpone* - and it must be noted that 'fox' and 'Fawkes' are similar enough to warrant a verbal association between Volpone and Fawkes - the Gunpowder Plot nevertheless sits at the heart of the play. *Volpone* is not a 'scattergun satire on the court in general, but a much deeper examination of power, profit and religious politics in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot'.<sup>54</sup> Dutton asserts that the play has 'persistent references, not directly to the Gunpowder Plot, but to the hanging, drawing and quartering of the surviving Plotters (30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 1606) and to their use of equivocation'.<sup>55</sup> His assertion, while correct in part, does not take into account the compelling textual evidence that suggests Jonson is referencing the events of 1605 with the same coded motifs seen in *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *The Whore of Babylon*; plays in performance at the same time as *Volpone*. In the atmosphere of fear, paranoia, and uncertainty in the early months of 1606, these motifs would have been instantly recognisable to Jonson's audience.

Jonson's choice of Venice as the setting for *Volpone* also echoes the distant non-English settings of *Macbeth*, *The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Devil's Charter*. For Jacobeans, Venice represented the 'archetype of corruption, decadence, and greed.'<sup>56</sup> Its position as the 'bastion of the Christian world against the infidel threat from the east made the whole situation a ready metaphor for Protestant England's defence against the ranks of Roman Catholicism, in the

shape either of Jesuit priests or of a Spanish army.<sup>57</sup> However, as a Catholic, Jonson aligns the Venetian court in *Volpone* – Protestant England – with the very corruption and greed associated with Venice itself. For most of his life, he lived in close proximity to the English court, and London and Westminster had become ‘the geographic and imaginative poles between which his life and works oscillate’.<sup>58</sup> Jonson saw his role as that of a reformer; ‘in varying modes and intensities at different times, he assigned himself the gargantuan and foolhardy task of critiquing the foibles and vices of court’.<sup>59</sup> In *Volpone*, he is able to maintain this critique, and at the same time negotiate both the recent events of the Gunpowder Plot and the government’s subsequent attempt to control its mythology. Setting the play outside England enables Jonson to remove blatant parallels with the court of James I, and thus render it more difficult for the authorities to accuse him of sedition. After *Volpone* was written, but before it was printed, Venice ‘expelled the Jesuits, the Catholic shock-troops of the Counter-Reformation, and came under papal interdict for doing so’.<sup>60</sup> However, prior to this, religious freedom ‘was more widely allowed in Venice than in most places, “there is no danger [of the Inquisition] at all in the state of Venice to him that can hold his peace and behave himself”; all of which is in sharp contrast to the repression and anxiety experienced by English Catholics in the months following November 1605’.<sup>61</sup>

According to Donaldson, *Volpone* ‘must have been written from start to finish in the interval between the Jonsons first appearance in the Consistory Court on 9<sup>th</sup> January and their second appearance on 20 April, during a period of continuing national vigilance and anxiety in the aftermath of the Gunpowder

Plot.<sup>62</sup> Given the timing then, it is not at all surprising that the play is concerned with '*plots* and *plotters*, words whose recurrence throughout the play might have given a small *frisson* to early audiences in their passing recall of recent events and alarms in England.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, as Donaldson concludes, '*Plotter* was a very new word in 1606: the OED's first example of its usage as a synonym for "conspirator" is from the same year, where it is used in relation to those involved in the recent "Jesuits" treason.<sup>64</sup>

The very first reference to the Gunpowder Plot in *Volpone* occurs in The Argument before the Prologue, in which the Jonson subtly announces the Gunpowder Plot as his subject:

Volpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, despairs  
Offers his state to hopes of several heirs  
Lies languishing, his parasites receives  
Presents of all, assures, deludes, then weaves  
Other cross-plots, which ope themselves, are told.  
New tricks for safety are sought; they thrive; when, bold,  
Each tempts th'other again, and all are sold.  
(Prologue)

'Cross-plots' can be read as a clear reference to the events of 1605, and 'new tricks for safety' to the crackdown by the government on Catholics and Jesuits. 'All are sold' may hint at the personal despair Jonson felt as a Catholic during these months, and could also refer to the capture and execution of Catesby's circle. In Act 1, almost immediately there is a second reference to the Plot.

Volpone, singing the praises of his gold, declares:

I wound no earth with ploughshares; fat no beasts  
To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,  
Oil, corn, or men, to grind 'em into powder,  
I blow no subtle glass; expose no ships  
To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea  
(1.1.34-7)

The words 'powder' and 'blow' have immediate connotations with the events of 1605, used as they were by James to describe the discovery of the Gunpowder Treason. To combine 'powder' and 'blow' with 'expose no ships / To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea', can be read as a direct reference to the discovery of the Monteagle letter. Here Volpone insists he may be a schemer but he would not diminish himself by exposing 'ships', that is, men, to the 'threat'nings' or danger of the 'furrow-faced sea', perhaps a reference to James I, or more likely, to the Holy See of Rome. It does not follow that this is necessarily Jonson's own stance, but his own compromising role in the Plot's recent discovery may not have been lost on the Catholic contingent in the audience. Volpone may be odious, but he argues here at least for a degree of integrity. Perhaps Jonson wanted to make it clear that in *Volpone* he intended to comment on the Gunpowder Plot, and these lines serve to reassure his audience that whatever rumours were circulating about his own involvement, he nevertheless finds the notion of informing on his fellow Catholics distasteful.

A second potential reference to the Plot occurs in Act 2. Volpone says to Celia 'Here is a powder, concealed in this paper' (2.2.216); a powder which he declares to be priceless and worth the whole world. The discovery of the Monteagle letter essentially saved the government from destruction by gunpowder, so its value too would be 'priceless' and beyond calculation. Jonson himself wrote an epigram in praise of Monteagle, in which he commended him as the 'saver of my country', declaring Monteagle's financial reward for delivering the letter as not nearly enough.<sup>65</sup> However, this second reference to powder appears to directly contradict the first; here the 'powder' is priceless, yet earlier

the word proceeds the line 'I blow no subtle glass; expose no ships', which, in the context of Volpone's speech, suggests a betrayal. This contradiction may be the result of Jonson's own equivocal position on the Plot: he is able to value and admire the action of Monteagle in alerting the authorities, yet recognises his betrayal of fellow Catholics. A further possible reference to the Monteagle letter occurs when Sir Politic declares 'This three weeks, all my advices, all my letters, / They have been intercepted' (2.3.11-12). The Monteagle letter was not intercepted. Monteagle delivered it straight to the authorities, but it did fall into government hands, and thus thwart the Plot. These lines come in an exchange in which Peregrine warns Sir Politic of a possible 'design' on him, a context then which strengthens the possibility that Jonson is referencing the Plot. Further mention of the Monteagle letter comes in Act 4. Sir Politic says to Peregrine 'I told you sir, it was a plot; you see / What observation is' (4.1.1-2). This is almost certainly a reference to James' intuitive insight upon reading the Monteagle letter.

In addition to the Plot itself, in *Volpone* Jonson also seeks to negotiate the difficult position of recusants in England during this period of severe anxiety. In Act 4, Sir Politic offers Peregrine advice on surviving in Venice:

You shall have tricks else, passed upon you hourly.  
And then, for your religion, profess none,  
But wonder at the diversity of all;  
And for your part protest, were there no other  
But simply the laws o'the land, you could content you;  
Nick Machiavel and Monsieur Bodin both  
Were of this mind.

(4.1.21-7)

No doubt Jonson is here drawing on his own precarious position. This advice would be equally applicable to all Catholics wishing to conduct themselves with

caution in England in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot; 'for your religion, profess none', and 'protest' yourself 'content' with 'the laws o'the land'. Similarly, the 'breath-taking blasphemy' of the play's opening lines, in which Volpone worships the gold he has amassed, conflate religion and wealth, and might have served as a reminder to the audience of the resentment recusants such as Jonson felt over what they perceived to be the 'venal hypocrisy of the Cecil's religious policy'.<sup>66</sup> Jonson pursues this further when Mosca states 'Tear forth the fathers of poor families / Out of their beds, and coffin them, alive / In some kind, clasping prison' (1.1.44-6). In the following scene, the dwarf Nano asks 'how of late thou hast suffered translation / And shifted thy coat in these days of reformation?' Androgino replies 'Like one of the reformed, a fool, as you can see, / Counting all old doctrine heresy' (1.2.29-32). Jonson, in his first brush with the authorities, was imprisoned in 1597 for his part in the *Isle of Dogs* scandal,<sup>67</sup> and so had personal experience of being confined alive in 'some kind, clasping prison.' Since the *Isle of Dogs* is now lost, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly it was about the play which so incensed Topcliffe, but as a result, Jonson gained unfortunate experience of being persecuted by the authorities, and could no doubt empathise with the experience of imprisoned Catholics. In addition, only a year later, in 1598, Jonson was arrested and imprisoned once again, this time for the murder of Gabriel Spenser, and it was during his time in Newgate prison that he formally converted to Catholicism.<sup>68</sup>

In both *Macbeth* and *The Whore of Babylon*, use of the word 'forked' instantly invokes Guy Fawkes. Mosca, in conversation with Voltore speaks of lawyers able to 'give forked counsel' (1.3.58); the widespread view of the



inherent corruption of lawyers is here transferred to Fawkes, and a similar reference to him may be inferred in Act 4. Voltore, in punishing Volpone, insists 'Best try him then with goads, or burning irons; / Put him to the strappado, I have heard / The rack hath cured the gout, faith, give it to him' (4.6.31-34). This seems to be a clear reference to the torture of Fawkes in the Tower. A further allusion to Fawkes occurs when Corbaccio, one of the three schemers, refers to Voltore as 'a knave / And he has a forked tongue' (5.10.45-6). Shakespeare makes reference to an 'adder's fork' in *Macbeth*, and here, Jonson seems to be adopting that same image to allude to Fawkes.

The word 'plot' appears throughout *Volpone*, along with the words 'mine', 'powder', and 'blow'. The coincidence 'that "plot" is a term both for a criminal intrigue and for a dramatic narrative makes for a heightened "double talk" throughout *Volpone*'.<sup>69</sup> Sir Politic suggests plots are 'Drawn out of playbooks' (5.4.42), and the First Avvocato indicts Mosca for being 'the chiefest minister, if not plotter' of all (5.12.108). Sir Politic-Would-Be, whose role in the play 'more or less openly alludes to the post-Gunpowder paranoia in England', imports to Venice 'the world of conspiracy theory, statecraft and espionage which characterised the England he had so recently left'.<sup>70</sup> In his meeting with Peregrine, he states:

it is no salt desire  
Of seeing countries, shifting a religion,  
Nor any disaffection to the state  
Where I was bred (and unto which I owe  
My dearest plots)

(2.1.4-9).

In the same scene they discuss the news that 'there was a whale discovered in the river, /...for the subversion / Of the Stade fleet' (2.1.46-8). Sir Politic affirms, 'Twas either sent from Spain, or the Archdukes! / Spinola's whale, upon my life, my credit! / Will they not leave these projects?' (2.1.50-2). The two then go on to discuss an 'unknown fool', who, 'While he lived, in action / He has received weekly intelligence, / Upon my knowledge, out of the Low Countries' (Sir Politic, 2.1.68-70). This individual is described as 'one of the most dangerous heads / Living within the state'. According to Richard Dutton, only one man in England was receiving weekly intelligence from the Low Countries in 1605-6, and that was Robert Cecil, 'who had inherited the extensive espionage operations built up by his father and Sir Frances Walsingham.'<sup>71</sup> Sir Politic's comments on the Gunpowder Plot throughout *Volpone* bring the audience repeatedly back to issues surrounding Catesby's scheme, and Dutton affirms that his character 'buys completely into all the anti-Spanish anxieties that followed the Gunpowder Plot.'<sup>72</sup>

In *Volpone*, birds of prey are literally figured on the stage: Corvino for raven, Corbaccio for crow, and Voltore for vulture; all 'carrion birds, disgusting in their alacrity to feed on decaying human flesh.'<sup>73</sup> It is difficult to determine whether Jonson is here overtly using these birds to allude to individual Gunpowder Plotters, but in Act 1 *Volpone* states 'Now, now, my clients / Begin their visitation! Vulture, kite, / Raven and gor-crow, all my birds of prey' (1.2.88-90). Fawkes, Catesby, and the others were caricatured by Dekker as birds of prey in *The Whore of Babylon*, in which he depicts them perching atop the roofs of Westminster. *Volpone* refers to his would-be inheritors as carrion again when he

states 'The vulture's gone, and the old raven come' (1.3.82), and Sir Politic receives news of 'a raven that should build / In a ship royal of the King's' (2.1.23-4). This evokes Thomas Percy and his position in the king's household. In Act 3, Mosca refers to Corvino as 'the old raven' (42). In Act 5, Volpone announces 'I shall have instantly my vulture, crow / Raven, come flying hither on the news / To peck for carrion, my she-wolf and all, / Greedy and full of expectation' (5.2.64-7). These lines not only recall the 'ravens' of the Plotters, 'greedy and full of expectation', but also evoke the 'wolf', synonymous with Roman Catholicism in England. Just as Barnes, Dekker, and Shakespeare had used 'raven' to denote the Gunpowder circle, so too it appears does Jonson.

Another symbolic Gunpowder signifier used in *Volpone* is the word 'mine', which evokes the mine dug under Westminster by the Plotters. In Act 3, Mosca admits 'But that I had done / Base offices in rending friends asunder, / Dividing families, betraying counsels, / Whispering false lies, or mining men with praises, / Trained their credulity with perjuries' (3.2.25-9). Here his list of crimes matches those of Fawkes and his co-conspirators. They too were involved in 'dividing families', 'betraying' counsels, 'whispering' false lies, and 'mining men' not with praises but with sedition. These lines also echo the distrust and paranoia prevalent among the recusant community in the aftermath of November 1605. Mosca, following his earlier discourse on parasites, claims 'such sparks / Are the true parasites, others but their zanies' (3.1.32-3). 'Sparks' evoke the lighting of the train that would have detonated the gunpowder stored in the vault. In Dekker's *The Double PP*, he describes Jesuits who shoot their 'Romaine darts',<sup>74</sup> and here Jonson couples parasites with 'sparks' in seeming condemnation of the activity of

the Gunpowder Circle. However, in scene nine, Mosca bemoans the failure of a 'plot': 'Alas, twas laboured all, sir, for your good; / Nor was there want of counsel in the plot, / But fortune can at any time o'erthrow / The projects of a hundred learned clerks' (3.9.58-60). It is difficult to ascertain whether Jonson is here expressing the view that some Catholics might have welcomed the success of the Gunpowder Plot, or if he is further condemning the conspiracy; if 'a hundred learned clerks' could have their plot overthrown by 'fortune', what hope did the Gunpowder conspirators have?

In Act 4, there is a clear discussion about the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November. Sir Politic, in describing some of the 'cautions' he has prepared for the state of Venice, says:

tinder boxes;  
 You must know,  
 No family is, here, without a box.  
 Now, sir, it being so portable a thing.  
 Put case, that you or I were ill affected  
 Unto the state; sir, with it in our pockets,  
 Might not I go into the Arsenale?  
 Or you? Come out again? And none the wiser?  
 (4.1.85-92)

This seems to be a direct allusion to the discovery of Guy Fawkes in the vault beneath Westminster, further supporting the view that Sir Politic is something of a figure for James' government in *Volpone*. He goes on:

Go to, then. I therefore  
 Advertise to the state, how fit it were,  
 That none but such as were known patriots,  
 Sound lovers of their country, should be suffered  
 To enjoy them in their houses; and even those;  
 Sealed at some office, and at such bigness,  
 As might not lurk in pockets  
 (4.1.93-8)

These comments locate Jonson's play 'in a very recent context', and like *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *The Whore of Babylon*, as one 'tinged with post-Gunpowder hysteria.'<sup>75</sup> He returns to this conspiratorial tone in Act 4. Mosca asks Corbaccio, Voltore, and Corvino 'Is the lie / Safely conveyed amongst us? Is that sure? / Knows every man his burden?' (4.4.4-6). This reads as an almost direct echo of the conversation held between the Plotters at the planning stage of their campaign, which was recorded in *King's Book*; a work with which Jonson was almost certainly familiar. Towards the end of the play Voltore asks 'if their plot / Have any face or colour like to truth? / Or if, unto the dullest nostril here, / It smell not rank and most abhorred slander?' (4.6.44-47). Here Jonson appears to be questioning the accuracy of the information disseminated by the government in the aftermath of the Gunpowder treason, perhaps lending his voice to those who believed it was an elaborate hoax to introduce harsher penalties upon the Catholic community.

There is evidence in *Volpone* that Jonson is not only concerned with the Gunpowder Plot, but also with other Gunpowder plays of 1605-6, perhaps because his play was in performance alongside *The Devil's Charter* and *Macbeth* at the Globe. It may have been in a direct response to *Macbeth* that Jonson also chose to utilise the Baleian trope of the image of two churches. Lady Would-Be can easily be read as a figure for the Whore of Babylon. Similarly, Celia might be an open figure for The Woman Clothed with the Sun. As Charles A Hallet has pointed out, her first word is patience, and her last word mercy.<sup>76</sup> However, given his religion, Jonson seems to be inverting Bale, so Celia becomes the chaste representation of the Catholic rather than Protestant Church, and Lady Politic her

direct opposite. Mosca describes Celia as the 'blazing star of Italy' (1.5.109), in an obvious conflation with the seat of the Catholic Church, and in Act 3 Celia states 'I am your martyr' (3.7.108); evoking the historical and religious associations between Catholicism and martyrdom. Volpone compares Celia with Cleopatra, 'the brave Egyptian queen caroused' (3.7.192), aligning her not with a saint or martyr, but with a debauched queen; revealing his desire to ravish Celia in the same way Giacomo longs to ravish Innogen in *Cymbeline*. Celia's husband is equally keen to abuse his wife:

Heart, I will drag thee hence home by the hair;  
Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up  
Thy mouth unto thine ears, and slit thy nose,  
Like a raw rochet – do not tempt me, come.  
(3.7.97-100)

These lines are by far the most violent and sadistic in the play. Corvino's outrage is sheer hypocrisy, since later in the action he is prepared to exchange the chastity of his wife for Volpone's wealth. Corvino's violence reveals his corruption, even while he schemes and attempts to inveigle himself into Volpone's favour. In Act 4, he denounces Celia: 'This woman, please your fatherhoods, is a whore' (4.5.120), then reinforces his statement, 'I hoped that she were onward / To her damnation, if there be a hell / Greater than whore and woman; a good Catholic / May make the doubt' (4.5.127-30). This further cements the configuration of Celia and the Catholic church; the 'whore' epithet explores the Baleian trope within its conventional readings, aligning her firmly with the Whore of Babylon, but it also inverts it, since it acts to discourse on the debasing of the Catholic Church by radical Protestants. Jonson's choice to invert this trope is interesting, and reveals less his own personal religion and more a

desire perhaps to utilise popular tropes in 1605-6. Celia's goodness is bound up in her love of God, and throughout the play she is 'identified with religion in its true sense, while Volpone and his forces practise a false religion.' The polar opposite of Celia is Lady Would-Be, the English wife of Sir Politic, a laughing stock in Venice.

In subscribing to the idea that Jonson is exploring the duality of Bale's *Image* in *Volpone*, Lady Would-be becomes a figure for the Protestant church in its discourse on the dangers of pomp and idolatry within the Catholic Church. Her lines 'Incorporating / Of these same outward things into that part / Which we call mental' (3.4.108-110) may be a reference to transubstantiation and the Virgin, to the Catholic rituals so loathed by Protestant reformers. Lady Would-be is thus the 'upside-down world's version of Celia; she is the unnatural woman.'<sup>77</sup> Jonson seems to align Lady Would-be very firmly with the Revelation Whore trope, inverting the paradigm and making the Protestant Church the Scarlet Whore in opposition to the chaste purity of Celia/the Catholic church. 'Come, I blush for you, Master Would-Be, ay; / And I am ashamed you should ha' no more forehead / Than thus to be the patron of St George / To a lewd harlot, a base fricatrice, / A female devil in a male outside' (4.2.53-6). While Celia desires to hide her beauty to prevent inflaming Volpone's lust, Lady Would-be actively seeks to seduce and bewitch Volpone with her physical appearance.<sup>78</sup>

Celia by contrast is a symbol of purity, the only virtuous and pure aspect of the otherwise corrupt world of *Volpone*. Throughout the play she is 'identified with religion in its true sense',<sup>79</sup> which for Jonson at this time is the Catholic Church.<sup>80</sup> Venice had a reputation for religious tolerance, yet in *Volpone* Celia is

imprisoned, abused, and tormented, enabling Jonson to utilise the Baleian trope in order to explore the persecution of Catholics. As a figure for purity and holiness, Celia is nonetheless subject to the heavy-handed authority of her husband, in much the same way the Catholics in England were controlled and contained by the state. In Act 3, for example, there are references to heaven, which serve as a 'reminder that heaven and saints are watching' the events unfold, thus giving the coming conflict in the play 'a kind of cosmic significance'.<sup>81</sup> As Hallet states, good and evil clash in the characters of Celia and Volpone, and Celia is 'willing to martyr her body to preserve her soul'.<sup>82</sup> She is what he calls 'the Heavenly One', embodying not just the attributes of goodness, but instead an entire attitude towards life.<sup>83</sup> As such, the diametric opposition between Celia and Lady Would-Be can be read in light of other Gunpowder plays in which the saintly radiance of the biblical virgin contrasts with the dark nature of the whore. Lady Macbeth appears in sharp distinction to the innocence of Lady Macduff, and Titania is pitted against the diabolical Empress. Jonson's choice to incorporate the two women of Revelation in *Volpone* might simply be in response to a dramatic trend that developed in the aftermath of the Plot, or it might be an attempt to negotiate the popularity of the motif from his own Catholic perspective.

In addition to allusions to the Gunpowder Plot and Bale's trope, *Volpone* features another key aspect of a Gunpowder play – witchcraft. The protagonist, like Macbeth, is repeatedly associated with the devil and black magic. *Volpone* demonstrates a 'marked concern' with demonic possession, which is first apparent in the conflation of Mosca the fly and Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies – 'he



is always implicitly a demonic figure, a kind of Mephistopheles to Volpone's Faustus. And he is the first to use the terms 'possession' and 'possess' in his negotiations with Corvino to secure Celia for Volpone's bed.<sup>84</sup> Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*,<sup>85</sup> a work almost certainly drawn on by both Shakespeare and Barnes for *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*, has at its core, an agenda: 'in respect of both Puritans and Catholics: the real issue is allegiance to the Crown, which is conterminous with adherence to "the Truth of Christian Religion Professed in England", i.e. the Church of England.'<sup>86</sup> This, according to Dutton, is the reason for Jonson's interest in figuring demonic possession in *Volpone*. However, this argument fails to take into consideration the relevance to the London stage of witchcraft and possession in the aftermath of the Plot. Devils and black magic are staples of Gunpowder plays, since these tropes are immeasurably entangled in texts surrounding the Plot and its aftermath. Fawkes and the conspirators are firmly aligned with diabolical activity, and deliverance from the Plot is seen as a deliverance from the Devil, both figuratively and literally. Jonson was astute enough to recognise the tastes of contemporary audiences, and to incorporate Gunpowder motifs into *Volpone* is to align his subject with the conspiracy and thus guarantee commercial popularity, since it taps into the contemporaneous zeitgeist concerning Catholicism and its associations with the Devil. In this way then, the disguised Volpone, mocking the suitors who believe Mosca has secured the inheritance, becomes, like *Macbeth* and Dekker's *Empress*, a dissembler, a serpent beneath the flower. Voltore reinforces this witch motif when he refers to Mosca's as Volpone's 'familiar' (5.9.8), which, in this context could mean 'either a member



In a striking echo of *Macbeth*, Nano calls to his companions 'Dwarf, fool, and eunarch, well met here we be. / A question it were now, whether of us three, / Being, all, the known delicates of a rich man, / In pleasing him, claim the precedency can?' (3.3.3-6). This meeting of 'the three' in 3.3.3 is very similar to the opening act of *Macbeth*: 'When shall we three meet again?' (1.1.1). Did Jonson intend to make his three misfits parallel the three witches in *Macbeth*; three referred to in fact as Volpone's 'bastards' (1.5.43)? If so, Jonson is not only aligning Nano and his counterparts with the witches in *Macbeth*, but in direct opposition to Shakespeare, figuring them as demonic forces associated with the Protestant English government. Shakespeare's witches act as agents of the Antichrist, in a play deeply concerned with Protestant issues surrounding the corruption of the Roman Church, but Volpone's 'bastards' are parasitical creatures feeding on the corruption of Volpone himself, whom Jonson depicts as a parasite devouring Celia's goodness. The figures of a dwarf, a fool, and a eunuch may also have evoked the courtiers surrounding James I; Salisbury's stature and physicality, inherited from his father, was the subject of an attack by John Day in *The Isle of Gulls*, and perhaps audiences at the Globe may have seen in Nano the figure of Cecil.<sup>88</sup> While Shakespeare chooses to make his witches catalysts for evil, Jonson instead complicates the three bastards to deride the English government and highlight the corrupt nature of the Protestant Church.

Satan and devils are also a feature of *Volpone*. Volpone speaks of hell itself, unleashed at the sight of Celia:

Those blows were nothing – I could bear them ever,  
But angry cupid, bolting from her eyes,  
Hath shot himself into me like a flame;  
Where now he flings about his burning heat,

As in a furnace an ambitious fire  
(2.4.4-7)

This is an interesting fusion of hell with 'blow' which calls to mind the imagined events surrounding the Gunpowder Plot, and echoes Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, in which the Empress asserts 'Aetna burns in us: bearded Comets shoote / Their vengeance through our eyes' (3.1.14-15). Celia asks 'What spirit / Is this hath entered him?' (3.7.32), evoking the theme of Volpone's demonic possession once again. The lawyer, Voltore, references devils in connection with events in the play twice: 'All is yours – the devil and all' (4.6.92), and 'Like a temptation for the devil' (5.2.28). The Gunpowder Plot, with its echoes of devils, Satan, and the black menace of Catholic Rome, gave books such as Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* a common currency. 'The lawyer writhing around on the floor of the court while Volpone induces illusions "in the shape of a blue toad with bats wings" is straight out of the pages' of Harsnett or the investigations of King James',<sup>89</sup> or indeed *Macbeth*. And, like *Macbeth*, the world of *Volpone* is one in which 'monsters rule, all but unchecked'.<sup>90</sup>

*Volpone*, with its witchcraft, plots, and devils, sits firmly within the definition of a Gunpowder play as established by Gary Wills. At the close of the play, Jonson makes an open reference to Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot:

The seasoning of a play is the applause  
Now, though the Fox be punished by the laws,  
He yet doth hope there is no suffering due  
For any act which he hath done 'gainst you;  
If there be, censure him – here he doubtful stands.  
If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands.  
(5.12.152-7)

The Fox / Fawkes has been punished by the laws, and the audience are invited to 'censure him' as he 'doubtful stands' before them. *Volpone* contains many Gunpowder tropes and was enjoyed by the same audiences attending productions of *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*; audiences preoccupied with the climate of anxiety and fear in the months immediately following the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.

On the Jacobean stage, 'contemporary issues constantly lurk beneath the surface of historical or fictitious settings,'<sup>91</sup> so while the action of a play might occur abroad, in a French court, or follow events from Roman history, for the audiences of the time, the relevance was sufficiently clear.<sup>92</sup> Jacobean tragedy is primarily concerned with the shape of evil,<sup>93</sup> and unsurprisingly, in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, plays like George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* developed an even greater topicality. The play was printed twice, in 1607-8, and again in 1641. The 1607 title page states 'As it hath often been presented at Paules',<sup>94</sup> but the dating of the first performance is tenuous. Andrew Gurr dates its first performance to 1604 at Paul's.<sup>95</sup> Chapman was in prison between September and November of 1605 for his contribution to *Eastward Ho!*<sup>96</sup> so a composition date before 1605 is likely, and Burnett supports this date, suggesting *Bussy* was composed between 1603-4.<sup>97</sup> However, given the numerous topical references in the play to the Gunpowder Plot, perhaps a better hypothesis might be that *Bussy* was composed before 1605, but was revised heavily for the 1606-7 season to include topical allusions to recent events. References to Elizabeth I as the 'old Queen' suggest a composition date after her death in 1603, and since the events surrounding the

Plot proved popular currency on the London stage, Chapman may have redrafted his play to take advantage of this.

The plot of *Bussy D'Ambois* was inspired by the life of a French courtier who had achieved a notable reputation in France as a scholar and poet,<sup>98</sup> and whose exploits were 'almost legendary in his time'.<sup>99</sup> Chapman however was not recreating the man himself so much as reinventing him for 'a moral and dramatic function.'<sup>100</sup> Traditional scholarship pinpoints *Bussy D'Ambois* as a 'cautionary lesson in the operation of society's just laws',<sup>101</sup> but some scholars suggest a more flexible and less rigid approach needs to be adopted, indeed that the play ought to be regarded as a 'philosophical tragedy on the uselessness of man's endeavours.'<sup>102</sup>

The play opens with the titular soldier reflecting on the corrupt society in which he finds himself. Disillusioned, and desperate for money, he posits the view that 'Man is a torch born in the wind; a dream' (1.1.18). His existential contemplation is interrupted by the arrival of Monsieur, brother to King Henry III, who employs Bussy as one of a group of loyal swordsmen, 'resolved spirits', to assist in his plot to assassinate the king. As the action moves forward, Bussy murders several of Henry's courtiers, and begins an affair with Tamyra, the wife of Count Montsurry, who, on discovering the affair, puts his wife to the rack to extract a confession. Tamyra is forced to write a letter in her own blood summoning Bussy to an assignation at which he is summarily despatched by Montsurry and his pistol-wielding courtiers. The play ends with a wounded and bleeding Tamyra banished into exile.

In addition to references to the events surrounding November 1605, one of the most significant aspects of *Bussy D'Ambois* is its similarity in tone to *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*. Like both of these plays, the action in *Bussy* can be read as a metaphor for hell. It is steeped in blood, darkness, and devils; there is no redemption in *Bussy*, no purity or light provided by Celia in *Volpone*. The central female character, Tamyra, is as dark as Lucretia and Lady Macbeth, and the nihilistic world of the play accurately reflects the post-Gunpowder atmosphere in England. In addition, its central theme of regicide evokes not only the recent attempt on James' life by the Gunpowder Plotters, but also the murder of Henri III in France, stabbed to death by a Jesuit in 1589. This event is recalled, along with the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the Spanish Armada, in many Gunpowder texts. The world of *Bussy* is bleak, pessimistic, and grotesquely depressing, equalling the post-apocalyptic nightmare vision of England in *The Divell in the Vault*. Bussy, like Macbeth, is a 'man of spirit beyond the reach of fear'; he neglects the light and 'loves obscure abodes' (1.1.46-8). The play's immediate concern is the corrupt nature of the French court, which Bussy inhabits in a state of perpetual nihilism. Invited to court by Monsieur, Bussy questions his very purpose. Should he 'flatter great Lords' or 'please portly Ladies'? Having heard 'villanies preach'd' should he then 'learn to commit them'? (1.1.91-2,102-3). He insists he is for 'honest action', and indeed one of the most striking aspects of Bussy is that he is the only character in the play to act with either integrity or truthfulness. His actions may be reprehensible, but in his moral turpitude, he is honest. In *Bussy*, Chapman has created an anti-hero rather than a villain; a man prepared to commit murder and adultery, but a man who neither

shies away from nor apologises for his crimes. He does not dissemble and flatter like Macbeth; rather he adopts a course and maintains it, even at the cost of his own life.

One of Bussy's primary motivations is revenge. He, like the Gunpowder Plotters, lived in a society in which 'revenge was ritualised most potently, in the burgeoning, increasingly busy law courts, where the state itself codified and lent its authority to the principled righting of wrongs.'<sup>103</sup> Indeed, in this respect Bussy could almost be a figure for the Gunpowder Plotters themselves. While each one of the Plotters 'hankered, to some degree, after a restoration of Catholicism, some were swayed by loyalty of friendship, some became involved because financial ruin left them careless as to their fate, and some acted out of chagrin, witnessing the frustration of personal political advancement.'<sup>104</sup> Bussy's own frustration and lack of personal advancement is the driving force behind much of the action. He occupies a place in a court riddled with corruption, nepotism, and the favours system. Chapman's preoccupation with the corrupt nature of court suggests an oblique critique of James I's own court, particularly in the discussion of the contrast between the French court of *Bussy*, and that of Elizabeth I:

Our French Court  
Is a mere mirror of confusion to it:  
The King and subject, Lord and every slave  
Dance a continual Hay; our rooms of State,  
Kept like our stables; no place more observ'd  
Than a rude market-place  
(1.2.26-31)

If the Catholic French court is a covert representation of the contemporaneous court of James I, it becomes clear that this derisory description is designed to



denounce the lascivious and corrupt nature of the English court. 'The stock setting for many Jacobean plays was a corrupt Italian city state which could stand as a version of a vaguely defined English court',<sup>105</sup> and the libels and pamphlets printed during James' reign attest to the widespread belief that his court was a hotbed of sexual scandal.<sup>106</sup> Sir John Harington's account of the court entertainments for the visit of the King of Denmark, in which 'ladies abandon their sobriety and roll about in intoxication' while the king makes such a spectacle of himself he has to be carried from the room and put to bed,<sup>107</sup> insinuate that drunkenness and wanton lechery were an integral part of court life. As Malcolm Smuts argues, by the late sixteenth century there was 'acrid criticism of royal courts, as places where ruthless men sought to advance their own interests at the kingdom's expense.' Samuel Daniel warned that:

...Courts were never barren yet of those  
Which could with subtle train, and apt advice,  
Work on the Prince's weakness, and dispose  
Of fable frailty, easy to entice.<sup>108</sup>

In the final years of Elizabeth's reign, the humanist culture that prospered at court was 'being transformed through the influence of classical models emphasising political treachery and a moral corruption associated with luxury and cultural sophistication.'<sup>109</sup> Thus, 'anti-court prejudice became embedded within court culture.'<sup>110</sup> The clearest example of this is in the work of Ben Jonson, 'in which satiric attacks provide a continuous counterpoint to praises of the king and Jonson's other patrons.'<sup>111</sup>

It is no surprise that Chapman should choose to figure the court of James in *Bussy D'Ambois*, since he had already criticised the Scots in the co-authored *Eastward Ho!* In the opening act of *Bussy*, Chapman refers to the accession of

James and attributes the resultant horror experienced during the Gunpowder treason directly to him: 'because in Kingdoms, / Where the King's change doth breed the subject's terror, / Pure innovation is more gross than error' (1.2.36-8). In a clear condemnation of James' accession, Bussy then makes a reference to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre: 'y'have cut too many throats / already Guise; and robbed the Realm of many thousand / Souls, more precious than thine own' (1.2.103-5); a common conflation of the two events in texts at this time. It might also be argued that Chapman's exploration of the corrupt nature of the French and English courts followed a dramatic precedent set by earlier playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe's depiction in *Edward II*<sup>112</sup> of contemporary scandals surrounding the 'politics of access and favour in the court of Henry III in France was shaped by his interest in Henri and the French court, and he dramatised both, for example, in his *Massacre at Paris*.<sup>113</sup> The institutional similarities between courts in France and England were often the result of direct contact and borrowing; Henry VIII created the office of Gentleman of the Privy Chamber in imitation of Francis I of France, and James' royal household in Scotland was organised, in part, by his cousin and favourite Esmé Stuart, who came to Scotland from the court of Henri III.<sup>114</sup> Chapman's decision to set *Bussy* in the French court of Henri III must therefore have been deliberate. The French court already had dramatic resonances with audiences, and thus provided a readily understood backdrop to Chapman's theme of contemporary English court corruption in 1606-7. The sorts of scandalous libel which James and his favourites attracted 'offer a rhetoric of blame that usefully oversimplifies a set of

specific and pervasive anxieties about the meaning of the personal aspects of monarchy, of corruption'.<sup>115</sup>

Throughout *Bussy*, Chapman, like Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, is preoccupied with the morality of killing, a theme which had obvious topical resonances given the recent executions of the Gunpowder Plotters and Father Garnet. Bussy, brought before King Henry for murdering his courtiers, is defended by Monsieur in his exposition on the nature of murder: 'Manly slaughter / Should never bear th'account of wilful murder; / It being a spice of justice, where, with life / Offending past law, equal life is laid / In equal balance, to scourge that offence' (2.1.150-4). Henry replies 'This would make every man that thinks him wrong'd, / Or is offended, or in wrong or right, / Lay on this violence, and all vaunt themselves / Law-menders and suppliers though mere butchers' (2.1.160-3). Henry's use of the word 'butchers' has multiple echoes; with the method of execution for traitors in England, with *Macbeth*, who is referred to as a butcher, and with Hubbock's Gunpowder sermon, in which he refers to the Plotters as 'unmerciful bouchers of Rome'.<sup>116</sup>

However, Bussy is not the only dangerous character. Tamyra, wife of Count Montsurry, refers to her powerful and potentially fatal passion for Bussy: 'it tosseth Temples in the air; / All bars made engines to his insolent fury' (2.2.40-1). This description may be a subtle reference to the averted destruction of Westminster in November 1605, and serves as a warning to the audience; her overpowering feelings are so treacherous they threaten to topple the very stability of the French court. With this uncontrollable passion, Tamyra promises to become as dangerous as the Whore of Babylon. She asserts her intent to use her

Friar, a man of God, as 'an agent for my blood' (2.2.49), and in the same scene, makes a speech that reiterates Lady Macbeth:

Now all ye peaceful regents of the night,  
 Silently-gliding exhalations,  
 Languishing winds, and murmuring falls of waters,  
 Sadness of heart, and ominous secureness,  
 Enchantments, dead sleeps, all the friends of rest.  
 That ever wrought upon the life of man,  
 Extend your utmost strengths; and this charm'd hour  
 Fix like the Centre; make the violent wheels  
 Of Time and Fortune stand

(2.2.157-165)

Tamyra calls on 'regents of the night' to 'extend' their 'utmost strengths', just as Lady Macbeth calls on 'spirits' to fill her 'from the crown to the toe, top full / Of direct cruelty!' (1.5.38-41). Both conjure the forces of darkness to assist them. Further confluences of Tamyra with Lady Macbeth are seen when the Friar explains to Bussy 'she keeps one letter written in his blood' (2.2.201), but with Bussy's help, she can 'clear her hands of such a lover's blood' (2.2.214). Lady Macbeth is similarly obsessed with the blood she struggles to wash from her hands, and for post-Gunpowder playwrights, this particular image called to mind not just the infectious nature of the Babylonian Whore; spotted, contaminated, stained, her body a manifestation of her crime, but the issue of concupiscence in Catholic theology. In Act 3, Tamyra and Bussy again recall Macbeth and his wife. Tamyra asserts:

So confident a spotless conscience is;  
 So weak a guilty: O the dangerous siege  
 Sin lays about us! and the tyranny  
 He exercises when he hath expung'd:

Like to the horror of a winter's thunder,  
 Mix'd with a gushing storm, that suffers nothing  
 To stir abroad on earth, but their own rages  
 (3.1.8-14)

Here once more is the 'spotless' conscience versus the 'guilty'. Just as Macbeth and his wife are condemned to insomnia and madness as a result of murder, so Bussy and Tamyra are subject to the 'tyranny' of 'sin', tumultuous, and dangerous as a winter storm 'that suffers nothing to stir abroad'. Like the Macbeths, they too have been cast into a nether world of darkness, a hell on earth from which neither of them can foresee an escape.

