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# **Prophetic Rhetoric in the Early Stuart Period**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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*In loving memory of Reg*

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## *Abstract*

*Emily Jennings, Merton College, Trinity Term 2015. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.*

### **PROPHETIC RHETORIC IN THE EARLY STUART PERIOD**

This is a study of the political prophecy in England in a period delimited by the accession of King James I (1603) and the end of the Interregnum (1660). It combines the analysis of hitherto obscure manuscript texts with that of printed works to provide a nuanced account of the uses and reception of prophecies in this period.

Chapter One (which focuses on the first decade of James's reign) and Chapter Two (which covers the period 1613-19) approach the analysis of dramatic treatments of political prophecy through the study of prophecy both as a rhetorical buttress to the Jacobean state and as a protest genre. Attentive to the elite bias of the legal documents wherein allegedly oppositionist uses of prophecy are recorded, these chapters heed the counsel of historians who have found literary scholars insufficiently suspicious of the rhetoric of these materials. A focus on dramatic texts, neglected by the historians, reveals that Jacobean playgoers were encouraged to regard both official prophetic rhetoric and official rhetoric about prophecy with scepticism.

Chapter Three considers how native and continental prophetic traditions were expanded and repurposed in England around the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, when belief in the purportedly inspired status of prophecies was rare but recognition of their utility as a vehicle for political discussion was nonetheless widespread.

Chapter Four explores the adaptation and tendentious exposition of medieval, sixteenth-century, and Jacobean manuscript prophecies in printed propaganda for both the royalist and parliamentary causes in the mid-seventeenth century.

This study of literary and archival sources finds that previous scholarship has overestimated the extent of popular faith in the authenticity of allegedly ancient and inspired prophecies in the early Stuart period. The longevity of purported prophecies, it concludes, was ensured through the recognition, appreciation, and exploitation of their rhetorical affordances.

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## *Conventions*

Quotations from manuscripts and early modern printed books retain the original spelling, italicisation, and capitalisation. In these quotations, abbreviations and contractions are silently expanded and ampersands are silently replaced with ‘and’. Punctuation has been modernised. The year is assumed to begin on 1 January; where necessary, dates recorded in original documents are silently altered in compliance with this principle.

## *Abbreviations*

AAW	Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster
Beinecke	New Haven (Yale University), Beinecke Library
BL	London, British Library
Bodl.	Oxford, Bodleian Library
Brotherton	Leeds, Brotherton Library
CUL	Cambridge, University Library
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
EBBA	<i>English Broadside Ballad Archive</i> < <a href="http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu">http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu</a> >
ERO	Essex Record Office
Folger	Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library
H. M. S. O.	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
MS	Manuscript
PC	Acts of the Privy Council
O.S.	Old Style
SP	State Papers
STC	<i>English Short Title Catalogue</i> < <a href="http://estc.bl.uk">http://estc.bl.uk</a> >
TLN	Through line number
TNA	London, The National Archives

## *Introduction*

### PROLOGUE: A PROPHECY REDISCOVERED

On 14 January 1649, the parson of Little Wigborough in Essex wrote a letter to the parliamentarian propagandist William Lilly, whose partisan expositions of prophecies had earned him renown and a large readership during the civil wars of the 1640s. The letter survives, as several critics have noted, in a volume of the Ashmole manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>1</sup> Its contents express the wish of its author, Robert Sterrell, to commission Lilly to cast his horoscope. They also mention an enclosed document offered as advance payment for that service: a transcript of a ‘propheticall tristike’ found by Sterrell ‘in a old manuscript’. This enclosure is not preserved in the Ashmole volume with the letter. Scholars have until now failed to note the presence of a document matching its description in Bodleian, MS Rawlinson C.813. The Rawlinson volume, bound in the late seventeenth century, comprises two originally distinct sixteenth-century manuscripts. At the time of binding, three loose leaves were introduced between the end of the second component manuscript and the back cover of the volume. These three leaves of text are written in three different seventeenth-century hands. The third leaf features a three-line political prophecy in Latin, headed: ‘A prophesie found at Wigborow Parua [i.e. Little Wigborough] in Essex, in Aprile in

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<sup>1</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 423, fol. 147<sup>r</sup>. See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; repr. London: Penguin, 1991), p. 453; Ann Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 67; Derek Parker, *Familiar to All: William Lilly and Astrology in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 117.

the year 1641 by me Robert Sterrel'.<sup>2</sup> The prophecy begins '*Tolle caput Mille...*' and consists of a series of coded references to numbers that together form a date. It is a version of a popular medieval 'date formula' that survives to this day in a number of manuscripts, the oldest of which is of mid- to late-fourteenth-century origin.<sup>3</sup> The three-line structure of this prophecy found by the Little Wigborough parson argues the case for its identification as the same 'propheticall tristike' sent by him to Lilly sixteen days before the beheading of King Charles I. Perhaps Sterrell believed that his parliamentary correspondent might, in the event of regicide, value the propagandist potential of an old text whose opening imperative, '*Tolle caput*' ('remove the head'), was interpretable as a proleptic endorsement of that controversial course of action.

The volume that contains the prophecy found and transcribed by Sterrell in the mid-seventeenth century has received substantial scholarly attention. A number of studies have discussed the first of its two component manuscripts, which dates from the second quarter of the sixteenth century and contains an important collection of medieval and Tudor lyric poetry and six political prophecies.<sup>4</sup> Its second component manuscript consists of some sixty folios of political prophecies copied out in the mid-sixteenth century and is counted among 'the most important extant compilations' of prophecies that were popular in the Tudor period.<sup>5</sup> The three leaves of prophetic texts added when the manuscript was bound in the late seventeenth century have, however,

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<sup>2</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 167<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See Lesley Ann Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon L. Jansen, 'English Political Prophecy and the Dating of MS Rawlinson C.813', *Manuscripta*, 25 (1981), 141-50; Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), p. 158; Kathleen H. Power, 'An Edition, with Commentary, of the English Lyrics on Folios 1-72 of the Bodleian MS Rawlinson C 813' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Western Australia, 1975); Edward Wilson, 'Local Habitations and Names in MS Rawlinson C 813 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Review of English Studies*, 41 (1990), 12-44; *The Welles Anthology: MS. Rawlinson C. 813*, ed. by Sharon L. Jansen and Kathleen H. Jordan (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Alistair Fox, 'Prophecies and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII', in Alistair Fox and John Guy, *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform, 1500-1550* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 77-94 (p. 77).

been almost entirely ignored. They fall outside the purview of the sixteenth-century specialists to whom Rawl. C.813 has traditionally been of interest. Contained as they are in a manuscript catalogued as a product of the sixteenth century, they have been overlooked too by researchers concerned with the mid-seventeenth-century works and correspondence of William Lilly.<sup>6</sup> Only the first of these three leaves, which features a copy of an apocalyptic prophecy that peaked in popularity in the late Jacobean period, has received so much as a passing scholarly mention.<sup>7</sup>

The need for studies of the political prophecy in seventeenth-century Britain to examine pre-seventeenth-century primary sources is demonstrated by the discovery that a text bound with two sixteenth-century manuscripts fits the description of the hitherto mysterious ‘prophetically tristich’ offered by Robert Sterrell to William Lilly. The above investigation into the medieval prophecy sent by an Essex parson in 1649 to the most famous partisan prophetic exegete of the Civil War period reveals how times of high political tension could bring old prophetic texts into new focus. ‘*Tolle caput...*’, a riddle centuries old, apparently recommended itself as a prophecy of contemporary events at the time of the regicide. Lilly did not in fact reproduce or tentatively expound this particular text in any of his parliamentarian publications; however, numerous old prophecies were thus revived and repurposed in the period covered by this thesis. The medieval tristich rediscovered by Sterrell at Little Wigborough possessed the connected qualities of semantic flexibility and ready applicability to a variety of possible political eventualities. In common with other examples of its genre, this political prophecy was apt for rhetorical manipulation and so able to transcend the original circumstances of its composition.

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<sup>6</sup> W. D. Macray, *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Partis Quintae: Ricardi Rawlinson*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1862-1900), II (1878), p. 416.

<sup>7</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 165<sup>r</sup>; referenced by Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 168n.

## PROPHECY AND PERSUASION

‘Prophetic Rhetoric in the Early Stuart Period’ considers a characteristic of political prophecies first identified by Rupert Taylor in his classic 1911 study of the genre and thereafter often explored: the ambiguous language that rendered them amenable to creative interpretation and hence to employment as political propaganda.<sup>8</sup> The present thesis not only analyses how the rhetorical affordances of prophecies were exploited in service of various political agendas between the accession of King James I in 1603 and the restoration of King Charles II in 1660; it also examines how the literature and official discourse of that period responded to the phenomenon of prophetic rhetoric.

This project adopts an expansive definition of ‘political prophecy’. The texts discussed exemplify various prophetic traditions but can all be classed as ‘political’ insofar as their composition, revival, or adaptation constituted a comment on affairs of state. Eschatological prophecies, for example, fall within the remit of the thesis in cases where their seventeenth-century writers or adaptors related contemporary events to stages in the apocalyptic scenario so as to convey a timely political message. An example of this practice would be the portrayal of the Palatine Elector Frederick V as the ‘last world emperor’ of Christian legend, calculated, as scholars have observed, to advance continental Protestant interests in the prelude to the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911; repr. 1967), p. 92. See also Karen R. Moranski, ‘The “Prophetic Merlini”, Animal Symbolism, and the Development of Political Prophecy in Late Medieval England and Scotland’, *Arthuriana*, 8:4 (1998), 58-68 (p. 61); Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g. Carlos Gilly, ‘The “Midnight Lion”, the “Eagle” and the “Antichrist”’: Political, Religious and Chiliastic Propaganda in the Pamphlets, Illustrated Broadsheets and Ballads of the Thirty Years’ War’, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 80 (2000), 46-77 (p. 53); Christof Ginzel, *Poetry, Politics and Promises of Empire: Prophetic Rhetoric in the English and Neo-Latin Epithalamia on the Occasion of the Palatine Marriage in 1613* (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2009), p. 22; K. Gibson, ‘Apocalyptic and Millenarian Prophecy in Early Stuart Europe: Philip Ziegler, Ludwig Friedrich

Previous studies of political prophecy have tended to limit their subject matter to texts of the type categorised by Keith Thomas as ‘ancient prophecy’ and variously labelled by other critics as ‘secular prophecy’ and ‘non-scriptural prophecy’.<sup>10</sup> Tim Thornton, whose monograph *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* focuses principally on the prophetic traditions associated with the names of Mother Shipton and Nixon of Cheshire, borrows the term ‘ancient prophecy’ from Thomas and defines it as ‘prophecy allegedly uttered or written by figures of the past, who might or might not be religious figures but who were not formally part of the biblical tradition and apocrypha’.<sup>11</sup> The present project combines the study of this prophetic genre with discussion of seventeenth-century instances where scripture and apocalyptic traditions were subjected to politically motivated exegesis.

In his twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*The History of the Kings of Britain*), Geoffrey of Monmouth included a set of prophecies that he claimed were the sayings of a fifth-century Welsh seer, Merlin Ambrosius.<sup>12</sup> While he drew on existing legends, Geoffrey also added original imaginative touches to his portrait of Merlin.<sup>13</sup> The name Merlin remained prominently associated with the genre of ancient prophecy for centuries after the *Historia* was composed. Periodically, the prophecies Geoffrey had devised and credited to Merlin were revived and ‘used for political purposes’.<sup>14</sup> In addition, many prophecies composed in the late medieval and early modern periods

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Gifftheil and the Fifth Monarchy’, in *Prophecy: The Power of Inspired Language in History, 1300-2000*, ed. by Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), pp. 71-83 (p. 76).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 461-62; Ursula Mühle-Moldon, ‘Every Prediction is a Twin’: *Säkulare Prophetien im England des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 1; Frances M. Gladwin, ‘Popular Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century England: By Mouth and Pen in the Alehouse and from the Pulpit’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Adelaide, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 167-85.

<sup>13</sup> See Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline D. Eckhardt, ‘The First English Translation of the *Prophetia Merlini*’, *The Library*, 6:4 (1982), 25-34 (p. 33).

were spuriously fathered on this legendary prophet, either to bolster their claims to authority or to protect the anonymity of their authors in cases where the content of the texts was arguably seditious.<sup>15</sup> For example, a late Jacobean prophetic verse libel that criticises the non-interventionist foreign policy adopted by the King of Great Britain in the early stages of the Thirty Years' War is almost always ascribed to Merlin in the many seventeenth-century manuscript copies in which it survives.<sup>16</sup> This libel, which begins 'A prince out of the north shall come', belongs to the genre of 'ancient prophecy' but also borrows its symbolic vocabulary from the eschatological prophecies in chapters eleven to thirteen of the apocryphal II Esdras, as Peter Daniell noted in the margin beside the copy in his verse miscellany.<sup>17</sup> Prophecies such as this, which invoke both the Merlin tradition and scriptural or apocryphal sources, prove the absence of a firm generic distinction between 'ancient' and apocalyptic prophecy in the period covered by this thesis. Such texts argue the need for studies of the 'political prophecy' in the early Stuart era to define that term inclusively.

This project analyses a wide range of primary sources, both literary and non-literary. It considers uses of prophecy in printed royal panegyric from the early years of the reign of King James I and examines documents pertaining to law cases of the same period involving allegedly seditious prophecies. It also discusses treatments of political prophecy in early seventeenth-century drama and examines the many extant copies of prophetic verse libels in early Stuart manuscript miscellanies. Other texts treated include the old and faux-antique prophecies that were eagerly collected at the

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<sup>15</sup> See Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 191.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g. BL, Additional (Add.) MS 28640, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>; CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Tanner 88, fol. 252<sup>v</sup>; BL, Add. MS 27879, fol. 239<sup>v</sup>; BL, Sloane MS 1479, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>; Beinecke, MS Osborn b.197, p. 174; Beinecke, MS Osborn fb.69, p. 229; Folger, STC 14344, copy 3, title-page annotation; Folger, MS V.a.275, p. 176; Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 232; Folger, MS L.b.670, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Bodl., MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>.

outset of the Thirty Years' War by British consumers of continental news. The project also considers apocalyptic treatises that were presented to monarchs by suitors for patronage on the one hand and bold critics of royal policy on the other. Printed works that offered partisan interpretations of prophecies in the turbulent years of the mid-seventeenth century are the subject of discussion in the final chapter.

The range of sources studied here reflects the prevalence of prophecy in early Stuart society. Surviving legal records show that potentially insurrectionary political prognoses could be circulated orally and that prophetically inflected speculation about affairs of state was therefore not restricted to the literate classes. Extant play-texts demonstrate that Jacobean theatregoers would have encountered political prophecy as a key theme in, for example, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*. (The manuscript notes of the astrologer and quack doctor Simon Forman (*d.*1611) inform us that both these plays were performed at the Globe, where scholars estimate that standing tickets priced at a penny were affordable for all but the very poorest of Londoners.<sup>18</sup>) The contents of early-seventeenth-century manuscript miscellanies reveal both that certain prophetic texts were circulated and copied among antiquarian enthusiasts who shared a keen interest in the fortunes of continental Protestantism at the outset of the Thirty Years' War and that the same texts could often travel beyond these coterie to reach audiences with very different interests, enthusiasms, and confessional allegiances.

Prophetic texts that were written or adapted in response to real-world political events in the early Stuart era have rarely been compared to contemporaneous literary treatments of political prophecy. *Merlin's Disciples*, a work of 1990 in which Howard Dobin provides a new historicist examination of Elizabethan and Jacobean political prophecy, is exceptional in this regard. Materials studied by Dobin include: canonical

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<sup>18</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 208, fols 206<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>; see, e.g. Mark Bayer, *Theatre, Community, and Civic Engagement in Jacobean London* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011), p. 96.

works such as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's history plays; State Paper records of official action taken against the disseminators of allegedly seditious prophecies; manuscript and printed propaganda for the Stuart succession of 1603; and the respective polemical tracts of Henry Howard and John Harvey, *A Defensatiue against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (1583) and *A Discoursiue Probleme concerning Prophecies* (1588). Although the present thesis follows the example of *Merlin's Disciples* in its analysis of both literary and non-literary primary sources, it eschews the assumptions about prophetic language on which Dobin founds his study.

Dobin describes the language of prophecy as 'slippery and polysemic'.<sup>19</sup> He asserts that the quasi-religious 'faith' reposed in the clarity of secular prophecies by their early modern readers and hearers was 'betrayed and undone' by this intrinsic ambiguity.<sup>20</sup> The critic thus assumes that the rhetorical manipulability of prophecies went largely unrecognised in the period covered by his study. When tested against the works of Shakespeare, his theories prove better supported by the histories than by the tragedies or tragicomedies. It is perhaps for this reason that he chooses to focus on the former to the total exclusion of *Cymbeline* and the almost total exclusion of *Macbeth*. Both of these plays would have brought the semantic flexibility of prophecy to the attention of their Jacobean audiences. Each is studied in detail in the first chapter of this thesis. Where Dobin is concerned with the pre-intentional qualities of prophetic language, the present project is interested in the rhetorical manoeuvres of the individuals or factions that devised or adapted political prophecies. It analyses both the archival sources that show such rhetorical sleights in practice and a selection of early modern literary works that encouraged audiences or readers to consider prophecies as 'artificial proofs' of the legitimacy of the causes in whose support they

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<sup>19</sup> Howard Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry, and Power in Renaissance England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

were cited. ‘Artificial’, as opposed to ‘inartificial’, proofs were details that did not self-evidently corroborate a given argument but could be made to do so through the exercise of rhetorical ingenuity.<sup>21</sup>

His implicit assumption that attitudes to prophecy were homogeneous at any given time determines the end-point of Dobin’s study. After the Jacobean period, he suggests, the credulity that had previously characterised the popular reception of prophetic texts was replaced by scepticism. In contrast to *Merlin’s Disciples*, the present thesis extends its focus beyond the reign of James. It does not accept that the artful manipulations of prophecies carried out by partisan propagandists during the English Revolution evinced a revolution in perceptions of the integrity of secular prophecies. Rather, it pays due attention to the agency of those who produced, used, or responded to prophetic texts between 1603 and 1660 and so discovers that the rhetorical exploitability of prophecies was acknowledged and at times embraced throughout this period. The approach adopted by this study partly resembles that taken in *Prophecy, Politics and the People* by Tim Thornton, who terms his method one of ‘close reading, not just of the specific evidences for prophetic traditions, but of the deeper and wider context for those who created, interpreted and consumed [...] prophecy’.<sup>22</sup> Thornton, a historian, contends that the reception of prophecies at the time of their composition or revival has been neglected in the work of literary scholars including Dobin, the early sixteenth century specialist Sharon Jansen, and the medievalist Lesley Coote. These scholars, he claims, have regarded prophecies ‘as texts to be analysed and deconstructed’ but have tended to conduct insufficiently critical readings of the content that accompanies these texts in the often-biased state

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<sup>21</sup> See R. W. Serjeantson, ‘Testimony and Proof in Early-Modern England’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 30 (1999), 195-236 (p. 203); Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 181.

<sup>22</sup> Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 13.

records where many of them are preserved.<sup>23</sup> Heedful of Thornton's comments, the present work of literary scholarship is sensitive to the rhetoric of its archival sources. In addition to such sources, it classes plays that exposed prophetic rhetoric to scrutiny among the extant evidences of attitudes to prophecy in the seventeenth century.

Thornton's focus on the heterogeneous reception of prophetic traditions entails a rejection of the 'modernization narrative' offered by Keith Thomas in his seminal 1971 analysis of popular beliefs, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.<sup>24</sup> In Thomas's account, the influence of ancient prophecies declined over the seventeenth century as the populace *en masse* ceased to believe that their contents were divinely inspired.<sup>25</sup> After the example of Thornton, the present study of political prophecy eschews such grand narratives about the displacement of uniform credulity by uniform enlightened scepticism. It contends that the pragmatic exploitation of the rhetorical potential of prophecies was a practice both widely employed and widely recognised at least as early as the beginning of the reign of King James I. This project is not the first to criticise the propensity of Thomas to underestimate how far early moderns were already aware of the rhetorical malleability of material we would now account superstitious. In an evaluation of Thomas's work on witchcraft trials, for example, Jonathan Barry finds his fellow historian reluctant to appreciate that many of the cases he cites emerged against a background of 'factional disputes and the conscious manipulation of false accusations' rather than genuine belief in *maleficium*.<sup>26</sup>

The status of polysemic prophecies as artificial proofs used and re-used to legitimise various political positions or campaigns is fully acknowledged by Glanmor

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<sup>23</sup> Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 512.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction: Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft', in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1-45 (p. 13).

Williams, whose study of political prophecy in medieval and Tudor Wales attributes the longevity of such texts not to their rhetorical manipulability alone but to this feature in combination with their fulfilment of ‘a more broadly based and deeply felt social need’.<sup>27</sup> Whereas Thomas regards the social need satisfied by prophecies as superstitious in character, Williams suggests that the need for prophecies was a product of rooted anxieties about national identity. The association between ancient prophecy and national consciousness, explored by Williams in regard to ‘Welshness’, is considered with respect to seventeenth-century ‘Britishness’ in the first chapter of this thesis. That chapter begins with an examination of the role played by prophecies of alleged ancient British origin in attempts to construct a modern British identity in and around 1603, when the accession of King James I united the English and Scottish crowns. Analysis of the Jacobean period, when most uses of political prophecy either constituted or supplemented reflections on the national character or the possible fate of the nation, is noticeably absent from the work of Tim Thornton. His *Prophecy, Politics and the People* is predominantly concerned not with national but with local prophetic traditions such as those embodied in the purported sayings of Shipton of York and Nixon of Cheshire. After he has considered sixteenth-century applications of political prophecy in the first chapter of his book, Thornton moves straight to a discussion of mid-seventeenth-century prophetic publications in his second chapter.

The period from the Stuart succession of 1603 to the eve of the English Civil War has hitherto received little attention in studies of political prophecy. By contrast, prophecies written and circulated in the medieval period have been well studied by Lesley Coote, who discusses secular prophecy, and by Bernard McGinn and Marjorie

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<sup>27</sup> Glanmor Williams, ‘Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales’, in *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S. B. Chrimes*, ed. by H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), pp. 104-16 (p. 111).

Reeves, who focus on politically motivated uses of apocalyptic prophecy.<sup>28</sup> Henrician appropriations of medieval prophetic texts have been analysed by several scholars, including Sharon Jansen, Alistair Fox, and Madeleine Hope Dodds.<sup>29</sup> Talia Pollock has recently given an account of the production and application of political prophecies in the Elizabethan era.<sup>30</sup> The propagandist use of prophetic traditions during the Civil War and Interregnum has received some attention, for example in the work of Jerome Friedman and Harry Rusche, but this mid-seventeenth-century phenomenon has not yet been satisfactorily compared and contrasted to Jacobean practices of prophetic composition, revival, and exposition.<sup>31</sup> *Säkulare Prophetien im England des 17. Jahrhunderts*, a German monograph by Ursula Mühle-Moldon, purports to survey English secular prophecies of the entire seventeenth century; however, its dependence on printed primary sources alone ensures its concentration on texts that appeared after the collapse of censorship in the early 1640s.

Digitised manuscript catalogues and other online finding aids facilitate access to a larger body of manuscript sources than Rupert Taylor found at his disposal in 1911, when he began *The Political Prophecy in England* with an expression of regret that many of the evidences for an English prophetic tradition languished undiscovered in archives and were hence unavailable to him.<sup>32</sup> This thesis profits throughout from the recently improved accessibility of manuscript material. In its second chapter, it

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<sup>28</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Marjorie Reeves, 'History and Eschatology: Medieval and Early Protestant Thought in Some English and Scottish Writings', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s., 4 (1973), 99-123; Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; repr. 2000); Marjorie Reeves, 'Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor', *Traditio*, 17 (1961), 323-70.

<sup>29</sup> Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*; Fox, 'Prophecies and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII'; Madeleine Hope Dodds, 'Political Prophecies in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Modern Language Review*, 11 (1916), 276-84.

<sup>30</sup> Talia Pollock, 'Political Prophecy in Elizabethan England' (unpublished master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution: The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies* (London: UCL Press, 1993), pp. 59-81, 225-37; Harry Rusche, 'Prophecies and Propaganda, 1641 to 1651', *English Historical Review*, 84 (1969), 752-70.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, p. 2.

analyses the scattered extant documents pertaining to a mid-Jacobean law case that has been ignored even in Keith Thomas's impressively researched chapter on ancient prophecies in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. References to this case, in which a charge of treason was brought against the author of a prophetic treatise that was left at Whitehall for the attention of King James in 1613, survive in the following diverse manuscript sources: State Papers; assize records; verse and prose miscellanies; the archives of a prominent Derbyshire family; the clandestine epistolary correspondence of recusant Catholics; and a newsletter of 30 June 1613, long noted as one of the few extant accounts of the fire that destroyed the Globe Theatre. The present work is the first to perceive the connections between these materials and to study them together.

Prophecy played a small role in the most famous treason investigation of the Jacobean period. On 6 November 1605, King James wrote with his own hand to the commissioners for the interrogation of the gunpowder plotters. He gave his agents licence to torture Guy Fawkes in their efforts to extract information. He instructed too that the prisoner should be questioned on the subject of a 'crewallie villanouse pasquill', which, claimed the king, 'spake some thing of haruest and prophecied my destruction about that tyme'. James does not appear to have been in receipt of any intelligence that associated Fawkes with this mysterious prophecy of the royal death around harvest time; he simply considered the libel 'lyke to be the laboure of suche a desperate fellow' as the man who had guarded the barrels of gunpowder beneath the parliament building.<sup>33</sup> No evidence has emerged in the four hundred years since the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot to suggest that Fawkes was involved in either the composition or the circulation of a prophecy. The inclination of the king to assume a connection between a prophecy of regime change and a treasonable plot underlines

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, SP 14/216/1, fol. 34<sup>v</sup>: The King to the Lords Commissioners, 6 November 1605.

the pertinence of Thornton's call for scholarly alertness to the possible biases of the official records where references to early modern uses of prophecy are preserved.

In its analyses of seventeenth-century legal investigations into the suspected use of political prophecies to incite rebellion, this thesis argues that the authorities sometimes construed the phenomenon of prophetic rhetoric tendentiously so as to secure a treason conviction. Prosecutors in state trials and royally appointed criminal investigators, it contends, laboured in some cases to suggest that individuals who had employed prophecies as conduits for the discussion of affairs of state were guilty of the attempted mobilisation of violence against the monarch through the dissemination of these prophecies. On close examination, the extant records that document law cases involving allegedly seditious prophecies can often be found to obfuscate the boundary between discussion and action in a manner advantageous to the state.

Attentiveness to the hostile rhetoric of official records of popular prophetic speculation has previously been counselled by Frances Gladwin, who remarks in her study of sixteenth-century instances and treatments of popular prophecy:

[G]overnment authorities and other leading educated elites maintained that prophecy incited the common people to rebellion. The inherent bias of source material reflecting this contemporary viewpoint has distorted the historian's approach to the phenomenon.<sup>34</sup>

Gladwin also pre-empts Thornton's argument that literary scholars including Howard Dobin and Sharon Jansen have erred through their failure to account sufficiently for the partiality of the official records whence many of the primary texts for their studies of prophecy are derived. The consequence of this error, she suggests, is a propensity to overemphasise 'the potency of prophecy in shaping contemporary issues'.<sup>35</sup> A lack

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<sup>34</sup> Gladwin, 'Popular Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century England', p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

of sensitivity to the biases of source materials has produced, according to Gladwin, an exaggeration of the performative efficacy of prophetic language by literary critics and a related tendency among historians to overstate the extent to which individuals who took an interest in political prognostication were inspired by the content of prophecies to become ‘active[ly] involve[d] in dissent’.<sup>36</sup>

The present project subjects the rhetorical stratagems of official documents to the critical analysis that Gladwin and Thornton have found lacking in earlier literary scholarship on early modern legal investigations into allegedly seditious prophecies. It acknowledges that the designation of prophecies as instruments of treason in reports produced by agents of the state potentially indicates more about the motives of the government towards the suspect than it does about the motives of the suspect towards the government. Literary texts such as Shakespeare and Fletcher’s play *King Henry VIII* fall outside the purview of historians like Gladwin and Thornton. Such texts can, however, prove relevant to the study of the elite rhetorical manoeuvres by which unofficial discussion of political prophecies was policed and punished in the early modern period. In the third section of its second chapter, this thesis analyses the portrayal of the treason trial of the Duke of Buckingham in *King Henry VIII*. Within the world of that play, this analysis contends, the purportedly disinterested legal apparatus of the state is responsive to the royal will. Shakespeare and Fletcher’s Buckingham is sentenced to death in a trial whose commitment to justice is subtly depicted by the playwrights as questionable. Accused of treasonable designs spurred by a prophecy that promised him the crown, Buckingham is publicly declared ‘traitor to th’height’ by his king before his trial has even begun.<sup>37</sup> This Tudor history play, whose potential topical resonance at the Jacobean moment of its composition has

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<sup>36</sup> Gladwin, ‘Popular Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century England’, p. 244.

<sup>37</sup> William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (London: Methuen Drama, 2000), i. 2. 214.

been noted in modern scholarship, brought before its first audiences in 1613 a portrait of the biased construction of a treason case against an individual whose show of interest in a political prophecy does not self-evidently constitute insurgent activity.<sup>38</sup>

Political prophecy figures significantly in the final moments of *King Henry VIII*, when Archbishop Thomas Cranmer christens the daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn and promises a prosperous reign to this infant who will one day occupy the throne as Queen Elizabeth I. In this instance, prophecy functions not as oppositionist rhetoric but as royal panegyric. After the prophetic oration has ended, Henry approves its content emphatically.<sup>39</sup> Many who witnessed performances of this play in 1613 would also have witnessed the emergence a decade earlier of a wave of publications that adduced prophecies as proofs of the legitimacy of the Stuart succession. One such work was *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland, England, and Some-Part of France, and Denmark*, issued in 1603 by the royal printer Robert Waldegrave. King James, like Shakespeare and Fletcher's Henry, authorised uses of prophetic rhetoric to solicit popular support for the ruling dynasty. At the same time, this thesis will show, the legal machinery of the Jacobean state laboured through creative interpretation of the treason law to define prophecies whose contents were apparently unfavourable to the government as rebellious calls to arms. In common with the Henrician government depicted in Shakespeare and Fletcher's play, the Jacobean administration recognised the value of loyalist implementations of prophecy on the one hand and, on the other, supported the exercise of rhetorical ingenuity to bring charges of treason against those who had written or discussed prophecies that did not plainly endorse the status quo.

This thesis examines the various ways in which the potential of prophecies to serve as artificial proofs was both exploited and exposed in the early Stuart period.

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<sup>38</sup> See, e.g. Jonathan Baldo, 'Necromancing the Past in *Henry VIII*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 34 (2004), 359-86 (p. 383).

<sup>39</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 65-67.

Discussions of instances of political prophecy in dramatic literature rub shoulders in the pages of this project with analyses of historical law cases involving allegedly seditious uses of prophecy. Affinities between the objectives of the legal system and those of the theatre in the late Elizabethan era are explored in the work of Lorna Hutson, who suggests that the onus on legal trials to produce plausible and coherent accounts of motives and events from disconnected pieces of evidence had important consequences for developments in the way dramatists worked to create persuasive narrative fictions for the theatre.<sup>40</sup> In theatres and courts of law, shown by Hutson to share a concern for the construction of narrative probability, prophecy was a familiar theme. The recurrent appearances of prophecy in these two arenas where the issue of rhetorical probability was at stake warrant the inclusion of both legal documents and plays among the sources analysed in the present study of prophetic rhetoric. Whereas Hutson considers how Elizabethan playwrights employed strategies of artificial proof in the construction of their dramatic fictions, this project is concerned instead with Jacobean plays whose self-conscious reflections on the limitations of such strategies involved the ambivalent treatment of political prophecy.

In *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*, prophecies are misinterpreted by characters predisposed to find certain suspicions proved or political decisions validated in their contents; in the world of *King Henry VIII*, prophecies are policed on the one hand, and pronounced on the other, in ways calculated to serve the royal will. These early seventeenth-century plays, all studied in this thesis, presented their popular audiences at the Globe with complex portraits of rhetorical engagements with prophecy. They hence serve as evidence to trouble the assumption of Keith Thomas that the advent of rationalism in regard to prophecy post-dated the Jacobean period. If the amenability

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<sup>40</sup> Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion*, p. 2. See also Quentin Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 6.

of prophecies to rhetorical manipulation was recognised and exploited throughout the early Stuart period, as this project contends that it was, it does not necessarily follow that prophetic language was commonly employed as a stimulus to action. When read closely, extant legal records from this era indicate that where causal relationships between the circulation of prophecies and the mobilisation of rebellion did not exist in practice, agents of the state could nonetheless conjure them into being in the realm of rhetoric through the biased interpretation of evidence and of the law. While students of political prophecy would be mistaken to read these records at face value, scholars such as Mühle-Moldon who neglect to study them at all are apt to form the erroneous opinion that the prophecies that attracted interest during the first four decades of the seventeenth century were all either apolitical or used to serve loyalist agendas.<sup>41</sup>

The hoped-for resurrection of the Protestant Edward VI became a common theme in prophecies either newly composed or newly adapted during the Marian persecutions of the 1550s. One of these prophecies was printed in 1603 in *The Whole Prophetie*, where it was repurposed as propaganda for the new Stuart regime.<sup>42</sup> Three years later, official records show, a Suffolk cleric who had been born around the same time as Edward VI manipulated a sixteenth-century prophecy so as to suggest that the throne of King James was soon to be occupied by a king named Edward.<sup>43</sup> This Protestant clergyman, who deemed the Stuart king too tolerant of Catholics, stated that the protagonist of the prophecy would prove to be either the Tudor boy-king, returned from the dead, or the still-living Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp, a descendant of Henry VII with a claim to the English throne. Although it was arguable whether the utterance of this prophecy amounted to an incitement to treason, it clearly

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<sup>41</sup> Mühle-Moldon, *Säkulare Prophetien*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *The Whole Prophetie of Scotland, England, and Some-Part of France, and Denmark* ([London(?): Robert Waldegrave, 1603), sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, ed. by Robert Cecil and others, 24 vols (London: H. M. S. O., 1883-1976), xviii (1940), pp. 280-81, 307, 317, 322.

constituted an expression of dissatisfaction with the Jacobean administration and an effort to cast doubt on the legitimacy thereof.

At the start of the Jacobean period, it appears, the prophecy of the resurrection of King Edward VI was variously manipulated both to express support for James and to articulate a lack of faith in the Stuart monarch who had succeeded Queen Elizabeth. Single prophecies diversely employed, like this one, by interested parties on opposite sides of a political issue to buttress their respective arguments are found too among extant examples of the uses of prophecy during the Civil War and Interregnum. The political turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century constituted a situation where partisan expositions of prophecies amounted to calls to arms. Royalist and parliamentary propagandists alike published prophetic pamphlets in efforts to muster support for their adopted causes in the conflict. This study examines these pamphlets in its fourth and final chapter. In the three preceding chapters, the question whether there were circumstances in which the discussion of prophecy could amount to the stimulation of action in the first four decades of the seventeenth century receives consideration. The question is approached both through the analysis of law cases and drama of the 1600s and 1610s and through the study of prophetic texts that circulated in manuscript in the late Jacobean period, when the reluctance of the king to intervene on the side of the Elector Palatine in the continental conflict that was to become the Thirty Years' War met with the disapproval of many of the hotter English Protestants. Among these manuscript-circulated texts were prophecies of a Protestant hero who would vanquish the papal Antichrist and prophecies associated with the names of renowned resistance theorists, David Pareus and George Buchanan. This thesis attempts a nuanced portrait of the scope of prophetic rhetoric in the period 1603-1660. It shows how a variety of arguments concerning affairs of state sought validation in prophecy throughout this

period. Its study of exercises in the persuasive use of prophecy also investigates the limits of the relationship between prophetic discussion and the taking of action.

## PROPHETIC ARTEFACTS

The present thesis considers the effects of prophetic rhetoric and explores the various situations that gave rise to the composition, adaptation, and exposition of prophecies in the early and mid-seventeenth century. It also examines the practices that were employed in that period to render old prophecies apparently relevant to contemporary politics. A commitment to archival research enables this project to engage with some of the medieval and sixteenth-century prophetic texts that were revived and repurposed between 1603 and 1660. An estimation of the date when a given prophecy was originally conceived can often be gleaned from internal references to political events that were then current. As several critics have noted, prophetic texts commonly began with predictions *ex eventu* (after the event) to enhance the seeming credibility of their speculative material.<sup>44</sup> Such prophecies purported to be older than they really were. This fiction enabled the texts to base their claims to authority on the suggestion that certain predictions made by their historic progenitors had been fulfilled in recent and contemporary events.

An example of a prophecy that opened in the mode of *ex eventu* prediction and shifted thereafter into speculation is a text that listed the individual years of the 1570s in sequence and supplied each year on the list with a forecast of the chief events it

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<sup>44</sup> See, e.g. Julia Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', *Journal of Medieval History*, 18 (1992), 357-71 (p. 363); Bart van Es, "'Priiue to his Counsell and Secret Meaning": Spenser and Political Prophecy', *English Literary Renaissance*, 30 (2000), 3-31 (p. 8); Jan Ziolkowski, 'The Nature of Prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*', in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. by James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 151-62 (p. 158).

was to witness.<sup>45</sup> This text circulated in manuscript both in continental Europe and in Britain. Jonathan Green discusses a Swiss manuscript copy of this Latin prophecy and offers 1572 as the probable date of composition. The predictions for 1570 (*Ferrarea tremet*), 1571 (*Cyprus deficitur*), and 1572 (*Pastor non erit*) refer to events that had already occurred by the time the prophecy was composed, claims Green.<sup>46</sup> Ferrara had suffered an earthquake in 1570; Cyprus, previously under Venetian control, had been forced to abandon the Christian faith when conquered by Ottoman forces in 1571; and Pope Pius V had died in May 1572. Green finds no historical analogues for the events forecast for the years 1573-80 and contends that those years still lay in the future when the prophecy was written.<sup>47</sup> As the third chapter of this thesis will show, this prophecy of the 1570s resurfaced in the 1590s and again at the start of the Thirty Years' War, when an English version was copied into numerous manuscripts and printed on a broadside with a ballad that paraphrased its contents.<sup>48</sup> In both of these periods when the prophecy attracted fresh attention, its list of forecasts remained the same while the corresponding series of dates changed to give the text the appearance of topicality. Thus, the text was repurposed as a prophecy of the 1590s when it re-emerged in that decade and was updated in the late Jacobean era to refer to the 1620s.

The first text in a sixteenth-century manuscript collection of prophecies, now part of MS Ashmole 1386 in the Bodleian Library, also exhibits a perceptible shift from the mode of *ex eventu* prediction to that of speculation. This text uses predictive language to evaluate the reigns of past and present English monarchs, each identified by his or her initial rather than by name. Political prophecies that denoted their real-

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<sup>45</sup> A copy of this prophecy is contained in Bodl., MS Arch. Selden B.8, fol. 300<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> 'Ferrara will tremble'; 'Cyprus will be forsaken'; 'there will be no shepherd' (i.e. no pope).

<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Green, '1570-80', <<http://researchfragments.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/1570-80.html>> [accessed 20 August 2015].

<sup>48</sup> *A Prophecie of the Iudgment Day: Being Lately Found in Saint Denis Church in France, and Wrapped in Leade in the Forme of an Heart: To the Tune of the Ladyes Fall* (London: I. W., [1622(?)]).

life protagonists thus by their initials were common throughout the medieval period and beyond, states Rupert Taylor. Prophecies of this type are labelled ‘Sibyllic’ by Taylor, who notes that the earliest extant examples of this sub-genre of political prophecy occur in the famed *Oracula Sibyllina*, a compilation of prophecies in Greek hexameters that were composed between the second and sixth centuries AD.<sup>49</sup> The series of monarchs individually appraised in the prophecy in the Ashmole manuscript begins with Henry VI, identified simply as H. The Catholic bias of this text is clearly revealed in its assessment of the legacy of another H. The reign of King Henry VIII, the monarch responsible for the Protestant Reformation, is summarised in the pseudo-prediction, ‘religious people awaye shalbe turned, some shalbe hanged, and some shalbe burned’.<sup>50</sup> Mary I is the final monarch identified by an initial in this prophecy. She is described as ‘vertuous and good and to the Church applyante’.<sup>51</sup> This praise of the Catholic Mary is followed by a transition from the Sibyllic mode of prophecy to the mode that Taylor terms ‘Galfridian’. Taylor attaches this label to prophecies that use animal symbols to denote their actors in the manner popularised by the Merlin prophecies of Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>52</sup> The Galfridian material in this prophecy claims that Mary will bear a son who will be raised on the European continent ‘vnder the wings of an Eagle which is of his bloude full nye’.<sup>53</sup> The eagle must represent Emperor Charles V, who would be the paternal grandfather of any child born to Mary and her husband Philip II of Spain. In contrast to the Sibyllic section of the prophecy, whose purported predictions deal with past and present events, this portion of the text is speculative. Mary died childless in 1558. The inaccuracy of the prediction that

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<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, p. 3. See also Jessica L. Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance: Shakespeare’s Sibyls* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 19-20.

<sup>50</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, p. 245.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>53</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, p. 246.

promises her a son indicates that the prophecy was written before the prospect of a Catholic heir to the English throne was conclusively cancelled by her death. The text must post-date her accession in 1553, since the accurate description of the short reign of her predecessor Edward VI clearly belongs to the category of prophecy *ex eventu*. It is hence possible to date the composition of this prophecy to the period 1553-58.

Among the pro-Catholic prophecies collected in Ashmole 1386 are three mid-sixteenth-century *ex eventu* prophecies of the Reformation, whose ominous accounts of great sorrows in England were to prove applicable to the Civil War a century later, at which time the texts were revived and published.<sup>54</sup> The traditions of Galfridian and Sibyllic prophecy, exemplified in the Marian text just discussed, also survived into the seventeenth century, when new texts in these prophetic modes were composed. This thesis analyses several prophecies of early Stuart origin in which non-fictional individuals are signified either by their initials or by animal symbols. It also considers instances where old texts in the Galfridian and Sibyllic traditions were re-interpreted in the light of seventeenth-century events. Prophecies that employed semantically flexible animal symbols were more adaptable than those formed of precise sequences of initials; nonetheless, the sixteenth-century prophecy of the resurrection of Edward VI that was repurposed to criticise the Jacobean government in 1606 belonged to the Sibyllic tradition. Prominent among the Galfridian texts revived and expounded anew in the seventeenth century was a twelfth- or thirteenth-century *ex eventu* prophecy of the reign of King Stephen (*d.*1154), who was represented therein as the ineffectual *rex*

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<sup>54</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, pp. 247-48; *The Prophecy of Humphrey Tindal Vicar of Wellenger, Shewing the Downfall of the Clergy, and the Woefull and Miserable Condition of this Kingdome* (London: I. M., 1642), sigs A2<sup>f</sup>, A3<sup>v</sup>; *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration, Made by Humphrey Tindall Vicar of Welling* (London: Bernard Alsop, 1644), sigs A2<sup>r-v</sup>, A4<sup>f</sup>.

*albus* ('white king'). During the Civil War, William Lilly published this medieval prophecy with a commentary that identified the ill-fated white king as Charles I.<sup>55</sup>

Antiquarian researches and the epistolary sociable sharing of texts preserved in institutional and family archives ensured that prophecies of medieval and sixteenth-century origin reached new audiences in the seventeenth century. These old texts had been born at times of apparent crisis, such as the Protestant Reformation, and had originally provided critique of contemporary politics in the guise of antique prophecy. When new perceived crises emerged in the early Stuart period, new pseudo-prophetic texts were written in response to them. For example, the reluctance of King James to intervene on behalf of the Protestant cause in the continental conflict that broke out at the end of the 1610s provoked a spate of prophetic invention. Many of the purported prophecies composed at this time were spuriously portrayed as recently rediscovered artefacts in notes that routinely accompanied them in their various manuscript copies. Thus, a particular prose prophecy composed no earlier than 1611 is supplied in almost all of its extant manuscript versions with a fictional account that attributes the text to Merlin and claims that it was rediscovered twice: first in a wall of a Leicestershire mansion in the thirteenth century; and again more recently, in a hole in the altar of a church in the same parish as that mansion.<sup>56</sup> The attribution of archaeological fictions such as this to modern pseudo-prophecies worked to suggest that these texts were ancient and that their authority was verified by the fulfilment of their predictions in recent events.<sup>57</sup> The prevalence of such fictions in the late Jacobean period, when disapproval of English foreign policy was rife amongst zealous English Protestants,

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<sup>55</sup> William Lilly, *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (London: John Partridge and Humphrey Blunden, 1645), sig. E1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g. Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 166<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 176; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 463.

supports the contention of Philip Schwyzer that ‘archaeological ideas and motifs tend to emerge [...] in relation to specific political, religious, and cultural crises’.<sup>58</sup>

Several individuals who copied political prophecies into newsletters or into manuscript miscellanies in the late 1610s and early 1620s disparaged the credibility of these texts in comments such as the following, made by the soldier and administrator George Carew in a communication to the diplomat Thomas Roe:

Of this idle prophetie [above-written] you may beleue what you list;  
for my owne particular I geue no more credit vnto them then vnto *las*  
*patrannas dellas mugeres viejas!*<sup>59</sup>

If the late-Jacobean collectors and disseminators of prophecies regarded them thus as old wives’ tales, they nevertheless valued these texts as contributions to the discussion of current affairs. The available seventeenth-century manuscript evidence indicates that several prophecies circulated in the early stages of the Thirty Years’ War through an East Anglian correspondence network formed of men who eagerly consumed news of the progress of the Protestant cause in mainland Europe.<sup>60</sup>

The archive of the Mores of Loseley Park, Surrey, furnishes insights into a family that produced two generations of Protestant prophecy collectors in the early modern period. Sir William More (*d.*1600), who opposed Marian religious policy in the parliament of 1555, owned a list of the sayings of ‘Sayntts and prophets wich hath prophesyd of a kyng wich shall wyne the holy crosse’.<sup>61</sup> This pro-Reformation text drew on the traditions of both ancient and eschatological prophecy. The papers of Sir

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<sup>58</sup> Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> TNA, SP 14/90, fol. 49<sup>v</sup>: George Lord Carew to Sir Thomas Roe, 18 January 1617.

<sup>60</sup> Emily Jennings, ‘Digging up the Future: Political Prophecies in Early-Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts: The Case of Cambridge University Library MS Ee.5.36’ (unpublished master’s assignment, University of Cambridge, 2011), pp. 9, 11; Noah Millstone, ‘The Rector of Santon Downham and the Hieroglyphical Watch of Prague’, in *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, ed. by Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 73-89 (pp. 80-82).

