

## POETS, PLAYERS, AND PREACHERS

Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in  
Seventeenth-Century England

*This page intentionally left blank*

ANNE JAMES


# Poets, Players, and Preachers

Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in  
Seventeenth-Century England

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS  
Toronto Buffalo London

© University of Toronto Press 2016  
Toronto Buffalo London  
[www.utppublishing.com](http://www.utppublishing.com)  
Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4937-8

 Printed on acid-free, 100% post-consumer recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.

---

### Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

James, Anne, 1958–, author  
Poets, players, and preachers : remembering the Gunpowder  
Plot in seventeenth-century England / Anne James.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4937-8 (hardback)

1. Gunpowder Plot, 1605 – Early works to 1800. 2. English literature – Early modern, 1500–1700 – History and criticism. 3. English literature – Political aspects. 4. Literature and history. 5. Conspiracy in literature. I. Title.

PR438.P65J36 2016 820.9'358 C2016-901906-3

---

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial assistance to its publishing program of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Financé par le  
gouvernement  
du Canada

Canada

# Contents

---

*Acknowledgments* vii

*List of Illustrations* ix

- 1 Introduction: Writing the Gunpowder Plot 3
  - 2 “like *Sampsons* Foxes”: Creating a Jacobean Myth of Deliverance 28
  - 3 “And no religion binds men to be traitors”: The Plot on Stage 71
  - 4 “In marble records fit to be inrold”: Epic Monuments for a Protestant Nation 113
  - 5 “fit audience find, though few”: Militant Protestants and Wandering Ways 151
  - 6 “For God and the King”: Preaching on the Plot Anniversary 187
- Conclusion: Echoes and Reverberations 251

*Notes* 253

*Works Cited* 353

*Index* 395

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Acknowledgments

---

I am grateful to those who read this manuscript and offered both helpful suggestions and encouragement at various stages of its development: David Gay, Rick Bowers, Beverley Lemire, Paul Harland, Richard Dutton, and Jeanne Shami, as well as the anonymous readers for the Press. Thanks to Greg Kneidel for his assistance with the Latin in [chapters 4](#) and [5](#). I would also like to thank the librarians and staff at the following repositories for access to their collections: The Bodleian Library, The British Library, Cambridge University Library, Dr Williams's Library (Dr David Wykes), McGill University Library, St Paul's Cathedral Library (Mr Joseph Wisdom), The National Archives, Worcester College (Oxford) Library (Dr Joanna Parker), University of Alberta libraries, and the University of Regina Library. My research was supported generously by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by the University of Alberta.

Parts of several chapters have been presented at conferences over the past few years, and I am appreciative of those who asked questions and offered comments on those occasions. An opportunity to attend the "Making Publics" Summer Seminar in 2009 allowed me to work out parts of [chapter 4](#). I would also like to thank the members of the John Donne Society for their collegiality over the past decade.

Thank you to the people at University of Toronto Press, particularly Suzanne Rancourt, whose patience and encouragement are much appreciated.

Finally, I am grateful to the family members who have supported me in every way over the years. My parents started me on a journey of learning that took longer than they could have imagined, and my husband, Warren, has taken every new direction easily in stride.

*This page intentionally left blank*



# Illustrations

---

- 1 *Princeps Proditorum* broadsheet (British Museum 1886, 04101) 80
- 2 *A Plot with Powder* (British Museum 1896, 1230.3) 154
- 3 Emblem from Francis Herring's 1617 *Mischeefes Mysterie*  
(trans. John Vicars) 167
- 4 *The Papists' Powder Treason* (Lambeth Palace Library) 208
- 5 *The Powder Treason* (British Museum 1852, 1009.248) 209
- 6 *The Double Deliverance 1588–1605*. Etching “invented”  
by Samuel Ward of Ipswich and printed at Amsterdam, 1621.  
(British Museum, Prints and Drawings, 1868, 0808.3353) 210
- 7 Sample page from Walter Yonge's notes on Matthew Newcomen's sermon  
(British Library Add. MS 18,781) 235
- 8 Page from “Sheares Bible” (British Library Add. MS 62708) 248

*This page intentionally left blank*

## POETS, PLAYERS, AND PREACHERS

Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in  
Seventeenth-Century England

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 1 Introduction: Writing the Gunpowder Plot

---

## 1.1 Preface

Over four hundred years after its discovery, the Gunpowder Plot still sparks the imaginations of writers and readers, regardless of the event's meagre results. No explosion on 5 November 1605 destroyed the English Houses of Parliament, and only thirteen alleged conspirators, a few supporters of the Midlands revolt, and two Jesuit priests lost their lives, most either killed resisting capture or executed by the crown.<sup>1</sup> Objectively, the plot was a failure, a non-event, but it has seldom been discussed objectively. Annual commemoration, both voluntary and enforced, ensured it a deep and lasting place in the collective memory and historical consciousness of the English people. Nevertheless, its meaning has never been stable, shifting with the winds of political, religious, and social change. This book explores how the literature that celebrated, chronicled, and critiqued the plot and its discovery from 1605 to 1688 both participated in and reflected these changes. In doing so, it queries both the role of literature in public events and the role of public events in literary history, negotiating the boundaries between imagination and memory, literature and history, fiction and reality.

From the beginning, both polemical imperatives and the desire to create a coherent narrative out of fragmentary, and frequently conflicting, evidence shaped Gunpowder narratives. The one provided by official contemporary sources, and still current in many popular histories, tells of a conspiracy by a small group of Catholic gentlemen, impoverished by the Elizabethan penal laws, further embittered by their new king's failure to rescind them, and seduced by Jesuit doctrine and the personal magnetism of their leader, Robert Catesby.<sup>2</sup> Rejecting the idea of a simple attempt on the king's life, Catesby and his followers determined on the bold scheme of blowing up the House of Lords on the opening day of James I's second parliament with most of the royal family, as well as the lords spiritual

and temporal, in attendance.<sup>3</sup> A solid wall impeded their efforts to tunnel beneath the building, but Thomas Percy, another of the plotters, obtained access to an adjacent cellar they could rent. Here they piled barrels of gunpowder, covering them with kindling, iron bars, and coal, both to conceal their stores and to maximize the damage of the projected explosion. When the original opening date of 7 February 1605 was postponed first to 30 October and then to 5 November, they seized the opportunity to consider how they would govern the country after destroying the ruling elite.<sup>4</sup> Uncertainty about which of the royal children would attend the opening hampered their planning, but they apparently agreed upon kidnapping the young princess Elizabeth and crowning her as figurehead under a Catholic regent. This part of the plan required developing a second base of operations in the Midlands, where several wealthier Catholics were recruited to supply funds and horses to seize the princess and put down any local resistance. At least one conspirator, however, allegedly spent some of his time fretting about the ethics of killing the Catholic lords who would be in Parliament.

On the night of 26 October 1605, an unidentified messenger delivered a cryptic letter in the street to a servant of the Catholic noble William Parker, Lord Monteaule,<sup>5</sup> warning him not to attend the opening, where a “terrible blowe” was to be struck. Wary of being compromised by the activities of his hotter headed co-religionists, Monteaule took the letter immediately to Whitehall, where several members of the Privy Council happened to be meeting. Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury and Secretary of State, claiming to be mystified by the enigmatic construction of its contents, chose to wait until the king returned from hunting on 30 October to initiate any investigation. Reading the letter several days after his return, James immediately suspected gunpowder and ordered the cellars searched. A first search revealed nothing suspicious; a second, on the night of 4 November, uncovered the gunpowder along with a man who gave his name as John Johnson but is known to history as Guy Fawkes. Imprisonment, and possibly torture, shook Fawkes’s initial bravado, and within a few days he began naming his fellow conspirators. By this time, however, the authorities had captured or killed most of the others, who had unwisely attempted to proceed with rebellion in the Midlands. Hunting down the last conspirators, rebels, and priests dragged into the beginning of 1606, but by early May all of the alleged conspirators were dead.<sup>6</sup>

Virtually every detail of this narrative, however, has been repeatedly challenged over the past four hundred years. An enduring subject of speculation is the authorship of the mysterious warning sent to Lord Monteaule. Given his suspicious death in the Tower before he could be tried, Francis Tresham remains the favourite suspect, but none of the conspirators ever confessed to penning the letter. Moreover, did the letter really alert the authorities, or had they been following the plotters’ movements and awaiting the most dramatic moment to

capture them? Equally contentious is the role of the priests, particularly Henry Garnett. The Jesuit superior eventually admitted to knowledge of the plot, but claimed he had obtained it only under the inviolable seal of confession. The third, and perhaps greatest, puzzle is why Salisbury, with the Monteagle letter in hand, waited until the last minute to act against the plotters. Critics accuse Salisbury of complicity ranging from inventing the plot for political purposes to simply allowing it to mature so he could claim the credit for thwarting it. Daring contemporaries observed that he benefitted from the plot in two ways – it solidified his position with his new monarch and it allowed him to neutralize his closest political rival, Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, compromised by his cousin Thomas Percy's role in the conspiracy. Those who credited Salisbury with the second Earl of Essex's fall in 1601 were quick to see a repetition of a successful strategy for disposing of a competitor.<sup>7</sup> Almost from the beginning, Cecil's detractors contested his actions, from his handling of the letter to his hand in shaping the official narratives. Sceptics continue to ask questions: Was there any evidence of a tunnel? What happened to the gunpowder? How much powder was there, was it "decayed" as some have claimed, and how much damage could it have done? Finally, was the real plot a government conspiracy to entrap a few malcontented Catholics?