Bussy refers to the 'witch Policy', who paints Sin 'in her cloth / Ten times more monstrous than he is in troth. In three of us, the secret of our meeting / Is only guarded, and three friends as one / Have ever been esteem'd: as our three powers' (3.1.25-31). This not only reinforces their doomed souls, but recalls the three witches in *Macbeth*, and the speech at 3.3.3 in *Volpone*: 'well met here we be. / A question it were now, whether of us three, / Being, all, the known delicates of a rich man, / In pleasing him, claim the precedency can?' (3.3.3-6). At the end of their exchange, Tamyra asks 'Disperse our passions' fumes, with our weak labours, / That are more thick and black than all earth's vapours?' The stage directions here note: '*The Vault opens*'. This use of 'vault' may be coincidence, perhaps nothing more than an addition by a scribe, but it is tantalising to imagine the figuring of a vault as deliberate given the recent Gunpowder treason; a vault on stage would surely elicit the vault beneath Westminster in which Guy Fawkes was discovered. If this was a deliberate device incorporated by Chapman, then it serves to further conflate Bussy and Tamyra with diabolical Catholic treason.

As already noted, certain birds have a particular currency in *Gunpowder* plays. In Act 3, Henry says to Bussy 'thy impartial words / Are like brave Falcons that dare truss a fowl / Much greater than themselves; flatterers are Kites / That check at nothing; thou shalt be my Eagle, / And bear my thunder underneath thy wings: / Truth's words like jewels hang in th'ears of Kings' (3.2.1-6). This image is startling in its similarity to remarks in *Macbeth*, in which the Old Man describes 'A falcon, towering in her pride of place, / Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed' (2.4.10-12).

The most obvious reference to the Gunpowder Plot in Chapman's play occurs at the very heart of *Bussy D'Ambois*. Chapman not only refers to the Plot itself, but appears to figure several of the Plotters, most notably Garnet.

Discoursing on the flatterers who surround a king, he asks:

Shew me a Great Man (by the people's voice,  
Which is the voice of God) that by his greatness  
Bombasts his private roofs, with public riches;  
That affects royalty, rising from a clappish;  
That rules so much more than his suffering King,  
That he makes kings of his subordinate slaves:  
Himself and them graduate like woodmongers  
(Piling a stack of billets) from the earth  
(3.2.25-32)

William Barlow, in his sermon from St Paul's Cross in the immediate aftermath of the Plot, described Guy Fawkes' preparations beneath Westminster. 'Such heapes hee had layde in, of Billets, fagots'.<sup>117</sup> Bussy goes on:

He shall confess all, and you may then hang him.  
Shew me a Clergyman, that is in voice  
A Lark of Heaven, in heart a Mole of Earth;  
That hath good living, and a wicked life;  
A temperate look, and a luxurious gut...

Let me but hawk at him, and, like the other,  
 He shall confess all, and you may then hang him'  
 (3.2.39-48)

It is particularly striking that Bussy should refer to a 'Clergyman' as a 'Mole of Earth', given accusations by several commentators that the Gunpowder Plotters were 'moles'; 'moles' who were subsequently hanged. These two speeches are clearly intended to reference the seditious activity of the Gunpowder Plotters, and may have been inserted by Chapman after the event as he was redrafting his play. In the very same scene, Guise and Monsieur discuss the threat to their own position now posed by Bussy as the king's favourite. Guise states 'Upstarts should never perch too near a crown' (3.2.135), to which Monsieur replies:

For there is no such trap to catch an upstart  
 As a loose downfall; and indeed their falls  
 Are th' ends of all men's rising: if great men  
 And wise make 'scapes to please advantage  
 'Tis with a woman: women that worst may  
 Still hold men's candles: they direct and know  
 All things amiss in all men; and their women  
 All things amiss in them: through whose charm'd mouths  
 We may see all the close 'scapes of the Court  
 (3.2.144-150)

Chapman reinforces allusions to the Plot in this speech, conflating the treacherous role played by women like Anne Vaux, with the whorish behaviour of women who 'hold men's candles'. Like Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, in which the Gunpowder Plotters are 'upstart crows', here too Chapman paints them as 'upstarts'. In 1605-6, there was much speculation about Garnet's relationship with Anne Vaux. The women involved in the Gunpowder Plot are often shadowy

figures on the periphery of the treason, but Garnet's relationship with Vaux was the subject of much gossip:

And they said Mistress Anne has lived in sin with Master Farmer, who is Garnet, and they said as much to her, and she, even though she was imprisoned there in the Tower, laughed loudly two or three times (for she really is quite funny and very lively), and she said, 'You come to me with this child's play and impertinence? A sign that you have nothing of importance with which to charge me.' And they asked her whether she had known anything about the Gunpowder Plot. She said of course she had known, for, since she was a woman, how could anything possibly happen in England without her being told of it?<sup>118</sup>

In this same scene, there are further striking similarities with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Bussy and Monsieur share a curious exchange in which they discuss their relative opinions of each other. Monsieur accuses Bussy of being 'a man / That dares as much as a wild horse of tiger; / As headstrong and as bloody; and to feed / The ravenous wolfe' (3.2.336-339). Bussy will, Monsieur asserts, 'envy, betray / Slander, blaspheme, change each hour a religion; / Do anything, but killing of the King', his 'gall / Turns all thy blood to poison, which is cause / Of that toad-pool that stands in thy complexion', and to his 'friend's slaughters like a Screech-owl sing' (3.2.352-371). Echoing Lady Macbeth's taunts to Macbeth, Monsieur here goads Bussy, who will do almost anything, however unnatural and debased, yet he cannot bring himself to murder a monarch. In the opening act of the following scene, Bussy declares 'I would trot through all / Honours and horrors: through foul and fair, / And from your whole strength toss you in air' (4.1.88-90). To which Monsieur replies, 'Go, th'art a devil; such another spirit / Could not be still'd'(4.1.91-2). Chapman's use of 'foul and fair' echoes *Macbeth* and Monsieur's denunciation of a Bussy as a 'devil' aligns him not just with



Macbeth, but also with diabolical witchcraft and the Gunpowder treason. Bussy has here become yet another Catholic witch.

A jealous Montsurry, sparring with his wife Tamyra over her alleged infidelity, shocks her into crying out 'Pour on thy powder: clear thy breast of me' (4.1.210). Her maid, Pero, asks 'What violence is this, to put true fire / To a false train? To blow up long crown'd peace / With sudden outrage?' The language used in this exchange contains clear Gunpowder motifs: 'train', 'fire', and, 'blow'. In Act 4, Tamyra, like Lady Macbeth, Lucretia, and the Empress, calls on the forces of darkness, 'O may my lines / (Fill'd with the poison of a woman's hate / When he shall open them) shrink up his eyes / With torturous darkness, such as stands in hell' (4.2.1-4). Tamyra then persuades the Friar to raise evil spirits. The Friar dresses in his robes and chants in Latin, after which Behemoth and other devils ascend with torches. Behemoth makes a prophecy about Bussy's future: 'If D'Ambois' mistress stain not her white hand / With his forc'd blood, he shall remain untouched'. More chilling is his promise that 'when the voice of D'Ambois shall invoke me I will rise, / Shining in greater light: and shew him all' (4.2.131-136).

Chapman, like Shakespeare and Barnes, invokes devils on the stage with ritualistic black magic, and in a direct allusion to the Gunpowder Medal, has Bussy swear to 'soothe his plots: and strew my heart with smiles / Till all at once the close mines of my heart / Rise at full date, and rush into his blood' (4.2.155-7). Chapman makes the same simile even more explicit and deliberate in the line 'adders lie a-sunning in their smiles' (5.1.79). In the opening of Act 5, Montsurry appears on stage dragging his wife Tamyra by her hair. They are followed by the

Friar, who attempts to placate Montsurry's dark mood, warning 'It is a damn'd work to pursue those secrets / That would ope more sin, and prove springs of slaughter' (5.1.26-7); a possible reference to the Monteagle letter. Montsurry replies 'The trump of Heaven; with whose determinate blasts / The wind shall burst, and the enraged seas / Be drunk up in his sounds; that my hot woes / (Vented enough) I might convert to vapour' (5.1.43-6). Determinate 'blasts' seems to be an allusion to the Gunpowder Plot, particularly when conjoined with 'burst', 'enraged seas', and 'hot woes'. Montsurry refers to executions, in which 'I may hang him / and then cut him down, / Then cut him up' (5.1.73-4), a clear reference to execution, and one which would almost certainly have evoked the deaths of the Plotters in January 1606.

In another reference to execution, Tamyra, pleads with her husband not to torture her on the rack, 'Hang me in chains, and let me eat these arms / That have offended: bind me fact to fact / To some dead women, taken from the cart / Of execution, till death and time / In grains of dust dissolve me' (5.1.107-9). These lines resonate with Corvino's threats to Celia in *Volpone*, in which he threatens to 'rip up thy mouth unto thine ears, and slit thy nose' (3.7.98-9). Montsurry, having ignored his wife's pleas, calls for his servants. 'Torture use / This other engine on th'habituate powers / Of her thrice damn'd and whorish fortitude' (5.1.136-8). This open alignment of his wife with the Whore of Babylon is reinforced when he bemoans 'here was she / That was a whole world without spot to me: / Though now a world of spots; O what lightning / Is man's delight in women!' (5.1.176-7). The suggestion made by Henry that Bussy 'Be purg'd from more such foul

pollution' (2.1.183) is here recalled, and the act of torturing Tamyra on the rack would almost certainly have evoked the fate of Fawkes in the Tower.

In the penultimate scene in the play, there are further echoes of *Macbeth*. A storm raging outside causes Bussy to declare 'the air goes high / In this close chamber, and the frightened earth / Trembles, and shrinks beneath me' (5.2.4-6). Macbeth speaks of 'Thou sure and firm set earth. / Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear / The very stones prate of my whereabouts' (2.1.55-7). Bussy, reflecting on the Friar's death, calls forth Behemoth 'O thou King of flames, / That with thy music-footed horse dost strike / The clear light out of crystal, on dark earth; / And hurl'st instructive fires about the world: / Wake, wake the drowsy and enchanted night, / That sleeps with dead eyes in this heavy riddle' (5.2.39-44). On receiving Tamyra's bloody letter, his spirits are stirred to fever pitch. 'O how it multiplies my blood with spirit, / And makes me apt t'encounter death and hell' (5.2.95-6). The world Bussy inhabits has now become as black as 'enchanted night'. The devil, the 'king of flames' hurls 'instructive fires about the world', and Bussy is so contaminated, that he, like Macbeth, is now ready 't'encounter death and hell.' The actions at the court of the Catholic Henry have proven so diabolical, so unnatural, that by the end of the play, the world of Bussy and Tamyra has become as dark as Macbeth's Scotland and Lucretia's Rome.

In the final scene of the play, Montsurry, musing on the blind errors of Nature, makes a palpable reference to the Gunpowder Plot, 'whole lasts of powder / Are laid (men think) to make them last, and guard them: / When a disorder'd spark that powder taking / Blows up with sudden violence and horror / Ships that kept empty, but sail'd long with terror' (5.3.21-5). Bussy, the 'disorder'd

spark', is the catalyst for the 'sudden violence and horror' in Henry's court, and having discovered the wounded Tamyra, he echoes Macbeth. 'Murder'd? I know not what that Hebrew means: / That word had ne'er been nam'd had all been D'Ambois / Murder'd? By heaven he is my murderer / That shews me not a murderer; what such bug / Abhorreth not the very sleep of D'Ambois? / Murder'd?' (5.3.76-81). He is subsequently dispatched from the world by Montsurry's men, who use pistols filled with gunpowder.

*Bussy D'Ambois* concludes with a final lasting reference to the Gunpowder Plot. Alone on stage, the ghost addresses the dead protagonist. 'Make the vast continent, crack'd with thy receipt, / Spread to a world of fire: and th' aged sky, / Cheer with new sparks of old humanity' (5.3.271-4).

*Volpone* and *Bussy D'Ambois* demonstrate that interest in the Gunpowder Plot extended beyond the composition of three plays in 1605-6. Both plays contain all the elements and motifs seen in *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *The Whore of Babylon*. *Volpone* was in production at the Globe with both Barnes' play and *Macbeth*, and *Bussy D'Ambois* was in performance across the Thames at Paul's. Jonson rushed to write *Volpone* in five weeks, which suggests the play was an urgent response to the events of November 1605. While Jonson chooses to explore the theme of Catholicism in England, Chapman instead explores an older preoccupation with the corrupt nature of courts, but edits it heavily to include specific references to the Plot. The similarities both plays share with *Macbeth* suggest that Shakespeare's response to the Gunpowder treason must have been popular, since his contemporaries adopt both his the themes and language. The

protagonists of these two plays are dark and disturbing; Bussy is a nihilistic murderer and Volpone an insidious leech. Both playwrights weave allusions to Catesby's subversion and desire for retaliation and reprisal into their narratives, and both apply the authorised logic of revenge to their characters. In line with divine justice, Montsurry murders Bussy, and Volpone is led away to prison; this authorised godly retribution is in sharp contrast to the unauthorised revenge both characters seek to accomplish in the plays. *Volpone* and *Bussy D'Ambois* extend the discourse on the events surrounding November 5th out to an even wider audience in 1606-7, demonstrating that rather than being an isolated event which several playwrights coincidentally chose to scrutinise, the Gunpowder Plot was indeed the mother of all crimes.

## Chapter Four

‘These are troubled times’

### Nightmare, Infection, and Tropes of Transgression in Ben Jonson’s *Catiline* and Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*

The events of 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605 created a defining moment in English drama, as authors struggled to assimilate the scale of Catesby’s near-apocalyptic plot. By 1610, the initial hysteria had died down, but there was nevertheless a sustained interest in the Gunpowder Treason. As late as 1611, arrests were being made of those suspected of being complicit in the treason,<sup>1</sup> and on a near monthly basis, reports were delivered to the government regarding further suspects connected to the conspiracy.<sup>2</sup> Events outside England also served as timely reminders of the dangers of radical Catholicism. On 14<sup>th</sup> May 1610, Henri IV, Catholic King of Navarre, was assassinated in Paris. Stabbed to death by the Jesuit fanatic Francis Ravaillac, Henri bled to death at the Louvre and accounts of his murder soon found their way across the English Channel. The following description of his death, translated from the French, was in circulation in London soon afterwards, and highlights the ferocious nature of his murder:

Henry King of France and Navarre, beeing at Paris about three of the clocke in the after noone, intended to goe to his Arcenall: tooke his Caroch, and as a Prince which lived without feare or suspition of his people, passed through the City, accompanied with fewe of his Nobilitie; without taking for his better assurance, either Archers, or any of his usuall Gard. But mischiefe, or rather our sinnes procured, that an accursed and execrable assasigne named Francis Ravaillac, borne in Angouleme, approached his person, not farre from S.Innocents; where seeing his Majesties Caroehe stayed by a Cart, which met and stopped their passage, taking opportunity, assaulted with most hellish fury this good King, with a long knife, made of purpose; with which hee gave him two

wounds in the left side, the first was given nigh the shoulder, which entered not farre, but onely rased the skinne: the second was mortall, the blowe entering betwixt the first and sixt rib, cut asunder the veine leading to the heart; and the wound was so deepe, that it reached into the Cava Vena, which was pierced with the point of the knife. The Prince finding himself wounded to death, lost upon the instant his speech, by reason of the aboundance of bloud, which issued out of his mouth, therefore they turned the caroch to the Louv're, where he was no sooner arrived but hee rendred his soule into the hands of Almighty God, testifying with his eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, that hee died a true Christian and good Catholique.<sup>3</sup>

Ravaillac was arrested and tried, and subsequently subjected to a violent public execution.<sup>4</sup> The horror of Henri's assassination rippled across Europe, and was felt keenly in England, where people took a serious interest in French affairs. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, James I issued a proclamation ordering all recusants to return to their homes. They were no longer permitted to attend court or travel within ten miles of London without special license. Private supplies of arms and gunpowder, other than those maintained for personal use, were to be confiscated by magistrates, and all Jesuit priests were commanded to leave England within a month.<sup>5</sup> In order to counter accusations of discrimination over this latest proclamation, James tried to maintain a general position of clemency. However, he was nonetheless forced to assert that this evil behaviour at home, 'manifested first by the Priests Treason immediately after Our entry into this Kingdom, and next, at the horrible Powder Treason (the unnatural crueltie whereof is never to be forgotten), joined to this horrible and lamentable accident abroad (we mean the devilish and most unnatural murder of the late French king our dearest Brother)', has so stirred the people that Parliament is now actively petitioning him to be 'more wakeful than before'.<sup>6</sup> This message, that it was Parliament, not James himself, which was keen to introduce these latest

measures, removed the king from potential accusations of persecution. His proclamation concluded with a reissue of the Oath of Allegiance.

By 1610, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Essex Rebellion of 1601, both served as frightening reminders of the potential for 'a violent over-throw of the legally constituted government, and the assassination of Henri IV of France in 1610 emphasized the immediacy of this danger.'<sup>7</sup> Prior to 1605, the Jesuit writer Bellarmine had declared it legal to 'assassinate heretical (i.e. Protestant) kings,<sup>8</sup> and as the leading Protestant monarch of Europe, James was a prime target.<sup>9</sup> Many believed the Gunpowder Plotters had been influenced by Bellarmine's writings,<sup>10</sup> and James' introduction of the Oath of Allegiance in 1606 had sought to both combat the spread of such treasonous convictions and assert his own legitimacy.<sup>11</sup> In 1609, James had published his *Premonition to all most Mightie Monarchs*,<sup>12</sup> which was appended to a reissued proclamation of the Oath. His position took the form of an open letter to Rudolph II, Emperor of Bohemia, and warned that while Catholics might accept Bellarmine's doctrine, monarchs throughout Europe remained in grave danger.<sup>13</sup> It also 'exhorted the Catholic monarchs of Europe to cast off their allegiance to the Papacy'.<sup>14</sup> However, James had failed to anticipate the Oath of Allegiance would provoke a paper warfare in Europe 'the like of which has never been seen since,'<sup>15</sup> and this war of words reached a high-point in 1609-11, at precisely the moment Shakespeare was creating his late romances.<sup>16</sup> The proclamation of 1610, in which the king rhetorically couples the murder of the French monarch with the Gunpowder Plot, reinforces the dangerous nature of Catholic extremism, and his conflation of gunpowder with the Whore of Babylon



and the Antichrist demonstrates that, five years later, apocalyptic biblical imagery was still connected to the Plot in public imagination:

And whatsoever King or State will not receiue them, and follow their aduise, rooted out must that King or State be, euen with Gunpowder ere it faile. And these Frogs had reason indeed to labor to become learned, thereby to dissipate that grosse mist of ignorance, wherewith the reigne of Antichrist was plagued before their comming foorth. Then doeth this Chapter conclude with the last plague that is poured out of the seuenth Viall vpon the Antichrist, which is the day of Iudgement: for then Babylon (saith he) came in remembrance before God.

But in the xvij Chapter is the former Vision interpreted and expounded; and there is the Antichrist represented by a Woman, sitting vpon that many-headed Beast; because as CHRIST his true Spouse and Church is represented by a Woman in the xij. Chap. so here is the Head of his adulterous Spouse or false Church represented also by a woman, but hauing a cupful of abominations in her hand; as her selfe is called a whoore for her spirituall adultery, hauing seduced the Kings of the earth to bee partakers of her Spirituall fornication: And yet wonderfull gorgious and glorious was shee in outward shew; but drunken with the blood of the Saints, by a violent persecution of them. And that she may the better be knownen, he writeth her name vpon her forehead agreeable to her qualities: A Mystery, that great Babylon, that mother of whoredomes and abominations of the earth.<sup>17</sup>

The rhetorical portraits painted at this time of traitors such as Ravallac created what Rebecca Lemon calls ‘the illusion of domestic consensus’.<sup>18</sup> By forcing recusants to swear the Oath of Allegiance, James compelled them into the position of either English subject or foreign traitor; a polemical manoeuvre which ‘positions the king’s opponents outside England’, and expresses ‘an apparent consensus within the borders.’<sup>19</sup> John Donne, writing on the Oath of Allegiance in his *Pseudo-Martyr*, maintains the Oath is less concerned with issues of religion and faith, and more preoccupied with concepts of civil disobedience; ‘this Oath is not offred as a Symbole or token of our Religion, nor to distinguish Papists from Protestants, but

onely for a Declaration and Preservation of such as are well affected in Civile Obedience, from others which either have a rebellious and treacherous disposition already'.<sup>20</sup> This position echoes James' own defence of the Oath, in which he distinguishes between 'naturall Allegiance' and 'fanatical zeale'.<sup>21</sup>

The assassination of Henri IV led not only to catastrophe for the political system in France<sup>22</sup> but lent considerable pressure to the government's position in England. In the years following his accession, James had embarked on a number of initiatives, including a proposed Union of England and Scotland, and on going diplomatic negotiations with Spain. He also sought a Spanish Match for his children, Henry and Elizabeth. His peaceful relationship with Spain after the signing of the Treaty of London in 1604 however was a controversial one.<sup>23</sup> In 1607, the Venetian ambassador reported that 'His majesty... loves quiet and repose, has no inclination to war... a fact that little pleases many of his subjects... The result is he is despised and almost hated.'<sup>24</sup> James' rule 1607-9 was one of disquiet for the populace. He campaigned for marital allegiance with Spain, yet introduced further penalties against recusants at home, which increased public disapproval. There were suggestions the populace longed for a 'rupture with Spain' and sought to disturb 'the calm',<sup>25</sup> and James' management was severely criticised.<sup>26</sup> It is no surprise that in 1610, with the added shock of the assassination of a European monarch, people were feeling decidedly apprehensive. By early 1611, it was common knowledge that since Elizabeth was no longer to marry the Duke of Savoy, and was now intended to marry a Protestant prince, Henry must be allied with a Catholic princess in order to maintain James' policy of Christian unity.<sup>27</sup> In spite then of attempts to promote agreement in matters of religion,

James' political manoeuvres, and his tightening of the laws against recusants, did little to quell the anxiety of those on both sides of the religious divide.

In 1610, an English translation of a 1605 Gunpowder text was published in London. Originally written in Latin by Francis Herring, who had printed it in the wake of the Plot, *Popish Pietie, or The first part of that horrible and barbarous conspiracie commonly called the powder-treason*,<sup>28</sup> recalled with vivid detail the events surrounding 5<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>29</sup> Similar in tone and content to *The Divell of the Vault*, Herring's poem imagines a post-apocalyptic England at the mercy of 'the purple strumpet'.<sup>30</sup> The Gunpowder Plot was, he declared, the work of 'The triple crowned beaste of Italie, / Bael the Queene of riot and excesse'.<sup>31</sup> Fawkes is reconfigured as the dark embodiment of evil who can 'easily wind / And turne himself to all the shapes i'th'towne';<sup>32</sup> a devil with a harmful heart who 'never sleepes'.<sup>33</sup> Another anti-papist text in circulation in 1610, was Thomas Sanderson's *Of Romanizing recusants*,<sup>34</sup> in which papists are categorised as 'Temporisers', 'Cunning machiavels', 'Underminers' and 'vault-workers'.<sup>35</sup> 'Let my people sing', Sanderson writes 'Faux of Moab is destroyed and brought to silence in an instant. Piercie, Catesbie, and the rest of the Moab are destroyed, and brought into silence in an instant.'<sup>36</sup> Despite the elapse of almost five years, the Gunpowder Plot was still a contentious subject in Jacobean England. Fawkes and Catesby were still quintessential examples of brutish inhumane monsters, epitomising all the qualities and wickedness of extreme Catholicism.<sup>37</sup> This post-Plot anxiety, reignited by the death of Henri IV, coincided with a vigorous growth of interest in matters of monarchy, allegiance, and faith. Two plays performed at the Globe in 1611, Ben Jonson's *Catiline His Conspiracy*, and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, demonstrate that

for playwrights and audience alike, issues arising from the Gunpowder Plot still reverberated with dramatic significance five years on.

In his book, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of Catiline and the Gunpowder Plot*, Professor De Luna contends that the ordinary playgoer of 1611 would have had an intimate knowledge of the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>38</sup> He confirms that the assassination of Henri IV stirred up 'fresh and fanatical interest in Papist plots against monarchy', and 'inspired a spate of anti-Papist writings in which the Powder Plot featured prominently.'<sup>39</sup> Playwrights also sought to capitalise on the political atmosphere of 1611. Ben Jonson, who had recanted his Catholicism in 1610,<sup>40</sup> was one such playwright. Jonson's interest in the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November is evident from *Volpone*, and from his own involvement in the government's investigations into the Plot. De Luna contends that Jonson began composing *Catiline* in 1608 then abandoned it, completing it in 1610 in response to the assassination of Henri IV.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the timing of *Catiline's* composition, and it is possible it predates *Volpone*, but perhaps for reasons of sensitivity Jonson chose to delay its production, by 1611 it was in performance at the Globe.<sup>42</sup> The notes of the astrologist Simon Foreman attest to the fact that *Cymbeline*, *Macbeth*, and *The Winter's Tale*, were also in performance at this time.<sup>43</sup> The presence of *Macbeth* in this repertory is noteworthy, given its resonances with the Gunpowder Plot. Possibly its theme of regicide was considered particularly relevant given the recent murder of the French monarch.

Why Jonson should choose to create a Roman play in 1610-11 is open to debate.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps it was natural for him to return to Roman history, 'since it provided the material for his last tragedy, *Sejanus*.'<sup>45</sup> However, it may have been

that public familiarity with the Catiline conspiracy, and its contemporary parallels with the Essex Rebellion and the Gunpowder Plot, 'increased in Jonson's view the relevance and seriousness of his tragic message.'<sup>46</sup> Donaldson asserts that *Catiline* was probably the first play Jonson composed after returning to the English Church, and dismisses allusions to the Gunpowder Plot in the play as uncharacteristic of Jonson's methods during this stage of his career.<sup>47</sup> He questions whether 'Jonson, so soon after his return to the Anglican Church, should have sought to develop such a detailed parallel between the Catilinarian and Gunpowder conspiracies, either as a "private joke" or in renunciation of a chapter in his life about which he now felt acute remorse', concluding that it 'seems... basically implausible'.<sup>48</sup> He suggests a more relevant context for *Catiline* might be the 'period of terror' in the months following the death of Henri IV, 'a period known to the French as *la grande peur*'.<sup>49</sup>

*Catiline His Conspiracy* is a lengthy and demanding play. Famous for its protracted speech by Cicero in Act 3, it was a failure on the stage in 1611, despite the probable presence of Richard Burbage as Cicero.<sup>50</sup> Later in his career, Jonson would enjoy success with *Catiline*, but in 1611, its reception must have been a disappointment to him. The plot, taken largely from Sallust's *Catilina*, is heavily reliant on classical sources. For the purposes of this thesis, and in order to demonstrate that *Catiline* is indeed a Gunpowder play, it is important to ascertain which aspects of the play are Jonson's, and which belong to borrowed classical authors. Lynn Harold Harris' research concludes that more than a fourth of *Catiline* is direct translation, and no more than a fourth belongs to Jonson himself; 'so in *Catiline*, Sallust furnishes most of the plot, many of the character studies, and a fair

share of the speeches. Cicero supplies much of the dialogue directly, especially as a great part of his speeches in the play consists of mosaics from his works'.<sup>51</sup> By comparing the lines Harris ascribes to classical authors, and those she ascribes to Jonson himself, it is possible to conclude that direct topical references to the Gunpowder Plot in *Catiline* do originate from Jonson himself.<sup>52</sup> This, combined with the presence of thunder, ghosts, devils, and treason, makes a case for arguing that *Catiline*, like *Macbeth* and *The Devil's Charter*, *Bussy D'Ambois* and *Volpone*, belongs in the category of Gunpowder plays as ascribed by Gary Wills.

As previously noted, a conflation of the Gunpowder Plotters with the historical figure of Catiline first occurs in *King's Book*, which refers to 'those worse than Catilines' who almost 'extirpated us and our memories'.<sup>53</sup> A pamphlet on the Plot by Lodowick Lloyd, published in 1607, *The Tragicomedie of Serpents*, picks up on this connection: 'those rebels and Trators, which under colour of religion, attempted sundry times our late queene, and now our soveraigne Lord and King',<sup>54</sup> and who do 'not seeke a Roman Cateline for their Captaine, nor a Spanish Viriatus for their leader'.<sup>55</sup> The author of *The Divell in the Vault* similarly refers to the Plotters as those 'Cursed catilines';<sup>56</sup> and Herring, in his English translation of *Popish Pietie*, refers to 'Old Romes bad member wicked Catiline'.<sup>57</sup> The Catiline Conspiracy of 63 AD had become an important Protestant symbol for the more violent aspects of the Jesuit-led counter Reformation,<sup>58</sup> and perhaps Jonson regarded the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605, and the classical figure of Catiline, as so firmly entrenched in the minds of the public, that few would have failed to understand the significance of his subject matter.<sup>59</sup>

The plot of *Catiline* follows the classical sources closely. Catiline, a disgruntled patrician, leads a group of Romans in a conspiracy to overthrow the Republic. The consul Cicero discovers the plot, and the Senate pass a bill introducing martial law. Catiline's allies stir up rebellion outside Rome, and Catiline eventually leaves the capital to assume control of his troops. Cicero delivers a series of speeches against Catiline, which lead to plans for his assassination by the conspirators. The plotters approach the Allobroges Gauls for support, but the Allobroges align themselves with Cicero and Rome, deceiving Catiline and his men, some of whom are eventually thwarted by Roman troops in an ambush and brought to Rome for trial and execution. Catiline escapes and is killed by Cicero's troops. Cicero is hailed as a hero and saviour of Rome at the play's conclusion.

Catiline opens with the ghost of Sylla, described in list of characters as 'sometime dictator of Rome.' His first words are an ominous warning about the fate of the Republic, 'Behold, I come, sent from Stygian sound / As a dire vapour that had cleft the ground / T'engender with the night and blast the day, / Or like a pestilence that should display / Infection through the world' (1.1.11-15). From the outset, Jonson presents a supernatural force threatening to wreak havoc and destruction on Rome. The use of the word 'blast' instantly calls to mind the Gunpowder Plot, and the imagery of 'dire vapour' creeping forth 'like a pestilence' to 'display infection' evokes the threat posed by those who lurk in the shadows. Sylla asks Rome 'What sleep is this doth seize thee, so like death / And is not it?' (9-10). This is not the sleep of innocence, but Rome's naivety in the face of the coming storm. This both sets the scene for the intrigues of Catiline, and echoes the

shock with which the Gunpowder Plot was discovered. A letter written in the aftermath of the Plot thanked God who had 'blessed us in our slumber [and] will not forsake us now we are awake.'<sup>60</sup> James and his ministers, like the inhabitants of Republican Rome, were believed to have been oblivious to the activities of Catesby and the conspirators until it was almost too late. As Lancelot Andrewes states 'We imagined no such thing, but that all had been safe, and we might have gone to the Parliament, as secure as ever. The danger never dreamt of'.<sup>61</sup> For the audience, this foreknowledge of what is to come enables a re-imagining of the slumber of London in the first days of November 1605. In this first long speech of the play, the ghost envisages a Rome reminiscent of England in *The Divell of the Vault*. Catiline must 'Let night grow blacker with thy plots' (1.1.61) and 'leave Rome's blinded walls / T'embrace lusts, hatreds, slaughters, funerals, / And not recover sight till their own flames / Do light them to their ruins.' (1.1.63-6). This presents an interesting conflation of Jonson's Gunpowder England with both the imagined biblical Rome of the Whore of Babylon, and the ancient Rome of stews, filth, and sin described in Dekker's play of the same name.

Barnabe Barnes refers to the Whore of Babylon in the opening lines of *The Devil's Charter*, 'Our subject is of blood and tragedy, / Murder, foul incest and hypocrisy. / Behold the strumpet of proud Babylon, / Her cup with fornication foaming full' (Prologue). Dekker opens *The Whore of Babylon* with a Prologue in which he promises that his play will 'from Graves / Raize up the dead: upon this narrow floore / Swell up an Ocean, (with an Armed Fleete,) / And lay the Dragon at a Doves feet' (Prologue).



Catiline is encouraged to blacken the night, and monster-like, to gorge on slaughter, visiting hell on the Romans. This figuring of Catiline as an instrument of Satan is then reinforced in the lines which follow, as he literally becomes possessed by evil; 'I feel / A spirit within me chides my sluggish hands / And says they have been innocent too long' (1.1.80-2). Demonic possession is important in plays produced during this period. James, in his speech to Parliament in 1605, suggests the Plotters were unnaturally possessed. Volpone is possessed. Lady Macbeth is possessed. The Pope in *The Devil's Charter* is possessed. Here Jonson uses this same theatrical trope to align Catiline with the dark protagonists of earlier Gunpowder plays. The similarities in the opening of *Catiline* with the opening scenes of *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *The Whore of Babylon*, and the early introduction of demonic possession, all assist in locating *Catiline* within the parentheses of a Gunpowder play.

Jonson's imagery of slaughter, infection, filth, darkness, and evil, presage unnatural activity, a threat to order, the unleashing of chaos; in essence, a theatrical apocalypse which mirrors the atmosphere in London in the aftermath of the Plot. He reinforces this sense of catastrophe when Cethegus recalls Rome in Sylla's day, 'Slaughter bestrid the streets and stretch'd himself / To seem more huge, whilst to his stained thighs / The gore he drew flow'd up and carried down / Whole heaps of limbs and bodies through his arch. / No age was spar'd, no sex.' (1.1.235-9). This description serves as a warning to the audience, and further demonises Sylla. To slaughter whole heaps of bodies suggests an almost supernatural destructive power. These lines elicit not only the description of a post-Gunpowder England imagined in *The Divell of the Vault*, where 'murther, furies,

fates and death, / beclad with bloody weede: Would all concurre with Nights blacke hours, / to plot some dismall deede',<sup>62</sup> but also events in France, including the death of Henri IV, and the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, so vividly imagined by Christopher Marlowe in his play *Massacre at Paris* c.1593, frequently appears in Gunpowder texts after 1605 as a terrifying example of Catholic treachery. The titular Bussy in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* makes an open reference to the massacre, 'y'have cut too many throats / already Guise; and robbed the Realm of many thousand / Souls, more precious than thine own' (1.2.103-5). The repeated rhetorical coupling of the Gunpowder Plot with the French massacre of 1572 serves to highlight the importance of events in France upon the English imagination, and the murder of Henri IV in 1610 soon became conjoined with the Massacre and the Plot as yet another example of the dangers of radical Catholic extremists. Jonson had only recently converted to Protestantism, but here he echoes Dekker and Barnes, in his evocation of innocents slaughtered at the hands of religious fanatics.

There are some direct references to the Gunpowder Plot in the first act of *Catiline*, which continue and expand on this theme. Catiline says to his conspirators 'Nothing wants then, / But that we take a solemn sacrament / To strengthen our design' (1.1.422-3). Jonson's use of the word 'sacrament' recalls the Catholic mass, and in this way he is able to conflate the Roman conspirators with both Catholics and the Gunpowder Plotters; his use of 'sacrament' conjuring up the meeting held by Catesby at the Duck and Drake Inn near The Strand in May 1604. Robert Winter testified that he and his fellow Gunpowder Plotters, having gathered, and 'upon a Primer given each other the oath of secrecy, in a chamber

where no other bodie was,' then went 'into the next roome and heard Masse, and received the blessed Sacrament upon the same.'<sup>63</sup> 'Sacrament' is used in conjunction with the Gunpowder Plotter's activities in both *A Brief Somme of this Late Intended Treason*,<sup>64</sup> and in the sermon given by William Symonds at St Paul's Cross in January 1606, in which he delivers a blistering attack on the Catholic Church and Rome, warning that men are blinded 'by their Sacraments, to murther Princes'.<sup>65</sup> Given the popularity of Gunpowder texts in the months following November 1605, and the plethora of public sermons delivered on the subject, members of Jonson's audience would have immediately understood this as a reference to Catesby and his men. A few lines later, in the same scene, Catiline reassures his conspirators about their impending attack, promising the whole Senate will be sleepy 'and dreaming no such violent blow' (1.1.437-8). 'Blow' is a direct echo of the Monteagle letter, and is a word that perhaps more than any other, instantly recalls the events of 5<sup>th</sup> November. Catiline again alludes to the sacrament when he calls for wine and blood. 'I have kill'd a slave / And of his blood caus'd to be mix'd with wine. / Fill every man his bowl. There cannot be / A fitter drink to make this sanction in' (1.1.483-6). To seal the plot he demands every man present drink human blood mixed with wine, not only bastardising the Catholic sacrament and reinforcing Catiline's own brutish appetite, but evoking the Whore of Babylon, who is 'overset with blood drinking or outrageous murdering of innocents'.<sup>66</sup> This action also serves as a reminder of Jonson's recent return to the Anglican Church; since as a Catholic, he would have been uncomfortable employing such a blasphemous image.

Blood is a staple in Jacobean tragedy, but it appears to have adopted a heightened topicality in Gunpowder plays. Lady Macbeth cannot remove the bloodstains from her hands, and the opening scene of *The Devil's Charter* features scenes of ritualistic bloodletting. Images of seas stained with blood, and rivers of blood flowing through the streets of London and Paris, are ubiquitous in Gunpowder texts, exemplified in *Macbeth*, 'this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine' (2.2.58-9). The presence of blood highlights not just the bloodshed and slaughter planned by the Gunpowder Plotters, but is also inextricably bound up in dramatic inversions of Catholic ritual. Guy Fawkes wished to 'make himselfe drunke with the blood of so many Worthies',<sup>67</sup> and J.H describes the papist who, like Catiline, 'dooth subborne his hel-bred troupe, / with blood t'imbrue their hands.'<sup>68</sup> Cicero alludes to this barbaric act of blood drinking to reinforce the satanic nature of Catiline in Act 3. 'And then to take a horrid sacrament / In human blood for execution / Of this their dire design, which might be call'd / The height of wickedness' (3.2.29-31).