<sup>61</sup> Folger, MS L.b.546, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

William were inherited by his son, Sir George More (*d.*1632), the reluctant father-in-law of the poet John Donne. Sir George was an antiquarian enthusiast. He was the owner of a collection of monastic manuscripts, from which he made a donation to the Bodleian Library in 1603.<sup>62</sup> Political prophecy also figured among his interests. In the late Jacobean period, Sir George acquired copies of two modern pseudo-prophecies of the career of King James. Both of these texts were spuriously ascribed to Merlin and described an apocalyptic battle between a Protestant king and the Romish Antichrist. One was the popular prophetic poem that began, ‘A prince out of the north shall come’; the other was the prose prophecy purportedly found in a Leicestershire church.<sup>63</sup> (Another extant manuscript copy of the latter prophecy bears annotations in the hand of the Suffolk gentleman and diarist Sir Simonds D’Ewes, who, in common with More, was a scholar of antiquities and a staunchly Protestant advocate of English military action against the Catholic Spanish-Imperial forces at the outset of the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>64</sup>) The interest taken by Sir George in political prophecies was indulged by his grandson, Poynings More. In 1630, Poynings sent a copy of an apocalyptic prophecy to his grandfather from Paris. The letter that accompanied the prophecy reported that it was centuries old and had been published for the first time three weeks ago, after the fire at the Sainte-Chapelle. The text had initially created excitement in France, Poynings noted, on account of its interpretability as a prophecy of the recent victory of the French forces led by Montmorency against the Spanish at the Battle of

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<sup>62</sup> Ian Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Surrey History Centre, Loseley MS 1925, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>; Folger, MS L.b.670, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> BL, Harley MS 252, fols 120<sup>r</sup>-121<sup>v</sup>; J. Sears McGee, ‘Sir Simonds D’Ewes: A “Respectable Conservative” or a “Fiery Spirit”?’ in *England’s Wars of Religion, Revisited*, ed. by Charles W. A. Prior and Glenn Burgess (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 147-67 (p. 152).

Veillane. A week after this triumph, however, Imperial troops had sacked Mantua and the French, deflated, had ‘layd aside [the prophecy] as not worth the speaking of’.<sup>65</sup>

During the Thirty Years’ War, the subjection of old prophecies to new, biased exegeses was prevalent, as was the composition of new partisan political prophecies. On 12 August 1622, the Suffolk clergyman John Rous obtained a copy of a witty prophecy that seemed at first to endorse the Spanish-Imperial cause but that revealed its true, anti-Catholic sympathies when read backwards. This reversible prophecy, influenced by apocalyptic themes, was addressed to the Spanish king, whom it lauded when read forwards and condemned when inverted.<sup>66</sup> An acquaintance with whom Rous shared this prophecy in 1623 explained the trick of the text in a marginal note beside his own manuscript copy: ‘Turne these [lines] backward and the sense proues truer.’<sup>67</sup> Another prophecy that playfully confronted its readers with an interpretative puzzle falls outside the scope of this thesis. Sir Walter Raleigh was the author of a poem couched as prophecy, which warned of imminent political unrest and the advent of apocalypse. It described a battle between four kings and told how ‘the dreadfull sound of trumpe’ would strike fear into the hearts of Christians while the bones of the dead were ‘tumbled vp and downe’.<sup>68</sup> Despite first appearances, this text was not a political prophecy. Rather, it was a whimsical, purely literary exercise: a bathetic allegory of games involving cards and dice. As a key supplied by one seventeenth-century copyist reveals, the four kings mentioned in the prophecy were not real political actors; they were the kings in a pack of cards. The tumbled bones were dice,

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<sup>65</sup> Folger, MS L.b.679, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 16<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Walter Raleigh, *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. by Agnes M. C. Latham (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951; repr. 1962), p. 48.

not the remains of the dead disgorged from their graves on Judgement Day.<sup>69</sup> The ‘sound of trumpe’ was a feature of card games, not a noise to herald the final doom.

Raleigh’s poem, known in modern editions by the title ‘On the Cardes, and Dice’, belonged to the category of ‘mock-prophecy’ and was a riddle with a single possible solution.<sup>70</sup> Since at least as early as the fifteenth century, political prophecies in which various protagonists and institutions were represented as the numbers on the faces of dice had been popular in England.<sup>71</sup> Allegories of that type, where the outcomes of tabletop games betokened serious political vicissitudes, were parodied by Raleigh in his poem, which used apocalyptic imagery to describe nothing weightier than the fortunes and losses experienced during dice- and card-play. All of the prophetic texts studied in the present project genuinely engaged with politics. Some were composed in the early Stuart period as oblique comments on current affairs; others were revived and repurposed in manuscript or print during this time. Old prophecies that had responded originally to such occurrences as the death of King Stephen, the Henrician Reformation, and the Marian persecutions were capable of re-application to events of the seventeenth century. Whereas the meaning of the Raleigh poem was not liable to alteration over time, the content and purport of political prophecies could always be changed to suit present circumstances. In its treatment of archaistic early Stuart prophecies and their associated archaeological fictions, this thesis explores the politically motivated production of spurious prophetic artefacts. In its analyses of the reappearances of medieval and sixteenth-century prophecies in seventeenth-century manuscripts and print publications, the project considers how genuine prophetic artefacts were rendered timely through rhetorical manipulation.

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<sup>69</sup> Folger, MS V.a.275, p. 124.

<sup>70</sup> F. P. Wilson, ‘Some English Mock-Prognostications’, *The Library*, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., 19 (1938), 6-43 (p. 8).

<sup>71</sup> See V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1971), pp. 359-60.

Chapter 1 considers uses and literary treatments of prophetic rhetoric in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Texts discussed include printed propaganda for the Stuart succession to the English crown and the extant records pertaining to a legal investigation of 1606, which concerned the allegedly seditious public utterance of a mid-sixteenth-century prophecy. Also analysed are the ambivalent treatments of staple prophetic motifs of Stuart panegyric in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*.

Chapter 2 focuses on the second decade of the seventeenth century. Among the materials studied are extant manuscript accounts of the contents of a lost Catholic apocalyptic tract of 1613. This manuscript tract, addressed to King James, challenged the scriptural exegeses provided by the king in the 'Monitory Preface' to the second edition of his *Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*. The protracted law case triggered by the delivery of the Catholic treatise to Whitehall finally ended in 1619, when its author was brought to trial for treason. In this chapter, both the rhetorical ingenuity of the author and the rhetorical sleights of the prosecution at his state trial are examined. The chapter also considers the complex portraits of prophetic and legal rhetoric in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII*.

Chapter 3 discusses political prophecies written or revived in the late Jacobean period. Some of the manuscript texts considered there received their first published scholarly analysis in 2014, in an essay by Noah Millstone that concentrates on the attempts of early modern readers to make sense of ambiguous prophecies through 'the multimedia social and intellectual practices associated with the miscellany'.<sup>72</sup> This chapter, for which the research was completed before the appearance of Millstone's essay, studies the origins and influences of the prophetic texts adapted or composed around the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. Many of the texts analysed evince the

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<sup>72</sup> Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham', p. 76. Millstone's findings concerning the circulation of prophecies through an East Anglian correspondence network coincidentally overlap with my interests as a master's student in 2011. See Jennings, 'Digging up the Future', pp. 8-13.

interest taken by British Protestants in the possible eschatological significance of the political upheaval on the European continent.

Chapter 4 examines prophetic pamphlets and anthologies that were printed during the English Civil War and Interregnum. It consults medieval and sixteenth-century manuscripts in its efforts to uncover the origins of the old prophecies that were repurposed at this turbulent time. The chapter explores how propagandists, both parliamentarian and royalist, manipulated prophecies so as to render these texts apparent proofs of the legitimacy of their particular causes.

## *History, Prophecy, and the Jacobean Union of Crowns*

The Stuart succession to the English crown in 1603 was portrayed as the fulfilment of various ancient prophecies in many texts and entertainments produced around that time. Prophetic traditions were invoked, and old prophetic texts were repurposed, to serve as proofs that the momentous union of the crowns of England and Scotland was endorsed by the vatic authorities of the past. This use of prophecy aimed to foster support for the Scottish successor of Queen Elizabeth I. The characteristic ambiguity of the genre ensured, however, that the prophecies brought into prominence as Stuart propaganda were thus made available for reinterpretation in support of other causes. This chapter analyses some manifestations of prophetic rhetoric from the first decade of the reign of King James I and explores the treatment of this phenomenon in drama of that period. Section One identifies some of the staple prophetic texts and motifs of succession-era Jacobean panegyric. Section Two considers how certain old prophecies were used to frame a Puritan protest against Jacobean ecclesiastical policy in 1606. The third and final section of this chapter examines how Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Macbeth* subtly expose prophecies as artificial proofs of the legitimacy of the arguments in whose support they are cited.

## PROPHECY AND LEGITIMATION

When King James VI of Scotland succeeded Queen Elizabeth I to the throne of England in 1603, many literary works invoked prophecies in praise of this peaceful change of government. Virgil's putative prophecy of the birth of Christ in the Fourth Eclogue, '*redeunt Saturnia regna*' ('*Saturnes* kingdom com', or 'the golden age returns'), was quoted to celebrate the Anglo-Scottish union, whereby the island of Britain was at long last united again under one ruler as it had been in ancient times.<sup>1</sup> In a pro-union tract, the Bishop of Bristol John Thornborough wrote: 'Thus we say, and thus we sing, *Redeunt Saturnia Regna*, even the golden age of Brittaines Monarchy is come again'.<sup>2</sup> *The Magnificent Entertainment*, designed for performance during the planned procession of the new royal family through London on 15 March 1603, likewise invoked this Virgilian prophecy as proof that 'it was now the golden world'.<sup>3</sup> According to Joseph Hall, author of *The Kings Prophecie; or, Weeping Ioy*, the prophecy in the Fourth Eclogue had signified the birth in 1594 of Prince Henry, who, as son and heir to King James, seemed to promise a smooth future succession devoid of the uncertainty that had surrounded the fate of the English throne in the prelude to the death of the childless Queen Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup>

The accession of James, the Protestant Scottish king, had put to rest popular fears that the Spanish Infanta would succeed Elizabeth to the English crown and that the nation would thus be brought under the yoke of Catholic Spain. In several literary

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<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *The Bucolikes of Publius Virgilius Maro*, trans. by Abraham Fleming (London: John Charlewood for Thomas Woodcocke, 1575), sig. D2<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> John Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty and Famous Kingdomes, England and Scotland into Their Ancient Name of Great Brittain* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, [1605(?)]), sigs F1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment* (London: T.C. for Tho. Man, 1604), sig. H4<sup>f</sup>. In the event, the plague of 1603 prevented the planned performance of this entertainment.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hall, *The Kings Prophecie; or, Weeping Ioy* (London: Simon Waterson, 1603), sig. A7<sup>f</sup>.

responses to James's accession, the avoidance of the Spanish rule that might have wrought the overthrow of the Protestant national religion was celebrated in terms borrowed from the prophecies in the Book of Revelation. Hall recalled thus that he had prepared himself to die for his faith rather than convert to Catholicism, before the resolution of the succession dispute in favour of the Protestant James rendered that course of action unnecessary:

Waiting for flames of cruell Martyrdome,  
Alreadie might I see the stakes adrest,  
And that stale strumpet of imperious *Rome*,  
Hie mounted on her seuen-headed beast,  
Quaffing the bloud of Saints in boules of gold,  
Whiles all the surplus staines the guiltles mold.<sup>5</sup>

Hall here identified the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17.4-6) as the Catholic Church in accordance with the Protestant exegetical tradition on which Edmund Spenser had famously drawn for the portrait of Duessa in his Elizabethan epic, *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>6</sup> In *Englands Wedding Garment*, an anonymous poem in praise of the Stuart succession, James was figured apocalyptically as an 'English Lion' destined to pull the pope 'head-long downe' and to destroy 'the ten- | Horn'd beast of Babel-Rome'.<sup>7</sup> Similar anti-Catholic overtones were perceptible in the praise of the Protestant 'North' in Samuel Daniel's *A Panegyrike Congratulatory Deliuered to the Kings Most Excellent Maiesty*, which declared that the elevation of King James to the English throne was divinely ordained 'to glorifie our dayes, | And make this Empire

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<sup>5</sup> Hall, *The Kings Prophecie*, sig. A5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche, Jr, and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr (London: Penguin, 1978; repr. 1987), l. 7. 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> *Englands Wedding Garment; or, A Preparation to King James his Royall Coronation* (London: Thomas Pavier, 1603), sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

of the North to shine: | Against all th'impious workings, all th'assayes | Of vile  
disnatur'd vipers, whose designe | Was to imbroyle the state'.<sup>8</sup>

Although the prospect of a Spanish yoke had provoked anxiety about the future religio-political identity of the English nation, the reality of a new union with Scotland under the rule of King James was not unreservedly embraced. The Anglo-Scottish union was instituted by royal proclamation on 19 May 1603.<sup>9</sup> James hoped that the personal union thus established would be followed shortly by a full legislative union. Parliamentary resistance, however, was to ensure that England and Scotland were never united by statute during the lifetime of this first Stuart English monarch. In the event, the union at which James aimed was not to be achieved until 1707 when Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch of England, occupied the throne. To encourage his subjects to embrace a more-than-temporary Anglo-Scottish rapprochement, in 1603 James authorised the publication of *The Whole Prophetie of Scotland*, a collection of political prophecies attributed to legendary seers, many of them native to the British Isles. This collection has been aptly termed a 'legitimizing device' for the union project in the work of Karen Moranski.<sup>10</sup>

*The Whole Prophetie of Scotland* contained two versions of a vatic text whose subject was a lion-like king of Britain born to a 'Frenche wife' in whose veins 'the Bruces blood' would flow. The first version of this text was attributed to the Yorkshireman John of Bridlington, the second to Thomas Rhymer of Erceldoune in

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel Daniel, *A Panegyrike Congratulatory Deliuered to the Kings Most Excellent Maiesty at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire* (London: V[alentine]. S[immes]. for Edward Blount, [1603]), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> King James VI and I, *A Proclamation for the Uniting of England and Scotland* (London: Robert Barker, 1603), printed in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, ed. by James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973-83), I: *Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625* (1973), pp. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Karen R. Moranski, 'The Son Who Rules "all Britaine to the Sey": *The Whole Prophetie* and the Union of Crowns', in *Prophet Margins: The Medieval Vatic Impulse and Social Stability*, ed. by E. L. Ridsen, Karen Moranski, and Stephen Yandell (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 167-84 (p. 168).

the Scottish Borders.<sup>11</sup> Apparently, Moranski notes, the prophecy had been applied in the fifteenth century to John Stewart, Duke of Albany, when this son of Alexander Stewart and the French Anne de la Tour d’Auvergne had been made Regent of Scotland after the death of King James IV.<sup>12</sup> In 1562, the Scots poet Alexander Scott was acquainted with the prophecy and identified the as-yet-childless Mary Queen of Scots, widow to the Dauphin of France, as the ‘Frenche wife’. In a New Year’s gift to his queen, he alluded to her descent from Robert the Bruce (‘Thow art be lyne, fra him the nynte degree’) and expressed a hope that, by the grace of God, she would fulfil the prophecy by bearing a son who would unite the kingdoms of Britain.<sup>13</sup> Her son, the future King James VI of Scotland and I of England, was born in 1566.

Another strain of royal blood besides that of Robert the Bruce became a central theme in texts and speeches that heralded James’s accession in England. A ‘true borne bud’ of the Tudor family tree, the Stuart king was the great-great grandson of the Welsh-descended King Henry VII.<sup>14</sup> Samuel Daniel employed horticultural imagery to illustrate the Tudor lineage of King James in the following lines in praise of Margaret Beaufort (‘*Margaret of Richmond*’), the mother of Henry VII:

*Margaret of Richmond* (glorious Grandmother  
Vnto that other precious *Margaret*,  
From whence th’Almightie worker did transferre  
This branch of peace, as from a roote well set)[.]<sup>15</sup>

The ‘other precious *Margaret*’ was Margaret Tudor, daughter to Henry VII and great-grandmother to King James VI and I, the ‘branch of peace’ described in Daniel’s poem. The king himself made propagandist use of his Tudor descent. In an attempt to

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<sup>11</sup> *The Whole Prophetie*, sigs A8<sup>v</sup>-B1<sup>r</sup>, B5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Moranski, ‘The Son Who Rules “all Britaine to the Sey”’, p. 178.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Scott, *The Poems of Alexander Scott*, ed. by Alexander Karley Donald, Early English Text Society: Extra Series, 85 (London: Kegan Paul, 1902), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Munday, *The Triumphes of Re-vnited Britannia* (London: W. Jaggard, [1605(?)]), sig. C3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel, *A Panegyrike Congratulatory*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

promote his project for legislative union between England and Scotland, James suggested during an address to parliament in 1604 that the union of the roses of Lancaster and York through the marriage of his Tudor ancestor to Elizabeth of York had prefigured an Anglo-Scottish marriage of kingdoms.<sup>16</sup> The theme of marriage was dominant too in *Rapta Tatio* (1604), a pro-union tract by John Skinner. In this work Skinner encouraged English and Scottish people to intermarry, ‘to make our Nations fully one’.<sup>17</sup> He reinforced the point with the final words of his tract, a refrain quoted from a poem included among the Third Eclogues in the *Arcadia* of the Elizabethan courtier-poet Sir Philip Sidney: ‘God *Hymen* long your coupled ioyes maintaine’.<sup>18</sup>

Sidney, who had died fighting for the Protestant cause against the Spanish, was remembered also in the work of the Welshman William Harbert, the writer of a pro-union tract entitled *A Prophetie of Cadwallader*. The paratexts of Harbert’s tract included a dedication to Sir Philip Herbert, wherein Sidney was praised for his love of ‘learning, warre, and peace’.<sup>19</sup> The text proper, written in rhyme royal, began with an account of a vision experienced by the narrator on the banks of the Thames.<sup>20</sup> This opening was inspired by the first lines of Spenser’s poem *The Ruines of Time*, a work whose dedication had likewise mourned the death of Philip Sidney.<sup>21</sup> Through his shows of reverence for Spenser and Sidney, those Elizabethan proponents of Protestant militancy, Harbert obliquely articulated a hope that King James would lead

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<sup>16</sup> David M. Bergeron, ‘Francis Bacon’s *Henry VII*: Commentary on King James I’, *Albion*, 24 (1992), 17-26 (p. 18).

<sup>17</sup> John Skinner, *Rapta Tatio: The Mirrour of His Maiesties Present Gouernment, Tending to the Vnion of His Whole Iland of Brittonie* (London: W. W[hite]. for S. Waterson, 1604), sig. F1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H3<sup>r</sup>; Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985; repr. 1999), pp. 213-16.

<sup>19</sup> William Harbert, *A Prophetie of Cadwallader, Last King of the Brittaines* (London: Roger Jackson, 1604), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Edmund Spenser, ‘The Ruines of Time’, in *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970; repr. 1989), pp. 471-78 (p. 471).

a Protestant force against the Catholic powers on the continent, a course of action seemingly endorsed by the prophecies of Revelation.

Harbert's tract was concerned not only with the role assigned to James in apocalyptic prophecies but also with the applicability of ancient British prophecies to the event of the Anglo-Scottish union. This Welsh writer, who like Anthony Munday and Samuel Daniel emphasised that the Stuart king was of Tudor blood, described the union of England and Scotland under James as the fulfilment of a prophecy made to the last king of the Britons in the twelfth-century chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>22</sup> In *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey described how Cadwallader had been driven from the island by the invading Saxons and how his surviving British subjects had retreated into Wales. Determined to reclaim his crown, Cadwallader had mustered an army but had surrendered when urged by an angelic voice to accept the conquest of Britain as the will of God. The voice of the angel had prophesied the restoration of Cadwallader's kingdom in a future age.<sup>23</sup> When James became King of Great Britain in 1603, pro-union propagandists such as Harbert insisted that this prophesied moment had arrived.

There were potential religious connotations to the idea of restoring Britain to the unified state that had preceded the Saxon conquest. After the Protestant Reformation in England, reformers had looked to British antiquity for evidence that a proto-Protestant church had existed on the island before the conversion of the conquering Saxons by the papal emissary Augustine of Canterbury.<sup>24</sup> A manuscript tract on the Stuart succession, written by John Harington and presented in 1602 to Tobias Matthew (then Bishop of Durham, later Archbishop of York), included a

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<sup>22</sup> Harbert, *A Prophesie of Cadwallader*, sig. B2<sup>f-v</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 282-83.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 33.

supposedly ancient prophecy whose symbolism foregrounded the issue of religious restoration. The prophecy also focused attention on the royal body of King James:

A King of Brittish blood in Cradell crownd  
with Lyon markt shall Ioine all Brutus ground  
Restore the Crosse and make this Ile renown'd.<sup>25</sup>

Matthew glossed these lines in the right-hand margin: 'The K. of Scotts is said to haue a mole like a Lyon.' In common with *The Whole Prophetie of Scotland* and *A Prophetie of Cadwallader*, this poem insisted that the blood of James proclaimed his legitimacy as heir to the English throne. It further suggested that the destiny of the king was manifest on his eloquent skin, marked with the Scottish royal coat of arms.

If the king's birthmark was a heraldic badge that testified to his genetic claim to the throne, it could also be considered a providential token, signifying his election by God. Skin marking had a troubled relationship to the theory of the divine right of kings in the early seventeenth century. Traditionally, the anointment of monarchs with chrism during the coronation ceremony had been regarded as instrumental: popular belief had held that this ritual both sealed the legitimacy of the sovereign and imparted magical properties to the royal skin, 'notably the power to cure scrofula, the "King's Evil," by the laying on of hands.'<sup>26</sup> After the Reformation, belief in the thaumaturgic efficacy of the anointing hand smacked unacceptably of idolatry. Thenceforward it was argued that the ceremony was merely symbolic of the prior anointment of the divinely elected monarch by God. The Protestant James subscribed to the Reformed understanding of the anointing ritual. He was also uneasy about the

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<sup>25</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 259 [163]. Pagination in this manuscript is erratic; hence, all page references included here follow the practice of Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift*, giving first the page number as written in the manuscript and, following this in square brackets, the true page number. See Roberta Florence Brinkley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, 1932), pp. 5-6.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Zaller, 'Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29 (1998), 757-78 (p. 758).

confessional implications of touching for scrofula.<sup>27</sup> History rendered skin and the faculty of touch objects of doctrinally inflected ambivalence. The superstition that held that royal children bore marks of their identity on their skin originated in medieval romance narratives.<sup>28</sup> Like the ceremony of anointment, it had potentially troubling Catholic overtones. In a discussion of early modern tendencies to regard singular moles as portents, Steven Connor describes skin markings as simultaneously ‘mute and blatant.’<sup>29</sup> Arresting signs that seemed to demand interpretation while they enigmatically resisted definitive readings, prophetic moles were challenging texts.

The succession tract by John Harington (first printed in 1880 for the Roxburghe Club) survives in a single manuscript version: the vellum-bound quarto copy presented to Tobias Matthew.<sup>30</sup> A scribal copy written within wide ruled borders in a formal, regular secretary hand, the text is anonymous, but is prefaced by a copy of a 1591 letter in which James VI of Scotland thanks a correspondent for the gift of a translation of Ariosto.<sup>31</sup> Harington’s translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* had been published in 1591 and the author had presented a copy to James. The prefatory letter therefore identifies the author of this tract. The final page of the tract bears the date 18 December 1602. After the text by Harington, on pages left blank by the scribe, is an extract of a prognostication with a pronounced Protestant bias, apparently entered into the manuscript in the late Jacobean period, labelled the work of a Swiss visionary named Sebalt Brant.<sup>32</sup> The prophecy of Sebalt Brant, which attracted

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<sup>27</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. by J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), p. 188.

<sup>28</sup> See Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 326.

<sup>29</sup> Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion, 2004), p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> See John Harington, *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown, A.D. 1602*, ed. by Clements R. Markham (London, 1880).

<sup>31</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 3 [3].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 263-68 [167-72].

interest during the Thirty Years' War, purported to offer predictions concerning the religio-political fortunes of continental Europe for the period 1604-23.<sup>33</sup>

Addressed to Protestants, Puritans, and Papists, Harington's tract affected the status of a balanced attempt to move readers of antagonistic dispositions to a consensus that favoured the Stuart succession. Yet his failure to publish perhaps exposes his purported aims to the charge of disingenuousness. His adopted role of mediator furnished an opportunity to exploit ambiguities and to show that acts of reading were motivated and subjective. In the address to Catholics towards the front of the volume, Harington warned: '[I]f they will hope euer to obtaine this long sewed for Tolleracion, let them leaue their vntollerable practises in matters of State'.<sup>34</sup> The writer artfully manipulated the word 'toleration' to argue concisely that the freedom to practise their religion without penalty should be conditional upon Catholics' unmitigated support for the Calvinist Stuart king. Beneath his 'gentle and easie exposition' of the prophecy concerning the union of the kingdoms and restoration of the cross, Harington cautioned Catholic readers to resist any inclination to interpret this prophecy in line with their own prejudices:

[P]rophecies ar ambiguous and therefore I must giue them a *Caueat*, that if they shall by sedicious pamplettes or by Frenche or Spanish practises offer to crosse the King of Scotts succession, he may *Restore them* so bitter a Crosse, as may make all his welwillers crye *Crucifige* vpon them, and so punish them as they shall haue few crosses left in their purses.<sup>35</sup>

Punning on the word 'cross', the author showed that this word could refer both to acts of obstruction and to the punishments and deprivations visited upon their

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<sup>33</sup> For other extant manuscript copies of this prophecy, likewise apparently dating from the period of the Thirty Years' War, see Wolfenbüttel, Germany, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 31.8 Aug. 2°, fols 33-38; Cod. Guelf. 19.5 Aug. 2°, fols 150-60.

<sup>34</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 9 [9].

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259 [163]; pp. 259-60 [163-64].

perpetrators. Imperialist Protestant prophecies of a king who would win the holy cross had been popular in England around the time of the Reformation, and it is to this tradition that the prophecy included by Harington in his succession tract belonged.<sup>36</sup> While in one sense Harington's punning tour de force crossed Catholics' potential tendentious readings of the 'King of Brittain blood' prophecy, his exploitation of the polysemy of a word like 'cross' ultimately worked to underline his assertion, 'prophecies ar ambiguous'.

Harington claimed to have included this prophecy in his tract specifically for the attention of Catholics, who were reputedly 'more superstitious and credulous' than Protestants or Puritans.<sup>37</sup> He suggested that certain interpretative tendencies were associated with particular religious beliefs. The role of the disposition of the reader in the construction of the meaning of a text was also scrutinised in the author's treatment of the well-known HEMPE prophecy earlier in the tract. In a discussion of the possible application of 'their old name of *Brytaine*' to the united realms of England and Scotland, Harington recollected a prophecy he had heard as a child:

After Hemepe is sowed and growen  
Kings of England shalbe none.<sup>38</sup>

The author recalled that, by common consent, the letters of the word HEMPE were taken to refer to the sequence of English kings and queens from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I: Henry; Edward; Mary and her husband Philip II of Spain; and Elizabeth. Opinion varied on the proper interpretation of the phrase, 'Kings of England shalbe none.' Some readers, 'applyeng this fantastike prophecie to their more fantastick humors', perceived a warning that the realm would be divided into a heptarchy as it

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<sup>36</sup> See, e.g. Folger, MS L.b.546, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 257 [161].

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21 [21].

had been under the Saxons; others perceived a reference to an imminent Spanish conquest and consequent viceregal government. Offering an interpretation that eschewed ‘spoile or bloodshed’, Harington suggested that the prophecy described the union of the kingdoms, whereby James’s title, King of England, might be subsumed into the style ‘King of Great Britain’.

The ‘King of Brittish blood’ prophecy, Harington claimed, was originally written in the ancient British tongue. Unfamiliar with this language, Harington could not find it represented in his polyglot dictionary. His English translation, he averred, was produced with the aid of a ‘well affected’ Welsh gentleman, from whom he had first heard the prophecy. Harington joked about the difficulties of translating Welsh: ‘Her wilbe hard to make speak good English’.<sup>39</sup> In this description of the pitfalls of translation, the author implied that the prophecy, as rendered in his treatise, was an unstable text. The political prophecies Harington included in his unpublished tract could serve as powerful propaganda for the Stuart succession. However, his interest in these texts as legitimising devices competed with an inclination to explore their multiple rhetorical affordances and not to settle on a single interpretation. It was not Harington, but the Welshman who assisted with his translation, whose name became associated with the propagandist use of the ‘King of Brittish blood’ text in the early seventeenth century.

In a commonplace book compiled by the administrator Sir Stephen Powle (c.1553-1630), MS Tanner 169 in the Bodleian Library, a copy of the ‘King of Brittish blood’ prophecy follows a transcript of a letter written by Harington in 1580 to Edward Dyer, the courtier and poet who was a close associate of Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville. A note states that the poem was ‘produced by Sir William Morris’ in

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<sup>39</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 258 [162].

parliament to support the union project.<sup>40</sup> Based on the evidence of this manuscript, Jason Scott-Warren argues plausibly that ‘the well-affected gentleman who gave Harington the [...] prophecy was the same man who later “produced” it in the parliament house.’<sup>41</sup> William Maurice, a ‘by no means outstanding Welsh squire’, had earned the ridicule of his parliamentary peers through repeated speeches that called for the King of England and Scotland to change his title to Emperor and to rename his dominions Great Britain.<sup>42</sup> The record of one such speech, dated 29 March 1604, tells how Maurice ‘did observe that an old provese among the Welchmen was in the kinge in parte performed’ and ‘wished that yt might be fully fulfilled hereafter’. According to this record, the Welsh squire pronounced the prophecy thus to the House of Commons: ‘A kinge of Brittyshe Bloud in Cradle Crowned with lyones Marke shall Joyne all brittyshe ground, restore the Crose and male [*sic*] this Ile Renowned.’<sup>43</sup> As the fourth chapter of this thesis will show, the association of this prophecy with William Maurice was remembered when the text resurfaced later in the seventeenth century.

A letter that refers to the prophecy of the crowned child (‘*coronog vabann*’) with British blood destined to ‘restore the kingdom of Brittain to the pristine estate’ survives in the hand of William Maurice.<sup>44</sup> Maurice claimed that the prophecy was first uttered by Cadwallader as he departed Britain, driven out by the Saxons. In this letter, addressed to a ‘good cousin’, he admonished his correspondent for ‘detraction

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<sup>40</sup> Bodl., MS Tanner 169, fol. 62<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 170.

<sup>42</sup> S. T. Bindoff, ‘The Stuarts and their Style’, *English Historical Review*, 60 (1945), 192-216 (p. 204); E. Namora Williams, ‘Sir William Maurice of Clenennau’, *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, 24 (1963), 78-97 (p. 93).

<sup>43</sup> ‘Debates in the House of Commons, 1604-1607’, ed. by Simon Healy, in *Parliament, Politics and Elections, 1604-1648*, ed. by Chris R. Kyle, Camden Fifth Series, 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2001), pp. 13-148 (p. 49).

<sup>44</sup> Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Clenennau Letters and Papers, Item 474. Reproduced in *Clenennau Letters and Papers in the Brogyntyn Collection*, ed. by T. Jones Pierce (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1947), p. 135.

of your owne countrey and countreyemen' and 'nipping of our country *beirdd*'. His indignation was aroused by his correspondent's application of the *coronog vabann* prophecy to Henry VI, who had been crowned as an infant in England, as James VI had in Scotland. Maurice argued fiercely that the prophecy could only refer to James: the blood of Henry VI was English, he argued, while that of James was British (Welsh) owing to his descent from the Tudor Henry VII.

King James eschewed the imperial title that Maurice had recommended for him in his speeches before parliament. The king did, however, adopt the new, old name of Britain, championed by Maurice, for the geopolitical entity created by the personal union of England and Scotland. On 20 October 1604, James changed his style by proclamation to 'King of Great Britain'.<sup>45</sup> The revival of this ancient name, derived according to legend from that of the Trojan Brutus who had first settled the island, did important rhetorical work. Through the conferral of an old, as opposed to a new, name upon his united kingdoms, the Stuart king was able to argue that the Anglo-Scottish union was not an innovation to be feared but the return of a golden age. He was assisted in his propagandist endeavours by writers including John Thornborough, who reminded his readers that the hero King Arthur had been, like James, a 'king of all greate Brittain'. Just as Arthur and his people had refused to be 'captivated to the [...] wil' of the Saxons, Thornborough insisted, the people of this newly created Britain should not fight amongst themselves but should unite behind King James against their common (by implication, Catholic) foe.<sup>46</sup> In *A Treatise of Union* (1604), John Hayward commended the fitness of the king's new style and emphasised that Britain was a name restored to the island that comprised both

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<sup>45</sup> King James VI and I, *A Proclamation concerning the Kings Majesties Stile, King of Great Britaine* (London: Robert Barker, 1604), printed in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 1, pp. 94-98. See also Bindoff, 'The Stuarts and their Style', p. 192.

<sup>46</sup> Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty Kingdomes*, sig. F2<sup>v</sup>.

Scotland and England, not a name imposed upon that territory without precedent: '[Briton] hath been heretofore the auncient common name of all the inhabitants within this Ile: and a thing may easily bee reduced to the first condition and state'.<sup>47</sup>

On 16 November 1604, King James issued *A Proclamation for Coynes*, wherewith he declared that a new gold coin to the value of twenty shillings would be minted. This coin, to be named the Unite, would be stamped on one side with the image of the king and his new British title and on the other with the royal coat of arms and the words from Ezekiel 37.22, *Faciam eos in gentem unam* (I will make them one nation).<sup>48</sup> Thornborough alluded to the new Jacobean coinage with a celebratory claim that God had 'ma[de] all one againe, as he spake by his Prophet Ezechiel, concerning Israel, and Iuda, saying, *I wil make them one people in the land*'.<sup>49</sup> The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel thus became one in a long catalogue of vatic authorities said to have legitimised the English accession or the union project of King James. Prophecies produced in support of the king were not, however, guaranteed to retain their initial loyalist associations. The characteristic polysemy of these texts, emphasised by Harington in his tract, was ripe for rhetorical exploitation.

### ILLEGITIMATE PROPHECY

In the autumn of 1606, a Puritan minister from Polstead in Suffolk came under legal scrutiny after a prophecy he had allegedly uttered on 11 September was brought to the attention of the authorities. The surviving documents that pertain to the investigation

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<sup>47</sup> John Hayward, *A Treatise of Union of the Two Realmes of England and Scotland* (London: F[elix]. K[ingston]. for C[uthbert]. B[urby]., 1604), sig. F2<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> King James VI and I, *A Proclamation for Coynes* (London: Robert Barker, 1604), printed in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, I, pp. 99-103 (p. 101).

<sup>49</sup> Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty Kingdomes*, sig. A1<sup>v</sup>.

into his prophetic speculation on the fortunes of King James I are preserved among the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House. The absence of any reference to a legal trial or punishment in these documents suggests that no treason charges were ultimately brought against the suspect. Close study of his case is rewarded with insights into the use of prophecy as a vehicle for political protest a mere three years after the accession of the Stuart king, an event that had been met with a torrent of prophetic panegyric. The analysis of this case in conjunction with early modern manuscript prophetic anthologies sheds new light on the techniques whereby old prophecies could be repurposed to respond to new political circumstances.

On a journey from his home in Polstead to the nearby village of Higham in September 1606, the clergyman Gervase Smith had apparently spoken indiscreetly. He had reportedly cast doubt over the legitimacy of King James's claim to Tudor lineage and repeated a prediction of the king's imminent death and of his supersession by Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp. Richard Humphrey, an Oxford graduate who taught at the free grammar school in Dedham, Essex, had been Smith's companion and interlocutor on this journey. Apparently scandalised by the content and import of the prophetic conversation of Smith, Humphrey had sent a reproofing letter to the Suffolk minister on 23 September, nearly two weeks after he had given audience to his prognostications on the road to Higham. Afraid that his correspondent might betray him to the authorities, Smith had promptly replied with a barely-veiled plea for Humphrey's discretion. 'That which I conferred with you in secrecy, I trust shall be buried in secrecy', the Polstead prophet had written imploringly.<sup>50</sup> Unmoved by this appeal, Humphrey had turned informer and disclosed the matter of his discussion with Smith to Richard Vaughan, the Bishop of London.

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<sup>50</sup> Gervase Smith to Richard Humphrey, 23 September 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, ed. by Robert Cecil and others, 24 vols (London: H. M. S. O., 1883-1976), xviii (1940), p. 298.

Vaughan had passed the details of Smith's indiscretion to the Privy Council, which had issued orders on 26 September for the suspect to be arrested and his house searched for incriminating texts. William Waldegrave and Thomas Wakelin, the two Essex justices commissioned to conduct the search, had subsequently written to inform the Privy Council that they had failed to unearth any 'writings and papers that concern[ed] casting of nativities and prophecies' among the possessions of the accused.<sup>51</sup> On 1 October, Smith was interrogated for the first time, by the following Privy Councillors: Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk; Edward Somerset, Earl of Worcester; George Home, Earl of Dunbar; Robert Cecil; and Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, who had composed a tract that condemned the popular interest in political prophecies in 1583.<sup>52</sup> When examined, Smith confessed to his ownership of 'certain books and papers tending to matters of prophecies, grounded upon arms, and signifying certain changes of religion in the church.'<sup>53</sup> He claimed that he had inherited these prophetic texts from an old man named John Ryghton, a long-term guest at his Polstead house who had died there six years previously. When invited to account for the fruitlessness of the search undertaken by Waldegrave and Wakelin, the minister claimed that he had long since burned the books that Ryghton had bequeathed to him.<sup>54</sup> In the absence of any material remains of the texts upon which the vatic utterances of Smith were purportedly based, the statements elicited from the accused and from witnesses formed the principal sources of evidence available to the investigators commissioned to determine the seriousness of his transgression.

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<sup>51</sup> William Waldegrave and Thomas Wakelin to the Privy Council, 28 September 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, XVIII, p. 304.

<sup>52</sup> See Henry Howard, *A Defensatiue against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (London: John Charlewood, 1583).

<sup>53</sup> Gervase Smith, 1 October 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, XVIII, p. 307.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

The revelations of Richard Humphrey about the assertions of Gervase Smith suggested the possibility of Puritan sedition a year after the discovery of the Catholic Gunpowder Plot. Humphrey stated that Smith, his Puritan travelling companion, had expressed disapproval of the perceived leniency of the king towards Catholics.<sup>55</sup> When asked to respond to this accusation, Smith confessed that he had ‘said that the laws against Papists were not hard enough, and till they were cut off they remained like serpents in the bosom of the land’.<sup>56</sup> During a later examination, Smith reiterated his opinion that ‘[t]he laws against recusants are wanting in severity; corrupters of the truth ought to be cut off by the sword’.<sup>57</sup> He also confessed that he disapproved of the present government of the Church in England, both because the ecclesiastical hierarchy failed to replicate the structure of the ‘Apostolic Church of pastors and elders’ and because ceremonies were maintained that were ‘contrary to the Word’.<sup>58</sup> Another charge levelled at Smith by Humphrey concerned a claim by the former that Richard Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, would prove ‘the ruin of the King and State’.<sup>59</sup> When examined on 12 October, Smith countered this accusation: he admitted that he had heard it ‘prophesied that a bishop who was no gentleman [...] should rule the Crown for a time’, but professed ignorance of the identity of the usurping prelate.<sup>60</sup> After the 12 October interview, a statement based on the answers Smith had given was prepared, and the accused set his name to it. His fate thereafter is unknown.

Viscount Beauchamp, the illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth’s cousin, Lady Katherine Grey, was not the only Edward whose succession to the English crown had

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<sup>55</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, XVIII, p. 280.

<sup>56</sup> Gervase Smith, 1 October 1606, p. 306.

<sup>57</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, XVIII, p. 321.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>59</sup> Gervase Smith, 8 October 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury* XVIII, p. 317.

<sup>60</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 322.

allegedly featured among predictions uttered by Gervase Smith en route to Higham.<sup>61</sup> Humphrey also testified that Smith had mentioned a prophecy of the restoration of the deceased King Edward the Sixth to sovereignty over England. The Polstead prophet had reportedly declared that the reinstatement of this lamented monarch would be attended by the willing capitulation of James's staunchly Protestant son and heir, Prince Henry, who would relinquish his claim to the English succession and be content 'to enjoy only the kingdom of Scotland'.<sup>62</sup> Humphrey stated that his travelling companion had described two possible means whereby the reappearance of 'Edward descending of the house of Cadwallader' might be achieved. According to one of Smith's hypotheses, the Essex schoolmaster explained, reports of the death of the fifteen-year-old Tudor king in 1553 had been inaccurate: Edward had been alive, living in exile in Africa, since that date, and would soon embark for England to reclaim his throne. Alternatively, if Edward were really dead, he would 'be raised up again miraculously'. Failing the revivification of the dead king, 'some other of that name and line' might, so Smith had reportedly opined, be set on the English throne in fulfilment of the prophecy.<sup>63</sup> Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp, had the same Christian name as the deceased boy-king and, as great-great grandson to Henry VII, was likewise a descendant of the house of Cadwallader. (The notion that Henry Tudor had been able to trace his lineage back to Cadwallader, the legendary last king of the Britons, was a commonplace that had initially been popularised by fifteenth-century Welsh bards.)<sup>64</sup> It is probable therefore that Beauchamp, whose name Humphrey mentioned elsewhere in connection with the prophecies of Smith, was the figure

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<sup>61</sup> Susan Doran, 'Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp (1561-1612)', under 'Seymour, Edward, first earl of Hertford (1539?-1621)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), XLIX, pp. 868-71 (p. 869).

<sup>62</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, p. 281.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>64</sup> Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory*, p. 14.

intended in the reference to ‘some other of that name and line’.<sup>65</sup> Summarising the prophetic utterances of Gervase Smith and their context, Keith Thomas shows in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* that there were Marian and Elizabethan precedents for the prediction of the triumphant return of King Edward VI.<sup>66</sup> To the zealous Smith, Thomas remarks, the dead king must have ‘appealed as a Puritan hero’.<sup>67</sup>

When questioned on 12 October 1606 in respect of the various allegations made by Humphrey, the fiercely anti-Catholic Smith admitted that he had uttered a prophecy of the return of Edward VI but strenuously denied that he had ‘said he should be raised up by miracle’.<sup>68</sup> The intensity of his hatred towards Catholics had already been revealed during his first examination (on 1 October), when the Puritan minister had confessed that although he regarded King James as a ‘wise and learned Prince’, he ‘thought him too favourable unto the Papists, [...] because he did not cause those to be executed which were banished’.<sup>69</sup> The want of anti-Catholic bloodlust on the part of James was not the only factor that contributed to Smith’s ambivalence about the Stuart monarchy. The Polstead prophet also expressed doubt over the degree of propinquity between the houses of Tudor and Stuart and thus implicitly called into question the right of James to succeed Elizabeth I to the English throne. Humphrey claimed in his first written statement, which summarised the content of the prophetic speeches Smith had addressed to him on 11 September, that the Suffolk minister had refused to acknowledge the existence of any Tudor blood in

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<sup>65</sup> Gervase Smith, 8 October 1606, p. 317.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 498-501. See also Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 92; A. N. McLaren, ‘Prophecy and Providentialism in the Reign of Elizabeth I’, in *Prophecy: The Power of Inspired Language in History 1300-2000*, ed. by Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), pp. 31-50 (pp. 39-40); Margaret E. Cornford, ‘A Legend concerning Edward VI’, *English Historical Review*, 23 (1908), 286-90.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 500.

<sup>68</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 321.

<sup>69</sup> Gervase Smith, 1 October 1606, p. 306.

the veins of the ‘illegitimate’ King James.<sup>70</sup> When confronted with this accusation, Smith denied that he had described James as illegitimate. He had, he conceded, made the mistake of supposing that ‘the King came from Tyder [Tudor] not *in recta linea* [by the direct line] but collaterally’, and now recognised the error of that former belief.<sup>71</sup> Smith’s erstwhile ignorance that James was lineally descended through both parents from Henry VII (who was great-grandfather to both Mary, Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley) might account for his desire to see Prince Henry, who was usually revered by advocates of a militant Protestantism, displaced as heir to the English throne by the dead, but unambiguously Tudor, Protestant hero Edward VI.

If rumours that the skin of King James bore a lion-shaped birthmark could be appropriated to portray the monarch who united the English and Scottish crowns as an evangelical hero who would shower glory on the island of Britain, Gervase Smith demonstrated that popular reports concerning the body of the Stuart king could also be put to pessimistic use. According to a statement by Humphrey, Smith had repeated a rumour that James was unable to move his eyelids and had described the ‘naughty looks’ of the king as ‘deadly, fatal, importing no good unto the land’.<sup>72</sup> The accused did not deny this charge. When questioned about the circumstances under which he had become acquainted with ‘that vile lie that the King had imperfection in his eyelids’, Smith named his source as ‘a jester that came from the Court’.<sup>73</sup> This piece of alleged court intelligence had reportedly been woven by Smith into a warning, uttered to Humphrey, that the consequence of Jacobean leniency towards Catholics would be the unwelcome re-establishment of Catholicism as the national religion.

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<sup>70</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, p. 280.

<sup>71</sup> Gervase Smith, 1 October 1606, p. 307.

<sup>72</sup> Gervase Smith, 8 October 1606, p. 317.

<sup>73</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 321.

The first statement given by Humphrey alleged that Smith had discussed a collection of prophecies attributed to Merlin, in which the letters E. I. M. E served to prognosticate a series of changes in the government of Church and state. The initials in this Sibyllic prophecy supposedly represented the four successive monarchs by whom these changes were to be effected. Smith had allegedly argued that the first E denoted Queen Elizabeth I while the I (or J) signified James, the present king. Because part of this prophecy had already been fulfilled in the death of Elizabeth and enthronement of James, Smith had reportedly declared, he was ‘persuaded of the truth of [it] concerning what was to come’. Humphrey claimed that Smith had predicted the overthrow of the current monarch by Catholics, who would establish their champion, named Mary, on the English throne. This Mary (M in the prophecy) would be ‘a bloody persecutor of the Protestants’. Her massacres would constrain the oppressed to summon the dead Edward VI, who would liberate Protestantism from her tyranny.<sup>74</sup>

With reference to examples from Sloane MS 2578, a collection of political prophecies compiled during the reign of Mary I and preserved in the British Library, Keith Thomas demonstrates that hopeful prophecies of the resurrection of Edward VI began to circulate among Protestants during the Marian persecutions of the 1550s.<sup>75</sup> Prophecies of the revival and return of a previous monarch were traditional vehicles for the expression of dissatisfaction with a present administration. When Henry IV occupied the English throne after the deposition of Richard II, for instance, prophecies of the resurrection and re-enthronement of his predecessor were common among groups that disapproved of the manner of his rise to power.<sup>76</sup> One of the texts copied into the Sloane manuscript is a set of predictions attributed to a group of

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<sup>74</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, pp. 280-81.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 498. See also Sharon L. Jansen, ‘British Library MS Sloane 2578 and Popular Unrest in England, 1554-1556’, *Manuscripta*, 29 (1985), 30-41 (p. 36).