## 1.2 Contesting Conspiracy: Studying the Plot

While such speculations have frequently engaged popular writers, political and religious historians, unconvinced by allegations of government conspiracy, have for the most part lost interest in the plot. Joel Hurstfield concluded in 1970 that "the question of the authenticity of Gunpowder Plot is no longer a rewarding subject of historical research ... Trying to prove that it was a fabrication has become a game, like dating Shakespeare's sonnets: a pleasant way to pass a wet afternoon but hardly a challenging occupation for adult men and women."<sup>8</sup> Satisfied that a plot existed, historians seem disinclined to probe its workings, leaving Jenny Wormald to lament more than a decade later that

after almost 400 years, we still lack a coherent historical explanation of how it was that thirteen Catholic conspirators sought to destroy the political structure of society within two years of the admittedly tortured birth of Great Britain. We still need answers to the two most basic questions, Why was there a Gunpowder Plot, and what did the Plotters really want?<sup>9</sup>

Compelling answers to such fundamental questions remain elusive largely because conflicting narratives quickly became weapons in confessional warfare. Early

published accounts were exclusively Protestant, not only because texts required pre-publication scrutiny, but also, as Alison Shell points out, because most Catholics preferred to forget the incident.<sup>10</sup> The primary sources of contemporary information, both published by royal authority, consisted of two pamphlets, one containing the king's speech to Parliament on 9 November 1605 and a "Discourse of the maner of this late intended treason," possibly written by the king, while a second offered the official account of the plotters' trials. Even as modern historical methodologies developed, however, they frequently served to construct or affirm Protestant narratives.

The first history based upon primary sources was David Jardine's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot* published in 1857. Jardine claimed to offer a balanced and accurate account by comparing newly rediscovered documents in the Public Record Office with the official contemporary pamphlets. He discounted the official "Discourse," which he believed to have been written by Francis Bacon, on the grounds of its narrative coherence, as an attempt "to surround fictions by undoubted truths with such apparent simplicity and carelessness, but in fact with such consummate art and depth of design, that the reader is beguiled into an unsuspecting belief in the whole narration." Jardine conceded that laws against Catholics were severe and accused James of increasing fines in order to reward his Scottish retainers, but he did not exonerate the plotters.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, he showed a grudging respect for Fawkes, whose "language and conduct after the discovery of the Plot are characteristic of a resolute fanatic, acting upon perverted notions of right and wrong, but by no means destitute of piety or humanity."<sup>12</sup>

Despite admitting that a Catholic might be pious, however, Jardine still saw the conspirators in thrall to superstition. Convinced of Garnett's legal guilt, he was less certain of the priest's moral guilt. Garnett was probably more involved in the plot than he admitted, but he was unfairly charged with all the crimes committed by the Jesuits during the previous twelve years. Sir Everard Digby, whom his judges had treated with respect based on his superior social status, Jardine dismissed as a "weak and bigoted young man," completely under the Jesuits' spell.<sup>13</sup> He argued that Tresham had written the Monteagle warning, but saw the letter as a ruse to conceal the government's real source of information. Nevertheless, he emphatically denied that Cecil had fabricated the plot and concluded that the plotters had been justly executed, regardless of any mitigating factors. Dismissing the familiar parallel of the Catilinarian conspiracy, he insisted that this one was *not* enacted by desperate men, but by men of wealth and position who deliberately rebelled against the state. Jardine's use of documents initiated archival research into the plot and made his study the most authoritative plot history until Samuel Gardiner published the first volume of his *History of England* in 1883.



Although Gardiner also relied upon documentary evidence, he found the coherence of the traditional narrative convincing, concluding that “The whole story of the plot, as far as it relates to the lay conspirators, rests upon indisputable evidence,” while he declared the evidence against Garnett mainly circumstantial.<sup>14</sup> Gardiner’s history ignited a heated exchange with Father John Gerard that smouldered for the remainder of the century. Gerard’s resentment of Gardiner’s status as a professional historian exacerbated their confessional differences, but some of their disagreement centred on the problem of narrative. Emulating Gardiner’s use of documentary evidence, in his *What Was the Gunpowder Plot?* (1897) Gerard shrewdly compared Cecil’s narrative for the foreign ambassadors, the 7 November “minute” for the Privy Council, and the “Discourse,” concluding that discrepancies among their stories pointed to manipulation of the official version.<sup>15</sup> Gerard offered the first serious challenge, based upon documentary evidence, to Protestant accounts, but Gardiner prevailed, not only through superior research but also by assailing Gerard’s personal and narrative credibility.

Responding with *What Gunpowder Plot Was* (1897), the historian focused on confessional differences: as a Catholic and a Jesuit, Gerard had reason to discredit the traditional story. Presuming that the original account is substantially true, Gardiner refutes the priest’s arguments step by step in the manner of seventeenth-century religious disputation. He also complains, however, that his opponent has no believable narrative to substitute for the traditional Protestant one he is intent upon demolishing. Joseph Levine observes that notwithstanding Gardiner’s reliance on documentary evidence, his project also required him to “imagine the conspirators at every step of their failed plot.”<sup>16</sup> Gardiner’s conclusions, mostly endorsed by a leading twentieth-century plot historian, Mark Nicholls, are thus based upon both documentary evidence and narrative coherence.

Along with Wormald, the only historian sensitive to the role of anti-Scots feelings among the plotters, Nicholls has done much to revive historical interest in the plot. In his most extensive study, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot*, Nicholls rejects the temptation to which most earlier historians succumbed, that of a chronological narrative, beginning instead with the government’s response to the discovery of the gunpowder. He supports his hypothesis “that the plot came as a genuine surprise to the authorities” by demonstrating that they reacted as most governments would to the sudden revelation of a conspiracy.<sup>17</sup> Although hampered by the destruction of the Privy Council records for the relevant period in a 1619 Whitehall fire, he finds no evidence of prior knowledge or fabrication by the government. In a subsequent article on the composition and dissemination of the popularly titled “King’s Book” containing the anonymous “Discourse,” he once again insists that in the days following the discovery “ignorance, embarrassment, even panic ran through the highest counsels in the land.”<sup>18</sup> Even if they do not

materially advance our understanding of the plotters' motives or long-term plans, Nicholls's conclusions, like Gardiner's, rebut the government conspiracy theories to the satisfaction of professional historians, leaving them to writers of popular history and sensational fiction.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps this situation should not surprise us, for the Gunpowder Plot has appealed to the popular imagination since James I claimed it as the founding event of his new Protestant Britain and initiated a deliberate memorialization campaign that produced poetry, prose pamphlets, and sermons. Studying this long-neglected literature allows us to explore topics at the forefront of seventeenth-century literary and interdisciplinary scholarship, including reciprocal relationships between literary and non-literary events, the beginnings of a "public sphere" in the early modern period, and the role played by narrative in public memory. In this sense, plot literature can function as a case study, providing a body of texts related to a single discrete event to be analysed with these questions in mind. At the same time, the plot deserves attention as a literary event in its own right because its treatment, not only by canonical authors including Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, and Donne, but also by less notable writers, contributed to new generic configurations. Specialized studies of individual texts have gradually given way to broader thematic treatments: Rebecca Lemon analyses the impact of the plot on discourses of treason, particularly in the theatre, and Paul Wake examines the relationship between history and imagination in the use of the Troy story in Gunpowder narratives.<sup>20</sup> Until now, however, no study has extensively sampled this literature from the perspective of its uses and reinterpretations of genre. The purpose of this book, then, is to examine a broad range of texts in three distinct genres in order to offer some preliminary conclusions first about the development and use of the Gunpowder narrative in seventeenth-century literary works, and second about how these works helped to reshape literary discourse in the period.

### 1.3 Reading Conspiracy: The Plot in Literary History

If historians have relinquished the Gunpowder Plot largely to amateurs, literary critics during much of the twentieth century relegated its literature to specialized literary historians, who sought the sources of canonical works such as *Paradise Lost* in the writings of neglected authors such as Phineas Fletcher and Francis Herring as well as in Milton's own youthful *In Quintum Novembris*. These studies produced some important work, including Stella Revard's insight that the Gunpowder sermons to which he would have been exposed annually might have been as important a source for Milton's narrative of the war in heaven as classical epic.<sup>21</sup> More provocatively, Barbara De Luna proposed in 1967 that Ben Jonson

wrote *Catiline, his Conspiracy* as a “parallelograph” of the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>22</sup> De Luna broke new ground in taking seriously the relationship between a literary text and the Gunpowder Plot, but she restricted Jonson’s purpose to justifying his own role in the aftermath of the conspiracy, and, while recognizing the play as a source for works by later writers, she failed to trace the contexts of its periodic revivals. Since early modern sermons, except those by well-known preachers such as John Donne and Lancelot Andrewes, remained unknown territory to most literary scholars, however, this large collection of texts continued to be neglected. In the final quarter of the twentieth century, however, two developments in literary theory provided a basis for new ways of looking at the Gunpowder texts. First, reception studies began replacing source studies as critics increasingly recognized relationships between texts as dialogic and accorded new importance to the reader’s role. Second, New Historicism offered serious attention to non-canonical works, grappling, like reception studies, with the question of how literary and non-literary histories might inform each other. Increased attention to the historical contexts of literary works has encouraged interdisciplinary studies in aspects of early modern culture such as the growth of a public sphere and the relationship between public memory and narrative. The texts arising from the Gunpowder Plot, both those traditionally considered literary and those not, present an excellent case study in which we can observe the unfolding of a narrative in an ever-changing religious and political context as well as develop methodologies for interdisciplinary work in these areas.