Cicero's first appearance in the play does not occur until Act 3. Standing before the Senate as Consul, his comments on the nature of the Consulship, designed to inspire confidence in his authority, recall elements of the Gunpowder Plot in some interesting detail:

I know well in what terms I do receive  
The Commonwealth, how vexed, how perplex'd,  
In which there's not that mischief or ill fate  
That good men fear not, wicked men expect not.  
I know, beside, some turbulent practises  
Already on foot, and rumours of moe dangers  
(3.1.47-52)

According to *King's Book*, the delivery of the Monteagle letter aroused suspicion in both Salisbury and James that 'turbulent practices' were indeed afoot. As a result, the Westminster vaults were searched, and Guy Fawkes eventually apprehended. Cicero's remarks here function both as a theatrical plot point; he is aware of Catiline's activities and can save Rome and avert catastrophe, which presents the audience with an anticipatory sense of the impending drama. However, they also allude to James' providential role in the Plot, conflating the actions of Catiline and Cicero with those of the Plotters and James respectively. This reinforces the official accounts of the Plot, which heralds James as the saviour of England. Cato, ally to Cicero, comments 'he that will / Govern and carry her [Rome] to her ends must know / His tides, his currents, how to shift his sails, / What she will bear in foul, what in fair weathers' (3.1.65-8). This allusion is particularly interesting, since Jonson here nods in the direction of both Shakespeare and Barnabe Barnes. The antimetabole 'fair is foul and foul is fair' used in *Macbeth*, subsequently becomes a trope for the atmosphere and climate of anxiety surrounding the Plot. Cato's remarks 'What she [Rome] will bear in foul, what in fair weathers' serves here as a commentary on good government; a fair monarch/consul knows how to steer his ship in foul weathers. And since 'foul waters' was also a shipping term, referring to those waters too shallow for ships to sail in, he is perhaps also suggesting that ultimately, Cicero's management of the Catiline crisis will lead to failure. Whether Jonson intended to obliquely criticise James I's handling of the Gunpowder Plot in *Catiline* is open to debate. But since he had only very recently returned to the Protestant fold, it would make sense for him to have some residual sympathy for

the Catholic cause, and given his recusancy fines in 1606, he almost certainly felt a sense of resentment at James' recent anti-recusancy legislation.

In response to Cicero's comments about plots stirring in the Republic, Caesar says of the Consul, 'he does make and breed 'em for the people / T'endear his service to 'em. Do you not taste / An art that is so common? Popular men, / They must create strange monsters and then quell 'em / To make their arts seem something' (3.1.94-8). These lines serve as a straightforward plot manoeuvre to heighten the irony for the audience, since Cicero is aware of Catiline's plot, and at this stage, Caesar is not, and the ensuing tension in the Senate contributes to the play's atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. If Caesar believes Cicero is manufacturing 'strange monsters' out of thin air, so he can 'quell 'em' and increase the respect of the people, then his surprise at discovering the conspiracy to be genuine will reinforce Cicero's position as rightful consul. However, this aside may also have had a covert contemporary allusion to the role of Cecil in the Gunpowder Plot, since some believed the Plot had been a construct of James' government, designed to increase its power of control over Catholics and dissenters.<sup>69</sup> This is evinced by the fact Salisbury was accused of manufacturing the Plot himself in the months following 5<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>70</sup> It is possible therefore that Jonson was also using the 'fair is foul' trope to introduce a contemporaneous conspiracy theory in order to negotiate his own difficult religious position, and to provide subtle acknowledgment to the Catholic members of his audience. In addition, the outcome for Catiline and the conspirators is not a happy one, the play concludes uneasily; 'civil disaster is forestalled but left lurking in the wings at the final curtain'.<sup>71</sup>

Further allusions to the Gunpowder Plotters and their cause occur in Act 3; the conspirator Cethegus addresses Catiline and the assembled men: 'Let us first take arms. / They that deny us just things now will give / All that we ask, if once they see our swords' (3.1.231-4). This imaginatively renders exactly the sort of speech Catesby may have delivered to his circle; all of who believed the English monarchy was denying Catholics their fundamental rights. One of the issues at the heart of the Gunpowder Plot was denial; of rights to Catholics, of the government to permit the free movement of Catholic priests, of a Catholic education, and perhaps most importantly, of promises believed to have been issued by James on the Scottish throne to Thomas Percy. Cethegus, like Percy and Fawkes, holds the conviction that justice must be served, by violent means if necessary. The lengths to which the Catiline conspirators are prepared to 'show their swords' is revealed by Cicero, who confirms, in an echo of James' Gunpowder speech to Parliament, that Catiline seeks 't'oppress her [Rome] with new cruelty / And utterly extinguish her long name / With so prodigious and unheard-of fierceness!' (3.2.29-31). Catesby, according to James, planned 'a roaring, nay a thundering sin of Fire and Brimstone,'<sup>72</sup> a 'great and horrible attempt whereof the like was neither heard nor read,'<sup>73</sup> where 'place and persons should all be destroyed and blown up'.<sup>74</sup> The means by which the Gunpowder circle intended this destruction was fire, and at line 44, Cicero speaks of Catiline longing to 'fire' Rome.

Jonson makes a clear reference to both the Plot itself, and perhaps even to his own shadowy role in the events surrounding 5<sup>th</sup> November, when Cicero gives a piece of advice to Curius the spy, 'be not afraid to break / With murderers and traitors for the saving / A life so near and necessary to you / As in your country's'

(3.2.127-9). In *Picture of a Papist*, written by Oliver Ormerod, and published in 1606, the recusant of the text denies that all Catholics are guilty of the Gunpowder Plot. The Minister retorts 'Sir, I condemne you not all; but I condemne the religion of you all: for your religion bindeth you all to attempt the like... your religion bindeth you all to play the traytours, and to take uppe armes against your countrey.'<sup>75</sup> At line 135 of Act 3, Cicero says to Curius 'no religion binds men to be traitors'. De Luna suggests this line may mean 'no religion *ought* to bind men to be traitors, or possibly, 'contrary to appearances, Catholicism *per se* does not bind men to be traitors'.<sup>76</sup> However, given the Catholic writings of Bellarmine and others, it seems clear that elements of Catholic theology could be construed as condemning English Catholics to act as traitors to their monarch, and Jonson's use of the line here, given his recent return to Protestantism, appears to criticise this Catholic imperative, and thus lend support to the Oath of Allegiance which releases recusants from their duty to the Pope.

Cicero continues his advice to Curius, 'Keep still your former face, and mix again / With these lost spirits. Run all their mazes with 'em, / For such are treasons. Find their winding out / And subtle turnings, watch their snaky ways / Through brakes and hedges into woods of darkness / Where they are fain to creep upon their breasts' (3.2.180-5). Here once again is the allusion to the serpent beneath the flower depicted on the Gunpowder Medal, lines that echo *The Whore of Babylon* and *Macbeth*. In Act 1 of Dekker's play, the Empress counsels her kings to 'Draw all your faces sweetly, let your browes / Be sleekd; your cheeks in dimples, give out smiles', 'Dissemble, flatter, stoope to licke the dust / Shee goes upon, and (like to serpents) creepe / Upon your bellies' (Act 1.1.102-10). Spies in Fairyland



must equivocate, and dissemble, use their charms to woo while creeping in the dust, all of which reinforces the 'fair is foul' trope. Lady Macbeth offers similar instructions to Macbeth. 'To beguile the time / Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye, / Your hand, your tongue. Look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't' (Act 1.5.61-4). All three playwrights use the simile of a dissembling serpent, a central motif in post-Plot England.

Further references to the Gunpowder Treason occur when Cicero announces, 'I found his mischiefs sooner with mine eyes / Than with my thought, and with these hands of mine' (4.2.71-3); an allusion to the providential nature of the king's discovery of the Plot, in which the 'dark phrases' of the Monteagle letter alerted him to 'this horrible forme of blowing us all up by Powder.'<sup>77</sup> *King's Book* maintains that James read the Monteagle letter personally, and Cicero's comment that he found mischiefs 'with mine eyes' educes the moment James unravelled the meaning of the cryptic note. This serves to draw further parallels between James, his government, and Cicero, which is underpinned by Cicero request, 'let all this wicked crew / Depart' (4.2.367-8). The phrase 'damned crew' had been in heavy use in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot. Dekker, for example, uses it in *The Whore of Babylon* when the Cardinal announces Spain's support for 'All the damb'd Crew, that would for gold teare off / The devills beard' (3.1.69-70), and in the government's published account of the trial of the Plotters, Catesby is referred to as 'Prince of the damned Crue'.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Francis Herring, in *Popish Pietie* refers to the Plotters as 'luther's crew'.<sup>79</sup> At the end of Act 4, Cicero claims in despair 'I have discover'd / So foul a treason' (4.6.37-8); a line that resonates with a multitude of Gunpowder texts, including the remarks made by James to

Parliament in the aftermath of the Plot's discovery, Shakespeare's antimetabole, and the proclamation issued for Thomas Percy's arrest on 5<sup>th</sup> November, in which Percy is described as being privy 'to one of the most horrible treasons that ever was contrived'.<sup>80</sup>

As noted, in Gunpowder plays, owls act as harbingers of ill, and are closely aligned with the shadowy world of Catholics. Cato refers to Catiline as a bird of the night, 'Sing out, screech owl' (4.2.448). This use of 'screech owl' recalls Dekker, who describes the Plotters in *Fairyland* as 'hungry Crowes' perched on the roof of Westminster 'like fatall Ravens or Skritch Owles' (3.1.113-4). *Macbeth* also contains references to owls, and in *Bussy D'Ambois*, Bussy promises to sing of his friend's slaughters 'like a Screech-owl' (3.2.371). Catiline, as a 'screech owl', a harbinger of evil, rouses his conspirators with instructions that might reflect the exact sorts of orders delivered by Catesby to Fawkes and the other Plotters.

'Prepare to execute what we resolv'd,' he says, 'I'll to the army; you, the while, mature / Things here at home. Draw to you any aids / That you think fit' (4.3.8-12).

In the spring of 1605, Fawkes was despatched to the Low Countries to spread word of the Plot, and later Percy and Catesby met at Bath to discuss bringing more men into the conspiracy; 'they agreed that the company being yet but few, M.Catesby should have the others authoritie to call in whom hee thought best.'<sup>81</sup> Catesby, like Catiline, was also rousing troops, and had arranged a hunting party for the Catholic gentry on 5<sup>th</sup> November, which would serve to act as an armed rebellion once the explosion at Westminster had taken place.<sup>82</sup> Whether the coincidences between Catiline's activities and Catesby's are deliberate or unintentional, and the allusions here, which draw parallels for the audience between both plots, suggest they are

deliberate, Jonson once again makes reference to the Plot when Sanga states 'The train hath taken' (4.4.20). Fawkes, discovered in the vault beneath Westminster with a match in his hand, was also ready to light the 'train' that would cause the catastrophic explosion beneath Westminster. The word 'train' appears in other Gunpowder plays, including *The Devil's Charter*, in which Frescobaldi declares 'I with my linstock gave fire to the train' (3.2).

Jonson also reintroduces the familiar trope of the Whore of Babylon, when Sempronia, one of several females engaged in the conspiracy, is described as having 'a sulphurous spirit / and will take / Light as a spark' (3.3.43-44). The coupling of Sempronia, a Roman harlot, with Catiline's conspiracy, is conflated to include the Gunpowder Plot when Catiline speaks of 'firing of the city' at line 50. The use of 'spark', 'sulphurous', and 'firing', within this context reinforces the parallels between the events in ancient Rome and those in London, since references to sulphur are tangible and clear Gunpowder signifiers. William Barlow, in his 9<sup>th</sup> November sermon, refers to sulphur in the hands of the Gunpowder Plotters as the material of death, as such, 'sulphur' played a key role in signifying Catesby's treason to audiences. Dekker refers directly to sulphur in the opening act of *The Whore of Babylon*, when King 3 states 'that sulphure boyling o're celestiaall fires, / May drop in whizzing flakes (with scalding vengeance)' (1.1.41-43), and in *The Devil's Charter*, devils appear on stage surrounded by sulphurous smoke. Jonson makes a second reference to sulphur when the Gaul Allobrox speaks of Cicero as a noble spirit 'discern'd / From harsh and sulphurous matter that flies out / In contumelies, makes a noise, and stinks' (4.1.50-2).

In Act 5, there is a direct reference to Guy Fawkes. Cicero states 'it was he [Cethegus] / I only watch'd while he was in our walls / As one that ha the brain, the hand, the heart' (5.4.134-6). The Gunpowder Plotters initially dug a tunnel through the perimeter wall in the precinct of Westminster, and Cicero's reference to Cethegus as one who was 'in our walls' reinforces the conflation of Cataline's conspiracy with that of Catesby's, particularly since he makes this claim in an address to both the gathered senators and suspects. Cicero invites the assembled Fathers of Rome to 'Imagine / You view'd your country buried with the heaps / Of slaughter'd citizens that had no grave; / This Lentulus here reigning, as he dream'd, / And those his purple Senate; Catiline come / With his fierce army; and the cries of matrons, / The flight of children, and the rape of virgins, / Shrieks of the living with the dying groans / On every side t'invade your sense; until / The blood of Rome were mixed with her ashes. / This was the spectacle those fiends intended' (5.4.159-68). This speech has remarkable echoes with the public sermon delivered by William Barlow, in which he describes the intended outcome of the Plotters as a '*Deluge of Bloode, as Baptismum sanguinis, a Baptisme of Martyrdome, to have washt away our sinners; and as a Holocaust, an whole burnt sacrifice.*'<sup>83</sup> In a further echo of Barlow, Cicero delivers the following line 'Wherein we are preserv'd from some great danger' (5.4.224). Barlow thanked God for 'preserving us from this terrible blow'.<sup>84</sup>

In discussing their enterprise, the conspirators themselves, planning the catastrophic attack on the Senate, echo a myriad of Gunpowder texts, from *King's Book* to *The Divell of the Vault*, all of which forcefully reminds the audience of the parallels between the two conspiracies:

Catiline:  
Were it embers,  
There will be wealth enough rak'd out of them  
To spring anew. It must be fire or nothing.

Varguntrius: True.  
In that confusion must be the chief slaughter

Curius:      When husbands, wives,  
                     Grandsires and nephews, servants and their  
                     lords, Virgins and priests, the infant and the nurse  
                     Go all to hell together in a fleet.

(3.3.129-140)

This exchange contains several Gunpowder images, the slaughter of women and children, destruction by fire, streets running with blood, citizens being blasted to hell, in short, the Jacobean apocalypse imagined by post-Plot writers.

Perhaps the clearest and most direct reference to the Gunpowder Plot in Jonson's play occurs in Act 4, when Cicero accuses Catiline of 'plotting / Hourly some fatal mischief to the public' (4.2.157-8). He goes on at lines 186-8 to assert 'thy purpose / Was on the fifth, the kalends of November, / T'have slaughter'd this whole order'. It cannot be accidental that Jonson chose to use the same date for Catiline's intended treason as the date of the intended Gunpowder Plot, just as Shakespeare had referred to a Tuesday in *Macbeth*. Here Jonson appears to be deliberately amalgamating James' discovery of the Plot with Cicero's discovery of Catiline's intrigue, thus reinforcing the similarities of the two treasons, and once again coupling the Roman plot to that of Catesby's. It might be a topical reference, designed to be of contemporaneous relevance to the London theatre audience of 1611, but taken in conjunction with other references to the Gunpowder Plot in *Catiline*, it does suggest Jonson was fusing the Roman conspiracy of 63 AD with the events of November 1605. How covert this fusion was depended on audience

knowledge of the Plot, but the linguistic evidence in *Catiline* makes a strong case for reading Jonson's play as a deliberate discourse on the events surrounding the Gunpowder Treason.

Renewed fears of Catholic plots, the threat of a Spanish Match, further arrests of men connected to the Gunpowder Plot, and an English monarch openly fearful of assassination attempts, mark 1610-11 as a period of high anxiety in England. An audience familiar with the classical conspiracy of Catiline, and its parallels with recent events, 'must have increased in Jonson's view the relevance and seriousness of his tragic message.'<sup>85</sup> Rebecca Lemon argues that in 1611, both Jonson and Donne were addressing issues arising from the Oath of Allegiance. In *Catiline* and *Pseudo-Martyr* respectively, the two authors 'defend both the Catholic right of conscience and the right of law against James' increasing exercise of prerogative.'<sup>86</sup> In depicting Cicero in a heroic battle against treason, Jonson explores how treason itself is capable of producing a form of tyranny, how a moderate ruler is forced to step outside the law;<sup>87</sup> Cicero must resort to underhand tactics in order to defeat Catiline. James, in a no doubt unwelcome toughened stance against Catholics and Jesuits alike in the years 1606-11, was increasingly forced to resort to harsher forms of, sometimes absolutist, rule in order to maintain his safety and that of the nation. Lemon asserts 'a suspension of the law in the name of necessity has long-term consequences: moments of crisis come to define the state'.<sup>88</sup> In *Catiline*, Jonson shows both 'evil seeking to destroy power'<sup>89</sup> and that same power's response in its adoption of methods which are not always synonymous with democratic integrity. Cicero resorts to spying and manipulation in order to protect

Rome from Catiline's intended holocaust, just as James was forced into a hardened position in relation to English Catholics after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.

It has been argued that public revulsion at Henri IV's assassination in France, was so great that in the long term 'the monarchy was strengthened: Francois Ravaillac's knife... assisted the growth of the absolute state.'<sup>90</sup> A similar anxiety about absolute power became a topic of social contention in England. The lingering sense of threat, brought to a heightened crisis by the murder of Henri IV, was a reminder to Jacobean audiences of both the vulnerability of the established order, and the danger when that established order seeks to go beyond its remit. Jonson's Roman play serves as a timely example of the problematic nature of treason, and in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, 'the polemics between and among Protestants and Catholics attest to the burgeoning public debate on the legal and political parameters of treason.'<sup>91</sup> The death of a French monarch at the hands of a fanatical Jesuit in 1611 no doubt drove this polemic further.

As Donaldson states, since James' accession 'Jonson had acted by turns as an apologist for the new King and as a satirist of his manners and countrymen; as a celebrator of the magnificence of the Jacobean court and scourge of its dubious values; as a confidant of the Gunpowder conspirators and as a go-between for their chief inquisitor, Robert Cecil; as a Catholic hare who might seem at times to be running with the Protestant hounds.'<sup>92</sup> In *Catiline*, Jonson seeks to explore the narrative of conspiracy in order to negotiate the events of 1605. Adopting classical sources, he weaves contemporaneous anxiety about Catholic treachery into an old story of Republican Rome in order to evade a potential backlash from the censors. His reasons for doing so would seem to be complex. That the Gunpowder Plot still

rang with topical currency in 1611 is plainly evident, and audience demand may therefore have dictated his subject matter. In addition, his recent conversion to Anglicanism, regarded by some scholars as a direct response to the assassination of Henri IV, perhaps prompted his decision to publicly denounce further acts of Catholic barbarity, and to distance himself from his documented involvement in the Gunpowder Plot itself. As John Donne concluded, a good Catholic 'may take the Oath without in any way compromising his religion. Though Donne and Jonson had switched their religion in opposite ways – Donne from Catholicism to Anglicanism, Jonson, the other way about – they may have had broadly similar views on the significance and legitimacy of the Oath, and it is almost certain that Jonson would have willingly subscribed to the Oath.<sup>93</sup> In *Volpone*, his position as a playwright is more complex and difficult to determine, but in *Catiline*, which appears to both support and condone government action in the aftermath of the conspiracy of 1605, he seems to have written a play that supports the Oath of Allegiance, and affirms his own newly changed religious status. In *Catiline*, Jonson depicts a world cast into darkness by a terrifying plot; a plot that only Cicero, in his wisdom, is able to avert. Cicero defends Rome just as James I had saved England. Unlike *Volpone*, which may or may not figure members of the government in oblique satire, *Catiline His Conspiracy* goes as far as Jonson perhaps felt comfortable in providing dramatic support for a government in crisis in 1611.

In repertory with Jonson's Roman play was Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. As *Macbeth* demonstrates, Shakespeare's plays are full of 'contemporary references which anchor them in the present and demand that playgoers and readers consider them



in terms of current political issues.<sup>94</sup> *Cymbeline* is just such a play, preoccupied with reflecting the climate in England in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, and in particular, the anxiety generated by the murder of the French monarch in 1610. People responded urgently to Henri's death. Rumours abounded 'that his murder was part of a wider Catholic plot', and twenty-three previous plots to assassinate him were already known to the authorities.<sup>95</sup> Most scholars regard the period of 1609-10 as the most likely date for *Cymbeline's* composition. Constance Jordan suggests a date of 1610, citing James' *Vos Dij estis [ye are gods]... But ye shall die like men*, written in the same year, as a text which attempted to define a monarch and to provide the terms of a monarchy, thus generating 'the principle political themes represented in Shakespeare's Romances.'<sup>96</sup> Roger Warren, editor of a recent Oxford edition of *Cymbeline*, argues specifically for the spring of 1610 as the date of *Cymbeline's* composition,<sup>97</sup> placing its creation at the exact moment of Henri IV's assassination and England's struggle to come to terms with yet another Catholic plot. Shakespeare's late plays are often referred to as romances or tragicomedies; the term 'tragicomedy' concedes the possible influence of the Italian pastoral, as developed in Guarini's *Compendio della Poesia Tragicoma*,<sup>98</sup> and tragicomic plots, comprised of an interlacing of serious and comic episodes, are 'tragic in potentiality, but not in action'.<sup>99</sup> Resolution occurs through the intervention of a 'credible miracle', which averts disaster and brings about the obligatory happy conclusion.<sup>100</sup> Since there are often overlaps between the narratives of romance and tragicomedy, they are best treated as 'complementary "frames" through which to view the late plays.'<sup>101</sup> The adoption of Italian pastoral at this time is worthy of note, since it was often, although not exclusively,

associated with Protestantism, and thus was 'an attractive mode in which to represent Protestant virtues'.<sup>102</sup>

Constance Jordan argues that Shakespeare's romances speak the language of politics: 'they are the product of a period in English politics in which what had at first appeared to be a settled and stable form of government was now being questioned and challenged by several opposing viewpoints.'<sup>103</sup> Another useful definition of romance in this period refers to the genre as a 'process of wish-fulfilment or utopian fantasy,' which aims to displace and transform a particular historical world in order to 'revive the conditions of a lost paradise or to anticipate a future kingdom in which suffering and limitations have been effaced.'<sup>104</sup> There has been much discussion regarding the nature of Shakespeare's late romances, but the politics in these plays is often overlooked. Jordan contends that 'conflicts within the families and states of Shakespeare's romances can, of course, be understood entirely in personal terms, but they acquire a second reference if they are read as metaphors expressing aspects of contemporary political debate.'<sup>105</sup> To focus on the politics in the romances is therefore to consider 'more than their generic, philosophic, and historical determinants. It is to see them as models of conflict between patterns of thought, and varieties of argument.'<sup>106</sup> The question of Rome in *Cymbeline* is one that has preoccupied many scholars, but it would not be unreasonable to propose *Cymbeline*'s Roman elements are a response to the atmosphere of anxiety pervading England in the years 1610-11, and as such the model of conflict in *Cymbeline* springs from a direct Roman threat to an English monarch. At the climax of the play, Rome invades Britain, evoking the attack of the Spanish Armada, and even the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre; events both

imaginatively tethered to the Gunpowder Plot in circulating Protestant polemic after 1605. In 1610, the added conflation of the Jesuit assassination of a French monarch hardened this polemic even further. Rome, therefore, 'appears in the play as both ancient and modern, so that England (itself ancient and modern) might define itself through association with one and differentiation with another. Loyalty, patrilineal descent, corruption, national character, and familial coherence are subjects of soliloquy and debate';<sup>107</sup> and indeed nationhood, England, and the Protestant Church, were all specific features of political discourse in the years following the Gunpowder Plot.

Shakespeare figures Rome in a similar way to Barnes and Dekker in their post-Gunpowder plays of 1606, in that Rome and the pope serve as the principal menace to the stability of the English nation. Innogen describes the crisis in her marriage, and by implication, the crisis in ancient Britain, as the result of 'that drug-damned Italy' (3.4.15). Pisanio supports this view, 'tis slander, / Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue / Outvenoms all the worms of the Nile, whose breath / Rides on the posting winds and doth belie / All corners of the world. Kings, queens, and states / Maids, matrons, nay the secret of the grave / This viperous slander enters' (3.4.33-8). Shakespeare's coupling of 'slander' and 'viper' in such a muscular image reflects the seditious and ominous nature of secret Jesuit undermining. The 'worms of the Nile', poisonous Egyptian snakes, evoke the serpent imagery seen in other Gunpowder plays; imagery used to denote Rome, and, after the Gunpowder Plot, the emblem of the serpent under the lily depicted on the commemorative medal. Lady Macbeth and the Empress refer to serpents deceiving innocents. The Pope in *The Devil's Charter* employs snakes to murder

sleeping princes, and Lodowick Lloyd's *Tragicomdie of Serpents* conflates the Gunpowder Plotters themselves with snakes. Thus, any reference to Rome and serpents in 1611 would have immediately induced the treachery of the Gunpowder Treason and wider Catholic conspiracy.

The one and only direct reference to the Gunpowder Plot in *Cymbeline* occurs in the Jailer scene in Act 5, which, like the Porter Scene in *Macbeth*, appears to be a clear commentary on contemporaneous events. The Jailer, noting the impending death of Posthumous, states 'there are verier knaves desire to live, for all / he be a Roman; and there be some of them too that die / against their wills; so should I, if I were one. I would we / were all of one mind, and one mind good. O there were / desolation of jailers and gallowses!' (5.4.293-7). Use of the word 'Roman' in this context is curious, since Posthumous is not in fact Roman; the Jailer is either discoursing on the contemporaneous death of Catholics, or Shakespeare has made an unlikely slip in continuity. The lines 'there be some of them too that die / against their wills' evokes the deaths of Catholic traitors, and may even be a direct reference to the execution of Ravaillac, Henri IV's Jesuit assassin. This speech seems to highlight the personal dangers of Catholicism: 'so should I [die against my will], if I were one'. There is also a touching plea for religious harmony. 'I would we / were all of one mind', states the Jailer, reiterating his earlier remarks on death and religion. 'You must either be directed by some / that take upon them to know, or take upon yourself that / which I am sure you do not know, or jump the after - / enquiry on your own peril' (5.3.273-6). A seemingly palpable statement on the nature of faith. While the Jailer does not necessarily reflect Shakespeare's personal religious views, he does propose that there are

choices about faith, a view taken in *Hamlet*. 'Some / that take upon them to know', is perhaps an indication of the fallibility of religious leaders, and the lines 'take upon yourself that / which I am sure you do not know' a warning to Posthumous that he must decide his faith for himself in matters of life and death 'or jump the after - / enquiry'. These lines recall Hamlet's agonised soliloquy on the nature of death, and echo Macbeth's claim 'We'd jump the life to come' (1.7.7). The Jailer's mistaking of Posthumous for a Roman thus shifts the tone of the scene away from a call for geographical peace between ancient Britain and Rome, to a plea centred instead on contemporaneous religious turmoil and persecution. The King in the very last line of the play reinforces this when he states, 'Never was a war did cease / Ere bloody hands were washed' (5.4.485-6).

Unlike *Catiline*, with its straightforward references to the events surrounding 5<sup>th</sup> November, *Cymbeline* instead demonstrates the means by which dramatic responses to the Powder Treason were developing, and at the time Shakespeare was writing his late romances his preoccupation seems to have shifted. *Cymbeline* has moved away from the knee jerk response of *Macbeth* towards questions of how a nation counters a crisis, how it handles contamination and the threat of domination and control from an external force. Plays such as *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* indicate that in the years following the Gunpowder Plot, Shakespeare has begun to critically engage with English politics in a more reflective way. The stage devils and witchcraft of *Macbeth* have been replaced with the deeply disturbing characters of Giacomo and Leontes. As Kiernan suggests, 'in the haunting last plays of his Jacobean period, Shakespeare's gaze is levelled at the remote horizon of what could be, rather than absorbed in the immediate tyranny of what is.'<sup>108</sup>

One of the differences between *Cymbeline* and *Catiline* is its exploration of Gunpowder tropes without specific allusion to the Plot itself. Unlike Jonson, Shakespeare uses his characters to negotiate the *issues* evoked by the conspiracy, rather than recreating a wholesale conspiracy. While the protagonist in *Catiline* talks of 'firing Rome', Shakespeare's Giacomo invades and corrupts the English court by stealth. In this way, Giacomo and his opposite Innogen become figures for Rome and England respectively, enabling Shakespeare to negotiate the concept of national and spiritual corruption; a theme linked specifically to the Plot, and one which emerged directly from the king himself in his Gunpowder address to Parliament. James referred to the Plotters as corrupt, bewitched, seduced by popery, and his subsequent expulsion of Jesuits from England highlighted English anxiety about subversive religious conversions and spiritual contamination. 'Certainly to many, if not most, educated Protestant English people of the period popery was an anti-religion, a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity. Anti-Christ was an agent of Satan, sent into the Church to corrupt and take it over from within. He was not an overt enemy like the Turk, but rather rose by stealth and deception, pretending piety and reverence while in fact inverting and perverting the value of true religion.'<sup>109</sup> Innogen, as a representation of pure Englishness, is set up in opposition to the dark and menacing Roman Giacomo, who engages in psychic warfare with her in an attempt to corrupt the world of the court and pervert her true faith. This dramatic conflict parallels the suspicion and fear with which England attempted to negotiate the Catholic sedition of the Gunpowder Plot. The action in *Cymbeline* then, might in part be understood in terms of English anxiety regarding perceived Catholic threats. The powerful

Giacomo only has to whisper into Posthumous' ear in order to instigate the potential murder of a member of the royal household, and such preoccupation with the assassination of royalty was at its height following the death of Henri IV.

Like *Catiline*, demonic infection forces every twist and turn in *Cymbeline*. The nightmare of Innogen<sup>110</sup> reflects the waking nightmare of England in the aftermath of November 1605. The central element of corruption in the play stems from Giacomo, first introduced on stage as 'A noble gentleman of Rome' (1.6.10). Venturing into Cymbeline's court on a wager between himself and Innogen's husband, Posthumous, Giacomo is a dark contaminant. His arrival at court heralds the beginning of a terrifying episode in Britain, which eventually culminates in the Roman invasion. In Giacomo's first scene with Innogen, he refers to the familiar antimetabole of 'fair and foul', but uses it with a sly, self-conscious irony, since his combination of verbal flattery and lewd insult is designed to unsettle and destabilise Innogen. Giacomo serves here as the counterpoint to the innocence of Innogen or England. He is the essence of foul, she of fair. His poisonous presence seeks to bewitch or seduce her; to contaminate her in the same way Jesuits were perceived to infect Protestants. 'Iachimo's verse style is calculated to put Imogen on her guard. He knows what he is doing: as he had told Posthumous earlier, "I am the master of my speeches"' (1.5.137).<sup>111</sup> His verbal onslaught, in which he calls into question Innogen's beauty, conflates Innogen with Biblical images of both the virgin and the whore. His own 'unsatisfied desire' which he equates as the urge to raven first the lamb, but also 'the garbage' (1.6.49-51), highlights his taste for corrupting innocence and indulging in sin. He can only truly enjoy Innogen once he has relocated her into his own sinful landscape. Giacomo's use of 'lamb' also

highlights the biblical purity and innocence of Innogen, which is underpinned when he compares her to women in Rome; women whose hands are 'made hard with hourly falsehood', 'base and illustrious as the smoky light / That's fed with stinking tallow' (1.6.107; 109-10). These lines echo Monsieur in *Bussy D'Ambois*, who refers to women who 'hold men's candles' (3.2.149). Giacomo evokes slaverling with common lips and 'all the plagues of hell', to educe the prostitution rife in Rome. His language is ambiguous; the image of 'women' could equally apply to 'a church', particularly in the line 'fed with stinking tallow', which evokes a smoky Catholic Church. Indeed 'hourly falsehood' might recall Catholic confession. This ambiguity serves to meld the sin of a Roman stew with the Catholic Church, in stark contrast to the purity of Innogen and Anglican worship. Giacomo's use of such comparisons highlights his own position as the corrupt invader, come from the 'stinking tallow' of Roman stews to raven the 'lamb' of England. Both Giacomo and Innogen can thus be read as interchangeable characters not only for Rome and England but also for the two churches. This complex imagery enables the audience to imagine the prostitution and sin of ancient Rome, and to conflate it with the Roman Church. Innogen, in sharp relief, transmits the purity of England's Protestant Church.

Innogen's response to Giacomo reinforces this duality of alignments. She questions why he dare 'Solicit'st here a lady that disdains / Thee and the devil alike' (1.6.147-8), threatening to report Giacomo as a 'saucy stranger in his court to mart / As in a Romish stew' (1.6.151-2). Innogen, like the English Church, recognises both Giacomo's potential for psycho-spiritual infection and his status as a dangerous predator. From the outset, Shakespeare aligns Innogen with the



concept of faith and suffering; 'always reserved my holy duty' (1.1.88) she says to Posthumous in the opening scene. Later, arriving in Wales in search of Posthumous, she changes her name to Fidele, which bolsters and underline both her loyal nature and her unswerving faith. Further parallels between Innogen and the English Church are made when Lucius reinforces her spiritual status, 'Thy name well fits thy faith, thy faith thy name' (4.2.382), and Belarius says of her 'behold divineness' (3.6.42). Shakespeare also highlights her virtue with his denunciation of those who worship 'dirty gods' (3.6.53).

Innogen emphasises her own faith by uttering a prayer of protection before falling asleep at the beginning of Act 2. Placing her book aside, she calls 'To your protection I commend me, gods. / From fairies and the tempters of the night / Guard me, beseech ye' (2.2.8-10). The trunk scene that follows makes for some of the most uncomfortable viewing in Shakespeare. Having persuaded Innogen to store his valuables in her bedchamber, Giacomo waits for her to fall asleep and then steals forth from a trunk, initiating a scene that is both lyrical and utterly sinister. He reinforces Innogen's spiritual and sexual innocence; she is a 'fresh lily' 'whiter than the sheets' (2.215-16). The lily was associated with purity;<sup>112</sup> a purity Giacomo recognises and acknowledges. It was also one of the flowers under which the serpent slithered on the Gunpowder medal. Here Giacomo, like the conspirators beneath Westminster, poses a hidden, unseen threat, and Innogen becomes both the sleeping Rome in *Catiline*, and a sleeping England in the months leading up to the Plot. He notes her bedside reading material: 'the tale of Tereus. Here the leaf's turned down / Where Philomel gave up (2.245-6)'. This book serves to highlight Innogen's awareness of this threat. Tereus, legendary king of Athens,

raped and mutilated his sister-in-law, Philomel.<sup>113</sup> Her reading material thus introduces the possibility of rape and mutilation into the scene, which reinforces Giacomo's potential for violence. By comparing himself to Tarquin, Giacomo 'underscores the difference between the two – the rapist physical and the rapist imaginary'.<sup>114</sup>

Innogen's death-like sleep renders her completely vulnerable to Giacomo, and foretells her induced coma in Wales. 'O sleep, thou ape of death,' Giacomo whispers, 'lie dull upon her, / And be her sense but as a monument / Thus in a chapel lying' (2.2.31-33). This is an almost literal prediction of the physical state in which the shepherds will discover Innogen. Innogen's sleep allows Giacomo to commit a mental assault upon her body and ravish her with his eyes. He spies a mole on her left breast, which he will later brag to her husband he kissed, 'it gave me present hunger / To feed again, though full' (2.4.137-8). In addition to the sexual imagery presented here, there is also a darker allusion to Giacomo as a type of incubus, feeding on the sleeping form of a victim, perhaps even a witch's familiar, since the uncomfortable connection of the mole with a hidden teat calls to mind the means by which witches were believed to succour their satanic creatures. As previously noted, imaginative links between the Gunpowder Plotters and witchcraft were firmly established in 1611. Shakespeare here reinforces Giacomo's status as a contagious Roman serpent. His eyes raven Innogen's body and it is his subsequent description of this event to Posthumous which bewitches Innogen's husband. At the close of this scene, Giacomo creeps back into the trunk, calling 'Swift, swift you dragons of the night, that dawning / May bare the raven's eye! I lodge in fear. / Though this is a heavenly angel, hell is here' (2.2.48-50). His

use of 'dragons' recalls the Whore of Revelation, riding her dragon in diabolical triumph. 'Raven' is double-edged. As a bird, raven often presages evil in Gunpowder plays, but here Shakespeare uses it as a substitute for ravish or rape, and thus the word becomes doubly ominous. As Simonds notes, Giacomo 'appears to ally his own wicked personality with that of the raven'. For Christians 'the fact that the raven did not return to Noah on the ark but remained away to eat carrion closely associates the bird with evil as early as Genesis';<sup>115</sup> and when the raven 'does open its eye in the morning, it flies out to the battlefield to perform its folkloric function of pecking out the eyes of fallen soldiers, once again associating itself with the demonic forces that at this point are so dear to Iachimo's heart.'<sup>116</sup> The linguistic combination of 'dragons' and 'raven' evokes the dark powers of the Devil, and Giacomo's final line, 'hell is here', may be read as a comment on his sexual torture at his close proximity to the sleeping Innogen, or perhaps as a far darker declaration that he has unleashed a form of hell in the world of the play.

Giacomo's presence in Innogen's bedchamber serves as a significant plot device. 'The hidden presence of a vicious slanderer (Iachomo in the bedchamber) warns us that this is a theologically fallen world, a world divided between the clarity of day (reason and wisdom) and the influences, often evil, of night (the passions and ignorance)'.<sup>117</sup> His subsequent suggestion of Innogen's infidelity acts as a corrosive spiritual pollutant, not just upon Posthumous, whose mind becomes so infected that he longs to kill his wife, but also upon Innogen. She is so tainted by the Italian's lies her husband begins to describe her in terms more applicable to the Whore of Babylon than a virgin princess. 'It is the woman's part; be it lying, note it / The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers; / Lust and rank thoughts,

hers, hers; revenges, hers; / Ambitions, covetings, changes of pride, disdain, / Nice longings, slanders, mutability, / All faults that man can name, nay, that hell knows' (2.4.174-9).