<sup>76</sup> Jonathan K. van Patten, ‘Magic, Prophecy, and the Law of Treason in Reformation England’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 27 (1983), 1-32 (pp. 5-6).

Welsh bards. It contains the prophecy of Robert Blake, which addresses the deceased monarch thus: ‘Vp Edward the vi<sup>th</sup> thye yeare is come’.<sup>77</sup> Further study of this text yields strong evidence that a version of these Welsh bardic prophecies was among the papers that Smith claimed to have inherited from Ryghton and later burned. Smith stated on 12 October that he had found among Ryghton’s books a prediction that a non-aristocratic bishop would influence royal policy-making. His record of this old prognostication replicated almost verbatim an oblique comment on the career of Thomas Cranmer from the prophecy of Robert Blake: ‘a bisshop being no ientylman shall enioye the crowne’.<sup>78</sup> A late sixteenth-century copy of the text containing Blake’s prophecy survives in MS Ashmole 378 in the Bodleian Library. Its existence attests that these Marian vaticinations appealed to Elizabethan collectors of political prophecies, among whom Ryghton would have numbered.<sup>79</sup>

The persuasive evidence that at least part of Smith’s collection of prophetic papers dated from the Marian era supports the thesis that E. I. M. E., the initials that Smith allegedly associated with a sequence of monarchs beginning with Elizabeth I and ending with the resurgent Edward, in fact first featured in a text of the 1550s where they described the reigns of the following series of English rulers: Edward VI (E); Lady Jane Grey (I or J); Mary I (M); and Edward VI (E), who would return to reverse the restoration of Catholicism instituted by Mary. In 1606 Smith invested the E. I. M. E. prophecy with contemporary relevance when he re-interpreted the first two letters in the sequence as allusions not to Edward and Jane but to Elizabeth and James. The probability that Smith’s treatment of this Sibyllic prophecy amounted to a deliberate re-interpretation, not an accidental misinterpretation, is argued by the fact that the Polstead cleric had experienced the era in which the prophecy originated at

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<sup>77</sup> BL, Sloane MS 2578, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., fol. 20<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 378, fols 22-24.

first hand. Smith had matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1548 at the age of nine.<sup>80</sup> Apparently born in 1539, therefore, Smith was a near contemporary of Edward VI, who was born in 1537. He hence lived through the reigns of the sequence of monarchs described in the *ex eventu* E. I. M. E. prophecy. If, as seems likely, he knew what the prophecy really was, he consciously endowed the text with the semblance of topical urgency in 1606 through the invention of new referents for its letters. This evidence for the rhetorical manipulation of a prophecy, performed by an obscure clergyman in conversation with a rural schoolmaster, indicates that the recognition of the polysemy of prophecies and of the rhetorical usefulness of that feature was not confined to elite circles in the early Jacobean period.

According to Humphrey's first account of his 11 September conversation with Smith, the Polstead minister had predicted that Mary, the future Catholic usurper of James's throne, would be toppled by Edward VI or by some other Edward of Tudor lineage. As argued above, this alternative Edward was probably assumed to be Viscount Beauchamp. Smith had reportedly told his travelling companion that Mary's successor would be approved by Prince Henry, who would be content to relinquish his claim to the English throne.<sup>81</sup> When examined on 1 October, Smith offered an exegesis of the E. I. M. E. prophecy that disagreed in certain particulars with the interpretation that Richard Humphrey, his accuser, claimed to have heard from him on the journey to Higham. Smith confessed that he had found among Ryghton's books a set of prognostications that foretold 'the putting down of the mass, the restoring of it again, and then the utter putting down of it again'. Admitting that M was the potentate who, according to these writings, would supplant James and accomplish the restoration of the mass, the minister did not confirm that the initial denoted the name

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<sup>80</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*, 4 vols (Oxford: Parker, 1891-92), IV (1892), p. 1371.

<sup>81</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, p. 281.

Mary. The reign of M was to be ‘of short continuance’, Smith claimed. It would be followed by the government of the realm by E, who would achieve the ‘utter putting down’ of the mass. During this, his first examination, Smith maintained that he understood the second E to represent the devoutly Protestant Prince Henry, ‘though not according to the letter’.<sup>82</sup> He would later revise his testimony on this point.

The second statement taken from his accuser refuted the assertion of Smith that his speeches to Humphrey had identified Prince Henry as the prospective monarch signified by the final E. On 8 October, Humphrey insisted that the Polstead cleric had ‘affirm[ed] that the L. Beauchamp should succeed’.<sup>83</sup> In an effort to emphasise how far his own hopes in respect of the succession differed from those expressed by his erstwhile travelling companion, the Dedham schoolmaster concluded his testimony with this obsequious tribute to the royal family and the investigators in the case: ‘The Lord preserve long his Majesty, our noble Queen, that hopeful branch the Prince of Wales with the whole progeny, the Privy Council, and all that wish well unto them’.<sup>84</sup> Having claimed in his first statement that Smith had identified the second E of the prophecy as either the resurrected Edward VI or Edward Seymour, Humphrey now alleged that his interlocutor had asserted unambiguously that Seymour was predicted to succeed to the crown. He also alleged that Smith had prophesied that King James would die ‘before Christmas’.<sup>85</sup>

When examined on 12 October, Smith answered the second set of allegations levelled by Humphrey. He protested that he had neither stated that the king would ‘live no longer than Christmas’ nor averred that Seymour would ‘succeed in the

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<sup>82</sup> Gervase Smith, 1 October 1606, p. 307.

<sup>83</sup> Gervase Smith, 8 October 1606, p. 317.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

kingdom'.<sup>86</sup> The statement to which he set his name after this final examination contained the following claim, which was inconsistent with his earlier assertion that the last letter in the E. I. M. E. sequence signified the future Henry the Ninth: 'E. means Edward VI, who the prophecies say shall rise again to comfort the young knight, [...] the true King in danger by the usurper'. Smith might have encountered this particular prediction in the first text printed in the *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland* in 1603. That text, an adaptation of the fourteenth-century 'Cock in the North' prophecy, contained the following lines:

[H]e that was dead, and buried in sight,  
Shall rise againe and liue in the land,  
In comfort of an yeung knight,  
That fortune hath chosen to be her husband[.]<sup>87</sup>

An old prophetic text that had been repurposed as propaganda for the Stuart succession in this printed anthology of 1603 was repurposed again by Smith in 1606 to express nostalgia for the Reformist zeal of Edward VI and to criticise the Jacobean government by negative comparison. According to the prophecies, Smith claimed in his 12 October examination, the resurrected E would 'leave the government to a cousin of his kin' as soon as he had eliminated confessional strife and established peace in the realm.<sup>88</sup> As used by Smith, the terms 'cousin', 'young knight', and 'true King' were presumably synonymous. Smith's use of these terms, and of the word 'usurper', in place of proper names was obfuscatory. As descendants of Henry VII, both Edward Seymour and the Stuart Prince Henry were related by blood to the Tudor Edward VI. Would-be interpreters of this rendition of the prophecy might, therefore, identify either Seymour or Henry as the 'true King', kinsman to King Edward, whose

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<sup>86</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 321.

<sup>87</sup> *The Whole Prophesie*, sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 322.

right to the succession was to be defended by the resurgent Tudor monarch against a challenge from an enigmatic ‘usurper’. Offering this equivocal account of the changes in government foretold in Ryghton’s books, the Polstead prophet contradicted his statement of 1 October, which had argued that the final initial in the E. I. M. E. series signified Henry, son and heir to King James. His accuser, Humphrey, likewise gave contradictory accounts of the comments Smith had made on the signification of the second E. The polysemy of the supposedly prophetic sequence of initials (E. I. M. E.), in combination with the inconsistent testimony from both sides, presented an obstacle to the investigators in this case, commissioned to discover the real content and import of the prophecies Smith had uttered on the road to Higham.

In reference to the prophecy that the reigns of I and the Protestant reformer E would be separated by a short period of popish tyranny presided over by a potentate with the initial M, Smith insisted that he had ‘spoke[n] of the ruin of the King by Papists only upon his private conjecture’: his defamation of English Catholics was not catalysed by any specific intelligence concerning a recusant conspiracy to topple King James and set a Catholic on the throne.<sup>89</sup> In this final examination, Smith was seemingly anxious to appear uninformed of the existence in either doctrinal camp of widespread militant opposition to the present condition of the Jacobean Church. He suggested that M and E would institute their respective reforms as independent agents, and not as the champions of revolutions mobilised by opposing confessional factions within the English populace. M (whom Smith still refused to name as Mary) was ‘a woman that [should] usurp the land and set up Popery, and persecute and burn many’.<sup>90</sup> It is unlikely that Smith failed to recognise this passage from one of the prophetic books of Ryghton as an *ex eventu* prophecy of the reign of ‘bloody’ Mary I.

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<sup>89</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 322.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321-22.

Smith denied that the coronation of M, who according to his exposition was a future tyrant queen, would be accomplished by an army of English Catholics who would first vanquish the Stuart king. He also argued that the reappearance and reenthronement of Edward VI would not be achieved through a campaign by the Protestant faction en masse. In a refutation of Humphrey's accusation that he had said 'the Protestants [would] call for the help of Edward', Smith claimed to believe that the dead king would return unsolicited to reform the English Church. He thus professed himself ignorant of any insurrectionary scheming among discontented radical Protestants.<sup>91</sup> These insistences on the part of Smith, which worked to portray his offence as purely verbal, perhaps helped him to avert a treason charge. After the report on his 12 October examination, the record concerning Smith and his prophecies falls silent. It appears that no further official action was taken against him.

The letter of 23 September in which Humphrey had informed Smith that he disapproved of the content of their conversation on the road to Higham was not found when the home of the Polstead minister was searched for incriminating papers. Smith perhaps burned the letter with the prophetic books of Ryghton before the Essex justices arrived to inspect his library on 26 September. The irrecoverableness of the original document obliged Humphrey to supply the investigating Privy Councillors with an approximate copy of the note he had sent to the Suffolk clergyman, 'as near as [he] could remember the same'.<sup>92</sup> It cannot be known how faithfully this later version of the letter, extant among the Cecil Papers, replicated the contents of its lost prototype. The Dedham schoolmaster might have been unable to recall the wording of his missive with complete accuracy and erred ingenuously in consequence. It is also possible that self-interest might have motivated Humphrey to misrepresent the

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<sup>91</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 322.

<sup>92</sup> R. Humfrey to Gervis [*sic*] Smith, 23 September 1606, in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury*, XVIII, p. 298.

substance of his epistle to Smith deliberately in his purported reconstruction of the missing original. Perhaps he was inclined to emphasise the disparity between his own religious convictions and the radical Puritanism of his Polstead associate in order to obviate suspicions of his own participation in seditious conversations and activities. Despite these doubts about its integrity, Humphrey's memorial reconstruction of his letter of 23 September warrants close study.

Humphrey recalled that he had recommended two books to his correspondent, Smith, as correctives to the interest of the latter in the prophecies of Merlin. To set store by such prophecies was 'mere idolatry', Humphrey claimed.<sup>93</sup> The first book the Dedham schoolmaster had counselled Smith to read was the *Britannia*, the topographical and historical survey of Britain and Ireland by William Camden, which was as yet available only in Latin at the time of the correspondence of Humphrey and Smith in the autumn of 1606. (An English translation by Philemon Holland would be published in 1610.) Camden's description of Carmarthen contained the following passage, which cast doubt over the legitimacy of Merlin and described his prophecies as discreditable:

*In hac natus est Britannorum Tages, Merlinus scilicet noster, vt enim ille Genii filius Aruspicinam suis Hetruscis, ita hic incubi filius, vaticinia, imo mera Orestis somnia nostris Britannis effinxit. Vnde in hac insula apud credulam et imperitam plebem vates celeberrimus audit.*<sup>94</sup>

(In this Citie was borne the *Tages* of the Britans, I meane *Merlin*: For like as *Tages* being the sonne of an evill Angell taught his countrimen the *Tuscans* the art of Sooth saying, so this *Merlin* the sonne of an *Incubus* Spirit, devised for our Britans prophesies, nay rather meere phantastical dreames. Whereby, in this Iland he hath beene accounted

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<sup>93</sup> R. Humphrey to Gervis [*sic*] Smith, 23 September 1606, p. 298.

<sup>94</sup> William Camden, *Britannia; siue, Florentissimorum Regnorum, Angliæ, Scotiæ, Hiberniæ, et Insularum adiacentium ex intima Antiquitate Chorographica Descriptio* (London: George Bishop, 1600), sig. Oo8<sup>v</sup>.

among the credulous and unskilfull people a most renowned  
*Prophet.*)<sup>95</sup>

The replica of Humphrey's 23 September epistle contained six pieces of advice offered to remedy the enthusiasm of Smith for prophecies. 'To begin with Merlin,' wrote the Dedham schoolmaster, 'the best antiquary we have says of him that he was *incubi filius*[,] even such a one as Tages the Hetrurian, and that his prophecies were mere *Orestis somnia*'.<sup>96</sup> The Latin phrases are recognisable as quotations from the *Britannia*, and the comparison of the legendary British seer to Tages, the Etruscan prophet, also features in the text by Camden. There can be no doubt about the identity of the author whose iconoclastic treatment of Merlin was thus recommended to Smith as an example of the 'best' antiquarian writing.

The sixth and final piece of advice offered in the reconstructed letter contained the second of the two prescriptions for reformative reading. 'Lastly,' wrote Humphrey to his acquaintance, 'consider what is written Ecclesiastes X, 20'.<sup>97</sup> Humphrey here obliquely indicated that there were potentially treasonable implications to the prophecies Smith had uttered on 11 September. The scriptural passage to which he directed the attention of the Puritan minister reads thus in the Geneva Bible:

Curse not the King, no not in thy thought, neither curse the rich in thy  
bedde chamber: for the foule of the heauen shall cary the voyce, and  
that which hath wings, shall declare the matter.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> William Camden, *Britain; or, A Chorographical Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands Adioyning, out of the Depth of Antiquitie Beautified with Mappes of the Severall Shires of England*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: George Bishop and John Norton, 1610), sig. Hhh6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> R. Humfrey to Gervis [*sic*] Smith, 23 September 1606, p. 298. '*Incubi filius*' translates as 'the son of an incubus'; '*Orestis somia*' translates as 'dreams of Orestes', i.e. fantasies.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>98</sup> *The Bible* (London: Christopher Barker, 1599), sig. Ii8<sup>r</sup>.

In a 1590s manuscript denunciation of ‘the circulation of seditious writings and pamphlets’, which Kenneth Cardwell has attributed to Francis Bacon, a marginal reference to this same verse (Ecclesiastes 10.20) accompanied lines that exhorted libellers to remember that ‘we are forbidden in anywise to slaunder [personages of excellent callinge], not onely openly, but euen where we are most priuate, and retired, not somuch as within our chambers, noe not within our breastes’.<sup>99</sup> To defame a potentate, either publicly or in private thoughts, ‘dissolueth and subuerteth the state’, this tract argued.<sup>100</sup> In the reign of James, the Elizabethan Act that had rendered speeches that questioned the legitimacy of the regnant monarch tantamount to treason (13 Elizabeth I c.1) was no longer in force.<sup>101</sup> From a legal perspective, therefore, to curse the monarch in speech or in thought could not be accounted an attempt to subvert the state when Gervase Smith engaged in prophetic speculation about the demise of King James in 1606. The invocation of Ecclesiastes 10.20 by Humphrey might attest to a tendency on his part to favour a definition of treason that included not only deeds but also words. Alternatively, Humphrey might have included this scriptural reference in the letter to Smith to warn, or threaten, his correspondent that he intended to play the role of ‘the foule of heauen’ and ‘declare the matter’ of Smith’s arguable crimes. That the letter from Humphrey caused Smith to fear that his prophetic utterances would be reported to the authorities is suggested by the anxious reply he hurriedly dispatched from Polstead on 23 September, in which he implored Humphrey to ‘bur[y] in secrecy’ the substance of their confidential discussion on the road to Higham.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Kenneth Cardwell, ‘An Overlooked Tract by Francis Bacon’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65 (2002), 421-33 (pp. 421, 432); TNA, SP 12/235, fol. 178<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, SP 12/235, fol. 178<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> See D. Alan Orr, *Treason and the State: Law, Politics, and Ideology in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 25.

<sup>102</sup> Gervase Smith to Richard Humfrey, 23 September 1606, p. 298.

Humphrey apparently tried to direct the attention of the Puritan Smith away from prophecies attributed to Merlin and towards the Bible and the work of William Camden, whose antipathy to Puritans was famous.<sup>103</sup> The *Britannia* treated folklore with scepticism and ‘rejoiced in the establishment of the Scottish claim’ to the Elizabethan succession.<sup>104</sup> This loyalist work, Humphrey perhaps hoped, might dissuade Smith from further speculation about the legitimacy of the Stuart monarchy and alter his desire to see the moderate Jacobean government replaced by a more zealously Protestant administration headed by Edward VI *redivivus*. The passage of the *Britannia* to which Humphrey drew Smith’s particular attention described enthusiasm for the prophecies of Merlin as a trait of ‘credulous and unskillfull people’. Humphrey echoed its sentiments when he labelled the study of prophecies ‘mere idolatry’. As revealed by the evidence for his deliberate manipulation of supposedly Merlinic prophecies to enhance their contemporary applicability, Smith did not treat these texts with the kind of superstitious reverence that Camden and Humphrey attributed disparagingly to students of non-scriptural prophecies. He rather recognised and exploited their rhetorical affordances.

When asked during his 12 October examination to supply details of ‘those he commonly conversed with’, Smith identified Richard Humphrey and a number of clergymen from neighbouring Suffolk villages.<sup>105</sup> His named associates were: a Master Lyster, curate of Shelley; Master Whittle, parson of Milden; William Barwick, parson of Hitcham, a graduate of St John’s College, Cambridge;<sup>106</sup> John Harrison,

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<sup>103</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘One of Us? William Camden and the Making of History’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 8 (1998), 139-65 (p. 156).

<sup>104</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586-1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 199.

<sup>105</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 321.

<sup>106</sup> John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part 1*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-27), 1 (1922), p. 102.

vicar of Cornand Magna, a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge;<sup>107</sup> and the Stoke-by-Nayland minister John Hankin, formerly of Gonville and Caius College.<sup>108</sup> Smith confessed that he had mentioned the prophecy of the return of Edward VI not only to the Dedham schoolmaster but also to Hankin and Harrison.<sup>109</sup> When questioned as a witness, Hankin protested that his only conversation with Smith on the subject of prophecies had occurred three years before, when the Polstead man had shown him a book that claimed ‘that Sebastian the King of Portugal, reported to be dead, was alive [...] and should do great things’.<sup>110</sup>

The prophetic books owned by Smith escaped the attention of the authorities when his activities were investigated in the autumn of 1606. He claimed that he had burned them. Thus deprived of any material evidence of the contents of the prophecies Smith had recited on the journey to Higham, the investigators were compelled to judge the ‘rhetorical probability’ of his guilt or innocence from fallible testimony alone.<sup>111</sup> Even though Robert Cecil endorsed one of the witness statements pertaining to this case with the words ‘Traitorous speeches uttered by Gervis Smyth’, it appears that the prophetic speculation in which Smith had indulged was not ultimately found to warrant a treason trial.<sup>112</sup>

As the close study of his case reveals, Gervase Smith based his prophecies of the demise of King James and of the resurrection of Edward VI on several old texts, many of which had circulated among oppressed English Protestants during the Marian persecutions of the mid-sixteenth century. The prophetic propaganda for the Stuart succession of 1603 had similarly repurposed existing prophetic texts and traditions.

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<sup>107</sup> Venn and Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part I*, II (1922), p. 315.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, II (1922), p. 298.

<sup>109</sup> Gervase Smith, 12 October 1606, p. 321.

<sup>110</sup> Gervase Smith, 8 October 1606, p. 317.

<sup>111</sup> Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion*, p. 78.

<sup>112</sup> Gervis [*sic*] Smith, parson of Polstead, 11 September 1606, p. 281.

Despite their opposed stances towards the Jacobean government, both Smith and the compiler of *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland* made rhetorical capital out of the prophecy of a dead man who would be revived to the comfort of a young knight. This example of a single prophecy used to further two antithetical agendas underlines the rhetorical manipulability of such texts. As the next section of this chapter will show, the artificiality of arguments that depended on prophecies for proof was brought to the attention of Jacobean theatre audiences.

### PROPHECY SCRUTINISED

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c.1606) and *Cymbeline* (c.1610) both contain allusions to the themes of succession-era Stuart panegyric. For this reason, scholars have been known to regard both plays as 'compliments' to King James.<sup>113</sup> Other critics have rightly suggested that the treatment these panegyric commonplaces receive in both plays is more ambivalent than such analyses allow. For instance, prophecies akin to those published or performed in support of the accession of James are exposed in these plays as ambiguous texts and utterances. Some are vulnerable to tendentious exegesis; others are rendered problematic by their manifestly untrustworthy origins.

When Macbeth and Banquo encounter the weird sisters together, each is hailed amid peals of thunder with a prophecy of his political fortunes. The sisters address Macbeth as 'Thane of Glamis' and 'Thane of Cawdor' and promise that he will be 'king hereafter'.<sup>114</sup> Banquo, they predict, will 'get kings' but 'be none'.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> See Henry Neill Paul, *The Royal Play of Macbeth: When, Why, and How It was Written by Shakespeare* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 1; Emrys Jones, 'Stuart *Cymbeline*', *Essays in Criticism*, 11 (1961), 84-99 (p. 96).

<sup>114</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by A. R. Braunmuller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. 3. 46-48. All future references to the play are to this edition, unless otherwise specified.

Later in the play, when Macbeth has procured the title ‘King of Scotland’ by regicide and has had Banquo murdered in an effort to forestall the predicted succession of his descendants to the Scottish crown, the protagonist attends a further conference with these ‘secret, black, and midnight hags’.<sup>116</sup> Here the sisters assure Macbeth that he will not be usurped by any ‘of woman born’ and that his reign will be secure until ‘Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane hill | Shall come against him’.<sup>117</sup> A final vision confirms the fears of the king that the escaped Fleance, son of Banquo, will beget heirs who will attain sovereignty over Scotland. Eight spectral figures attired as kings, followed by the ghost of their progenitor Banquo, appear to Macbeth. The last holds a glass showing ‘many more’ kings of the same line.<sup>118</sup> Some of these phantasms carry ‘two-fold balls and treble sceptres’.<sup>119</sup> As critics have noted, these objects signify the union of kingdoms under James VI and I.<sup>120</sup> The Stuart king purported to be descended from Banquo.<sup>121</sup> This putative genealogical relationship had been described visually in an illustration of the Stuart family tree in a 1578 history of Scotland by John Leslie.<sup>122</sup> The vision of the heirs of Banquo seems to invite interpretation as a compliment to one of their number: Shakespeare’s royal patron, James. Such an interpretation is only possible, however, if the origins of the vision are disregarded. It is conjured by the diabolic weird sisters whose prophecies elsewhere in

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<sup>115</sup> *Macbeth*, I. 3. 65.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 47.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 79; IV. 1. 92-93.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 119.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 120.

<sup>120</sup> See, e.g. Philippa Berry, ‘Reversing History: Time, Fortune and the Doubling of Sovereignty in *Macbeth*’, *European Journal of English Studies*, 1 (1997), 367-87 (p. 385); Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson, ‘*Macbeth*, the Jacobean Scot, and the Politics of the Union’, *Studies in English Literature*, 47 (2007), 379-401 (p. 392); Ian Ward, *Shakespeare and the Legal Imagination* (London: Butterworths, 1999), p. 166.

<sup>121</sup> See Ian Ward, ‘Terrorists and Equivocators’, in *Shakespeare and the Law*, ed. by Paul Raffield and Gary Watt (Oxford: Hart, 2008), pp. 185-202 (p. 196).

<sup>122</sup> John Leslie, *De Origine, Moribus et Rebus Gestis Scotorum* (Rome: [n. pub.], 1578), sig. R2<sup>v</sup>. Later, the claims of King James to descent from Fleance would be outlined by John Selden in his gloss on the prophecy of the Severn in Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London: M. Lownes, J. Browne, J. Helme and J. Busbie, [1612]), sig. H6<sup>r-v</sup>.

the play serve to keep the word of promise to the ear of their kingly recipient but break it 'to [his] hope'.<sup>123</sup>

Macbeth initially interprets the prophecies of the first two apparitions as promises of his invulnerability: a moving wood and a man not born of woman are phenomena that the law of nature seems to preclude and therefore, he reasons, his presentiments of deposition can be dismissed. In the last act of the play, as Malcolm and Macduff lead an army bolstered by English soldiers in an assault on Dunsinane, Macbeth realises that his confidence in the soundness of his prophetic exegesis has been misplaced: when his opponents march toward him bearing boughs hewn down in Birnam wood and Macduff reveals that he was 'from his mother's womb | Untimely ripped', the cornered king recognises the potential for vaticinal rhetoric to 'palter with us in a double sense'.<sup>124</sup> In this play, the weird sisters are the source both of the panegyric prophecy that promises glory to Banquo (and by extension to King James I) and of the prophetic incitement to regicide, delivered to Macbeth. The apparent prophecies of immortality with which they furnish Macbeth are ultimately revealed to have equivocated with their mortal recipient. This revelation compromises the prophecy of the future greatness of Banquo's line by association.

In the *Chronicles* of Holinshed, consulted by Shakespeare in the composition of this play, Lady Macbeth is not her husband's sole collaborator in the murder of Duncan. Macbeth confides his regicidal design to a group of 'trustie frendes, amongst whom Banquo was the chiefest'.<sup>125</sup> Shakespeare exempts the supposed ancestor of his royal patron from any involvement in the treason perpetrated by the title character of his drama. He nevertheless draws uncomfortable parallels between Banquo and

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<sup>123</sup> *Macbeth*, v. 8. 21-22.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 5. 43-45; v. 8. 15-16; v. 8. 20.

<sup>125</sup> Raphael Holinshed and others, *The Second Volume of Chronicles*, rev. edn ([London]: [Henry Denham], 1587), sig. P2<sup>f</sup>.

Macbeth and allows the spectre of the conduct of Banquo in Holinshed to haunt this early Stuart play. Following the coronation of Macbeth, Banquo reveals in soliloquy that he suspects the new king of Scotland as the murderer of Duncan.<sup>126</sup> In the same private speech, he recalls the encounter with the weird sisters and their prophecy that his heirs would be kings:

If there come truth from them –  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine –  
Why by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well  
And set me up in hope? But hush, no more.<sup>127</sup>

Having begun to consider the future promised to his dynasty by the sisters, Banquo is checked when the arrival of Macbeth and the royal retinue interrupts his speech. The soliloquy therefore ends before it can either confirm or invalidate the notion subtly proffered to suspicious minds in the audience by its first ten lines: that the thoughts of Banquo have begun to incline toward treason. The possibility that Banquo will follow the violent example of the king who now holds the crown of Scotland from his offspring is quickly forestalled when he is murdered by the hired hands of Macbeth, who fears his potential disloyalty.

Towards the beginning of the play, Duncan is gratified by the report of the military conduct of Banquo and Macbeth delivered by the Captain, recently returned from the wars. Shakespeare troubles that report, however, with seeming references to succession-era Stuart propaganda; thus, the playwright works to invite a more ambivalent response from his Jacobean audience than the one elicited from Duncan by the Captain's narrative of the Scottish reaction to a renewed enemy assault:

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<sup>126</sup> *Macbeth*, III. 1. 1-3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 1. 6-10.

DUNCAN           Dismayed not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?  
 CAPTAIN         Yes, as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion.  
                       If I say sooth, I must report they were  
                       As cannons over-charged with double cracks;  
                       So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.  
                       Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds  
                       Or memorise another Golgotha,  
                       I cannot tell.<sup>128</sup>

With his reference to Golgotha, the skull-strewn site of the Crucifixion, the Captain attempts to convey an image of an eleventh-century Scottish battlefield littered with body parts. For any spectator familiar with the fate of Duncan in the *Chronicles*, this allusion might also seem to presage his ‘sacrilegious murder’ by Macbeth.<sup>129</sup> On the night ordained for the assassination, Lady Macbeth leaves the feast held in honour of her royal guest to seek her husband. When she finds him, she remarks to Macbeth that Duncan has ‘almost supped’.<sup>130</sup> Susan Zimmerman has argued that these words spoken by Lady Macbeth call to mind the Last Supper and thus encourage an audience to perceive parallels between the murder of Duncan and Christ’s sacrifice.<sup>131</sup>

Through its comparison of the military feats of Macbeth and Banquo to an effort to recreate the scene of Christ’s execution, the Captain’s speech omens the death of the ‘Lord’s anointed’ king Duncan.<sup>132</sup> The role of Banquo in this project to ‘memorise another Golgotha’ gestures toward Holinshed’s account of his complicity in the treasonable enterprise of Macbeth. The distinction between the loyalist Banquo, purported founder of the Stuart dynasty, and the traitor Macbeth seems similarly on the point of collapse in the Captain’s claim that the arrival of enemy reinforcements dismayed Macbeth and Banquo ‘as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion’. Likened to

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<sup>128</sup> *Macbeth*, I. 2. 34-41.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 3. 60.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 7. 29.

<sup>131</sup> Susan Zimmerman, ‘Duncan’s Corpse’, in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 320-40 (p. 329).

<sup>132</sup> *Macbeth*, II. 3. 61.

eagles and lions, these two Scottish warriors are arguably rendered types of King James, who was figured under both of these symbols in the tracts and pageants produced in honour of his accession to the English throne. In *The Magnificent Entertainment*, for example, the king was hailed as the ‘Eagle of all birds that flie’.<sup>133</sup> In *Englands Wedding Garment* and *The Kings Prophecie*, he was likened to a lion.<sup>134</sup> The rhetoric of Jacobean accession propaganda is problematised in the battle narrative given by the Captain in *Macbeth*, where it is recycled to describe both Macbeth and Banquo: a future traitor and the apparently heroic ancestor of the seventeenth-century King of Great Britain. The comparison of these two leonine and aquiline warriors to ‘cannons over-charged with double cracks’ might offer an implicit comment on the way this double application of Stuart symbolism threatens to collapse the compliment seemingly offered to James in the play. As cannons break when overcharged, the analogy between Banquo and the patron of the King’s Men will cease to function effectively as flattery if parallels with Macbeth are introduced into the portrait of Banquo. The play hints that ‘the new “British” kingship putatively represented by Banquo’s heir is mysteriously dependent upon its opposite yet originating shadow: the tyrannical and bloody image of a Scottish or Celtic king.’<sup>135</sup>

Although he employs material from the chronicle history of Scotland in praise of James, Shakespeare simultaneously ‘hints to his English audiences how futile it would be to unite this new past, suddenly bequeathed to them with the accession of the Scottish monarch, with their own.’<sup>136</sup> Banquo is subtly shown to be an ambiguous historical counterpart for the Stuart king; thus, he appears as a dubious advertisement for the Jacobean union project. He is not the only analogue for King James offered by

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<sup>133</sup> Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment*, sig. E1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>134</sup> *Englands Wedding Garment*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>; Hall, *The Kings Prophecie*, sig. B6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>135</sup> Philippa Berry, ‘Reversing History’, p. 387.

<sup>136</sup> Jonathan Baldo, ‘“A Rooted Sorrow”: Scotland’s Unusable Past’, in *‘Macbeth’: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Nick Moschovakis (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 88-103 (p. 99).

this play. Edward the Confessor, as described by Malcolm, is endowed with the hereditary power to cure scrofula and possesses in addition ‘a heavenly gift of prophecy’.<sup>137</sup> The claim to God-given vaticinal insight made on behalf of the Anglo-Saxon King Edward in *Macbeth* perhaps constitutes a topical allusion to the published notion that Shakespeare’s royal patron had been divinely gifted the ability to expound scriptural prophecies. *Ane Fruitfull Meditatioun* (1588), a commentary by King James on four verses from the twentieth chapter of Revelation, was described in its prefatory epistle as ‘ane worke worthie of all praise, quhilk Goddis Spirit did vtter be our Souerane, as ane witness of his graces knowlege in the hie misteries of God’.<sup>138</sup>

The power of the Stuart monarch to penetrate ‘hie misteries’ manifested itself, according to common report, on his body. In common with his rumoured lion-shaped birthmark, the caul with which James had been born was popularly interpreted as ‘a magical sign giving him a charmed life, a special gift for prophecy’.<sup>139</sup> At the time of his English accession, King James was anxious that the portrayal of his royal body as providentially marked and his touch as mystically efficacious might fuel popish superstition among the commonalty; however, these misgivings about touching for scrofula and about anointment with the chrism of Edward the Confessor at his coronation were superseded by his awareness that such arguably idolatrous public rituals could usefully enhance his authority in the eyes of his subjects. He therefore ‘decided to keep them, although with some embarrassment’.<sup>140</sup> The ambivalence of the Stuart king about the politic decision to encourage popular veneration of his

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<sup>137</sup> *Macbeth*, IV. 3. 152-58; IV. 3. 159.

<sup>138</sup> King James VI, *Ane Fruitfull Meditatioun Contening ane Plane and Facill Expositioun of the 7. 8. 9. and 10. Versis of the 20 Chap. of the Reuelatioun* (Edinburgh: Henry Charteris, 1588), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, *Lies Like Truth: Shakespeare, ‘Macbeth’, and the Cultural Moment* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), p. 76.

<sup>140</sup> Malcolm Smuts, ‘Banquo’s Progeny: Hereditary Monarchy, the Stuart Lineage, and *Macbeth*’, in *Renaissance Historicisms: Essays in Honor of Arthur F. Kinney*, ed. by James M. Dutcher and Anne Lake Prescott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 225-46 (p. 228).

sovereign skin problematizes the compliment seemingly intended in the analogy drawn by Shakespeare between Edward and James.

The vatic gift of Edward, described as ‘heavenly’, provides a contrast to the diabolical prognostications of the weird sisters. Described by Banquo as the utterances of a ‘devil’ who can apparently ‘speak true’ and termed by Macbeth ‘th’equivocation of the fiend’, the sisters’ prophecies are the dubious source of the promise that the descendants of Banquo will rule in Scotland, and later Britain, until ‘th’crack of doom’.<sup>141</sup> In a potential source for *Macbeth*, the sisters were described not as devils but as nymphs. This source was an entertainment by Matthew Gwinne, performed before King James at Oxford in 1605, entitled *Tres Sibyllae*. The ‘switch from a positive to a negative origin’ for the prophecy of the line of kings to derive from Banquo in *Macbeth* ‘effectively taints the entire line and the ideologies propounded by that line’, Peter Herman rightly argues.<sup>142</sup> The prophecy concerning the heirs of Banquo is conjured by witches and takes as its subject the progeny of a character not wholly free of the taint of his counterpart in the *Chronicles* of Holinshed. Its compliment to James is necessarily diminished by these factors.

*Cymbeline* is cluttered with motifs from Stuart propaganda produced around the time of the accession of James. The title character concludes the play with a proclamation of concord between nations:

Publish we this peace  
To all our subjects. Set we forward. Let  
A Roman and a British ensign wave  
Friendly together.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Macbeth*, I. 3. 105; V. 6. 42; IV. 1. 116.

<sup>142</sup> Peter C. Herman, ‘*Macbeth*: Absolutism, the Ancient Constitution, and the Aporia of Politics’, in *The Law in Shakespeare*, ed. by Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 208-32 (p. 218).

<sup>143</sup> William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), V. 4. 476-79. All future references to the play are to this edition, unless otherwise specified.

This moment has been read as a reference to the union of the English and Scottish crowns. Britain and Rome in this play can be deemed analogues of early seventeenth-century England and Scotland respectively, Leah Marcus argues. Her analysis concludes with a description of an emblem devised by Henry Peacham in which the heraldic lions, or ensigns, of the two realms unite to support a single crown.<sup>144</sup> The image by Peacham was addressed to ‘the High and mightie IAMES, King of greate Britaine’ and accompanied by verses that celebrated peace between two previously hostile countries.<sup>145</sup> At the beginning of his reign, James evoked the rule of Augustus, Roman Emperor during the universal peace supposedly ushered in by the birth of Christ, in support of his union project.<sup>146</sup> Shakespeare’s play is set during this Augustan peace. Although England and Scotland were joined in name under James’s adopted style, ‘King of Great Britain’, his plans to unite the kingdoms by statute collapsed in 1607, owing to parliamentary opposition.<sup>147</sup> *Cymbeline*, probably written in 1610, revisits many of the themes of succession propaganda and Jacobean royal self-fashioning, including: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s British history; the descent of the Stuart king from the Tudor Henry VII; royal birthmarks; and political prophecy.<sup>148</sup> While these themes are recalled, they are also problematised by their presence in a script and (in performance) on a stage populated with ambiguous readable materials.

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<sup>144</sup> Leah S. Marcus, ‘*Cymbeline* and the Unease of Topicality’, in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. by Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 134-68 (p. 149).

<sup>145</sup> Henry Peacham, *Minerua Britanna; or, A Garden of Heroical Deuses* (London: Walter Dight, [1612]), sig. D1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>146</sup> Jones, ‘Stuart *Cymbeline*’, p. 90; Glynn Wickham, ‘Riddle and Emblem: A Study in the Dramatic Structure of *Cymbeline*’, in *English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in Honour of her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by John Carey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 94-113 (p. 107).

<sup>147</sup> David L. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments 1603-1689* (London: Arnold, 1999), p. 106. See Marie Theresa O’Connor, ‘A British People: *Cymbeline* and the Anglo-Scottish Union Issue’, in *Shakespeare and the Law: A Conversation among Disciplines and Professions*, ed. by Bradin Cormack, Martha C. Nussbaum, and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 231-55 (p. 231).

<sup>148</sup> Martin Butler, ‘Introduction’, in *Cymbeline* (2005), pp. 4-6.

Characters in this play often perform credulous, uncritical readings, appearing wilfully to ignore the polysemy or multiplicity of texts and symbols. Shakespeare subtly undermines these partial reading practices through the exposure of the irrepressible vitality, mutability, and signifying potential of myths, histories, and texts. His portrayal of tendentious acts of reading and editing seems to reflect on the ‘culturally opportunistic artificiality of the union project’.<sup>149</sup>

Cymbeline, like King James I in 1610, is father to two sons and a daughter. Reunited with them in the final act of the play, he asks: ‘Oh, what am I, | A mother to the birth of three?’<sup>150</sup> His maternal metaphor perhaps echoes a passage in a panegyric of James, produced by John Gordon in 1604. This text contended that a Protestant consensus among readers could serve as ‘a Mother to bring forth the vnion of three Realmes vnder your Maiestie in one royaltie.’<sup>151</sup> Gordon shared this view with the author of *Englands Wedding Garment* (1603). If Shakespeare intended a reference to either of these Protestant propagandist texts, it does not follow that he endorsed the prejudices they espoused. Indeed, critics have found grounds on which to argue that *Cymbeline* eschews and undermines the anti-Catholic bias usually characteristic of early Stuart treatises on the union that (like Gordon’s) evoke ancient Britain as the seat of a proto-Protestant faith.<sup>152</sup> Where the play imports metaphors and images from earlier Jacobean texts, it does so in an exploratory, not a dogmatic, manner.

In Thomas Dekker’s *The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603), the death of Elizabeth and accession of James were figured by a fruitless cedar that metamorphosed into an olive

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<sup>149</sup> John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 133.

<sup>150</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 368-69.

<sup>151</sup> John Gordon, *England and Scotlands Happinesse* (London: William Aspley, 1604), sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> See, e.g. John E. Curran, Jr, *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 35; Andrew Escobedo, ‘From Britannia to England: *Cymbeline* and the Beginning of Nations’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59 (2008), 60-87 (pp. 69-71).

tree, ‘vpon whose spreading branches grow both Kings and Queenes’.<sup>153</sup> The olive tree symbolised both the peaceful inauguration of James and his marriage, which had produced heirs and therefore seemed to promise an untroubled succession. In *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty Kingdomes*, John Thornborough compared the cedar in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4.7-12) to the ancient name of Britain, once hewn down but now sprung up from its stump to flourish again.<sup>154</sup> A cedar features in the prophecy left by Jupiter on the breast of the sleeping Posthumus in *Cymbeline*:

‘Whenas a lion’s whelp shall, to himself unknown, without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow; then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty.’<sup>155</sup>

When called upon to interpret the prophecy of Jupiter in the final scene of this play, the Soothsayer reports that Cymbeline is figured therein as the cedar ‘whose issue | Promises Britain peace and plenty’.<sup>156</sup> If the interpretation of the Soothsayer resembles the early Jacobean works by Dekker and Thornborough, wherein the cedar image served an optimistic message, the prophecy itself arguably does not.

Shakespeare’s widowed Cymbeline, like Dekker’s Queen Elizabeth I, is likened to a lone cedar; and the two ‘lopped branches’ with whom he is reunited at the end of the play in apparent fulfilment of the prophecy are his unmarried male children.<sup>157</sup> The Soothsayer perceives a reference to marriage in the prophecy, but applies it to the reunion of Posthumus with his wife Innogen, who is supplanted as

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<sup>153</sup> Thomas Dekker, *1603: The Wonderfull Yeare: Wherein is Shewed the Picture of London, Lying Sicke of the Plague* (London: Thomas Creede, [1603]), sig. C1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>154</sup> Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty Kingdomes*, sig. D1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>155</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 3. 202-207.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 455-56.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 452.

heir to the British throne by her returning elder brother, Guiderius. Succession thus becomes an all-male affair. As will be seen, this is not the only act of reading in the final scene that seems calculated to authorise Guiderius's future succession via the re-contextualisation of Innogen, the 'tender air' of the prophecy who is put in her place, not as her father's 'tender heir', but as '*mollis aer*', as in '*mulier*', as in 'wife'.<sup>158</sup>

King James fashioned himself as a peacemaker. He also adopted the related role of matchmaker. Leah Marcus describes his encouragement of 'state marriages that bridged political and religious differences'.<sup>159</sup> The 1607 marriage of the Scotsman and royal favourite Sir James Hay to Honora Denny, the daughter of an English peer, was compared to the union of the kingdoms in a masque by Thomas Campion.<sup>160</sup> John Kerrigan argues that Shakespeare courted the patronage of Hay with a reference to a particular passage from Holinshed's Scottish *Chronicles* in *Cymbeline*.<sup>161</sup> The passage in question described how a husbandman named Haie and his two sons had protected the borders of Scotland from a Danish invasion in the tenth century A.D.<sup>162</sup> In Posthumus's speech in praise of the bold stand taken by Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus against the Romans, the playwright perhaps alludes obliquely to this episode.<sup>163</sup> The husbandman Haie was an ancestor of Sir James. Kerrigan argues that Shakespeare's use of the Scottish legend is partly explicable as a patronage suit but also insists that the play's 'dramaturgy is not instrumental': while *Cymbeline* may make specific appeals to members of the Stuart court, its apparently topical elements embrace but also transcend the occasions for which they appear to

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<sup>158</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 444-47.

<sup>159</sup> Marcus, 'Cymbeline and the Unease of Topicality', p. 141.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas Campion, *The Lord Hay's Masque*, in *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605-1640*, ed. by David Lindley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 18-34 (ll. 15-19).

<sup>161</sup> Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 140.

<sup>162</sup> Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1957-75), VIII (1975), p. 48.

<sup>163</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 3. 14-34.

have been written.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, the defence of British borders by the ‘old man, and two boys’ in the play recalls not only the Haie story but also the legend of how Lartius, Herminius, and Horatius Cocles defended Rome against the invading army of Lars Porsena at the Pons Sublicius in the sixth century B.C.<sup>165</sup> The account of the warlike exploits of Belarius and the two princes exemplifies the ‘unstable “mingle-mangle” of sources and historical periods’ wherewith, in the view of Heather James, ‘*Cymbeline* threatens to dissolve rather than ratify the emergent British nation along with its Jacobean political iconography’.<sup>166</sup>

Symbols and myths that clustered around James at the time of his accession are dispersed among various characters in this play. As discussed above, *Cymbeline* the peacemaker is a possible figure for the Stuart king. Innogen shares her name with the wife of Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain to whom James was compared in works such as Harbert’s *A Prophetie of Cadwallader* and Munday’s *Triumphes*.<sup>167</sup> In this play, unlike in Geoffrey’s chronicle, Innogen is daughter rather than wife to the Briton king. The imprecision of the correspondence between the Innogen of the British history and the Innogen of the play subtly exposes the lability of attempts to apply old texts to modern contexts and is characteristic of the play’s ‘questioning of the mythic habit of thought’.<sup>168</sup> The playwright troubles Geoffrey’s chronology with the anachronistic insertion of a figure for Brutus’s wife into a drama about the reign of *Cymbeline*; thus, he designedly draws attention to his method of grafting new material onto his sources to produce heterogeneous, unhistorical history. Two strands of Galfridian legend are evoked in the figure of Arviragus, the youngest son of

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<sup>164</sup> Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 133.

<sup>165</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 3. 52.

<sup>166</sup> Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 152.

<sup>167</sup> Harbert, *A Prophetie of Cadwallader*, sig. G4<sup>v</sup>; Munday, *Triumphes*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>168</sup> Joan Carr, ‘*Cymbeline* and the Validity of Myth’, *Studies in Philology*, 75 (1978), 316-30 (p. 316).

Cymbeline. The name ‘Cadwal’, given to him by Belarius, calls to mind the prophecy of the restoration of the kingdom of Britain, uttered to Cadwallader by an angel. Harbert, who marshalled this prophecy in support of the union project in 1604, also used the legendary ‘Arvirage’ as a model of British pride and military courage in another pro-union treatise.<sup>169</sup>

The elder prince, Guiderius, bears a royal birthmark upon his neck: ‘a sanguine star’.<sup>170</sup> This mole becomes the authorised text on the royal succession at the end of the play, when its discovery prompts Cymbeline to address Innogen with an expression of sympathy that is simultaneously a performative utterance: ‘Thou hast lost by this a kingdom’.<sup>171</sup> The authorisation of this fleshly text seems to entail the silent removal from circulation of Innogen’s own royal birthmark. The resemblance between the shape of her ‘cinque-spotted’ mole and that of a star has invited critical comment.<sup>172</sup> Imprinted on feminine skin, though, it is likened by Iachimo to a flower (a ‘cowslip’) when he gazes on it earlier in the play.<sup>173</sup> Of the three characters who are definitely aware of the existence of this birthmark (Innogen herself, Posthumus, and Iachimo), none mentions it when Guiderius’s strikingly similar mole is described. Although the two birthmarks in this play are potentially identical texts, the gender of the skin on which they are imprinted seems to determine the manner and the contexts in which they are read. The selective readings whereby the erstwhile status of Innogen as heir is suppressed in the final scene work also to distance her husband from the throne. His name, Leonatus, recalls the heraldic symbol of the Stuart king. Given the frequent association of King James with lion symbolism, the account of Posthumus as

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<sup>169</sup> William Harbert, *Englands Sorrowe; or, A Farewell to Essex* (London: Valentine Simmes, 1605), sig. C3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 364.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 373.