New Historicist methodologies of contextualizing literary texts by juxtaposing them with texts previously read as historical documents inform this study first by turning our attention to works that have been traditionally slighted, recognizing them as texts in their own right rather than simply as contexts or sources. While early New Historicists sought in such texts evidence for the repressive exercise of power and authority, literary scholars of the seventeenth-century have more recently begun wrestling with more complex understandings of relationships between writers and rulers.<sup>23</sup> I argue that the Gunpowder texts are not simply propaganda forced upon subjects by an authoritarian government, but that by reading, writing, and even listening, subjects actively participated in developing and revising plot narratives. Consequently, as readers we must be sensitive to changes over time, a problem New Historicists have been reluctant to address for fear of recreating the teleological narratives that characterized older historicisms. Reception studies, a cluster of related methodologies based on initial theorizations by Hans Robert Jauss in the 1970s, offers a solution to this problem by tracing the histories of texts as readers shape them into new texts.<sup>24</sup>

Jauss’s seven theses reoriented the relationship between text and context by giving literary texts a role beyond mere commentary. His seventh thesis proposes

that “The social function of literature takes place when the reader’s literary experience informs his understanding of the world and affects his social behaviour.”<sup>25</sup> Jauss sees literary history as a series of ongoing dialogues between works and their audiences involving refutation, emulation, and imitation. Although he invited criticism by failing to define the “horizon of expectations” against which a text is initially read, this methodology both accounts for literary change and traces the relationship between literary and non-literary history.<sup>26</sup> Complementing or even replacing source studies, reception studies presents a new way of understanding the texts written in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, which encouraged various responses that in turn created new texts and fostered incremental generic changes.

In critiquing both reception studies and New Historicism, Robert Hume argues that simply placing examples in chronological order tells us nothing about progression. To write credible literary history, we must situate texts within a broader cultural history, considering and contextualizing both production and reception. Rejecting Jauss’s more theoretical models, which imply homogeneous audiences with a uniform horizon of expectations, Hume advocates reconstructing audiences using data obtained about real readers when possible and carefully hypothesized readers when we lack evidence for actual reception. In such cases, dedications and other paratextual materials provide valuable clues about how authors expected their texts to be understood and what readers they sought. The importance of examining such materials can be seen in Richard Dutton’s reading of the preliminaries of *Volpone* as evidence of Jonson’s engagement with recent history in the play.<sup>27</sup> Genre also informs us about both the ways in which a writer expected a text to be understood and the reading strategies with which an audience likely approached it.

To Hume’s suggestive remarks about genre, we may add Alastair Fowler’s proposal that genre studies can help to resolve the problem of accounting for change in literary history. Central to Fowler’s approach is a definition of genres less as systems of classification than as “fields of association” modified over time.<sup>28</sup> He argues that every literary work modifies a genre and that these incremental generic changes constitute literary history. Changes, however, result from both internal and external factors, in other words from both literary and extra-literary events, an insight that offers the possibility of situating literary within non-literary history. Similarly, Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker affirm that “The history both of the creation of genres and of the awareness and manipulation of genres is a literary subject, but its exposition is part of social and cultural history.” Perhaps more audaciously, they argue that “Literature ... not only divines the important changes in history but can mold, accelerate, and even enact them.” Most frequently it does so by changing literary history.<sup>29</sup> Both readers and writers are vital to this

process. Nigel Smith also argues that genre is the connection between text and society. Genres, “with their capacity for transformation as well as representation, define the parameters of public debate, the nature of change, and the means for comprehending that change.” They “are always engaged in the social relations in which they originate”; however, “texts have a power in their circulation, interpretation and use, not necessarily connected with the circumstances of their production.”<sup>30</sup> In the case of the Gunpowder Plot, texts and their responses formed and transformed genres as authors wrote and rewrote the story to inform, persuade, and entertain their audiences.

This is the first study to examine a wide range of Gunpowder texts as literary works both composed and read with attention to their genres. In contrast, cultural studies such as David Cressy’s have used literary texts as evidence for various commemorative practices without accounting for generic differences. Similarly, Jason C. White, who cites numerous poems and prose pamphlets written in the plot’s aftermath as evidence for the development of national identity, categorizes these texts simply as polemics.<sup>31</sup> To understand these texts historically, however, we need to recreate contexts that include occasions, real or anticipated audiences, and the associations evoked by genre. Foregrounding genre, I trace changes to individual texts, their receptions, and their genres over time, assuming that generic change happens gradually through the reception of texts and their assimilation, through positive and negative responses, into new texts. This method resolves one of the dilemmas posed by New Historicism – that, as David Quint observes, “attention to synchronous historical relationships can cause the text’s participation in a diachronic *literary* history to be overlooked.”<sup>32</sup> For example, we will see in [chapter 6](#) that Henry Burton signalled his challenge to Laudianism in 1636 by preaching on a biblical text that Lancelot Andrewes had chosen for a conformist sermon in 1614. Thus, combining these methodologies nuances our understanding of the interactions between literary and non-literary history more than relying upon a single methodology.

## 1.4 Debating Conspiracy: The Plot and the Public Sphere

Responses to the plot provide a case study for examining the circulation of news and opinions in oral, print, and manuscript forms during the seventeenth century. Building upon and responding to Jürgen Habermas’s *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, historians and literary scholars over the past several decades have explored how a culture of discussion and debate in England, what Habermas calls a public sphere, originated in various venues and media predating the periodical press and the coffee house. In particular, Peter Lake, in collaborations with Steve Pincus and Michael Questier, has traced its earliest beginnings to the arrival

of the Jesuit mission in England.<sup>33</sup> Their research has stimulated interest in the transmission of news and views within public spaces including both the theatre and the church, and also through such previously neglected printed materials as pamphlets and sermons. Rebecca Lemon suggests that “the reading and writing communities that emerged out of the Gunpowder Plot offer a story of origins in the creation of the early modern public sphere,” and examines how rulers and subjects negotiated the idea of treason in post-plot England, analysing plays by Jonson, Hayward, and Shakespeare as well as Donne’s *Pseudo-Martyr*.<sup>34</sup> The current study endorses and extends Lemon’s conclusion by demonstrating that the plot encouraged discussion and debate of other topics and through other media, such as sermons.

One of the features that increasingly distinguished both popular and official responses to the attempted rebellions and assassinations of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the use of print to disseminate multiple interpretations of these events. While there were doubtless competing, and even conflicting, understandings of earlier incidents, the increasing availability of print opened up new avenues for discussion. Censorship at times restricted the printing of more extreme views, but Annabel Patterson has pointed out that the authorities permitted a significant degree of critique, provided that authors avoided open sedition.<sup>35</sup> For more dangerous works, the options of oral or manuscript transmission remained, although a letter might fall into the wrong hands or a libel writer be identified.

Early in Elizabeth’s reign, official proclamations, accounts of executions that the state had scripted, and popular ballads publicized acts of treason. Those with court connections or hopes of preferment might also extol Elizabeth and celebrate the preservation of the Protestant state in literary texts intended for select audiences, as Thomas Churchyard did after the Northern Rebellion.<sup>36</sup> Even in such texts, however, and particularly in official ones, chronicling conspiracies and rebellions served an admonitory function and consequently focused on occasions of punishment. Witnessing public executions and participating in occasional ceremonies of thanksgiving involving homilies and special liturgies warned subjects against treasonous behaviour. Such media discouraged, although they could not prevent, individual interpretation. The government’s need to control interpretative acts may be seen in K.J. Kesselring’s description of how the queen and William Cecil drafted a defence of Elizabeth’s reign immediately after the Northern revolt. The document, however, “ended with a note that as the bulk of her good subjects were unable to read, the text was to be read aloud in all parish churches.”<sup>37</sup> Whether or not the defence was disseminated in this way, Kesselring found no surviving print copies nor any evidence of publication. The setting of the parish church doubtless discouraged dissonant responses, contributing to the monologic nature of the discourse surrounding treason.

Nevertheless, the drafting of this document suggests a subtle change in official responses to threats against the state. Despite continuing to produce accounts of conspiracies and executions, the government apparently shifted its emphasis from displays of authority to attempts at persuasion. In 1583 William Cecil, Lord Burghley penned a defence of Edmund Campion's execution, and four years later a pamphlet, appearing anonymously but reputed to be the work of his son Robert, justified the beheading of Mary Stuart.<sup>38</sup> Produced explicitly in response to rumours and libels, such accounts acknowledged the possibility of alternative interpretations and expressed the government's commitment to convincing readers to trust official versions.<sup>39</sup> Between 1569 and 1583, then, the government seems to have acknowledged an increasing level of popular print literacy and to have developed a strategy for using printed texts both to pre-empt and to respond to discordant voices. However, the materiality of these texts and their ongoing availability to anyone who could read or hear them read offered possibilities for discussion and dialogue not only at the time but in succeeding years. Consequently, it became increasingly necessary for writers to establish the truth of their narratives against competing versions.