In an interesting echo of Ben Jonson, Posthumous says of Innogen 'let her beauty / Look through a casement to allure false hearts' (2.4.34-5). In *Volpone*, Corvino, furious with his wife, the virtuous Celia, berates her for standing at the window: 'A crew of old, unmarried, noted lechers, / Stood leering up like satyrs; and you smile / Most graciously, and fan your favours forth, / To give your hot spectators satisfaction!' (2.5.6-9). Both Posthumous and Corvino ascribe whorish qualities to faithful women. The Italian's lies have recast Innogen at court; she has become a woman of 'lust and rank thoughts' (2.4.173); a woman in diametric opposition to the Innogen Posthumous left behind. Through the presence of Giacomo, she has been inverted from virgin to whore.

Posthumous, infected by the darkness of Rome, becomes blind to the truth. In Act 3, his servant, Pisanio, asks 'O master, what a strange infection / Is fall'n into thy ear! What false Italian, / As poisoned tongued as handed, hath prevailed / On thy too ready hearing?' (3.2.3-6). Pisanio, untainted by Giacomo, is able to see the transformation in Posthumous and recognise his corruption. It is still within Posthumous' power to dismiss Giacomo's claims and maintain his faith in his wife, but he is unable to defend his senses from such bewitching imagery. Similarly, Macbeth, who is promised advancement by Duncan, fails to defend himself against his overpowering ambition and chooses instead to murder. So strong, so sinister, are the forces at work in Giacomo, that Posthumous suffers a form of possession. Innogen seems to recognise this. 'That drug-damned Italy hath out-

craftied him' (3.4.15), she says, highlighting the sense of bewitchment. She returns to this theme when she comments on her husband's letters:

The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,  
All turned to heresy? Away, away,  
Corrupters of my faith, you shall no more  
Be stomachers to my heart. Thus may poor fools  
Believe false teachers. Those that are betrayed  
Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor  
Stands in worse case of woe

(3.4.82-7).

The cherished letters, written by her husband, which she has treasured and kept close to her heart, have been polluted as a result of her fall from grace, and the religious imagery in this scene heightens not only her sense of personal loss, but her spiritual loss too. Posthumous has become a heretic, his letters heretical to her faith; they have the potential to corrupt her spirituality, and having once acted as a stomacher to her deepest and most vulnerable self, his letters now threaten to defile her. Blinded by Rome, Posthumous has turned traitor, to Innogen, and to their marriage, and, within the religious context of the speech, to the world of *Cymbeline* and Britain too. Innogen's line 'yet the traitor / Stands in worse case of woe,' serves to act as reminder of the violent death prescribed for traitors in Jacobean England, and foreshadows the apparent beheading of Posthumous in Act 4. At the end of Act 3.4, Innogen recalls an image first introduced by Giacomo in Act 1. Pleading with Pisanio to take her life, she begs 'The lamb entreats the butcher. Where's thy knife?' (3.4.96). Giacomo has previously referred to 'ravens a lamb' to reinforce Innogen's status as an innocent, but here, used in conjunction with 'butcher', Shakespeare evokes a biblical image of sacrifice and slaughter. Catesby and his men were publicly denounced as 'unmercifull bouchers of

Rome’;<sup>118</sup> Macbeth is referred to as a ‘dead butcher’ (5.8.69); in *Cymbeline*, Posthumous has now replaced Giacomo as the butcher. The hand which threatens to bring about Innogen’s death may belong to Pisanio, but it is her husband, corrupted by ‘drug-damned Italy’, who has turned traitor and become ‘unmercifull boucher’.

Giacomo, perhaps more than any other character in Shakespeare, is the epitome of evil. Worse than Iago, since he is driven not by the usual forces of ambition or lust, but by an almost supernatural need to destroy. The catalyst for much of the devastation in *Cymbeline*, Giacomo resonates with the agents sent into Fairyland in Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon*, with the witches in *Macbeth*, and with the corrupt nature of Barnes’ Pope. ‘Giacomo discerns the weakness in one whom he would dupe and uses that vulnerability against his victim.’<sup>119</sup> As a result of his actions, before the end of the play, ‘nearly every character has been duped at least once and almost every episode will have been built around a case of deception or blindness.’<sup>120</sup> By the end of Act 2, Giacomo’s work is essentially done. Posthumous is easily able to overcome him in a dumb show duel, ‘a curious stage action possibly symbolizing the spiritual pre-eminence of reformed Protestantism over Roman Catholicism in the minds of Shakespeare and his audience’.<sup>121</sup> Having contaminated the world of the play, he slinks back to Rome. Cloten then takes his place as a secondary, ruinous element, although he merely attempts to maximise on a situation already unravelling before him.

Giacomo is not the only danger to the purity of Innogen in the play. Shakespeare creates yet another darkly powerful and ambitious figure in *Cymbeline*’s queen. Like Lady Macbeth and the Empress, the Queen uses black

magic and deception in her plot to remove Cymbeline and place her own son on the throne. She attempts from the outset to dupe both Innogen and the audience, 'you shall not find me, daughter, / After the slander of most stepmothers, / Evil-eyed unto you' (1.1.71-3). A seeming advocate for Innogen and Posthumous, her subsequent interactions with the doctor Cornelius reveal her skill at dissembling. Receiving a box from the doctor which she believes to contain a poisonous compound, she demands to know if he finds her 'devilish'; confirming to him her intention to test the mixture only on 'such creatures as / we count not worth the hanging, but none human' (1.5.19-20). However, with the arrival of Pisanio, she reveals her true intentions in an aside, 'upon him / Will I first work. He's for his master, / And enemy to my son' (1.5.27-9). Cornelius, in his own aside comments, 'She doth think she has / Strange ling'ring poisons. I do know her spirit, / And will not trust one of her malice' (1.5.33-5). The Queen is thus established as a dangerous presence in the court of Cymbeline, plotting to murder those who stand in her way with poison. Having made a gift of the poison to Pisanio, which he mistakenly believes to be a health cordial, she promises 'I have given him that / Which if he take, shall quite unpeople her / Of liegers for her sweet, and which she after, / Except she bend her humour, shall be assured / To taste of too' (1.5.78-82); lines which disclose her murderous intent to despatch Innogen from the world.

Cymbeline's Queen, like Lady Macbeth and Dekker's Empress, acts to bring about a wider national disorder from within the confines of her own domestic community. If Innogen reflects English faith and purity in *Cymbeline*, the Queen is her feminine antithesis, a scheming manipulator prepared to use devious means to achieve her own personal objectives. She is in fact 'a crafty devil' (2.1.49). Echoing

the words of both Cicero in *Catiline*, and the Empress in *The Whore of Babylon*, she orders Cloten to dissemble and flatter Innogen. 'Frame yourself to orderly solicits, and be friended / With aptness of the season. Make denials / Increase your services; so seem as if / You were inspired to do those duties which / You tender to her; that you in all obey her' (2.3.44-9). Just as Lady Macbeth entreats her husband to 'bear welcome in your eye', the Queen here persuades her brutish son to deceive Innogen. Plays written in response to the Gunpowder Plot 'contrast good and bad women, they domesticate the gender disorder and female conspiracy threatened by Catholicism. These plays associate Catholic conspiracy with the intimate rebellion of a wife within a household'.<sup>122</sup> Such plays use the rebellion of a wife in place of a foreign invasion,<sup>123</sup> but as Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* demonstrates, the depiction of a foreign invasion was a powerful dramatic device used to highlight the dangers of Catholic Rome. In *Cymbeline*, not only does Shakespeare figure Catholic deception in the character of the outsider Giacomo, he reflects its presence within English society in his figure of the Queen. In an echo of Dekker's Empress, the Queen makes a startling speech during the visit of the Roman ambassador to court. Rounding on the King, she reminds him of the 'natural bravery' of the British Isles. 'A kind of conquest / Caesar made here, but made not here his brag / Of 'came and saw and overcame'. With shame - / The first that ever touched him – he was carried / From off our coast, twice beaten' (3.1.22-6). Like Lady Macbeth, it is the Queen who emboldens her husband, prompting him not to show deference to the visiting Romans. This disorderly defiance is reinforced in Act 5 when Cornelius, reporting her death, states she died 'With horror, madly dying, like her life, / Which being cruel to the world,



concluded most cruel to herself' (5.4.31-33). In this interchange between Cornelius and the King, the word 'confess' is repeated four times. 'What she confessed / I will report' (33), 'she confessed she never loved you' (36), 'your daughter...she did confess / Was as a scorpion to her sight' (43-45), 'She did confess she had / For you a mortal mineral' (49-50). Repetitive use of 'confess' serves to further conflate the Queen with Catholicism, and Cornelius' speech emphasises her demonic nature: 'poison', 'fiend', 'craft', 'shameless-desperate', 'evils', 'vicious'; he lists her crimes with relish. The Queen 'abhorred' the King, only marrying him to further herself and her son; she intended to take Innogen 'off by poison', and to feed the King a mineral which would 'by inches waste' him. As he slowly faded, she planned to watch, weep, and kiss him, all 'to work / Her son into th'adoption of the crown'. In conjunction with the word 'confess', Shakespeare uses 'repent' to describe the Queen on her deathbed, but she does not repent her crimes, only that 'The evils she hatched were not effected', and so she 'Despairing died' (5.4.59-61).

Cymbeline himself also underscores the diabolical nature of the Queen, evoking traits of Bale's Babylonian Whore when he considers how she bewitched him: 'Mine eyes / Were not in fault for she was beautiful, / Mine ears that heard her flattery, nor my heart / That thought her like her seeming' (5.4.62-5). 'Attracted by her outward beauty, Cymbeline marries a vicious and ambitious woman, whose bad counsel nearly destroys the kingdom'.<sup>124</sup> This image, of a 'mask of beauty hiding inner corruption',<sup>125</sup> is an established trope in Gunpowder plays used to denote women who dissimulate and delude men with their beauty.

There are several echoes of magic in *Cymbeline*. In Act 4, the brothers intone over Innogen's supposedly dead body with lines that bears some similarity

with *Macbeth's* witches. They incant 'The sceptre, learning, physic, must / All follow this and come to dust'. With elevated poetic tones they continue, 'Fear no more the lightning flash', 'Nor th'all dreaded thunder-stone', 'No exorciser harm thee,' 'Nor no witchcraft charm thee' (4.2.269-78). These pacey rhythmic lines, which sound much more like a charm or spell than a eulogy, effectively cast a protective energy around Innogen, echoing her prayer of protection in Act 1; a prayer that corresponds with the interior magic of the play, and acts to prevent her corruption. A further whisper of magic is found in the same scene, when Innogen, having awoken to find what she believes to be the decapitated corpse of her husband lying beside her, cries out 'All curses madded Hecuba gave the Greeks, / And mine to boot, be darted on thee!' (4.2.314-5). This is a moment in which Innogen's soul is genuinely endangered; it is an outpouring of grief, a lament for the loss of Posthumous, for the horror of her existence. She has awoken, but, as she observes in quiet desperation, the 'dream's here still' (4.2.307).

Both Innogen and Posthumous experience a form of death in *Cymbeline*. For Posthumous, his death, imagined by Innogen with the discovery of Cloten's headless corpse, reflects his temporary status as bewitched traitor. He has literally lost his head, or so she believes. He can be restored in time, but only through her grace and his return to the world of the court. Innogen falls into a deep sleep in Act 1, and from thence undergoes a waking nightmare. She may recover from her drug-induced coma in Act 4, but the world is still inverted, and her former allusion to that 'drug-damned Italy' has now becomes heavy with unconscious irony. Supposing her husband to have been spiritually drugged, she herself has been physically drugged. Twice in *Cymbeline* Innogen is protected from danger; through

her own prayer in the trunk scene, and by the chants of her unknown brothers. Yet, this protection is only physical. She is cast into a nether world of spiritual and emotional confusion from the moment Giacomo slithers from the trunk until the resolution at the end of the play. Between these two events, the dramatic action is the result of a temporary bewitchment, a bewitchment affecting all the major characters. Nature is inverted, misunderstanding clouds order, truth is concealed, and the very clothes and outward appearance of the characters shift in line with the dream-like quality of the action. The sleep which eludes Macbeth, has here become the sleep of death and confusion; not until Cymbeline embraces his daughter at the end of the play, 'My tears that fall / Prove holy water on thee!' (5.4.265-6), is Innogen fully awakened and restored in a final figurative baptism.

The purity of Innogen is the chief determinate of events in *Cymbeline*. The plot centres on her fundamental resistance to the forces of darkness, and this play, like other Gunpowder productions at the time, explores the apocalyptic battle between good and evil, fair and foul. Giacomo endeavours to undermine and destroy the world of *Cymbeline*, a world that ultimately relies on Innogen for its redemption. Attempts are made to seduce, infect, and destroy her; Giacomo defames her, Cloten plans to rape her, the Queen intends to poison her. She is ruthlessly pursued. Even her own husband seeks to have her murdered. From the moment Innogen falls asleep in her chamber she enters into a waking nightmare, which makes her prayer for protection all the more poignant. At the beginning of the play, Innogen's marriage to Posthumous has placed her figuratively outside the world of the court; she is shunned by her father, and suffers a form of exile. The Second Lord comments 'Thou divine Innogen, what thou endur'st, / Betwixt a

father by thy stepdame governed, / A mother hourly coining plots, a wooer / More hateful than the foul expulsion is / Of thy dear husband, than that horrid act / Of the divorce he'd make' (2.1.54-9). These lines immediately precede the trunk scene, and emphasise Innogen's vulnerable and isolated status. The concurrence of the words 'plots', 'foul', 'horrid act', and 'expulsion' evoke anxiety about the stability of the royal family. Cymbeline himself is not in any danger until the Romans arrive at the end of the play, but Innogen is a princess and member of the royal family; a status which may have caused some members of the audience to recall the Gunpowder Plotters' plans to snatch the Princess Elizabeth. Throughout *Cymbeline*, Innogen, like Shakespeare's England, resists attempts to overthrow her, and against almost impossible odds, retains her purity in the eyes of both herself and the audience.

The ending of *Cymbeline* posits the question of whether 'Britain's reattachment to its Roman roots' permits a peace or truce.<sup>126</sup> For Edmund Spenser, the 'dream of deep roots serves to protect his nation from Roman (Catholic) incursion, which the poet refers to as "hideous hunger of dominion".'<sup>127</sup> However, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* questions the nature of infection; an infection of faith and belief. With their betrothal, Innogen and Posthumous promise to keep faith, 'not only by not being unfaithful, but also by not losing faith in the other's fidelity.'<sup>128</sup> The arrival of the Italian Giacomo jeopardises the faithful world of *Cymbeline*; all the characters have their faith tested in one way or another, and the resulting conflict, between good and evil, fair and foul, culminates in a reordering of their world. As in other Gunpowder plays, the ending of *Cymbeline* is uneasy; the longing for geographical and religious unity appears hopeful, but is ultimately

unrealistic, perhaps even ironic. Britain and Rome, like Innogen and Posthumous, must attempt to live in harmony, despite the pressures placed on their strained relationship. However, few would be foolish enough to assume a happy ending for either.

In creating a romance set in Britain's past, Shakespeare, like Ben Jonson, is able to negotiate contemporary political issues within a landscape that appears far removed from England in 1611. Plays located in ancient Rome, France, Scotland, Venice, that is, in geographical settings that appear liminal to England,<sup>129</sup> enable playwrights to emphasise 'the drama's Otherness'.<sup>130</sup> The ancient worlds of Rome and Britain provide a sanctuary within which Jonson and Shakespeare can explore the continued aftershocks of November 1605 in relative safety. Catiline's conspiracy of 63 AD, and the reign of Cymbeline in the 40s AD, had established historical narratives, yet upon these two events both playwrights covertly hang their contemporaneous religio-political themes. The similarities between Catiline's conspiracy and the Gunpowder Plot make it easy for Jonson to present an event sourced from the classics and interweave his own commentary into it.

Shakespeare's choice of the reign of Cymbeline however forces him to be much shrewder; with the exception of the attempted invasion of Britain, there is little in the story of Cymbeline to lend obvious parallels with Elizabethan and Jacobean England, yet he manages nonetheless to introduce contemporaneous themes and elements into an ancient story. Both *Catiline* and *Cymbeline* are Gunpowder plays. They contain possession and witchcraft, undermining and dissembling, blood and murder, and elements of the supernatural; *Catiline* features Sylla's ghost, Jupiter appears at the end of *Cymbeline*. What both plays seek to explore is the way in

which England is recovering from the events of 1605. Jonson is more closely involved in examining the political impact of Catesby's treason, the position of government, of monarch/consul, of Parliament/Senate. His play peers into the heart of conspiracy itself and reflects on the motivations of those on the fringes, the dispossessed, and the disenfranchised, in an effort to understand the relationship between good government and tyranny. Shakespeare is preoccupied with the spiritual crisis provoked by the Gunpowder Plot; his play surveys what it means to be spiritually contaminated, to lose faith, to be lost in a nightmare. He seeks a greater understanding of the psychological ways in which English society is corrupted and infected. Shakespeare and Jonson's demonstrable uneasiness with the threat of Rome in 1611 suggests, in the wake of the murder of Henri IV, that the themes and motifs established in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot continued to be both relevant and topical on the London stage.

## Chapter Five

### 'a Parliament of Devils'

Black Papist Deeds in John Webster's *The White Devil*, Shakespeare and Fletcher's *All Is True*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*

The years 1612-15 were turbulent for James I. Catesby, Fawkes, and the conspirators were gone, but certainly not forgotten. Beneath the long shadow cast by the Gunpowder Plot, James would have to deal with the deaths of his son and Salisbury, the politics of his daughter's marriage, and a Catholic scandal at court that would eventually lead to one of the most sensational murder trials of the seventeenth century. By 1612, as events at court were unfolding, Catesby and his men were thoroughly established as 'butchers', 'blood-suckers', 'vipers', involved in 'treasons', 'murder', and 'black conspiracy'. The Pope was the Antichrist and the streets of London were awash with imagined blood and slaughter. So ingrained were these Gunpowder paradigms in public consciousness, that authors no longer needed to refer to the Gunpowder Plot itself; its linguistic signifiers were sufficient to recall the menace of Catholic treachery. Such tropes had the rhetorical effect of aligning Catholic treason post-1605 with the activities of the Gunpowder Circle, and thus events such as the Overbury scandal, which by 1615 had become known as the 'Powder Poison', were interrogated via Gunpowder terminology, and conflated with the mythology surrounding the Gunpowder Treason itself. In the years 1612-15, both these examples of Catholic terror became imaginatively interconnected, and played powerfully on people's minds.

The ever-present nature of the Antichrist during these years is attested to by his presence in the volumes of texts, sermons, and plays produced by authors and playwrights. In 1615, Thomas Adams, Calvinist Episcopalian, regarded as 'one of the more considerable buried literary talents of the seventeenth century,'<sup>1</sup> published *The Black Devil*,<sup>2</sup> a series of three sermons in which he expounds on the nature of Satan. In his sermons, Adams conflates Satan and Catholicism with two popular animal images prevalent in Gunpowder texts; the serpent -- Satan's whole course is serpentine,<sup>3</sup> and the owl -- a 'night-bird, the Jesuited Seminary; that Sculkes all day in a hollow tree, in some Popish vault; and at even howtes his masses, and skreeks downefall and ruine to King, Church, and Comman-wealth.'<sup>4</sup> Adams' choice to conjoin these images of Satan with the Gunpowder Plot as late as 1615 demonstrates the enduring topicality of Catesby's treason. 'God sees the malicious Jesuite calling up a Parliament of Devils, to plot treasons. He heares their damnable consultations: and observes them, whiles they apparel bloud-red murder, and black conspiracie, in the white robes of Religion. He saw Garnet plotting in his study, and Faulx digging in the vault'.<sup>5</sup> These now familiar Gunpowder images first emerged in late 1605: Fawkes digging underground; scheming Jesuits plotting catastrophe, and the screech owl hooting downfall and murder. The clergyman Thomas Draxe, also writing in 1615, this time on the Second Coming, similarly alludes to the Gunpowder Plot in his list of notable Catholic crimes:

The first generall Signe, already (at least for the most part) accomplished: are the great persecutions, massacres, murders, warres, poisonings, rackings, excommunications, and all kind of cruelties against Protestant Princes, Prelates, Pastors, Professours, Churches, Kingdomes, Provinces, under the Romish Foxe, Wolfe,



Antichrist, and his Butcher-like and bloud-sucking followers; especially (over all Europe) in these last hundred yeares immediately expired. Their Religion is rebellion, their faith is faction, their badge is bloud. Rome hath been, & (to their power) yet is, the Shambles and Slaughterhouse of the Saints. How many hundred thousands of Christians in Europe hath not that vieprous and bloody generation slaine and destroyed?<sup>6</sup>

Far from having faded from memory, the Gunpowder Plot continued to reverberate; it was still a crime beyond imagination, and was still cited as primary evidence of the atrocious nature of the Catholic Church. Rumours of plots and attempts to murder the king developed a greatly increased credibility after 1605.<sup>7</sup> In March 1606, James was forced to issue a declaration reassuring the nation he was still alive, after a rumour swept the country of his death. In July 1606, 'Chamberlain reported the discovery of a Spanish plot to murder James. In 1613, reports circulated of a letter left in the Stone Gallery in Whitehall warning the king of a popish assassination plot against him... In 1610 [Walter] Yonge recorded news of a Jesuit plot to "destroy both his Majesty and the Prince"'.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the suspicions of new plots, in 1612 the government was still investigating aspects of Catesby's Powder Treason and its on going issues. In June, two Jesuit priests were hanged at Tyburn for refusing to leave the country, despite having been banished twice,<sup>9</sup> and the following month, suspicion fell on the Spanish Ambassador Zuniga, who was summoned to Whitehall to acquit himself on charges of involvement in the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>10</sup> 'The lingering in England of the Spanish Ambassador, Don Pedro de Zuniga, is very suspicious,' Archbishop Abbot wrote to the king. 'He has secretly dispersed 12,000/. or 13,000/. already in England, and tampers by night with the Lieger Ambassador from France. He was in England at the time of the powder treason, and God knows what share he had in

that business.<sup>11</sup> Zuniga, lodging at the home of de Valasques, attended Mass daily, and there were circulating reports that he was sending information overseas, so the King of Spain might avail himself of discontented English Catholics.<sup>12</sup> During these same months there were rumours in Holland of a plot to murder Prince Maurice, which were brought to the attention of James, since the reports were 'like those which preceded the murder of the French King' and thus caused anxiety about yet another 'great conspiracy'.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the Earl of Northampton was still attempting to clear his name in relation to the Gunpowder Plot. As a man who had 'hunted Garnet and the rest from the bar to the gallows,' he complained, why should he still be accused 'of covering their crimes'?<sup>14</sup> Investigations into the Plot continued into October. John Pepys delivered 'two bundles of the examinations of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot', and the 'little bundle of Garnett's letters, written with orange', to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and at the same time a request was made for a warrant to search White Webbs, a house 'much frequented by recusants' and the place 'where the Gunpowder Treason was hatched'.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of 1612, London was rife with gossip regarding an impending Spanish Armada intent on attack.<sup>16</sup> Against this backdrop of paranoia and fear, the untimely and unexpected death of Prince Henry on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 'on the anniversary of a memorable deliverance', that is, on the near-anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, created such suspicion that surgeons, 'on account of vulgar rumours', opened his body.<sup>17</sup> The death of Henry from typhoid fever became a cause of great mourning in England.<sup>18</sup> He had been the 'symbol of Protestant aspirations, and the prospect of his eventual succession had cheered all those who despaired of James' temporising policies and longed to see England re-emerge as

the champion of the Reformed religion.<sup>19</sup> Henry's death delayed James' negotiations with Count Palatine for a marriage agreement with Elizabeth.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, however, in February 1613, following the state funeral of Henry came the royal wedding of James' daughter. The marriage on 14<sup>th</sup> February was the culmination of days of celebrations. Elizabeth was resplendent in 'a gowne of white satten richly embroidered', and James I wore 'a most sumptuous black sute with a Dyamond in his hatte of a wonderfull value'.<sup>21</sup> This marriage was yet another attempt by James to heal the political rift in Europe. In March 1612, he had signed a treaty of mutual assistance with the princes of the Protestant Union,<sup>22</sup> and Frederick V, son of Frederick IV, Calvinist ruler of the Palatinate, at sixteen, was a good match for his daughter. Frederick was related to William The Silent, figurehead of the Dutch resistance, and was also connected to the King of Sweden, the Elector of Brandenburg, and the Huguenot Duc de Bouillon, all of whom were leading Protestant figures in Europe. Through this marriage, 'James would be at the centre of the protestant network, ideally placed to make his views known and his influence felt'.<sup>23</sup> The marriage thus represented 'not only a firm bond between the English and imperial Protestants, but also a counterweight to a planned dynastic union with Spain, the traditional enemy heartily detested by the English public. If James' Spanish policy was the target of criticism at home, the match between the princess and the young Elector Palatine sparked general enthusiasm.'<sup>24</sup> In spite of the festivities, however, there was sufficient nervousness at the wedding for the government to station five hundred musketeers to guard the court,<sup>25</sup> giving those who attended cause to suspect 'there is intelligence of some intended treachery'.<sup>26</sup>

Suspicion of treachery was also at the heart of a court scandal during these same months; a scandal which would lead to the implication of the Count and Countess of Somerset in the grisly murder of the courtier Thomas Overbury. The case caused a sensation. The Countess of Somerset, a notable Catholic, was vilified as a whore and a witch, and, as noted, the plot was soon dubbed the 'Powder Poison' and conjoined with the Gunpowder Plot in print. The myth and rumours which sprang up around it included many elements of Gunpowder mythology; witchcraft, dissembling, regicide, devils, and possession. In order to appreciate the suspicion and unrest felt in London 1612-15, it is helpful to review in brief the details of the Overbury murder.

At the heart of the Powder Poison was the issue of divorce. An issue which had been raging since 1611, when Robert Carr, favourite of the king, and son of a powerful Scottish Catholic family, which had openly supported Mary, Queen of Scots, began a secret romantic relationship with Frances Howard. At the time, Frances was married to Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, the son of the court favourite of Elizabeth I, Robert Devereux. The marriage, brokered in 1606, when both Frances and Robert were young - she was only 16, and he 15 - was politically a success, since it united two powerful families at court; privately however it was something of a disaster. In all such marriages, 'children, boys and girls alike, were pawns in parental power-games'.<sup>27</sup> It was 'customary in early marriages such as this, even though the partners were legally old enough to give consent and to begin sexual relations, for the couple to be separated for some time, and for the marriage to be consummated later'.<sup>28</sup> Despite this, Frances complained that her husband suffered from impotency, although he subsequently proved able to

perform sexually with other women.<sup>29</sup> By May 1613, she was openly petitioning the king for a divorce. The affair caused an outrage at court. Frances underwent an examination to have her virginity established, and a long list of witnesses testified to the couple's inability to consummate their marriage.<sup>30</sup> Divorce in early modern England was extremely rare, in fact 'wives were not permitted to initiate an action of divorce which allowed remarriage.'<sup>31</sup> There were instances among the lower classes in which the church could intervene if a woman was found to be living with a violent husband, and it could thus grant a separation a *mensa et thoro* (from bed and board) with maintenance for the wife.<sup>32</sup> Some 'wife sales' went on among the lower ranks, during which a wife's lover was permitted to buy her. This entailed a humiliating appearance on the part of the wife, who had to wear a halter around her neck, and be led to market like an animal.<sup>33</sup> It was not until after 1670 that wealthy peers could seek a private act of Parliament in order to allow them to divorce and remarry.<sup>34</sup> The state of the Essex marriage then was the subject of much gossip,<sup>35</sup> yet between 1595 and 1620 one third of older peers were estranged or actually separated from their wives.<sup>36</sup> This is attested to in a wedding sermon by Robert Abbot delivered in 1608:

Nature, religion, fidelity, civilities, equity, all cry it out that the husband and the wife should walk together; and yet the cry of all these availeth not, but that lamentable ruptures and divisions betwixt husband and wife are everywhere to be seen amongst us, especially amongst men of higher place, yea so common in many places as it were a thing out of fashion for great men and their wives to live and walk together.<sup>37</sup>

There had been no domestic precedent for an attempt to dissolve a marriage prior to Frances Howard. Indeed, 'one of the most striking paradoxes of the story is precisely that if Frances Howard had been content to behave as it was alleged

many others did, and conduct an illicit affair, she would have remained a forgotten figure, whereas by having the courage and determination (or a petulant wilfulness, depending on one's point of view) to see a way out of her marriage she ensured her notoriety.<sup>38</sup>

This notoriety caused problems for James. He worked hard to promote his court as the essence of morality, even though stereotyped images of court corruption were part of Jacobean political culture.<sup>39</sup> However, with the Howard divorce came serious accusations of corruption.<sup>40</sup> Frances quickly acquired a reputation as a lustful adulteress, and this reputation, manifest in the print media circulating throughout the precinct of St Pauls, 'drew upon and energised pre-existing literary stereotypes of courts corrupted by lust.'<sup>41</sup>

One of those most opposed to the divorce was Sir Thomas Overbury, an intimate of Carr's. Overbury had initially supported the secret liaison between Frances and Carr, but was hostile to the idea of a Carr-Howard marriage.<sup>42</sup> The death of the Earl of Salisbury at the end of 1612 had thrown court politics into chaos; powerful families vied for position; the Howard family, and in particular Frances' great-uncle, the Earl of Northampton, were the main supporters of the pro-Spanish policy at court.<sup>43</sup> Carr, favourite of the king, and now intimately involved with Lady Essex, fell ever deeper into the Catholic Howard faction.<sup>44</sup> During this turbulent political episode, Thomas Overbury composed a poem on the virtues of womanhood entitled *A Wife*,<sup>45</sup> erroneously believed to have been written in order to dissuade Carr from marrying Frances. The poem was not printed in Overbury's lifetime, but it circulated in manuscript form from as early as the winter of 1612.<sup>46</sup> After Overbury's death, a copy came to the attention of the

publisher Lawrence Lisle<sup>47</sup> and it was entered into the Stationers' Register in December 1613. It sold well, and a second edition, published as *A wife now the widdow of Sir Thomas Overbury ... whereunto are added many witty characters ... written by himselfe and other learned gentlemen his friends (1614)*,<sup>48</sup> was no doubt an attempt to cash in on Overbury's death. The appended characters, not in fact written by Overbury, were short prose descriptions of imaginary persons 'imitating Joseph Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* of 1608.'<sup>49</sup> By 1622, the poem had gone through eleven editions, with up to eighty-two appended characters, some by John Webster. Others have been ascribed, less certainly, to Thomas Dekker and John Ford; 'and one of them was later printed with the juvenilia of John Donne.'<sup>50</sup> The historiography of this poem is closely linked to the Howard divorce, and later editions of the text became inherently connected to the reputation of Lady Essex.

In April 1613, Overbury was sent to the Tower, "'Forasmuch'" in the words of the warrant for his imprisonment, "as his Majie hath conceived a greate displeasure against [him] for a matter of high contempt".<sup>51</sup> Overbury continued to correspond with court officials, and Robert Carr, with whom he maintained a fractious relationship. Indeed, he threatened Carr from the Tower, warning he might disclose 'the story betwixt you and me from the first hour to this day', so that 'whether I die or live, your shame shall never die'.<sup>52</sup> Rumours that Carr and Overbury were involved in a sexual relationship surrounded their friendship.<sup>53</sup> Overbury died a seemingly innocent death five months later, and soon after, an anonymous poem surfaced connecting Overbury's death with the Howard divorce scandal. 'Tis painful rowing 'gainst a big swoll'n tide / Nor dare we say why

Overbury died.<sup>54</sup> Within two years, both Carr and Frances Howard were arrested on suspicion of his murder. Those most closely involved in the Overbury case 'seem to have made no connection between the death of Overbury and the annulment; furthermore, they seem to have become aware of Robert Carr's existence as the future husband for Frances Howard only some way through the proceedings. It is, of course, possible that more was known at the time than it was politic to record. Perhaps contemporaries did have strong suspicions that Overbury was murdered because of his opposition to the remarriage of Frances Howard, but in the absence of any solid material evidence it is essential to keep the two issues separate.'<sup>55</sup>

In 1615, disturbing new information came to light, which revealed that Overbury had indeed died in suspicious circumstances. In the autumn, Frances and her new husband, Robert Carr, now the Earl and Countess of Somerset, were arrested as the prime suspects. A sensational trial followed in the winter of 1615, in which suspected accomplices were accused, convicted, and put to death in several very high profile executions. These included Weston, Lieutenant of the Tower; Mrs Turner, a widowed friend of the Countess; an 'eccentric cunning man' known as Franklin from Maidstone; and Overbury's keeper at the Tower.<sup>56</sup> Seats at the trials, which were open to the public, were highly sought after. People paid exorbitant sums to witness the proceedings; 'I know a lawyer that had agreed to give ten pound for himself and his wife for the two days, and fifty pound was given for a corner that could contain a dozen,' reported Chamberlain.<sup>57</sup> After Weston's trial, London adopted an almost celebratory atmosphere, 'the people themselves being more willing to be lookers-on in this business, than proceeders in their own.'<sup>58</sup> The



poet Richard Niccols described attending one of the trials at the Guildhall, where he struggled to hear 'the judgment... in that late black deed', in what he described as the 'thickest throng.' Coke estimated in reports to James that 'many thousands' had attended Weston's first arraignment. The executions themselves also attracted vast crowds.<sup>59</sup>

In 1615, the death of Overbury was the 'talk of all England'.<sup>60</sup> The population relished the details of the murder. Like Henry Garnet, the Countess of Somerset was accused of using popish equivocation.<sup>61</sup> There were suggestions that Frances had syphilis. 'Images of pox at court during the Overbury affair may particularly have encouraged and reinforced fears of popish corruption. The association of unruly sexuality with popery was a standard anti-popish canard that resurfaces in all kinds of English anti-popish polemic, from John Foxe and Thomas Middleton to the humblest balladeer'.<sup>62</sup> Obscene epitaphs also linked the Whore of Babylon to syphilis including one which describes the only true religion fit for a whore to die in is that of 'the great Whore of Babylon'.<sup>63</sup> Rumours abounded that the Countess of Somerset had sent Overbury tarts and jellies laced with poison, that she had used a musician to deliver poisoned delicacies, and that Overbury's manservant had died after eating poisoned soup.<sup>64</sup> One of her known accomplices, James Franklin, admitted he had obtained on her behalf seven different poisons, 'that is to say, aqua fortis, Mercury water, white arsenick, powder of diamonds, lapis Cosmatis, great spiders and Cantarides [dried beetle or Spanish Fly]'.<sup>65</sup> The prosecution alleged that when her attempts to poison Overbury failed - he was sick but stubbornly refused to die - Frances dispatched an apothecary's boy to give Overbury a fatal toxic enema.<sup>66</sup> Whatever the cause, and there are some who

argue the case against Frances was so bizarre as to be at least partially fictitious, Overbury died in September 1615 in grim conditions. He had complained of ill-health only weeks after arriving at the Tower and by May was 'much damaged in his health by close imprisonment'.<sup>67</sup> He was feverish, and unable to eat; he suffered nausea and vomiting, and was perpetually thirsty. He died alone, after prolonged suffering, and was buried the same evening in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, due to 'the foulness of his corpse.'<sup>68</sup>

The Somersets were imprisoned in the Tower in October 1615. In May 1616, Inigo Jones and his workers were paid £20 to erect a stage and several scaffolds for their arraignment.<sup>69</sup> Both husband and wife were convicted and sentenced to death. James eventually intervened to revoke their death warrants, and Frances, who had confessed her guilt, was pardoned. The couple were both confined to the Tower for six years,<sup>70</sup> and after their release, were permitted to live freely on their country estates with £4,000 a year.<sup>71</sup>

Like the Gunpowder Plot, the trials and executions surrounding the Overbury scandal prompted a spate of printed publications. It was widely discussed in 'many different print forms,' but during 1615-16, it became 'a print sensation of unusual proportions.'<sup>72</sup> Two ballads about Overbury were in heavy circulation. One, entitled 'There was an old lad rode on an old pad,' became extremely famous; the second, set to the tune of 'O the wind and the rain', probably the song from *Twelfth Night*, was entitled 'In England there lived a jolly sire'. If they were 'as widely sung as their form allowed', then they would have had a good chance of reaching 'a geographically broad and socially diverse audience'.<sup>73</sup>

Overbury's murder was represented as visible evidence of an array of 'moral failings at court,' failings which included 'the very stain of religion, and the bane of human society, as pride, ambition, witchcraft, whoredom'.<sup>74</sup> The concept of these sins became the means by which Jacobean audiences negotiated the Overbury affair,<sup>75</sup> and a firm connection between sinful behaviour and popery was widely presumed.<sup>76</sup> This framework for understanding and interpreting court scandal was part of Protestant religious assumptions; 'in a religious, scriptural culture, many were only too well aware of the terrible judgements that manifest sins at court might provoke.'<sup>77</sup> Although poisoning had been mandated as an act of high treason, by 1615 this had been repealed; however, it was still regarded as a form of treason, since 'it tendeth to the utter subversion and dissolution of human society'.<sup>78</sup> At the Somersets' trial, a metaphorical connection was made between popery and poison: 'It is an Italian crime fit for the court of Rome, where that person that intoxicateth the kings of earth with his cup of poison';<sup>79</sup> a statement clearly aligning the Somersets with the Whore of Babylon. The scandalised response to the Overbury murder demonstrates, that, like the Powder Treason, England was once again reeling from the discovery of another terrifying Catholic plot.

Just how far the plot extended nobody seemed to know. Edward Coke, at the trials, 'hinted at a widespread conspiracy to poison';<sup>80</sup> *The Calendar of State Papers* reveal gossip that Frances Howard may have murdered Prince Henry; that she may have planned to poison the Princess Elizabeth's wedding party and a baptism party; that she may even have intended to strike at James himself. In the minds of the public, her actions kindled post-Gunpowder anxieties; and the case

shared many elements with Catesby's treason. Frances Howard was suspected of using witchcraft and black magic to destroy her enemies. Rumours of witchcraft at court had in fact been circulating since May 1613, and after the revelations of 1615, a 'widely copied libel' referred to her as 'A wife, a witch, a murderer, and a whore'.<sup>81</sup> The witch epithet was affixed to her reputation during the trial of Anne Turner, when the court inspected evidence of magic charms, cloths and parchments decorated in strange characters, names of spirits and devils, and images and writings from Simon Forman. There was even, most sensationally, a fragment rumoured to be a piece of child's skin.<sup>82</sup> Like the Gunpowder Treason, the murder of Overbury provoked panic about diabolical activity, the infectious nature of papists, and the ever-present Whore of Babylon. If James I had escaped an almighty blow in 1605, here was another near miss. So strong were the imaginative links between the Overbury murder and the Powder Treason that newsletters circulating in late 1615 talked of 'an English treason plot comparable in scope to the Gunpowder conspiracy'.<sup>83</sup> Another stated 'If all be true that is talked and muttered ordinarily...there will be a discovery cousin germain to the Powder Plot.'<sup>84</sup> This episode in James' court captured the imaginations of writers and playwrights, who utilised pre-existing Gunpowder paradigms to negotiate this latest Catholic threat. The two events may have been separated by a number of years, but for London audiences they both served as examples of the dangerous nature of Catholic treachery. It was not long before the Powder Poison was subsumed into extant Gunpowder motifs, and became part of the cultural mythology of early modern terrorism; a mythology which had its origins in the actions of Catesby, Fawkes, and Percy.