<sup>172</sup> Maurice Hunt, ‘Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*’, *Studies in Philology*, 99 (2002), 404-31 (p. 427).

<sup>173</sup> *Cymbeline*, II. 2. 39.

a ‘lion’s whelp’ works in some ways to portray this son-in-law to Cymbeline as a Stuart son and heir.<sup>174</sup> As the recipient of the prophecy of Jupiter, he is the focus of a further apparent reference to the legitimising propaganda that accompanied James’s accession.<sup>175</sup> The manner in which the prophecy is bestowed seems to recall a passage in ‘The Prophesie of Waldhaue’, one of the texts printed in *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland* in 1603. Waldhave, like Posthumus, wakes to find a prophetic text on his breast, placed there while he was sleeping.<sup>176</sup>

The prophetic tablet in the play is a curious, hybrid textual artefact. Although it is fathered on Jove, its symbolism (which includes a lion’s whelp and a family tree) suggests kinship to the prophecies of Geoffrey’s Merlin. The strangeness of this text resides in its heterogeneity; meanwhile, other texts that appear onstage as props are curiously endowed with metamorphic abilities. When Innogen learns of the plot by her husband against her life, she produces his love-letters, hitherto worn next to her bosom, and declares that the ‘scriptures of the loyal Leonatus’ are ‘turned to heresy’.<sup>177</sup> Her bedtime reading may have inspired her use of this mutative image. A stage-property representing Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is required for the scene in which Iachimo catalogues the contents of Innogen’s bedchamber, noting the book with its leaf ‘turned down | Where Philomel gave up’.<sup>178</sup> Although a physical copy only appears in one scene, the influence of the work of Ovid is shown to be far less easily containable. Critics have recognised a reference to the tale of Orpheus in Guiderius’s avowed intention to throw the severed head of Cymbeline’s braggart stepson into a creek, whence it will be carried to sea to ‘tell the fishes he’s the Queen’s son,

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<sup>174</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 3. 202.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 3. 173.

<sup>176</sup> *The Whole Prophesie*, sig. C4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>177</sup> *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 79-80.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 2. 45-46.

Cloten'.<sup>179</sup> According to the Ovidian legend, the head of Orpheus, 'miraculously prophesying', floats to Lesbos in embassy to his mother after it is torn from his trunk by Bacchantes.<sup>180</sup> In Guiderius's image, the truncation of the body of Cloten renders his head, like that of Orpheus, a textual excrescence that retains its vitality and eloquence after excision from the body of text to which it originally belonged.

Belarius likens his own body to a text fashioned by violence when he tells Guiderius and Arviragus that the 'world may read' in him the story of his life at the court of Cymbeline, because his 'body's marked | With Roman swords'.<sup>181</sup> Claiming that his scars attest to the feats of bravery that secured his renown as a soldier and his high position at court, the unjustly disgraced former favourite of the king suggests that the Roman inscriptions on his flesh tell an unambiguous story. An image of a Roman penetration is misread, however, elsewhere in the play. The Soothsayer initially perceives a portended Roman victory over Britain in his vision of an eagle that vanishes into the sun.<sup>182</sup> Later, however, he describes the same dream as a sign of peaceful union between Caesar and the 'radiant Cymbeline' when events call for such a 'politic reinterpretation'.<sup>183</sup> Collisions between Rome and Britain attract conflicting exegeses. The Roman inscriptions on Belarius's skin perhaps evoke the idea of Romish scriptures. Resident in a region to the west of the Severn anachronistically referred to as 'Wales', Belarius inhabits a country regarded in the early seventeenth century as at once a seat of modern recusancy and the haven of ancient British proto-Protestantism.<sup>184</sup> A chink in the island's armour against invasion by foreign Catholic

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<sup>179</sup> *Cymbeline*, IV. 2. 152; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 111.

<sup>180</sup> Hunt, 'Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*', p. 420.

<sup>181</sup> *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 56-57.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 349-51.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 4. 473; Bradin Cormack, *A Power to Do Justice: Jurisdiction, English Literature, and the Rise of Common Law, 1509-1625* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 232.

<sup>184</sup> *Cymbeline*, III. 2. 61.

powers, the Welsh port of Milford Haven was also the site where Henry Tudor, ancestor of James I and father to Henry VIII, catalyst of the English Reformation, had landed in 1485 to seize the English crown from Richard III.<sup>185</sup> The ‘Celtic fringe’ posed a potential threat to the British story, but was also central to it.<sup>186</sup>

Belarius is not the only character in Wales whose skin tells a story. Guiderius’s mole, un-discussed until the final scene of the play, recalls rumours about the royal birthmark of King James, shaped like his armorial badge. The revelation of the mole on the skin of Guiderius is prefigured when Belarius uses a heraldic metaphor to describe the princes’ innate ‘honour’ and ‘[c]ivility’, which he deems exemplified in the violent decapitation of Cloten.<sup>187</sup>

O thou goddess,  
Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon’st  
In these two princely boys!<sup>188</sup>

Belarius’s choice of verb, ‘blazon’, suggests that the princes’ warlike impulses work like a family coat of arms to proclaim their royal identity. This interpretation is, however, tendentious. To a critical audience of the play, it is far from clear that a savage beheading bespeaks irrepressible civility. Belarius reads nature’s blazon in the boys not, as he claims, through the evidence presented by their deeds, but through the lens of his pre-existing knowledge of their true identity. His reading is based less on what he sees than on what he expects to see. When Cymbeline hears in the final scene that the young man known as ‘Polydore’ is marked with a star-shaped mole, he, like Belarius, readily credits the blazon of princely identity. When he hears Belarius attest

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<sup>185</sup> Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr, *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 136. See Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, sig. H2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>186</sup> Willy Maley, “‘This Sceptred Isle’: Shakespeare and the British Problem”, in *Shakespeare and National Culture*, ed. by John J. Joughin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 83-108 (p. 93).

<sup>187</sup> *Cymbeline*, IV. 2. 177-78.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 168-70.

to the existence of this mole, Cymbeline immediately rejoices in the reunion of his family. He allows himself little time to look at the mole before he speaks. A director could indeed choose not to stage the revelation of the mole, making the king's sudden unshakeable conviction a response to the mere spoken promise of visible evidence rather than the evidence itself. This would serve to underline the similarities between the uncritical acceptance of a birthmark as proof on the part of Cymbeline and the misplaced credulity of Posthumus when, earlier in the play, a report in which his wife's mole is accurately described simulates evidence of her unchastity.<sup>189</sup> Cymbeline is of course correct to assume that 'Polydore' is really Guiderius, but the interpretive practices that produce his belief nonetheless seem problematic in a play that elsewhere 'emphasises the ways in which proof can often be "similar"'.<sup>190</sup>

'Polydore' is a prince in disguise, but his mole is circumstantial, not direct, proof of his identity. Following his reunion with his family, Cymbeline professes to be eager to question his three children about their meeting in Wales, but claims, 'nor the time nor place | Will serve our long inter'gatories.'<sup>191</sup> He imposes a 'fierce abridgement' on a story that possesses 'circumstantial branches which | Distinction should be rich in.'<sup>192</sup> This excision of circumstances (meaning 'details') produces a truncated account which, in Cymbeline's view, befits the occasion. Detail can render a story ambiguous. Iachimo alludes to 'circumstances' before he furnishes Posthumus with the dishonest account of his seduction of Innogen:

Sir, my circumstances  
Being so near the truth as I will make them,

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<sup>189</sup> Raphael Lyne, 'Recognition in *Cymbeline*', in *Late Shakespeare, 1608-1613*, ed. by Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 56-70 (p. 59).

<sup>190</sup> Richard Meek, "'More than History can Pattern": Shakespeare and Historicism', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 46 (2010), 221-43 (p. 236).

<sup>191</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 391-92.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 382; v. 4. 383-84.

Must first induce you to believe[.]<sup>193</sup>

This character litters his inventory of Innogen's chamber furnishings with detail and so damns her with circumstantial proof. Cymbeline in the final scene eschews circumstances and produces tendentious, rather than comprehensive, versions of events. The production of biased, propagandist texts via the violent excision of troubling details was, in Jennifer Summit's analysis, common in the aftermath of the English Reformation. Summit argues that the books salvaged from monastic libraries were Protestantised through physical interventions which sought to prune away the corrupting evidence of their Catholic past.<sup>194</sup> Old books, according to this critic, were regarded as vital tools for the fashioning of a new English confessional identity; yet they had to be materially tamed to suit their new propagandist function. Philip Schwyzer similarly discusses how old texts were recycled in service of contemporary political aims in the sixteenth century. He focuses on the acts of 'linguistic technology' whereby the British history was marshalled in support of attempts to forge a British national consciousness in sixteenth-century, Saxon-descended England.<sup>195</sup> The acts of rending and wresting described by Summit and Schwyzer respectively have analogues in the loppings of circumstances, suppressions of rival blazons, and strained prophetic interpretations that occur in the final scene of *Cymbeline*. These biased treatments of readable material at the end of the play work, within the plot, to create the triumphant atmosphere necessary for the march through Lud's Town and the king's publication of his peace. Within the theatre, however, they hint at the artificiality of propagandist projects.

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<sup>193</sup> *Cymbeline*, II. 4. 61-63.

<sup>194</sup> Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 104-5.

<sup>195</sup> Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory*, p. 7.

In Act Four, tidings of the Queen's illness, the absences of Innogen and Cloten from court, and the Roman landing reach Cymbeline all at once and render him purportedly 'amazed with matter'.<sup>196</sup> He is confounded by an abundance of information. At the play's end, by contrast, he seems to harness the experience of amazement as a preferred reading technique. His uncritical acts of interpretation in the final scene are characterised not only by abridgements but by a tendency to read according to the logic of the early modern wonder-cabinet, a space that made no enquiries into the histories of the artefacts it collected, but presented them as 'strange things [...] reduced to the status of sheer objects, stripped of cultural and human contexts.'<sup>197</sup> Cymbeline describes Guiderius's mole as a 'mark of wonder' and, as he marvels at it, does not pause to scrutinise it.<sup>198</sup> He is similarly disposed to wonder at the absence of his sons from court. He refers to their '*strange* starting from [their] orbs', even though Belarius's account of the kidnapping, motivated by his desire to avenge an unjust banishment, has already made clear that the princes' disappearance has a political rather than a providential explanation.<sup>199</sup>

The narratives, texts, and symbols that populate the stage in the final scene override objectivity via the inspiration of wonder or provoke wresting and rending interpretations. These interpretations attempt to tame signification in order to produce or endorse unambiguous, unquestionable statements and proclamations. Drawing the attention of the audience to the fallibility of many of the acts of reading performed by its characters, the play performs a 'general undermining of texts'.<sup>200</sup> Reading in accordance with their pre-existing beliefs or dispositions, and excising or ignoring

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<sup>196</sup> *Cymbeline*, IV. 3. 28.

<sup>197</sup> Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 64.

<sup>198</sup> *Cymbeline*, V. 4. 365.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 4. 371 (emphasis added); V. 4. 332-47.

<sup>200</sup> J. Clinton Crumley, 'Questioning History in *Cymbeline*', *Studies in English Literature*, 41 (2001), 297-315 (p. 307).

details that threaten to undermine the integrity of their motivated interpretations, characters unwittingly expose the ‘narcissisms of reading and writing’.<sup>201</sup> It has been suggested that the play’s subtle treatment of textual integrity ‘implicitly question[s] critical attempts to read topical significance into the text of *Cymbeline*’.<sup>202</sup> While it would be inaccurate to regard the play as a compliment to King James, the extent to which the text is saturated with the imagery and rhetoric of succession propaganda would be difficult to overstate. In *Cymbeline*, as in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare treats the prophetic motifs of the Jacobean panegyric that had appeared around 1603 in a manner that draws attention to their infinitive interpretability and rhetorical manipulability. He thus counsels his audience to regard official prophetic rhetoric with scepticism.

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<sup>201</sup> Erica Sheen, “‘The Agent for his Master’: Political Service and Professional Liberty in *Cymbeline*”, in *The Politics of Tragicomedies: Shakespeare and After*, ed. by Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 55-76 (p. 67).

<sup>202</sup> Meek, “‘More Than History Can Pattern’”, p. 238.

*Noses of Wax: Prophecy, Scripture, and the Treason Law in  
Mid-Jacobean England*

In the early modern period, the nose made of malleable wax was a familiar metaphor for interpretive pliancy. Religious polemicists would use it to accuse their opponents of the rhetorical manipulation of scripture.<sup>1</sup> It was employed elsewhere to comment on the vulnerability of the law to biased exposition and application. The metaphor appears, for example, in Lording Barry's Jacobean city comedy *Ram-Alley*, where the legal profession is cynically appraised by one of its own practitioners, Throat, who says of the law: 'tis, within the power of vs Lawiers, | To wrest this nose of waxe which way we please'.<sup>2</sup> The first and second sections of the present chapter consider aspects of a legal case that arose in 1613. The third section discusses Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII*, a play first performed in that same year. Both the play and the extant documents pertaining to the law case, this chapter argues, demonstrate contemporary awareness of the rhetorical sleights used in mid-Jacobean propaganda to present inherently ambiguous scriptural prophecies as unequivocal endorsements of a given political agenda. The play and the law case likewise both furnish insights into

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<sup>1</sup> H. C. Porter, 'The Nose of Wax: Scripture and the Spirit from Erasmus to Milton', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 14 (1964), 155-74 (p. 155).

<sup>2</sup> Lording Barry, *Ram-Alley; or, Merrie-Trickes* (London: G. Eld for Robert Wilson, 1611), sig. Bb2<sup>v</sup>; see Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 236.

the tendentious interpretive processes whereby the treason law could be employed to police instances of unauthorised prophetic speculation on political themes.

### ‘BALAAM’S ASSE’: SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POLITICAL PROTEST

On Wednesday 28 April 1613, the court at Whitehall awoke to surprising news. At nine o’clock that morning, a mysterious sealed box had been discovered on the doorstep of the royal chapel; once opened, it had been found to contain a handwritten book addressed exclusively to King James. This book, ‘Balaam’s Asse’, proved on inspection to be a controversial work of scriptural exegesis. Framed by its anonymous author as a Catholic rejoinder to Protestant commentaries on the Book of Revelation, it argued that the king, rather than the pope, was the Antichrist and that Britain, not Rome, was Babylon. An enquiry began, and the unknown writer of the apocalyptic polemic was sought for questioning on suspicion of high treason. As this tract is no longer extant, information about its contents and about the protracted law case it ignited can only be gleaned from partial accounts in surviving contemporary and near-contemporary sources: newsletters; manuscript miscellanies; and records of legal proceedings. The uncollated state of these documents has hitherto restricted scholarly treatments of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ to cursory and often inaccurate anecdotes derived from only small samples of the available sources. The present analysis rescues this treatise from archival obscurity and sheds light on the rhetorical stratagems whereby the state contrived both to define it as a treasonable publication and to impose harsh sanctions first on an innocent man suspected of its authorship and later on the guilty party. Also discussed is the rhetorical dexterity exhibited first within the pages of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ and then in court and on the scaffold by its author, a Catholic controversialist

who sought with his writings and oratory to expose and subvert the biased biblical exegeses, oppressive constructions of treason, and spectacular punitive rituals through which the Jacobean state worked to exact allegiance from its subjects.

When ‘Balaam’s Asse’ arrived at court in 1613, the Protestant state was grieving for James’s militant heir presumptive, Henry, who had died the previous November. It was also troubled by rumours both of Catholic plots on the life of the king and of a planned assault on the British coast by a second Spanish Armada.<sup>3</sup> The oath of allegiance, devised in 1606 to compel Catholic subjects to pledge their loyalty to James following the discovery of the Gunpowder treason, was being tendered afresh to recusants by a government fearful of popular reprisals over the marriage in February 1613 of Princess Elizabeth to the Calvinist Frederick V of the Palatinate.<sup>4</sup> In this tense religio-political climate, John Heath published his English translation of *Accomplissement des Propheties*, a tract composed in 1611 by the French Protestant theologian Pierre du Moulin in response to the 1610 assassination of King Henri IV of France. Du Moulin’s text refuted Jesuitical objections to the 1606 oath and endorsed scriptural exegeses propounded by James, King of Great Britain and Ireland, in the ‘Monitory Preface’ to the second edition of *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* (1609). In its lengthy exposition of the prophecies of Revelation, the king’s ‘Monitory Preface’ identified the pope as the Antichrist. Heath reprinted its final twenty-two pages verbatim at the end of *The Accomplishment of the Prophecies* (1613), following du Moulin, whose text concluded with a translation of the latter part of the ‘Preface’ into French. James’s tract, it was claimed, ‘deserue[d] to bee written in letters of

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<sup>3</sup> Antonio Foscarini, Venetian Ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate, 15 March, 1613, in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, ed. by Rawdon Brown, George Bentinck, Horatio F. Brown, and A. B. Hinds, 38 vols (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864-1947), XII (1905), pp. 506-507.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Questier, ‘Catholic Loyalism in Early Stuart England’, *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 1132-65 (p. 1141).

gold'.<sup>5</sup> The monumentalising impulse evinced by his fellow Protestant apologists towards his work probably gratified the king whose 'Monitory Preface' staked this claim to the final word in polemical contests over the interpretation of Revelation:

[M]y only wish shalbe, that if any man shall haue a fancie to refute this my coniecture of the Antichrist; that he answere mee orderly to euery point of my discourse: not contenting him to disproue my opinion, except hee set downe some other methode after his forme for interpretation of that booke of the Apocalyps, which may not contradict no part of the Text, nor containe no absurdities.<sup>6</sup>

Via the wholesale importation of a large section of the king's text into their own works, the French Protestant scholar and his English translator indulged its claim to incontrovertibility. The Catholic author of 'Balaam's Asse' did not follow suit. Extant accounts state that the book left on the threshold of the chapel at Whitehall was couched explicitly as a refutation of the 'Monitory Preface'.<sup>7</sup> Its identification of James and his kingdom, rather than the pope and Rome, as Antichrist and Babylon 'retorted diuers of those sayings which are vsed by the Protestant writers against the Pope and Church of Rome against the King's Majesty of England'.<sup>8</sup>

'Balaam's Asse' challenged the king's assumed interpretative hegemony over the Apocalypse. It laid claim to divine endorsement through its title, which recalled the biblical episode where the ass ridden by Balaam receives the power of speech from God so that she might rebuke her terrene master for persecuting her (Numbers 22.28-30). This prosopopoeia also yoked one of the topoi of Protestant propaganda to a Catholic agenda. Since the Reformation, hybrid creatures with asinine features had

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre du Moulin, *The Accomplishment of the Prophecies*, trans. by John Heath (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1613), sig. Gg8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> King James VI and I, *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Robert Barker, 1609), sig. O4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/165, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; AAW, MS A XII, Item 152: 'Robert Clapham' (Richard Broughton) to 'George West' (Thomas More), 24 August 1613, fol. 341<sup>r</sup>. This letter is referenced in *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, ed. by Michael Questier, Camden Fifth Series, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 228n.

<sup>8</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/128, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

served in anti-papal polemic as analogues for an allegedly monstrous Catholic Church, a spiritual body egregiously endowed with a corporeal head in the form of the pope.<sup>9</sup> With his choice of mouthpiece, the author of this rejoinder to the ‘Monitory Preface’ embraced the asininity traditionally ascribed to Catholics in the invectives of their confessional opponents. Like his antagonistic deployment of the Book of Revelation, that ‘arsenal for all Protestants against Rome’, his appropriation of this motif from the pages of anti-papal propaganda exposed the rhetorical artificiality of Protestant discourse through a practical demonstration of the semantic pliability of its commonplaces.<sup>10</sup>

In late May 1613 Benjamin Norton, a secular priest from Midhurst in Sussex, wrote to Thomas More, alias George West, one of the agents of the English archpriest George Birkhead in Rome. He informed his correspondent of a search conducted by justices of the peace at the Hampshire home of John Cotton, a Jesuit sympathiser, during rogation week. After their discovery and confiscation of Catholic ‘bookes & churchestuffe’ kept by Cotton at his house in Soberton, the investigators had extended their search to a room set aside for his use at the Warblington residence of his brother George where, according to Norton, they had found various relics including a bone labelled ‘Digby’. Protestant gossips confidently asserted that the bone came from the skeleton of the Gunpowder traitor Everard Digby, reported Norton, and Samuel Harsnett had been heard to inveigh against Cotton from the pulpit at Chichester. Certain Catholics, he noted, meanwhile propounded the alternative thesis that the

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<sup>9</sup> See Philipp Melanchthon, *Of Two VVonderful Popish Monsters*, trans. by John Brooke ([London]: [Thomas East], [1579]), sig. B1<sup>v</sup>; John Barthlet, *The Pedegrewe of Heretiques* (London: Henry Denham for Lucas Harryson, 1566), sig. Y1<sup>v</sup>; Robert Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambledon, 1987), p. 284; Kurt Schreyer, ‘Balaam to Bottom: Artifact and Theatrical Translation in the Sixteenth Century’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 42 (2012), 421-60 (p. 429).

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Sharpe, ‘Reading Revelations: Prophecy, Hermeneutics and Politics in Early Modern Britain’, in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 122-63 (p. 137).

relic was that of another Digby, an obscure priest.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the month of June, Norton keenly followed the news about John Cotton as it developed. By the end of the month, he had learned of the reason this Hampshire recusant was under investigation. In a later communication to More, dated 30 June, Norton reported that Cotton was the suspected author of a libel.<sup>12</sup> This ‘libel’ was ‘Balaam’s Asse’.

John Cotton had been mysteriously absent from home when the investigators had arrived with a search warrant. On 11 June a royal proclamation that called for his arrest was published. This proclamation described Cotton as a fugitive from justice who stood accused of ‘very strange and execrable high treasons’ and offered a reward of a thousand crowns for his capture. The document claimed that Cotton had evaded arrest after ‘some priuie intelligence’ had warned him that he was wanted for questioning. It stated that if Cotton failed to surrender himself forthwith, the king would have ‘iust cause to conclude him guiltie’.<sup>13</sup> Extant newsletters from late June 1613 reveal that Cotton turned himself in on the day the proclamation appeared. John Chamberlain wrote from London to Dudley Carleton, stationed in Venice, on 23 June to inform the latter that Cotton had been ‘proclaimed for execrable treason’ and had ‘com[e] in upon the summons’.<sup>14</sup> An epistle sent to William Trumbull by Sir John Throckmorton reported that Cotton ‘came in of himself’ after the proclamation was published; that he was ‘said to have written a most detestable book’; and that a chest in his study had been found to contain relics of Gunpowder plotters including Everard

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<sup>11</sup> AAW, MS A XII, Item 119, fols 263<sup>v</sup>-64<sup>r</sup>: Benjamin Norton to ‘George West’ (Thomas More), 31 May 1613; edited by Michael Questier in *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, pp. 227-28; referenced in Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 306.

<sup>12</sup> AAW, MS A XII, Item 118: Norton to ‘George West’ (Thomas More), 30 June 1613, fol. 261<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> King James VI and I, *A Proclamation for the Search and Apprehension of Iohn Cotton Esquire* (London: Robert Barker, 1613).

<sup>14</sup> John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. by Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), I, p. 461.

Digby and Robert Catesby.<sup>15</sup> In a letter to his erstwhile pupil Sir Thomas Puckering, Thomas Lorkin stated that Cotton had surrendered himself to the authorities directly in response to news of the proclamation against him, which he had heard from the Thames watermen as he crossed the river in disguise. Lorkin described Cotton as the alleged author of ‘a very scandalous and rayling booke against his Maiestie’.<sup>16</sup>

A later communication sent by Lorkin to Puckering, dated 30 June 1613, is well known as one of the few extant contemporary accounts of the fire that destroyed the Globe Theatre during a performance of Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *King Henry VIII* on 29 June. This letter opened not with news of that conflagration but with a report on the progress of the case against John Cotton, which critics have consistently overlooked in their concentration on the now more famous event described by Lorkin to his former charge. Alarmed by rumours that the developing friendship between Puckering and the Catholic Lord Roos would result in the conversion of the former to the Church of Rome, Lorkin was careful to insist that the imputed crimes of the alleged writer of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ were rendered ‘more odious’ by his ownership of superstitious paraphernalia: ‘Digbyes finger, Percies toe, some other part ether of Catesby or Rookewood (whether I well remember not)’ and a rib of the Elizabethan Catholic martyr Mark Barkworth, alias Peter Lambert.<sup>17</sup> In a letter that likewise mentioned the fire at the Globe, Chamberlain reported to Ralph Winwood on 8 July that he had heard of ‘nothing yet don or saide to that Cotton that was proclaimed’.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sir John Throckmorton to William Trumbull, 21 June 1613, in *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire, Preserved at Easthampstead Park, Berks*, ed. by E. K. Purnell, A. B. Hinds, G. Dyfnallt Owen, and Sonia P. Anderson, 6 vols (London: H. M. S. O., 1924-95), IV (1940), p. 152; referenced by Mark Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 270<sup>v</sup>: Thomas Lorkin to Thomas Puckering, [date unknown].

<sup>17</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 268<sup>r</sup>: Thomas Lorkin to Thomas Puckering, 30 June 1613; John Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad, 1604-1667: Their Influence in English Society and Politics*, rev. edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 33-34.

<sup>18</sup> Chamberlain, *Letters*, I, p. 466.

In common with Throckmorton and Lorkin, Cotton's co-religionist Norton opposed the veneration of the powder plotters as martyrs at a time when 'the sence of gunpowder' was still 'soe stronge in many mens noses'.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to those other newsletter-writers, however, he was inclined to disbelieve rumours that Cotton owned relics of these Jacobean traitors. By the time Norton wrote to More on 30 June with news that Cotton was the alleged author of a libel, a rival account of the rib found in his relic collection was in circulation. Norton endorsed this account, which held that the rib came not from the quartered body of Digby but from the corpse of John Rigby, the Elizabethan martyr.<sup>20</sup> By late August 1613, when More received a newsletter from another secular priest, Richard Broughton (alias Robert Clapham), popular report held Cotton innocent of the composition of 'Balaam's Asse'.<sup>21</sup> All of the extant letters just discussed indicate that very little specific information leaked to the rumourmongers about the contents of this controversial reply to the king's 'Monitory Preface' in 1613. Unable to provide quotations from the treatise attributed to Cotton, letter-writers concentrated their descriptive and analytical efforts on his alleged hoard of relics.

After it was discovered at Whitehall on 28 April 1613, 'Balaam's Asse' was sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, to be examined. When its suspected author gave himself up to the authorities on 11 June he, too, was conveyed to the archiepiscopal residence at Lambeth for examination. The records of the enquiries Abbot made concerning Cotton's case are preserved in 8ANC7, a volume of the Ancaster manuscripts in Lincolnshire Archives. These records show that the Archbishop interrogated Cotton for the first time on 14 June. According to the report on his first examination, Cotton denied that his incriminating flight from his Soberton

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<sup>19</sup> AAW, MS A XII, Item 119, fol. 264<sup>r</sup>; *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> AAW, MS A XII, Item 118, fol. 261<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> AAW, MS A XII, Item 152, fol. 341<sup>r</sup>.

house shortly before the search by the justices of the peace on 11 May proved him a traitor. He had fled, he claimed, because he believed ‘that pursuite was made after him for his religion’ and because he feared that he might be compelled to swear the oath of allegiance if captured. As soon as he had learned of the proclamation that labelled him a suspect in a treason case, Cotton insisted, he had turned himself in.<sup>22</sup>

Any subject who persistently refused to pledge allegiance to King James when required to do so could expect to suffer ‘the penalties of praemunire – loss of goods, and imprisonment at the king’s pleasure.’<sup>23</sup> A letter seized from among Cotton’s papers during the search at his house proved that he had solicited the opinion of the Jesuit Francis Young on whether he might swear the oath and avoid these sanctions without compromise to his conscience. This letter, written by Young in reply to Cotton’s request for advice, is preserved in the Ancaster volume. It insists that the terms of the oath seek to exact not only temporal allegiance to the king but also spiritual allegiance to the Church of which he is styled Supreme Governor. It warns Cotton that his submission to the oath would be tantamount to a betrayal of his spiritual obligations to the Church of Rome.<sup>24</sup> George Abbot did not accept the missive from Young as corroboration of Cotton’s account of the motive behind his flight. The Archbishop instead made a note to the effect that Cotton’s correspondence with the disreputable Young and his hesitation to pledge his loyalty to King James only increased the likelihood that he was the author of the disputatious rejoinder to the preface to *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/126, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. Partial transcripts of Abbot’s records are available in *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Ancaster, Preserved at Grimsthorpe*, ed. by S. C. Lomas (Dublin: H. M. S. O., 1907).

<sup>23</sup> Johann P. Sommerville, ‘Papalist Political Thought and the Controversy over the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance’, in *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. by Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 162-84 (p. 163).

<sup>24</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/112: Francis Young to John Cotton, 1 June 1612, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/163, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

Cotton was required in his first examination at Lambeth to account not only for his absence from his Soberton home at the time of the search but also for the discoveries made by the justices of the peace. He testified that he owned relics of several Elizabethan, but no Jacobean, martyrs. The rib with the doubtful inscription had come, he claimed, not from the corpse of Everard Digby but from that of John Rigby, executed under Elizabeth.<sup>26</sup> As seen above, this detail from Cotton's testimony reached Norton in West Sussex by 30 June. If it also reached Thomas Lorkin in London by the same date, he chose not to mention it in his letter to Puckering. The damning account of Cotton supplied by Lorkin was perhaps calculated to persuade Puckering to abandon his rumoured plans to convert to Catholicism.

By 5 July, Abbot had examined Cotton four times at Lambeth. He believed him guilty but had failed to extract a confession. On that date, by order of the king, he delivered the suspect over to Henry Hobart and Francis Bacon, Attorney General and Solicitor General respectively, for further interrogation at the Tower of London. Transcripts of documents that concerned the administration of Cotton's removal to the Tower are preserved in the Privy Council Register for 1613-14. These transcripts include a missive from the Council to the keeper of the Gatehouse prison, dated 5 July, which gave orders for the conveyance of Cotton 'vnder safe Custody' into the hands of Gervase Helwys, lieutenant of the Tower.<sup>27</sup> Present on the same page is a copy of a letter sent by the Council to Helwys to prepare him for the transfer.<sup>28</sup> Also included in the Register is a transcript of a letter written to Bacon and Hobart by Abbot, who thus consigned the investigation to the Attorney and Solicitor General and informed them of the king's desire 'that all due meanes be vsed for the fynding

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<sup>26</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/126, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, PC 2/27, fol. 37<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., fol. 37<sup>r</sup>.

out of the author of soe odious and detestable a worke' as 'Balaam's Asse'.<sup>29</sup> Records of statements taken by Hobart, Bacon, and their colleagues from Cotton and from witnesses in his case survive in the Ancaster volume in Lincolnshire Archives.<sup>30</sup>

Bacon was promoted to the office of Attorney General on 27 October 1613, midway through the investigation. Henry Yelverton succeeded him as Solicitor General. On 22 January 1614, Bacon, Yelverton, and Henry Montagu (Recorder of London) wrote to the king to express their shared opinion on Cotton's case. They deemed it both 'possible' and 'probable' that Cotton was guilty, and they labelled him a 'dangerous man'. Their letter recommended the continued detention of the suspect in the Tower but advised James against a prosecution for treason. A dearth of 'convicting proofs that may satisfy a jury of life and death', they suggested, might acquit the defendant and embarrass the king if the case were to be brought 'upon the stage' in a state trial where the public performance of monarchical unimpeachability was at stake.<sup>31</sup> The Privy Council proceedings show that Cotton remained a prisoner in the Tower, in accordance with the advice of Bacon and his colleagues, for five years. In March 1618, he prevailed upon the king to consent to his removal to Soberton and to give orders for his confinement there under house arrest.<sup>32</sup> One of Cotton's brothers, Richard, and Sir Anthony Hungerford agreed to act as his sureties. Each paid a thousand pounds as a guarantee that the prisoner would be permitted neither to venture beyond the orchard attached to his house nor to receive more than three recusants into his company at any one time.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, PC 2/27, fol. 37<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MSS 8ANC7/146-53, 158, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Bacon, Henry Montagu, and Henry Yelverton to the king, 22 January 1613-14, in *The Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England*, ed. by Basil Montagu, 16 vols (London: William Pickering, 1825-34), xii (1830), pp. 469-70.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, PC 2/29, fol. 336<sup>v</sup>: 'A letter to Sir Allen Apsley Knight Leiuetenant of the Tower'.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, PC 2/29, fol. 291<sup>r</sup>: 'At the Court at Whitehall on Sondag in the forenoone the first of March 1617 [1618]'.

John Cotton was still a prisoner in his Hampshire home when, in March 1619, news broke that the author of 'Balaam's Asse' had been arrested in London. Thomas Lorkin, who had deemed Cotton guilty and labelled him 'odious' in 1613, wrote to tell Puckering of the circumstances under which his innocence had now at last become manifest. The author of the offending treatise had been captured a few days since quite by chance, Lorkin claimed, when a 'hungry Pursuyuant' watching the door to the Spanish embassy had seen a man leave the building and, in the belief that he was a priest, had followed him in hope of financial gain.<sup>34</sup> (The typical reward for the capture of a recusant was a third of his or her confiscated property.<sup>35</sup>) Having followed his prey to an inn, Lorkin reported, the pursuivant had confronted him with the accusation that he was a priest. The cornered man had refuted this charge with the claim that he was a husband and father. A struggle had ensued in which the man had resisted the attempts of his assailant to search his person for incriminating 'letters or writings or bookes'. The pursuivant had eventually overpowered his victim and made an unexpected discovery: the pocket of his captive contained a copy of 'Balaam's Asse' that featured 'new annotations'.<sup>36</sup> Thus John Williams, a former lawyer and a recusant, was finally unmasked as the author of the apocalyptic treatise that had graced the doorstep of the chapel at Whitehall six years previously.

The Privy Council Register reveals that in May 1619, when the indictment of John Williams for treason made the news, Cotton requested the release of his sureties from their bonds and appealed for the restoration of his own liberty after years of wrongful imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> When the official decision had been taken not to place the case of Cotton 'upon the stage' in 1613-14, the seepage of information about the

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<sup>34</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 452<sup>r</sup>: Thomas Lorkin to Thomas Puckering, 16 March 1619.

<sup>35</sup> Clarence J. Ryan, 'The Jacobean Oath of Allegiance and English Lay Catholics', *Catholic Historical Review*, 28 (1942), 159-83 (p. 182).

<sup>36</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 452<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, PC 2/30, fol. 197<sup>r</sup>: 'At the Courte at Greenewich the 23 of May 1619'.

contents of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ into the popular consciousness had been prevented. At the time of Williams’s public trial in 1619, by contrast, details from his treatise found their way into manuscript miscellanies. Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetry 26, a verse and prose miscellany compiled over the estimated period 1615-1660, contains a page of text written at the time of Williams’s arraignment, summarising the contents of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ and featuring extracts from the treatise.<sup>38</sup> MS K.56, an unbound collection of historical papers and political poems (c.1574-1641) in St John’s College, Cambridge, also contains a record of Williams’s trial from 1619. This record likewise quotes and paraphrases ‘Balaam’s Asse’.<sup>39</sup> Details from the apocalyptic treatise are also reproduced in: a four-page account of ‘Iohn Williams his arraignment at the Kings Bench in Easter tearme 1619’, originally owned by the Puritan John Gell of Hopton Hall and preserved in Derbyshire Record Office;<sup>40</sup> and a five-page report from the 1619 Middlesex assizes, kept at Essex Record Office.<sup>41</sup> The substance of Williams’s now-lost text can be partly recovered via the close analysis both of these contemporary accounts of his court case and of the notes made by Abbot when the manuscript of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ was in his possession in 1613. These materials furnish insights into the attitudes and rhetorical methods of Williams and an opportunity to excavate the foundations of the treason case constructed against him by the state.

‘Balaam’s Asse’, conceived specifically to antagonise the biblical exegeses propounded in the ‘Monitory Preface’, alleged that King James had therein falsely identified the pope as the Antichrist of the Book of Revelation and that the Stuart monarch was himself ‘Antichrist in person’.<sup>42</sup> Daniel Fischlin is surely right to assert

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<sup>38</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Cambridge, St John’s College, MS K.56, Item 8.

<sup>40</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71.

<sup>41</sup> ERO, MS D/DAC 66; referenced by David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

that the polemical opponent of the king exposed ‘the arbitrariness of interpretive positionings, the ease with which apparently secure exegeses could be overturned and deconstructed’ in order to deflate the professions of irrefutability made by James’s tendentious scriptural commentary.<sup>43</sup> Reliant on a secondary source as opposed to original documents, however, Fischlin perpetuates a misattribution of the combative apocalyptic treatise to John Cotton.<sup>44</sup> Scholars who are aware that news about a book entitled ‘Balaam’s Asse’ circulated in both 1613 and 1619 have hesitated to state definitively that the same book was at issue each time.<sup>45</sup> This hesitancy is the result of unfamiliarity with the full range of relevant surviving documents. The study of Abbot’s notes from 1613 in conjunction with the various extant manuscript accounts of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ from 1619 reveals several shared references. For example, reports that ‘Balaam’s Asse’ mentioned three natural disasters that had afflicted England in the years immediately following the accession of King James feature in the files of Archbishop Abbot; the St John’s manuscript; and the document in Derbyshire Record Office. These disasters were named as plague, frost, and flood.<sup>46</sup> They can be identified as the plague that had struck London in 1603; the frost that had caused the Thames to solidify in 1608; and the flooding of the Severn River, which had caused a significant loss of both livestock and human life in January 1607.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel Fischlin, “‘To Eate the Flesh of Kings’: James VI and I, Apocalypse, Nation, and Sovereignty”, in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. by Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), pp. 388-420 (p. 402).

<sup>44</sup> See Bernard Capp, ‘The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic Thought’, in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions*, ed. by C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 93-124 (p. 103).

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g. David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 208n.

<sup>46</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g. Dekker, *1603: The Wonderfull Yeare*; Joseph P. Ward, ‘The Taming of the Thames: Reading the River in the Seventeenth Century’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008), 55-75 (p. 60); *1607: Lamentable Newes out of Monmouthshire in Wales* (London: [Edward Allde], [1607]).

Pamphlet literature on the union of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603 had celebrated King James as a ‘second *Brute*’, the restorer of the legendary ancient kingdom supposedly founded by the Trojan refugee.<sup>48</sup> A decade later, according to Abbot’s notes, such propagandist praises of Britishness were punningly subverted by the author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’, who described Jacobean Britain as a locus of ‘brutishness’ and as ‘the seat of Antichrist’.<sup>49</sup> This phrase, ‘the seat of Antichrist’, appears also in an account from 1619.<sup>50</sup> Abbot and the later commentators alike remarked that Britain was compared to Babylon in ‘Balaam’s Asse’.<sup>51</sup>

Abbot recorded the presence of a jocular reference to St Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*) in the treatise. According to the Archbishop’s notes, the author had suggested that Augustine ‘mought as well make a book *de Ciuitate diabolorum*’ (*‘City of Devils’*) with Britain as its subject.<sup>52</sup> The St John’s manuscript similarly records that ‘Balaam’s Asse’ described Britain as ‘the habitation of damned spirittes’. This same manuscript also cites a legal witticism allegedly included by Williams, a former barrister, in his apocalyptic commentary. The joke apparently told how the nation, damned by the Protestant Reformation, had forfeited the right to bring to trial its ruler, Satan, who had enjoyed ‘quiet possession of his land for these 60 yeares, and aboue, soe that he [was] oute of the statutes of limitation’.<sup>53</sup> In this joke, Reformed religion in general and the Protestant King James in particular were derided as satanic. Three of the extant accounts from 1619 allude to another passage in ‘Balaam’s Asse’ that obliquely identified James as Satan. The treatise prophesied, they claim, that the king would soon be unable any longer to ignore the parallels

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<sup>48</sup> See, e.g. Harbert, *A Prophecie of Cadwallader*, sig. G4<sup>v</sup>; Munday, *Triumphes*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>f</sup>; St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

between his realm and both the abomination of desolation in Daniel (11.31; 12.11) and the great city of Babylon in the Revelation (Chapters 14-18). So plain would the applicability of these scriptural metaphors to Jacobean Britain prove ‘that noe man shall be able noe not the Deuill himselfe with any shadowe of Reason to wrest [them] by interpretation to any other place’.<sup>54</sup> The diabolic polemical adversary thus described is easily identified as a thinly veiled figure for the king, whose ‘Monitory Preface’ had staked a strong claim to exegetical supremacy over the passages of Revelation concerning Babylon and the Antichrist, which ‘Balaam’s Asse’ set out to dispute. James had accused Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, one of his antagonists in the oath of allegiance controversy, of ‘shamelesse wresting [...] of Scripture’.<sup>55</sup> ‘Balaam’s Asse’ turned this charge against James, the ‘Deuill’ whose *Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* ‘rest[ed] at the fundamentall points of the catholique faith’.<sup>56</sup>

Extant records concerning ‘Balaam’s Asse’ from both 1613 and 1619 state that the treatise described the horses of Revelation, Chapter Six, as types of English kings and princes. Abbot remarked that the white horse and red horse were identified as symbols for William the Conqueror and William Rufus respectively.<sup>57</sup> The later documents note additionally that Edward the Black Prince was suggested as a historical referent for the black horse and King James as a contemporary referent for the pale horse. A derisory allusion to recent events might have been intended in the identification of the Black Prince as the predecessor of the pale horse. King James, represented as the pale horse, had suffered the premature death of his son and heir Henry in November 1612, some six months prior to the appearance of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ at Whitehall. As the author of that treatise perhaps recalled, elegists had

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<sup>54</sup> ERO, MS D/DAC 66, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>. The same statement is referenced, with slightly different phrasing, in St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> King James VI and I, *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (1609), sig. O4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

compared Henry to the Black Prince, another Prince of Wales who had not lived long enough to become King of England.<sup>58</sup> The records of the contents of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ from 1619 tell how the author prognosticated the death of James and the ruination of his kingdom with the following formula, adapted from Ovid’s *Amores*: ‘*O lente lente, currite mortis equi!* – Run o yee iades of death: I see the pale horse out of breath.’<sup>59</sup>

Whereas the ‘Monitory Preface’ had named Christ as the triumphant rider of the white horse and had associated the pale horse with the Antichrist in accordance with Protestant propagandist tradition, James’s exegetical adversary portrayed the first and fourth horses not as opposites but as analogous ‘foreign hunters’.<sup>60</sup> According to the text in the St John’s manuscript, ‘Balaam’s Asse’ declared:

That William Conqueror was *peregrinus venator*, and that *in peregrino venatore tempora haec incipiunt, deficient in peregrino venatore* (meaninge the kinge).

That we are the confused Babell, the sinn-sicke state, the great Cittie walled with the sea.<sup>61</sup>

The Catholic apocalyptic treatise allegedly asserted that the present ‘sinn-sicke’ age had been ushered in by a foreign hunter (*‘peregrinus venator’*), the eleventh-century Norman Conqueror of England, and that it would end in the reign of the current Scottish king of England, a second foreign hunter. This Scotophobic passage might be interpreted as a proffered criticism of King James’s perceived absolutist sympathies. In *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies*, written five years before his English accession, James had used the reign of the Conqueror, who famously ‘gave the law and took

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<sup>58</sup> See Jerry Wayne Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Prince Henry Stuart: A Study of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), p. 181.

<sup>59</sup> Ovid, *Amores: Book One*, trans. by John Barsby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), XIII. 40; Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>. See also St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> King James VI and I, *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (1609), sigs L4<sup>v</sup>-M1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. The Latin phrase beginning ‘*in peregrino venatore...*’ translates as ‘these times begin with a foreign hunter and will end with a foreign hunter’.

none', as a rhetorical prop to his contention that 'the King is above the law'.<sup>62</sup> Records of the arbitrary government of William I troubled early seventeenth-century English common lawyers who wished to neutralise the threat posed to the venerable concept of the ancient constitution by the documented legal opinions of their Scottish king. William's reputation constituted a significant obstacle to their project to prove that the law in England was not and never had been subject to the royal will.<sup>63</sup> If the unbridled Conqueror represented a pernicious precursor to the regnant Stuart king in the eyes of the lawyers, James found in the reputation of William a workable precedent for his own theory of the relationship of the monarch to the law. 'Balaam's Asse', written by a former barrister, maligned William and James as parallel, nation-destroying *peregrinos venatores*. It thus sided with the common lawyers against King James, their rival legal exegete.

The writer of 'Balaam's Asse' offered in his exposition of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse both a refutation of James's commentary on the same scriptural passage in the preface to the *Apologie* and a challenge to the interpretations of the law propounded in other works by the Stuart sovereign. His gloss on the two witnesses of Revelation, Chapter Eleven, contested another exegetical argument of the 'Monitory Preface'. After the example of sixteenth-century Protestant commentators, James had disparaged 'the generall conceit of the Papists' that biblical prophecies of the resurrection of Enoch and Elijah (Ecclesiasticus 44.16 and Malachi 4.5 respectively)

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<sup>62</sup> King James VI, *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1598), sigs C8<sup>r</sup>, D1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 83; Pauline Croft, 'Sir John Doddridge, King James I, and the Antiquity of Parliament', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 12 (1992), 95-107 (p. 101); Janelle Greenberg, *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St Edward's 'Laws' in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 29. N.B. Johann P. Sommerville has challenged such scholarly portrayals of Jacobean common lawyers as reluctant to accept the fact of the Norman Conquest. See Sommerville, 'The Ancient Constitution Reassessed: The Common Law, the Court and the Languages of Politics in Early Modern England', in *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture*, ed. by R. Malcolm Smuts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 39-64 (p. 52).

would be fulfilled in their return to earth as the two witnesses.<sup>64</sup> In defence of this Catholic hermeneutic tradition, page twelve of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ asserted: ‘Henoeh and Elias shall personally come’.<sup>65</sup>

In common with the section on the four horsemen, a passage in ‘Balaam’s Asse’ that treated the biblical prophecies of a time, times, and half a time combined partisan scriptural exegesis with a tendentious reading of English history. The author described Henry VIII and the three Reformed monarchs to follow him onto the English throne as harbingers of apocalypse in some verses couched in the Sibyllic prophetic mode. These verses forecasted the demise of the Protestant state thus:

These put together, thus they crye:  
Alas, ’twas H. E. E. the fourth was I.  
Fowre letters doe the persons show,  
The place, the tyme, and tymes of wooe.  
H. Which letter shewes halfe tymes defection.  
E. Which brought the church to lay-protection.  
E. Which brought t’ a woman lay-subiection.  
I. Which shewes sin’s ripe and at perfection.  
These 4 letters shew the fall,  
Of them and of theyr Generall.<sup>66</sup>

In the St John’s manuscript, the word ‘Generall’ in the final line of the poem is glossed as ‘*Antichrist* meaning the kinge’.<sup>67</sup> The report on Williams’s trial preserved at Derbyshire Record Office states that the verses were ‘shewed and read in the court’ to conclude the case for the prosecution.<sup>68</sup> Predicting the downfall of the nation headed by the Protestant Antichrist in the person of King James (I), the Catholic

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<sup>64</sup> King James VI and I, *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (1609), sig. 11<sup>v</sup>. See Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation*, Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics, 8 (Appleford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), pp. 186-87; Alexandra Walsham, “‘Frantick Hacket’: Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement”, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 27-66 (p. 46).