As sermons came to dominate Reformation culture, the pulpit offered an apparent solution to the problem of establishing truth claims. Delivering official accounts of events through clergymen could align political with divine authority, but this process too was fraught with uncertainties. Sermons reached both the literate and illiterate, but they required the cooperation of preachers, who quickly realized that political sermons allowed them to question, or even reject, official versions of events. As God's servants as well as the monarch's, these men also needed to believe the story they were telling. After Essex's execution the Elizabethan authorities struggled to find a preacher willing to endorse the crown's version of the rebellion at Paul's Cross, and William Barlow, who reluctantly accepted the assignment, was derided for his pains, while some of James VI's Scottish preachers stubbornly refused to publicize his narrative of the Gowrie Conspiracy.<sup>40</sup> The pulpit thus remained a necessary but not entirely reliable instrument of official communication, and sermons joined pamphlets in providing a range of interpretations of political events to an increasingly sophisticated audience of hearers and readers. Although they form an extensive and important body of texts, these sermons have generally been either neglected or relegated to specialized studies.<sup>41</sup>

Lake and Questier identify three characteristics necessary to the development of a "public sphere": messages sent through various media, an assumption of general public interest, and a belief that individuals are capable of considering public events critically. They suggest that the commencement of the English Jesuit mission helped to create these conditions, particularly the third. Examining the interactions between the Elizabethan government and the first missionaries,

Edmund Campion and Robert Persons, they conclude that “in Elizabethan England the creation of something like a rudimentary public sphere was not a product of Puritan opposition to the establishment or state but rather a product of the regime’s own efforts to perpetuate and protect itself from a popish threat variously conceived.”<sup>42</sup> In a more recent collaboration, Lake and Pincus develop the complementary idea that a public sphere emerged gradually from traditions of giving counsel, and that exceptional events such as threats of conspiracies and rebellions permitted occasional openings and closings of the public sphere that gradually normalized more widespread participation in public affairs.<sup>43</sup> Thus, increasingly frequently, the crown’s attempts to warn people about the threat of militant Catholicism were countered by writers exhorting the king to maintain true religion.

As a significant threat from a religious group disadvantaged in England but powerful on the Continent, the Gunpowder Plot required an official narrative that would inform the English public of what had taken place, warn others against similar attempts, and justify the traitors’ punishments to both national and international audiences. Like his predecessor, James used pamphlets, liturgies, and sermons to achieve these objectives. The sermon at Paul’s Cross, again by the unlucky Barlow, the official narrative (possibly penned by James), and the account of the trials and executions compiled by the Earl of Northampton all offered a reasonably homogeneous narrative. As we shall see later, however, subsequent writers discovered and exploited gaps within and between them.<sup>44</sup> Although the new king acted more assertively than Elizabeth ever had by instituting annual commemorations to sustain a powerful collective memory of this event, pulpit, stage, and pamphlet helped to destabilize its meanings.

### 1.5 Remembering Conspiracy: Plot Narratives and National Memory

That public memory had political consequences in this period has been demonstrated by Jonathan Scott, who argues in *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* that recollections of incidents such as the Gunpowder Plot fuelled the fear of Catholicism that helped to detonate the civil wars and the 1688 revolution.<sup>45</sup> Building upon Scott’s work, Jason C. White shows how militant Protestants used the memory of the plot to appeal for a political union that could strengthen their defences against international Catholicism. In other words, these writers assert the political significance of perceptions, regardless of their truth content. James I seems to have shared the belief that perceptions influence political activity, hastening to counteract rumours that Catholic nations had supported the plotters in order to prevent his subjects from jeopardizing the new peace with Spain. I suggest that the king also sought to



create a cultural memory that supported his bid for union, solidifying his position as the founder of a new dynasty and a new Britain as well as the preserver of Protestantism. The following chapters will show that he was successful in creating a powerful memory, but less successful in retaining control of that memory, perhaps because he underestimated the interpretative capabilities of his reading and writing subjects.

Although public memorials shaped national memory, literature perpetuated it, particularly as the immediacy of the event faded. According to Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, once the witnesses to events die, cultural memories must be actively cultivated through texts, material objects, and rituals. Memories of the Gunpowder Plot survived not only in annual commemorative rituals, but also in texts accessible throughout the year in print or manuscript. Erll and Rigney propose that literature plays three roles in the production of cultural memory, acting as a medium of remembrance, an object of remembrance, and a medium for the production of cultural memory. Although these roles may overlap, literary texts first “help produce collective memories in the form of narratives.”<sup>46</sup> Paul Ricoeur and Paul Connerton also insist upon the role of narrative in memory, Connerton arguing that remembering requires creating “meaningful narrative sequences,” while Ricoeur proposes that narrative incorporates memories into our identities, individual and collective.<sup>47</sup>

If we accept Connerton’s distinction between two types of remembrance – incorporation and inscription – we may see the early seventeenth century at a crossroads between the two. Incorporation involves ritual acts requiring physical participation, while inscription involves the creation of myths. Although Connerton admits that the two may overlap, he argues that the “transition from an oral culture to a literate culture is a transition from incorporating practices to inscribing practices.”<sup>48</sup> In the seventeenth century, commemoration included both such incorporating rituals as attending church, participating in the liturgy, and ringing church bells and such inscribing practices as hearing sermons and watching plays, as well as reading and writing various print and manuscript texts. While the two types frequently reinforced each other, they could also open up differences of interpretation. As Connerton points out, ritual may be more conservative than myth, since the “*reservoir of meanings*” in a myth may be reshaped for different purposes, while “the structure of ritual has significantly less potential for *variance*.”<sup>49</sup> Although Cressy’s study of the “vocabulary” of celebration demonstrates that practices such as bell ringing expressed changing meanings over time, they could not accommodate the full range of interpretations that narratives could.<sup>50</sup>

Despite requiring his subjects’ participation in both incorporating and inscribing practices, James encountered several obstacles to creating a new national identity through shared memory. As Ricoeur reminds us, the “duty of memory

consists essentially in a duty not to forget," which meant subjects had to be exhorted continually to recall their own deliverance from this threat.<sup>51</sup> While remembrance needed to begin on this personal level, writers frequently threatened that individual forgetfulness could endanger the state: if England's people forgot God's blessings, then God would forget England.<sup>52</sup> One of the difficulties of memory, however, is its tendency to become confused with imagination. This problem became acute when individuals were required to remember an event that had been prevented from happening. To impress people with the magnitude of their deliverance, speakers and writers had to describe the extent of the proposed destruction, which could only be accomplished by appealing to their imaginations.<sup>53</sup> In his sermon at Paul's Cross on 10 November 1605, Barlow painted a vivid picture of London after an explosion. In this "*ferie massacre*," "(beside the place it selfe at the which hee aymed) the *Hall of Iudgement*, the *Courtes of Recordes*, the *Collegiate Church*, the *Citie of Westminster*, yea, *White-Hall* the *Kinges house*, had beene trushed and ouerthrowne." A "*Deluge of Bloode*," in which people would have been torn "parcell meale" as if by beasts would have followed the explosion.<sup>54</sup> So many sermons and pamphlets during the remainder of the century repeated this word picture that even the Royalist James Howell felt compelled to satirize it in his letter to the "knowing reader" at the beginning of his *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae*.<sup>55</sup> Expanding on the capabilities of letters, he reminds his readers that "Had not the Eagle's *Letter* brought to Light / That subterranean horrid Work of Night":

Witness that fiery *Pile*, which would have blown  
Up to the Clouds, Prince, People, Peers and Town,  
Tribunals, Church, and Chapel; and had dry'd  
The *Thames*, tho' swelling in her highest Pride,  
And parboil'd the poor Fish, which from her Sands  
Had been toss'd up to the adjoining Lands.  
Lawyers, as *Vultures*, had soar'd up and down;  
Prelates, like *Magpies*, in the Air had flown.<sup>56</sup>

Howell's poem demonstrates how imagination stimulates literature by providing the possibility of multiple, even competing, memories.<sup>57</sup>

Individuals recall public events differently, according to Maurice Halbwachs, because they have different social identities. Halbwachs and other memory theorists also suggest that individuals identify more fully with smaller, more tightly knit social groups than with the more abstract notion of the state.<sup>58</sup> In the years after the plot's discovery, preachers occasionally reminded elite congregations that they would have lost their lives had the plot been successful. Members of the

lower social orders, however, likely recalled the threat of economic and political chaos rather than that of immediate death. Those outside London may have felt less personally affected by the plot, receiving the news after the danger was averted and having to rely on second-hand accounts of the trials and executions witnessed by Londoners. Walter Yonge, living in Devonshire, recorded the plot's discovery in his diary with interest but no apparent fear. His observation that the Midlands rising comprised only "sixty or eighty horse" suggests that he did not exaggerate the threat.<sup>59</sup> In these cases, social cohesion within a smaller group did not preclude identification with the Protestant nation.