Early in 1613, however, the talk of England was the royal wedding. Elizabeth's nuptials, like Henry's funeral, generated a spate of printed publications. *A Marriage Hymne* highlights the combination of joyful celebration and anxiety prevalent in the capital during these months. Translated from the original Latin by its author, Joannes Maria de Franchis, it was in print within three months of the wedding, and comprises a lengthy exploration of the state of religion in England, and verses in praise of the healing nature of the marriage. Little is known of its author, but the tone of his verse anticipates an England united in its Protestant faith by the wedding, while cautioning the need to maintain vigilance in the on going battle against the dark forces of Catholicism.

*A Marriage Hymne* opens with a meeting of the Gods, attended by the female figure of Religion, who bears a 'sad look, soft pace, / Deep sighes, moyst eyes, pale cheeks, haire and cloathes rent'.<sup>85</sup> Dis, Religion despairs, with his 'foul-mouthd legions armes' will not let her 'raigne or barely rest'.<sup>86</sup> Dis Pater, Roman god of the Underworld, was often used in poetic association with death itself, and later became conflated with Pluto.<sup>87</sup> In this instance, he serves as a figure for both the Antichrist and the pope. In addition, De Franchis integrates Dis and his followers into the Gunpowder Circle; 'his pride-swolne spleen, more fierce than his own fire, / Could not but bellow: thus in vawtes at night'.<sup>88</sup> Here the author introduces the familiar figure of Guy Fawkes in the vault below Westminster, about to drive Protestantism 'to hell, In everlasting darknesse'.<sup>89</sup> Dis, like the Empress in Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, urges his followers to 'Recover your lost honour, wreak your spites: / Regaine your subjects, open our wide gates, / Restore new

altars for your auncient rites, / By strength or cunning make my power some way, / Doe good or ill so that I win the day.<sup>190</sup> *A Marriage Hymne*, like the 1606 poem *The Divell of the Vault*, depicts fiendish Jesuits plotting and creeping through England. Dis advises his agents to 'fly from hell to camp in Babylon', and in echoes of *Macbeth*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *Cymbeline*, urges them to 'Looke lowly, seeming plaine, with curteous gestures, / Outwardly prasing God, inwardly lothing'.<sup>91</sup> Here once again is the familiar motif of the dissembling serpent, sleeking smooth brows, looking like the innocent flower, but being a devil beneath it. Dis' hellish followers are wolves, clad 'in sheeps faire clothing',<sup>92</sup> their speech 'pleasant without murmuring, / Their harts all ragefull hate and slaughter breathing'.<sup>93</sup> Dis, 'by seeming faire, foule meaning wins',<sup>94</sup> an image abounding in Gunpowder paradigms from *Macbeth* onwards. His faithful 'keep, and creep, and weep to guilded lead / Or wooden sticks, or dead-mens cloths or bones',<sup>95</sup> in an open figuring of his worshippers with Catholic religion. De Franchis then reinforces the conflation of the Gunpowder Plotters and the destructive power of Dis:

Digging the bowels of the wondering earth,  
And laying their divel-found engines in her veines,  
They would have opened wider gates to death,  
To passe in shorter time with sorer paines:  
Their chiefest mark was my wisht overthrow,  
With all my better worlds by one fierce blow.

They would have slaine his Queene, Lords, Commonality:  
For one all should have perisht (oh fowle deed!)  
To drive all true devotion out my land,  
They would not let Towres, Temples, Cities stand,

Then might the world have known the deeps of Stix,  
These mischiefe-broachers might have seen their place.  
Who (could they with one blow, heaven, earth, hell, mixe  
With all their force).<sup>96</sup>

These verses not only evoke the Plot in some detail, but also echo the circulating texts of 1605. 'Digging the bowels of the wondering earth' instantly suggests the mine initially dug by Catesby and the others. Digging also recalls *The Whore of Babylon*, 'When mines are to be blowne up, men dig low' (3.1.112), and *The Black Devil* by Adams, in which Fawkes is depicted 'digging in the vault'.<sup>97</sup> Their 'devil-found engines' is a clear reference to the gunpowder the Plotters subsequently stored in the vault, and alludes to *King's Book* in its description of James, concerned that 'there might bee some fiery Engine' sent to destroy him.<sup>98</sup> 'One fierce blow' echoes many Gunpowder texts, particularly Barlow's 1605 sermon, in which he thanks God 'for 'preserving us from this terrible blow'.<sup>99</sup> De Franchis also alludes to Barlow in the lines 'They would have slaine his Queene, Lords, Commonality: For one all should have perisht (oh fowle deed!)'.<sup>100</sup> This reinforces the potentially catastrophic nature of the Gunpowder treason, and James' comment, in the aftermath, that the Plotters intended not only 'the destruction of my Person, nor of my Wife and Posteritie only, but of the whole Body of the State in generall; wherein should neither have been spared, or distinction made of yong nor olde, of great nor small, of man nor of woman: The whole Nobilitie, the whole Reverend Clergie, Bishops and most part of the good Preachers, the most part of the Knights and Gentry...The whole Judges of the land, with the most of the Lawyers and the whole Clerkes'.<sup>101</sup> In *A Wedding Hymne*, the Plotters are 'mischiefe-broachers', a term which recalls Herring's long poem on the Plot; with one 'blow' they sought to blast the country; to 'mixe' 'heaven, earth, hell', and introduce England to 'the deeps of the Stix'.<sup>102</sup>

Having aligned the figure of Dis and his followers with Satan and the Gunpowder circle, De Franchis goes on to imagine a world blasted apart; a world with 'darkness over-spread this age, / And man-kind much degenerate from our image', where 'The Dragon conquering by dissentions, / We saw (which mov'd us most) our children dying, / And hear their guiltles blood for venegeance crying.'<sup>103</sup> England is once again catapulted into the horrifying apocalyptic landscape of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. However, unlike the author of *The Divell of the Vault*, De Franchis is cautiously optimistic; the marriage of Elizabeth and Count Palatine will unite England and other Protestant countries in their fight against Rome. He casts the newly married Elizabeth in a mythological light that shares much with the patriotic fervour reserved for the golden years of Elizabeth I, and one which is underlined by Shakespeare and Fletcher, writing *All Is True* during these same months.

That authors such as De Franchis should choose to evoke the Gunpowder Plot in a poem in praise of the royal wedding illuminates the struggle still embracing England in the years following the Plot's discovery. By the wedding in 1613, seven years have elapsed, yet the Plot still reverberates with an urgent contemporary significance. John Boys, preaching a public Gunpowder sermon on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1613 at St Paul's Cross, urges his audience to remember:

the saintship of Henry Garnet is so buffeted by the replies and antilogies of our accurate learned divines, that as his straw face will hereafter hardly be worth a straw. Catesbie, Winter, Rookwood, and the rest of the Cole-saints and hole-saints (who laboured in the divels mine by the Popes mint) are numbered among the holy ones also: Babilon and Egypt praise God in them, and for them.<sup>104</sup>



Referring to the holy straw reputedly splashed with Garnet's blood during his execution, Boys' choice of words: 'his straw face will hereafter hardly be worth a straw', successfully negates the spiritual value of this treasured Catholic relic. The straw, publicised by Anne Vaux, and reputed to have miraculous properties, was eventually smuggled out of England and kept at the English Jesuit College at Liege, where it was lost during the French Revolution.<sup>105</sup> Boys reminds London to 'for ever spend the prime part of this present fifth of November in praying and praising the Lord, for his unspeakable goodnesse in delivering our King, Queene, Prince, and State of this realme from that hellish, horrible, bloody, barbarous intended massacre by Gunpowder.'<sup>106</sup>

Both the royal wedding and the emerging scandal surrounding Overbury are mirrored in the drama drawing audiences to the theatres in 1612-15. Jacobean drama responded directly to contemporary events. Its primary role may have been to entertain, but topicality on the London stage guaranteed box office receipts. At a time when plays were divided between fashionable newly-built indoor theatres such as Blackfriars, and outdoor ones like the Globe and Red Bull, royal censorship and the control of drama was tightened.<sup>107</sup> This made expressions of vitriolic anti-Catholicism and radical commentary more difficult for playwrights. After the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, and with the gradual loss of fashion for the festive social harmony which shaped much of the romances in the late sixteenth century,<sup>108</sup> graphic court revenge involving devious plots and poison eventually became a staple on the Jacobean stage.<sup>109</sup> Poisoning was often represented as an 'inherently cowardly and secretive form of murder,' usually, but not exclusively, associated with women and their attempts to murder men.<sup>110</sup> In

1612, one play primarily concerned with the burning issue of marriage, divorce, court scandal, and poison was John Webster's *The White Devil*.

Webster was inspired by real events for the plot of *The White Devil*. He drew on several sources.<sup>111</sup> Accounts of the assassination of the Duchess of Brachiano on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1585 in Padua, circulated in England via newsletters, and the Duke of Brachiano's heir, Virginio Orsini, visited London in 1601, escorting his cousin, Marie de Medici, on her way to assume the throne of France.<sup>112</sup> The story of the Duchess' assassination was such a sensation in London that Webster's subject matter was instantly familiar to audiences.<sup>113</sup> His play features an explosive plot. It includes six murders, a failed duel, an intricate tournament, processions, a trial scene, and the 'full depiction of a Papal election'.<sup>114</sup> The narrative revolves around Vittoria Corombona, daughter of a noble Venetian family, and wife to Camillo. The Duke of Brachiano's sexual designs on Vittoria lead to intrigue and murder; Vittoria is tried in court, imprisoned in a house for penitent whores, and elopes with Brachiano. The play ends with the violent deaths of almost all the principal characters.

*The White Devil* was first performed by Queen Anne's Men, at the Red Bull, Clerkenwell in 1612.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, it was not a success with audiences.<sup>116</sup> Webster enjoyed critical acclaim from his peers, but as he complains in his note to the reader, his play being shown 'in so dull a time of Winter, presented in so open and blacke a Theater... it wanted (that which is the onely grace and setting out of a Tragedy) a full and understanding Auditory'.<sup>117</sup> That the weather had been miserable is confirmed by a letter written in January 1613, in which Thomas Lake grumbles 'the winter has been stormy and rainy'.<sup>118</sup> In his introduction to the

printed play, Webster refers to the 'uncapable multitude' apt to poison even 'the most sententious Tragedy that was ever written'.<sup>119</sup> One suggestion for the tragedy he refers to is Ben Jonson's *Catiline*, which received a similarly unenthusiastic response from audiences in 1611.<sup>120</sup> Webster may here be defending his fellow playwright, 'aligning himself with Jonson in defence of the worth of the tragic writer,' and thus justifying the publication of plays 'which have in them matters of more serious import than can readily meet the eye and ear in the public theatres.'<sup>121</sup>

*The White Devil* is 'an intensely contemporary play.'<sup>122</sup> It is unequivocally concerned with 'political ethics, and seeks to find some rationale of behaviour in a realistically depicted court society.'<sup>123</sup> Like *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The White Devil* calls to mind a variety of contemporary English scandals.<sup>124</sup> By the time of its performance, gossip was already circulating about a possible divorce at court between Frances Howard and Robert Devereux. Webster admits in the introduction that the play has taken him time to complete, which suggests he began its composition before 1612. However, as is the case with *Bussy D'Ambois*, this would not prevent him from inserting new up to date topical references. In addition, by utilising established Gunpowder tropes, Webster could evoke both the popular theme of the Plot, and connect it to the developing scandal surrounding the transgressions of the Catholic Frances Howard. Whatever the date of its composition, *The White Devil* resonates with contemporaneous themes, like his later play, *The Duchess of Malfi*. Written during the imprisonment of Arabella Stuart, and performed in the winter of 1613, at the height of public interest in her marriage,<sup>125</sup> *The Duchess of Malfi* contains such parallels between the fictitious

Duchess and Arabella, that whatever the audience's view of the king's cousin, the similarities are inescapable.<sup>126</sup>

For many in the audience, the title of *The White Devil* would have been the first significant clue as to its subject matter. The term 'white devil' first appeared in Protestant theology with Luther;<sup>127</sup> it denotes 'a religious hypocrite', and was usually applied to the Catholic Church. 'Later writers widen the concept to comprise evil masking as good in general, but the emphasis is still on the perversion of spiritual values'. By the early seventeenth century, the term had become proverbial, recalling 'the medieval equation of wolf with devil'.<sup>128</sup> In *The Divell of the Vault*, the Gunpowder Plotters are 'bloud-bathed *Romish Wolves*',<sup>129</sup> and Draxe speaks of the 'Romish Foxe, Wolfe, Antichrist' in his commentary on the Plot.<sup>130</sup> Webster's title therefore, might well have been chosen because it alluded to the satanic nature of Catholic plots, and may have been inspired by the preacher Thomas Adams. Adams delivered a sermon against the corrupt nature of Catholicism at St Paul's Cross on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1612, entitled, *The White Devil, or The Hypocrit uncased*.<sup>131</sup> The title of Webster's play also introduces its central theme of duality, which is 'the organizing principle of the work... the duality suggested by the play's title-duality in the sense of duplicity (since "white devil" could mean simply "hypocrite"), and in the sense of dialectical opposition.'<sup>132</sup> This duality, seen in the replication Webster adopts throughout his play -- two physicians, two poisoners, two conspirators -- is 'almost entirely iconographic, illustrating the duplicity that is everywhere in Bracciano's court'.<sup>133</sup> The opening act of *The White Devil* reflects the plotting and corruption so familiar in Gunpowder plays. Flamineo makes a speech which has direct echoes with *Macbeth*, *The Whore of Babylon*,

*Bussy D'Ambois*, *Volpone*, *Catiline*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Devil's Charter*: 'We are engaged to mischief and must on', he remarks, 'The way ascends not straight, but imitates / The subtle folding of a winter's snake' (1.2.339-344). Like every plotter in every Gunpowder play, Flamineo utilises the image of the snake on the Gunpowder medal to pronounce his undermining and infectious presence. Here is another Giacomo, another Catiline.

Webster highlights this diabolical dissembling at the opening of Act 2. Brachiano enters with a conjurer, and dons a magic nightcap that enables him to witness a dumb show of his wife's murder. This is a complex and clever piece of staging by Webster; the audience witness Isabella's death as a mirage or a dream, underscoring the supernatural magic of the act; the chaste Isabella, observing her nightly custom of paying homage to her husband's portrait, kneels before the painting, kisses it, and is fatally poisoned. The implications of her actions overtly recall Catholicism: she kneels, as to a shrine, and worships the false image of her husband with religious reverence. She is then poisoned by that very image, indicating that the powerfully infectious nature of Brachiano is not confined to his own person, but even contaminates his portrait. Webster here clearly affixes Brachiano's poison to the infectious nature of Catholicism; Isabella is infected and contaminated through her Catholic worship. Her death demarcates Webster's theme as 'evil masked under fair appearances,'<sup>134</sup> recalling the 'fair is foul' antimetabole, and the serpent under the flower motif at the core of post-Gunpowder discourse. In early modern England, poison was often associated with popery and witchcraft, and was regularly coupled to accusations of Jesuit treachery.<sup>135</sup> Edward Squire had been hanged in the late 1590s for 'smearing

poison on the pommel of Queen Elizabeth's saddle and on the Earl of Essex's shipboard chair'. For Webster's audience, his descriptions of 'poisoned pictures, prayer beads and tennis racquets... did not necessarily seem outlandish.'<sup>136</sup>

The conjurer reveals a second dumb show, in which Camillo, husband to Vittoria, is murdered on a vaulting horse. While it is tempting to suggest 'vaulting horse' was used to evoke Fawkes in the vault, it is more likely Webster was punning on 'vaulting house', a derogatory term used for a brothel.<sup>137</sup> It is an appropriate enough image, since Vittoria is shortly to be condemned to a house for penitent whores, and Camillo has become a cuckold in his own home.

Fundamental to *The White Devil* is the negotiation of both court corruption and infectious Catholic agitation, highly contemporary preoccupations in London between 1606 and 1612. Like other Gunpowder plays, *The White Devil* is populated with devils. The word 'devil' 'occurs thirty-three times, [but] does not provide a sharp theological focus' in the play.<sup>138</sup> Instead, it serves broadly as 'an indicator of evil'. Webster interchanges 'Devil' and 'devil' in connection with all the principal characters in the play,<sup>139</sup> thus linking the population of Brachiano's court, and perhaps even Italy en masse, with satanic activity and demonic undermining. Vittoria is openly called 'a devil' or said to be possessed by the devil more often than anyone else.<sup>140</sup> Monticelso is referred to as a devil in the opening lines of Act 4, and considering the white devil's 'special significance in protestant theology', it is no surprise that Cardinal Monticelso, with his apparent pious preaching, is referred to as a devil that possesses a 'black book wherein "lurk / The names of many devils"' (4.1.35-6).<sup>141</sup> Like Salisbury in the days following the discovery of the Monteagle letter, Monticelso urges patience to those anxious to

uncover the bloody plots at hand. 'Patient as the tortoise, let this camel / Stalk o'er your back unbruised; sleep with the lion, / And let this brood of secure foolish mice / Play with your nostrils, till the time be ripe / For th'bloody audit' (4.1.15-19). Francisco responds 'Treason, like spiders weaving nets for flies, / By her foul work is found, and in it dies' (4.1.25-6), once again associating the action of the play with recent and on going Catholic treachery. He goes on, 'It is reported you possess a book / Wherein you have quoted, by intelligence, / The names of all notorious offenders, / Lurking about the city' (4.1.26-32). This parallels the book of intelligence in *Volpone*, and as Monticelso hands over a list of suspicious persons, Francisco remarks, 'Better than tribute of wolves paid in England; / 'Twill hang their skins o'th'hedge' (4.1.68-70); perhaps an allusion to fines paid by English recusants. He also observes, 'in so little paper / Should lie the undoing of so many men!' (4.1.88-9). By 1612, any reference to the uncovering of treason via a letter would evoke the Gunpowder Plot, and so familiar were audiences with this trope that Webster is able to confidently employ it here as a plot device, just as Jonson had done in *Catiline*, and Shakespeare does in *All Is True*. Similarly, Flamineo condemns Francisco with the lines 'a halter on his strange equivocation!' (4.2.34); instantly coupling both the secrecy and undermining of Vittoria with the secretive Jesuit doctrine of Equivocation adopted by Garnet which so bewildered many Protestants.

An allusion to Garnet also occurs in Act 4. Francisco, plotting murder with Lodovico, asks 'You have ta'en the sacrament to prosecute / Th'intended murder?' (4.3.72-3). He then reveals his intended crime to Monticelso in a scene which recreates the 'walking confession' given by Catesby in Wales: 'What I utter is in

confession merely, which you know / Must never be revealed' (4.3.109-11). It was Catesby's confession, among others, that gave Garnet an excuse to equivocate at his trial in 1606.<sup>142</sup> In the opening scene of Act 5, the stage directions read '*The conspirators here embrace*', followed by the lines 'You have our vows sealed with the sacrament' (5.1.64). Here Webster alludes not only to the Gunpowder Plot, but also to the perversion of the white devil in this blasphemous act of the sacrament; an inversion seen in both *Macbeth* and *Catiline*.

*The White Devil* contains many Gunpowder paradigms, and many allusions to other Gunpowder plays. In this way, Webster is able to keep the audience connected to the concept of dark satanic (Catholic) treason. Flamineo, expounding on drinking, claims 'protesting and drinking go together, and agree as well / as shoemakers and Westphalia bacon. They are both drawers-on, / for drink draws on protestation, and protestation draws on / more drink' (5.1.171-5); lines which bear a striking resemblance to those in *Macbeth's* Porter Scene. At her trial, Vittoria states 'These are but feigned shadows of my evils. / Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils; / I am past such needless palsy' (3.2.146-8). It is a defiant speech which mirrors Lady Macbeth's reassurance that 'the sleeping and the dead / Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil' (2.2.50-2). Like other Gunpowder playwrights, Webster also uses bird imagery to intensify the mood of prevailing darkness. Flamineo, Vittoria's treacherous brother, feigning madness, refers to Monticelso, soon to be pope, as a 'screech-owl' (3.3.49); a classic Gunpowder emblem, in which the papal office is conflated with the Plot and witchcraft. In the same scene, Flamineo, referring to torture on the rack, asks 'How croaks the raven? / Is our good duchess dead?' (3.3.67-8). Again there is an



unmistakeable echo of Lady Macbeth, who states 'The raven himself is hoarse, That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan, Under my battlements' (1.5.39-40). Raven is a definitive Gunpowder motif in plays of this period, denoting evil, and always connected to the bloody stratagems of Rome. Webster uses further Gunpowder tropes in Act 5. Flamineo denounces Monticelso as a 'screech-owl', and Cornelia condemns Brachiano as a 'screech-owl' (5.2). She then states, 'Here's a white hand: / Can blood so soon be washed out? Let me see: / When screech-owls croak upon the chimney-tops, / And the strange cricket i'th'oven sings and hops, / When yellow spots do on your hands appear, / Be certain then you of a corpse shall hear' (5.4.78-83); lines again which owe much to *Macbeth*. Brachiano also asks 'did you ever hear the dusky raven / Chide blackness?' (5.3.85-6). In an earlier speech he fuses 'sickness and physicians with deadly poison and with the foreboding owl:'<sup>143</sup> 'What say yon screech-owls, is the venom mortal?' (5.3.18). He continues, 'the dull owl / Beats not against thy casement; the hoarse wolf / Scents not thy carrion. Pity winds thy corpse / While horror waits on princes' (5.3.30-33).

Vittoria, mocking her brother, uses a disturbing image seen in both *Macbeth* and *The Whore of Babylon*. 'The next thou giv'st, murder some sucking infant, / And then thou wilt be famous', she states (5.6.33-4). Lady Macbeth boasts she can pluck a baby from her nipple and dash its brains out (1.7.57-8); and the Empress threatens to 'snatch babes from breasts, / And when they crie for milke, let them sucke blood' (4.4.122-3). Webster might be using this image here to both reinforce the devilish nature of Vittoria, and to allude to the popularity of *Macbeth*; Vittoria's suggestion of murdering a 'sucking infant' indicates it may make her brother famous, and *Macbeth* had been in repertory at the Globe only the previous year.<sup>144</sup>

Webster chooses to make multiple allusions to *Macbeth* in *The White Devil*, perhaps because he wished to draw parallels between his characters and those of Shakespeare, in order to emphasise their demonic natures, or perhaps, because *Macbeth* was such a highly successful Gunpowder play he wished to reinforce his own Gunpowder allusions in *The White Devil*.

Webster's dramatic depiction of a corrupt court in *The White Devil*, like Chapman's in *Bussy D'Ambois*, presents courtiers jostling for position in a world filled with 'flattering parasites seeking to win favour with wealthy nobles.'<sup>145</sup> The Jacobean court was an expensive environment: 'political aspirants were expected to give feasts at £1000 apiece, present costly hangings, horses, jewellery to all officers and favourites according to their degree, and sit down to dicing-tables where parks and manors were thrown away.'<sup>146</sup> This was a domain where 'Flamineo's pursuit of courtly reward would be understood, and where Brachiano's talent for racketing away "five hundred Crowns at Tennis", and Vittoria's merry heart and "good stomach to a feast" would have seemed in no way unusual.'<sup>147</sup> Webster's concern with courtly corruption is apparent from his opening lines. 'O Democritus thy gods / That govern the whole world! Courtly reward, / And punishment! Fortune's a right whore' (1.1.2-4). He reinforces this with an early reference to thunder: 'The violent thunder is adored by those / are pushed to pieces by it' (1.1.11-12). Lodovico, speaking of his enemies at court, states 'Your wolf no longer seems to be a wolf / Than when she's hungry' (1.1.8-9), and Gasparo responds 'You term those enemies / Are men of princely rank' (1.1.10-11). Given that 'wolf' was often synonymous with 'Catholic', Webster here reinforces the Catholic corruption at Brachiano's court; his courtiers are Catholic wolves who

adore 'violent thunder'. Webster then locates the court directly in Rome, despite the historical events of 1585 having occurred in Padua. Gasparo accuses Lodovico of having 'acted certain murders here in Rome, / Bloody and full of horror' (1.1.31-2), which immediately aligns Lodovico with the very court he professes to despise. This is the first instance of binary opposition in the play. Lodovico, as corrupt as Brachiano and his courtiers, in an act of pure hypocrisy, condemns as immoral the Duke who seeks 'by close panderism' to 'prostitute / The honour of Vittoria Corombona' (1.1.41-2). In the same scene, Brachiano denounces his wife Isabella:

Your hand I'll kiss,  
This is the latest ceremony of my love;  
Henceforth I'll never lie with thee, by this  
This wedding-ring, I'll ne'er more lie with thee.  
And this divorce shall be as truly kept,  
As if the judge had doomed it

(2.1.192-7)

Webster's use of the word 'divorce' suggests he was deliberately referring to events at James' court. The obvious precedent of a royal or courtly divorce was that of Henry VIII in 1533, but the theme of divorce in general appears to be largely absent from early modern drama prior to the Overbury affair.<sup>148</sup>

In Act 1, Brachiano visits the house of Vittoria and her husband. He and Vittoria's brother Flamineo discuss the means by which he can inveigle himself into Vittoria's bed; Flamineo teases Camillo for his lack of sexual activity with his wife, and Camillo admits 'I do not well remember, I protest, / When I last lay with her' (1.2.52-3). This educes the contemporary gossip surrounding the secret relationship between Frances Howard and Robert Carr, as well as Howard's claims of her husband's impotence. Flamineo mocks Camillo for his cuckold status, hinting at Vittoria's previous adultery with other men, and establishing her whorish

appetite; 'I do commit you to your pitiful pillow / Stuffed with horn-shavings' (1.2.73-4). Since Carr and Lady Essex began a secret liaison in 1611, a full year before *The White Devil* appeared on the stage, it is tempting to see Vittoria as a figure for Frances Howard, particularly since the playwright was a close acquaintance of Thomas Overbury, so much so, in fact, that Webster had overseen the printing of the sixth edition of *A Wife*.<sup>149</sup> Certainly, Vittoria's subsequent entanglement with the powerful Brachiano and the accusations of her whoredom by the court are reflective of the growing disreputable status of Lady Essex.

Following some farcical manoeuvrings by Flamineo, Vittoria and Brachiano exhibit their adultery in public. The stage directions read '*Zanche brings out a carpet, spreads it and lays on it two fair cushions. Enter Cornelia [behind listening]*' (1.2). Brachiano confesses his love for Vittoria, and the implication is they then embrace. Zanche comments 'See now they close' (1.2.203), and Flamineo reiterates, 'Most happy union' (1.2.204). This is an important scene, making public Vittoria's adultery, solidifying her status as a whore, and Brachiano's corrupt nature. Both Flamineo and Zanche witness the embrace, as does Vittoria's mother, Cornelia. She cries, 'My fears are fall'n upon me! O my heart! / My son the pander! Now I find our house / Sinking to ruin!' (1.2.205-7). This moment is the crux upon which the rest of the action hangs. It makes a travesty of Vittoria's protestations of innocence at the trial to come. Cornelia, commenting perhaps on her own body, states 'O that this fair garden / Had with all poisoned herbs of Thessaly / At first been planted, made a nursery / For witchcraft' (1.2.265-8). This statement baldly denounces Vittoria as a supernatural practitioner. By only the second scene of the play, then, Webster has established Vittoria as a corrupt witch at the heart of a

corrupt Roman court, aligning her firmly with the familiar trope of the Whore of Babylon, and the play itself with contemporaneous Gunpowder plays.

This coupling of the court with Babylon is reinforced when Cardinal Monticelso, soon to be Pope Paul IV, warns Brachiano of his lustful appetite. 'O my lord, / The drunkard after all his lavish cups / Is dry, and then is sober; so at length, / When you awake from this lascivious dream, / Repentance then will follow, like the sting / Placed in the adder's tail' (2.131-5). Vittoria's Whore of Babylon status is thus established; she has intoxicated Brachiano, infecting and possessing him with her lustful appetites. His tone is deliberately ironic, since Brachiano receives the warning from a man soon to become pope; a position firmly affiliated with the Babylonian Whore in Protestant theology. Their subsequent exchange underlines this spiritual corruption. Francisco, Duke of Florence, and brother to Brachiano's wife, attacks Brachiano for his adulterous activity, denouncing Vittoria as nothing more than Brachiano's 'strumpet'. Brachiano responds 'there's hemlock in thy breath / And that black slander; were she a whore of mine / All thy loud cannons, and thy borrowed Switzers, / Thy galleys, nor thy sworn confederates, / Durst supplant her'. Rather than leaping to her defence, he simply reiterates her powerful status as biblical whore, and Webster's language in this interchange underpins the Catholicism of the court; 'confession', 'Cardinal', 'absolution', 'perfume', 'plasters'.

In the scene immediately preceding Vittoria's murder trial, Webster emphasises her status as a whore/witch. Monticelso speaks of 'black lust' that will make her 'infamous' (3.1.7). The lawyer suggests that 'none should sit upon her' but 'old whoremasters' (12-13), and her brother, Marcello, is told to feed

Brachiano's 'victories, / As witches do their serviceable spirits' (3.1.37-8). This aligns the family, and particularly Vittoria, with supernatural forces. At her trial, she is denounced as 'this debauched and diversivolt woman, / Who such a black concatenation / Of mischief hath effected' (3.2.28-30).<sup>150</sup> Many of the 'invectives the Cardinal hurls against whores at the trial were customarily used to describe Catholicism in Elizabethan England',<sup>151</sup> and here Webster broadens the white devil metaphor to incorporate the church of which Monticelso is himself a representative; he too is also a white devil, 'a perverter of spiritual values'.<sup>152</sup>

Throughout the play, Vittoria's bewitching qualities, which attest to her Whore of Babylon status, are underscored. Brachiano confirms 'I was bewitched, / For all the world speaks ill of thee' (4.2.98-9), and 'I have drunk Lethe. Vittoria? / My dearest happiness? Vittoria? (4.1.126-7), emphasising his drugged mental condition and possessed status. Vittoria counters his complaint with Babylonian hypocrisy. 'What have I gained by thee but infamy? / Thou hast stained the spotless honour of my house' (4.2.105-6). This ironic play on the spotted nature of the Whore of Babylon, affiliates Vittoria even further with the characters of the Empress, Lady Macbeth, Tamara, and Lucretia Borgia. This affiliation demonstrates just how powerful the language of Gunpowder plays had become. In addition to alluding to the Plot itself, Webster is now also able to refer to earlier Gunpowder productions; an indication of the potency of stage representations of this post-Gunpowder world.

Webster reveals the extent of Vittoria's evil in the play's key adultery scene, when she incites Brachiano to murder: 'Excellent devil / She hath taught him in a dream / To make away his duchess and her husband' (1.2.256-8).<sup>153</sup> Lund views

Vittoria as 'the most alluring representative of evil' in the play; she is "'Satan hym selfe... transfourmed into an angel of lyght"'.<sup>154</sup> Her effect on the other characters 'is a frightening demonstration of the power of the white devil.'<sup>155</sup> Her diabolical status is highlighted by Webster's repeated use of the imagery of crystals, diamonds, and light, not just to define her character, 'but to define her as the white devil'.<sup>156</sup> Indeed the women of *The White Devil* are binary opposites, a common motif in Gunpowder plays. They are either fair or black, witch or virgin, the Woman Clothed with the Sun, or the Whore of Babylon. Isabella is 'spotless' in contrast to the 'black Zanche'. This contrast 'would have been even more pronounced in Jacobean productions of the play, where both roles were taken by the same actor. Where Isabella is the virtuous and devoted wife, Zanche is the lascivious fickle, paramour'.<sup>157</sup> It is only Vittoria who spans the two extremes and appears in both guises. At times, she is an innocent, wrongly imprisoned by corrupt officials, at other times she is as black as Satan, urging Brachiano to murder, and taunting him with her hypocrisy. Vittoria speaks 'ambiguously of her "weak fortune" and hints to Brachiano of convenient murders'. She is simultaneously a devil, yet sympathetic, since her husband is impotent, her brother is exploiting her for his own advancement, and the Duke is bewitched by her.<sup>158</sup> In essence, Vittoria is 'a synthesis of the play's dialectic; she is, in the language of the play, an excellent devil, a glorious strumpet, the devil in crystal, a diamond in the darkness, a white devil'.<sup>159</sup>

As Bogard asserts, no one else had come close to creating a second Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth as Webster had with Vittoria Corombona.<sup>160</sup> However, her character extends beyond Lady Macbeth, who experiences remorse and is so

tormented by her actions she takes her own life. Vittoria is defiant and rebellious to the end. Even in death she is self-righteous and scornful. 'I will not in my death shed one base tear, / Or if look pale, for want of blood, not fear' (5.6.234-5). When she exclaims 'My soul, like to a ship in a black storm, / Is driven I know not whither' (5.6.247-8), Webster reinforces her condemned nature as the fallen white devil. 'Vittoria can simulate Popish devotion,'<sup>161</sup> for example when at her prayers, but she also threatens Flamineo with damnation and death, and in the end, the audience witness her 'dying in spiritual blindness';<sup>162</sup> a death which Webster no doubt intended as a warning on the dangers of spiritual corruption.

Like many Gunpowder plays, *The White Devil* concludes uneasily. Monticelso and Francisco survive the bloodshed, and are left alive 'triumphantly successful'; Francisco is still the great Duke of Florence, and Monticelso is the pope. There is indeed little to threaten the position of either.<sup>163</sup> However, Webster strives to ensure the audience is not confused into thinking the Duke and the Cardinal are morally just in their revenge. Instead, he paints them as 'symbolic representatives of abstract evil in State and Church',<sup>164</sup> and the play's ending may be understood as the playwright's comment 'on the permanence of evil.'<sup>165</sup> At the close of *The White Devil*, the future is uncertain, and while immediate crises may have been resolved, the long-term outlook is inherently unstable. In this, *The White Devil* shares its fragile conclusion with *Macbeth*, *Bussy D'Ambois*, *Catiline*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Whore of Babylon*. Webster's play, like other Gunpowder plays attempts to get to the heart of evil; it negotiates specific aspects of the atmosphere in London after the Gunpowder Plot; paranoia, witchcraft, suspicion, court corruption, murder, and damnation. Aspects brought once more to the fore



by the rumours of Catholic scandal at court, and the murder of Henri IV just the year before. *The White Devil* shares a similarity in tone with *Macbeth* and *Bussy D'Ambois* in its exploration of the diabolical nature of its protagonists. It echoes *Catiline* and *Cymbeline* in its warning of spiritual blindness, and it reiterates the popular Protestant trope of the two women from Revelation to once again couple Catholic Italy and the pope with the treacherous nature of the Whore of Babylon and the Gunpowder conspiracy.

In June 1613, the Globe theatre on Bankside burned to the ground during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, or *All Is True*. The play had been performed only two or three times<sup>166</sup> when a spark from live canon fire ignited the thatched roof of the theatre: 'it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole house to the very grounds.'<sup>167</sup> *All Is True*,<sup>168</sup> now acknowledged to be a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher,<sup>169</sup> may have been written in celebration of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine. Crowded with pomp and majesty, there is no evidence of its performance at Blackfriars,<sup>170</sup> or at court, although five other plays by Shakespeare were acted before the newly married royal couple.<sup>171</sup> *All Is True* may also have been the 'stage play to be acted in the Great Hall by the King's players' which aroused 'much expectation' on February 16th, but which was then subsequently cancelled in favour of a masque.<sup>172</sup> Shakespeare's late play is certainly topical, since it celebrates the birth of Elizabeth I, and links her identity with that of the now-married Princess Elizabeth, a noteworthy and popular theme in 1613. 'How much are we, the inhabitants of this whole isle, bound unto our

good God that hath lent us such a princess, and in her hath renewed and revived the name and nature of our late deceased, ever to be remembered, happy Queen Elizabeth!’<sup>173</sup> In *All Is True*, ‘the patriotic symbols of earlier Tudor propaganda are passed on to James Stuart through the inspired vision of one who became a martyr of the Protestant Church, and could be expected to have true visions of the future.’<sup>174</sup> Cranmer’s speech at the end of the play, in which he prophesises the peace and prosperity of Elizabeth’s reign, ‘alludes flatteringly’ to its continuance under James, and ‘resembles in phrasing and imagery what was being said in the marriage tracts and sermons.’<sup>175</sup> All of which lends weight to the theory that *All Is True*, if not written specifically for the royal wedding, was at least composed with that event in mind. This would date its composition to the latter half of 1612 or very early 1613, since discussions surrounding the wedding were ongoing at this time. A recorded performance date does not occur until June 1613, and written accounts of the fire at the Globe suggest the play had only been performed two or three times, so perhaps Shakespeare and Fletcher began work on *All Is True* towards the beginning of 1613. A further note on the play’s dating comes from Cumberland Clark, who states that the mention of ‘some strange Indian... come to court’ (5.4.33-4) may refer to five Indians who were brought to England in 1611 by explorers of the New World.<sup>176</sup> This would thus date the play from 1611 onwards.