<sup>65</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>; also quoted, with very slight variations, in St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

author of 'Balaam's Asse' also deplored the abuses supposedly perpetrated by the monarch's heretical predecessors: Henry VIII (H); Edward VI (E); and Elizabeth I (E). The references to 'the tyme, and tymes of woove' and 'half tymes defection' in lines four and five identified this opprobrious poetic commentary on post-Reformation English history as an attack besides on conventional Protestant readings of the prophecy of time, times, and a half in the Book of Daniel (7.25 and 12.7) and the Revelation (12.14). According to Reformed exegetes, this biblical prophecy referred to the 1260-year reign of the papal Antichrist. Reinterpreted in 'Balaam's Asse', it became instead a prediction of the abominable reign of Protestantism in England and its cessation with the demise of the Antichristian King James.

The Sibyllic verse-prophecy demonstrated the subversive wit of the writer of 'Balaam's Asse'. When treated as a word rather than a series of initials, H, E, E, and I would produce a sound like a bray. They would thus evoke God's asinine mouthpiece in the Book of Numbers, from which the treatise took its name. The allusive title, 'Balaam's Asse', worked to suggest that the dissident text to which it was applied was simultaneously a divinely-endorsed, authoritative exposition of Scripture and the meaningless, inarticulate utterance of an ignorant and motiveless animal. The 'HEEI' prophecy embodied a similar calculated and playful contradiction. It was equivocally presented as both an audacious invective against the Protestant state and a bestial, therefore seemingly naïve and apolitical, bray.

Abbot apparently perceived an oblique threat to the safety of King James in a mention of François Ravailac, the Catholic assassin of the French king Henri IV, about halfway through the manuscript of 'Balaam's Asse', on page forty-three. The word 'Rauillaque' appears under the heading 'Treasonable passages' in the notes of the Archbishop. Perhaps the passage of 'Balaam's Asse' to which it refers threatened

the emulation of Ravaillac's rebellious act in England by an aggrieved Catholic subject of King James. According to Abbot, the phrase 'not præserued but reserued' appeared on the same page of the tract as the mention of 'Rauillaque'.<sup>69</sup> All four accounts from 1619 indicate that the author of 'Balaam's Asse' used this phrase in a particularly contentious reading of very recent history that thus addressed the king:

You haue escaped manie daungers, but why or wherefore yf your conscience can tell you it is well; but yf it cannot [...] you must needes feare that you were reserued for vengeance not preserued for glorie.<sup>70</sup>

Several conspiracies to topple the government of the Stuart king had been hatched and thwarted in the early years of his reign in England: the Bye and Main Plots in 1603 and the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. 'Balaam's Asse' apparently advised James to interpret his deliverance from such attempted rebellions not as evidence that he was under divine protection but as a sign that a worse fate awaited him. In the years that immediately followed the discovery of the powder treason on 5 November 1605, the Protestant state had moved decisively to determine the significance attributed to that date in the popular consciousness. It had quickly become traditional to ring bells and light bonfires every 5 November in order to commemorate the salvation of the king and parliament from a treasonable design and to re-assert the status of Protestantism as the official national religion.<sup>71</sup> In its claim that James had been preserved from harm so that he might suffer in the future, 'Balaam's Asse' antagonised such ritual reiterations of the authorised meaning of that notorious date.

On Friday 5 November 1613, the assumed interpretative hegemony of the state over the Gunpowder Plot anniversary was further challenged when a sequel to

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<sup>69</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> St John's, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. See also Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>; DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; ERO, MS D/DAc 66, fol. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 57.

'Balaam's Asse' appeared at Whitehall. Found on a stair outside a vestibule to the presence chamber was an apple whose core had been removed and replaced with a Latin text written on two multiply folded sheets of paper. This text, a letter addressed to James, purported to be the work of the author of 'Balaam's Asse'. It pleaded the innocence of Cotton, who, it declared, was most unjustly punished in prison (*'inquissime plectitur Cottonus ergastulo'*). It also appealed for the expeditious release of Cotton and his fellow inmate of the Tower, the Jesuit William Baldwin (*'per horum festinas libertates te obsecro'*).<sup>72</sup> Like 'Balaam's Asse', the letter was sent to Archbishop Abbot to be examined. It survives among the documents that pertain to Cotton's case in the Ancaster volume. The letter bears remnants of the wax used to seal it and some deep stains along certain of its folds, consistent with the idea of contact with the moist flesh of an apple (see Figure 1). Abbot had the document endorsed thus: 'The letter found in the Apple. Novemb. 5. 1613.'<sup>73</sup> A page of notes by the Archbishop is included in the volume immediately after the letter. These notes reveal that Abbot persisted with his attribution of 'Balaam's Asse' to John Cotton after the discovery of the missive in the apple and also regarded the suspect in the Tower as the likely author of the latter text. The Archbishop reasoned that Cotton's incarceration and consequent reliance on an emissary accounted for the interval between the delivery of 'Balaam's Asse' to Whitehall in April and that of its sequel in November.<sup>74</sup> This account obfuscated the possibility that the date on which the letter was left at the palace was a calculated extra-textual constituent of its meaning. Delivered on 5 November amid the ritual commemorative celebrations of the rescue of the Protestant government from gunpowder, this epistle was perhaps conceived by

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<sup>72</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/154, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. ('I beg you for their hasty release.')

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/155, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

its Catholic author as an apple of discord to trouble the propagandist appropriation of that anniversary by the state.

In an effort to confirm his suspicions that Cotton himself was the author of the petition for his release from prison, Abbot interviewed Gervase Helwys, lieutenant of the Tower of London, and his servant John Williamson. Helwys told him that Cotton had been supplied with apples to sweeten his wine.<sup>75</sup> Williamson admitted that the prisoner had been granted a modest stock of writing materials.<sup>76</sup> In late November, Abbot examined George Cotton. He suspected that George, a monthly visitor to the Tower, had delivered the letter in the apple to court at the request of his brother.<sup>77</sup> When Francis Bacon interviewed this same witness on 13 January 1614, he asked whether George had been in the vicinity of Whitehall on 5 November. The brother of the prisoner in the Tower insisted that he had remained at home on that date and had observed the bonfires in the streets from his window.<sup>78</sup> A week after this statement was taken, Bacon and his colleagues wrote to the king to express their opinion that John Cotton was probably the author of both ‘Balaam’s Asse’ and ‘the letter in the gilt apple’ and that he should remain in prison and not be tried.<sup>79</sup> Abbot’s notes reveal that he too continued to attribute the Latin petition to John Cotton after his brother denied any involvement in its delivery.<sup>80</sup>

The writer of the text in the apple claimed authorship of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ and recalled some of the arguments advanced ‘*in libro illo meo Balaamitico*’ (‘in that Balaamitical book of mine’). In a reference to the ‘HEEI’ prophecy, he remarked ‘*quod cum singula haec tempus, et tempora, et dimidium temporis, ad personas*

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<sup>75</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/164, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/159, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/156, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/160, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Bacon, *Works*, XII, p. 470.

<sup>80</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/164, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

*singulas, et distinctas referantur, quod ex numero hoc necessario excluduntur interuenientes Philippus et Maria*’ (‘that by each of these – “time”, and “times”, and “half a time” – particular people are represented, and that from this sequence the intervening Philip and Mary are necessarily excluded’).<sup>81</sup> The confessional allegiance of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ was thus said to have dictated the omission of the initials of the Catholic Mary I and Philip of Spain from its Sibyllic verse-prophecy, which depicted a series of Reforming and Reformed English heads of state starting with Henry VIII as harbingers of apocalypse. Each time he evoked an argument from ‘Balaam’s Asse’, the letter-writer defended its legality and asked on what grounds the king and Privy Council had deemed it treason: ‘*quaenam est haec proditio?*’<sup>82</sup> His denial of treasonable intent emphasised the unpublished state of the treatise, addressed ‘*non populo nouarum auido, sed tibi soli Regi meo*’ (‘not to the commonalty, greedy for news, but to you alone, my king’).<sup>83</sup> In his précis of ‘Balaam’s Asse’, compiled some months before the letter in the apple arrived at court, Abbot noted that the treatise itself claimed ‘that no person lyuing was made acquainted’ with its contents.<sup>84</sup> The Latin epistle likewise emphasised its own exclusivity. Its address identified the king as its sole intended recipient thus: ‘*Male homini succedat qui audet has letteras Iacobo Rego inconsulto aperire*’ (‘Let evil befall the person who dares to open these letters without the permission of King James’).<sup>85</sup> This warning about the dire consequences of curiosity was also a punning reference to the letter’s container: the noun ‘*malus*’ (here rendered in the vocative, ‘*male*’) means both ‘evil’ and ‘apple’.

Further proof of an authorial penchant for linguistic play is perhaps detectable at the end of the letter. The signature, which read ‘B.A.’, identified the writer by his

<sup>81</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/154, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>. (‘How, then, is this treason?’)

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/145, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/154, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

‘Balaam’s Asse’ persona. Perhaps not coincidentally, ‘B.A.’ also inverted the formula for which swearers of the oath of allegiance were required to substitute their name:

I A.B. doe truely and sincerely acknowledge, professe, testifie, and declare in my conscience before God and the world, That our Soueraigne Lord King IAMES, is lawfull King of this Realme[.]<sup>86</sup>

The author of both the refutation of James’s *Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* and its epistolary sequel perhaps intentionally signalled his defiance of the exacting demands made of Catholics by the state through the device of overturning ‘A.B.’, the pair of letters that stood for all acquiescent Jacobean subjects. The language in which the oath was couched might also have inspired the container he fashioned for one of the written protests he delivered to court. Swearers were required to pronounce the oath ‘according to the plaine and common sense vnderstanding of the [...] words, without any Æquiucation, or mentall euasion, or secret reseruatiō whatsoever’.<sup>87</sup> This stipulation was probably inspired by the recent treason trial of Henry Garnet, a confessed confidant of the powder plotters, who had been accused of equivocation in the courtroom where he was ultimately sentenced to death.<sup>88</sup> Garnet, a Jesuit, was believed to be the author of a manuscript treatise that explained and advocated the doctrine of equivocation to Catholics whose consciences were subject to surveillance by the state. The treatise described the practice of mental reservation, whereby an individual could qualify a profession of conformity to the official religion with some unarticulated, internally held subtext that was inaccessible to the instruments of

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<sup>86</sup> The opening lines of the oath, quoted in [King James VI and I,] *Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus; or, An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* (London: Robert Barker, 1607), sigs B1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> [King James VI and I,] *Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus*, sigs B2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g. William Camden, *Actio in Henricum Garnetum* (London: John Norton, 1607), sigs O1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

governmental authority but both accessible and satisfactory to God.<sup>89</sup> Harbouring a subversive text inside its flesh and covering skin, the apple placed on a stair outside the anteroom to the presence chamber at Whitehall might be deemed to analogise the body of an outwardly conformist but inwardly resistant Catholic Jacobean subject.

The container in which the sequel to ‘Balaam’s Asse’ arrived at Whitehall contributed to the message of the text. Its eloquent materiality argues for the inclusion of that letter of 5 November in the category of libels, texts whose ‘visual dimension could be exploited’ to reinforce their meaning.<sup>90</sup> The spectacular presentation of refractory political texts was a long-established practice. It had become conventional in the fourteenth century, for example, for expressions of grievances to be affixed prominently to church doors.<sup>91</sup> ‘Balaam’s Asse’, left outside the door of the royal chapel, and the letter in the apple shared certain features in common with libels; however, they departed from this tradition of popular protest insofar as they withheld their contents from the gaze of the commonalty and presented them for the king’s eyes only. This eschewal of publication became the cornerstone of John Williams’s defence when he was tried for treason in 1619. His confession to the authorship of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ vindicated John Cotton, who had been wrongfully imprisoned in 1613 owing to various misinterpretations of evidence by the investigators in his case.

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<sup>89</sup> Bodl., MS Laud. Misc. 655, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>. A printed edition of this manuscript exists: Henry Garnet, *A Treatise of Equivocation*, ed. by David Jardine (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851).

<sup>90</sup> Adam Fox, ‘Ballads, Libel and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England’, *Past and Present*, 145 (1994), 47-83 (p. 62).

<sup>91</sup> See Wendy Scase, ‘“Strange and Wonderful Bills”: Bill-Casting and Political Discourse in Late Medieval England’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 2 (1998), 225-47 (p. 240).

## REX V. WILLIAMS; OR, THE RHETORIC OF TREASON

In criminal enquiries of the early modern period, Lorna Hutson has argued, the pre-trial examination of suspects or witnesses was a process whose goal was to determine ‘the rhetorical probability of any given narrative of the facts’ in a case.<sup>92</sup> Investigators could not hope to extract objective truth from fallible testimony; instead, their aim in the interpretation of different versions of events was to construct the likeliest possible story. The surviving records of the official researches concerning John Cotton, who in 1614 was pronounced guilty of the composition of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ but was not brought to trial, furnish a case study in the production of rhetorical probability.

A two-page summary of the case against Cotton, compiled in early 1614 by George Abbot and now preserved as MS 8ANC7/163 in Lincolnshire Archives, reveals the Archbishop’s heavy dependence on the testimony of John Copley, an ex-secular priest and former friend of the Cotton family. The motives of Copley have been doubted by Peter Lake and Michael Questier, who describe him as ‘happy to add fuel to the fire’ of suspicion against an erstwhile ally in order to strengthen his own recently-forged patronage ties to the circle of Viscount Montague, a hater of the Jesuits.<sup>93</sup> Abbot’s account of Cotton as ‘a buyer and reader of the bookes of the late Controuersies, especially touching the question of the Popes power against Princes’ was based on two separate statements by Copley.<sup>94</sup> In an interview of 28 June 1613, this principal witness testified that Cotton kept a ‘secret place’ in his house where he stored several prohibited Catholic tracts pertaining to the oath controversy, by writers such as Robert Bellarmine, Robert Persons, and Martin Becanus.<sup>95</sup> On 20 January 1614, when the Archbishop questioned him for the second time, Copley additionally

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<sup>92</sup> Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion*, p. 78.

<sup>93</sup> Lake with Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, p. 305.

<sup>94</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/163, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/133, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

claimed that the suspect owned a text of the banned book *Pruritanus*, copies of which had been publicly burned at Paul's Cross by order of the state in 1609.<sup>96</sup> *Pruritanus* was an anti-Protestant diatribe that vilified King James's Reformist and Reformed predecessors, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, with reference to passages of the Bible. It featured an appendix in which the king's *Apologie* was ridiculed via a series of questions answered with 'ludicrously mis-used texts from the Scriptures'.<sup>97</sup> Abbot perhaps deemed this text a probable influence on 'Balaam's Asse', which likewise critiqued post-Reformation English history; satirised the vagaries of biblical exegesis; and contested James's published defence of the oath of allegiance.

John Copley gave an incriminating account of Cotton's circle of acquaintance. He stated that this suspected author of 'Balaam's Asse' had known both the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion and Henry Garnet, respectively executed as traitors in 1581 and 1606.<sup>98</sup> The Archbishop made a note of these details and supplemented them with the information that Cotton had been arrested with Campion and committed to prison for six months in 1581.<sup>99</sup> A mistake made by Copley in his testimony concerning the dates of his conversations with Cotton around the time 'Balaam's Asse' appeared at Whitehall eventually came to light in an interview with Bacon and Yelverton on 20 January 1614.<sup>100</sup> As Abbot noted, the revelation of Copley's mistake proved that Cotton had told the truth when he had insisted that he and Copley had discussed

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<sup>96</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/162, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>; Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 76.

<sup>97</sup> P. R. Harris, 'The Reports of William Udall, Informer, 1605-1612', *Recusant History*, 8 (1966), 192-284 (p. 202).

<sup>98</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/133, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/163, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. See also the report on Cotton's third examination, 18 June 1613, MS 8ANC7/128, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. In George Elliot, *A Very True Report of the Apprehension and Taking of that Arche Papist Edmond Campion* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1581), sig. C4<sup>v</sup>, Cotton's name appears in a list of six Catholic 'Gentlemen' arrested with Campion in 1581 and imprisoned in the Tower.

<sup>100</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/161, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. See also Lincolnshire Archives, MSS 8ANC7/128, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; 8ANC7/133, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; 8ANC7/146, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>; 8ANC7/163, fols 1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>f</sup>.

‘Balaam’s Asse’ on 1 May, three days after its discovery at court.<sup>101</sup> Cotton’s situation did not improve after the unreliability of the key witness against him became manifest on 20 January. Two days later, on 22 January 1614, Bacon and his colleagues made their recommendation for his indefinite detention in the Tower.

Inconsistencies in Cotton’s testimony were not so lightly disregarded as those in the evidence of his accuser, Copley. In his third and fourth examinations by Abbot, on 18 and 22 June, the suspect maintained that he had not arrived in London until the evening of Wednesday 28 April, after the offending manuscript had been found at Whitehall in the morning.<sup>102</sup> Witness statements from the staff of the King’s Head tavern in Southwark, however, placed Cotton in London on the previous evening, Tuesday 27 April.<sup>103</sup> These statements supported the hypothesis that Cotton had possessed the opportunity to deliver ‘Balaam’s Asse’ to the palace. When questioned by Hobart and Bacon on 20 July, the suspect confessed that he had indeed arrived in London on the Tuesday. Cotton insisted that the inaccuracies of his earlier testimony were mistakes, not calculated deceptions. He claimed that he had left Soberton for the metropolis in April a day earlier than originally intended and that he had forgotten to take this change of plans into account when previously required by the Archbishop to recollect his movements on the Tuesday and Wednesday.<sup>104</sup> Abbot’s notes from early 1614 show that he was inclined to regard the vacillating testimony of the suspect as a token of guilt, not simply of a faulty memory. The Archbishop opined that Cotton had altered his account of the date of his arrival in London only when he had realised that he was ‘conuicted by many witnesses and vnauoydable circumstances’.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/163, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MSS 8ANC7/128, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; 8ANC7/129, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MSS 8ANC7/131, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; 8ANC7/132, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/146, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/163, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

The proofs of Cotton's acquaintance with Jesuits and his interest in the oath of allegiance controversy; the opinions of expert witnesses who were asked to compare samples of his handwriting to the script of 'Balaam's Asse';<sup>106</sup> and the demonstrable unreliability of his testimony all reinforced the rhetorical probability of his authorship of the audacious refutation of King James's 'Monitory Preface'. Abbot's summary of the case and the letter of Bacon, Yelverton, and Montagu to the king both insisted that the available evidence indicated Cotton's guilt. The arguments of the investigators ensured that the suspect remained immured in the Tower of London without trial. He suffered the results of this injustice for six years before the encounter between John Williams and the pursuivant in 1619 precipitated the discovery of his innocence.

Williams, from Brentwood, had been a barrister until he was expelled from the Middle Temple in 1612 for recusancy.<sup>107</sup> When Abbot studied the manuscript of 'Balaam's Asse' at Lambeth in 1613, he remarked that its author claimed in the preface that all but six pages had been written before August 1612.<sup>108</sup> The Archbishop tried to argue that this detail incriminated his prime suspect, Cotton. He alluded to Copley's claim that Cotton had guarded some of his papers with more than usual secrecy around the date in question, as if their content were provocative.<sup>109</sup> For the modern researcher cognisant of the later discoveries made about the authorship of 'Balaam's Asse', the date mentioned in its preface has a different significance. It indicates that John Williams composed most of his combative scriptural commentary around the time of his disbarment. The treatise secured him another, final day in

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<sup>106</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/136, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>107</sup> ERO, MS D/DAC 66, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Henry Rolle, 'Williams de Essex', in *Un Continuation des Reports de Henry Rolle, Serjeant del' Ley, de Divers Cases en le Court del' Banke le Roy en le Temps del' Reign de Roy Jaques* (London: Francis Tyton, Thomas Basset, and John Leigh, 1676), sig. M4<sup>v</sup>; translated as 'The Case of Williams, of Essex, for Treason: B. R. Easter, 17 James I. A.D. 1619', in *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. by T. B. Howell, 21 vols (London: Longman, 1809-26), II (1816), p. 1085.

<sup>108</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/165, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

court. In May 1619, Williams was tried at the King's Bench, where he defended himself, spiritedly but unsuccessfully, against a treason charge.

Two texts formed the basis of the charge brought against Williams: 'Balaam's Asse' and a now obscure work written by him in 1619. This later text reiterated the arguments of the 1613 treatise and affected to prophesy that King James 'should not liue longe, but should dye in short time', bringing his realm 'to vtter ruine and desolation'.<sup>110</sup> It situated itself within the *de casibus* tradition with its title, *Speculum Regale*.<sup>111</sup> Both 'Balaam's Asse' and *Speculum Regale* predicted James's fall. Henry Montagu, who had been Chief Justice of the King's Bench since 1616, argued that Williams's audacious writings constituted *crimen læsæ majestatis*. By 'branching and buzzing' the opinion that James was Antichrist and his ecclesiastical polity heretical 'in the ears and hearts of the people, being [James's] subjects', Montagu contended, Williams had sought to raise a popular rebellion that would culminate in regicide.<sup>112</sup>

The notion that the circulation of political prophecies constituted insurgent activity was often articulated in the early modern period in efforts to discourage or to police the employment or discussion of such prophecies. To persuade would-be poets of the indecorum of any proposed use of prophecy in their work, for instance, George Puttenham denounced amphibolous 'blind prophecies' as stimuli for 'insurrections and rebellions' in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589).<sup>113</sup> Steven Mullaney, who cites Puttenham, describes prophecy as an early modern 'rhetoric of rebellion'.<sup>114</sup> Such an assessment fails, however, to consider how indictments of prophetic rhetoric might in

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<sup>110</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> Rolle, *Un Continuation des Reports*, sig. M4<sup>v</sup>; Howell, *State Trials*, II, p. 1085. '*Speculum Regale*' translates as 'The Mirror of a King'.

<sup>112</sup> Howell, *State Trials*, II, pp. 1086-87; Rolle, *Un Continuation des Reports*, sig. N1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>113</sup> George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 346.

<sup>114</sup> Steven Mullaney, 'Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England', *English Literary History*, 47 (1980), 32-47 (p. 36).

themselves have been rhetorical. In the Court of King's Bench, Williams disputed the suggestion of Montagu that his prophetic texts were insurrectionary. He reiterated the argument made by the text in the apple in 1613 to counter official efforts to define 'Balaam's Asse' as treasonable: that the treatise had been addressed not to a news-hungry populace but to the king alone. Williams reminded his accusers that no rebellion had followed the arrival of 'Balaam's Asse' at court. This, he remarked, was because he had 'inclosed his Book in a box sealed up, and so secretly conveyed it to the king, and never published it'.<sup>115</sup> As his treatise had eschewed the popular gaze, he argued, it could not justly be accounted an appeal to the commonalty to kill the king.

Challenged thus, the courtroom opponents of Williams resorted to the abandonment of their initial insistence on the centrality of the act of publication ('branching and buzzing') to his crime. They countered his arguments with a deft, and legally dubious, rhetorical manoeuvre that rendered the mere written expression, as opposed to the publication, of a wish for the death of the present monarch constitutive of treason. Solicitor General Thomas Coventry summed up this revised position. He declared 'that to write treason (though it be neuer published) is an ouert act of treason'.<sup>116</sup> It was argued that Williams was a traitor 'if words can amount to treason, (as clearly they may)'.<sup>117</sup> Despite the confidence of this assertion, the idea that words alone could constitute treason was a highly contestable Henrician legal innovation that did not enjoy the status of self-evident fact in the Jacobean period. In 1534, Henry VIII had passed legislation to expand the definition of treason and had so given the crime a basis not only in deed but also in language. This statute on treason by words had been revoked at the accession of Edward VI in 1547. Many of its terms

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<sup>115</sup> Howell, *State Trials*, II, p. 1087. See also Rolle, *Un Continuation des Reports*, sig. N1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>116</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> Howell, *State Trials*, II, p. 1088. See also Rolle, *Un Continuation des Reports*, sig. N1<sup>r</sup>.

had later been revived under Elizabeth, in the Treasons Act of 1571.<sup>118</sup> In James's reign, however, no statutory basis existed for the crime of treason by words. When the prosecutors pragmatically invoked this crime at Williams's trial, their insistence on the 'clarity' of its contours was disingenuous. The celebrated nineteenth-century lawyer James Fitzjames Stephen apparently perceived an injustice in the proceedings at King's Bench in May 1619: a note that summarises the trial in his *A History of the Criminal Law of England* ends with the exclamation, 'Poor Williams!'<sup>119</sup>

Although there was no Jacobean law of verbal treason, the prosecution was able to support its case with a precedent from earlier in the reign of the Stuart king. The following summary of the arguments used against Williams in the courtroom is taken from the account of the trial in the St John's College manuscript:

[T]was adjudged that assoone as the Imaginacion hath produced, and the hart brought to the hand which writes it, that it is an ouerture of highe treason: *Crimen læsæ Maiestatis*, for twas said *scribere est agere et ita fuit* [to write is to incite, and thus it was] in Peachams case. *Sic ponitur onus criminis* [The burden of the charge is set down thus].<sup>120</sup>

Edmund Peacham, a Puritan, had been arrested in 1614 and brought to trial a year later as the author of a sermon on Hosea 7.5, in which he had prophesied the death of King James.<sup>121</sup> He had taken his text from the Geneva Bible, where his chosen verse was glossed as a description of a king who 'delighted in flatteries'.<sup>122</sup> The sermon, found among papers in his study, had never been preached. It could hence not without artful interpretation be labelled a rhetorical instrument to agitate the

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<sup>118</sup> Rebecca Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 5-9.

<sup>119</sup> James Fitzjames Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law of England*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1883), II, p. 306.

<sup>120</sup> St John's, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, SP 14/2, fol. 241<sup>r</sup>: 'The Seuerall poynts contayned in the inditment of Edmound Peachampe with the places of scripture scited and his text'.

<sup>122</sup> *The Bible* (London: Christopher Barker, 1599), sig. Vv3<sup>v</sup>.

populace against the king. Peacham had nonetheless been condemned of high treason in August 1615. He had escaped the death penalty.<sup>123</sup> In his treatment of this case, the Victorian historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner argued that Edward Coke, then Chief Justice of the King's Bench, had challenged Francis Bacon's readiness to conclude without statutory backing that *scribere est agere* (to write is to incite).<sup>124</sup> Coke was no longer Chief Justice when John Williams was tried for treason in 1619.

The case of Williams places significant pressure on David Cressy's statement that 'no one went to their death just for treasonable words' in the reign of James.<sup>125</sup> The considerable rhetorical resourcefulness of the courtroom opponents of Williams worked to portray the words of his treatise as intended catalysts for rebellion among an English populace that had been expressly denied the opportunity to read them. Secured through creative interpretations of both evidence and the law, the conviction of Williams exemplifies the phenomenon known as 'constructive treason', where the definition of treason is unobtrusively broadened to bring doubtful cases within its compass.<sup>126</sup> The Treason Act of 1352 (25 Edward III, st. 5, c. 2), which provided the accepted legal definition of that crime in Jacobean England, stipulates that treason occurs '[w]hen a Man doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King'. The Norman-French-derived verbs 'compass' and 'imagine' proved semantically pliable in the reign of James. As D. Alan Orr notes, these verbs could be artfully expounded 'to effect an expansion in the law of treason without the aid of additional legislation' such as that introduced under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. by James Spedding, 5 vols (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1861-74), v (1869), pp. 90, 127-28.

<sup>124</sup> Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England: From the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 10 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1889), II, p 277.

<sup>125</sup> David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk*, p. 91. The case of Williams is referenced in *Dangerous Talk*, in the chapter 'Words against King James'. Citing the account of Williams's arraignment in Essex Record Office (MS D/DAc 66), Cressy inaccurately states that 'the outcome of his case is unknown' (p. 110).

<sup>126</sup> Lemon, *Treason by Words*, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Orr, *Treason and the State*, p. 26.

Orr remarks that the treason law was rhetorically manipulable in the early modern period not only on account of the flexible terminology of the 1352 statute but also owing to the development in the sixteenth century of a notion of ‘custom-derived, “common-law treasons” that had existed before 25 Edward III and still existed wanting but for statutory confirmation or judicial invocation’.<sup>128</sup> His analysis of the report on the arraignment of Williams in Howell’s *State Trials* notes that the prosecution invoked the concept of common-law treason in this case. He argues, however, that the specific definition of treason provided in court by Henry Yelverton as King’s Attorney was perfectly compatible besides with the 1352 legislation.<sup>129</sup> The account of the trial in Derbyshire Record Office reveals that some comments by the Attorney General anticipated Orr’s opinion. It records (as *State Trials* does not) that Yelverton stated: ‘The indictment is accordinge to common lawe, though grounded vpon the statute of 25. E3 [i.e. 25 Edward III].’<sup>130</sup> Yelverton equipped his rhetorical arsenal with both statutory and common-law notions of treason. Despite the inclusivity of his definition of treason in this case, its applicability to the conduct of Williams might still appear questionable to a modern researcher.

Attorney General Yelverton claimed that the common law and the Act of 1352 agreed in their identification of four different varieties of treason. The first of these was ‘publique rebellion’. No such event had proceeded from the delivery of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ to the palace in 1613, as the defendant was at pains to point out.<sup>131</sup> The second species of treason was ‘to deny the kings title and say that he is a tyrant and hath noe power in spirituall iurisdictions’.<sup>132</sup> Some text in ‘Balaam’s Asse’ might be deemed to have satisfied these conditions. The parallel drawn between the two

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<sup>128</sup> Orr, *Treason and the State*, p. 15.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>130</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>131</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Howell, *State Trials*, II, p. 1087.

<sup>132</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

*peregrinos venatores*, the absolutist William the Conqueror and King James I, had arguably charged the Stuart king obliquely with tyranny, while the indirect but obvious identification of James (the ‘I’ of the ‘HEEI’ prophecy) as the ill-fated Antichrist at the head of a doomed Protestant state could be accounted a denial of the legitimacy of his claim to supremacy over the Church in England. As the full text of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ has not survived, it cannot be known whether the original manuscript contained further passages that an unsympathetic reader might construe as examples of Yelverton’s second category of treason. The third type of treason was ‘to sett vp a power in the kingdome superior to the kings power’.<sup>133</sup> Although it maligned James’s government, ‘Balaam’s Asse’ did not identify or promote a specific candidate to replace him forcibly as head of state. The fourth and final type of treason was committed, according to the Attorney General, when a person directed criticism at the king with the goal ‘to make men thinke him vnworthie to weare the crowne vpon his head’.<sup>134</sup> Williams could be accounted guilty of treason under this head only if the prosecution were to choose unjustly to ignore the care he had taken to withhold the contents of his treatise from all eyes except the king’s.

The surviving records of the trial do not specify whether Yelverton tried to depict Williams as a traitor according to all or only some of the four categories of treason he outlined. A fresh comparison between the definition of treason provided in court by Yelverton and the extant contemporary accounts of the evidence against the defendant suggests to modern eyes that no legitimate grounds existed for the invocation by Williams’s prosecutors of any but the second species of treason. Furthermore, the case against Williams even in respect of this variety of treason was flimsy for two reasons. Firstly, *pace* Orr and the Attorney General himself, it is not

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<sup>133</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

clear that the Treason Act of 1352 covers the kinds of activity that come under the second head of Yelverton's definition. Denials of the king's power and comments on his tyranny and impotency in spiritual jurisdictions are neither overt acts nor necessarily incitements to action: they are fundamentally linguistic phenomena. This class of treason identified by Yelverton hence reads like the product of his attempt to revive the crime of treason by words through the covert expansion of the law. Secondly, James is never directly accused of tyranny or explicitly labelled an illegitimate head of the Church in the surviving quotations from 'Balaam's Ass'; instead, these ideas are expressed obliquely, through the analogy with the Conqueror or the symbolism of the 'HEEI' prophecy. The question whether figurative language could amount to treason was thus implicitly at issue in the trial of John Williams.

Perhaps mindful that his brief invocation of the non-statutory crime of treason by words could bear little scrutiny, Yelverton devoted the climax of his speech for the prosecution to the contention that Williams was guilty of a less debatable kind of treason. He addressed the defendant thus:

[Y]ou shall not dye for religeon for noe man amongst vs dys for religeon, but for that he abides here and stirs vp others to rebellion and treason.<sup>135</sup>

We have seen how the prosecutors in this case resorted to the claim that unpublished words could constitute treason after Williams illustrated the flaw in their attempt to portray a treatise he had deliberately withheld from the popular gaze as an incitement to insurgency. Yelverton's closing remarks reveal, however, that the concession of Williams's valid point by his courtroom opponents was but temporary. The capstone of the treason case Yelverton constructed against Williams was the notion, stealthily

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<sup>135</sup> DRO, MS D258/10/71, fol. 2<sup>f</sup>.

reclaimed after its previous demolition by the defendant, that ‘Balaam’s Asse’ had made treasonable overtures to the subjects of its sole addressee, King James. Dubious though they probably were as a summary of the motive and conduct of the author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’, the words of the Attorney General’s address to Williams were shrewdly chosen. Their rhetorical impact was likely to be enhanced by their echoes of a passage from ‘A Remonstrance for the Right of Kings’, written by King James himself in 1615. In this work, the king had declared that none of his subjects had ever suffered torture or execution ‘for [...] conscience in matter of religion’ and had insisted that these punishments were reserved for intriguers against the life or office of the monarch.<sup>136</sup> Records of the trial do not indicate whether Henry Montagu as Chief Justice found the defendant guilty according to Thomas Coventry’s contention that ‘to write treason (though it be neuer published) is an ouert act of treason’ or at the prompting of Yelverton’s emulation of royal rhetoric and adherence to the idea that ‘Balaam’s Asse’ had been devised to foment civil disobedience. From a modern perspective, the arguments of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General appear to contort the facts in Williams’s case on the one hand and to give inordinate weight to a defunct species of treason on the other. The twenty-first-century scholar is likely to share the inclination of Fitzjames Stephen to regard the conviction and sentence meted out to Williams as unjust.

On trial in 1581, the Jesuit Edmund Campion had claimed that his imputed crimes and those of his alleged confederates had been artfully misrepresented in the speeches of the prosecution and that their lives as a result stood ‘vpon pointes of

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<sup>136</sup> King James VI and I, ‘A Remonstrance for the Right of Kings’ (1615), in *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine* (London: Robert Barker and John Bill, 1616), sigs li5<sup>f</sup>-Ss2<sup>v</sup> (sig. Rr3<sup>v</sup>).

Rethorique'.<sup>137</sup> John Williams might reasonably have offered a similar account of his own treason trial nearly forty years later. 'Balaam's Asse' was ruled a treasonable publication, even though it had never been published, and Williams was condemned to a traitor's death on 3 May 1619. The execution, performed on 5 May, is mentioned in several extant newsletters. Thomas Lorkin, a follower of this case since the beginning, wrote to Puckering the day after the trial with news of the sentence received by the author of 'Balaam's Asse'.<sup>138</sup> He wrote again the next day to confirm that Williams had been hanged, drawn and quartered at Charing Cross, and opined that '[h]is prophecy deserued no lesse'.<sup>139</sup> Dudley Carleton, ambassador to the Netherlands, received news of the fate of Williams from various correspondents.<sup>140</sup> On 8 May, Carleton's regular correspondent John Chamberlain sent him a report of the previous Wednesday's execution. Chamberlain stated that Williams had 'died a Romane Catholike, and otherwise boldly and confidently enough'.<sup>141</sup>

Attorney General Yelverton had declared in court that the Jacobean regime did not put people to death for their religion and had admonished Williams not to misconstrue his traitor's death as martyrdom. When he took to the scaffold, however, Williams proved as disinclined to ratify the official rationale for his execution as he had been unwilling to cede exegetical hegemony over the Revelation to the king in the subversive 'Balaam's Asse'. Chamberlain's letter to Carleton suggests that the condemned man gave a defiant gallows performance. Details of how this defiance was manifested can be gleaned from an anonymous account of the execution,

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<sup>137</sup> Anthony Munday, *A Discoverie of Edmund Campion, and his Confederates* (London: Edward White, 1582), sig. C5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>138</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 465<sup>v</sup>: Lorkin to Puckering, 4 May 1619.

<sup>139</sup> BL, Harley MS 7002, fol. 467<sup>f</sup>: Lorkin to Puckering, 5 May 1619.

<sup>140</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 14<sup>f</sup>: Sir Edward Harwood to Dudley Carleton, 4 May 1619; TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 25<sup>f</sup>: Nathanael Brent to Dudley Carleton, 8 May 1619.

<sup>141</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 23<sup>f</sup>: John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, 8 May 1619.

preserved among the State Papers in the National Archives.<sup>142</sup> A close reading of this document requires a brief preliminary survey of scholarship on the social and political function of spectacular executions in the early modern period.

Historians have identified a pattern of conventions that governed the conduct of many condemned individuals on the Renaissance scaffold of execution. A typical gallows speech would begin with a confession from the convict, either to the specific crime for which he or she had been sentenced to death or more generally to the sin of having lived a dissolute life. The speaker would then plead forgiveness both from the sovereign and from God and finally ask the assembled crowds to join in a prayer for the salvation of his or her soul.<sup>143</sup> J. A. Sharpe claims that condemned criminals rarely deviated from this state-prescribed formula and that their submissiveness served to ‘legitimize[] [...] the whole structure of secular and religious authority’.<sup>144</sup> In a challenge to Sharpe, Thomas Laqueur describes the gallows as a site of Bakhtinian carnivalesque inversion where the state’s efforts to elicit a consensus of popular antipathy to the convicted felon, and thereby to exhibit and reinforce its own power, were often derailed by irreverent spectators.<sup>145</sup> Peter Lake and Michael Questier follow Laqueur in a rejection of Sharpe’s confidence in the effectiveness of public executions as exemplary deterrents to potential insurgents. Where Laqueur charts the vulnerability of punitive state theatre to subversion by unruly crowds, however, Lake and Questier focus on instances where condemned individuals flouted

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<sup>142</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 17<sup>r-v</sup>: ‘A relation of the manner of the death of one Williams executed for wryting a Booke called Balaams Asse’, 5 May 1619.

<sup>143</sup> Andrew Fleck, ‘“At the Time of his Death”: Manuscript Instability and Walter Raleigh’s Performance on the Scaffold’, *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), 4-28 (p. 10). See also Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, ‘The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989), 259-75 (p. 272).

<sup>144</sup> J. A. Sharpe, ‘“Last Dying Speeches”: Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Past and Present*, 107 (1985), 144-67 (p. 163).

<sup>145</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, ‘Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604-1868’, in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. by A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 305-55 (p. 327).

the conventions of the ‘last dying speech’ and in so doing rendered the scaffold a platform for a final, public ‘ideological struggle’ against the state.<sup>146</sup> Their analysis of gallows rhetoric argues that the condemned often imbued their speeches with ‘martyrological resonances’ calculated to elicit the sympathy of spectators, while the representatives of the state on the scaffold endeavoured to ensure that the dying individual was despised by the crowd as a traitor, not hailed as a martyr.<sup>147</sup>

The manuscript account of John Williams’s execution in the State Papers suggests that a rhetorical struggle akin to those discussed by Lake and Questier took place on 5 May 1619 between the Catholic author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ and the agents of the Protestant state. This two-page document, which is unsympathetic to Williams, describes his attempts to wrest control over the popular reception of his death from Robert Tounson, Dean of Westminster, and Thomas Fanshawe, clerk of the crown in King’s Bench. According to the opening lines of the report, Williams’s scaffold performance began uncontroversially enough, with a confession of his offence and a prayer for the health and prosperity of King James.<sup>148</sup> The text goes on, however, to indicate that the speech soon departed from convention. When Williams asserted that ‘an inconsiderate loue to his contry’ had induced him to compose his refutation of James’s ‘Monitory Preface’, it alleges, Tounson swiftly admonished him that this ‘confession was not answerable to his offence’.<sup>149</sup> The Dean seemingly grasped the double-edged nature of this apology, in which Williams overtly pronounced himself guilty of rash (‘inconsiderate’) conduct but covertly implied that support for the Jacobean regime was irreconcilable with a commitment to the best interests of his compatriots. After the interruption of Fanshawe, Williams allegedly invited the Dean

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<sup>146</sup> Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 153 (1996), 63-107 (p. 82).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>148</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>.

and the King's Bench clerk to question him. Fanshawe took the opportunity to ask whether Williams still insisted, as he had at his trial, that he had made no copies of 'Balaam's Asse' besides the one delivered to court in April 1613 and the annotated version discovered on his person during his arrest. The condemned man responded that there was 'not an other booke nor a peece of [his treatise] in the world'.<sup>150</sup>

The prosecution at the trial of Williams had reported that his writings prophesied the destruction of Whitehall in 1621.<sup>151</sup> At his execution, Fanshawe asked Williams why he had named 1621 as the date on which the royal residence would be laid waste. His reply, according to the anonymous account in the State Papers, was 'that hee hoped they wold not thinke him so fond as to conceaue himself to be illuminated with any diuine or Propheticall spirit, but that which hee wrote was Ironice'.<sup>152</sup> This alleged reference to irony, the rhetorical device that says one thing but means its opposite, constituted a characteristic insistence on the untameable polysemy of words from the author of 'Balaam's Asse', on whose body the Jacobean state was about to perform a supposedly definitive inscription of its authority. If Williams indeed spoke these words, their suggestion that a representative of the state like Fanshawe had misunderstood the tone of his writings was perhaps intended to exemplify a broader comment on the subvertible nature of official pronouncements on the meanings of his crime and present punishment. It should be pointed out, however, that not all accounts attribute such a speech to Williams. John Chamberlain told Carleton that the condemned man had laid claim to 'an inward warrant, and a particuler illumination to vnderstand certain hard passages of Daniell and the reuelation'.<sup>153</sup> The quantity of detail in the anonymous report suggests that its author

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<sup>150</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>151</sup> Howell, *State Trials*, II, p. 1085; Rolle, *Un Continuation des Reports*, sig. M4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>153</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 23<sup>r</sup>.

was probably an eyewitness to the execution. It is unclear whether the scantier account sent by Chamberlain to Carleton among other news was based on his own observations or on second-hand testimony. While this uncertainty argues that the non-epistolary account is the likelier of the two to be accurate, the possibility that its author distorted some details for rhetorical effect cannot be wholly discounted.

Whereas the anonymous account contradicts the comments of Chamberlain on Williams's self-fashioning as a prophet, its final sentence corroborates and elucidates his assertion that the author 'died a Romane Catholike':

Master Dean told [Williams], that they wold willingly ioyn with him in his Prayres to God; [Williams] said hee had done his deuotions ere he came to that place, and so gaue the Executioner a handkerchief which hee tyed about his head and whilst hee was so doing hee prayed in Latin and pulling the handkerchief ouer his eyes hee said *Post tenebras spero lucem*, and so dyed.<sup>154</sup>

When Williams uttered his Latin orisons on the scaffold and refused to participate in the English prayers led by the agents of the Protestant state, his conduct recalled that attributed to such convicted traitors as Edmund Campion and the Gunpowder plotter Everard Digby in contemporary accounts of their executions.<sup>155</sup> His very last rhetorical flourish bears comparison with his erstwhile transformation of the papal ass, a commonplace of anti-Catholic satire, into a mouthpiece for the expression of anti-Protestant sentiment. The phrase '*post tenebras spero lucem*' ('I hope for light after darkness') had been articulated in the past by convicted traitors as they prepared for death.<sup>156</sup> According to one manuscript report, Walter Raleigh uttered this phrase in English when he was brought to the scaffold in 1618, a mere year before Williams

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<sup>154</sup> TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>155</sup> Munday, *A Discoverie of Edmund Campion*, sig. G3<sup>r</sup>; T. W., *The Araignement and Execution of the Late Traytors* (London: Jeffrey Chorlton, 1606), sig. C1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>156</sup> Rosemary Greentree, 'Thoughts from Concentrated Minds: Some Verses Written before Execution', *Neophilologus*, 93 (2009), 723-40 (p. 731).

met the same fate.<sup>157</sup> Given the acknowledged tendency of Williams to subvert the themes and conventions of Protestant propaganda, though, it is at least possible that he intended a reference to the motto of Geneva, changed from *post tenebras spero lucem* to *post tenebras lux* ('light after darkness') at the dawn of the Reformation to signal that Protestantism was the light that had banished the darkness of Catholicism.<sup>158</sup> With his use of this phrase, recorded both in the anonymous text in the State Papers and in the notes on 'Balaam's Asse' in the Rawlinson manuscript, the Catholic Williams perhaps meant to undermine another rhetorical buttress of the Reformed Church and to imply that the Protestantism espoused by the Jacobean state was the true locus of darkness, whence he was about to escape into heavenly light.<sup>159</sup>

Williams apparently eschewed the submissive conduct that the state required of convicted traitors on the scaffold. The spectacular execution and dismemberment he was to undergo were state-sponsored rituals calculated to render him an object of popular opprobrium and thus to procure a palpable consensus of support for the Jacobean regime from the gathered crowds. Via the various rhetorical sleights just discussed, the condemned man subtly challenged his official designation as a traitor and promoted an alternative, martyrological narrative of his execution. The two-page text in the State Papers appears careful to forestall the conclusions that Williams sought to encourage. Its final words ('hee said *Post tenebras spero lucem*, and so dyed') are notably colourless: they obfuscate the agency of the hangman and neglect to describe how the corpse of Williams was violently quartered. Any account of post-mortem dismemberment might have sponsored the idea that the Catholic author of 'Balaam's Asse' was a martyr whose bodily fragments deserved veneration as relics.

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<sup>157</sup> BL, Harley MS 852, fol. 29<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>158</sup> Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. by M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), p. 116.

<sup>159</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 88<sup>r</sup>.