For others, however, conflicted loyalties arose. This was particularly true for Catholics, expressly denied full participation in a Protestant state.<sup>60</sup> Recent research depicts the post-Reformation Catholic community in England as a close and supportive network,<sup>61</sup> yet many Catholics, including Ben Jonson, considered themselves both Catholics and loyal Englishmen. James acknowledged this dilemma, insisting from the beginning that Catholics could be loyal subjects without changing their religion, provided they repudiated the pope's power of deposition. Many writers nevertheless saw all Catholics as potential if not actual traitors, forcing them to choose between their religious and political allegiances. For many, a less explicit conflict centred on James's unpopular project of Anglo-Scottish union. Undercurrents of anti-Scots feelings, expressed in post-plot drama and perhaps more covertly in Anglo-Latin epic, indicate that many were unwilling to subsume their English identity within a British one.<sup>62</sup> James, however, apparently recognized the necessity of overcoming these challenges. Recent scholarship has described how the English Reformation disrupted medieval sites of memory, initiating a crisis of memory as the sermon replaced the Mass, prayers for the dead were abolished, and the old calendar of saints' days was radically pruned.<sup>63</sup> As Cressy suggests, the institution of political anniversaries helped to smooth this transition by replacing these traditions with new rituals and myths.<sup>64</sup>

While rituals could be legislated, mythmaking required the work of authors mostly outside direct state control. Some wrote to obtain patronage, others for more immediate monetary gain, and still others to persuade readers of their political or religious views. For all Renaissance authors, however, writing about the recent past posed a theoretical challenge that continues to trouble both historians and literary critics. Aristotle's *Poetics*, echoed by Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*, distinguished poetry from history, classifying poetry as general, plot-driven, and focused upon the possible, while history is particular, episodic, and deals with the actual.<sup>65</sup> Aristotle does not preclude poets from representing historical subjects; however, Sidney favours imagined events, claiming that the historian has fewer opportunities to encourage virtuous action because the actual events he must narrate may not supply appropriate morals.<sup>66</sup> Historical narratives, he fears, may

actually promote vicious rather than virtuous action. According to Eric MacPhail, Aristotle developed the idea of plot or *mythos* “as a distinctly poetic form of rationality and coherence absent from history,” but Renaissance theorists transferred this idea from poetry to history. In the reversal that he posits, “humanist historiography sought to portray the pattern and the logic of historical events while Renaissance literary criticism undertook to reevaluate the historicity of fiction.”<sup>67</sup>

The relationship of narrative to literary form in historical representation remains contentious. Hayden White proposes that all narrative histories are “verbal fictions” shaped according to literary conventions.<sup>68</sup> Jauss similarly argues that narrative history perpetrates three “illusions”: the illusion of a clear beginning and end, since these are actually selected from a range of possibilities; the illusion of completeness even when events are obviously incomplete; and the illusion of objectivity.<sup>69</sup> According to White, the literary form the author chooses to impose upon an event determines the selection of beginning and end. As Ricoeur points out, however, White’s equation of historical and fictional narratives neglects a fundamental difference between the two. While fictional narratives require only a sign and a signifier, historical narratives also need a referent to legitimate their truth claims, although these may be compromised by the selectivity of both archive and researcher.

From the beginning, the crown needed to assert the truth of the plot in order to squelch powerful counter-narratives by religiously and politically disaffected individuals and communities. Recognizing testimony as the link between memory and history, the crown first polished and published the confessions of Guy Fawkes and Thomas Winter in the “Discourse” published with James’s 9 November speech, then documented the plotters’ trials.<sup>70</sup> By including his account of Catholic interference beginning with the bull against Elizabeth in the latter pamphlet, however, Northampton began situating the event within a lengthier history. Subsequent authors adopted this chronicle form to offer credible history while demonstrating England’s providential preservation. The form promised objectivity, since most readers were unlikely to reflect upon the absence of incidents that had been silently elided.<sup>71</sup> Listing the Catholic plots from which Protestant England had been saved, frequently beginning with the Elizabethan Settlement, these texts made the Gunpowder Plot the finale in a series of increasingly daring Catholic attempts to subvert English Protestantism. As White points out, however, closure remains elusive in the chronicle form, making it singularly appropriate to a series of incidents that could only end with the papal Antichrist’s final defeat at the apocalypse.<sup>72</sup>

One of the earliest prose chronicles to include the Gunpowder Plot, Thomas Mason’s 1615 *Christs victorie ouer Sathans tyrannie*, a continuation of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, places the conspiracy within a lengthy list of domestic rebellions,

assassination attempts, the thwarted Spanish invasion of 1588, and the Gowrie Conspiracy.<sup>73</sup> Contextualizing the plot within a chronology of Protestant martyrdoms both emphasizes its place in providential history and openly contests Catholic claims that Garnett and Oldcorne died as martyrs.<sup>74</sup> A new polemical imperative shaped the chronicles of the 1620s, as authors garnered support for their political positions on intervening in the continental war by mobilizing fears that the next generation might forget the plot. Bishop George Carleton's providential history, *A Thankfull Remembrance of God's Mercy* (1624), exhorted England to remember her deliverances, implicitly warning that forgetfulness could imperil the nation. Like Mason, Carleton situated the plot within a detailed list of attacks on English Protestantism, attributing the conspiracy to the Jesuits without entirely dismissing the possibility of diabolical agency.<sup>75</sup> Dedicating his pamphlet to Prince Charles, to whom he was chaplain, however, Carleton chose as his final evidence of divine favour God's preservation of England from the continental wars in which Charles was then attempting to embroil his country. Carleton's isolationism contrasts with the repeated injunctions of the puritan printer Michael Sparke to pray for German Protestants and particularly for the dispossessed Elector Palatine and his wife, Princess Elizabeth, in his immensely popular *Crumms of Comfort*, a collection of prayers and thanksgivings reprinted in numerous editions from the mid-1620s into the eighteenth century. Although these texts displayed the widening interpretative gap between conformists and radical Protestants, both authors consciously sought to instil memories of former deliverances in the next generation, providing foldout illustrations of the Armada and the Gunpowder Plot to be used when instructing children about these events.<sup>76</sup>

The new sense of solidarity engendered by the Thirty Years' War encouraged radical Protestants like Sparke to integrate their list of deliverances with those of their co-religionists on the continent, and by mid-century their chronicles were able even to represent the civil wars as part of the Counter-Reformation. The anonymous *Papa Patens or The Pope in his Colours* (1652) promised on its title page an "Exact account" of the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot, the Massacre at Paris, the murders of Henri III and IV, and the Irish Rebellion.<sup>77</sup> No longer was the plot simply an attack on an individual monarch, or even a nation; it had become part of an international conspiracy against Protestantism directed from Rome itself. The nation's enemies, in their efforts to restore Catholicism, begin "by striving to make our selves hate our own Religion, and leave that God which brought us out of the Land of *Aegypt*," but if this fails they resort to "poyson, murder, and force of Arms."<sup>78</sup> The pamphlet's underlying message is that people err in hating puritans more than papists when their behaviour is in fact much more moderate and less politically dangerous. Thus, Catholics can be blamed even for the dissensions among Protestants that have caused the civil wars. Rather curiously, a brief recital

of William Watson's 1603 plot (also known as the Bye Plot), the truth of which the writer questions, follows the account of the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>79</sup> Possibly the author thought narrating the events chronologically would undermine the truth claims he makes for the Gunpowder Plot, condemning those who either consider it the work of "a few male-contents" or "an invention of him whom in reverence I forbear to name."<sup>80</sup> For the first time in this text, however, narrative struggles against the chronicle form.

Nevertheless, J.H. could still use this form at the Restoration to span the divide of the civil wars, celebrating Charles II's accession by recalling his grandfather's deliverances in *A True and Perfect Relation of that Most Horrid & Hellish Conspiracy of the Gunpowder Treason* (1662) and claiming he had collected his information "out of the Best and most Authentique Writers." Indeed, the author seems to have drawn eclectically from various sources. He follows the author of the "Discourse" in giving Fawkes three matches and the author of *Papa Patens* in having the plotters encounter the wall about Candlemas.<sup>81</sup> From the "Discourse," also, comes the image of the rebels' support melting away like a snowball in spring that John Vicars borrowed when expanding a brief epic by Francis Herring. His main purpose is to celebrate the Stuart dynasty, beginning the story with James's accession and the Watson and Raleigh conspiracies and concluding with the executions of the Gunpowder traitors. Thomas Howard, the Lord Chamberlain, takes precedence over Salisbury in the plot's discovery, possibly because the Howard line had continued to support the Stuarts.<sup>82</sup> This royalist text warns readers that their ingratitude caused Charles I's execution, thus linking Catholicism and separatism at the same time that 30 January joined 5 November on the political calendar, one celebrating a Stuart monarch's deliverance from a Catholic plot and the other commemorating his son's betrayal by puritans. While the chronicle structure had proved remarkably flexible for both political and religious purposes, fidelity to history was becoming incompatible with fidelity to a polemical narrative. The result was a movement away from the chronicle format towards single-incident narratives representing themselves as trustworthy histories.

For early writers of histories the only available documentary evidence comprised the testimonies of Fawkes and Winter, the Monteagle letter, and the trial itself, all mediated through official accounts that Catholic writers actively contested.<sup>83</sup> In his 1658 *Englands warning peece or the history of the gun-powder treason*, Thomas Spencer cited John Speed and Bishop Carleton rather than more radical sources to prove his neutrality, and he supplemented the conspirators' testimonies with that of the Littletons' cook, who guessed the rebels were hiding at Holbeach House after the failed Midlands rebellion when his master ordered more food than he could possibly eat. Although unsubstantiated, this anecdote offers readers an immediate first-person narrative. By the 1670s, amid fears of a Catholic

succession, authors turned to Catholic sources to assert an increasingly elusive impartiality. Edward Stephens' *Discourse Concerning the Original of the Powder-Plot* (1674) tackles both Catholicism and separatism, warning that the laxity of preferment-seeking clergy is driving more godly clerics from the Church of England, leaving the country more vulnerable to Catholicism. Although he implicates even the pope in the plotting of the conspiracy, his primary targets are the Jesuits, and he exploits Catholic anti-Jesuitism by citing Catholics like Jacques Auguste de Thou, who concede the Society's role in the conspiracy. An English edition of de Thou's narrative appeared the same year.<sup>84</sup>

As the urgency to validate the traditional narrative escalated in response to the Popish Plot, the original account of the discovery appeared in 1679 for the first time since 1606, with a new preface signed by T.L., probably Thomas Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln. Hoping to quell rumours that there was no plot or that Cecil invented one, Barlow insists in his introduction that the story is "no lying Legend, no vain Romance, no spurious or unlicenc'd-seditious Pamphlet, but an Authentique History." Rejecting various generic labels, Barlow claims objectivity, relying upon Catholic authors to show that even their co-religionists repudiate the Jesuits, although he blames the puritans as well, asserting that they "had set a foot a scandalous report of the King, *THAT HE MEANT TO GRANT A TOLERATION TO POPERY*."<sup>85</sup> Barlow's main contribution to plot historiography, however, was publishing some letters by Everard Digby, found upon the death of his son, Sir Kenelm Digby. Although they provide little insight into the event, they augmented the documentary evidence for the first time since the confessions of Fawkes and Winter and the Monteaule letter had been printed with the original narrative.<sup>86</sup>