The Protestant alliance between Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine was an important political event in 1613, and one with acute religious significance. A play ‘depicting the death-throes of Roman Catholicism in England, the establishment of the national Church, and the birth of the militantly anti-Catholic Elizabeth would have been appropriate to the temper of the moment.’<sup>177</sup> This was not the first play

written and performed about the Tudor king's reign. There are a number of earlier plays, including *Sir Thomas More* (1592-3), *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* (1599-1602), and two lost plays, Chettle's *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey* (1601), and *The Rising of Cardinal Wolsey* (1601) by Chettle, Drayton, Munday, and Smith.<sup>178</sup> However, Shakespeare and Fletcher's play contains some critical differences to these earlier works. *All Is True* refuses 'until its very end, to appeal to the nationalism which earlier history plays, both "romance" and "chronicle" had successfully tapped. Similarly, the avoidance of a comic subplot eliminates the chance to evoke sympathetic laughter'.<sup>179</sup> The play also does not adopt a biographical approach charting the career of a single character or king, as earlier plays such as *Richard III* had done.<sup>180</sup> Instead, it presents a series of scenes documenting the fall of Wolsey and Henry's break with the Catholic Church, culminating in the christening of Elizabeth I. The spectators' interest is thus 'on the one hand, [focused on] Henry's break from Rome and the establishment of Protestantism and, on the other, the divorce from Katherine, [and] the ascension of Anne'.<sup>181</sup>

*All Is True* is concerned with matters of religion and royal divorce, popular themes in 1613. Just as Webster had alluded to Frances Howard in *The White Devil*, and to the rumours surrounding Arabella Stuart in *The Duchess of Malfi*, the reign of Henry VIII may have offered Shakespeare and Fletcher an opportunity to celebrate the royal wedding and the historic birth of Elizabeth I, but also to cash in on the emerging outrage surrounding France Howard. *All Is True*, perhaps surprisingly, almost belongs in the category of Gunpowder Plays as ascribed by Gary Wills. It contains undermining, diabolical activity, supernatural forces, and an attempt to bring about the destruction of a kingdom. It does not feature direct

references to the Plot, but like *Cymbeline*, *Catiline*, *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Devil's Charter*, and *Macbeth*, it is preoccupied throughout with Catholic menace, and for the purposes of this thesis it demonstrates how issues that arose in the aftermath of the Plot continued to preoccupy the imaginations of playwrights. In addition, *All Is True* is so pregnant with established post-Gunpowder paradigms that Shakespeare and Fletcher do not need to refer to the Plot itself in order to conflate the Catholicism of Wolsey with the demonic treachery of Catesby and Fawkes. This reveals the extent to which tropes once specific to the Plot have now become a common anti-papist currency on the stage, affirming Simonds' assertion that playwrights continuously appropriated established *topoi* and varied them to lend new meanings.<sup>182</sup>

The play opens with a promise to present such scenes 'as draw the eye to flow'. It informs the audience, the 'first and happiest hearers of the town,' that the play will deal with serious and weighty matters: 'Think ye see / The very persons of our noble story/... see / How soon this mightiness meets misery; / And if you can be merry then, I'll say / A man may weep upon his wedding day' (Prologue). This mention of a 'wedding day' so early on may reference the royal wedding, but it might also obliquely refer to the Essex divorce. In the plot of *All Is True*, Henry's passion for Anne, and his plans to divorce Katherine, recall not just the historic narrative of Henry VIII's marital status, but also the secret affair and divorce scandal between Lady Essex and Robert Carr. Wolsey counsels Henry against 'a divorce, a loss of her / That like a jewel has hung twenty years / About his neck, yet never lost her luster'. This simile of the queen as a precious jewel establishes the powerful bond between Henry and Katherine, but it might also have served as

a covert reference to the rumours that Frances Howard wore 'powder' around her neck; presumably concealed in some form of jewellery; powder she supposedly used in an effort to escape her marriage to Devereux.<sup>183</sup> Another reference to Lady Essex's divorce might be inferred in Wolsey's remarks to the King: 'I know your Majesty has always loved her / So dear in heart not to deny her that / A woman of a less place might ask by law: / Scholars allowed freely to argue for her' (2.2.109-112). Frances Howard, 'a woman of less place' had herself requested 'scholars' to 'argue for her' in the matter of a separation from her husband, all of which was underway during early performances of *All Is True*. While James' councillors met at Lambeth to discuss Frances' divorce petition, on the stage, Henry orders Wolsey to arrange a similar meeting at Blackfriars, in order to discuss his own divorce: a 'weighty business' (2.2.139). So in *All Is True*, divorce perhaps becomes more than 'an historical problem and event... It is a theme in a broader and more conceptual way, involving the disjunction of inner and outer and public and private lives',<sup>184</sup> and as the Frances Howard affair demonstrates, in 1613, issues of divorce were not only restricted to questions of the Tudor king's conscience. Public interest in Howard and Carr in the spring and summer of 1613 demonstrates the extent to which divorce was a much-discussed topical issue, and the theme of divorce in *All Is True* almost certainly contributed to wider extant discussions of martial adultery and infidelity. While the focus of the play is England's break from the Catholic Church, it seems likely that the text was either edited in the summer of 1613, before its first performance to include topical references to the Essex divorce, or written in the spring, at same the time the divorce rumours were circulating. As Michael Questier has argued, the scandal of the Howard divorce brought to the

fore the issue of powerful Catholic factions at court.<sup>185</sup> In 1613, new information about the Gunpowder Plot was still emerging. In March, Sir John York and Sir William Ingleby were both examined on suspicion of having been involved in the Plot; examinations with which the king was personally involved.<sup>186</sup> In addition, rumours of a Popish plot to attack Ireland were circulating, creating anxiety about whether England had enough naval men to defend her.<sup>187</sup> Gossip about Frances Howard, which as early as January 1613 included accusations she attempted to poison her husband,<sup>188</sup> can only have fuelled anxiety regarding on going Catholic treachery.

The first act of *All is True* opens with the figures of Norfolk, Buckingham, and Abergavenny, who provide a lavish description of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; the famous event in France in 1520, in which Henry VIII met Francis I. Here, the two kings are 'those sons of glory, those two lights of men, / Met in the vale of Andren' (1.1.6-7). The description of 'earthly pomp' 'all in gold', and 'incomparable' 'masque', anticipates the subsequent spectacle on the stage, and serves to introduce the character of Wolsey, who is the antithesis of 'glory' and 'light', indeed he is an inhibitor and corrupter of the 'sun', whom Buckingham condemns as an ambitious and vain man. The 'devil speed him!' Wolsey is a 'keech' who with 'his very bulk / Take[s] up the rays o' th' beneficial sun' (1.1.55-6). Not only is Wolsey corpulent, he is unsupported 'by ancestry'. In an echo of *The White Devil*, he 'spider-like, / Out of his self-drawing web,' uses force, and 'of his own merit makes his way' (1.1.59-64). Wolsey is here presented as a self-made man suffering from over-weaning arrogance, and a pride, which comes 'If not from hell, the devil is a niggard' (1.1.70). Abergavenny cites examples of at least three of

his kinsmen who have suffered ruin at Wolsey's hands, and Norfolk warns of the Cardinal's 'malice and his potency'; he's 'vengeful,' and his sword 'hath a sharp edge' which he 'darts' where he will (1.1.105-112). Buckingham describes Wolsey in even more inflammatory terms; he is 'a holy fox, / Or wolf, or both (for he is equal rav'nous / As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief / As able to perform't, his mind and place / Infecting one another' (1.2.158-162). Wolsey then is depicted with all the hallmarks of a Gunpowder witch. An historic Catholic figure, in *All Is True* he is associated with post-Plot tropes of evil, darkness, ruthlessness, infection, and danger. This danger is evinced when Buckingham, accused by the king on the charge of high treason, and subsequently sent to the Tower, protests his sudden downfall as a direct result of Wolsey's plotting, 'that dye is on me / Which makes my whit'st part black' (1.1.207-8). By scene two Buckingham has become 'as black / As if besmeared in Hell' (1.2.123-4), and on the word of Wolsey, and his own surveyor, who has been bribed by the Cardinal, he is condemned as a traitor for plotting to overthrow the king.

This Surveyor cites 'a vain prophecy of Nicholas Hinton' a 'Chartreux friar' 'who fed him [Buckingham] every minute / With words of sovereignty' (1.2.145-149). This 'holy monk' under 'the confession's seal' confided to Buckingham's chaplain a prophesy which promised that one day the Duke would govern England (1.2.160-164). He insists 'th'devil's illusions' have deceived this monk, and thus stained Buckingham with witchcraft; his downfall constructed by the diabolical nature of Wolsey's Catholicism. At Wolsey's banquet in scene four, what appears to be light-hearted banter between Sir Lovell and Lord Sands provides an opportunity for the playwrights to disparage Wolsey and the Catholic priesthood.

Aligning himself with the Cardinal, Sands states 'had the Cardinal / but half my lay thoughts in him, some of these / Should find a running banquet 'ere they rested, / I think would better please 'em' (1.4.11-13). Here 'these' refers to the assembled courtiers, and 'running banquet' to the availability of women for immediate sexual gratification. 'Running banquet' may also be a pun on syphilitic sores, which would again reinforce Wolsey's sexual depravity.

Lovell: O, that your lordship were but now confessor  
To one or two of these!

Sands: I would I were;  
They should find easy penance.

Lovell: Faith, how easy?

Sands: As easy as a down bed would afford it.  
(1.4.15-18)

This exchange conflates Wolsey's banquetting room with a brothel, which is further reinforced by the actual 'coupling' of the king and Anne Bullen in the same scene. This dialogue anticipates the remark in Act 3, when Surrey warns Wolsey, 'I'll startle you / Worse than the sacring bell, when the brown wench / Lay kissing in your arms, Lord Cardinal' (3.2.293-5). The 'sacring bell' was the bell of consecration rung at the Elevation of the Host, the most solemn part of the Mass.<sup>189</sup> To conjoin its image with that of a 'wench' 'kissing' the Cardinal is to undermine his legitimate religious status, and emphasise his corrupt nature. This scene also anticipates the accusation made by Katherine when she denounces Wolsey and his depraved sexual appetite:<sup>190</sup> 'of his own body he was ill, and gave / The clergy ill example' (4.2.43-4).



These dramatic alignments of Wolsey with whoring serve to blacken his already dark Catholic nature. Like Brachiano in *The White Devil*, and Giacomo in *Cymbeline*, his nature is so infectious it even contaminates the king. Chamberlain, complaining of the king's melancholy, notes 'It seems the marriage with his brother's wife / Has crept too near his conscience'. Norfolk replies 'Tis so. / This is the Cardinal's doing: the king-cardinal, / That blind priest, like the eldest son of Fortune, / Turns what he list' (2.2.16-21). The corrupt Wolsey has dived 'into the King's soul' and scattered 'Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience / Fear and despairs' and now 'to restore the King, / He counsels a divorce' (2.2.26-30). Wolsey is a 'bold bad man' (43), an 'imperious man' (46); he should be left 'To him that made him proud – the Pope' (54). Here Wolsey is denounced as a dangerous agent of Rome; like Giacomo in *Cymbeline*, and Flamineo in *The White Devil*, he undermines, plots, and contaminates. Wolsey himself confirms this when he refers to Rome as 'the nurse of judgment' (93). Katherine accuses him of having 'blown this coal betwixt my lord and me' (2.4.79). He is, she says, too cunning for a simple woman to oppose. He is sly and dissembles, like all diabolical agents in Gunpowder plays. 'Y'are meek and / humble-mouthed. / You sign your place and calling, in full seeming, / With meekness and humility, / but your heart / Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride' (2.4.107-110). This echoes the description of Dis and his followers in *A Marriage Hymne*, and the ubiquitous post-Gunpowder image of the serpent dissembling beneath an innocent flower. Even Henry denounces the Cardinal's activity, 'I abhor / This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome' (2.4.236-7). Just as Innogen becomes infected by the sly Catholic tricks of Giacomo, and the three demonic sisters infect the world of *Macbeth*, Henry's court

is corrupted by Wolsey's Roman witchcraft. Chamberlain warns Norfolk and Surrey, 'If you cannot / Bar his access to th' King, never attempt / Anything on him, for he hath a witchcraft / Over the King in's tongue' (3.2.16-19). Wolsey's power to seduce is as much of a menace as that of Lucretia Borgia and Vittoria Corombona.

Wolsey's ambitious plotting is finally undone when Henry reads a letter accidentally sent by Wolsey, in which the Cardinal itemises his vast wealth. This action seals his fate. From this moment on, he is forced to resign himself to his impending doom. 'This paper has undone me. 'Tis th' account / Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together / For mine own ends; indeed to gain the popedom, / And fee my friends in Rome. O negligence/ Fit for a fool to fall by! What cross devil / Made me put this main secret in the packet / I sent to the King?' (3.2.210-16). Here *All Is Well* adopts the well-established Gunpowder motif in which a character is undone and his plot discovered through the device of a letter.

The language Wolsey uses throughout this scene is pregnant with Catholicism; 'popedom', 'devil', 'wealth', 'sleek', 'wanton', 'violence', 'ruin', 'Holiness', and 'malice'. Surrey hurls accusations at him. He is 'a proud traitor, priest.' His 'ambition, / Thou scarlet sin, robbed this bewailing land / Of noble Buckingham' (3.2.250-256), and of the crimes Wolsey accused Buckingham, in his 'great goodness, out of holy pity, / Absolved him with an axe' (3.2.263-4). Henry Garnet was similarly castigated as a 'proud traitor' and he too was 'absolved with an axe'. Here the playwrights reinforce the corrupt nature of Catholic priests by evoking the paradigms of insidious Jesuits, papist plots, the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and the murder of Henri IV; paradigms established after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. Wolsey is defiant, and adopts a familiar motif to reinforce this

insubordination: 'spotless shall mine innocence arise / When the King knows my truth' (3.2.301-2). This image is used in other Gunpowder plays, including *Bussy D'Ambois*, in which Tamyra remarks, 'So confident a spotless conscience is' (3.1.8), and *The White Devil*, in which the corrupt Vittoria complains ironically that her 'spotless honour' has been tainted (4.2.106). Here once again the playwrights reinforce Wolsey's corruption through spiritual blemishes; marks of the devil. By echoing other Gunpowder plays in *All Is True*, Shakespeare and Fletcher perpetuate the widespread concern with undermining, contamination, and supernatural treachery that arose in the aftermath of the Plot, a concern reinforced by the emerging scandal surrounding the Catholic Frances Howard. The accusations against Wolsey go beyond general anti-popery since Fletcher and Shakespeare choose to utilise specific Gunpowder paradigms in relation to him. Wolsey is infectious, the serpent beneath the lily, spotted, possessed, an agent of witchcraft. Since Robert Carr would go on to be implicated in the second Gunpowder Plot of 1615,<sup>191</sup> it is clear that imaginative links existed between the Howard scandal, general Catholic treachery, and the Gunpowder Plot itself. In figuring Cardinal Wolsey on the stage as a Gunpowder Witch, Fletcher and Shakespeare are combining the historical popish characteristics of Wolsey with contemporaneous Protestant paradigms of post-Gunpowder discourse. However, unlike Gunpowder witches such as Macbeth, and Catiline, Wolsey, left alone on stage, acknowledges his fatal error, 'my high-blown pride / At length broke under me'. He laments his status as a 'poor man' hanging on 'princes favours', who must now fall, 'like Lucifer, / Never to hope again' (3.2.361-371). Wolsey has been rendered powerless. Having warned Cromwell to 'Love thyself last; cherish those

hearts that hate thee: / Corruption wins not more than honesty' (3.2.442-3), he shuffles off the stage in tears. This scene may have elicited a small degree of sympathy from the audience, but Wolsey's regret, like the Queen's in *Cymbeline*, is personal; it is for his fall from grace, not for the execution of Buckingham. His death is reported by Griffith, who informs Katherine, 'he died fearing God' (4.2.68).

Wolsey's role as spiritual advisor to the court is subsequently adopted by Cranmer, loathed by some as 'a most arch heretic, a pestilence / That does infect the land' (5.1.45-6). However Shakespeare and Fletcher celebrate Cranmer's achievements; the historical Cranmer had been heavily involved in the divorce proceedings of Henry VIII and England's subsequent separation from the Catholic Church, and to Henry in *All Is True* he is 'this good man,' 'this honest man'. During a failed attempt by courtiers to denounce Cranmer for 'new opinions, / Divers and dangerous', Henry warns them to 'respect him / Take him and use him well; he's worthy of it. / I will say thus much for him, if a prince / May be beholding to a subject, I / Am, for his love and service' (5.3.154-157). The king names Cranmer godfather to the newborn Elizabeth, and at the close of the play, it is Cranmer who ushers in a golden age in England. Elizabeth's birth, he announces, 'promises / Upon this land a thousand blessings'. She will be 'A pattern to all princes living'; 'Truth shall nurse her, / Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her. / She shall be loved and feared', and through her, 'another heir' will rise from the 'sacred ashes of her honour'. This heir, James I, 'Shall stand star-like, as great in fame as she was'. He will 'make new nations', and 'Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine, / His honour and the greatness of his name / Shall be' (5.5.19-52). This

speech enables Shakespeare and Fletcher to celebrate the Tudor 'lineage' of James I, strengthening his links to Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, as natural heir, and coupling the glory of the Tudor monarchy to that of the Stuarts. It also reinforces James' status as divinely appointed king and Protestant saviour, evoking and reinforcing the hope and celebrations engendered by Elizabeth's marriage to the Elector Palatine. With Elizabeth's christening comes the beginning of a bright Protestant future and England's longed-for release 'from the secular misrule and spiritual bondage of Wolsey's regime'.<sup>192</sup>

Throughout the play, Wolsey is associated with the Church of Rome.<sup>193</sup> He embodies 'all the reasons for paranoia that James associated with seditious Jesuits, especially in the years following the Gunpowder Plot,'<sup>194</sup> and perhaps it is no surprise Shakespeare and Fletcher celebrate the reign of James I with a play in which an English king 'successfully struggles to throw off the oppression of a high-handed Roman Churchman.'<sup>195</sup> Several critics see *All Is True* as a celebration of Jacobean kingship<sup>196</sup> and its spectacle as an essential aspect of the play's image of contemporary royalty.<sup>197</sup> Cox argues that in this play Shakespeare is relating past and present more overtly 'than in any other play, and his view of Elizabethan-Jacobean England is positive, one fundamentally compatible with his societal perceptions in the Romances.'<sup>198</sup> His view of the play may derive from the histories but its concerns 'derive from the romances immediately preceding it', and its place in Jacobean drama warns against regarding it as yet another history play.<sup>199</sup> Shakespeare and Fletcher's late play has received a mixed response. It has been accused of having a 'cynically arbitrary' structure and of being 'conspicuously lacking in unity.'<sup>200</sup> Some even see it as a 'stream of declamations', which are not

only 'episodic but repetitious'.<sup>201</sup> However, if the play lacks 'visible architectonic unity',<sup>202</sup> it does have a solid narrative, and it becomes obvious in the final act that the 'central thrust of the play is the birth of Elizabeth and the prophecy of the culmination of Tudor greatness'.<sup>203</sup> In this way, like *A Wedding Hymne*, *All Is True* envisions a truly unified Protestant England.<sup>204</sup> Shakespeare's late play 'offers a sense of validation for James I, it approves the status quo and it approves its restoration through tangential or miraculous means.' It 'explicitly invokes the succession of James as part of the glorious future attending the infant Princess Elizabeth, who is born in Act 5. However, *Henry VIII* shows its origins as a play written after the heyday of optimism in the new Stuarts. In particular it may well have been written and was certainly performed after the death of Prince Henry, which offered a grim backdrop to hopes for the future.'<sup>205</sup> At the end of *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare leaves a Britain fraught in its uneasy relationship with Rome. At the end of *All Is True* however, separation and independence from Rome has been successfully achieved. Wolsey, comparing himself to Lucifer (3.3.371), 'momentarily illumines the Christian myth which serves as background to the action of *Henry VIII*: the whole epic movement from paradise lost to paradise regained... Despite the machinations of Lucifer and of the unregenerate Wolsey - God in His benevolence toward man, brings forth good out of seeming ill'.<sup>206</sup> In this way *All Is True* parallels both Innogen's/England's resistance to the powers of Rome in *Cymbeline*, and the providential means by which God, in spite of the actions of Catesby and Fawkes, delivered England from a catastrophic act of terror. Wolsey is a 'compelling figure in this stage world';<sup>207</sup> a figure who commands attention. His role of villain 'calls to mind the determination of Richard III',<sup>208</sup> and

like Richard, he 'commands an awesome fascination through his ability to subordinate everything to his ambitious design.'<sup>209</sup> With the providential success of Wolsey's overthrow, the playwrights recall a variety of Protestant triumphs, commencing with Henry VIII's defeat of the pope, through the conquest of the Spanish Armada, to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. In *All Is True*, England has once again prevailed over the dark satanic forces of Catholicism.

In 1615-16, Thomas Middleton presented a play that incorporated both contemporary fears surrounding the Overbury scandal, and older anxieties activated by the Gunpowder Plot. *The Witch* was first performed by the King's Men at Blackfriars c.1616.<sup>210</sup> It survives only in manuscript form, probably dating from 1619-1627. Middleton's signature is not on the manuscript, but the epistle suggests that he was involved in its preparation.<sup>211</sup> In this Epistle, Middleton describes his play as 'this ignorant ill-fated labour of mine. Witches are, *ipso facto*, by the law condemned, and that only, I think, hath made her lie so long in an imprisoned obscurity.'<sup>212</sup> Clearly, the play was not a success when first performed. Elizabeth Schafer believes *The Witch* was written towards the end of the Overbury scandal 'as deliberate, particularised and dangerous satire which was suppressed by the government before it could have the success Middleton was to have later with another political satire, *A Game at Chess*.'<sup>213</sup> When Middleton first began writing for the King's Men is uncertain, but it seems likely it was sometime after 1615, and he appears to have worked on adapting their repertory.<sup>214</sup> *The Witch* was in performance with another of Middleton's plays, *The Widow* (1615-17),<sup>215</sup> a play believed to contain a reference to Anne Turner, one of the suspects in the

Overbury affair, who had a fondness for wearing yellow ruffs and cuffs.<sup>216</sup> There are strong grounds for believing that *The Witch* was designed to appeal to the excitement generated by the Essex divorce, 'which had been the talk of the town in 1613,'<sup>217</sup> and to the even more sensational trials related to the Overbury murder in 1615-16.<sup>218</sup>

*The Witch* is a grotesque and unsettling play. Sebastian, recently returned from soldiering overseas, and widely believed to be dead, discovers his fiancée is married to the aristocrat Antonio. Worried Isabella may consummate the marriage, Sebastian visits an old witch to procure a spell to render Antonio impotent. The spell works, and a disguised Sebastian is soon employed as a servant, Celio, in Antonio's house. After several complicated sub-plots involving pregnancy and deceit, further witchcraft, bed trick scenes, and attempted murder, the play eventually concludes on a happy, if farcical, note of festivity, with Sebastian finally restored to his rightful place at Isabella's side.

In *The Witch*, Middleton references not just the Overbury scandal, but a curious event taking place in 1615; an event he refers to as a current 'insurrection / Among the people' (4.1.16-17). This insurrection occurs off stage, enabling the playwright to highlight the instability of the Duke's court. However, it may also have served as a veiled reference to largely unexplored episode that took place in the summer and autumn of 1615. *The Calendar of State Papers* records an exchange of letters regarding an uprising among the descendants of the Gunpowder Plotters. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, Bishop James 'Sends information by a Polish surgeon [Chris.Newkirk], a pretended Catholic, and much courted by the priests, who wish to learn from him how to make still powder. He is to meet Winter and



Digby in Doncaster. They have given him an altar, devotional books, beads, &c'.<sup>219</sup>

Chris Newkirk was also informed that 'there would soon be an alteration, both in King and Prince', and that 'sundry meetings' were taking place in Cleveland, Yorkshire, and elsewhere.<sup>220</sup> On August 16<sup>th</sup>, Bishop James writes to Abbot 'Some mischief in hand; great need for caution', and notes a 'Flocking of priests' in Newcastle. He warns that 'France, Spain, and Spinola had each 20,000 men ready; that the North of England would raise 20,000 more, for a hurly-burly on a certain signal'.<sup>221</sup> The following day, Archbishop Abbot writes to Sir Ralph Winwood, sending examinations made by the Bishop of Durham, and 'other papers of consequence'. He notes 'Young Winter is the son and brother of the Winters who died in the Powder Treason, a desperate young fellow, rooted in Popery, and brought up at Sir Wm. Ingleby's, Yorkshire. Great watchfulness required.'<sup>222</sup> The correspondence over the subsequent days includes details of a plot by Lord Stanley and others to burn Protestant towns, and a letter sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> August by Chris Newkirk to the Bishop of Durham: 'Met in Yorkshire with Winter, Rokewood, and John, William, and Thos. Digby, and Percy, &c. After consultation, they agreed to admit him into their confidence, and told him they were authorized by the Pope to take vengeance for the martyrdom of their friends, on pretence of complicity in the Powder Treason. Had made three engines ... and were going into Cardiganshire to try one.'<sup>223</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> September, Newkirk writes again to the Bishop of Durham. The engineer of the plotters is sick; 'foot and horse race is to be given at Hambleton by the Earl of Rutland, &c on Sept.30th, to afford them an opportunity to assemble. All the conspirators will meet at London, on Oct.14.'<sup>224</sup>

What became of this plot is unclear. There are reports of the repression of troublemakers in Northumberland in the spring of 1616, but otherwise the uprising seems to have come to nothing. Further research will no doubt reveal more about this attempt by the sons of Winter, Percy, and others, to exact revenge for the deaths of their fathers. That Middleton should allude to this event may hint that rumours of the rebellion had reached London: 'There's an insurrection / Among the people; they are up in arms - / Not out of any reason but their wills, / Which are in them their saints – sweating and swearing, / Out of their zeal to rudeness, that no stranger, / As they term her, shall govern over them' (4.1.16-21). This plot in 1615 was the result of 'wills', in the sense that the plotters were attempting to avenge their fathers; here 'will' could denote 'father' or the 'wishes of a father'. The Catholicism of these fathers is implied in 'saints'; and in the wills, 'saints' could also be an indication of the martyrdom of the Gunpowder Plotters. This new plot emerged out of the 'sweating and swearing' and 'zeal' of the Gunpowder Plotters' descendants, who wished not only to avenge their fathers' deaths but also to complete their mission to remove any strangers (i.e. Protestants) who 'govern them'. It is possible of course this speech is entirely unrelated to the 1615 plot, but these curious lines do appear to allude to some sort of zealous conspiracy, and fit with this little-documented Gunpowder uprising.<sup>225</sup>

In *The Witch*, A reference to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 occurs in the scene between Hecate and Stadlin:

Hecate: Is the heart of wax  
Struck full of magic needles?

Stadlin: 'Tis done, Hecate.

Stadlin: They're a-roasting both, too.  
(1.2.47-9)

References to magic wax appear in the accounts of the Overbury murder, but the mention of the farmer and his wife may also be a passing allusion to Garnet and Anne Vaux. One of Garnet's aliases was Farmer, and Vaux was widely believed to have been having a sexual relationship with him. There would certainly be topicality in jokes about Garnet, even as late as 1616. Middleton reinforces this reference when he has Hecate declare she has bewitched some of the farmer's animal; 'seven of their young pigs I've bewitched already' (1.2.56), and she intends to send 'snakes' to 'milk 'em all' (60-61). Here once again is the popular Gunpowder image of the serpent creeping forth to destroy, and Middleton, like Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Webster, adopts the established theatrical trope of the Gunpowder serpent to highlight the diabolical nature of Hecate.

Sebastian's visit to Hecate to procure a charm to render Antonio impotent affords Middleton the opportunity to make two further topical allusions. In the first, Hecate describes Stadlin's power. 'She raises all your sudden, ruinous storms / That shipwreck barks' (1.2.133-4). These lines educe James' return to Scotland from the Danish court in the spring of 1590. The journey, blighted by storms, was subsequently blamed on witches, as part of a long Danish tradition of assigning maritime disasters to spells cast by witches under the control of foreign adversaries.<sup>226</sup> This event was to contribute to James' well-known interest in witchcraft. Another witch, Hoppo, is equally powerful: 'Hoppo and her incantation

/ Can straight destroy the young of all his cattle, / Blast vineyards, orchards, meadows' (1.2.141-143). This echoes both Macbeth, who accuses the witches of creating 'yesty waves' which 'Confound and swallow navigation up - / Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down' (4.1.53-55), and the destruction imagined in the 'blast' of gunpowder planned by Catesby. In a further allusion to the Gunpowder Plot, Almachildes, paying a drunken visit to Hecate, asks 'You had a devil once in a fox-skin?' 'Oh I have him still,' she replies (1.2.230-1). Here Middleton plays on the 'devil in a sheepskin' image; the loaded 'fox' an allusion to Catholics, and a witty pun on 'Fawkes'.

Middleton also comments directly on the Overbury trials, conflating the Italian court in *The Witch* with the corrupt nature of English Catholicism. While the actions of Frances Howard were not directly related to those of Fawkes and Catesby, she was a Catholic engaged in murder at court, and this aligned her in popular imagination with the murderer of Henri IV; Catherine Medici, Henry Garnet and the Gunpowder circle, and indeed the Whore of Babylon. A libel circulating in relation to Frances Howard compared her to the witch Canidia, and predicted 'that once Canidia had been cut off, darkness would be transformed into light, death into rebirth. Once the "croaking ravens" and "death-boding owls" had rung Canidia down "from earth to hell"... the spell would be broken.'<sup>227</sup>

In the minds of Middleton's audience, the Powder Poison was yet another example of Catholic treachery, and as such, its imaginative coupling with the events of 1605 was natural. Just as the Gunpowder Plot was imaginatively linked to the murders in Paris and the Spanish Armada, the Powder Poison became yet another in a series of events shaped by the seditious undermining of the pope and

the Devil. Playwrights were able to denounce the Powder Poison with Gunpowder paradigms established in the aftermath of 1605, firmly linking the two events as chilling examples of Catholic terror.

In Act 1, Gasparo orders Florida to withdraw to her chamber, where he will send her 'ven'son, custard, parsnip pie... suckets, jellies, syrups' (1.1.66-67). In October 1615, it was reported that Simon Merston, one of the king's musicians, carried 'tarts and jelly for Overbury, from the Countess of Somerset.'<sup>228</sup> In January, the Countess of Somerset confessed that 'in her letter to the Lieutenant of the Tower, about sending tarts, jellies, wine &c, for Overbury, she meant that the tarts and jellies then sent, wherein were poison, should be given to Overbury'.<sup>229</sup> Suspicions were also recorded and suspects questioned about a supposed plot to murder the princes 'when they went a-maying' to Highgate in May 1612, with poison in 'dried and candied fruit'.<sup>230</sup> Gasparo's reference to jelly would thus have had immediate topical significance for his audience. Frances was also rumoured to have had many lovers. To highlight this, Gasparo refers to Florida as a 'grand strumpet,' comparing her to a 'fair building', which has 'just at this time some one and twenty inmates'. Half of them are 'young merchants' who will depart shortly, merely taking 'rooms for the summer'. These merchants will then be replaced by 'the termers' when the weather grows foul (1.1.69-74). Here Middleton depicts Florida not just as a whore, but also as a whorehouse, recalling the language used to denounce Vittoria in *The White Devil*, and equating the action of the play with the sin of a Romish stew.

Sebastian's anger at the start of *The Witch* is born out of his belief that Isabella belongs to him. 'She is my wife by contract before heaven' he tells

Fernando in the opening scene (1.1.4). Middleton thus establishes the legitimacy of the relationship between Isabella and Sebastian, since Fernando has witnessed their contract, 'and Sebastian's belief in its legality determines his behaviour in the play'.<sup>231</sup> However, Sebastian's defiant tone warns of his unprincipled behaviour as the action unfolds. Like Vittoria Corombona, he has an unstable duality that reflects the chaos and confusion inherent in the play. The governor of Ravenna, who had given his consent for Isabella's marriage to Antonio, is referred to as 'the devil in a sheepskin!' (1.1.12), reinforcing this theme of duplicity and deception. This theme is also underscored in the exchange between Gasparo, and Florida; in love with Antonio and weeping over his newly married state. 'My master marry for his reputation / He means to keep you too,' Gasparo tells her. 'Are you so simple, / And have been five years traded, as to think / One woman would serve him? Fie, not an empress! / Why he'll be sick o'th' wife within ten nights' (1.1.55-58). Rather than a union of love, then, Middleton establishes Antonio's marriage to Isabella as one of political convenience, evoking the deceptiveness of contemporary court marriage, and the fickle duplicitous Italian world of the play.

Middleton ensures, then, that his audience firmly equate Antonio's Italian court with Catholic whoring, lust, adultery, and contamination. In a scene which calls to mind *Bussy D'Ambois*, and which combines weddings, witchcraft, and lust into one central motif, the Duke, leading the wedding party, raises a cup fashioned from a human skull to announce 'health' (1.1.105). This cup, once the head of his wife's father, is 'a trophy / we'll keep till death' (1.1.116-17). With this gruesome memento mori the Duke aligns both himself and his Italian court with death and corruption. 'That's an ill bride-cup for a marriage day,' comments Antonio

(1.1.123), reinforcing the image of death and marriage, and anticipating the dark and tragic fates about to unfold in the play. In *Sir Thomas Overburies Vision*, printed in 1616, a text inspired by the Overbury murder, the author has Weston complain to Overbury of that 'Whore's cup,' in which 'disloyalty did oft conceal'.<sup>232</sup>

Middleton establishes a connection between the lustful court and witchcraft when Almachildes visits the witches to procure a charm, or trick, which will 'make a wench fall backwards' (1.1.90-1). This theatrical conflation of a lustful court and witchcraft highlights once again the development of post-Gunpowder drama. Here Middleton can allude to *Macbeth* instead of the Plot itself, yet still convey the nature of Catholic corruption. Both witchcraft and popery were perceived and represented as absolute 'anti-Christian inversions of the proper religious order';<sup>233</sup> and the promiscuous lustful woman was a 'common witch-type' in early modern culture. It was *Macbeth* however, which popularised this dramatic coupling of anti-papistry and witchcraft in the aftermath of the Plot. Middleton continues this theme with the appearance of Hecate and her witches. Hecate reels off a list of spirits and devils, issuing orders to the witch Stadlin, busy off stage, 'sweating at the vessel'. Stadlin subsequently appears with a dish and Hecate hands over a dead baby, 'take this unbaptised brat,' she says, ordering Stadlin to boil it well and preserve the fat (1.2.18-19). This macabre and disturbing image parallels Lady Macbeth and the Empress, who both advocate the murder of babies, and Vittoria, who mocks Flamineo, and urges him to 'murder some sucking infant' (5.6.33). It also evokes the fragment of a child's skin included in the exhibits at the Overbury trials. Middleton here is presenting a complex alignment of witchcraft, murder, and

the diabolical Mother, with the Whore of Babylon; an alignment seen in other Gunpowder plays.

Middleton further aligns sin and depravity with witchcraft when the witches prepare for a night flight, 'Heard you the owl yet?' Hecate asks Stadlin (3.3.4). 'You are fortunate still; / The very screech-owl lights upon your shoulder (10). This use of 'screech owl', an established Gunpowder motif, serves to reinforce the dark nature of the witches, and Firestone, in an aside, compares the witches to 'fowls i'th'air that fly'. 'I am sure they'll be a / company of foul sluts there tonight', he states, since 'they are able to / putrefy it, to infect a whole region' (3.3.16-19). Pollution in the play is further reinforced when the Duchess visits Hecate and the witches to procure poison to kill Almachildes. 'This must be done with speed, dispatched this night, / If it be possible' she tells Hecate. (5.2.10-11). Hecate asks 'Can you doubt me then daughter? / That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods / walk, / Whole earth's foundations bellow and the spirits / Of the entombed to burst out from their marbles' (25-28). This not only echoes her speech in 1.2, when she brags of the power of witchcraft, but the line 'miles of woods / walk' recalls the Burnham Wood prophecy in *Macbeth*. Hecate dismisses the Duchess, 'Leave all to me and my five sisters, daughter' (5.1.37). She calls to her spirits, the 'raven' and the 'screech-owl', who 'never fly by th' door / But they call in – I thank 'em – and they lose not by't; / I give 'em barley, soaked in infants' blood' (40-42). Raven and screech owl denote darkness and witchcraft in post-Gunpowder drama, and are often used to invoke Catesby and his fellow conspirators. Hecate's line 'barley soaked in infants blood' educes the unnatural mother image used to denounce Lady Macbeth and the Empress.



In a scene, which again recalls *Macbeth*, the witches add diabolical ingredients to a vessel, including 'three ounces of the red-haired girl' whom Hecate had killed the previous night. This again highlights her natural propensity to murder children, and aligns the world of *The Witch* and her dark magic with the papist brutality depicted in post-Gunpowder tropes.

Middleton, like his fellow Gunpowder playwrights, utilises the popular trope of the Whore of Babylon to establish the corrupt nature of the play's central female character, the Duchess. The action of the play is bound up, like that of the play's court, in lust and witchcraft, each character serving to reinforce the corrupt nature of their stage-world. The contamination of lust pervades the narrative, and is reinforced in the most transgressive act in the play. The Duchess, duping Almachildes into having sex with her by blindfolding him and pretending she is Amoretta, removes the blindfold and presents him with a simple choice: 'thou must either die or kill the duke' (3.1.16). If he refuses, she will accuse him of rape, 'I purpose / To call this subtle sinful snare of mine / An act of force from thee' (29-31). Almachildes protests 'I see no choice in't madame, / For tis all death methinks' (37-8). The Duchess then reveals her intention to make him her legal husband once the Duke is murdered. The Duchess is a clear figure for the Whore of Babylon; she plots to murder her husband, committing adultery in the process, and threatening her lover with a false accusation of rape. Such actions would have been disturbing to Middleton's audience, and here the dark nature of the Duchess evokes the disreputable figures of Frances Howard, and the dark women of Gunpowder plays.

Francisca too displays elements of the Scarlet Whore. Scheming against her sister-in-law Isabella, she plans to 'catch this sister of mine and bring her name / To some disgrace' (4.3.5-6). To achieve this she has 'spiced' the 'maidservants and the girls o'th' house' with 'a drowsy posset' (4.3.17-18). This recalls the actions of Lady Macbeth, who 'wassail's' Duncan's sleeping guards with wine. Having ensured the house will be undisturbed, Francisca sends Gasparo to Isabella's chamber, directing her brother Antonio to 'discover' the two supposed lovers together. Antonio returns, announces he has killed them both, and threatens Francisca with death. In heeding Francisca's false revelations, Antonio has become a murderer: 'Hadst thou been secret, then had I been happy, / And had a hope, like man, of joys to come' (4.3.70-71). Francisca admits, 'Your bed was never wronged / ... 'Twas only my deceit, my plot and cunning / To bring disgrace upon her' (4.3.79-83). Antonio, sickened at having killed without just cause, laments his actions, 'I've killed 'em now for nothing; yet the shame / Follows my blood still' (4.3.98-99). Forcing Aberzanes and Francisca to their knees, he performs a makeshift handfast ceremony. Again, Middleton chooses to align the activity of Francisca with Lady Macbeth rather than the Gunpowder Plotters, but the dramatic effect is the same. By 1615-16, then, the actions of Lucretia Borgia, Dekker's Empress, and Lady Macbeth have become theatrical metaphors for the Powder Treason itself, demonstrating the power and currency of dramatic depictions of post-Gunpowder culture.

In a series of plot twists, Antonio discovers Isabella is sleeping with the disguised Sebastian. Her reputation is thus ruined. Blaming Sebastian, she claims, 'You've served me fair; my credit's stained for ever!' (5.1.129-131). Sebastian's

dissembling has tainted Isabella, who is now as spotted as the Whore of Babylon. Like Innogen in *Cymbeline*, the sin of lust and lies has disgraced her, and she too is now contaminated.