Extant documentary evidence from the time of his execution indicates that Williams and the agents of the state on the scaffold were engaged in a rhetorical contest to influence his posthumous reputation. The anonymous chronicler of his gallows performance supported the efforts of Tounson and Fanshawe to ensure that the author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ was not remembered sympathetically. The scantiness of references to Williams’s trial and punishment in manuscripts compiled in the decades following his death suggests that he achieved no great prominence, either as a villain or as a victim of an oppressive regime, in the collective memory of the English populace. While his biography was seldom recounted, however, his political poetry became a staple of miscellanies. A prophetic verse libel, probably one of the ‘new annotations’ discovered on the copy of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ found in the possession of Williams during his arrest in March 1619, survives in at least nine manuscripts.<sup>160</sup> It can be found on the verso of the page of text concerning ‘Balaam’s Asse’ in the Rawlinson manuscript and on the page immediately after the notes on the trial of Williams in MS K.56 in St John’s College, Cambridge. The poem, here copied in full, begins with a reference to the placement of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ at court in 1613 and ends with Williams’s prophecy of the destruction of Whitehall in 1621:

Christ 7 yeares since rode to the courte and there he left his *Ass*;  
 The courtiers kickt him oute of dores, because there was noe grasse;  
 The sillie beast mournes euer since, and thus I heard him braye:  
 Althoughe that then they had noe grasse they might haue geuen me hay,  
 But nowe the tyme my master sayes is come and all shall see  
 That nothings els within this courte but grasse shall onely bee;  
 The tyme is come my master saith, but yet he thus tolde me:  
 Theeffect therof vntill the tyme I speake of shall not be;  
 1621 the 6<sup>th</sup> daie of September;  
 He that this asse did thus despise, this *asses* wordes remember,  
 For yf not then about the middest of Marche that next ensues  
 He woulde not geue his asse for all the horses in the Mewes.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Besides the manuscripts discussed, these include: BL, Harley MS 4931, fol. 13<sup>v</sup>; BL, Add. MS 4457, fol. 121<sup>r</sup>; BL, Add. MS 47127, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Ashmole 1382, fol. 270<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 8, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

Rupert Taylor was baffled by this prophecy when he encountered a printed version in William Lilly's *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England*. His classic 1911 study of the English prophetic tradition commented on the 'exquisite absurdity' of the verses.<sup>162</sup> The archival research documented in the present chapter restores their original sense.

In Bodleian, MS Malone 19, a widely studied collection of political and lyric verse compiled in the 1620s and 1630s, the poem 'Christ 7 yeares since rode to the courte' is headed 'Verses found in a box sealed, found at the Court, and deliuered to the Kinge'.<sup>163</sup> This title confuses the history of the poem, which was never left at court, and the history of 'Balaam's Asse', found at Whitehall in a sealed box in 1613. Seemingly unaware of the legal case in which the poem was implicated, Pauline Croft takes the provenance claim it bears in the Malone manuscript at face value.<sup>164</sup> The commonplace book of one J. Tempest, preserved in the Brotherton Library in Leeds, contains a copy of the same verse libel, again supplied with a misleading title: 'A writing found at the court at Whitehal, 1619'.<sup>165</sup> In British Library, Sloane MS 1489, a verse and prose miscellany of the late 1620s, the poem is simply headed 'Williams the Iesuite his verses'.<sup>166</sup> Directly beneath this text of the poem is a copy of the Sibyllic verse prophecy from 'Balaam's Asse', in which the four monarchs to have propagated the Reformed faith in England (H, E, E, and I) are reviled as harbingers of apocalypse. Appended to this prophecy is a witty rejoinder, also in verse, that lauds the same monarchs as agents of the ruin of the Church of Rome:

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<sup>162</sup> William Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1651), sig. K3<sup>v</sup>; Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, p. 120.

<sup>163</sup> Bodl., MS Malone 19, fol. 145<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>164</sup> Pauline Croft, 'Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England', *Historical Research*, 68 (1995), 266-85 (p. 282).

<sup>165</sup> Brotherton, BC MS Lt.q.9, fol. 64<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>166</sup> BL, Sloane MS 1489, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>.

Three characters, or 4 in all:  
By doubling one portend in small  
The words vpryse, and Babels fall:  
H first the Dragons head did wound;  
E layde him for a while in swound;  
E strooke him wholye to the ground;  
Let I his relicqes al confound,  
That Iames may sing while Rome cryes HEEI:  
Hee gaue the wound but slaine haue I.  
So these 4 letters shew the fall  
Of Rome and of hir generall.<sup>167</sup>

This poem subverts the exposition of the Revelation with which John Williams reviled post-Reformation England, just as ‘Balaam’s Asse’ itself overturned the historical interpretation of Scripture propounded by King James in the ‘Monitory Preface’. Its first three lines argue that the letters of the acronym ‘HEEI’ – one of which (‘E’) is doubled – furnish a concise prophecy of the triumph of Protestantism, the religion of the Word, over Catholicism, represented as Babel. Williams, who likened himself to Christ in his verse-prophecy ‘Christ 7 yeares since rode to the courte’, is recast as a false prophet in this poem, which recruits the symbolic vocabulary of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ in order to assault the arguments of that treatise.

The poem in Sloane MS 1489 exposes and exploits the semantic pliability of the components of Williams’s ‘HEEI’ prophecy in a witty reversal of their original confessional allegiance. Although unsympathetic to the opinions of the author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’, it thus follows in his methodological footsteps. In his apocalyptic treatise and in his courtroom and scaffold performances, John Williams persistently undermined the pretensions of his rhetorical adversaries to unassailability. He contested the king’s claim to exegetical supremacy over the prophecies of the Revelation and challenged official, state-sponsored interpretations of his own crime and spectacular punishment. Owing perhaps to the absence of any surviving copies

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<sup>167</sup> BL, Sloane MS 1489, fol. 9<sup>v</sup>.

of 'Balaam's Asse', no substantial study of that text and its author has been attempted before now. This archival lacuna does not, however, altogether preclude analysis of Williams's treatise, of which portions are quoted and paraphrased in a number of extant early seventeenth-century manuscripts. The various surviving accounts of the trial and execution of Williams also reward rigorous study. They offer insights into the dubious arguments whereby the state successfully constructed a treason case against this author, whose unpublished scriptural commentary had challenged the use of biblical prophecies to endorse the oath of allegiance in the writings of King James. These accounts also reveal that the efforts of Williams to derange the rhetoric of Protestant hegemony did not cease until his final breath left his body. The foregoing analysis of 'Balaam's Asse' and its attendant law case has considered the rhetorical manipulability of the treason law and the artificiality of propagandist uses of prophecy in mid-Jacobean England. These same themes figure prominently in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII*, a play first performed in 1613, soon after 'Balaam's Asse' was discovered at Whitehall.

#### PROPHETIC AND LEGAL RHETORIC IN *KING HENRY VIII (ALL IS TRUE)*

Political prophecy figures in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII* both as a reported catalyst for the treason imputed to the Duke of Buckingham and as the mode of expression adopted by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer for his panegyric of the future Queen Elizabeth I in the climactic christening scene. The prophecy that '[n]either the King, nor's heirs [...] shall prosper', allegedly imparted to Buckingham by the 'devil monk' Nicholas Hopkins to tempt him to treason, is ostensibly invalidated by the vatic oration of the Reformist Archbishop, which promises a long and glorious reign

to Elizabeth, the Protestant daughter of King Henry.<sup>168</sup> While these two prophecies are superficially presented as respectively false and true, the playwrights' subtle and persistent exposure of the rhetorical artificiality of purported truth covertly insists on the untenability of such facile distinctions. In the Shakespeare First Folio of 1623, this play was titled *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth*.<sup>169</sup> Extant letters from 1613, the year when it was first performed, indicate however that the original title was *All Is True*.<sup>170</sup> Many critics share the opinion that this title comments ironically on the mutual exclusivity of the various 'truths' pronounced by characters in the play and is thus 'is at best open-ended and dialogic, at worst cynical'.<sup>171</sup> The present analysis similarly finds that the authorised 'truths' that serve to bolster the Henrician government within the dramatic fiction are deftly exposed by the dramatists as expedient rather than absolute. This study of *King Henry VIII (All Is True)* closely examines two very different instances of prophetic rhetoric and considers how their reception by the king exemplifies the biased production of official 'truth', a process repeatedly depicted in this mid-Jacobean Tudor history play.

As discussed above, the prosecutors of the author of 'Balaam's Asse' secured his conviction as a traitor in 1619 through various rhetorical sleights that effectively recuperated the defunct crime of treason by words. The historical treason trial of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, likewise occurred at a time when legislation on treasonable speech or writing did not exist. Buckingham was executed as a traitor

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<sup>168</sup> William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII (All Is True)*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (London: Methuen Drama, 2000), I. 2. 168-69; II. 1. 21; V. 4. 57. All further quotations from the play are taken from this edition, which is hereafter referenced as *Henry VIII* in the notes.

<sup>169</sup> William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (London: Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623): *Histories*, sig. T3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> See, e.g. the account of the letter of Henry Bluett to Richard Weeks, 4 July 1613, in Maija Jansson Cole, 'A New Account of the Burning of the Globe', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32 (1981), 352.

<sup>171</sup> Janette Dillon, 'The Trials of Queen Katherine in *Henry VIII*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 63 (2010), 149-61 (p. 160).

in 1521, thirteen years before the Henrician statute on treason by words was passed.<sup>172</sup> In common with the picture that emerges from the study of documents concerning the arraignment of John Williams, the portrayal of the trial of Buckingham in *King Henry VIII* suggests the presence of a possible injustice in the verdict delivered against an individual accused of the oppositionist implementation of a political prophecy.

In the first scene of Shakespeare and Fletcher's play, there are intimations of a rivalry between Buckingham and Cardinal Thomas Wolsey that has driven each to gather evidence of treason against the other. Immediately prior to his arrest on charges he will later claim Wolsey has bribed his surveyor to make against him, Buckingham declares to Norfolk that he knows Wolsey to be a traitor 'by intelligence | And proofs as clear as founts in July when | We see each grain of gravel'.<sup>173</sup> These proofs are doomed to remain unspecified.<sup>174</sup> The arrest of the duke seems to award the victory in this contest of mutual denigration to Wolsey; however, the curiosity of the audience to learn whether the charges against Buckingham are trumped up by his rival or factually based is not to be rewarded with any soliloquised revelation of Buckingham's real motives and allegiances.<sup>175</sup> The speeches of the duke about the alleged machinations of the Cardinal are ambiguous on the subject of his own guilt or innocence. His declaration, 'I shall perish | Under device and practice', made as soon as he hears himself proclaimed a traitor, could be accounted either an admission of his intrigues ('device and practice') against the king and an acceptance of his deserved fate or an accusation that others have practised to procure his downfall.<sup>176</sup> The statement, 'My surveyor is false: the o'er-great Cardinal | Hath showed him gold', is interpretable

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<sup>172</sup> Lemon, *Treason by Words*, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. I. 222-23; I. I. 153-55.

<sup>174</sup> Pierre Sahel, 'The Strangeness of a Dramatic Style: Rumour in *Henry VIII*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1986), 145-51 (p. 151).

<sup>175</sup> Barbara Kreps, 'When All Is True: Law, History and Problems of Knowledge in *Henry VIII*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999), 166-82 (pp. 167-68).

<sup>176</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. I. 203-4.

either as an accusation that the surveyor is a liar or as a protest that his coerced disclosure of real crimes committed by Buckingham is a betrayal of a confidence.<sup>177</sup>

At the beginning of the second scene of the play, Henry thanks Wolsey for his discovery and interception of the treason of Buckingham. His reproachful description of the alleged crime of the duke as a ‘full-charged confederacy’ seems to signal that the king has resolved, even before Buckingham has been brought to trial, that he should be found guilty.<sup>178</sup> This speech of Henry to Wolsey confirms for the audience that the Cardinal has played a role in the accumulation of evidence against the duke. The question whether this evidence is genuine or has been falsified to besmirch the reputation of Buckingham remains open.

*King Henry VIII* draws heavily on material from the 1587 edition of the *Chronicles* of Holinshed, where the account of the arraignment and execution of Buckingham deems his offence ‘traitorous’ but also seems to endorse rumours, current at the time of the trial, that ‘the cardinall chieflie procured the death of this noble man’.<sup>179</sup> The description of Wolsey as the architect of the fall of Buckingham in Holinshed appears immediately after the chronicler has stated his intention simply to reproduce the information about that episode supplied in the historical writing of Edward Hall and Polydore Vergil and to avoid ‘anie parcial wresting of the same’ either to denounce or to exonerate the duke. The chronicler explicitly acknowledges that his remark on the self-interested schemes of Wolsey constitutes an exception to the principle he has just outlined.<sup>180</sup> He thus incidentally draws attention to the inevitability of biased interpolation and interpretation in the production of ostensibly disinterested history. Scholarship on *King Henry VIII* has argued that purported

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<sup>177</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 1. 222-23.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 3.

<sup>179</sup> Raphael Holinshed and others, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, rev. edn ([London]: [Henry Denham], 1587), sigs Nnnn4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. Nnnn4<sup>v</sup>.

‘historiographical veracity’ is one of the varieties of supposed ‘truth’ about which the playwrights subtly encourage audiences to be sceptical.<sup>181</sup>

Those familiar with Holinshed among the Jacobean audiences of this play would have noted a close resemblance between the pre-trial speech in which the surveyor testifies against the duke in i. 2 and a particular passage of the description of the evidence against Buckingham in the *Chronicles*.<sup>182</sup> They might also have observed that the playwrights alter the emphasis of the alleged crimes of Buckingham via the abstraction of this one passage from the longer chronicle account. The full description of the treason case against Buckingham in Holinshed tells how the duke first ‘imagined and compassed the kings death’ at least two years prior to his acquaintance with the prophecy that promised him the crown.<sup>183</sup> It mentions too that Buckingham attempted to raise an army. This account thus indicates that the treason of the duke consisted not in words alone but also in action.<sup>184</sup> These details are not present in the particular passage adapted from Holinshed to form the speech of the surveyor in *King Henry VIII*. The play hence does not specify whether the alleged regicidal intentions of the duke pre-dated his receipt of the prophetic inducement to treason from the monk; nor does it describe any action taken by him as a result of the prophecy. The absence of such information renders doubtful the evidence of any attempt by the duke to mobilise a rebellion against King Henry and suggests that his alleged crimes within this dramatic fiction might consist only of utterances inspired by a prophecy.

The neutrality of the surveyor as a witness is questioned by Queen Katherine, who interrupts his testimony to speculate that his dismissal from the service of

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<sup>181</sup> Annabel Patterson, “‘All Is True’”: Negotiating the Past in *Henry VIII*, in *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, ed. by R. B. Parker and S. P. Zitner (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp. 147-66 (p. 148).

<sup>182</sup> *Henry VIII*, i. 2. 151-209; Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, sig. Nnnn4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 12-47.

<sup>183</sup> Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, sig. Nnnn4<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. Nnnn4<sup>v</sup>.

Buckingham has motivated him to fabricate evidence against his erstwhile employer in the pursuit of revenge.<sup>185</sup> Her objection is swiftly silenced by Henry, who appears predisposed to account the duke guilty and has called upon the surveyor to relate ‘point by point the treasons of his master’.<sup>186</sup> Although the probable unreliability of this witness is ignored by the king within the play, it is perhaps not disregarded by an attentive theatre audience. The surveyor recalls a conversation in which Buckingham told him of a conference that had passed between his chaplain, John de la Court, and the Chartreux monk Nicholas Hopkins. It is notable, although unremarked by any character within the drama, that the evidence of the surveyor is thus a report of a discussion about a reported discussion. If perceived by the audience, the potential of this several-times-mediated testimony to contain corrupt accretions throws into relief the willing and uncritical acceptance of its veracity by Henry.

In common with its source in the *Chronicles*, the speech of the surveyor tells how Buckingham sent de la Court to speak with Hopkins after the monk many times intimated that he had ‘a matter of some moment’ to impart to the duke.<sup>187</sup> Whereas Holinshed specifies that the duke and Hopkins had previously communicated about the ambitions of the former to wear the crown, this speech does not. It reports that Hopkins thus instructed de la Court to deliver a prophecy to Buckingham:

‘Neither the King, nor’s heirs –  
Tell you the Duke – shall prosper. Bid him strive  
To purchase the love o’th’ commonalty. The Duke  
Shall govern England.’<sup>188</sup>

The chronicle account indicates that Buckingham heeded the incitement of the monk to divert the loyalty of the populace away from the king and towards himself. It tells

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<sup>185</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 2. 173-75.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 7.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 163.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 168-71.

how the surveyor warned the duke that the prophecy might be diabolic and how the duke responded, ‘Well [...] it cannot hurt me’, and ‘seemed to rejoice in the moonk’s words’.<sup>189</sup> In *King Henry VIII*, the surveyor recalls:

I told my lord the Duke, by th’ devil’s illusions  
The monk might be deceived, and that ’twas dangerous  
For him to ruminat on this so far until  
It forged him some design – which, being believed,  
It was much like to do. He answered, ‘Tush,  
It can do me no damage,’ adding further  
That had the King in his last sickness failed,  
The Cardinal’s and Sir Thomas Lovell’s heads  
Should have gone off.<sup>190</sup>

The surveyor claims here to have advised Buckingham not to dwell too long on the prophecy lest his thoughts should develop into a treasonable plot (‘some design’). His report that the duke responded ‘Tush, | It can do me no damage’ is not followed, as its equivalent is in the *Chronicles*, by an account of the apparent pleasure taken by Buckingham in the words of the prophecy. Thus, in the play, the reported assessment of the prophecy by the duke is ambiguous. His alleged statement that the promises of Hopkins could do him no damage might signal either his dismissal of the prophecy as a trifle and his consequent lack of any intention to act upon it or his belief that the prophecy was divinely inspired and that no harm could therefore befall him in the pursuance of the course of action it seemed to encourage.

The allegation of the surveyor that Buckingham declared he would have killed Wolsey and Lovell if Henry had not recovered from his most recent illness elicits from the king the response ‘Ha? What, so rank?’<sup>191</sup> Although Henry is thus inclined to deem this imputed statement damning, it does not in fact evince any murderous design on the part of the duke, since the tense to which it belonged was the conditional

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<sup>189</sup> Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, sig. Nnnn4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>190</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 2. 178-86.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 186.

perfect: at the time of its utterance, the king was already known to have survived his illness. The surveyor describes the response of Buckingham to tidings of the royal displeasure at his continued employment of William Bulmer, a favourite of the king:

‘If’, quoth he, ‘I for this had been committed’ –  
As to the Tower, I thought – ‘I would have played  
The part my father meant to act upon  
Th’usurper Richard[.]’<sup>192</sup>

Henry Stafford, Second Duke of Buckingham, was beheaded in 1483 as a conspirator against the government of Richard III. The above comment of his son to the surveyor was again reportedly expressed in the conditional perfect tense; hence, an audience might remark that it did not evince any actual intention on the part of Buckingham to emulate the treasonable conduct of his father.

Still on the subject of his imagined imprisonment for the retention of Bulmer in his service, the duke is said by the surveyor to have sworn that ‘were he evil used, he would outgo | His father by as much as a performance | Does an irresolute purpose’.<sup>193</sup> The surveyor couches these words in the conditional tense in his report. He thus obfuscates their status as a continuation of the account given by Buckingham of action he would have taken under hypothetical historical circumstances. Henry chooses to interpret this reported speech as evidence of the duke’s present intention to commit regicide in the future: ‘There’s his period: | To sheathe his knife in us.’<sup>194</sup> The king brings the pre-trial examination of the surveyor to a close with the following assessment of the alleged crimes of Buckingham:

Call him to present trial. If he may  
Find mercy in the law, ’tis his; if none,  
Let him not seek’t of us. By day and night,

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<sup>192</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 2. 193-96.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 207-9.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 209-10.

He's traitor to th' height!<sup>195</sup>

As critics have noted, this emphatic expression of his opinion that the duke is guilty perhaps constitutes an effort by Henry to determine the outcome of the trial before it has taken place.<sup>196</sup> Among his auditors is the Duke of Norfolk, who will play an influential role at the trial as the highest-ranking member of the jury of Buckingham's peers. Henry ostensibly insists on the separateness of the law, in which the defendant might '[f]ind mercy', and the royal will, which condemns him. Later in the play, however, the 'highly irregular' interventions of the king in his own divorce tribunal and in the proceedings of the Privy Council against Cranmer indicate his contempt for due legal process and so retrospectively argue the disingenuousness of his denial of any personal influence over the verdict to be passed upon Buckingham.<sup>197</sup> The degree of sincerity attributable to the statement 'We must not rend our subjects from our laws | And stick them in our will', made by the king earlier in I. 2, is hence questionable.<sup>198</sup>

Similarities between the attitudes to the law evinced by the character of King Henry and by his arguable topical analogue, King James I, have been perceived by William Baillie, who contends that 'both are notably autocratic and manipulative while insisting upon the forms of law'.<sup>199</sup> *King Henry VIII* was first performed in 1613. In the same year, James was presented with 'Balaam's Asse', the prophetic treatise that compared him disparagingly to the absolutist William I. Six years later, the treason law would be dubiously expounded to secure a conviction against the author of that treatise, whose alleged crimes consisted in words rather than deeds. The

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<sup>195</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 2. 211-14.

<sup>196</sup> See, e.g. Ivo Kamps, 'Possible Pasts: Historiography and Legitimation in *Henry VIII*', *College English*, 58 (1996), 192-215 (p. 198).

<sup>197</sup> Gerard Wegemer, 'Henry VIII on Trial: Confronting Malice and Conscience in Shakespeare's *All Is True*', *Renascence*, 52 (2000), 111-30 (pp. 116, 122).

<sup>198</sup> *Henry VIII*, I. 2. 93-94.

<sup>199</sup> William M. Baillie, 'Henry VIII: A Jacobean History', *Shakespeare Studies*, 12 (1979), 247-66 (p. 248).

transgressions of which Buckingham stands accused by the surveyor in *King Henry VIII* are likewise purely verbal and committed, similarly, at a time when the position of the law with respect to treason by words is ambiguous. In the *Chronicles*, the evidence against Buckingham is gathered from multiple witnesses and encompasses several alleged crimes besides those mentioned in the testimony of his surveyor. If in *King Henry VIII*, by contrast, the duke stands accused only of such utterances as those reported by the surveyor, the justice of the guilty verdict reached by his peers is debatable. The treatment of his trial by the playwrights has been deemed illustrative of ‘the law’s formal incapacity to constitute truth’.<sup>200</sup> Within the play, the king himself alludes to the exploitability of the law when he converses with Cranmer prior to the appearance of the latter before the Privy Council to answer charges of heresy. Henry expresses his support for his interlocutor but counsels the Archbishop to be wary, since ‘not ever | The justice and the truth o’th’ question carries | The due o’th’ verdict with it’.<sup>201</sup> The king has perhaps gained this insight through personal experience as a manipulator of the legal process.

The trial of Buckingham does not take place on stage; its events and outcome are instead reported in a discussion between two gentlemen at the beginning of the second act.<sup>202</sup> The first gentleman informs the second that the following testified against Buckingham in court: the surveyor; John de la Court; one Gilbert Park; and the monk Nicholas Hopkins.<sup>203</sup> As the statements of the latter three witnesses are not described by the first gentleman, audiences do not learn whether Court, Park, and Hopkins adduced any deeds committed by the duke as proofs of his villainy or only recounted instances of arguably treasonable speech similar to that reported by the

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<sup>200</sup> Dennis Kezar, ‘Law/Form/History: Shakespeare’s Verdict in *All Is True*’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 63 (2002), 1-30 (p. 23).

<sup>201</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 1. 129-31.

<sup>202</sup> See Dobin, *Merlin’s Disciples*, p. 175.

<sup>203</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 19-22.

surveyor in his pre-trial testimony. The play never specifies the full contents of the catalogue of charges faced by Buckingham at his trial. Although the question whether the duke is guilty is answered affirmatively within the action of the play, it remains unresolved from the point of view of an audience subtly prompted by the playwrights to consider the possible partiality of the ‘truths’ uncovered by the law.

At his trial in 1619, the former barrister John Williams argued incisively that the unpublished state of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ rendered inadmissible its categorisation by his courtroom opponents as an incitement to popular rebellion. This well-informed defence was dismissed, and Williams was convicted and executed as a traitor. In *King Henry VIII*, Buckingham is similarly reported to have failed in his efforts to avert a guilty verdict with accomplished courtroom speeches. The first gentleman tells how the duke ‘pleaded still not guilty and alleged | Many sharp reasons to defeat the law’.<sup>204</sup> He describes the ineffectuality of Buckingham’s adroit defence thus: ‘Much | He spoke, and learnedly, for life, but all | Was either pitied in him or forgotten.’<sup>205</sup> Moved to pity but not moved to rule in favour of the duke, the jury was perhaps afraid to incur the displeasure of the king, who had taken care to express his personal judgement of Buckingham publicly before the trial.

All of the witnesses against Buckingham, according to the first gentleman, ‘accused him strongly’.<sup>206</sup> The same detail is recorded in the *Chronicles*, which remark that Hopkins ‘like a false hypocrite had induced the duke to the treason with his false forged prophesies’.<sup>207</sup> No character in *King Henry VIII* notes the hypocrisy of Hopkins or of de la Court, who delivered the prophesies to Buckingham; however, audiences of the play might wonder whether the vehement accusations made by these

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<sup>204</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 13-14.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 27-29.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 24.

<sup>207</sup> Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, sig. Nnnn5<sup>f</sup>.

witnesses against the duke were motivated less by their commitment to justice than by their wish to divert attention from their personal complicity in his alleged treason.

The two gentlemen speculate that Wolsey might have engineered the fall of the duke, driven thereto by his jealousy of the love shown by the commonalty for the nobleman popularly known as “‘bounteous Buckingham[’]”.<sup>208</sup> For the audience, this epithet might recall the reported advice of Hopkins that Buckingham should ‘purchase the love o’th’ commonalty’ in preparation for an attempt to usurp the English throne. It could be deemed to confirm that the duke acted on this recommendation by the monk to use displays of largesse to cultivate popular support for a projected rebellion. This potential evidence of treasonable activity remains inconclusive, however, since the gentlemen’s conversation does not reveal whether the generosity of Buckingham pre- or post-dated his receipt of the prophecy that promised him the crown.

Deprived of the opportunity to hear the speeches of Buckingham at his trial, which occurs off-stage, the audience is able to judge his eloquence at first hand when the duke arrives at the scene of the conversation between the gentlemen after receipt of his death sentence and speaks to the popular crowd that has followed him thither. His speech appears at the outset to espouse the submissiveness required of condemned traitors by the state in the moments before their public execution. ‘Hear what I say, and then go home and lose me’, begins his address to the assembled crowds.<sup>209</sup> This appeal on the part of the duke to be forgotten ostensibly discourages any potential popular inclination to venerate him posthumously as a martyr. After this statement, however, Buckingham deviates from the conventions of ‘the gallows confession which would justify the state’s version of truth’.<sup>210</sup> He does not deliver the expected admission of guilt but instead swears on the salvation of his soul that he is no traitor:

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<sup>208</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 52.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 57.

<sup>210</sup> Kreps, ‘When All Is True’, p. 176.

‘if I have a conscience, let it sink me, | Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful’.<sup>211</sup>

The duke’s assessment of the legal process by which he has been tried is equivocal:

The law I bear no malice for my death –  
’T has done upon the premises but justice –  
But those that sought it I could wish more Christians.<sup>212</sup>

This comment by Buckingham that the law has done justice ‘upon the premises’ obliquely suggests that the evidence in his case has been presented selectively by his enemies to ensure the legal process finds him guilty. While the law is disinterested in principle, implies the duke, it can serve in practice as an instrument of oppression.

A later passage in the oration of Buckingham is superficially identifiable as the conventional prayer for the long life and prosperity of the monarch, uttered by the convicted traitor on the scaffold:

My vows and prayers  
Yet are the King’s and, till my soul forsake,  
Shall cry for blessings on him. May he live  
Longer than I have time to tell his years[.]<sup>213</sup>

Although these lines appear to offer a contrite validation of the Henrician government against which Buckingham is judged to have intrigued, their expressed hope for the king to live longer than the duke has ‘time to tell his years’ potentially harbours subversive undertones. Shortly to be executed, Buckingham has very little time left to ‘tell [the] years’ of Henry; consequently, this speech might not in fact envisage such a protracted reign for the Tudor king as it appears to at first. Another ambiguous turn of phrase marks the assertion: ‘I had my trial, | And must needs say a noble one’.<sup>214</sup> The duke could mean either that his own sense of justice deems his trial noble or that he

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<sup>211</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 60-61.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 62-64.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 88-91.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 118-19.

feels compelled to describe the trial as such in order to ratify the particular version of the ‘truth’ that the Henrician state wishes to propound.<sup>215</sup>

Whereas Buckingham seems to eschew any claim to martyrdom with the first words of his speech, which constitute a plea to be forgotten, his oration ends thus:

Farewell, and when you would say something that is sad,  
Speak how I fell. I have done, and God forgive me.<sup>216</sup>

The phrase ‘God forgive me’ is potentially interpretable as an indirect admission of guilt by the duke, while the overture to the crowd to tell his story after he has died is arguably an appeal to the hagiographical impulses of his auditors and thus a claim to innocence. Buckingham does not portray himself unambiguously either as a villain or as a martyr. ‘[S]plit judgements’ of the duke persist among the audience in the theatre after his final speech.<sup>217</sup> They also persist among certain characters in the play. After Buckingham has spoken, the second gentleman expresses his ambivalence about the verdict and sentence passed upon the duke thus: ‘If the Duke be guiltless, | ’Tis full of woe.’<sup>218</sup> Neither the address by Buckingham to the crowd nor the report of his trial suffices to convince the second gentleman either of his guilt or of his innocence. These evidences and the testimony of the surveyor also fail to solve the enigma of his deeds and intentions to the satisfaction of the audience. Although the recipient of the prophecy of Nicholas Hopkins is adjudged a traitor by the legal machinery of the state in *King Henry VIII*, the extent of his culpability and the soundness of the witnesses and practices that bring about his conviction both remain in doubt.

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<sup>215</sup> See Blair Worden, ‘Shakespeare and Politics’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 44 (1991), 1-15 (p. 12).

<sup>216</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 134-35.

<sup>217</sup> Alexander Leggatt, ‘*Henry VIII* and the Ideal England’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1986), 131-44 (p. 135).

<sup>218</sup> *Henry VIII*, II. 1. 138-39.

The prophecy that has supposedly induced Buckingham to rebel against the Tudor monarchy seems to find a loyalist counterpoint in this play in the form of the prophecy uttered at the christening of the infant Princess Elizabeth by Cranmer. The Archbishop introduces his oration with the following words to the king:

Let me speak, sir,  
For heaven now bids me; and the words I utter  
Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth.<sup>219</sup>

The prophecy of Cranmer is Protestant where that of the 'devil monk' Hopkins is Catholic; purportedly true and divinely inspired where that of Hopkins is reportedly 'vain' and diabolic.<sup>220</sup> After the delivery of this prophecy in the final scene, Henry bestows royal approval on its contents with his remark, 'This oracle of comfort has so pleased me'.<sup>221</sup> Despite superficial appearances, however, this vatic encomium of the Tudor princess, which has no basis in any chronicle source, does not furnish an unproblematic riposte to the prediction of Hopkins that neither Henry nor his heirs will prosper.<sup>222</sup> Criticism of this play has rightly argued that the dramatists encourage audiences to regard this 'display[] of royally sponsored "truth"' with ambivalence.<sup>223</sup>

The vision of Cranmer concerns the reign of Elizabeth and that of her successor, King James I, the incumbent of the English throne when *King Henry VIII* was first performed in 1613. Frances Yates argued in 1975 that this play shared the Protestant apocalypticism characteristic of the texts and entertainments produced to celebrate the marriage concluded in February 1613 between Frederick V, Elector

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<sup>219</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 14-16.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 1. 21; I. 2. 147.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 65.

<sup>222</sup> Michael Davies, 'Converting Henry: Truth, History, and Historical Faith in *Henry VIII*', in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. by David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 258-79 (p. 277).

<sup>223</sup> Thomas Healy, 'History and Judgement in *Henry VIII*', in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 158-75 (p. 174).

Palatine, and another Princess Elizabeth: the daughter of King James. *King Henry VIII* was thus calculated to flatter the Stuart king, she contended, since it ‘belong[ed] to the hour in which King James seemed whole-heartedly on the side of the Union of Protestant Princes, to the head of which he was marrying his daughter’.<sup>224</sup> Also in 1975, Lee Bliss propounded the alternative, subsequently influential thesis that the prophecy of the Reformist Cranmer in the play did not in fact offer an unequivocal compliment to James. For the earliest audiences, she suggested, the christening speech would have amounted to ‘a glimpse of what a transformed England, under an inspired monarch, might be’, not a mid-Jacobean portrait of the actual religio-political fortunes of the nation since the break with Rome, spoken by an early sixteenth-century character in the mode of exultant prophecy.<sup>225</sup> Close analysis of the prophetic speech assigned by the playwrights to the character of Cranmer will ratify the suggestion of Bliss that its contents do not simply reflect the apparent biases of the apocalyptic propaganda for the Palatine wedding but rather encourage reflection upon the pragmatic omissions and evasions whereby prophetic panegyric is produced.

When *King Henry VIII* was first staged in 1613, ‘apocalyptic representations of Protestant Truth’ were in fashion.<sup>226</sup> In the mayoral pageant *The Triumphs of Truth*, for example, Thomas Middleton depicted the defeat of popish Error by Truth, a woman attired in a white robe and a starry diadem reminiscent of the crown of stars worn in Revelation 12.1 by the woman clothed with the sun, widely regarded as an allegory for the Protestant Church.<sup>227</sup> The ‘widespread nationalistic and Protestant fervour’ of that year constituted an enthusiastic response to the Palatine marriage and

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<sup>224</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Shakespeare’s Last Plays: A New Approach* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 76.

<sup>225</sup> Lee Bliss, ‘The Wheel of Fortune and the Maiden Phoenix of Shakespeare’s *King Henry the Eighth*’, *English Literary History*, 42 (1975), 1-25 (p. 23).

<sup>226</sup> Michelle O’Callaghan, *The ‘Shepherds Nation’: Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 94.

<sup>227</sup> Thomas Middleton, *The Triumphs of Truth* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), sig. B3<sup>v</sup>.

perhaps also an attempt to compensate for the death in November 1612 of Prince Henry, whom militant English Protestants had revered as their future champion.<sup>228</sup> The hopes previously invested in the Stuart prince shifted their focus to Frederick. At the time of his marriage, propagandists portrayed the Elector Palatine as the hero of a future ‘apocalyptic showdown with the omnipotent Habsburg regime’.<sup>229</sup> Critics such as Yates have described the prophetic oration devised by Shakespeare and Fletcher for Cranmer as a product of this mood of Protestant eschatological expectation. Others, however, have remarked that the scriptural prophecies obliquely referenced in the speech of the Archbishop are not in fact those of Revelation, the text routinely invoked in the militantly Protestant entertainments and writings of 1613; instead, they are to be found in the Old Testament.<sup>230</sup> The prediction of Cranmer that in the reign of Elizabeth ‘every man shall eat in safety | Under his own vine what he plants’ recalls I Kings 4.25 and Micah 4.4.<sup>231</sup> In the description of James as a ‘mountain cedar’ whose branches will spread to make new nations, echoes of Ezekiel 17.22-23 and 31.6 are perceptible.<sup>232</sup> Panegyric addresses to a princess named Elizabeth were common around the time of the earliest performances of *King Henry VIII*. (Some critics have indeed suggested that this play was written for the Palatine wedding celebrations, while others have insisted on the absence of evidence to support this hypothesis.<sup>233</sup>) To contemporary audiences attuned to the apocalyptic vocabulary typical of such encomia, the biblical allusions in Cranmer’s prophecy probably appeared anomalous.

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<sup>228</sup> Camille Wells Slight, ‘The Politics of Conscience in *All is True* (or *Henry VIII*)’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 43 (1991), 59-68 (p. 59).

<sup>229</sup> Ginzler, *Poetry, Politics and Promises of Empire*, p. 38.

<sup>230</sup> Gordon McMullan, ‘Shakespeare and the End of History’, *Essays and Studies*, 48 (1995), 16-37 (p. 32).

<sup>231</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 33-34.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4. 53.

<sup>233</sup> See, e.g. Howard Felperin, ‘Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*: History as Myth’, *Studies in English Literature*, 6 (1966), 225-46 (p. 244); see, e.g. Julia Gasper, ‘The Reformation Plays on the Public Stage’, in *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 190-216 (p. 207).

Via its excitation and subsequent disappointment of audience expectations for a climactic speech suffused with Protestant apocalypticism, ‘*Henry VIII* addresses Foxean history without embracing it’.<sup>234</sup> The hypothesis that the prophecy of Cranmer can be heard and read as a self-conscious reflection by the playwrights on the rhetorical manoeuvres involved in the production of propaganda is supported by the conspicuous absence of any reference to the two monarchs who occupied the English throne in the interval between the reigns of Henry and Elizabeth: Edward VI and Mary I. As previously discussed, the author of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ excluded the Catholic Mary and Philip from the ‘HEEI’ prophecy, which vilified the sequence of Reformist and Reformed monarchs from Henry VIII to James I as agents of the destruction of England. That Sibyllic prophecy formed a contrast to pro-Protestant narratives such as the one provided by John Speed in *The History of Great Britaine* (1611), where Henry was labelled ‘*the King that first vncrowned the head of the vsurping Beast*’ and James was hailed as ‘*that most royall and Christian Monarke, whose learned pen hath first depainted Antichrist, and pierced the heart of all Papall Supremacie*’.<sup>235</sup> Archbishop Cranmer in *King Henry VIII* is a Protestant propagandist who, like Speed, celebrates the transfer of Reformed kingship from Henry to James. From the vantage point of 1613, however, his vision of an England in which ‘God shall be truly known’ would have commanded the status of a ‘selective presentation of historical material’.<sup>236</sup> The exclusion of Mary, the elder half-sister of Elizabeth, from this vision is accentuated

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<sup>234</sup> Marsha S. Robinson, *Writing the Reformation: ‘Actes and Monuments’ and the Jacobean History Play* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 24.

<sup>235</sup> John Speed, *The History of Great Britaine under the Conquests of the Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans* (London: [William Hall and John Beale], 1611), sig. Vv2<sup>r</sup>; referenced by Donna B. Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 152.

<sup>236</sup> Baldo, ‘Necromancing the Past in *Henry VIII*’, p. 385; see also Frank V. Cespedes, “‘We are One in Fortunes’: The Sense of History in *Henry VIII*”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 10 (1980), 413-38 (p. 434).

by its replication in the response of the king to the Archbishop's encomium of his younger daughter: 'Never before | This happy child did I get anything.'<sup>237</sup>

Protestant propagandist motives on the part of the character of Cranmer account for the absence of any mention of the Catholic Mary in his prophecy. The omission of any reference to King Edward, her Protestant predecessor, might be considered a response by Shakespeare and Fletcher to the perceived dictates of the particular mid-Jacobean moment in which they wrote.<sup>238</sup> Gordon McMullan has suggested that the dramatists might have deemed it inappropriate to evoke the memory of 'a prince who died young, but at least survived long enough to be king' so soon after the death of Prince Henry.<sup>239</sup> It is also possible that the silence over Edward in the christening speech is calculated by the playwrights to make the prophetic credentials of Cranmer appear questionable. At the fictionalised historical moment when this speech is uttered, the birth of Edward lies four years in the future. The failure of the Archbishop to mention him could be accounted the result of a failure to foresee his arrival. The absence of the unborn younger brother of Elizabeth from the vision propounded by Cranmer might thus be deemed to expose the Archbishop's claim to the status of divinely inspired prophet as a mere rhetorical device.

The speech of Cranmer is received enthusiastically by the regnant monarch, Henry, within the fiction of the play. It is doubtful whether James I, who was King of England at the time of the composition and earliest performances of *King Henry VIII* and was the implied secondary recipient of this prophecy, would have been so unreservedly flattered by its contents. Cranmer labels Elizabeth a 'pattern to all

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<sup>237</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 63-64.

<sup>238</sup> See Anston Bosman, 'Seeing Tears: Truth and Sense in *All is True*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50 (1999), 459-76 (p. 474).

<sup>239</sup> Gordon McMullan, "'Swimming on Bladders': The Dialogics of Reformation in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*", in *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, ed. by Ronald Knowles (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 211-27 (p. 223).

princes living with her | And all that shall succeed'.<sup>240</sup> This account of the emulation of Queen Elizabeth by her royal contemporaries and successors might have provoked an ambivalent response from the king who had governed Scotland while she reigned in England and had followed her onto the English throne. Nostalgic recollections of the reign of Elizabeth were common in mid-Jacobean literature, where they typically served not to underline similarities between the governmental styles of the Tudor queen and her Stuart successor but to highlight their differences and thus obliquely to criticise James. William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613), for example, evoked the memory of the Elizabethan martial hero, the Earl of Essex, in the context of a lament for Prince Henry, whose Protestant militancy had promised one day to replace the unpopular (perceived) tolerationism of his father.<sup>241</sup> From the point of view of 1613, the words of Cranmer might hence have amounted to an awkward reminder of the much-maligned non-conformity of James to the 'pattern' of his predecessor.

Similarly ambivalent is the description of Elizabeth as a 'maiden phoenix' from whose ashes James will 'rise as great in fame as she was'.<sup>242</sup> This analogy for the Stuart succession of 1603 was used in various early Jacobean works of royal panegyric. An example is the dedication to King James, the 'new true PHÆNIX' risen from the 'Spicie Ashes of the sacred VRNE' of Elizabeth, printed in Josuah Sylvester's translation of the *Deuine Weekes and Workes* of du Bartas.<sup>243</sup> The playwrights echo such encomia and arguably also problematise them. Although the image of the phoenix ostensibly extols the renewal of the Reformed Elizabethan administration in the Jacobean Protestant state, it also potentially deemphasises continuity via its

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<sup>240</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 22-23.

<sup>241</sup> William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* ([London]: [Thomas Snodham for George Norton], 1613), sig. N2<sup>v</sup>; see David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 185.

<sup>242</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 40, 46.

<sup>243</sup> Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas, *Deuine Weekes and Workes*, trans. by Josuah Sylvester (London: Humfrey Lownes, 1605), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

obscuration of genealogical relationships. In an analysis of the employment of the phoenix topos by Dekker in the fiercely Protestant *The Whore of Babylon* (1607), John Watkins notes the rhetorical utility of this metaphor that ‘glosses over [...] the fact of James’s descent from Mary Stuart’.<sup>244</sup> The spontaneous regeneration topos that works to suppress the inconvenient memory of James’s Catholic mother might also be considered to gloss over connections that James found useful for propagandist purposes around the time of his English accession, such as his verifiable lineal descent from Henry VII.<sup>245</sup> Ivo Kamps has argued that *King Henry VIII* deliberately eschews any mention of the shared Tudor blood of Elizabeth and James so as to trouble the superficial jubilancy of its climactic speech. Such a mention would, he claims, ‘have given a sense of the rightness and inevitability of James’s reign that the image of the phoenix lacks’.<sup>246</sup> Positioned within a speech that tendentiously edits the sequence of monarchs from Henry VIII to King James I, the phoenix topos is made vulnerable to the scrutiny of audiences likely to be alert to ‘the subterfuges of propaganda’.<sup>247</sup>

The image of a family tree is used in the christening oration, not to describe the consanguinity of Elizabeth and James but to portray the Stuart king as a cedar who will ‘flourish’ and ‘reach his branches | To all the plains about him’.<sup>248</sup> The ‘odd resonance’ of this passage in a play written so soon after the Stuart tree had lost a significant branch in the form of Prince Henry has been noted.<sup>249</sup> Cranmer directly

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<sup>244</sup> John Watkins, “‘Out of her Ashes May a Second Phoenix Rise’: James I and the Legacy of Elizabethan Anti-Catholicism”, in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. by Arthur F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 116-36 (p. 128).

<sup>245</sup> See, e.g. Bergeron, ‘Francis Bacon’s *Henry VII*’, p. 18.

<sup>246</sup> Kamps, ‘Possible Pasts’, pp. 208-9.

<sup>247</sup> Amy Appleford, ‘Shakespeare’s Katherine of Aragon: Last Medieval Queen, First Recusant Martyr’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 40 (2010), 149-72 (p. 167).

<sup>248</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 52, 53-54.

<sup>249</sup> Judith H. Anderson, ‘Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*: The Changing Relation of Truth to Fiction’, in *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 124-54 (p. 153).

proceeds to prophesy, ‘Our children’s children | Shall see this and bless heaven’.<sup>250</sup> These words subtly remind the first audiences of *King Henry VIII* that they are the denizens of the Jacobean future that the Archbishop projects. These audiences are thus implicitly invited to judge whether the vision of Cranmer is indeed realised in their time. Given the recent death of the prince, their judgement would probably be negative. In several ways, the prophecy of Cranmer engages not only with the moment in Tudor history that causes its utterance within the fiction of the play but also with the religio-political situation of 1613. Both its eschewal of the apocalyptic register widely adopted by advocates of the Palatine wedding and its problematic treatment of metaphors familiar from succession-era panegyrics of James encourage critical reflection on the commonplaces of Stuart propaganda. It is noteworthy that *King Henry VIII* is a product of the same year of Protestant eschatological fervour that saw King James anonymously presented with ‘Balaam’s Asse’, the Catholic prophetic treatise that demonstrated the subvertible nature of the Reformed apocalyptic exegesis presented by the king as definitive in his propagandist ‘Monitory Preface’. The prophetic oration of Cranmer, as handled by the dramatists, shares the tendency of ‘Balaam’s Asse’ to scrutinise the rhetoric that serves to endorse the status quo in government and religion, although the play in which it appears does not share the polemical character of that treatise.

Cranmer prefaces his prophecy with the claim that it represents not ‘flattery’ but the ‘truth’. For audiences, the integrity of this claim is rendered dubious not only by the discrepancies between the contents of his vision and the actual events of the reigns of Elizabeth and James but also by the location of the prophecy at the end of a play in which Shakespeare and Fletcher have subtly exposed the partiality of

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<sup>250</sup> *Henry VIII*, v. 4. 54-55.

authorised 'truth'. The guilt of Buckingham, for example, has been established as fact within the play by a legal process over which the king appears to exercise control; it remains, however, uncertain from the point of view of the audience in the theatre. Buckingham is indicted for treason, apparently on account of his alleged interest in a prophecy about the demise of the Tudor dynasty. The justice of his conviction and execution on these grounds is questionable. Doubt also surrounds the justice of the traitor's death visited upon John Williams in 1619 (not on the scaffold of theatrical representation but on the real scaffold of execution) as punishment for his authorship of a treatise that prophesied the destruction of the Jacobean Protestant state. The extant documents that concern 'Balaam's Asse' and its attendant protracted law case expose the law as a wax nose that could be wrested to define instances of prophetic speculation as acts of treason; so too does Shakespeare and Fletcher's play. Both *King Henry VIII* and the recoverable contents of 'Balaam's Asse' also evince their authors' awareness of the rhetorical artifice of state-sponsored uses of prophecy and prophetic exegesis. The study of *King Henry VIII* and 'Balaam's Asse', each finished in 1613, reveals the status of prophecies as artificial proofs, both of treason on the one hand and of the legitimacy of Church and state on the other.