The earlier chronicles had relied upon the method of example, which, according to Jauss, "extracts a clearly formulated moral lesson from some earlier deed in order to guide future actions."<sup>87</sup> As long as human nature was regarded as constant, understanding the past could explain the present and anticipate the future. Thus, on the journey from Reformation to apocalypse, Catholics and Spaniards would always attack or undermine Protestant England, but they would do so in various ways. By the 1670s, this approach was abandoned in favour of the parallel, which, as Achsah Guibbory explains, represents a more cyclical view of history than the chronicle, for it suggests that certain patterns repeat themselves, although with varying degrees of exactness.<sup>88</sup> In 1678 John Williams, Bishop of Chichester, followed Stephens's formula in his *History of the Gunpowder-Treason* to insist that the plotters were highly placed Jesuits, that even some Catholics condemned the plot, and that the evidence of Garnett's complicity had conveniently perished with Catesby. Williams also makes an impassioned plea for the continuing celebration of the plot lest it, like the Armada, be forgotten and England continue to fall prey to Jesuit treachery. Responding to his critics, in 1681 he

published a “vindication” of the earlier text, adding to it “A PARALLEL betwixt That and the Present Popish Plot,” reiterating his previous assertions that the plot was formulated in the highest Jesuit councils, but using the strategy of the parallel to demonstrate that if the Gunpowder Plot was genuine, then the Popish Plot must also be. He elaborates on the similarities between the two – both were perpetrated by Jesuits, were intended to re-Catholicize England, and were planned and discovered in comparable ways.<sup>89</sup> The argument is logically weak, but in the highly charged atmosphere of the time its rhetoric may have been compelling. Williams’s pamphlets were reprinted with Gilbert Burnet’s 1684 Gunpowder sermon and various items related to the Popish Plot in *A Collection of Several Tracts and Discourses* [sic] in 1685. In his controversial sermon, published to vindicate himself of charges of popery, Burnet used a strategy similar to Williams’s by choosing as his text Psalm 22.31, in which David requests God’s assistance on the strength of a former deliverance.<sup>90</sup> The subsequent discovery that the Popish Plot had been fabricated, however, seems to have revived an element of scepticism regarding traditional plot narratives from which they have never fully recovered.

While these prose texts, despite their obvious polemical stances, represented themselves as histories, the commemorative texts with which this study is largely concerned were not required to establish truth claims by using testimony or printed sources. Commemoration, as Ricoeur points out, requires fidelity to the original narrative rather than to historical truth.<sup>91</sup> Most of these texts were self-consciously literary or rhetorical, taking the forms of occasional poetry, epigram, Virgilian epic, or sermon. The theatre from the beginning challenged both the historical and commemorative traditions by querying official accounts. The relationships among these texts demonstrate a developing intertextuality that blends fiction and reality, memory and imagination. While at times authors’ engagements with previous texts seem eclectic or merely pragmatic, they frequently serve to turn their works into “object[s] of remembrance,” making intertextuality part of collective memory. Erll and Rigney argue that “recollecting texts composed or written in earlier periods is an integral part of cultural remembrance.”<sup>92</sup> Rewriting texts, as Jauss has made clear, also enables literary history.

Responses to the plot helped to create a radically Protestant epic tradition, influenced the development of the occasional political sermon, and fostered the late-seventeenth-century ghost poem genre inspired by Jonson’s *Catiline, his Conspiracy*. Equally importantly, they helped to create audiences sensitive to religious and political nuances in the selection and manipulation of various generic codes. Consequently, the impact of these developments extends beyond literary history. While the relationship between public memory and history is complex, and it is difficult to trace a direct path from reading to political action, it is clear that memory creates narratives, narratives shape beliefs, and beliefs inform actions.



The present study examines texts in their relations not only to the original plot, but also to events taking place when they were composed, published, and received. Since the number of artefacts, even within the three genres I have selected, precludes analysis of every plot-related work, I have chosen a smaller number of texts representing the range of this material and its literary and historical influence in the seventeenth century, contextualizing them as broadly as possible.<sup>93</sup> The selected texts either take the plot as their main subject or theme, or were written as a direct result of the discovery or its annual celebration. I have deliberately omitted some specific groups of texts, particularly the polemical texts related to the Oath of Allegiance controversy. This vast body of materials merits its own study, and its relationship to the Gunpowder Plot is tangential although clearly significant. The best known of these texts, Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*, has already been discussed in the context of post-plot representations of treason by Rebecca Lemon. With a few notable exceptions, the texts I discuss are by Protestant authors. Although it is not essential to my argument, I assume, with them and with most modern historians, that there was a plot and that its discovery unfolded roughly according to the official narratives. The majority of these texts, not surprisingly, were produced in the first half of the seventeenth century; however, their influence extends through the century and even into the next. Because generic development and mutation occurred at different paces among the selected genres, terminal dates for inclusion of texts vary between chapters; however, changing interpretations of the plot after 1688, when William III represented his own arrival on 5 November as England's second great deliverance from Catholicism, stimulated new forms of Gunpowder literature that cannot be discussed here but deserve their own study.

I begin in [chapter 2](#) by reviewing the way in which, between 1569 and 1605, the English church and state developed and disseminated a providential account of the country's Protestant history through occasional liturgies, sermons, and prose narratives celebrating the monarch's deliverances from Catholic threats, both domestic and international. James VI followed a similar prescription in Scotland after his alleged kidnapping by the Gowrie brothers, with the important distinction that he made celebrating his deliverance an annual event. Bringing this celebration with him to England enabled him to claim a place in a developing narrative demonstrating God's care for English Protestantism by establishing an annual thanksgiving service and modelling the liturgy for the occasion on the one for Elizabeth's accession day. Early in his English reign, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot allowed James to enhance this identification by the same means. Nevertheless, from the beginning rumours, libels, manuscript testimonies, and even printed sources offering alternative interpretations countered the sermons and authorized print accounts of these events. As time passed, James's

insistence upon perpetual memorialization paradoxically both strengthened his self-representation as a British Protestant monarch and opened him and his heirs to critique. Although he could perpetuate the myth that all the plots against both himself and Elizabeth were, like Samson's foxes, joined at their tails, he had created regular occasions that his critics as well as his supporters could exploit.<sup>94</sup> This chapter, then, establishes how the development of the occasional thanksgiving liturgy, anniversary sermon, and narrative of deliverance helped to create a "rudimentary public sphere" during the late Elizabethan period by enabling members of various social and religious groups to interpret public events. Furthermore, these texts not only commented on events, but also created these events in the public memory using evolving generic conventions. By reading the texts created in the immediate aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot both in chronological order and against one another, we can see that a narrative develops through negotiation and dialogue rather than being simply imposed by the authorities.

Each of the remaining chapters concentrates upon a single genre, tracing its changing role in the narrative and its transformations over time. [Chapter 3](#) explores the repercussions of the state's failure to create a univocal narrative, particularly in the very public trials and executions of the plotters, which opened the door to theatrical representations that engaged with unresolved questions about ambition, religion, and rhetoric. While no surviving play dramatizes the plot, contemporary dramas allude to it in various ways. Investigating the possibility of a dialogic relationship among three early plays – John Day's *Isle of Gulls*, Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, and Thomas Dekker's *Wbore of Babylon* – I suggest that they challenge their audiences to re-examine the events that had recently taken place on the public stage of London, and particularly Robert Cecil's part in them. Jonson's later *Catiline, his Conspiracy* reprises these questions, offering a sweeping indictment of institutional rather than merely individual corruption and its lengthy afterlife. Memory plays a crucial role in this play, beginning with the appearance of Sylla's ghost in Catiline's study. This striking ghost, which functions differently than other stage spectres in the period, reappears in Restoration satire to raise once again the problem of the connection between religion and ambition that had not been safely buried with the plotters. The apparition highlights another absent presence in plot narratives – the women who cared for and protected the plotters, especially the priests, but were erased from the plot narratives until scholars in the late twentieth century began to reinstate them.<sup>95</sup> The female characters in *Catiline* have suffered from a similar neglect through most of the play's history, despite the significance of their actions and the liberties Jonson took with his classical sources in representing them. Why did the women, particularly Anne Vaux, who had sheltered Garnett, drop out of the narrative so quickly and completely? The play's conclusion raises further questions about the rhetorical self-representations of those who tried the plotters and about the futility of trying to eliminate English Catholicism. The ghost thus serves as

a reminder of all that haunts Jacobean England and the hazards of applying simple solutions to complex problems. Briefly tracing the play's reception through the later seventeenth century we watch its central concerns migrate from drama to dramatic monologue and tragedy to satire, these generic transformations signalling new efforts to understand old problems.

Whereas the reception of Jonson's play demonstrates the movement of a single text from one genre to another, the following two chapters trace the transformation of a genre, the Anglo-Latin Gunpowder epic, as it gradually evolves from a courtly manuscript genre to a public print one. If James saw in the plot evidence that God protected English Protestant monarchs, he also noted in its timing an opportunity to promote the project that was to have dominated the parliamentary session disrupted by its discovery – the political union of England and Scotland. Although the king wanted his reign to be seen in some ways as a continuation of Elizabeth's, he also wanted to emphasize that he was creating a new Britain.<sup>96</sup> The Gunpowder Plot was thus to become the founding event for both his new dynasty and a new Protestant nation. Those who wrote congratulatory poems to solicit patronage from members of the court after the plot's discovery seem to have recognized this ambition and chosen Anglo-Latin epic as the most appropriate genre in which to represent the plot as the founding event of this new nation.