In an outlandish final scene, the Duke closes the play with a short speech in which he forgives the Duchess, and announces 'may this day ever prove / A day of triumph, joy, and honest love' (134-5). Middleton must have known such a resolution was farcical, but perhaps he intended a satirical attack on James I for pardoning the Somersets, despite Frances' public confession of guilt. The Duchess' lines 'My guiltiness had need of such a master, / That with a beck can suppress multitudes, / And dim misdeeds with radiance of his glory, / Not to be seen with dazzled, popular eyes'(4.1.50-3), may be a possible allusion to James, since only the king, with the 'radiance of his glory' could forgive such black deeds as those committed by the Somersets.

In alluding to both the Powder Poison and the Gunpowder Plot, Middleton conjoins the two events with the action of *The Witch*; action which includes intended murder, witchcraft, poison, and lust, all elements firmly associated with Catholicism by 1616. *The Witch* is not what Heinemann calls 'a satisfactory play' - the 'melodramatic devices are too elaborate for the human motivation and passions to work consistently and freely.'<sup>234</sup> However, she does concede Middleton successfully conveys a court corrupted by lust and witchcraft which is 'more realistic and more disturbing than has commonly been allowed.'<sup>235</sup> The witch scenes in Middleton's play are longer and more complex than those in *Macbeth*, and the stage horror is effective in 'a deliberately grotesque way.'<sup>236</sup> However, Middleton's witches are less sinister than Shakespeare's, since 'they do not evoke

the fatal force of cosmic evil that terrifies'.<sup>237</sup> In *The Witch*, Hecate and her associates are part of the play's deception and disguise, an integral component in the dissembling world of the lustful Italian court. 'Connecting sin at court with popery is central to the long and short-term political significance of the Overbury scandal',<sup>238</sup> but beyond that, Middleton, like Webster, and Chapman, presents his audience with an Italian court full of whores, pimps, and witches.

In *The White Devil*, *All Is True*, and *The Witch*, lustful corruption endangers and pollutes the court, and witchcraft and supernatural activity reinforce this corruption. The pope as the Antichrist lurks in the background, waiting in the wings to strike at England. Like earlier Gunpowder plays, *The White Devil*, *All Is True*, and *The Witch* deal with dissembling, equivocation, lies, undermining, and authority threatened. They question and satirise the nature of a sinful court, express fears about the transgression of witches, and demonstrate that the issues arising from the Gunpowder Plot still cast a shadow over England. At the core of all three plays is the Whore of Babylon; a symbol of Catholic violence, treachery, and menace. Webster and Middleton choose, as Chapman had done, to explore the notion of the sinful Catholic court. Through tropes of murder, witchcraft, and sexual deviance, they demonstrate the spiritual chaos unleashed when courtiers and rulers are infected and transgress. Shakespeare and Fletcher depict an English king embracing the truth and light of Protestantism and casting off the papal yoke. All three plays explore post-Gunpowder issues, but they also incorporate the danger of more contemporaneous themes such as divorce, adultery, rebellion, and poison, negotiating these latest Catholic disgraces with the now firmly established Gunpowder paradigms that first arose in 1605.

In the years during which these plays were in production, concerns surrounding the Gunpowder Plot continued to endure. There were on going investigations and arrests of those suspected of being involved in the conspiracy, rumours of further plots and assassination attempts, and in 1615, an uprising in the North by the descendants of Catesby's circle. James' successful negotiation of a Protestant husband for his daughter was greeted with celebration in 1613, but the emergence of the divorce scandal and subsequent murder of Overbury in the Tower did little to quell public anxiety about court corruption. The shocking revelations during the Overbury affair 'suggest that in his own court, James had allowed witchcraft and its concomitant radical disorders to flourish unchecked.'<sup>239</sup> He had narrowly averted a catastrophic explosion in 1605, but the king continued to be a target for Catholic dissension. Henri IV's murder in 1610 reinforced this danger, and the Overbury scandal highlighted the persistent nature of papist violence. 'The crime of poisoning had a number of highly dubious associations that helped connect the Overbury murder – and, by implication, the royal court – to such frightening transgressions as demonic witchcraft, popery, and the political corruption of courts under wicked rulers. If a single crime could evoke Jesuits, witches and Tiberian Rome, it was unlikely to do much for the court's reputation of virtue.'<sup>240</sup> Like Lady Macbeth, Vittoria Corombona, and Dekker's Empress, Frances Howard repeatedly violated patriarchal norms of modest female behaviour, which 'disturbed her contemporaries and prompted the misogynistic vilification of the transgressor.'<sup>241</sup> During the Overbury scandal she 'was the chief source of the horror and disquiet the affair triggered.'<sup>242</sup>

On 16th November 1615, Sir Edward Coke openly linked the Overbury case with both the attack of the Spanish Armada, and the Gunpowder Plot. 'This powder poison', he wrote, 'hath been in all things so dangerous as the powder treason'.<sup>243</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> November, he reinforced this view in an address to the court at Franklin's trial, 'if this plot had not been found out neither the court, city, nor many particular houses had escaped the malice of the wicked crew'.<sup>244</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> November, almost ten years to the day since the detection of Guy Fawkes in the vault beneath Westminster, Coke noted, 'The discovery of the Powder Poison, as of the Powder Treason, a sign of God's favour towards his Majesty'.<sup>245</sup> By 1615, the actions of Frances Howard had been firmly tethered to a long list of Catholic crimes stretching back to 1588. In the government's comparison of the Overbury poison plot with the Catholic attacks of 1588 and 1605, the event became inscribed 'upon the sacred roll of God's deliverances of the Protestant English monarchy from the forces of popish darkness'.<sup>246</sup>

Prior to the Powder Treason, playwrights had utilised general tropes of anti-Catholicism to denounce Catholic activity. As Paul Quinn argues, there existed in England a long-established tradition of anti-papistry before the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Playwrights depicted Catholic atrocities in the on going battle between Rome and Protestantism. 'Papists are violent, treacherous, and corrupt: it is a corruption figured morally, politically, and doctrinally. The Papist characters dominate, while the Protestant characters are either victims, or only survive through divine Providence'.<sup>247</sup> The stereotypical anti-Catholic tropes employed on the stage prior to 1605 included 'hypocritical Papist clerics plotting in incense filled churches, claiming celibacy while flouting the rule by engaging in illegal

sexual activity, or taking advantage of their close proximity to female congregants'.<sup>248</sup> These dramatic motifs are 'readily apparent on the English stage and in wider print culture prior to the closure of the theatres at the onset of the Civil wars'.<sup>249</sup> An estimated 15,000 people a week attended the theatre in 1595. By 1625 that figure had risen to 25,000.<sup>250</sup> It was often the case that references to contemporary political events in dramatic works amounted 'to little more than a series of allusions',<sup>251</sup> but these allusions often lead to 'a more sustained analysis of contemporary political issues and problems, indicating that dramatists had a clear interest in politics and realised that many in the audience would share their concerns'.<sup>252</sup> In the years following 1605, the primary preoccupation of playwrights and audiences alike was Catholic terror attacks.

As Mark Nicholls states, what is evident from the Gunpowder Plot is that it was no longer enough 'to kill a king, or to kill a royal family, or even wipe out an entire political nation. To achieve paralysis in the state, a vital precondition in any coup, you need by the early seventeenth century to start thinking about erasing the physical memorials dear to the regime, to ensure a *tabula rasa*, to begin the world anew'.<sup>253</sup> After the discovery of Fawkes in the vault, authors and dramatists began to mine circulating discourse looking for new epithets of anti-Catholic abuse, simply because the pre-existing ones weren't *sufficient* to convey the horrors of post-Plot culture. By drawing on Gunpowder commentary, playwrights were able to introduce a whole host of appropriately terrifying new paradigms to replace, or coexist alongside, pre-existing anti-papist stereotypes. The mere hypocrisy of a Catholic cleric was no longer adequate. To successfully navigate a theatrical world post-*The Devil in the Vault*, audiences demanded witches, the Whore of Babylon,

the serpent beneath the flower, the infectious dissembler, the demonic pope, the Roman butcher, and the Antichrist himself.



## Conclusion

‘Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill’

The intention of this thesis was to investigate the extent to which the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 had an impact on the work of Shakespeare. Initial assumptions that the Plot may have had, at best, a minor impact on the drama produced in the Jacobean theatre have instead given way to an understanding of the intense eschatological terror the Gunpowder Treason unleashed in England. Not only did it influence London playwrights, it had a profound effect on the cultural landscape of the early seventeenth century. A failed affair by a group of restless fanatics, the physical conspiracy, in and of itself, came to nothing, and was swiftly and successfully dealt with by James I and his government. Nevertheless, the impact the Powder Treason had on the English imagination was a long-time dying. The Plot came to represent the near-apocalyptic escape England had made from the threat of the Antichrist. It was an imaginary Armageddon. In these turbulent years of religious upheaval, ‘while it was certain Antichrist would lose and Christ would win, it was still an open question whether England would triumph with Christ or be destroyed by Antichrist.’<sup>1</sup>

To the Protestants of England, Fawkes, Percy, and Catesby epitomised the dark menace of Roman Catholicism. As Peter Lake argues, ‘there really was a popish threat to the autonomy of Protestant England for much of Elizabeth’s reign. Under James the war with Spain ended but... if the alarm over the Spanish Match is added to the traditional list which stretches from the Armada, through the

gunpowder plot, the various invasion scares of the 1620s and the Irish revolt, then every generation of English people between the 1580s and the 1640s had personal experience of popish assault on English independence.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot unleashed intense psychological warfare. Sermons expounded on the need for revenge and on the need to pray for sudden, unexpected death. Poems recalled the slaughter of thousands on the streets of Paris, the violent murder of monarchs, the infectious danger of contagious Jesuits. The Plot afforded England the opportunity to peer into the heart of darkness; to consider the reality of life without a monarch, a clergy, and a ruling body. A life without God himself. Moreover, the idea of the Antichrist stalking the streets of London shifted from an abstract idea reserved for Sunday morning contemplation to a chilling new reality.

One place in England where this fear found voice was in the London theatres. As Andrew Hadfield asserts, 'Political debate took place constantly in and around Shakespeare's London, and nowhere more so than in the variety of public performances on display.'<sup>3</sup> After 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605, these performances afforded playwrights the opportunity to respond to the issues provoked by the Gunpowder Plot, and what is now clear is that in its aftermath, the London theatre emerged not just as a place of entertainment, but as a front line in England's psychological battle with the forces of darkness. Playwrights played a crucial role in the years 1605-16; they navigated and circumnavigated issues that beat at the heart of English politics. Popular drama mirrored the anxiety and fear experienced on the streets of London, and as audiences flooded to the auditoriums to witness their own spiritual and religious crises, the theatre became an urgent site of cosmic

reassurance. The rolling landscapes of pastoral comedy gave way to dark and violent revenge tragedies, populated by possession, devils, blood, witchcraft, the supernatural, and terror. Even a comedy such as *Volpone* or a romance like *Cymbeline* had darkness at its core. However, by successfully resolving such terrifying issues, theatres demonstrated that solutions were possible, that England might survive, that death may not lurk around every corner.

What is also clear is that Gunpowder plays became part of the mythology of the Plot itself. Not all the plays were a success; as is clear from the colophons of the printed texts of *The Witch*, *The White Devil*, and *Catiline*. However, the very fact these plays were written and in performance, suggests their authors believed the subject matter to be topical. Perhaps the plays were better received than the dramatists imply, or perhaps *Macbeth* was such an overwhelmingly successful Gunpowder play it overshadowed other works. From Barlow's sermon on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1605, through J.H.'s *The Divell of the Vault* and the Gunpowder plays of 1605-6, tropes which emerged in the aftermath of the Plot's discovery came to form a new and rapidly established dramatic syntax. This nomenclature became so laden with instant meaning that, by 1612, Shakespeare was able to depict Wolsey as 'a holy fox' (1.2.158); a caricature that simultaneously evoked Guy Fawkes, the undermining Jesuit, the pope, and the Antichrist, and efficiently coupled Wolsey's imaginative activity to the frightening reality of early seventeenth century Catholic treachery. Moreover, when Middleton alludes to *Macbeth* in 1615-16, he reveals the extent to which Gunpowder plays *themselves* came to denote the Plot. This evolution of Gunpowder linguistics highlights the fact playwrights were not writing in isolation - from each other or from their audiences. Rather, Shakespeare, Barnes,

et al, recycled popular tropes and paradigms because it lent their work a topical currency. These plays borrow from each other in the same ways that authors borrowed from circulating texts and ballads. To use a contemporary example, a TV show such as *Homeland* could not exist without previous post-9/11 shows such as *24*. *Homeland* does not need to refer directly to the events of September 2001, it need only allude to tropes established in *24*: the lone government agent working to dismantle a terrorist plot and prevent catastrophe; the threat of religious extremism; the vulnerability of a nation to attack from within and without. *Homeland* succeeds because its nomenclature is drawn from extant popular discourse. What this thesis demonstrates is that in the early years of the seventeenth century, dramatic production in London theatres relied on just such a circulation of relevant paradigms. Indeed, it is tempting to conclude that *Macbeth* may be the first modern instance of popular culture's confrontation with terrorist events.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605, the Antichrist made his long-awaited appearance in London. Booted and spurred, he was unexpectedly discovered, match in hand, in an unassuming vault beneath Westminster.

The Gunpowder conspirators had no way of knowing that, despite their failure to detonate an explosion beneath Westminster, the impact of their enterprise would nonetheless create a powerful rent in the English psyche. It is this rent, manifest in the written responses of the playwrights, authors, and commentators, which demonstrates the absolute *success* of Catesby's Plot and reveals the true power of what we in the modern world have come to define as terrorism.

The Gunpowder Plot was undeniably 'the mother of all crimes',<sup>4</sup> and the people of England 'came to understand the magnitude of what had been planned, just as they came to recognise the high good fortune that had averted catastrophe at Westminster. And such a catastrophe!'<sup>5</sup> However, in imagining what might have been, the citizens of London were also forced to confront the more uncomfortable issue of *what might be*. As Shakespeare wrote in the dark days of 1606, 'Such welcome and unwelcome things at once / 'Tis hard to reconcile.'<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

## Introduction

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation in The Gunpowder Plot' in *The Historical Journal*, 50, No.4 (2007), 787

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 788

<sup>3</sup> Mark Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot: The King's Book and the Dissemination of News', *Recusant History* 28, No. 3 (2007), 397

<sup>4</sup> Gary Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*, (OUP, 1995), 26

<sup>5</sup> Henceforth, DV: J.H, *The Diuell of the Vault. Or, the vnmasking of murther in a briefe declaration of the Cacolicke-complotted treason, lately discovered* (London, 1605), A4.r

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, B.v

<sup>7</sup> Frances Dolan, *The Whore of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth Century Print Culture* (USA: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005)

<sup>8</sup> Peggy Munoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline, An Iconographic Reconstruction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), 15

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>10</sup> Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority: Elizabethan & Jacobean Censorship* (The Revels Plays Companion Library) (MUP, 1990), 29

<sup>11</sup> John Gerard, *What Was The Gunpowder Plot?* (London: Osgood, McIlVaine and Co, 1897), 4

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>13</sup> Robert Appelbaum, 'Milton, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Mythography of Terror', *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 12 (2007), 466

<sup>14</sup> Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time* (OUP, 2000)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture* (CUP, 1997), 82

<sup>17</sup> Julia Gasper, *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 62-3

<sup>18</sup> Judith Doolin Spikes, 'The Jacobean History Play and the Myth of the Elect Nation' *Renaissance Drama* 8 (1977), 141

<sup>19</sup> Wills, 8

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson, Volpone, and The Gunpowder Plot* (CUP, 2008)

<sup>23</sup> B N De Luna, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of Catiline and its Historical Context*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)

<sup>24</sup> Rebecca Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007)

<sup>25</sup> Alistair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair 1603-1660* (CUP, 2002)

<sup>26</sup> Paul Quinn, *Anti-Papistry and the English Stage 1580-1642* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Sussex, 2006)

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the works cited in this thesis, general, although not always reliable, discussion of the Plot can be found in the following: Alice Hogge, *God's Secret Agents: Queen Elizabeth's Forbidden Priests and the Hatching of the Gunpowder Plot* (UK: Harper Perennial, 2006); David Cressy, Antonia Fraser, Brenda Buchanan and David Cannadine, *Gunpowder Plots: A Celebration of 400 Years of Bonfire Night* (UK: Allen Lane, 2005); Philip Caraman, *Henry Garnet, 1555-1606 and The Gunpowder Plot*, London, (1964)

<sup>28</sup> Mark Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot* (UK: MUP, 1991), 213

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 214-5

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (CUP, 1980), 216-228. See also Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company 1594-1642* (CUP, 2004), 281-288

<sup>31</sup> James Ellison, 'The Winter's Tale and the Religious Politics of Europe', in Alison Thorne (ed) *Shakespeare's Romances: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Hants: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 178

<sup>32</sup> Gerard, 236

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (Arden Critical Companions) (UK: Thompson Learning, 2004), 19-20

<sup>34</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 398

## CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> William Barlow, *The sermon preached at Paules Crosse, the tenth day of Nouember being the next day after the discoverie of this late horrible treason. By the right reuerend father in God, William, by Gods permission, Lord Bishop of Rochester* (London, 1606), D.r

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, E4.v

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Philip Sydney, *A History of the Gunpowder Plot: The Conspiracy and its Agents* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1905), 186-7

<sup>4</sup> Nicholls, *Investing Gunpowder Plot*, 15

<sup>5</sup> Alan Haynes, *The Gunpowder Plot* (UK: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 5

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (UK: Phoenix, 2005), 23

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> James Sharpe, *Remember Remember the Fifth of November: Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot* (London: Profile Books, 2006), 5

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 21-22. For a discussion of English Catholics at this time, see John Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past and Present*, 21, (April.1962), 39-59, and Christopher Haigh, 'From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol.31 (1981), 129-147

<sup>10</sup> Haynes, 8

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Fraser, 25

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Oswald Tesimond, 'The Narrative of Oswald Tesimond alias Greenaway', in Francis Edwards (ed) *The Gunpowder Plot* (London: The Folio Society, 1973), 29

<sup>15</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 398

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- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, 401
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid, 400
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 401
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, 398
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, 401
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid
- <sup>24</sup> Henceforth *KB*. Known as *King's Book*. Anonymous, *His Maiesties speach in this last session of Parliament as neere his very words as could be gathered at the instant. Together with a discourse of the maner of the discouery of this late intended treason, ioyned with the examination of some of the prisoners* (London, 1605), L2.r
- <sup>25</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 398
- <sup>26</sup> Fraser, 60
- <sup>27</sup> Thomas Winter, 'Thomas Winters Confession, taken the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1605. In the presence of the Councillors, whose names are under-written' in *KB*, I2.v
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid
- <sup>29</sup> Haynes, 48-9
- <sup>30</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 788
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 788-9
- <sup>32</sup> Winter, *KB*, I2.v
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid, I2.v-r
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, I2.r
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid
- <sup>36</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 789
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid
- <sup>38</sup> Winter, *KB*, I2.r
- <sup>39</sup> Haynes, 52
- <sup>40</sup> Winter, *KB*, I2.r
- <sup>41</sup> Haynes, 29
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid
- <sup>44</sup> Winter, *KB*, I3.v
- <sup>45</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 789
- <sup>46</sup> Fraser, 84-5
- <sup>47</sup> Tesimond, 69
- <sup>48</sup> Fraser, 87
- <sup>49</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 790
- <sup>50</sup> Winter, *KB*, I3.r
- <sup>51</sup> Fraser, 48
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, 122
- <sup>53</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 791
- <sup>54</sup> Winter *KB*, I4.v
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid
- <sup>57</sup> Sharpe, 46
- <sup>58</sup> Winter, *KB*, I4.v
- <sup>59</sup> Fraser, 39-40



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- <sup>60</sup> Ibid, 122
- <sup>61</sup> Winter, *KB*, I4.r
- <sup>62</sup> Fraser, 133
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid
- <sup>64</sup> Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 40
- <sup>65</sup> Winter, *KB*, I4.r
- <sup>66</sup> Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 40
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid
- <sup>68</sup> Guy Fawkes, 'The True Copie of the Declaration of Guido Fawkes, taken in the presence of the Counsellors whose names are under-written' in *KB*, H3.v
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid, H3.r
- <sup>70</sup> Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 40
- <sup>71</sup> Winter, *KB*, K.r
- <sup>72</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 793
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid
- <sup>77</sup> Fawkes, *KB*, H3.r
- <sup>78</sup> Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 41
- <sup>79</sup> Fawkes, *KB*, H4.r
- <sup>80</sup> Gerard, 58
- <sup>81</sup> *KB*, G4.r
- <sup>82</sup> Haynes, 7
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid
- <sup>85</sup> Winter, *KB*, K2.r
- <sup>86</sup> Fawkes, *KB*, H3.r
- <sup>87</sup> Winter, *KB*, K2.r
- <sup>88</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 790
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid
- <sup>90</sup> Winter, *KB*, K2.r
- <sup>91</sup> James Travers, *Gunpowder: The Players Behind the Plot* (Kew: The National Archives, 2005), 46
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid, 46-7
- <sup>93</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 799
- <sup>94</sup> Henceforth: *CSPD. The Calendar of State Papers* details the suspicions surrounding Garnet's involvement closely, and it seems clear from the evidence gathered in the Tower during his imprisonment he was well aware of the Plot before 5<sup>th</sup> November. See Mary Anne Everett Green, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I 1603-109* (Vol. 9) (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1857)
- <sup>95</sup> Travers, 24
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid, 181
- <sup>98</sup> Winter, *KB*, K3.v
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid, K3.r
- <sup>101</sup> Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 6

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- <sup>102</sup> Ibid, 7  
<sup>103</sup> KB, F2.r  
<sup>104</sup> Ibid, F4.v  
<sup>105</sup> Nicholls, with permission, from private e-mail correspondence, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
<sup>106</sup> KB, F4.r  
<sup>107</sup> Ibid, G2.v  
<sup>108</sup> Ibid  
<sup>109</sup> Travers, 181  
<sup>110</sup> Ibid  
<sup>111</sup> Travers, 52  
<sup>112</sup> KB, G2.r  
<sup>113</sup> Ibid, G4.v  
<sup>114</sup> Ibid  
<sup>115</sup> Travers, 182  
<sup>116</sup> Ibid  
<sup>117</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 397  
<sup>118</sup> Ibid  
<sup>119</sup> Ibid  
<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 399  
<sup>121</sup> Ibid  
<sup>122</sup> Ibid  
<sup>123</sup> Travers, 65  
<sup>124</sup> *By the King whereas one Thomas Percy, a gentleman pensioner to his Maiestie, is discovered to haue bene priuy to one of the most horrible treasons that euer was contriued.* (London, 5th November 1605)  
<sup>125</sup> Ibid  
<sup>126</sup> Travers, 66  
<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 56  
<sup>128</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 790  
<sup>129</sup> Travers, 56-7  
<sup>130</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 407  
<sup>131</sup> KB, H.r - H2.v  
<sup>132</sup> Travers, 60  
<sup>133</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 407  
<sup>134</sup> Sharpe, 62  
<sup>135</sup> Ibid  
<sup>136</sup> Ibid  
<sup>137</sup> Ibid  
<sup>138</sup> Ibid  
<sup>139</sup> Travers, 182  
<sup>140</sup> Sharpe, 62  
<sup>141</sup> KB, G2.r  
<sup>142</sup> According to Winter's confession, Catesby and Rookwood were burnt by Gunpowder. It is clear from multiple secondary sources that gunpowder had been drying out near to a fire, and a spark had caused it to ignite, injuring those close by. See, for example, Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 20  
<sup>143</sup> Travers, 182  
<sup>144</sup> Winter, KB, K3.r -K4.v

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- <sup>145</sup> Anon, *A True and Perfect Relation of the proceedings at the seuerall arraignments of the late most barbarous traitors, Imprinted at London: By Robert Barker, printer to the Kings most excellent Maiestie* (London, 1606)
- <sup>146</sup> T.W, *The Araignment and Execution of the late Traytors, with a relation of the other Traytors, which were executed at Worcester, the 27. of January last past* (London, 1606)
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid, B.r –B2.v
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid, B2.v
- <sup>149</sup> Ibid, B2.r
- <sup>150</sup> Quoted in *A True and Perfect Relation*, K2.r – K3.v
- <sup>151</sup> T. W, C.r
- <sup>152</sup> Ibid, C2.v
- <sup>153</sup> Ibid, B4.r
- <sup>154</sup> Ibid, C2.r–C3.v
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid, C3.v
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid, C3.r
- <sup>157</sup> Ibid, C3.r – C4.v
- <sup>158</sup> Ibid, C4.v
- <sup>159</sup> Ibid, C4.r – D.v
- <sup>160</sup> Ibid, D.r
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid, D2.v
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid, D4.v
- <sup>163</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 402
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid, 404
- <sup>165</sup> James I, 'His Majesties speech in this last session of Parliament, as neere his very words as could be gathered at the instant,' in *KB*, B.v
- <sup>166</sup> Ibid
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid, B2.v
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid, B2.r
- <sup>170</sup> Ibid, B2.r-B3.v
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid, B3.v
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid, B4.v
- <sup>173</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 797
- <sup>174</sup> Ibid
- <sup>175</sup> Fraser, 50
- <sup>176</sup> Tesimond, 58
- <sup>177</sup> Fraser, 51
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid
- <sup>179</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 801
- <sup>180</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 802
- <sup>181</sup> Jenny Wormald, 'Gunpowder, Treason, and Scots', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol.24, No.2, Politics and Religion in the Early Seventeenth Century: *New Voices* (April, 1985), 147
- <sup>182</sup> Ibid, 148
- <sup>183</sup> Cited in *Ibid*

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- <sup>184</sup> Lori Anne Ferrell, *Government by Polemic: James I, the King's Preachers, and the Rhetorics of Conformity 1603-1625*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 67-8
- <sup>185</sup> Fraser, 46
- <sup>186</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 403
- <sup>187</sup> *KB*, C2.r
- <sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, C3.v
- <sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, C3.r
- <sup>190</sup> Wormald, 146
- <sup>191</sup> Ferrell, 65
- <sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, 20
- <sup>193</sup> *KB*, B4.r
- <sup>194</sup> *Ibid*, C.v
- <sup>195</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 806
- <sup>196</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 403
- <sup>197</sup> James I, *KB*, C4.v
- <sup>198</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>199</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 403
- <sup>200</sup> *Ibid*, 401
- <sup>201</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>202</sup> Anita McConnell, 'Barlow, William (1554-1625)', *ONDB* [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008]
- <sup>203</sup> Matthew Law, in Barlow, A4.r
- <sup>204</sup> *Ibid*, A4.v
- <sup>205</sup> Thomas S Nowak, 'Propaganda and the Pulpit. Robert Cecil, William Barlow and the Essex and Gunpowder Plots', in Katherine Z Keller and Gerald J Schifforst (eds) *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Language and Literature Series, Volume 15), (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1993), 35
- <sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 38
- <sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 48
- <sup>208</sup> Barlow, E.v
- <sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, E.r
- <sup>210</sup> Nowak, 49
- <sup>211</sup> Barlow, C3.v
- <sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, C4.v
- <sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, C3.r
- <sup>214</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>215</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, C4.v
- <sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, C4.r
- <sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, D.r
- <sup>219</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, D.r
- <sup>221</sup> Nowak, 51
- <sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 48
- <sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 51
- <sup>224</sup> *Ibid*

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- <sup>225</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The double PP. A papist in armes. bearing ten seuerall shields. Encountred by the protestant. at ten seuerall weapons. A Iesuite marching before them* (London, 1606)
- <sup>226</sup> John Twyning, John, 'Dekker, Thomas (c.1572–1632)' *ODNB* [accessed 15 May 2008]
- <sup>227</sup> For a discussion of Dekker and Segar, see F P Wilson, 'Dekker, Segar, and Some Other Author (S)', *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 18, No. 3. University of California Press (May, 1955), 297-300
- <sup>228</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>229</sup> William Segar, *The blazon of papists* (London, 1587), A1.r
- <sup>230</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>231</sup> Lisa Jardine, *The Awful End of Prince William the Silent: The First Assassination of a Head of State with a Handgun* (UK: Harper Collins, 2005), 35
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, 36
- <sup>233</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>234</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>235</sup> Richard Bonny, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660* (UK: OUP, 1991), 171
- <sup>236</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The massacre at Paris with the death of the Duke of Guise. As it was plaide by the right honourable the Lord high Admirall his Seruants* (London, 1594)
- <sup>237</sup> Lisa Parmalee, 'Printers, Patrons, Readers, and Spies: Importation of French Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England,' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), 855
- <sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 856
- <sup>239</sup> Dekker, *The Double PP*, B2.r
- <sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, B3.r
- <sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, B3.r –B4.v
- <sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, B4.v
- <sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, B4.r
- <sup>244</sup> 'screech-owl, n. 'A name for the Barn Owl (*Aluco flammeus* Fleming, *Strix* Linn.), from its discordant cry, supposed to be of evil omen.' *OED Online*, screech-owl, n. (Second edition, 1989; online version March 2012) [accessed January 30, 2012]
- <sup>245</sup> Dekker, *The Double PP*, D.2.r
- <sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, D3.r
- <sup>247</sup> N.D.F Pearce, 'Heath, John (b. c.1585)', *ODNB* (2004) [accessed 12<sup>th</sup> April 2007] Susan E Krantz cites John Heath as the author of *The Divell of the Vault*, in 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in The Whore of Babylon', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Tudor and Stuart Drama (Spring, 1995), 275
- <sup>248</sup> Hynd is credited as 'J.H' in several of his publications. Both his work and *The Divell of the Vault* feature in the Harleian Miscellany, and the printer Nathaniel Butter printed both Hynd's work and *The Divell of the Vault*. For further information on Hynd see Helen Moore, 'Hynd, John (fl. c.1592–1606)', *ONDB* [accessed 18<sup>th</sup> August 2008]
- <sup>249</sup> *DV*, A3.r
- <sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, A4.r
- <sup>251</sup> *Ibid*, B.v
- <sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, B2
- <sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, B3.v

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- <sup>254</sup> Ibid, B4.r. As yet, sources for this event in Germany have still to come to light, and no documented evidence for such an incident can be found. Further research may one day uncover a second European Gunpowder Treason.
- <sup>255</sup> Ibid, C.r
- <sup>256</sup> Ibid
- <sup>257</sup> Ibid, C2.r
- <sup>258</sup> Ibid, C2.v
- <sup>259</sup> Ibid C3.v
- <sup>260</sup> Ibid, C3.r
- <sup>261</sup> Ibid
- <sup>262</sup> Ibid, D.v
- <sup>263</sup> Ibid, D.r
- <sup>264</sup> Ibid, D3.v
- <sup>265</sup> Ibid
- <sup>266</sup> Stephen Wright, 'Symonds, William (b. 1556, d. in or after 1616)', *ODNB* [accessed 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008]
- <sup>267</sup> William Symonds, *A Heavenly Voyce: A Sermon tending to call the people of God from among the Romish Babylonians: Preached at Paules Crosse the 12 of Januarie. 1606* (London, 1606), C3.v
- <sup>268</sup> Ibid
- <sup>269</sup> Ibid, D2.v-r
- <sup>270</sup> Ibid, D2.r
- <sup>271</sup> Ibid, D3.r
- <sup>272</sup> Ibid, D4.r
- <sup>273</sup> Ibid, E2.r
- <sup>274</sup> Ibid, E4.v
- <sup>275</sup> Pauline Croft, 'The Reputation of Robert Cecil: Libels, Political Opinion and Popular Awareness in the early Seventeenth Century' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Volume 1 (1991) 48
- <sup>276</sup> Robert Cecil, *An Answere To Certaine Scandalous Papers, Scattered abroad under colour of a Catholicke Admonition*, (London, 1606), B3.r
- <sup>277</sup> Ibid, F2.v
- <sup>278</sup> Ibid, E.v
- <sup>279</sup> Ibid, B4.v
- <sup>280</sup> Ibid, B3.v-r
- <sup>281</sup> Ibid, C.v
- <sup>282</sup> Ibid, E2.r
- <sup>283</sup> Cited in Stephen Wright, 'Leigh, William (1550–1639)', *ODNB* [accessed 5th Feb 2009]
- <sup>284</sup> William Leigh, *Great Britaine's great deliverance, from the great danger of Popish powder by way of meditation, upon the late intended treason against the King's most excellent Majestie, the Queene, the Prince, and all their royall issue: with the high court of Parliament and Westminster, there to have beene blowne up by the Popish faction, the fift of November, 1605. If God of his great mercy had not prevented the mischief* (London, 1606), D.v
- <sup>285</sup> Ibid, C.v
- <sup>286</sup> Ibid, B2.r
- <sup>287</sup> Ibid, E.v

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- 288 Ibid, B3.r  
 289 T.W. D.r  
 290 Leigh, B2.v  
 291 Brett Usher, 'Hubbock, William (1560–1631)', *ODNB* [accessed 16th March 2008]  
 292 William Hubbock, *Great Britain's Resurrection: Or the Parliament's passing bell. By way of Psalmodie, agains the Tryumphing of the Papists in their seven psalms. And in imitation of the song of the three Nobles of Israel, delivered out of the fierie oven of Babell* (London, 1606), A2.r  
 293 Ibid, B.r  
 294 Ibid, B2.v  
 295 Ibid, B3.v  
 296 Ibid, D2.v  
 297 Ibid, D3.v  
 298 Ibid, F2.r–F3.v  
 299 Ibid, F4.v  
 300 Ibid, G4.v  
 301 *DV*, C.r  
 302 Dekker, *The Double PP*, D.2.r  
 303 Barlow, C.4.v  
 304 John Rhodes, *A Brief Some of the Treason intended against King and State, when they should have been assembled in Parliament. Novemb.5.1605. with certain other English meters, which may be called: A dying repentance, or A mournfull song for Traytors to make use of now begun by one of Babington's company* (London, 1606)  
 305 Ibid, A2.r  
 306 Ibid, A2.v  
 307 Ibid, A3.v  
 308 Ibid, B.v  
 309 Ibid, A4.v  
 310 Ibid, B.v  
 311 P E McCullough, 'Andrewes, Lancelot (1555–1626)', *ODNB* [accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2009]  
 312 Ibid  
 313 J H Parker, *Ninety-six sermons By the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes; published by His Majesty's special command*, Volume IV (Oxford, 1841), 205  
 314 Ibid, 206  
 315 Ibid, 211  
 316 Adam Nicolson, *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible* (UK: Harper Perennial, 2003), 111  
 317 Andrewes in J H Parker, 211  
 318 Ibid, 212  
 319 Ibid, 213  
 320 Ibid, 215  
 321 Ibid, 217  
 322 Ibid, 213–14  
 323 Ibid, 206  
 324 Barlow, C4.r

<sup>325</sup> Dekker, *The Double PP*, D3.r

<sup>326</sup> DV, C3.v

<sup>327</sup> Donaldson, 227

<sup>328</sup> Cited in Ibid

## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I*, (London: Pimlico, 2004), 223

<sup>2</sup> Wills, 14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Barlow, C3.r

<sup>5</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 397

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Wills, 15

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>9</sup> C A Patrides and Joseph Antony Wittreich (eds) *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (UK: MUP, 1984), 97

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 98

<sup>13</sup> Hadfield, 3

<sup>14</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth-Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (UK: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), 19

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 20

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 23

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 52

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> John N King (ed) *Voices of the Reformation: A Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 32

<sup>20</sup> Patrides and Wittreich, 273-389. The bibliography lists over a hundred texts including, at least ten English sermons published on Revelation.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Dent, *The ruine of Rome: or An exposition vpon the whole Reuelation Wherein is plainly shewed and proued, that the popish religion, together with all the power and authoritie of Rome, shall ebbe and decay still more and more throughout all the churches of Europe, and come to an vtter ouerthrow euen in this life before the end of the world. Written especially for the comfort of Protestants, and the daunting of papists, seminary priests, Iesuites, and all that cursed rabble* (London, 1607)

<sup>22</sup> Wills, 17

<sup>23</sup> John D Cox, 'Stage Devilry in Two King's Men Plays of 1606', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (Oct 1998), 934

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (OUP, 2011), 237

<sup>26</sup> John D Cox, 'Barnes, Barnabe (*bap.* 1571, *d.* 1609)', *ODNB* [accessed 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009]

<sup>27</sup> Paul Henry, *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 2



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- <sup>28</sup> H L Rogers, 'An English Tailor and Father Garnet's Straw', *Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol.16. No.61 (Feb, 1965), 44
- <sup>29</sup> John Twynning, 'Dekker, Thomas (c.1572–1632)', *ONDB* [accessed 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008]
- <sup>30</sup> Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (UK: CUP, 1980), 219. To cross-reference dates, I have also referred to Gurr's *The Shakespeare Company 1594-1642* (CUP, 2004). All citations refer to *The Shakespearean Stage* unless stated
- <sup>31</sup> Thomas Dekker, 'The Whore of Babylon', Fredson Bowers (ed) *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Volume 2 (UK: CUP, 1955), 499
- <sup>32</sup> S E Sprott, 'The Damned Crew', *PMLA*, Vol. 84, No.3 (May 1969), 494
- <sup>33</sup> Susan E Krantz, 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in The Whore of Babylon', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.35, No.2, Tudor and Stuart Drama (Spring 1995); Julia Gasper, *The Dragon and The Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990)
- <sup>34</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 806
- <sup>35</sup> Barnabe Barnes, Nick de Somogyi (ed), *The Devil's Charter: A Tragedy Containing the Life and Death of Pope Alexander the Sixth* (London: Globe Education, Mick Hern Books, 1999), Prologue, 6. This edition does contain line numbers.
- <sup>36</sup> Burton Raffel (ed) *Macbeth* (New Haven and London: YUP, 2005)
- <sup>37</sup> DV, B2.v
- <sup>38</sup> The antimetabole has a rather complex history. First used by Chaucer, it is popularized by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. However, several translations of Horace's *Odes*, most notably that by Dryden, include the phrase 'fair is foul' in Book 3 Ode 29. Whether an English translation of Horace with an identical translation existed before Shakespeare's composition of *Macbeth* is difficult to say. See G W Shepherd (trans) *The Complete Odes and Epodes* (UK: Penguin, 1988)
- <sup>39</sup> Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, 499
- <sup>40</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris, 'The Smell of Macbeth', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 58, Number 4, (Winter, 2007), 466
- <sup>41</sup> DV, A.v
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid, C4.v
- <sup>43</sup> KB, F4.r
- <sup>44</sup> Barlow, D2.v
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, D4.r
- <sup>47</sup> DV, C3.v
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid, B4.v
- <sup>49</sup> Matthew 27:33, Geneva Bible (1587), *The Bible in English (990 – 1970)* Online Edition (Chadwick Healey Literature Collections, 2011). Please note: currently no stable URL is provided by Chadwick and access is via subscribing institutions [accessed 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011]
- <sup>50</sup> DV, B2.r
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid, C.r
- <sup>52</sup> James I, *Vox regis, or, The difference betwixt a King ruling by law, and a tyrant by his own will with the excellency of the English laws, rights and privileges: in two speeches of King James to the Parliaments in 1603 and March 21.1609: and in his basilicon doron: which may be an appendix to Vox Populi* (London, 1681)
- <sup>53</sup> KB, B2.v

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- <sup>54</sup> See John D Cox, 'Stage Devilry in Two King's Men Plays of 1606', in *The Modern Language Review* 93. No.4 (October, 1998), 934-947 and Rogers, H. L. 'An English Tailor and Father Garnet's Straw' in *The Review of English Studies* 16.61 (1965): 44-49
- <sup>55</sup> Nicholls, 'Investigating Gunpowder Plot', 50
- <sup>56</sup> Rogers, 44
- <sup>57</sup> *A True and Perfect Relation*, Bbb.4.r
- <sup>58</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 9, 288
- <sup>59</sup> Rogers, 46
- <sup>60</sup> Travers, 170-1
- <sup>61</sup> Rogers, 46
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 45
- <sup>63</sup> It is worth noting that Dekker, in his *Seven Deadly Sins of London*, also published in 1606, refers to both an English Tailor and a French Court Seamster, in what may be another topical allusion to Garnet. See Thomas Dekker, *The seuen deadly sinnes of London drawne in seuen seuerall coaches, through the seuen seuerall gates of the citie bringing the plague with them. Opus septem dierum. Tho: Dekker* (London, 1606), 30
- <sup>64</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 9, 305
- <sup>65</sup> Travers, 155
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 160
- <sup>67</sup> Rogers, citing Stunz, 48
- <sup>68</sup> *A True and Perfect Relation*, B.r
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, F.r
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, T2.v-r
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, Aa3.r
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, Ddd.v
- <sup>73</sup> *DV*, C2.r
- <sup>74</sup> Hubbock, B2.v
- <sup>75</sup> Dolan, 5-6
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>77</sup> Barbara L Parker, 'The Whore of Babylon and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol 35. No 2, Tudor and Stuart Drama (Spring 1995), 251
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>79</sup> John Bale, 'Image of both Churches', John N King (ed) *Voices of the Reformation: A Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 28
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 22
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>82</sup> Francis Herring, *Mischeefes mysterie: or, Treasons master-peece, the Powder-plot Inuented by hellish malice, preuented by heauenly mercy: truely related. And from the Latine of the learned and reuerend Doctour Herring translated, and very much dilated. By Iohn Vicars. , London: Printed by E. Griffin, dwelling in the Little Olde Bayly neere the signe of the Kings-head* (London, 1617) Herring published a Latin poem on the Plot, *Popish Pietie*, in 1606. This was reprinted in English in 1610. *Mischeefes mysterie* was published in 1617, translated by John Vicars.
- <sup>83</sup> *A True and Perfect Relation*, AAA.3.v
- <sup>84</sup> Anon, *[The popes eschucheon, or coate of armes. In a field sable he beareth tripartite, three furies, heresie, frenzy and hypocrisy. His fiue gracelesse children,*

which he hath begotten vpon the whore of babylon (whose name is idolatry) are: a papist lormant, a papist cowchant, a papist passant, a papist rampant, a papist pendant]. Written by a gentleman, that careth as much for the Popes curse, as the Devils blessing (London, 1606)

<sup>85</sup> Dekker, *The Double PP*, B3.v

<sup>86</sup> Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, 497

<sup>87</sup> The term used by Bale and Foxe to define a play which 'aims to interpret events in terms of Protestant historiography derived from the Book of Revelations and other biblical texts. It organises events by means of allegory, and has 'as its fundamental theme the struggle of the True Church against the anti-Christ' see Gasper, 62-3

<sup>88</sup> John Foxe in John Hazel Smith (ed) *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe The Martyrologist: Titus et Gesippus, Christus Triumpans* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), 37-8

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 38

<sup>90</sup> See Gasper, 72

<sup>91</sup> Foxe (Latin line numbers 72-91)

<sup>92</sup> There is not the scope within this paper to discuss the figure of Mary, queen of Scots. However, Dekker, like Spenser before him, references her in *The Whore of Babylon*, and it is therefore possible that both Lady Macbeth and Lucretia Borgia may also have been understood as covert figures for the Scottish queen. Further research might determine a definitive conflation of Mary with The Whore of Babylon during this period.