***Grave Tidings: Disinterment, Eschatological Prophecy, and  
the Thirty Years' War***

The policies adopted by King James in the later years of his reign received criticism in a number of arenas. His design to marry his son and heir, Prince Charles, to the Catholic Infanta of Spain met with the disapproval of a vocal, zealously Protestant segment of the English populace. So too did his reluctance to intervene on the side of his Protestant son-in-law, Frederick V of the Palatinate, in the continental conflict that would become known as the Thirty Years' War. The popular appetite for foreign news was strong at this time, when the European confessional wars were often discussed with reference to the final battle between the Romish Antichrist and the Reformed Church, long anticipated by Protestant apocalyptic exegetes.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have studied how objections to late Jacobean foreign policy were framed in apocalyptic terms in sermons such as Thomas Gataker's *A Sparke toward the Kindling of Sorrow for Sion* (1621) and how the government attempted to silence such objections through the promulgation of the 'Directions concerning Preachers' in August 1622.<sup>2</sup> Others

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Frearson, 'London Corantos in the 1620s', *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History*, 1 (1993), 3-17 (p. 14).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Salzman, *Literary Culture in Jacobean England: Reading 1621* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.52; Alexandra Walsham, "'The Fatall Vesper': Providentialism and Anti-Popery in Late Jacobean London', *Past and Present*, 144 (1994), 36-87 (p. 81); Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed*

have considered how protests against the rapprochement with Catholic Spain were articulated in printed pamphlets including those of Thomas Scott.<sup>3</sup> The circulation of militantly Protestant verse libels in the late Jacobean era has also received attention.<sup>4</sup> A very recent essay by Noah Millstone constitutes the first and, at present, the only published scholarly treatment of the verse and prose prophecies that circulated in manuscript in the fervid atmosphere of the late 1610s and early 1620s.<sup>5</sup> The present chapter offers further analysis of these texts from a different perspective. Millstone analyses the coterie circulation of these enigmatic prophecies and the attempts of collectors to decode them by means of their juxtaposition to similarly themed texts in manuscript miscellanies. This chapter, by contrast, focuses on practices of adaptation and reinterpretation. Its first section concerns prophecies that were portrayed as recently unearthed artefacts in their titles and prefatory comments. The second section discusses the survival of traditional prophecies concerning a last world emperor into the late Jacobean period. The third and final section considers how contemporary attitudes to James manifested themselves in the prophecies newly composed in the final years of his reign.

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*Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Lake, 'Constitutional Consensus and Puritan Opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), 805-25; Leticia Álvarez Recio, 'Opposing the Spanish Match: Thomas Scott's *Vox Populi* (1620)', *Sederi*, 19 (2009), 5-22.

<sup>4</sup> Alastair Bellany, "'Raylinge Rymes and Vaunting Verse": Libellous Politics in Early Stuart England, 1603-1628', in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 285-310; Thomas Cogswell, 'Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 60 (1997), 303-26; Andrew McRae, 'The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libeling', *Modern Philology*, 97 (2000), 364-92.

<sup>5</sup> Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham'.

## ARTEFACT OR FICTION?

In the early 1620s, an alleged event of 1608 piqued the interest of several manuscript compilers. Among them was the antiquary Roger Dodsworth. An extant historical miscellany compiled by Dodsworth contains a late Jacobean copy of an indulgence reportedly granted to an English knight, Gerard Braybrooke, by Pope Boniface IX in 1391. This Latin text is prefaced by a brief account in English of its fairly recent rediscovery beneath the floor of St Paul's Cathedral. According to this account, the indulgence was found tied to Braybrooke's coffin by a length of rope when his grave was broken open in June 1608 for the interment of the lawyer Richard Swale.<sup>6</sup> Copies of the original text of the indulgence and an English translation thereof also feature among texts entered in the early 1620s into Harley MS 358, an antiquarian miscellany now preserved in the British Library.<sup>7</sup> Another late Jacobean copy of the Latin text survives amid entries of 1622 and 1623 in the miscellany of John Rous, the Church of England cleric from Santon Downham, Suffolk, whose manuscripts are of recognised value to scholars of early Stuart news culture and popular opinion.<sup>8</sup> The possibly apocryphal nature of the tale of the exhumation of the indulgence in 1608 is suggested by the fact that no contemporary record of that incident appears to survive: the earliest discoverable accounts date from the 1620s. It is conceivable that the text of the

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<sup>6</sup> Bodl., MS Dodsworth 145, fol. 68<sup>r</sup>. The antiquary William Dugdale, a colleague of Dodsworth's, included a copy of the indulgence and an account of its early Jacobean rediscovery in *The History of St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Thomas Warren, 1658), sig. N1<sup>r-v</sup>. Dugdale's version of the story of the disinterment of Gerard Braybrooke in 1608 was mentioned in 1857 by two contributors to *Notes and Queries*, J. G. N. and H. C., in their exchange on the subject of the exhumation and mutilation of the corpse of Sir Gerard's kinsman and contemporary Bishop Robert Braybrooke following the Great Fire of London. See J. G. N., 'Old St Paul's and Bishop Braybrooke', *Notes and Queries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 62 (1857), 185-86; and the untitled reply from H. C., *Notes and Queries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 62 (1857), 186-87.

<sup>7</sup> BL, Harley MS 358, fols 11<sup>r</sup>-12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>; see, e.g. Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), 60-90 (p. 65); Thomas Cogswell, 'The Politics of Propaganda: Charles I and the People in the 1620s', *Journal of British Studies*, 29 (1990), 187-215 (p. 215).

indulgence was found in an old manuscript by an antiquarian researcher in the late Jacobean era and made the subject of a spurious archaeological narrative at that time.

Additional doubt surrounds the integrity of a longer version of this tale of rediscovery, extant in the seventeenth-century manuscript miscellany of the recusant Shann family of Methley, West Yorkshire.<sup>9</sup> In the Shann manuscript, the description of the revelation precipitated by the attempted burial of Richard Swale is preceded by an entry about the mass release of Catholics from English prisons in the summer of 1622 ‘by the gracious pardon of the Kinge’.<sup>10</sup> The ‘toleration of 1622’, exemplified by the liberation of incarcerated Catholics, constituted a conciliatory overture by King James to the Catholic King Philip IV of Spain, to whose sister he wished to marry his son Charles.<sup>11</sup> Militant English Protestants resented the projected Spanish match and the attendant ‘*de facto* toleration of the English Catholics’ and wanted James to show greater support for his son-in-law Frederick, who had lost the crown of Bohemia and was shortly to lose his ancestral lands in the continental confessional wars.<sup>12</sup> The Catholic Richard Shann followed his appreciative report of the liberation of his co-religionists with a unique account of the disinterment of Braybrooke in 1608, which worked to portray the circumstances of that incident as miraculous.

According to the text entered by Richard Shann in the family miscellany, the coffin to which the indulgence was attached was opened and found to contain the two-hundred-year-old corpse of Braybrooke ‘as saife and sound from putrefaction, as

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<sup>9</sup> On the Shann family, see Alexandra Walsham, ‘Supping with Satan’s Disciples: Spiritual and Secular Sociability in Post-Reformation England’, in *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England*, ed. by Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 29-55 (p. 51); Phebe Jensen, ‘“Honest Mirth and Merriment”: Christmas and Catholicism in Early Modern England’, in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. by Lowell Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 213-44 (pp. 224-25).

<sup>10</sup> BL, Add. MS 38599, fol. 54<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Questier, ed., *Stuart Dynastic Policy and Religious Politics, 1621-1625*, Camden Fifth Series, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, p. 20.

if it had beene but fowre daies buried'.<sup>13</sup> Whereas this story differs markedly from the other extant late Jacobean records of the discovery at St Paul's, it bears comparison with a passage in William Burton's *The Description of Leicester Shire* (1622) that describes the opening of the Warwickshire grave of Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset, in 1608. Burton noted that the seventy-eight-year-old corpse of Grey was found wholly uncorrupted, 'the flesh of the body nothing perished or hardned, but in colour, proportion and softnesse, alike to any ordinary corpes newly to be interred'.<sup>14</sup> The similarities between this narrative and the text in the Shann miscellany raise the possibility that the latter text conflated two distinct records of exhumations performed in 1608 in order to create a fictional tale about a corpse preserved intact through the miraculous operation of the papal indulgence buried with it. If this is the case, it is noteworthy that the description of the corpse of Braybrooke in the Shann manuscript contains no equivalent of Burton's claim that the immaculacy of the body of Grey was attributable to the mundane process of 'strong embalming'.<sup>15</sup> In 1622, when government policy seemed to portend the improvement of the fortunes of Catholics in England, the recusant Shann family perhaps seized on the idea that a miraculous corpse had been disinterred in the reign of the present king as a prop to their hopes that Catholicism, forced 'underground' by the Reformation, might be on the brink of re-emergence into the light of toleration under James.<sup>16</sup>

Of the various recoverable accounts of the alleged events at St Paul's in 1608, that in the Shann miscellany is both the only one to mention the condition of the body of Braybrooke and the only one not to reproduce the text of the indulgence. If the Shann family derived a consolatory tale about a miraculously preserved body from

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<sup>13</sup> BL, Add. MS 38599, fols 55<sup>v</sup>-56<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> William Burton, *The Description of Leicester Shire* (London: John White, 1622), sig. G2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. G2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> See Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*, p. 3.

this supposed incident, its appeal to the other manuscript compilers perhaps consisted instead in its status as one of a number of stories about disinterred textual artefacts to circulate in manuscript in the late Jacobean era. Many of the supposedly exhumed texts that attracted interest at this time were prophecies.

Historians have noted that manuscript political prophecies of the early modern period were often accompanied by prefatory comments that described their discovery in some subterranean or intramural hiding-place.<sup>17</sup> This ‘archaeological *topos*’ has been described as ‘a validating charter for unsettling predictions about future political, religious or social upheaval’.<sup>18</sup> In the atmosphere of Anglo-Spanish tension and prophetic expectation that preceded the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, John Harvey published *A Discoursiue Probleme concerning Prophecies*, which noted disparagingly that the many prophecies widely discussed at that time were typically alleged to have been found ‘in some old stonie wall, or vnder some altar, or in some ancient window, or in some darke caue, or deepe dungeon’.<sup>19</sup> Henry Howard had made similar comments five years previously in his polemical treatise, *A Defensatiue against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (1583).<sup>20</sup> Howard’s condemnation of popular prophetic speculation was reprinted for the first time in 1620 and for the second time in 1622. Its reappearance in late Jacobean England, where the attribution of possible eschatological significance to the religious wars on the continent was rife despite royal disapproval, coincided with a particularly active manuscript circulation of prophecies that purported to have been recently exhumed.

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<sup>17</sup> See Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 463; Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Inventing the Lollard Past: The Afterlife of a Medieval Sermon in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58 (2007), 628-55 (p. 648).

<sup>19</sup> John Harvey, *A Discoursiue Probleme concerning Prophecies* (London: Richard Watkins, 1588), sig. K1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Howard, *A Defensatiue*, sig. li3<sup>v</sup>.

Archaeological narratives were sometimes used to claim antique status for modern pseudo-prophecies in the late 1610s and early 1620s. Some of the prophetic texts to which such narratives became attached in this period, on the other hand, were genuine products of former times, repurposed to appear predictive of contemporary events. One such text was a prophetic poem in which political vicissitudes were represented as throws of the dice. On 18 January 1624, one J. M. made a copy of this poem, which he claimed to have taken from ‘an old written paper sayd to haue bin brought out of the Tower by Sir William Wade and stopt in a hole in a wall in his house where it was taken out after his death’.<sup>21</sup> William Waad was Lieutenant of the Tower of London from 1605 to 1611; he died in 1623. Whether or not the tale of the removal of this prophecy from an old manuscript at the Tower by Waad in the early seventeenth century was true, the text was undoubtedly more than a century old at the time of its transcription by J. M. A copy dated 1520 survives among the State Papers of the reign of Henry VIII.<sup>22</sup> The revival of this text in the late Jacobean period is probably attributable to its amenability to topical exposition at that time. The series of dice-throws it described could be interpreted as a reference to the year 1623. The first throw yielded one and six, or sixteen: ‘When Ase beareth vp syse’. The account of the second throw, which put ‘sinke and kater [...] on one side’, could be deemed a direction to ignore the numbers four and five. Two and three, or twenty-three, was the product of the final roll: ‘When Deux putteth forth traye then all is spent | Then must we come to a new parlyament’.<sup>23</sup> The failure of the Spanish match negotiations in 1623 deprived the Stuart government of the Infanta’s dowry. The fiscal difficulties thus created for King James compelled him to summon parliament on 30 December in that year. J. M. transcribed the dice prophecy a mere three weeks after that event.

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<sup>21</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, SP 1/232, fols 253<sup>v</sup>-254<sup>r</sup>; referenced by Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>.

A rare example of a prophecy that appeared in print in the late Jacobean period is *A Prophetie of the Iudgment Day* (see Figure 2).<sup>24</sup> This broadside featured an apocalyptic prose prophecy that briefly predicted the events of each year of the 1620s in turn, with the exceptions of 1621 and 1627. A ballad, to the tune of ‘The Lady’s Fall’, expounded this series of predictions in a series of corresponding eight-line stanzas. The prose text read as follows:

- 1620. There shall be great warres through Italy.
- 1622. There shall not be a Shepheard to feed the Flocke.
- 1623. The wrath of God shall shew it selfe through the whole World.
- 1624. God shall be knowne but of a few.
- 1625. A Great Man shall arise.
- 1626. *Affrica* shall burne: the Sunne shall be darkned etc. *Math. 24.29.*  
And the Moone shall be bluddy. *Reue. 6.12.*
- 1628. There shall be an vniuersall Earth-quake.
- 1629. Infidels shall know the Trinity and vnitie of the Godhead.
- 1630. The Ryuers shall be dried vp, and there shall be but one  
Shepheard, and one Sheepefolde.

No date of publication appears on this broadside. Based on the year to which the first listed prediction is applied, the *English Short Title Catalogue* conjecturally dates the text to 1620. Alexandra Walsham, who describes this piece of ephemera as a general ‘vehicle[] for moral exhortation’, supports this conjecture.<sup>25</sup> A different publication date suggests itself, however, if the expository stanza for the prediction for 1622 is perceived to contain a specific reference to a current event. This stanza exhorted its readers and hearers to pray ‘that we may not be bereft, | of Pastors, vs to teach’ and that God would send ‘good men his word to Preach’. It is possible that these lines offered an oblique protest against the ‘Directions concerning Preachers’, issued by

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<sup>24</sup> *A Prophetie of the Iudgment Day*. See EBBA 20171, Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys 1.36-37; *A Pepysian Garland: Black-Letter Broadside Ballads of the Years 1595-1639 Chiefly from the Collection of Samuel Pepys*, ed. by Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 112-15.

<sup>25</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 176.

King James in August 1622 to prohibit the treatment of state matters in sermons. If so, the year 1622 would constitute a *terminus a quo* for the publication of this text.

The list of predictions for the 1620s, hereafter dubbed the ‘St Denis prophecy’ after the Parisian abbey in which it was purportedly discovered in the year 1616, was copied from the printed broadside text by the compiler of MS K.56, a miscellaneous collection of historical papers and late Jacobean verse libels now preserved at St John’s College, Cambridge.<sup>26</sup> The ballad that accompanied the printed version of the text was not copied into this manuscript. Several manuscript copies of the St Denis prophecy survive from the late 1610s and early 1620s. Millstone, who mentions this text only in passing, references seven of these copies.<sup>27</sup> To his list a further five copies in English, two in Latin, and one in German can be added.<sup>28</sup> Many of the extant late Jacobean manuscripts in which this prophecy can be found also contain examples of militantly Protestant political poems written in that period. The presence of a copy in the Shann family miscellany demonstrates, however, that this text did not appeal exclusively to collectors with evangelical sympathies.<sup>29</sup> Of the various surviving manuscript copies of the St Denis prophecy from the era of the Spanish match negotiations and the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, only three derive from the broadside, whose description of the envelopment of the prophecy in a leaden heart and omission of a prediction for 1621 are both distinctive.<sup>30</sup>

The series of forecasts that culminated in an echo of John 10.16 (‘there shall be one fold, and one shepherd’) attained the height of its popularity in the late

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<sup>26</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 7, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Millstone, ‘The Rector of Santon Downham’, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> BL, Add. MS 15891, fol. 204<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Tanner 88, fol. 253<sup>v</sup>; Cambridgeshire Archives, P50/1/3: Cottenham parish register, 1614-65, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>; Folger, MS V.a.339, fol. 22<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 165<sup>f</sup>, referenced by Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, p. 168n; Beinecke, MS Osborn b.101, p. 58; TNA, SP 14/90, fol. 49<sup>f</sup>; Haldensleben, Germany, Schloss Hundisburg, MS Alv. Ng 178, fol. 80<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> BL, Add. MS 38599, fol. 58<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> St John’s, MS K.56, Item 7, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; Folger, MS V.a.275, p. 176; Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 231.

Jacobean era but was not a product of that time. The text had circulated in manuscript in England and on the continent since the 1570s, the decade to which its predictions originally referred. Jonathan Green has noted that a Latin copy from that decade survives in a Swiss manuscript.<sup>31</sup> An English manuscript, MS Arch. Selden B.8 in the Bodleian Library, contains another Latin copy of this prophecy, in which the 1570s are likewise the subject of the list of predictions. The prefatory comments to this version of the prophecy claim that the original was found in a late fourteenth-century chronicle of Italy and sent to the German classical scholar Joachim Camerarius (*d.*1574) at Augsburg, where it still remained in the 1570s.<sup>32</sup>

It was apparently in the 1590s that stories of the discovery of this apocalyptic prophecy in the Abbey of St Denis in Paris first began to appear. In that decade, Simon Forman entered a copy of the text into his alchemical miscellany. His version applied the series of predictions to the 1590s and bore the title:

Prophecies found engrauen in a marble stone of 8 cubites in breadth  
And 12 in length in St Dennis churchyard in Parris in Fraunce, in Ebrue  
letters beinge plucked downe by the commaundement of the  
magistrates[.]<sup>33</sup>

The claim that the prophetic textual artefact discovered at St Denis was written in Hebrew endured into the late Jacobean period. Whereas *A Prophecie of the Iudgment Day* described the discovery of the text in a container made of lead, many of the manuscript copies produced around the time of the publication of this broadside

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Green, '1570-80', <<http://researchfragments.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/1570-80.html>> [accessed 20 August 2015]. Green points out that this prophecy is inaccurately analysed in Willem Frijhoff, *Embodied Belief: Ten Essays on Religious Culture in Dutch History* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> Bodl., MS Arch. Selden B.8, fol. 300<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1490, fol. 106<sup>v</sup>. See also Gregor Jordan, *Propheceyung vnnd [sic] Weissagung von erschrecklichen vnd grewlichen Widerwertigkeiten, so dem gantzen Erdenkreiß vberkommen vnd anstehen; Neben einer vnerhörten Weissagung, so in der Statt Pariß dis 91. Jars, in einem Thurn, welcher eingeschossen, darinn ein Seul von Marmelstein gestanden, darauff in Hebreisch vnnd [sic] Latin dieselbig gehawen, erfunden worden* (Cologne: [n. pub.], 1591).

reported instead that the prophecy had been found in a marble casket.<sup>34</sup> This detail perhaps represented a mutation of late sixteenth-century accounts such as Forman's that reported the inscription of the text on a marble stone. When George Carew included a transcript of the St Denis prophecy in a newsletter to Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador to Mughal India, in January 1617, he remarked that the original had reportedly been found in a marble container at the base of a pillar in the Parisian abbey. He dismissed this text and other similar prophecies as '*las patrannas dellas mugeres viejas*' ('old wives' tales') but apparently deemed it worthy of inclusion in his European news report despite its lack of genuine vatic insight. Current reports claimed, according to Carew, that the prophecy had been conveyed from Paris via papal nuncio to Camillo Borghese, Pope Paul V, in December 1616.<sup>35</sup> The same detail about the delivery of the St Denis prophecy to the pope was recorded by the Tirolese Paracelsian Adam Haselmayer on his manuscript copy, which Susanna Åkerman has located at the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel.<sup>36</sup>

If the apocalyptic St Denis text attracted the interest of such alchemical enthusiasts as Simon Forman in the 1590s and Adam Haselmayer in the late 1610s, it also appealed to the general reader, exemplified by the compiler of MS V.a.339 in the Folger Shakespeare Library, who glossed the prophecy with a versified exhortation to repentance copied from Henry Alleyn's almanac for the year 1608.<sup>37</sup> The compiler of MS Ee.5.36, a quarto collection of sixteen political prophecies produced in 1623 and preserved in Cambridge University Library, used the margins of his manuscript to compare the St Denis prophecy to another apocalyptic forecast for the 1620s: a

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<sup>34</sup> See, e.g. the Shann miscellany.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, SP 14/90, fol. 49<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Wolfenbüttel, Germany, Herzog August Bibliothek, MS Cod. Guelf. 31.8 Aug. 2<sup>o</sup>, fols 73-76; Susanna Åkerman, *Rose Cross over the Baltic: The Spread of Rosicrucianism in Northern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 156.

<sup>37</sup> Folger, MS V.a.339, fol. 22<sup>r</sup>; Henry Alleyn, *Alleyns Almanacke; or, A Double Diarie for this Yeare of Our Lord God, 1608* (London: Company of Stationers, [1608]), sig. C8<sup>v</sup>.

prophecy allegedly discovered inside ‘an Hierogliphicall Watch or Clock found in the Librarie of Prague in Bohemia’.<sup>38</sup> The prefatory comments to the latter text claimed that it had been found in 1621 after the combined forces of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II and the German Catholic League had defeated the Palatine forces and deprived Frederick of the Bohemian crown at the Battle of White Mountain. This Prague prophecy was a subject of German pamphlet literature in 1621; the following year, translations began to appear in English manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> The text was manifestly a recent composition, conceived as propaganda for the Palatine cause. It imagined the present European confessional conflict in eschatological terms and predicted a triumph for Protestantism in 1626, when religious factionalism would cease and the earth would be as one sheepfold (*‘vnum ouile’*) under one shepherd (*‘vnus pastor’*).<sup>40</sup>

Although widely reproduced in late Jacobean manuscripts, the claim that the apocalyptic forecast for the 1620s had been unearthed recently at St Denis Abbey was false. The text was an adaptation of a prophecy that had circulated in manuscript in England and on the continent since the 1570s, at which time it had been applied to events of that decade. Through the use of the archaeological topos, the editorial sleights that had refashioned a prophecy of the 1570s as a prophecy of the 1620s were de-emphasised. The exhumation narrative attributed to this text was also appropriate to its apocalyptic subject matter: the disinterment of this prophecy constituted the revelation of a text that purported to furnish revelations about the end times.

Another prophetic text supposedly exhumed from the foundations of a continental religious edifice in the 1620s is preserved among the State Papers in the

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<sup>38</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fols 2<sup>r</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>. For a discussion of the Prague prophecy and late Jacobean English manuscript versions thereof, see Millstone, ‘The Rector of Santon Downham’, p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> See Gilly, ‘The “Midnight Lion”, the “Eagle” and the “Antichrist”’, p. 53; Leigh Penman, ‘A Seventeenth-Century Prophet Confronts his Failures: Paul Felgenhauer’s *Speculum Poenitentiae, Buß-Spiegel* (1625)’, in *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 169-200 (p. 177).

<sup>40</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>.

National Archives. Three copies survive of a prophecy purportedly discovered at Rocca Contrada (now Arcevia) in Ancona, Italy, when the foundations of an ancient fortification were laid bare for the construction of a Capuchin convent in the Jubilee year 1625. One of the extant copies of this text is in Latin; another is a translation of this Latin version into English; the other is a separate English version of the text.<sup>41</sup> According to the archaeological fiction attached to the Latin version, the prophecy was engraved on a sheet of lead found underground at the site of the old castle during the construction of the convent.<sup>42</sup> The exhumation narrative that accompanies the English version of the prophecy alleges that the text was inscribed not on lead but on a stone that formed part of a ‘very thick wall’ among the ruins of the castle.<sup>43</sup> The presence of clear topical allusions in this supposed prophecy leaves the twenty-first-century reader in no doubt of the spuriousness of its claims to antiquity. Composed in 1625, at the moment of its alleged rediscovery, the Rocca Contrada prophecy reads:

When this house of warre shall be destroyed and a house of prayer be erected then at length shall I come to light and then shall be a time of saluacion and the yeare of sanctificacion. The Foxe shall desire (but in vaine) to be vnited to the Eagle but shall be Ioynd to the (Gallo) Cocke, and then woe be to the world for nacion shall rise against nation and kingdome against kingdome, but especially woe be to the o Rome, for thy Pastor (whose Armes shall be the Bees) shall lament ouer the[e] with great lamentacions, for thy sorrowes shall be greate. Euen as a sea shall they Rush vpon the[e]: and shee who was the Mistress of the world shall be turned into a denne of theeues. Woe be to the[e] o Rome Woe be to the[e] o Rome Woe be to the[e] o Rome.<sup>44</sup>

The fox and the eagle represented England and Spain respectively, and the doomed attempt of the fox to unite itself to the eagle figured the failure of the negotiations for the marriage of Prince Charles to the Spanish Infanta in 1623. France was the cock,

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<sup>41</sup> TNA, SP 85/5, fol. 158<sup>r</sup>; *Ibid.*, fol. 160<sup>r</sup>; *Ibid.*, fol. 187<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, SP 85/5, fol. 158<sup>r</sup>; English translation on fol. 160<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, SP 85/5, fol. 187<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 187<sup>r</sup>.

and the seeming prediction that the fox would be joined to the cock in fact alluded to a contemporary event: the matrimonial union of Charles and Henrietta Maria of France in 1625. The Romish pastor blazoned by bees was Urban VIII, who was pope in 1625 when the prophecy was allegedly ‘found’. Urban VIII bore three bees on his coat of arms. Portrayed as an artefact in the accounts of its provenance, the text allegedly unearthed at Rocca Contrada was really a comment on contemporary European politics and an endorsement of the Protestant cause in the continental wars.

James Maxwell, the Scottish scholar and promoter of the Jacobean Church settlement, had presented English readers with a different anti-Catholic prophecy, likewise purportedly connected to an Italian building, in 1615. His *Admirable and Notable Prophecies*, a compilation of European vaticinal texts in translation, had been published that year. Maxwell had spent much of the first decade of the seventeenth century searching ecclesiastical libraries on the Continent for evidence that pre-Reformation prophets had advocated the correction of abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. While many of the prophecies he included or described in his printed collection represented the fruits of his researches among written monuments preserved in archives, Maxwell did not disdain to reference or reproduce material he had encountered in ephemeral literature such as printed newsbooks. His account of a prognostic text discovered in a vault in a Calabrian abbey, for example, was derived from a mid-1590s issue of *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*, the periodical edited by Michael Jansonius and printed at Cologne. Like the Rocca Contrada prophecy that was to attract English interest a decade later, the text reportedly exhumed in Calabria was said to have been unearthed during construction work on an old building. Maxwell described how the sepulchre containing the prophecy had been uncovered in 1593 when some masons commissioned by the abbot, Petrus-Paulus, had demolished a wall

in order to reconfigure the foundations of the abbey. Inside the sepulchre was the nearly wasted corpse of Abbot Werde of Hydruntum, who had died in 1279. In the hand of the corpse was a silver plate engraved with these words: ‘*Cum sancta Ciuitas fulgebit splendore stellæ, soliterum me videbit, etc.* When the holy Citie shall be enlightened by a bright starre, then shall the Sunne see me againe.’<sup>45</sup>

Beneath the head of the three-centuries-old body of the abbot, Maxwell reported, was a marble chest that contained a leaden box. In that box was a scrap of parchment on which was written a prophecy of the despoliation of Italian cities and the dread exploits of ‘the Mahumetan Dragon’.<sup>46</sup> Maxwell included this text in a collection of supposedly medieval prophecies that, in his view, could be read as prefigurations and vaticinal endorsements of contemporary criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. The presence of apparent topical allusions indicates, however, that the text was not as old as the description of its provenance adapted by Maxwell from a twenty-year-old volume of *Mercurius Gallobelgicus* suggested. In 1593, when the text was purportedly rediscovered, a Turkish fleet looted the Calabrian coast. It seems likely that the account of the persecution of Italy at the hands of a ‘Mahumetan Dragon’ constituted an oblique reference to this assault by an Islamic foe. This prophecy, like the one that supposedly resurfaced at Rocca Contrada in 1625, was in all probability a modern text rhetorically disguised as an antique.

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<sup>45</sup> James Maxwell, *Admirable and Notable Prophecies, Vttered in Former Times by 24 Famous Romain-Catholickes* (London: Edward Allde, 1615), sig. K3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K3<sup>v</sup>.

## PROPHECIES OF A LAST WORLD EMPEROR

Another text anthologised by Maxwell in *Admirable and Notable Prophecies* was a paraphrase of the widely circulated fourteenth-century prophetic text that Marjorie Reeves has termed the ‘Second Charlemagne Prophecy’.<sup>47</sup> This prophecy, Reeves has shown, married the chiliasm of the twelfth-century Italian mystic Joachim of Fiore to the last world emperor legend, an eschatological prophetic tradition that perhaps had its roots in the fourth century AD, when the conversion of Constantine necessitated a reappraisal of the hitherto negative role afforded to Roman Emperors in Christian apocalyptic literature.<sup>48</sup> The ‘earliest surviving witness’ to the last world emperor tradition is the seventh-century Syriac work, *The Revelations of the Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>49</sup> This text placed elements of the medieval Alexander legend into a Christian eschatological framework and so prophesied that a Christian hero would arrive to eradicate Islam and to establish Christianity as the universal religion in the final age of blessedness before the end of the world.<sup>50</sup> The coming of the eschaton would be signalled, according to this work of anti-Islamic propaganda, by the release of Gog and Magog from behind the Gates of the North, which would cause Christians to ‘flee in terror to hide themselves in mountains and caves and graves’.<sup>51</sup> The unclean nations would wreak destruction until their annihilation by God, at which time the last world emperor would enter Jerusalem, there to remain until the advent of

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<sup>47</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 328; see Capp, ‘The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic Thought’, p. 102.

<sup>48</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 328; see also Bernard McGinn, ‘Symbolism in the Thought of Joachim of Fiore’, in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. by Ann Williams (Harlow: Longman, 1980), pp. 145-64 (pp. 150-51).

<sup>49</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> See Michael W. Twomey, ‘The Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius and Scriptural Study at Salisbury in the Eleventh Century’, in *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. by Charles D. Wright, Frederick M. Biggs, and Thomas N. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 370-86 (p. 371).

<sup>51</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 75.

the Antichrist. This event would prompt the emperor to ascend Golgotha and place his crown upon the Holy Cross, whereupon crown and cross would be assumed into heaven and he would breathe his last. The Antichrist would then reign over the earth until the cessation of history.<sup>52</sup> These events formed the basic scenario of the last world emperor prophecy, which would be revived and adapted many times in the millennium that followed its delineation by the Pseudo-Methodius.

The longevity of the last world emperor prophecy is attributable to its openness to infinite political interpretations. Various exegetes at various historical moments identified contemporary political actors as its protagonists. In the tenth century, for example, the opponents of the first Saxon Holy Roman Emperor Otto I retrospectively identified Charlemagne as the last world emperor who had presided over the final age of prosperity on earth; thus, they identified Otto as the Antichrist.<sup>53</sup> The medieval Latin versions of the prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl supplied the last world emperor tradition with a detail that would resurface in many later iterations: they promised that the Christian emperor would lead a great crusade and that he would put to the sword all those who refused to ‘adore the Cross of Jesus Christ’.<sup>54</sup>

Followers of the twelfth-century chiliast Joachim of Fiore brought his theory of a third *status*, or blessed Age of the Holy Spirit on earth after the reign of the Antichrist, to bear on the interpretation of the last world emperor prophecy.<sup>55</sup> The Hohenstaufen Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, a notorious enemy of the papacy, was identified by Italian Joachimites during his lifetime as the Antichrist of that prophetic tradition. German Joachimites meanwhile identified him as the hero of the

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<sup>52</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Reeves, ‘Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor’, p. 324.

same legend.<sup>56</sup> After Frederick died in 1250, the failure of the glorious third *status* to begin as prophesied prompted the introduction of a new figure into the last world emperor tradition: a notional Hohenstaufen Frederick III, as yet unborn, whom the Italian Joachimites designated the true Antichrist.<sup>57</sup> German Joachimites retaliated with the identification of this future Frederick as a hero.<sup>58</sup>

The non-Joachimite German scholar and clergyman Alexander of Roes responded to the death of Frederick II and concomitant collapse of the Hohenstaufen dynasty with the claim that a second Charlemagne, of Teutonic stock, would arrive in the future to fulfil the role of the last world emperor prior to the advent of the Antichrist in the person of Frederick III, after which the world would end in the year 1500. Reeves suggests that Alexander's ignorance of the German Joachimite tradition that portrayed Frederick III as the last world emperor accounts for his tortuous installation of a German descendant of Charlemagne in that role.<sup>59</sup> She notes that in his writings 'we encounter for the first time the Third Frederick as tyrant and the Second Charlemagne as saviour placed in the dramatic juxtaposition in which we shall meet them many times'.<sup>60</sup> This juxtaposition was reproduced in *The Great Tribulations and the State of the Church*, a work by the late fourteenth-century Italian Joachimite, Telesphorus of Cosenza. Around 1386, Telesphorus significantly revised this work of the 1360s in response to the Western Schism.<sup>61</sup> His revised text predicted that Frederick III, a tyrannical emperor of German extraction, would form an alliance

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<sup>56</sup> David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane, 1988; repr. London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 431; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 108-26.

<sup>57</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 308.

<sup>58</sup> Dietrich Kurze, 'Nationale Regungen in der spätmittelalterlichen Prophetie', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 202 (1966), 1-23 (p. 7).

<sup>59</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 313.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>61</sup> Bernard McGinn, 'Portraying Antichrist in the Middle Ages', in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Werner Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), pp. 1-48 (p. 24).

with an evil pseudo-pope to attack the true church. These allies would be confronted, Telesphorus claimed, by a French king named Charles, descended from Pepin (the father of Charlemagne), in alliance with the legitimate pope.<sup>62</sup> This version of the last world emperor legend imported the figures of the rival true and false popes from *The Angelic Oracle of Cyril*, a late thirteenth-century Joachimite text that prophesied a conflict between a holy *orthopontifex* and an evil *pseudopontifex*.<sup>63</sup> In the second edition of *The Great Tribulations*, these figures clearly signified two contemporary actors in European religious politics: the pope at Rome, Urban VI (Bartolomeo Prignano), and the anti-pope at Avignon, Clement VII (Robert of Geneva). The question whether Urban or Clement should be acknowledged as the legitimate pope divided Europe. France endorsed the Avignon papacy. So too did Telesphorus, through his depiction of the *orthopontifex* as the ally of a French king.

There was a close affinity, as Reeves has shown, between the revised edition of *The Great Tribulations* and the anonymous Second Charlemagne prophecy, which was copied immediately after the Telesphorean text in at least two medieval manuscripts and which became ‘one of the most widely disseminated oracles’ of the medieval and early modern periods in its own right.<sup>64</sup> Likewise a product of the time of the Western Schism, this short Latin prose prophecy contained many details also to be found in the work by Telesphorus. Both texts described the last world emperor as a French king named Charles, who would receive the imperial diadem from a true, or ‘angelic’, pope. Both prophecies also claimed that Charles would succeed the emperor Frederick III, a persecutor of the true Christian Church and an ally of the pseudo-pope, and that Charles would eventually resign his office on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem before the Second Coming. The opening words of the Second Charlemagne

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<sup>62</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 326.

<sup>63</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 187.

<sup>64</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 328.

prophecy gave the name and physical description of its hero: '*Karolus filius Karoli ex natione illustrissimi Lili habens frontem longam, supercilia alta, oculos longos, nasum aquilinum*' ('Charles the son of Charles from the nation of the most illustrious lily, possessed of a large forehead, high brow, long eyes, and an aquiline nose').<sup>65</sup> The lily, the heraldic symbol of the French monarchy, indicated that the imperial hero Charles would be French. His description as a 'son of Charles' might be interpreted either literally or, more loosely, as a claim that he would descend from Charlemagne.

The earliest known surviving copy of the Second Charlemagne prophecy contains an account of the destruction of the clergymen who have usurped Peter's seat, perpetrated by the valiant emperor Charles. Maurice Chaume, the finder of this transcript, dates it to 1381 or 1382 and contends that it was made very soon after the prophecy was first conceived.<sup>66</sup> He identifies the protagonist as Charles VI, who succeeded his father Charles V as King of France on 16 September 1380 and was thus 'le premier roi Charles, fils de Charles, qui eût existé en France'.<sup>67</sup> Chaume interprets the passage about the usurpation of the seat of Peter as an *ex eventu* prophecy of the return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome in April 1378, which would lead a few months later to the election of the anti-pope Clement VII at Avignon.<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere in this early text of the Second Charlemagne prophecy, the flight of tyrants '*in montibus et cavernis*' ('into the mountains and caves') at the sight of Charles was described.<sup>69</sup> This prediction had been a feature of the last world emperor legend since at least as early as the seventh century, when it appeared in the work of the Pseudo-Methodius.

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<sup>65</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 328.

<sup>66</sup> M. Chaume, 'Une prophétie relative à Charles VI', *Revue du moyen âge latin*, 3 (1947), 27-42 (p. 30).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The late fourteenth-century Second Charlemagne prophecy narrated the career of *Karolus filius Karoli* (Charles, the son of Charles), the bridegroom of justice, who would defeat the tyrants in his own kingdom, wage war against other nations, and destroy Florence and Rome with fire. This French King Charles, it claimed, would cross the sea with a great army and enter Greece, where he would be named King of the Greeks. From the tenth- and eleventh-century Latin versions of the oracle of the Tiburtine Sibyl, the prophecy borrowed the detail that the last world emperor would put to death all pagans who could not be persuaded to adore the crucifix. The prophecy proceeded to tell how Charles would succeed the Antichrist Frederick III as emperor and be crowned by the angelic pope. Finally, it depicted the extension of the empire of Charles over the whole world, followed by his retirement on the Mount of Olives, where he would surrender his imperial crown to God and give up the ghost at the end of days.<sup>70</sup> This text, whose constituent elements were largely recycled from various incarnations of the last world emperor tradition and from Joachimite theses on a future Frederick III, in turn proved eminently recyclable in the centuries that followed its conception at the time of the Western Schism. In 1484, Chaume tells us, it was adapted and embellished by a certain M. Guilloche of Bordeaux to celebrate the recent accession of King Charles VIII of France. Guilloche was apparently untroubled by the fact that Charles VIII was the offspring of Louis XI and therefore not, as the prophecy dictated he should be, a ‘son of Charles’.<sup>71</sup>

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, this text was printed in the *Mirabilis Liber*, a propagandist prophetic anthology that worked to suggest that the French

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<sup>70</sup> Chaume, ‘Une prophétie relative à Charles VI’, p. 29; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 328.

<sup>71</sup> Chaume, ‘Une prophétie relative à Charles VI’, p. 31.

monarchy would enjoy a glorious future in league with an angelic pope.<sup>72</sup> Apt for this rhetorical function, the Second Charlemagne prophecy was rendered still apter by the removal of the reference to *Karolus filius Karoli* in the opening sentence, which enabled the identification of the protagonist as Francis I, King of France. The prophecy as printed in this collection began: ‘*Surget rex ex natione illustrissimi lilii, habens frontem longuam, supercilia alta, oculos longos, nasum aquileum*’.<sup>73</sup> Jennifer Britnell and Derek Stubbs have argued that this anthology, printed in Paris in 1522, was compiled some time earlier to support Francis’s campaign to be elected Holy Roman Emperor, which he would lose when that office was awarded to Charles V in 1519.<sup>74</sup> Across the Channel, different rhetorical purposes were served by the Second Charlemagne prophecy. This text had been known in England since at least the fifteenth century in a version that named its hero as Charles, the son of Philip.<sup>75</sup> An early sixteenth-century manuscript prophetic anthology, now preserved in the British Library, contains an English translation of the prophecy, erroneously ascribed to Geoffrey Chaucer.<sup>76</sup> Thus spuriously presented as the product of a native prophetic tradition, the text was probably prized for its anti-Protestant propagandist potential at the time of its entry into this Henrician manuscript. ‘Charles the sonne of Phillippe’ might readily be deemed to signify Emperor Charles V, whose parents were Philip I and Joanna of Castile. This identification of the Catholic Charles as the last world emperor, propagator of the true faith over the earth, would constitute an oblique criticism of the Henrician Reformation.

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<sup>72</sup> See Marjorie Reeves, ‘Some Popular Prophecies from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries’, in *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. by G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 107-34 (p. 126).

<sup>73</sup> ‘A king shall rise from the nation of the most illustrious lily, etc.’ A transcript of the prophecy is provided by Jennifer Britnell and Derek Stubbs, ‘The *Mirabilis Liber*: Its Compilation and Influence’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 49 (1986), 126-49 (p. 140).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

<sup>75</sup> See Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 248.

<sup>76</sup> BL, Add. MS 24663, fols 10<sup>v</sup>-11<sup>r</sup>; referenced by Marjorie Reeves in an appendix to *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 531.

The French scholar and prophetic exegete Guillaume Postel, who was familiar with the *Mirabilis Liber*, echoed its application of the Second Charlemagne prophecy to Francis I of France in his mid-sixteenth-century collection, *Le Thrésor des Prophéties de l'Univers*.<sup>77</sup> Postel, who claimed to have experienced a prophetic vision of Francis as a 'leader in the universal restitution or reformation of all things', did not exploit the Second Charlemagne text for panegyric purposes, as the earlier French prophetic anthology had done.<sup>78</sup> Produced after the death of Francis, his treatment of the prophecy instead alleged that the king had failed to perform the role assigned to him in that text and so had deprived his country of the glory it had been promised.<sup>79</sup> At the turn of the seventeenth century in France, Jean-Aimé de Chavigny suggested, as Postel had done, that the fulfilment of the Second Charlemagne prophecy was not inevitable but rather conditional on the virtuous conduct of its protagonist. Whereas Postel had identified Francis as the *rex ex natione illustrissimi lilii* to whom the text referred, Chavigny applied the prophecy to the royal dedicatee of his *Pléiades* of 1603, Henri IV.<sup>80</sup> He glossed the text with a description of the differences between good princes and tyrants, quoted from the chapter 'Babylon' in the *Divine Weeks* of du Bartas.<sup>81</sup> Thus, in the guise of praise, his use of the prophecy offered advice on good governance to the regnant King of France.

A passage in the Second Charlemagne prophecy described a war between its hero and the Christians of certain nations, which would end when the hero reached the age of forty. Chavigny argued that the word 'Christians' here referred specifically to Catholics. Thus, the Catholic author of the *Pléiades* expounded this passage as a

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<sup>77</sup> Britnell and Stubbs, 'The *Mirabilis Liber*', p. 132.

<sup>78</sup> Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel: Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> Guillaume Postel, *Le Thrésor des Prophéties de l'Univers*, ed. by François Secret (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 179.

<sup>80</sup> Jean-Aimé de Chavigny, *Pléiades* (Lyon: Pierre Rigaud, 1603), sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B4<sup>r</sup>.

prophetic endorsement of the ‘happy’ conversion to Catholicism (‘heureuse conuersion à l’Eglise Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine’) that Henri had undergone in 1593 at forty years old.<sup>82</sup> Other details in the text proved less amenable to pro-Catholic exegesis. Chavigny did not fully reproduce the section of the prophecy in which the incineration of Rome and Florence and the eradication of the invaders of the seat of Peter by the hand of the last world emperor were described. Via the omission of everything but the first letter of each word in this passage, he reduced it to a cryptic sequence of characters. Although this segment had originally referred to the conflict of the Roman and Avignon papacies at the time of the Western Schism, a seventeenth-century reader unacquainted with the history of the Second Charlemagne prophecy would likely interpret the allusion to the ‘invaders of Peter’s seat’ as a denigration of the papacy in general. Chavigny rendered this passage obscure and so weakened its potential to antagonise the confessional agenda of his interpretation.

In 1615, James Maxwell referenced the *Pléiades* of ‘Johannes Amatus’ (i.e. Jean-Aimé) de Chavigny in his collection of *Admirable and Notable Prophecies*: texts that might serve, despite their former Catholic associations, to reinforce a call for the Roman Catholic Church to undergo reformation.<sup>83</sup> He also supplied a paraphrase of parts of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, which he labelled in a marginal note ‘[a]n ancient prophesie touching a King of France’.<sup>84</sup> His paraphrase began:

[T]here is [a prophecy] that beginneth, *Surget Rex ex Natione illustrissimi Lillii, etc.* Which promiseth that a King of *France* shall subdue many Nations and peoples, burne both *Rome* and *Florence*, and chastise many of the Clergie.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Chavigny, *Pléiades*, sig. B5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>83</sup> Maxwell, *Admirable and Notable Prophecies*, sig. H4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H2<sup>v</sup>.

Whereas the Catholic Chavigny had obscured the passage that concerned the ruination of Rome and Florence by fire and the punishment of the clerical invaders of the seat of Peter, Maxwell increased its prominence via the suppression of adjacent content. This material about the destruction of the seat of Catholicism and the correction of clerical abuses was particularly apt for the rhetorical purposes of Maxwell, who set out to critique the Roman Catholic Church.

When the German Protestant theologian David Pareus published his commentary on the Book of Revelation (*In Divinam Apocalypsin Sancti Apostoli et Evangelistæ Johannis Commentarius*) at Heidelberg in 1618, he included a full Latin text of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy in his gloss on Chapter Seventeen, Verse Sixteen: ‘And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire’. He identified the ‘harlot’ who would be consumed by ravening mouths and by fire as the Catholic Church. In a prefatory account of the provenance of his version of the prophecy about the *rex ex natione illustrissimi lilii*, Pareus called attention to the correspondence between the prediction made in Revelation 17.16 and the content of that prophecy:

*Obiter, in gratiam lectorum, huc lubet adscribere Prophetiam ex antiquissimo codice MS. in ædibus Præpositi Saleziani reperto, nuper ad me missam: cui tribuat quisque quantum volet: certè à præsentì oraculo, quantum ad Romæ excidium, non aberrant.*<sup>86</sup>

(Here by the way to gratifie the Reader, I thinke good to set downe a prophesie taken out of an Ancient Manuscript found in the House of *Salezianus*, and lately sent to mee: which every one may credit, so far as it likes him. Certainly so much of it as concerns the destruction of Rome doth not aberre from the present Prophesie of this Booke.)<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> David Pareus, *In Divinam Apocalypsin Sancti Apostoli et Evangelistæ Johannis Commentarius* (Heidelberg: Jonæ Rosæ, 1618), sig. Nnn1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> David Pareus, *A Commentary upon the Divine Revelation of the Apostle and Evangelist John*, trans. by Elias Arnold (Amsterdam: C. P., 1644), sig. Kkk2<sup>v</sup>.