Nevertheless, they also used the occasion to counsel James on his handling of the Catholic problem. Early epics such as those by Michael Wallace and Francis Herring congratulated the king on his deliverance, but also reminded him of the dangers of allowing Catholics to remain in the country, particularly at court. As some of these poems found their way into English print culture, they helped transform epic from a royalist to a puritan genre in the mid-seventeenth century. Beginning with Herring's 1609 sequel describing the Midlands rebellion, the epics grew more militantly Protestant as publication and translation moved them down the social and economic ladder. Later writers such as Phineas Fletcher combined panegyric praise with apocalyptic warning, representing forcefully Satan's control of the Catholic Church through tropes of monstrosity and demonic councils. Although part of an academic rather than a courtly tradition, Milton's *In Quintum Novembris* also demonstrates diminishing faith in the ability, and perhaps the will, of a godly monarch to preserve the Protestant nation. John Vicars's escalating emphasis upon the abortive revolt and the plotters' characters in his "dilations" of Herring's poem completed the genre's transformation from court panegyric into godly propaganda, raising puritan struggles into an epic subject and creating an audience for the new Christian heroism of patient faith that the mature Milton would celebrate in *Paradise Lost*. The role of gunpowder in Milton's depiction of heavenly warfare demonstrates how godly Protestant writing had transformed the meaning of the Gunpowder Plot and how Milton's response helped to reshape the English epic.

Audiences are the primary subject of the sixth chapter, which documents how annual Gunpowder sermons preached, and sometimes printed, between 1606 and 1688 participated in perpetuating but also transforming memories of the plot. Here we see not the transformation of a single text or a genre, but the creation of a new genre, the anniversary sermon. Both a means for the ruler to display his power and authority to his subjects, and at the same time the minister's opportunity to offer counsel to his governors, sermons participated in the often contentious process of defining the English church in its relations both to the state and to its rivals, Catholicism and puritanism. Although this was the primary genre through which James had chosen to keep alive the official memory of his deliverances, the sermons provided ordinary individuals, even those who could not read, with the skills they needed to understand and participate in religious, political, and ultimately literary discourse by teaching them to negotiate among messages to multiple audiences.

Since the number of surviving sermons does not permit analysis of each one, and generalizing from a body of texts produced over such a long and tumultuous period is dangerous at best, I have selected four sermons for in-depth textual and contextual analysis, focusing particularly on their relationships with their audiences.<sup>97</sup> John Donne, preaching at Paul's Cross in 1622, responded to both James's recent *Directions to Preachers* and Samuel Ward's controversial "Double Deliverance" cartoon by offering a methodology of listening and reading that balances obedience to royal authority with the subject's freedom to interpret. Wolfgang Iser's theory of "blanks" and "negations" may be usefully employed to examine how Donne creates spaces for interpretation through the structure of his sermon, particularly in the later published version. Three printed responses to the 1636 sermons for which Henry Burton lost his ears (those of Archbishop Laud, Peter Heylyn, and Christopher Dow) demonstrate the Laudian administration's uneasiness with the close reading and interpretation that Burton advocates, particularly when performed by the godly. Matthew Newcomen's 1642 sermon to Parliament continues the tradition of counselling governors. Responding to the prospect of a negotiated peace settlement with Charles I that he felt would threaten further ecclesiastical reform, he justifies continuing the war against the king for religious reasons. The preservation of sermon notes taken on this occasion, attributed to Walter Yonge (second son of the diarist), allows us to consider how Newcomen may have adapted his sermon for performance and print audiences. Preaching before the restored Charles II at Whitehall on 5 November 1661, Seth Ward viewed his audience not as competent interpreters, but as potential subversives to be coerced into submission. Nervous about any kind of interpretation, Ward clarifies relations between church and state by articulating the duties of both monarchs and subjects. His sermon was reprinted during the controversy over Henry

Sacheverell's best-selling, and highly inflammatory, Gunpowder sermon of 1709, but the message of passive obedience had lost its effectiveness. Analysis of these four sermons suggests some of the ways in which readers and listeners helped to develop the genre of the anniversary sermon, enabling their own participation in the changing interpretation of the Gunpowder Plot.

In conclusion, I reiterate that the literature that took the Gunpowder Plot as its primary subject did not simply comment on its political occasion. Instead, it reshaped the narrative of the plot that was fundamental to its public memorialization. This constant revision involved not only writers, but also readers, who developed the skills to interpret complex messages in the theatre, in print, and in church, and by responding to them helped to create new genres and transform others. Although I make a case here for the significance of one particular incident – the Gunpowder Plot – I believe the methodologies used in these chapters could be effective in considering the reciprocal relationships between literary and non-literary history in the context of other seventeenth-century events. Not the least of the intriguing possibilities is the effect that the literature of the Gunpowder Plot had on the creation of the Popish Plot, to which I have barely alluded.<sup>98</sup>

## 2 “like *Sampsons* Foxes”: Creating a Jacobean Myth of Deliverance

---

Early seventeenth-century readers perceived the Gunpowder Plot not as an isolated incident but as the climax in a series of Catholic assaults upon England and her church dating back at least as far as the Northern Rising and the papal bull against Queen Elizabeth.<sup>1</sup> Examining the genesis of this interpretation in the earliest official responses to the plot, I argue that between 1569 and 1605 the English church and state had developed a providential account of English Protestant history through liturgies, sermons, and prose narratives celebrating deliverances from a succession of Catholic threats, and that James I seized the opportunities of the Gowrie Conspiracy and the Gunpowder Plot to expand this English narrative into a British one. Upon his accession to the English throne, one of the king's challenges was to identify his reign as an extension of Elizabeth's while making it clear that he was founding a new Stuart dynasty and a British nation.<sup>2</sup> By inserting the Gowrie Conspiracy into a series of English deliverances, James hoped to make a cultural connection between the two countries through his own person, miraculously preserved in both places.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see in subsequent chapters, however, overcoming resistance to political union was even more difficult than convincing some of his preachers to accept his narrative of the Gowrie incident.

In using the phrase “myth of deliverance” to describe this phenomenon, I rely upon Paul Connerton's distinction between “myth” as verbal act and “ritual” as performance.<sup>4</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a myth as a “traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon.”<sup>5</sup> Common usage sometimes denigrates myth by associating it with exaggeration or lies; however, here it is not intended to suggest that James and his advisors perpetrated deliberate falsehoods. While the word “myth” is not used in contemporary accounts, the word “deliverance” appears repeatedly and carried much weight for

seventeenth-century readers. Blair Worden explains that deliverances were considered “pleasant providences” or “mercies.” These “were not random or arbitrary displays of God’s sovereignty, but formed a pattern, a ‘chain’ or ‘series’, visible to the true believer.” Thus, “Providence was the thread of divine purpose which drew together the seemingly disparate events of history.”<sup>6</sup> The story of the Gunpowder Plot, retold annually, acquired mythic status as a link in the chain of deliverances from the papal Antichrist that demonstrated God’s approval of English Protestantism. As interpreter of the cryptic Montecagle letter, James could claim an instrumental role in this divine work, justifying both his reign and the ongoing marginalization of Catholics.

To remind his subjects continually of the providential status of his reign, James introduced a new focus upon perpetual memorialization that was paradoxically to offer later writers opportunities to critique both his and his son’s actions. Even in November 1605, however, not all readers and listeners credited the news of the plot. While dissenting interpretations frequently had to rely upon manuscript or oral transmission, their proliferation required the government to engage with them in a series of texts and oral performances over the following months. The evidence that official texts were developed to target specific counternarratives complicates the prevailing view, expressed by David Cressy, that consensus regarding the nature of the plot did not fragment until the 1630s. Instead, I suggest that such a consensus was illusory from the beginning.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the Protestant narrative of the Gunpowder Plot was not simply imposed by the state and accepted by a passive populace, but developed through dialogue and debate among competing accounts from the beginning.

## 2.1 Liturgies: Thanksgiving and Vengeance

On 12 July 1603, two weeks before James I’s coronation, the Privy Council instructed Archbishop John Whitgift to devise a thanksgiving service according to his own “Judgment and Wisdom” to celebrate the anniversary of the king’s escape from an alleged plot by the Gowrie brothers in Scotland on 5 August 1600. The next day, Whitgift in turn requested assistance from his bishops, but suggested that

in the meantime, and for the speedier Dispatch of your Letters, I think it fit, that some Order be observed in this Action as was used upon the 17th of *November* in our late Sovereign’s Time; with special Charge, that in every particular Church there be a Sermon and Service, with a Declaration of the great Blessing of God for his Majesties Deliverance from that Danger, with hearty Prayer to God for the Continuance of his Goodnes towards him and us; and to the like effect.<sup>8</sup>

As Whitgift's letter indicates, special thanksgiving services in honour of the monarch were not unprecedented. Beginning in the late 1570s, annual liturgies and sermons celebrated the anniversary of Elizabeth's accession, but occasional thanksgivings for her deliverances had begun even earlier.<sup>9</sup> What is striking about Whitgift's direction, however, is the priority the king apparently accorded this activity in the first months of a new reign. Clearly, James had grasped the potential that such occasions offered for moulding his public image as both Elizabeth's rightful successor and the founder of a new dynasty and a British nation.