<sup>93</sup> Edmund Spenser in Thomas P Roche (ed) *The Faerie Queen* (Penguin, 1987), 58 (1.2.13)

<sup>94</sup> A C Hamilton, *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 229

<sup>95</sup> Spenser, 98 (1.5.26)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 144 (1.8.35)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 64 (1.2.38)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 144 (1.8.46)

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 136 (1, 8.14)

<sup>100</sup> Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds) *Conflict In Early Stuart England (Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642)* (New York and Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989), 75

<sup>101</sup> Herring, F4.v

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, D4.r

<sup>103</sup> *DV*, B3.v

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, C3.r

<sup>105</sup> Dolan, 39

<sup>106</sup> *KB*, C2.r-C3.v

<sup>107</sup> Bale, in John N King, 29

<sup>108</sup> In this curious speech, Dekker also recalls the actions of Elizabeth I in relation to Mary, queen of Scots.

<sup>109</sup> *A True and Perfect Relation*, CCC4.v

<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting that Horace in Book Three of his *Odes*, refers to a 'croaking raven' (Book 3.27). He may have been one of the classical authors who established the literary precedent for omens indicating the wicked: 'a hooting owl, a pregnant bitch, a grey / wolf loping... a snake... the croaking raven' (1-10). Shakespeare

probably studied Horace at school, but whether or not the Latin version of Horace he used contained a near-identical translation to the above is open to further research.

<sup>111</sup> *DV*, B.v

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, C.2.v

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, D.3.v

<sup>114</sup> Bale, in King, 29

<sup>115</sup> Wills, 88

<sup>116</sup> *DV*, B2.v

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, B2.v

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, D.r

<sup>119</sup> Doolin Spikes, 141

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> Symonds, C3

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Broude, 'Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England', *Renaissance Quarterly* 28, No. 1, University of Chicago Press (Spring 1975), 52

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 53

<sup>4</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 791

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 797

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 797-8

<sup>8</sup> J W Lever, *The Tragedy of State. A Study in Jacobean Drama* (New York: Methuen and Co, 1980), 3

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984), 26

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 149

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 83

<sup>12</sup> Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England 1603-42* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), 286

<sup>13</sup> Robert S Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (UK: OUP, 2007), 20

<sup>14</sup> Lockyer, 286

<sup>15</sup> John Bossy, cited in Miola, 20

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 26

<sup>17</sup> Michael Questier, cited in Miola, 27

<sup>18</sup> Donaldson, 228

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> Travers, 82

<sup>21</sup> Donaldson, 199

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Dutton, 22

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 22-3

<sup>27</sup> Travers, 85

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- <sup>28</sup> Jonson's letter is cited in Travers, 85-6
- <sup>29</sup> Donaldson, 228
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid, 229
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, 273
- <sup>35</sup> Travers, 58
- <sup>36</sup> Lever, 18
- <sup>37</sup> Dutton, 55
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, 57
- <sup>39</sup> Ben Jonson in Gordon Campbell (ed) *The Alchemist And Other Plays* (UK: Oxford World Classics, 1995), 8
- <sup>40</sup> Dutton, 6
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid, 75
- <sup>42</sup> Anton Francesco Doni, *The morall philosophie of Doni drawne out of the ancient writers. A worke first compiled in the Indian tongue, and afterwards reduced into diuers other languages: and now lastly englished out of Italian, by Sir Thomas North, Knight. Imprinted at London: By Simon Stafford* (London, 1601) First printed 1570.
- <sup>43</sup> Dutton, 75
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, 81
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, 76
- <sup>46</sup> Antony G Petti, cited in Dutton, 4
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid
- <sup>48</sup> Croft, 57
- <sup>49</sup> Robert C Evans, *Jonson and the Contexts of His Time* (London and Toronto: Lewisburg Bucknell University Press, 1994), 45
- <sup>50</sup> Dutton, 30
- <sup>51</sup> Cited in Dollimore, 23
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, 24-5
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, 23
- <sup>54</sup> Dutton, 65
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, 64
- <sup>56</sup> David Bevington, 'The Major Comedies' in Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* (CUP, 2000), 107
- <sup>57</sup> Dutton, 70
- <sup>58</sup> Leah Marcus, 'Jonson and the Court' in Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, (CUP, 2000), 16,30
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid, 30
- <sup>60</sup> Dutton, 101
- <sup>61</sup> Fynes Moryson cited by Dutton, 101
- <sup>62</sup> Donaldson, 230
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid, 231
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid, 199
- <sup>66</sup> Dutton, 93
- <sup>67</sup> Donaldson, 111
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid, 138

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- <sup>69</sup> Dutton, 109  
<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 65  
<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 66  
<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 56  
<sup>73</sup> Bevington, 75  
<sup>74</sup> Dekker, *The Double PP*, B4.v  
<sup>75</sup> Dutton, 55  
<sup>76</sup> Charles A Hallet, 'Jonson's Celia: A Reinterpretation of "Volpone"', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 68, No.1 (1971), 51  
<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 66  
<sup>78</sup> Ibid  
<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 53  
<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 54  
<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 60-1  
<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 60; 63  
<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 68  
<sup>84</sup> Dutton, 119  
<sup>85</sup> Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Eggegeious Popish Impostures to Withdraw the Hearts of Her Majesty's Subjects from their Allegiance, and from the Truth of Christian Religion Professed in England, Under the Pretence of Casting Out Devils* (London, 1603)  
<sup>86</sup> Dutton, 120  
<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 121  
<sup>88</sup> Donaldson, 233  
<sup>89</sup> Dutton, 124  
<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 126  
<sup>91</sup> Lever, 2  
<sup>92</sup> Ibid  
<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 18  
<sup>94</sup> George Chapman in N S Brookes (ed) *Bussy D'Ambois* (The Revels Plays, MUP, 1999), lx - lxi  
<sup>95</sup> Gurr, 217  
<sup>96</sup> Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Chapman, George (1559/60–1634)', *ODNB* [accessed 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009]  
<sup>97</sup> Ibid  
<sup>98</sup> Brookes, *Bussy D'Ambois*, lx  
<sup>99</sup> Ibid  
<sup>100</sup> Ibid  
<sup>101</sup> Lever, 39  
<sup>102</sup> Ibid  
<sup>103</sup> Nicholls, 'Strategy and Motivation', 800  
<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 788  
<sup>105</sup> Hadfield, 32  
<sup>106</sup> Alistair Bellany, 'Libellous politics in early Stuart England' in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds) *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Hants & London: Macmillan, 1994), 286  
<sup>107</sup> Sir John Harington, cited in Stewart, 236-7

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<sup>108</sup> Cited in Malcolm Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c1590-1630', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds) *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Hants & London: Macmillan, 1994) 21

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 30

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 31

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer: and also the life and death of Peirs Gaueston, the great Earle of Cornewall, and mighty fauorite of king Edward the second, as it was publiquely acted by the right honorable the Earle of Pembroke his seruantes* (London, 1598)

<sup>113</sup> Curtis Perry, 'The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite Kings in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, No. 4 (Winter 2000), 1062

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 1070

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 1059

<sup>116</sup> Hubbock, B2.v

<sup>117</sup> Barlow, C3.r

<sup>118</sup> Rhodes, cited in Miola, 22

#### CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> De Luna, 66

<sup>2</sup> CSPD, Vol 10.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Pelletier, *A LAMENTABLE DISCOURSE, UPON The Paricide and bloody assassination: committed on the Person of HENRY the fourth (of famous memories) King of FRANCE and NAVARRE. Translated out of the French Copy, Printed at Rouen by Peter Courant, and the Copie of Paris, Printed by FRANCIS HUEY, with permission* (1610), 1-3. For more on Henri's death see Anon, *The sighes of Fraunce for the death of their late King, Henry the fourth The true maner of his murder: the forme of the coronation of Prince Lewes at S. Augustines. With the oration made by Mounsier Seruin, attourney generall to the King, exhorting both the peeres and people to allegiance. Printed in the Kings Palace* (London, 1610)

<sup>4</sup> For more on the trial and execution of Ravallac, see Anon, *The Terrible and deserued death of Francis Rauilliack shewing the manner of his strange torments at his execution, vpon Friday the 25. of May last past, for the murther of the late French King Henry the Fourth: together with an abstract out of diuers proclamations, and edicts, now concerning the state of France: as it was printed in French in three seuerall bookes published by authority. Edinburgh, Printed by Robert Charteris* (Edinburgh, 1610)

<sup>5</sup> England and Wales By the King, *A proclamation for the due execution of all former lawes against recusants, giuing them a day to repaire to their owne dwellings, and not afterwards to come to the court, or within 10. miles of London, without speciall license: and for disarming of them as the law requireth: and withall, that all priests and Iesuits shall depart from the land by a day, no more to returne into the realme: and for the ministring of the oath of allegiance, according to the law* (London, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1610)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>7</sup> Howard B Norland, 'The Design of Ben Jonson's *Catiline*', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Central Renaissance Conference (Winter, 1978), 68

<sup>8</sup> Robert Bellarmine, 'On the Authority of the Pope against William Barclay, 1610', cited in Miola, 92-6

<sup>9</sup> James Ellison, 'The Winter's Tale and the Religious Politics of Europe' in Alison Thorne (ed) *Shakespeare's Romances: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 178

<sup>10</sup> See Lemon for a discussion of Bellarmine, Garnet, and the Oath of Allegiance, 116-118

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Known as *Premonition*. James, I, *An apologie for the oath of allegiance First set foorth vvithout a name: and now acknowledged by the author, the right high and mightie prince, Iames, by the grace of God, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland; defender of the faith, &c. Together with a premonition of his Maiesties, to all most mightie monarches, kings, free princes and states of Christendome. Imprinted at London By Robert Barker, printer to the Kings most excellent Maiestie* (London, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1609)

<sup>13</sup> Ellison, 179

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 178

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> James I, *Premonition*, 98-9

<sup>18</sup> Lemon, 122

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Lemon. John Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr, wherein out of Certain Propositions and Gradations, this Conclusion is evicted, that those which are of the Romane Religion in this Kingdome may and ought to take the Oath of Allegiance* (London, 1610), 124

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Lemon, James I, from his *Triplici Nodo*, 124

<sup>22</sup> Bonny, 224

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Healy, 'Pericles and the Pox', in Alison Thorne (ed) *Shakespeare's Romances*, 55

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Ibid, 65

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 55

<sup>27</sup> Ellison, 193

<sup>28</sup> Francis Herring, *Popish pietie, or The first part of the historie of that horrible and barbarous conspiracie, commonly called the powder-treason nefariously plotted against Iames King of great Britaine, Prince Henrie, and the whole state of that realme assembled in Parliament; and happily disc[ou]ered, disappointed, and frustrated by the powerfull and sole arme of the Almightye, the fifth of Nouember, anno 1605. Written first in Latin verse by F. H. [...] in physicke: and translated into [English by A.P* (London, 1610) A6.v

<sup>29</sup> This poem has been omitted from the discussion of post-Gunpowder texts in Chapter One, since its Latin language would, by its nature, have restricted its popular dissemination in the months following the discovery of the Plot. However, in 1610 it was reprinted in English, ensuring a new audience for Herring, and in 1617 it was reprinted yet again, and expanded by John Vicars to become *Mischeefes mysterie: or, Treasons master-peece, the Powder-plot Inuented by hellish malice,*



*preuented by heauenly mercy: truely related. And from the Latine of the learned and reuerend Doctour Herring translated, and very much dilated. By Iohn Vicars* (London, 1617)

<sup>30</sup> Herring, A2.v, verse 3

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, B8.r, verse 67

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, A9.r verse 14

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Sanderson, *Of Romanizing recusants, and dissembling Catholicks. A counter-maund of a counterfeit embassy. Or, An answer to the posthume pamphlet of Ralfe Buckland sometime a popish priest secretly printed and published after his death about a yeere agoe* (1611), A4.r. I have been unable to locate a first edition. However, for these purposes it is irrelevant, since this second edition was printed in 1611 and was thus in circulation during this period. Perhaps a reprint was inspired by the death of Henri IV.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, D2.v

<sup>37</sup> Nicolson, 110

<sup>38</sup> De Luna, 34

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 32. De Luna argues that Jonson recanted his Catholicism as a direct response to Henri IV's assassination, but provides no credible evidence to support this, 70

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 69-70

<sup>42</sup> Other plays at The Globe in 1611 include Beaumont & Fletcher's *A King and No King*, and possibly Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. See Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 216-228

<sup>43</sup> Foreman, cited by Roger Warren, in *Cymbeline*, (UK: The Oxford Shakespeare, OUP, 2008), 4

<sup>44</sup> De Luna suggests Jonson's choice of the Catiline conspiracy as dramatic subject matter in 1611 was covert, since 'the parallels he seems clearly to have intended between the Catiline Conspiracy of 63 B.C and the Powder Plot of 1605 were such that they probably would not have been apprehended by the ordinary playgoer.' (See De Luna, 34) However, this seems unlikely. De Luna himself argues that most members of the audience would have been familiar with the Plot, and the textual signifiers and allusions to texts and motifs surrounding the Plot, so critical a component of earlier Gunpowder plays, are still present in 1611. Indeed, far from having dispersed in the years since the composition of *Macbeth* and *The Whore of Babylon*, these tropes were still very much in existence; evidence that the dramatic motifs which had developed in response to the Plot had become firmly entrenched in the minds of playgoers and playwrights alike.

<sup>45</sup> Norland, 67

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Donaldson, 281-2

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 282

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> W F Bolton and Jane F Gardener (eds) *Ben Jonson: Catiline* (UK: Regents Renaissance Drama Series, Edward Arnold, 1973), XIV

<sup>51</sup> Lynn Harold Harris, 'Local Colour in Ben Jonson's *Catiline* and Historical Accuracy in the Play', *Classical Philology* 14, No. 3 (July 1919), 277

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<sup>52</sup> See Harris, 275-9

<sup>53</sup> KB, F.v

<sup>54</sup> Lodowick Lloyd, *THE TRAGOCOMEdie of Serpents*, (London, 1607), 4

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 8

<sup>56</sup> DV, C2.v

<sup>57</sup> Herring, B6.v Verse 51

<sup>58</sup> De Luna, 110

<sup>59</sup> In his study of *Catiline*, De Luna's focuses on the differences between the classical accounts of Catiline's conspiracy and Jonson's own, which he argues provides compelling evidence for Jonson's play being a straight-forward narrative of the events surrounding 5th November. He also attempts to make the case that characters in *Catiline* are figures for members of both Catesby's circle and the government, with particular emphasis on a connection between Cicero and Cecil. He suggests Jonson's Catholicism was disingenuous, and cites Dekker's *The Double PP* as a source for *Catiline*, unfortunately failing to note that Dekker reworked *The Double PP* from an earlier source.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Gerard, 104

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Nicolson, 110

<sup>62</sup> DV, A.v

<sup>63</sup> KB, I4.v

<sup>64</sup> Rhodes, A3.v

<sup>65</sup> Symonds, E2

<sup>66</sup> Bale, in King, 28

<sup>67</sup> Barlow, C3.r

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, B.v

<sup>69</sup> For more on the contemporaneous rumours that the Plot was a construct of James' government, see Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, 214-221

<sup>70</sup> Gerard, 48-9

<sup>71</sup> Bolton and Gardener, xii

<sup>72</sup> KB, B2.v

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, B3.r

<sup>75</sup> Oliver Ormerod, *The picture of a papist: or, A relation of the damnable heresies, detestable qualities, and diabolically practises of sundry hereticks in former ages, and of the papists in this age Where in is plainly shewed, that there is scarce any heresie which the auncient Church knew, and withal condemned to the pit of hell, which the Romish Church hath not raked vp againe, and propounded to the world with new varnish and fresh colours. Together with a discourse of the late treason, and of the late execution of some of the traitors ... Written to stop the mouthes of those, that complaine of rigour, and scandalize the state of cruelty, in their iust seueritie. Whereunto is annexed a certain treatise, intituled Pagano-pagismus: wherein is prooued by irrefragable demonstrations, that papisme is flat paganism: and that the papists doe resemble the very pagans, in aboue seuenscore seuerall things* (London, 1606), 180

<sup>76</sup> De Luna, 40

<sup>77</sup> KB, B4.r

<sup>78</sup> *A True and Perfect Relation*, V2.r

<sup>79</sup> Herring, A2.v Verse 9

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- <sup>80</sup> *Proclamation issued for the apprehension of Thomas Percy*  
<sup>81</sup> KB, K2.r  
<sup>82</sup> Ibid  
<sup>83</sup> Barlow, C4.v  
<sup>84</sup> Ibid, E4.r  
<sup>85</sup> Norland, 69  
<sup>86</sup> Lemon, 12  
<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 156  
<sup>88</sup> Ibid  
<sup>89</sup> Bolton and Gardener, xii  
<sup>90</sup> Bonny, 225  
<sup>91</sup> Lemon, 157  
<sup>92</sup> Donaldson, 224  
<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 258  
<sup>94</sup> Hadfield, 28  
<sup>95</sup> Donaldson, 273  
<sup>96</sup> Constance Jordan, *Shakespeare's Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1  
<sup>97</sup> Warren, 65  
<sup>98</sup> Thorne in *Shakespeare's Romances*, 5  
<sup>99</sup> Ibid  
<sup>100</sup> Ibid  
<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 6  
<sup>102</sup> Ellison, 179  
<sup>103</sup> Jordan, 31  
<sup>104</sup> Tom Moylan cited in Kiernan, 31  
<sup>105</sup> Jordan, 29  
<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 14  
<sup>107</sup> Bonnie Lander, 'Interpreting the Person: Tradition, Conflict, and *Cymbeline's* Imogen', *Shakespeare Quarterly* (59:2) (Summer, 2008), 164  
<sup>108</sup> Kiernan, 27  
<sup>109</sup> Lake, 'Anti-popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', 73  
<sup>110</sup> A note on the name of Innogen. Many editions of *Cymbeline* use Imogen rather than Innogen. However, the 2008 Oxford edition uses Innogen throughout, its editor arguing that Shakespeare chose to use Innogen, and Imogen has since become a corruption. The First Folio refers to her as Imogen.  
<sup>111</sup> Coburn Freer, *The Poetics of Jacobean Drama*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 105  
<sup>112</sup> David Crystal and Ben Crystal (eds) *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary And Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002), 330  
<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 619  
<sup>114</sup> Freer, 107  
<sup>115</sup> Simonds, 203  
<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 203  
<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 68  
<sup>118</sup> Hubbock, B2.v

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- <sup>119</sup> Cynthia Lewis, "'With Simular Proof Enough': Modes of Misperception in Cymbeline', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1991), 350
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid, 344
- <sup>121</sup> Simonds, 227
- <sup>122</sup> Dolan, 56
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid
- <sup>124</sup> Simonds, 308
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid
- <sup>126</sup> Andrew Escobedo, 'From Britannia to England: Cymbeline and the Beginning of Nations', *Shakespeare Quarterly* (59:1) (Spring 2008), 89
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid
- <sup>128</sup> Jordan, 78
- <sup>129</sup> Constance C Relihan, 'Liminal Geography: Pericles and the Politics of Place', in Alison Thorne (ed) *Shakespeare's Romances*, 72
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER FIVE

- <sup>1</sup> J. Sears McGee, 'Adams, Thomas (1583–1652), *ODNB* [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011]
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas Adams, *The blacke devil or the apostate Together with the wolfe worrying the lambes. And the spiritual navigator, bound for the Holy Land. In three sermons* (London, 1615)
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, 25 (E.v)
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, 25 (D3.v)
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, 55 (H2.v)
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas Draxe, *An alarum to the last iudgement. Or An exact discourse of the second comming of Christ and of the generall and remarkeable signes and fore-runners of it past, present, and to come; soundly and soberly handled, and wholesomely applyed. Wherein diuers deep mysteries are plainly expounded, and sundry curiosities are duely examined, answered and confuted* (London, 1615), 38-40 (D4.v-D5.v)
- <sup>7</sup> Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 200
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 201
- <sup>9</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 134
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 137-8
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 140
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 144
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 145
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid, 164
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid 167
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid, 155
- <sup>18</sup> Lockyer, 16
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid
- <sup>20</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 156
- <sup>21</sup> Anon, *The mariage of Prince Fredericke, and the Kings daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, vpon Shrouesunday last VVith the shovves on land and water, before, and after the wedding, as also the maskes and reuells in his Highnes court, with the*

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*running at the ring, by the Kings Maiestie, the Palsegraue, Prince Charles, and diuers others of the nobilitie* (London, 1613), B2.v

<sup>22</sup> Lockyer, 15

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 15-16

<sup>24</sup> Jaroslav Miller, 'The Henrician Legend Revived: The Palatine Couple and its Public Image in Early Stuart England', *European Review of History* Vol.11. No.3 (Autumn, 2004), 306

<sup>25</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 169

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 34

<sup>27</sup> David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), 14

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 22

<sup>29</sup> Alistair Bellany, 'Howard, Frances, countess of Somerset (1590–1632)', *ODNB* [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011]

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Sara Mendleson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (OUP, 1998), 141

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 42-3

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 141

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Lindley, 80

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, citing Lawrence Stone

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 5

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 28

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 156

<sup>42</sup> John Considine, 'Overbury, Sir Thomas (*bap.* 1581, *d.* 1613)', *ODNB* [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011]

<sup>43</sup> Alistair Bellany, 'Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset (1585/6? –1645)', *ODNB* [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011]

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Overbury, *A vvife novv the vvidth of Sir Thomas Ouerburie Being a most exquisite and singular poeme, of the choyse of a wife. Whereunto are added many witty characters, and conceyted newes; written by himselfe, and other learned gentlemen his friends* (London, 1614)

<sup>46</sup> Considine

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Overbury

<sup>49</sup> Considine

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 6

<sup>55</sup> Lindley, 79

<sup>56</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 7

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 78

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- <sup>58</sup> Ibid citing Bacon  
<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 78-9  
<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 7  
<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 176  
<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 163  
<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 163-4  
<sup>64</sup> *CSPD*, Vol.10, 311; 313  
<sup>65</sup> Considine  
<sup>66</sup> Ibid  
<sup>67</sup> Ibid  
<sup>68</sup> Ibid  
<sup>69</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 78  
<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 7  
<sup>71</sup> Bellany, 'Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset (1585/6? –1645)', *ODNB* [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011]  
<sup>72</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 114  
<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 104-5  
<sup>74</sup> Ibid citing Thomas Tuke, 50  
<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 142  
<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 143  
<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 141  
<sup>78</sup> Ibid, citing Bacon, 144  
<sup>79</sup> Ibid, citing Bacon, 147  
<sup>80</sup> Considine  
<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 149  
<sup>82</sup> Ibid  
<sup>83</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 190  
<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 187-8  
<sup>85</sup> Joannes Maria de Franchis, *Of the most auspicious marriage: betwixt, the high and mightie Prince, Frederick; Count Palatine of Rheine, chiefe sewer to the sacred Roman Empire, Prince Elector, and Duke of Bauaria, & and the most illustrious Princesse, the Ladie Elizabeth her Grace, sole daughter to the high and mightie Iames, King of great Brittain, &c. In III. bookes: composed in Latine by M. Ioannes Maria, de Franchis. And translated into English* (London, 1613), B3.v  
<sup>86</sup> Ibid, B3.r  
<sup>87</sup> Crystal and Crystal, Appendix 2  
<sup>88</sup> De Franchis, B3.r  
<sup>89</sup> Ibid  
<sup>90</sup> Ibid, B4.v  
<sup>91</sup> Ibid, B4.r  
<sup>92</sup> Ibid  
<sup>93</sup> Ibid  
<sup>94</sup> Ibid, C.v  
<sup>95</sup> Ibid, C.r  
<sup>96</sup> Ibid, C.r –C2.r  
<sup>97</sup> Adams, *The Black Devil*, 55 (H2.v)  
<sup>98</sup> *KB*, E.r  
<sup>99</sup> Barlow, E4.r

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- <sup>100</sup> De Franchis, C2.v (10)
- <sup>101</sup> KB, B3.v
- <sup>102</sup> De Franchis, C2.v (10)
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid, C3.r
- <sup>104</sup> John Boys, *An exposition of the last psalme deliuered in a sermon preached at Paules crosse the fifth of Nouember 1613, which I haue ioyned to the Festiuals as a short apologie for our holy daies in the Church of England: dedicated vnto my honorable friend and most respected kinsman Sir William Monins baronet / by Iohn Boys* (London, 1615), A5.r
- <sup>105</sup> Travers, 172
- <sup>106</sup> Boys, B.v
- <sup>107</sup> Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (CUP, 1980), 48
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid
- <sup>109</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 146-7
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid, 144
- <sup>111</sup> Rene Weis (ed) *John Webster, The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays* (Oxford World Classics, OUP, 1996), xv
- <sup>112</sup> M C Bradbrook, *John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 121
- <sup>113</sup> Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1955), 16-17
- <sup>114</sup> Anders Dallby, *The Anatomy of Evil: A Study of John Webster's The White Devil* (Malmo: CWK Gleerup Lund, 1974), 30
- <sup>115</sup> Gurr, 227
- <sup>116</sup> It is possible *The White Devil* was written as part of the celebrations for the Merchant Taylors Company, since tragedies were often performed at weddings and other happy occasions. Sir John Swinnerton, a member of the company, became Lord Mayor of London in 1612. Both Thomas Dekker and Wentworth Smith, former collaborators of Webster's, published works with dedications to Swinnerton as a lover of plays as part of these celebrations, and Webster's own father was a member of the Merchant Taylors. See Bradbrook, 141
- <sup>117</sup> John Webster, *THE WHITE DIVEL, OR, The Tragedy of Paulo Giordano Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, With The Life and Death of Vittoria Corombona the famous Venetian Curtizan. Acted by the Queenes Majesties Servants* (London, 1612), A2.r
- <sup>118</sup> CSPD, Vol.10, 166
- <sup>119</sup> Webster, *THE WHITE DIVEL*, A2.r-B.v
- <sup>120</sup> Bogard, 7
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid, 16
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid, 18
- <sup>125</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, 'The Crime of Marriage: Arabella Stuart and The Duchess of Malfi', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), 64
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid, 65
- <sup>127</sup> Martin Luther, *A commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther vpon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians first collected and gathered vvord by vvord out of his preaching, and novv out of Latine faithfully translated into English for the vnlearned.*

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*Wherein is set forth most excellently the glorious riches of Gods grace.* (London, 1575)  
 'This white Deuill which forceth men to commit spirituall sinnes, that they may sell them for righteousnes, is farre more daungerous then the blacke deuill, which onely enforceth them to commit fleshly sinnes which the world acknowledgeth to be sinnes', D.r

<sup>128</sup> Dalby, 127

<sup>129</sup> DV, D3.v

<sup>130</sup> Adams, *The Black Devil*, 25 (E.v)

<sup>131</sup> Thomas Adams, *The vvhite deuil, or The hypocrite vncased in a sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, March 7. 1612* (London, 1614). The *Stationers' Register* records an entry for this sermon with the following, 'a booke Called *the white Devill or the Hypocrite uncased in A sermon* preached at Paules Crosse Marche the vijth 1613 by THOMAS ADAMS, see *Stationers' Register*, Vol 3, 238

<sup>132</sup> Susan H McLeod, 'Duality in The White Devil', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.20, No.2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring 1980), 272

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 273

<sup>134</sup> Lund, 108

<sup>135</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 147

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 145

<sup>137</sup> '3. vaulting-house, a brothel. Also vaulting-door, the door of such a place. Obs.' *OED Online*, Vaulting horse, N3 (Second edition, 1989; online version March 2012) [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012]

<sup>138</sup> Lund, 125

<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 131

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Travers, 181

<sup>143</sup> Lund, 112-3

<sup>144</sup> Gurr, 137

<sup>145</sup> Bogard, 18

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> If a general precedent for divorce as a plot device on the Jacobean stage existed prior to 1612, it is still waiting to be established.

<sup>149</sup> Bradbrook, 167

<sup>150</sup> In an interesting parallel, in Overbury's *A vvife novv the vvidovv* (1614), a reference is made to 'a white whoore', F2.r

<sup>151</sup> Lund, 129

<sup>152</sup> Ibid

<sup>153</sup> Ibid,

<sup>154</sup> Cited in Ibid

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 140

<sup>157</sup> McLeod, 280

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 281

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 285

<sup>160</sup> Bogard, 2

<sup>161</sup> Bradbrook, 131



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- <sup>162</sup> Ibid, 132-3
- <sup>163</sup> Lund, 155
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid
- <sup>165</sup> Ibid
- <sup>166</sup> Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare & Co*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 212
- <sup>167</sup> Citing a letter written by Henry Wotton to Edmund Bacon 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1613, in 'Introduction to Henry VIII', Stanley Schoenbaum (ed) *Shakespeare, King John/Henry VIII* (USA: Signet, 2004), 226
- <sup>168</sup> Originally entitled *All Is True*, its name was changed to *Henry VIII* in the First Folio, 'to bring its title in line with those of all the other English history plays, which are named after the kings whose reign they dramatize.' See Wells, *Shakespeare & Co*, 212
- <sup>169</sup> On the collaboration, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (OUP (2002), 333-402. The lines in the play traditionally ascribed to Shakespeare are: Act 1, Scenes 1 & 2; Act 2, Scenes 3 & 4; Act 3, Scene 2 (to line 204); and Act 5, Scene 1.
- <sup>170</sup> Wells, 17
- <sup>171</sup> Schoenbaum, 225
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid, 225
- <sup>173</sup> George Webbe cited in Schoenbaum, 225
- <sup>174</sup> Schoenbaum, 229
- <sup>175</sup> Ibid, 225
- <sup>176</sup> Cumberland Clark, *A Study of Shakespeare's Henry VIII* (London: The Golden Vista Press, 1931), 34
- <sup>177</sup> Howard Felperin, 'Shakespeare's Henry VIII: History as Myth', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.6, No.2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring 1966), 244
- <sup>178</sup> Paul Dean, 'Dramatic Mode and Historical Vision in Henry VIII', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol.37, No.2 (Summer 1986), 176
- <sup>179</sup> Ibid, 177
- <sup>180</sup> Ibid
- <sup>181</sup> Larry S Champion, 'Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Celebration of History', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol.44, No.1 (Jan., 1979), 2
- <sup>182</sup> Simonds, 15
- <sup>183</sup> Bellany, 'Howard, Frances, countess of Somerset (1590–1632)', *ONDB* [accessed 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011]
- <sup>184</sup> Dean, 175
- <sup>185</sup> Michael Questier, 'The reputation of King James I revisited for the umpteenth time', *Centre for Early Modern Studies Lecture Series*, University of Sussex, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012
- <sup>186</sup> *CSPD*, Vol.10, 175
- <sup>187</sup> Ibid, 177
- <sup>188</sup> Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 148
- <sup>189</sup> Schoenbaum, 317
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid, 332
- <sup>191</sup> Questier, 'The Reputation of King James I'
- <sup>192</sup> Felperin, 242
- <sup>193</sup> Ibid, 241

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- <sup>194</sup> John D Cox, 'Henry VIII and the Masque', *ELH*, Vol.45, No.3 (Autumn, 1978), 399  
<sup>195</sup> Ibid  
<sup>196</sup> Cox, 395  
<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 394  
<sup>198</sup> Champion, 15  
<sup>199</sup> Felperin, 226-7  
<sup>200</sup> Champion, 6  
<sup>201</sup> Ibid  
<sup>202</sup> Ibid  
<sup>203</sup> Ibid  
<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 7  
<sup>205</sup> Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare's Late Work* (Oxford Shakespeare Topics: OUP, 2007), 113  
<sup>206</sup> Felperin, 244  
<sup>207</sup> Champion, 10-11  
<sup>208</sup> Ibid  
<sup>209</sup> Ibid  
<sup>210</sup> Gurr, 224  
<sup>211</sup> Elizabeth Schafer (ed) *The Witch: Thomas Middleton* (New Mermaids, London and New York: A C Black & W W Norton, 1994), xi  
<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 4  
<sup>213</sup> Ibid, xii  
<sup>214</sup> Heinemann, 107  
<sup>215</sup> Gurr, 224  
<sup>216</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 222  
<sup>217</sup> Heinemann, 107-8  
<sup>218</sup> Ibid  
<sup>219</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 301  
<sup>220</sup> Ibid,  
<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 302-3  
<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 303  
<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 304  
<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 308  
<sup>225</sup> The speech bears little real relevance to the action of the play. Michael Questier has recently presented evidence that Robert Carr was rumoured to be involved in this uprising, and further research will no doubt bring more to light on this second Gunpowder Plot. See Questier, 'The Reputation of King James I'  
<sup>226</sup> Christine Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, (London: Blackwell, 1984), 10  
<sup>227</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 230  
<sup>228</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 313  
<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 342  
<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 334  
<sup>231</sup> Schafer, 5  
<sup>232</sup> Richard Niccols, *Sir THOMAS OVERBURIES Vision. With the ghoasts of Weston, M. Turner and the late Lieutenant of the Tower, and Franklin* (London, 1616), D1.r  
<sup>233</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 153  
<sup>234</sup> Heinemann, 111

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- <sup>235</sup> Ibid  
<sup>236</sup> Ibid, 108  
<sup>237</sup> Ibid, 111  
<sup>238</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 143  
<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 152  
<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 148  
<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 137  
<sup>242</sup> Ibid  
<sup>243</sup> Ibid, 184  
<sup>244</sup> Ibid, 182  
<sup>245</sup> *CSPD*, Vol 10, 329  
<sup>246</sup> Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 206  
<sup>247</sup> Quinn, 6  
<sup>248</sup> Ibid, 3  
<sup>249</sup> Ibid  
<sup>250</sup> Hadfield, 32  
<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 34  
<sup>252</sup> Ibid  
<sup>253</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 405

## CONCLUSION

- <sup>1</sup> Hadfield, 82  
<sup>2</sup> Lake, 'Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', 80  
<sup>3</sup> Hadfield, 12  
<sup>4</sup> Nicholls, 'Discovering Gunpowder Plot', 397  
<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 413  
<sup>6</sup> *Macbeth* (4.3.138-9)

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