As Richard Helgerson and Timothy Rosendale have shown, the regular services of the Book of Common Prayer contributed to emergent English nationalism by continuously reinforcing England's distinctive religious character. I would like to suggest, however, that occasional liturgies played a crucial and largely unexamined role in this process by developing a narrative of English history in which God protected the nation against its enemies, particularly Rome and Spain.<sup>10</sup> This providentialist narrative was reflected in literary as well as polemical works well into the next century. While the tradition began with Elizabeth's reign, James eagerly adopted and expanded it, first by introducing the annual memorialization of his deliverances and second by making attendance at such services compulsory.

The practice of ordering special prayers on political occasions began after the Northern Rising and continued with the gradual institution of an annual service of thanksgiving, sometimes accompanied by a sermon, on 17 November, the queen's accession day.<sup>11</sup> The first accession day service was published in 1576 and was followed by a proliferation of occasional liturgies drawn up to offer thanksgiving for Elizabeth's deliverances from assassination plots by William Parry (1585), Anthony Babington and his fellow conspirators (1586), and Doctor Lopez (1594), as well as a special service to celebrate the defeat of the Armada in 1588.<sup>12</sup> Since Elizabeth's accession was understood as the country's liberation from the reign of her Catholic half-sister, all of these occasions presented opportunities for anti-Catholic rhetoric. Although public participation in these liturgies was not required, and the accession day celebration remained controversial, the "Admonition to the Reader" in the 1594 service concludes with the hint of a threat: the "duetie of praying and thankesgiuing there is no doubt, but euery true hearted *English* man and faithfull *Subject* will both priuately and publickely from the botome of his heart performe."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to regard the purpose of these services as simply coercive. In accordance with prevailing beliefs in divine providence, the authorities expected subjects to recognize that maintaining God's favour benefitted them individually as well as collectively.<sup>14</sup>

For rulers, prayer was a double-edged sword. In *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, James identifies prayer as the subject's only legitimate means of resisting an evil or tyrannical ruler. Conversely, by insisting that his subjects routinely pray for him,



the monarch could encourage the development, as well as the demonstration, of obedience and loyalty. As a political instrument, liturgy offers the advantages of both inclusiveness and active participation. While some parishes lacked trained ministers who could preach occasional sermons, almost everyone in England participated in the liturgies of the church.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in her studies of the English prayer book, Ramie Targoff argues that church authorities justified communal prayer by insisting upon the reliability of external signs in mirroring inward devotion. At the same time, “mainstream Renaissance Protestants frequently imagined performative behavior to have a causal as well as reflective relation to the internal self: according to such accounts, the individual’s assumption of external gestures prompted the corresponding internal conditions.” Consequently, “Behind the church’s emphasis on external conformity lies its commitment to the transformative power of practice.”<sup>16</sup> While Targoff is mainly concerned with individual religious devotion, the assumption that speaking words of prayer and praise for the queen will inspire subjects with love for her doubtless underlies the institution of special services on political occasions. Paul Connerton argues further that such shared and repeated speech acts and gestures reinforce communal identity and that such rituals resist change over time.<sup>17</sup> Although Connerton sees participation in liturgy as primarily a performative, bodily action, liturgy also contributes to the creation and dissemination of myth through its use of language. As special liturgies of deliverance developed, a narrative emerged in which first Elizabeth, then James, became the successor to the Old Testament kings, and England merged with Israel.

Like occasional accession day sermons and the *Homily against Wilful Disobedience*, which had been introduced after the failure of the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and was required to be read annually in churches, these services reinforced the connection between treason and false religion, while insisting upon the providential preservation of the queen’s person as the means by which her subjects retained access to the gospel. The directions for the use of the 1585 service, to be read in the diocese of Winchester on the occasion of Elizabeth’s escape from Parry’s plot, ordered that the minister preach a sermon declaring “the authoritie and Maiestie of Princes,” and “how streight dutie of obedience is required of all good and Christian subiects, and what a greeuous and heynous thing it is both before God and man traiterouslie to seeke their destruction, and the shedding of their blood.”<sup>18</sup> The service was distinctive in requiring the reading of an extract from Parry’s confession. When juxtaposed with the full confession as it appears in the official pamphlet detailing the conspiracy, this excerpt seems to have been chosen to emphasize the Jesuits’ role and to omit Parry’s insistence that he would have preferred to improve the lot of English Catholics by non-violent means.<sup>19</sup> Although ambition was the ultimate source of his fall, the idea of killing the

queen only occurred to him after his conversion to Rome, and he did not proceed until both a papal ambassador and a Jesuit had assured him that he could meritoriously commit the deed. The prayer asks that “y cruel spirits of Antichrist that seeke the subuersion of the Gospel, maie by the hand of thy iustice, feelee what it is to set to sale for money the innocent bloud of thine annointed Princes, which thou hast prepared and set vp, to be the nurses and protectors of thy truth.”<sup>20</sup> Extrapolating from a single example, the service implicates the entire Catholic Church in an attempt to subvert English Protestantism.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the political ramifications of Mary Stuart’s alleged involvement in the Babington Plot, the 1586 order of service celebrating its failure maintains a more restrained tone, rejoicing in the deliverance of queen, church, and nation from “sundry wicked Conspirators,” who remain unidentified.<sup>21</sup> Among the Psalms and lessons from which the preacher may choose, the dominant theme of thanksgiving generally overcomes calls for vengeance.<sup>22</sup> This service provides the germ of the idea of annual memorialization, asking in the preface that “euery one that feareth the Lord among vs, not onely with the *Iewes* in the booke of *Esther* yeerely holds a memoriall with great ioy of so notable deliuerence, but dayly in common assemblies haue this great goodnesse in remembrance,” yet there seems to have been no attempt to institute an annual thanksgiving.<sup>23</sup> The same is true of the Armada celebration two years later, for which a brief service was issued consisting of a Psalm and Collect written for the occasion. Thanksgiving was again the dominant theme, vengeance having already been satisfied by the destruction of the Spanish fleet.

Like the 1586 service, that of 1594 addresses a general rather than a specifically clerical audience in its “Admonition to the Reader.” This introduction emphasizes the providential protection God accords to kings and kingdoms. The English owe special thanks to God for setting Elizabeth over them, preserving her realm from both internal and external threats, and protecting her person from traitors and conspirators. In contrast to the 1585 service, this one does not even name the individual conspirators, since they are now regarded merely as pawns of Spain and the Catholic Church. All of these treasons “haue they beene continually projected, caried forwarde, and managed by idolatrous *Priestes* and *Iesuites* his creatures, the very loathsome *Locusts* that crawl out of the bottomlesse pitte.”<sup>24</sup> The image of the priests as locusts will be taken up by Phineas Fletcher in *Locustae*, his neo-Latin epic on the Gunpowder Plot, long recognized as an influence on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The list of conspiracies that follows reinterprets history to demonstrate that priests and Jesuits are aided by kings and magistrates who mask their own ambitions with shows of Catholic devotion. In the Northern Rebellion, the pope sent the priest Morton to stir the earls up to revolt, while Cardinal Allen has boasted that he and other Catholics incited Philip II to send the Armada. Spain

and Rome are acting in concert to re-Catholicize England, but only the “wilfully malicious” can fail to see that God protects Protestantism.<sup>25</sup>

In the service itself, three prayers for the queen’s preservation follow a series of Psalms proceeding from invocation to assurance. The first prayer implicitly connects Satan and the Catholic Church, asserting that God preserves kings from “the malice of Satan & his wicked ympes,” and once again charges Elizabeth with preserving Protestantism, asking: “O Lorde, dissipate and confound all practises, conspiracies, and treasons against her, against this realme of England, and against the trueth of thine holy word here taught and professed.”<sup>26</sup> This prayer, however, progresses beyond earlier ones in the pursuit of vengeance, imploring:

Smite our enemies (good Lorde) vpon the cheeke-bone, breake the teeth of the vn-godly, frustrate their counsels, and bring to nought all their deuises. Let them fall into the pit, that they haue prepared for vs: Let a sudden destruction come vpon them vnawares: and the net that they haue laide for others priuily, let it catch themselues, that they may fall into their owne mischief.<sup>27</sup>

The second prayer asks God to cause the queen’s enemies either to repent or to perish. These services, then, promoted a providential Protestant reading of Elizabeth’s deliverances in which God systematically thwarted the devil and his instruments, Spain and the Jesuits, providing that English subjects performed their duties of regular prayer and thanksgiving.

Although these occasional services offered James I precedents for establishing his own services of prayer and thanksgiving, his English memorialization of the Gowrie Conspiracy nevertheless presented several political challenges. Even had its details been more credible than they were, the Gowrie affair had taken place in Scotland and so could easily have been seen as irrelevant by James’s new subjects. Nor did the plot fit neatly into the anti-Catholic tradition, for whatever motives may have activated the Gowries, their religious affinities seem to have been presbyterian rather than Catholic. James and Whitgift’s solution of modelling the 5 August service on the 17 November one was brilliant, for it papered over the differences between the occasions more effectively than the half-hearted attempts of the preachers, who twisted the evidence to turn Alexander Ruthven into a crypto-Catholic, while insisting that James’s Scottish deliverance had preserved him to defend Protestantism in England.

The most salient feature of the service was its emphasis upon continuity. The three kings presented in the Old Testament readings as parallels with Elizabeth had all followed their predecessor David’s example in religion, as Elizabeth had continued Henry VIII’s reformation. Their stories emphasized that correct worship preserves the monarch, the state, and true religion. Jehoshaphat managed to