Pareus asserted that his readers must reach their own conclusions about the credibility of the text as inspired prophecy. He nonetheless alerted them to the similarities between its prognosis for Rome and the fate assigned to that city in the Biblical verse under discussion. For Pareus, then, as for Maxwell, the predictions concerning Rome in the Second Charlemagne prophecy merited especial attention. Marjorie Reeves has remarked how the original Joachimite tenor of the prophecy is ignored in Pareus's selective treatment of the text: 'Thus the Second Charlemagne ends his career by becoming merely the divine instrument for the destruction of Rome.'<sup>88</sup> Yet if the German Protestant scholar Pareus only obeyed anti-Catholic propagandist convention in his use of this fourteenth-century prophecy, English readers who sought out his *In Divinam Apocalypsin [...] Commentarius* in order to make manuscript copies of the same prophecy in the 1620s were perhaps engaged in a more controversial enterprise.

A copy of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy features in the Cambridge prophetic anthology compiled in 1623, MS Ee.5.36. That the commentary on Revelation by Pareus, printed in 1618 at Heidelberg, was the source from which the compiler of this manuscript obtained the prophecy is indicated by a note in the left-hand margin beside the text. The note begins: '*Diuus Pareus in Reuel cap 17 vers 16*' ('the divine Pareus on Revelation, Chapter Seventeen, Verse Sixteen'). The remainder of this marginal note reproduces the first half of the provenance account with which the German divine prefaced his edition of the prophecy. It tells how the text was found in a very ancient manuscript in the house of Provost Salezianus and sent to Pareus.<sup>89</sup> A volume of historical and political texts preserved among the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Library contains another copy of the Second Charlemagne prophecy, likewise derived from the version in Pareus's scriptural commentary and

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<sup>88</sup> Reeves, 'Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor', p. 369.

<sup>89</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

accompanied by a copy of the note that prefaced the prophecy in that work of 1618.<sup>90</sup> The text is located among political texts of the 1610s and 1620s, including other prophecies, in this manuscript. If its position can be accounted an indicator of its transcription date, both this copy of the Second Charlemagne prophecy and the one in the Cambridge manuscript were made around the time that the Jacobean government signalled its disapproval of Pareus through a public act of censorship.

In April 1622, a preacher by the name of John Knight delivered an arguably inflammatory sermon at St Peter's Church, Oxford.<sup>91</sup> As a result, he was arrested and imprisoned at the Gatehouse. The argument of the offending sermon, according to a petition addressed by the incarcerated preacher to the king, was '[t]hat in case of Religion an inferiour Magistrate might take vp defensiuē Armes against his Prince'.<sup>92</sup> Knight protested that he had been unaware that the opinions voiced in his sermon were controversial: he had imbibed them from a commentary on chapter thirteen of the epistle of St Paul to the Romans, included by David Pareus in his *In Divinam Romanos S. Pauli Apostoli Epistolam Commentarius* (Heidelberg, 1613). Pareus was 'so much honored both in Sermons and disputacions' at Oxford, Knight claimed, 'that he did not doubt him *Catholice orthodoxus*'.<sup>93</sup> A commission headed by Archbishop Abbot made a declaration to the Privy Council on 22 May on the subject of Knight's 'wicked sermon tending to no lesse then sedition, treason, and rebellion against Princes'.<sup>94</sup> The preacher was therein described as 'a young and vnaduised man'. This emphasis on his juvenile impressionability seems to evince an inclination on the bishops' part to credit Knight's claim that his expressed views were not independently

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<sup>90</sup> BL, Harley MS 252, fol. 124<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>91</sup> See George W. Whiting, 'Pareus, the Stuarts, Laud, and Milton', *Studies in Philology*, 50 (1953), 215-29 (p. 218).

<sup>92</sup> TNA, SP 14/130, fol. 186<sup>r</sup>: Petition of John Knight, prisoner in the Gatehouse, to the king.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> TNA, SP 14/130, fol. 138<sup>r</sup>: Declaration by the Archbishop of Canterbury and twelve Bishops, on a sermon preached at Oxford by Mr. Knight, 22 May 1622.

formed but only ill-considered restatements of the widely discussed ‘doctrine taught by Pareus’.<sup>95</sup> The bishops reserved most of their criticism for the published works of the German divine, not the naïve oratory of Knight. They condemned Pareus’s defence of resistance theory ‘in his Commentaries on the 13 to the *Romans*, and in some other such like bookes’ and advised the university authorities in Oxford and Cambridge to restrict their students’ reading to the following: Scripture; English theological treatises; and ‘those things which are sett downe by publicke authority within this kingdome, as namely the Articles of Religion, the Homilies, Catechismes etcæt, approoued by Conuocation’.<sup>96</sup> Students should be dissuaded, they argued, from the perusal of ‘other late authors, who liue in Churches and States, which are not so settled as it hath pleased God that these are within this famous kingdome’.<sup>97</sup>

The declaration of the bishops concerning the controversial sermon of Knight evinced official concerns that the religio-political literature produced on the war-torn continent might impart dangerous ideas to British readers and work to disrupt the peace that the Jacobean government was determined to maintain in the face of popular calls for a militantly Protestant foreign policy. Pareus’s comments on the legitimacy of resistance to monarchs in cases where religion was at stake, first published in 1613, acquired new relevance in the context of the upheaval in Bohemia. The election of Frederick as king by the Bohemian Protestants in 1619 set a potentially troublesome precedent. Thomas Cogswell has observed that ‘[t]he validity of the Bohemians’ right to eject Ferdinand and to install Frederick remained most uncertain’ to King James.<sup>98</sup> To support the initiative of the Bohemian opponents of the Habsburg King Ferdinand, James would have to contradict his own published theories about ‘the God-given

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<sup>95</sup> TNA, SP 14/130, fol. 138<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 138<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 138<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, p. 17.

powers of kings and the biblical basis of the subject's duty of nonresistance'.<sup>99</sup> In his acceptance of the Bohemian crown, Frederick had profited from an act of rebellion. The King of Great Britain, who in the early 1620s faced a domestic struggle to contain widespread popular discontent over his non-interventionist foreign policy, perhaps hesitated to lend military aid to his son-in-law out of fear that this effective endorsement of Ferdinand's deposition might placate his own restive subjects in the short term but negatively affect the security of the Stuart monarchy in the long term.

The bishops who addressed the Privy Council condemned the suggestion of Pareus that an inferior magistrate might take up arms against his king 'as ofte as he held him (in his owne rashe and præcipitate opinion) to goe about to alter any thing in Matters of Religion, or in poynt of State vnder colour of Religion'.<sup>100</sup> They stressed that the opinions voiced by Knight had been gleaned from the commentary written by Pareus and, in the conclusion to their message, declared their intention 'to leaue all further branding and vindicating of the foresayd Booke, to the great power, and æquall wisdome' of the Privy Council.<sup>101</sup> Despite its deferential tone, this statement amounted to a recommendation that any punishment administered in connection with the sermon of Knight should be visited not only on the preacher but also on the textual source of his ideas. The use of the word 'branding' to describe the mooted public condemnation of the work by Pareus likens the text to a criminal: it evokes images of felons whose misdeeds are symbolically recorded on their flesh through the painful administration of a hot iron. The proceedings of the Privy Council for 27 May reveal that instructions were given for the Bishop of London to search the city for

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<sup>99</sup> Johann P. Sommerville, 'King James VI and I and John Selden: Two Voices on History and the Constitution', in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. by Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), pp. 290-322 (p. 291).

<sup>100</sup> TNA, SP 14/130, fol. 137<sup>r</sup>: The Archbishop of Canterbury and twelve Bishops to the Council, 22 May 1622.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

copies of Pareus's text and to deliver the fruits of this search to the sheriffs of London so that the books could be 'publickely burned in *Paules Church* yarde by the Comon Execucioner of that Cittie'. An order was also given to the sheriffs 'to be very carefull, that not any one of the said Bookes be sau'd, or escape the Fyer'.<sup>102</sup>

Letters of instruction were sent from the Privy Council to the university authorities of Oxford and Cambridge on 31 May.<sup>103</sup> These letters directed the Vice-Chancellors, heads of Colleges, and public readers of both institutions to advise their students against the perusal of works by Pareus and by 'other *Neotericks*' who shared the opinion of the German theologian that the deposition of monarchs was defensible in certain circumstances.<sup>104</sup> They also required, 'for the better suppression of theis daungerous and false Assertions of *Pareus*', that all libraries and studies should be searched for copies of Pareus's controversial text and that such copies as were found should be burned in some public place in each of the universities.<sup>105</sup> The transactions of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge for July 1622, preserved in the National Archives, reveal that on the seventeenth day of that month, both institutions notified the Privy Council that the incineration of all discoverable copies of the commentary by Pareus had been carried out as requested.<sup>106</sup> A decree published in Oxford in 1622 recorded that the burning of the *In Divinam Romanos S. Pauli Apostoli Epistolam Commentarius* had taken place on the sixth of June.<sup>107</sup> This decree refuted one-by-one a series of propositions concerning the rights of subjects to resist their monarchs.

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<sup>102</sup> TNA, PC 2/31, fol. 373<sup>r</sup>: Meeting of the Council at Whitehall, 27 May 1622.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, PC 2/31, fol. 377<sup>r-v</sup>: A letter to the Vice-Chancellor, heads of Colleges, and public readers of the University of Oxford, 31 May 1622; BL, Harley MS 7040, fol. 225<sup>r-v</sup>: A copy of a letter sent by the Privy Council to the Vice-Chancellor, heads of Colleges, and public readers of the University of Cambridge on 31 May 1622.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, PC 2/31, fol. 377<sup>r</sup>; Harley MS 7040, fol. 225<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> TNA, PC 2/31, fol. 377<sup>v</sup>; Harley MS 7040, fol. 225<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, SP 14/132, fols 76<sup>r</sup>-77<sup>v</sup>: The University of Oxford to the Council, 17 July 1622; TNA, SP 14/132, fols 78<sup>r</sup>-79<sup>v</sup>: Transactions of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, 17 July 1622.

<sup>107</sup> *Decretum Vniuersitatis Oxoniensis damnans Propositiones Neotericorum Infra-Scriptas, siue Iesuitarum, siue Puritanorum* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short, 1622), sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

Some of these propositions were deemed Puritanical, while others were labelled Jesuitical, as the title of the publication attests: *Decretum Vniuersitatis Oxoniensis damnans Propositiones Neotericorum Infra-Scriptas, siue Iesuitarum, siue Puritanorum* ('Decree of the University of Oxford damning the Neoteric Propositions listed below, whether Jesuitical or Puritanical').

The newsletter writer John Chamberlain suggested to Dudley Carleton that the decision of the government to burn copies of Pareus's book publicly might not have its intended effect. Whereas the spectacular incineration of these books was devised by the Jacobean administration as an act of censorship, Chamberlain failed to see 'what goode yt can do to burne a few bookes here when they are current all Christendome ouer'.<sup>108</sup> Despite the instructions of the Council to the Bishop of London, it was inevitable that many copies of the offending text would 'escape the Fyer'. Chamberlain failed to mention another likely consequence of the conflagrations in London and the two university cities: that the attempt to suppress the work of Pareus would increase the popular appetite for this taboo text. In her discussion of Jacobean book burning, Cyndia Clegg describes two libel cases where King James chose to take no public action against the perpetrators or their writings so as not to ignite popular interest in scurrilous texts. She notes that James made sparing use of book burning and implies that when he resorted to this tactic, the spectacle was effectively stage-managed to elicit the awe and obedience of his subjects at potentially turbulent times.<sup>109</sup> Extant manuscript evidence of the continued circulation of texts by Pareus after the public bonfires suggests, however, that the ritual incineration of this book judged seditious by the state might have inspired not awe for

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<sup>108</sup> TNA, SP 14/131, fol. 30<sup>v</sup>: John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, 8 June 1622; referenced by David Cressy, 'Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36 (2005), 359-74 (p. 367), and by Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*, p. 85.

<sup>109</sup> Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*, pp. 88-89.

authority but rather a sudden taste for the œuvre of the blacklisted author on the part of spectators who might otherwise have remained indifferent.

On 24 June 1622, a student of St Edmund Hall, Oxford, wrote to his brother in London to repeat an earlier request to be sent a copy of ‘Pareus his comment on the Romans, the booke that was burnt with vs’.<sup>110</sup> Matthew Nicholas told Edward, his brother, not to send him copies of Pareus’s other works, as these were still easy enough to come by in Oxford. As regards these other writings by Pareus, Matthew noted, ‘I intende to buy them all when I haue better store of money’.<sup>111</sup> If the *In Divinam Romanos S. Pauli Apostoli Epistolam Commentarius* had not been publicly burned at his university on the sixth of June, perhaps Nicholas would never have coveted the text or taken a wider interest in the literary output of its author. Another extant letter of Matthew Nicholas to his brother, dated 10 July 1622, reveals that Edward managed to acquire a copy of the banned book in London. Matthew wrote to thank him for his endeavours and to advise Edward to disguise the book before he sent it on to Oxford. He recommended that the text should be sealed up carefully in a paper parcel ‘for feare it be knowne’.<sup>112</sup>

As the extant letters of the Nicholas brothers show, the forbidden status of Pareus’s commentary on the epistle of St Paul to the Romans filled the Oxford student Matthew with a desire to read not only that particular text but also the entire œuvre of the German theologian. The copies of Pareus’s edition of the Second Charlemagne prophecy in manuscripts of the 1620s might attest to a similar wish on the part of their collectors to become more widely acquainted with the works of this resistance theorist in the aftermath of the public incineration of his commentary. If the book burnings were devised by the state to procure popular concurrence with its condemnation of the

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<sup>110</sup> TNA, SP 14/131, fol. 96<sup>r</sup>: Matthew Nicholas to Edward Nicholas, 24 June 1622.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> TNA, SP 14/132, fol. 32<sup>v</sup>: Matthew Nicholas to Edward Nicholas, 10 July 1622.

opinions of Pareus, individuals who sought out and transcribed other texts from the printed works of the German divine shortly after these ritual conflagrations were perhaps thus engaged in minor acts of defiance.

In the Cambridge manuscript collection of prophecies, Ee.5.36, Pareus was not the only resistance theorist to be invoked as an authority on matters pertaining to prophecy. One of the texts in this collection was a record of a rumour that began to circulate in 1622, the subject of which was a visit paid by the ghost of the Scottish political theorist and historian George Buchanan to King James in a dream. The rumour told how the king had dreamed that Buchanan, his erstwhile tutor, had visited him to prophesy his death in these words:

*Sexte verere Deum, tunc est tibi terminus aevi  
Cum tuus ardenti flagrat Carbunculus igne*

Thou James the Sixte feare God  
then is thy lifes good nighte  
When thy Carbuncle doth  
in burning fire flame bright.<sup>113</sup>

Buchanan's was not the only ghost invoked in late Jacobean writing. The spectral complaint topos was employed by writers such as Thomas Gainsford and Thomas Scott to put protests against the pacific foreign policy favoured by the king into the mouths of godly Elizabethan martial heroes.<sup>114</sup> In his *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (1579) and *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582), Buchanan had defended the doctrine that subjects might lawfully depose tyrants.<sup>115</sup> When the story that this writer had returned from the grave to remind King James of his mortality first appeared in 1622, the king and a vocal portion of the populace were divided over the issues of the

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<sup>113</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g. Thomas Gainsford, *Vox Spiritus; or, Sir Walter Rawleighs Ghost (1620)* (Exeter: Rota, 1983); Thomas Scott, *Robert Earle of Essex his Ghost* ([London(?): [John Beale(?)], 1624).

<sup>115</sup> George Buchanan, *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (Edinburgh: John Ross, 1579); George Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (Edinburgh: Alexander Arbuthnot, 1582).

Spanish match and British military intervention in the confessional wars on the continent. The circulation of Buchanan's purported prophecy in the context of this division might be accounted subversive. The Cambridge divine Joseph Mede appears to have considered the text politically dangerous. In a missive to his regular correspondent Martin Stuteville, dated 30 March 1622, Mede referenced a previous letter in which he had imparted to Stuteville 'those verses [that] were deliuered to the King in a dreame by his master Buchanan'.<sup>116</sup> He was anxious for reassurance that his correspondent had adhered to the directions of that former letter:

I hope my lettre miscarried not, if it did, I am in a sweet pickle. I desired to heare from you of the receipt and extinction of it, but I haue not yet receiued any thing.<sup>117</sup>

Mede had asked Stuteville to destroy the earlier letter after reading it. His evident fear that the document might fall into hands other than those of its intended recipient bespeaks his perception of the prophecy ascribed to Buchanan's ghost as provocative.

The 30 March communication to Stuteville contained some further details about the alleged dream vision of King James, obtained by Mede from one Master Downham, a visitor from London. According to Downham, James had told his courtiers of his dream the morning after its occurrence. The king had reportedly said that the ghost of Buchanan 'seemed to check him seuerely as he vsed to do' in the dream and that his efforts therein to pacify his former tutor were rejected as Buchanan 'turn[ed] away with a frowning countenance' to utter his prophecy.<sup>118</sup> A version of this rumour, differing in certain details from the account that passed from Downham to Mede to Stuteville, was sent from England to Venice by the Venetian ambassador

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<sup>116</sup> BL, Harley MS 389, fol. 164<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., fol. 164<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., fol. 164<sup>r</sup>.

Girolamo Lando on 21 September 1622.<sup>119</sup> This account of James's dream of Buchanan has been discussed by David Norbrook.<sup>120</sup> The verse prophecy ascribed to Buchanan was copied by the compiler of MS Ee.5.36 from the manuscript miscellany of the Suffolk rector John Rous, who made no allusion to the king's alleged dream. Rous reported that the poem had been given to James by Buchanan when the latter was still alive, and that the king had called the poem to mind one night in 1622 and been unable to sleep until he found the old text in his study.<sup>121</sup> The copy of the poem in the miscellany of Matthew Day similarly makes no reference to any spectral appearance by Buchanan.<sup>122</sup> The wide variations among the extant references to Buchanan's prophecy in manuscripts and letters of the 1620s indicate that it was a popular subject of rumour: mediated by multiple tellers, the tale was altered and embellished in a great many ways.

Neither Mede nor Rous pretended to attribute any authority to the sixteenth-century resistance theorist Buchanan as a prophet. The Venetian ambassador claimed that the dream vision of Buchanan had warned King James that he would fall into ice and then into fire; that he would subsequently experience frequent pain; and that he would die two years after its onset. Unlike Mede and Rous, Lando made the ominous suggestion that certain parts of the prophecy had already come true. He alleged that James had suffered 'accidents of water and fire' and that it was a 'profound secret' that the king was presently afflicted by pain that kept him to his chamber.<sup>123</sup> Lando did not specify the nature of the king's supposed encounters with water and fire, but he perhaps had in mind two historic, thwarted treason attempts: the machinations of

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<sup>119</sup> *Calendar of State Papers [...] in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, xvii (1911), pp. 444-45.

<sup>120</sup> David Norbrook, 'Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography', in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 78-116 (p. 92).

<sup>121</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 16<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> Folger, MS V.a.160, p. 86.

<sup>123</sup> *Calendar of State Papers [...] in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, xvii, pp. 444-45.

the Berwick witches who had reportedly conspired to kill James in 1590 and raised a storm at sea to impede the voyage of his fiancée, Princess Anne of Denmark, to Scotland;<sup>124</sup> and the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. If these were the ‘accidents’ to which Lando meant to allude, he neglected to mention that they were accidents avoided, rather than experienced, by King James VI and I.

After the death of the king in 1625, the rumours about his dream vision were remembered. In the late nineteenth century, Frederick Furnivall discovered an account of Buchanan’s posthumous prophecy in an Edinburgh University Library manuscript (the ‘Jackson MS’). This early seventeenth-century account featured a copy of the verse prophecy that told how James would die when his carbuncle burned in the fire. It supplied the poem with a gloss that described how the carbuncle stone typically worn by the king in his hat had fallen into a nearby fire as he slept two years before his death. The text claimed that the king had informed his courtiers, once he awoke, that Buchanan had visited him in his dream to deliver the prophecy. The gloss concluded with the succinct sentence: ‘Soe he died two yeares after.’<sup>125</sup> Although the verses ascribed to Buchanan nowhere suggested that there would be an interval of two years between the descent of the carbuncle into the fire and its inevitable corollary, the death of the king, the writer of this account in the Jackson manuscript nonetheless used the conjunction ‘so’ in order to imply that the circumstances of James’s death had corresponded precisely to the prophecy supposedly uttered by Buchanan. In common with the Venetian ambassador in 1622, this contributor to the Jackson manuscript was apparently reluctant to foreclose speculation that the renowned Scottish resistance theorist of the sixteenth century had been a prophet.

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<sup>124</sup> Brian P. Levack, ‘Possession, Witchcraft, and the Law in Jacobean England’, in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, ed. by Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 29-56 (p. 42).

<sup>125</sup> Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Ballads from Manuscripts*, 2 vols (London: Taylor, 1868-73), II (1873), p. 289.

As will be seen in the next chapter, the story of the dream vision experienced by King James in 1622 was resurrected in the aftermath of the execution of Charles I. The parliamentarian propagandist William Lilly amended the tale in order to cement the reputation of Buchanan as a prophet.<sup>126</sup> Prophecies pronounced or printed by both Buchanan and his fellow resistance theorist Pareus were copied into MS Ee.5.36 in the 1620s. In the same decade, works by these two writers also rubbed shoulders on the shelves of the bookshop of one Godfrey Emerson. A survey of ‘such Persons as deale in Old Bookes’ in London was commissioned in September 1628, three years into the reign of King Charles. The conductors of the survey found at the premises of Emerson two copies of the ‘Cronocon’ (the *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*) of Buchanan and one copy of ‘Pareus ad Romanos’ (the *In Divinam Romanos S. Pauli Apostoli Epistolam Commentarius*, the banned book that had been publicly burned at London, Oxford, and Cambridge in 1622). Having discovered these copies of two controversial texts that advocated the deposition of tyrants among Emerson’s wares, the commissioners ordered him not to sell them and to await their further instructions.<sup>127</sup>

#### THE LION KING: JAMES AS A SUBJECT OF PROPHECY

The Cambridge manuscript in which the prophetic verses attributed to George Buchanan and a copy of Pareus’s edition of the Second Charlemagne prophecy both appear also contains a copy of a widely circulated verse prophecy of the career of King James, which usually begins ‘A prince out of the north shall come’. (Alternative versions begin ‘A king out of the north shall come’.) In this collection of prophecies,

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<sup>126</sup> William Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1651), sigs F3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> TNA, SP 16/117, fol. 10<sup>f</sup>: Adam Flip, Edmund Weaver, and Humphrey Cross, ‘The names of such Persons as deale in Old Bookes’, 13 September 1628.

compiled in 1623, this vatic poem immediately precedes the Second Charlemagne prophecy. The proximity of the two texts is apt, as both are renditions of the last world emperor legend.<sup>128</sup> The first four lines of the poetical prophecy, here quoted from a version in Harleian MS 7332 in the British Library, are as follows:

A King out of the North shall come  
King borne crown'd babe, his breast vpon  
A Lion rampant strange to see  
And C. J. S. his name shalbe.<sup>129</sup>

This opening has certain features in common with the beginning of the earlier verse prophecy about 'A King of Brittish blood', included by John Harington in his tract in support of the Stuart succession to the English crown in 1602. Where the Harington poem described its subject, King James VI of Scotland, as 'in Cradell crownd', this poem similarly referred to James as a 'crown'd babe'.<sup>130</sup> Both verse prophecies also alluded to James's rumoured lion-shaped mole. The Harington text told of a king 'with Lyon markt'; and the later poem claimed that its hero would bear 'his breast vpon | A Lion rampant strange to see'. The latter phrase might be taken to refer simply to the Stuart coat of arms, which depicted a lion rampant; yet the description of the leonine mark as 'strange to see' emphasises its rarity and hence invites the conclusion that the badge in question is a royal birthmark, providentially stamped onto the skin of the Stuart scion like the 'mark of wonder' on the neck of Guiderius, the long-lost heir to the British throne in Shakespeare's Jacobean tragicomedy

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<sup>128</sup> The status of 'A prince out of the north shall come' as a last world emperor prophecy has been noted in Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 59; Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham', pp. 84-85.

<sup>129</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 28<sup>f</sup>. See 'Ni3: "A Prince out of the North shall come"', in *Early Stuart Libels: An Edition of Poetry from Manuscript Sources*, ed. by Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series, 1 (2005) <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels>> [accessed 11 November 2014].

<sup>130</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 259 [163].

*Cymbeline*.<sup>131</sup> This anonymous prophetic poem identified its subject not only by his singular mole but also by his initials, ‘C. J. S.’ John Rous noted in the margin of his miscellany that these were the initials of King James, who had been given the first name Charles by his godfather Charles IX of France and the second name James by his godmother, Queen Elizabeth I of England.<sup>132</sup>

Although there are notable similarities between the opening lines of this poem about the career of (Charles) James Stuart and those of the earlier poem on the same subject, put to propagandist use by John Harington in 1602, there is also a suggestive difference. The prophecy in the Harington manuscript did not emphasise the northern origins of its hero, whereas the later poem did in its very first line. Alois Brandl has suggested that the beginning of ‘A prince out of the north’ was influenced by a prophetic tradition native to the British Isles: the legend of the heroic ‘cock of the north’, which developed early in the fourteenth century as a vehicle for the depiction of Edward the Black Prince as a future king of France but which was widely applied to Henry Percy (Hotspur) at the turn of the fifteenth century.<sup>133</sup> A version of the ‘cock of the north’ prophecy was the first text printed in *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland*, the anthology issued to celebrate the accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England in 1603. This text alluded to a ‘Lyon [...] in the broad North’.<sup>134</sup>

Another influence that might be perceived in ‘A prince out of the north’ is that of a body of continental prophecies that invested their hopes for religious reform in a ‘lion from the north’, alternatively labelled the ‘midnight lion’ (*der Löwe aus Mitternacht*) in reference to the direction in which the hands of a clock point at

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<sup>131</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 365.

<sup>132</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>133</sup> Alois Brandl, “‘The Cock in the North’: Poetische Weissagung auf Percy Hotspur (gest. 1403)”, *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 47 (1909), 1160-89 (p. 1182); see also Fox, ‘Prophecies and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII’, pp. 80-81.

<sup>134</sup> *The Whole Prophesie*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

midnight. Historians have remarked that prophecies about a northern, or midnight, lion were used in continental propagandist campaigns of the 1610s to champion the Palatine Elector Frederick V, son-in-law to James, as a propagator of reform throughout Europe.<sup>135</sup> Howard Hotson has additionally noted that the ‘early printing history of the definitive version’ of the midnight lion prophecy is closely connected to the publication history of the Rosicrucian manifestos, whose involvement in the propaganda campaign for the Elector Palatine was posited by Frances Yates in her 1972 study of the ‘Rosicrucian Enlightenment’.<sup>136</sup>

The prophecy of the midnight lion, which was based on the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the apocryphal II Esdras, claimed that its hero would win a decisive victory over a powerful heretical eagle.<sup>137</sup> This prophecy began to appear in German manuscripts around 1598, spuriously attributed to Paracelsus. The text retained its association with the name Paracelsus when it was first printed in 1619 as *De Tinctura Physicorum*.<sup>138</sup> Adam Haselmayer alluded to this prophecy in ‘the earliest Rosicrucian incunable’: his 1612 printed response to the manuscript Rosicrucian manifestos, which were themselves first printed in 1614 and 1615.<sup>139</sup> The pseudo-Paracelsian prophecy narrated the future accomplishments of the midnight lion, “‘of good Christian doctrine’”, who would enter a protracted and savage war with the eagle and eventually emerge victorious. It told how the defeated eagle would be destroyed ‘in a general conflagration’, which God would descend to earth to

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<sup>135</sup> Gilly, ‘The “Midnight Lion”, the “Eagle” and the “Antichrist”’, p. 48.

<sup>136</sup> Howard Hotson, *Paradise Postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), p. 59; Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 54.

<sup>137</sup> See Alastair Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse: The Reception of the Second Book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 172, 187-88.

<sup>138</sup> See Susanna Åkerman, ‘The Rosicrucians and the Great Conjunctions’, in *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. by Richard H. Popkin and others, 4 vols (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), IV: *Continental Millenarians: Protestants, Catholics, Heretics*, ed. by John Christian Laursen and Richard H. Popkin, pp. 1-8 (p. 2). ‘*De Tinctura Physicorum*’ translates as ‘On the Essence of Natural Philosophy’.

<sup>139</sup> Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, p. 59; Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 30.

quench. Thereafter, claimed the prophecy, the lion would be made an emperor; rule over the whole of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa; and institute an age of peace and unity that would prevail until the end of the world.<sup>140</sup> Elements of the traditional last world emperor prophecy are clearly perceptible in this catalogue of the exploits of a midnight, or northern, lion. Prior to the defeat of Frederick at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, this prophecy was a vehicle for the expression of popular hopes that he would prove a great leader of the Protestant cause in Europe.<sup>141</sup>

The late Jacobean prophetic account of the career of 'C. J. S.' specified that its subject was a 'prince out of the north'. The earlier verse-prophecy on the same theme, included by Harington in his succession tract of 1602, did not. The reference to the northern origins of the Scottish King James in the later poem bespeaks the possible influence of continental prophecies about the career of Frederick, the northern or midnight lion, on the writer or writers of this militantly Protestant English prophecy. Given the reluctance of the Stuart king to support Frederick's claim to the crown wrested by Bohemian rebels from the Catholic King Ferdinand (later Holy Roman Emperor), the allusion to prophecies that depicted Frederick as a Protestant crusader and emperor over most of the world in the opening line of this poem raises the hypothesis that its overt praise of a 'courageous, wise and holy' king veiled a critique of Jacobean foreign policy.<sup>142</sup> Support for this hypothesis is offered by lines seven to fourteen, which can be read as a lament that late events had exposed the popular optimism that greeted the English accession of James as misplaced:

At best of strength his Fortunes best  
He shall recieve and then in rest  
The Lion coucheth in his denn  
And lyes in peace so long till Men

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<sup>140</sup> Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 163-64.

<sup>141</sup> Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>142</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 28<sup>r</sup>: 'A King out of the North shall come', line 6.

Do wonder and all Christendome  
Think the tyme long both all and some.  
At length he calls a Parliament  
And breaks it straight in discontent.

These lines, couched as prophecy, commented obliquely on the political status quo in England at the time of their composition. They depicted James as a sleeping lion whose disinclination to stir himself in support of the Palatine cause had marred his 'Fortunes' and exasperated 'all Christendome'. The reference to a parliament dissolved 'in discontent' has elicited divergent interpretations from historians.

Tim Thornton has suggested that the poem was composed sometime between 1614 and 1620, 'when James still seemed potentially a Protestant crusader in continental Europe'.<sup>143</sup> His theory assumes that the lines about a broken parliament refer to the 'Addled Parliament' of 1614, dissolved by the king after a mere two months. In their analysis of the copy of 'A prince out of the north' in the mid-seventeenth-century Percy Folio (British Library, Add. MS 27879, fol. 239<sup>v</sup>), John Hales and Frederick Furnivall posit that the poem was composed early in 1620, when King James hesitantly allowed the dispatch of four thousand British volunteers to the Palatinate to fight in defence of the ancestral lands of his son-in-law.<sup>144</sup> They suggest that the tone of the poem was optimistic rather than ironic and that the poet was a zealous English Protestant who believed that James had finally assumed the mantle of the warlike Reformist king who would ensure the continued Protestant occupation of the Bohemian throne and propagate the true faith throughout Europe. The poem must have been composed, argue Hales and Furnivall, before the defeat of Frederick's troops at the Battle of White Mountain on 8 November 1620 dashed the hopes of its

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<sup>143</sup> Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, ed. by John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall, 3 vols (London: N. Trübner, 1867-68), III (1868), p. 371.

writer.<sup>145</sup> Their argument that the poem was composed in early 1620 assumes in common with Thornton's that line thirteen refers to the 'Addled Parliament' of 1614. In contrast to these scholars, Andrew McRae and Alastair Bellany gloss this line as an allusion to the parliament of 1621, dissolved by the king on 6 January 1622 after his attempt to prohibit discussion of the projected Spanish match moved the affronted Commons to present him with a Protestation that asserted their ancient constitutional right to free speech.<sup>146</sup>

If this verse prophecy of the career of King James was composed after 1621 as McRae and Bellany suggest, its identification of the Stuart king as the last world emperor is probably not straightforwardly panegyric but instead tonally reminiscent of Guillaume Postel's application of the Second Charlemagne prophecy to the life of King Francis I of France. Postel argued in the mid-sixteenth century that Francis I had failed to assume his destined role as the last world emperor when he had neglected to reform ecclesiastical and secular government in France. A post-1621 composition date for 'A prince out of the north' would suggest that its author, like Postel, conceived of the last world emperor legend as an index of the glory that his monarch could have attained if only different political decisions had been made. A militantly Protestant poet writing after 1621, when the dispossessed Frederick and Elizabeth were in exile at The Hague while King James persisted in his efforts to procure a Catholic Spanish bride for Prince Charles, would be unlikely to imagine that the Stuart king might yet lead a successful crusade against the Antichrist and end his days in triumph in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

The inclusion of 'A prince out of the north' in the Cambridge manuscript, compiled in 1623, provides a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the poem. If it

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<sup>145</sup> *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, p. 372.

<sup>146</sup> 'Ni3: "A Prince out of the North shall come"', in *Early Stuart Libels*, ed. by Bellany and McRae.

was written sometime between the dissolution of the 1621 parliament in January 1622 and the end of the following year, this ambivalent poetic incarnation of the last world emperor legend was the product of an atmosphere of English Protestant discontent that also stimulated the underground revival of interest in Pareus and Buchanan as resistance theorists and possible prophets. The thesis that the poem was written around this time finds some support in a German broadsheet produced shortly after the Battle of White Mountain and the commencement of the exile of the Palatine court at The Hague. The illustrations to *Schlaffender Loew* (c. 1621) depicted Frederick as the titular sleeping lion and his Stuart bride Elizabeth as a wakeful lioness surrounded by cubs. The words ‘[e]rhebe dich du Mechtige Loew’ (‘rouse yourself, you powerful lion’) issued from the mouth of the lioness, while the lion rejoined, ‘[I]aß mich Ruhen’ (‘let me rest’).<sup>147</sup> Perhaps the ninth line of the English verse prophecy, which read ‘[t]he Lion coucheth in his denn’, was influenced by this German appeal to Frederick to renew his efforts in support of the Protestant cause after his Bohemian disappointment. It is alternatively possible that the sleeping lion of ‘A prince out of the north’ recalled a similar figure in an earlier English text. In *The Kings Prophecie; or, Weeping Ioy*, a panegyric of James produced at the time of his English accession, Joseph Hall had compared the Stuart king to a sleeping lion who would prove fierce when provoked.<sup>148</sup> If a reference to this work from early in the reign of James was intended in the late Jacobean verse prophecy, the tone of the reference was probably ironic, since the reluctance of the king to stir himself in the interests of his son-in-law was widely criticised at this time.

C. J. S., the lion-marked northern king, would eventually be roused from his ignoble slumber by ‘enemies beyond the sea’, according to line sixteen of the poetical

<sup>147</sup> E. A. Beller, ed., *Caricatures of the ‘Winter King’ of Bohemia from the Sutherland Collection in the Bodleian Library, and from the British Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), plate 21.

<sup>148</sup> Hall, *The Kings Prophecie*, sig. B6<sup>v</sup>.

prophecy that narrated his career.<sup>149</sup> Lines twenty-one and twenty-two compared the subsequent military triumphs of this king to those of Alexander the Great. The poem told how its hero would perform famous feats of arms in league with various European princes, who would eventually elect him ‘western Emperor’ (line 26). He would destroy Rome, ‘[t]hat citty ancient old and great | which on seauen hills is situate’ (lines 28-29). Following his despoliation of the seat of the papacy, the recently crowned emperor would be threatened by a foe from the east. In response, like the Second Charlemagne of the earlier last world emperor prophecy, he would cross a great body of water. On its farther shore, this hero would meet his foe and drive him back eastwards by force of arms (lines 38-39). After this triumph, the lion-king would be crowned emperor of east and west; in other words, of the whole world. His foe, an analogue for the Antichrist of the last world emperor tradition, would return with a great army mustered with the aid of eastern kings and princes. According to the final two couplets in almost all extant versions of the prophecy, the foe would journey to the Valley of Jehoshaphat with the following consequences:

There shall he meete the Lyon strong  
Who in a battell ferce and long  
Shall foyle his foe then cruell death  
Shall take away his aged breath.<sup>150</sup>

The lion-king would vanquish his foe. After this victory, he would remain at Jehoshaphat and eventually die there, of old age. The Second Charlemagne prophecy, printed in the commentary of Pareus on the Revelation in 1618, might have provided the writer of this poem with some of the conventional details of the last world emperor legend. So too might the vernacular prophetic tradition. Elements of this

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<sup>149</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 28<sup>r</sup>: ‘A King out of the North shall come’, line 16.

<sup>150</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

legend had been incorporated into a prophecy attributed to a native seer, Thomas the Rhymer of Erceldoune. The English hero of the prophecy of Thomas was predicted to hold a notorious parliament, win the holy cross, and eventually die a natural death at Jehoshaphat. This text had been employed in early sixteenth-century England as both pro- and anti-Reformation propaganda.<sup>151</sup>

‘A prince out of the north’ portrayed a last world emperor whose emblem was not the French fleur-de-lys that designated the protagonist of the Second Charlemagne prophecy but a lion. The transplantation of the last world emperor legend into British soil for the purposes of this poem was aided by the attribution of its verses to the legendary British seer Merlin.<sup>152</sup> Francis Castillion headed his manuscript copy of the verses: ‘Maudlins Prophecie found longe Before Kinge Ieames came into England’.<sup>153</sup> A more overtly sceptical commentator on the supposed Merlinic authorship of this verse prophecy was the compiler of the Cambridge anthology of prophecies, who wrote in the margin beside his copy: ‘Fathered on Merlin but how true I knowe not’.<sup>154</sup> Merlin seems to have been portrayed as the originator of a last world emperor prophecy not only on the manuscript page but also on the stage in the late Jacobean period. In *The Birth of Merlin*, the titular character uttered a prophecy of this type with reference to the future exploits of King Arthur.<sup>155</sup> This play, probably the work

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<sup>151</sup> Thomas of Erceldoune, *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. by J. A. H. Murray (London: Early English Text Society, 1875), p. 60; see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 192; Sharon L. Jansen, ‘The “Prophecies of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng”’: Henry VIII and a Sixteenth-Century Political Prophecy’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16 (1985), 291-300 (p. 294).

<sup>152</sup> See, e.g. BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>; CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; BL, Sloane MS 1479, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Tanner 88, fol. 252<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>; Folger, MS V.a.275, p. 176; Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 232; Folger, STC 14344, copy 3, title-page annotation. These last three copies are discussed by Nicole Clifton, ‘A Seventeenth-Century Prophecy of Merlin’, *A Manuscript Miscellany* (2005)

<[http://www.folger.edu/html/folger\\_institute/mm/EssayNC.html](http://www.folger.edu/html/folger_institute/mm/EssayNC.html)> [accessed 19 November 2014].

<sup>153</sup> Beinecke, MS Osborn fb.69, p. 229.

<sup>154</sup> CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>155</sup> William Rowley, *The Birth of Merlin; or, The Childe Hath Found his Father* (London: Thomas Johnson for Francis Kirkman and Henry Marsh, 1662), sig. G1<sup>r-v</sup>.

of William Rowley alone despite its title-page description as a collaboration with Shakespeare, was first printed in 1662 but apparently staged at the Curtain in 1622.<sup>156</sup>

Although the Scottish Charles James Stuart was the principal subject of the English prophetic verses on the career of a prince out of the north, it is possible that echoes of the continental prophetic propaganda that depicted Frederick as the lion of midnight in the 1610s were perceived by English readers of this prophecy about a leonine northern king. In the margin beside his copy of ‘A prince out of the north’, Peter Daniell of Oxford glossed the description of the lion rampant on the breast of the northern prince with references to Chapters Eleven to Thirteen of the apocryphal II Esdras and to Chapter Eleven of the Book of Daniel.<sup>157</sup> The familiarity of Daniell with II Esdras perhaps argues his awareness of the continental vogue for prophecies based on this apocryphal source. This trend is exemplified by the pseudo-Paracelsian prophecy of the midnight lion, which was associated with the reformist expectations invested in Frederick V. In MS Ashmole 423 in the Bodleian Library, the right-hand margin beside the copy of the English verse prophecy of the career of King James is occupied by the following chronogram:

FreDerICVs II reX BoheMIae 1619.  
FreDerICVs II reX roManVs 1623.  
FreDerICVs II reX Imperator AVgVstVs 1624.<sup>158</sup>

Although the first line refers to ‘Fredericus II’, its subject is plainly the coronation of the Elector Palatine as King Frederick I of Bohemia in August 1619. It is reminiscent of a chronogram that appeared on a German broadsheet published on 7 November 1619 to celebrate the accession of Frederick to the Bohemian crown: ‘FRIDERICVS

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<sup>156</sup> N. W. Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623-73* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 136.

<sup>157</sup> Bodl., MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>158</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 423, p. 263.

FIT REX BOHEMIÆ [MD]CXIX'.<sup>159</sup> The next two lines of the manuscript chronogram express the hope that Frederick will have a glorious career, to culminate in his coronation as emperor in 1624. The presence of this three-line text as a marginal accompaniment to the copy of 'A prince out of the north' in the Ashmole manuscript indicates that the annotator perceived a correspondence between the poem's depiction of the future career of King James and the prophetic hopes that had been invested in Frederick prior to his defeat at White Mountain.

In Harley MS 7332 in the British Library, the copy of 'A prince out of the north' is immediately preceded by a copy, in the same hand, of another prophetic text that opens with a reference to James as a lion-marked northern king. Attributed to 'Mervey or Marlin', this prose prophecy begins:

There shalbe from a King of Engelland out of his loynes in the North a Prince borne with a flesh-mold on him in forme of a Lyon he is chosen of God for his annoynted to keepe his Comandement.<sup>160</sup>

The claim that the protagonist of this prophecy will hail 'from a King of Engelland out of his loynes' refers to the descent of King James from the Tudor Henry VII, his great-great grandfather. Rumours of a leonine Stuart royal birthmark are invoked in this opening sentence, as they were in the second and third lines of 'A prince out of the north'. Apparently unaware that reports of this birthmark existed and were known to the likes of John Harington and Tobias Mathew at least as early as 1602, when the succession to the crown of Elizabeth I was still uncertain, Helen Cooper claims that '[t]he methods of identifying the true heir offered by romance do not immediately connect with practical politics' and that propagandists would not have been motivated

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<sup>159</sup> Currier: *Die guter vnd troestlicher newen Zeitung vor das betruete Koenigreich Böhmen*, in Beller, ed., *Caricatures of the 'Winter King' of Bohemia*, plate 1.

<sup>160</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>r</sup>. An edition of this prose prophecy, hitherto unavailable in print, is supplied as an Appendix to this thesis, pp. 280-82.

to suggest that the legitimacy of the Stuart claim to the English throne was proven by a providential mark on the body of the Scottish King James VI.<sup>161</sup> Tales of long-lost royal children identified and restored to their birthright owing to the presence of distinctive marks on their skin were staples of continental medieval romances, later appropriated by Shakespearean tragicomedy.<sup>162</sup> Although the romance motif of the royal birthmark was indeed employed towards the end of the Tudor period, *pace* Cooper, to endorse the candidacy of the King of Scots for the English succession, occurrences of this motif in late Jacobean political prophecies are not unambiguously panegyric. Like the verse prophecy that follows it in the Harleian manuscript, the prose forecast for the career of King James recalls the corpus of prophecies associated with Frederick V via the emphasis on the northern origins of its leonine royal hero.

Noah Millstone is acquainted with five manuscript copies of this prophecy and states that these range in date from the late 1610s to the early 1620s. He contends nonetheless that the oblique references to a projected rapprochement between England and Spain point to a composition date sometime between the accession of James I in 1603 and the conclusion of the Treaty of London in 1604, which ended the Anglo-Spanish War.<sup>163</sup> Several factors call this thesis into question and suggest that the text commented not on the entente of 1604 but on the later, protracted efforts to unite England and Spain through the marriage of Charles to the Infanta, which were to end in failure in 1623. The contemporaneous transcription of this prose text and the late Jacobean 'A prince out of the north' into Harley MS 7332, a manuscript with which Millstone is unfamiliar, indicates perhaps that the compiler perceived these two prophecies to share a common interest in the British political atmosphere at the time of the Bohemian crisis and Spanish match negotiations and wished to compare them.

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<sup>161</sup> Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 326.

<sup>162</sup> Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, p. 142.

<sup>163</sup> Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham', p. 79.

Firmer support for the idea that the prose prophecy was written later than Millstone suggests can be found in its use of the image of the northern lion, which had gained currency through its association with Frederick in the continental prophetic propaganda of the 1610s. The text also contained a possible allusion to the offer of the crown of Bohemia, made by the Protestant rebels of that country to the Elector Palatine in August 1619:

God blesseth thy People in a Land which is part of another Kings right. [...] [J]oyne thy loue with theirs for they doe yeild thee all Earthly seruice, and shall offer tribute to be their King. [R]efuse not them.<sup>164</sup>

These words appeared approximately halfway through the text. Although it might be assumed that their addressee was King James, who was identified as the subject of this two-page prophecy in its opening sentence, they do not accurately describe the circumstances in which the King of Scots was made King of England in 1603. James was not nominated by '[his] People' in England, whose monarchy was and is hereditary, but by his predecessor and distant kinswoman Queen Elizabeth I. The Protestant Frederick, on the other hand, was chosen as king by his co-religionists (his 'People') in Bohemia, an elective monarchy, in 1619. As has been seen, James had argued in print that the deposition of a king by his subjects was never defensible. The suggestion that he owed his position as King of England to the actions of the 'People' might not have pleased him. If, as its reference to the role of the 'People' seems to suggest, the above passage described not the offer of the English crown to James VI of Scotland but the offer of the Bohemian crown to Frederick V of the Palatinate, August 1619 can be fixed as the *terminus a quo* for the composition of the prophecy.

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<sup>164</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>r</sup>.

A further challenge to the contention of Millstone that this text was composed before 1604 is posed by the fact that it contained multiple verbatim quotations from the King James Version of the Bible, first published in 1611. It included, for example, the following phrases from the 1611 translation of the Book of Daniel: ‘in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not’ (Daniel 11.38); and ‘the people that do know their God shall be strong’ (Daniel 11.32). The presence of these and other scriptural passages was obliquely signalled by the final sentence of a note on the provenance of the prophecy, which routinely accompanied the text in manuscript copies: ‘It is in holy Church all.’<sup>165</sup> The phrase ‘holy Church’ referred in this instance to Holy Scripture, the source of many phrases in the text.

The account of the provenance of this prophecy is typically divided in half in surviving manuscript versions. The first half, which forms the title of the text, describes it as a prophecy of Merlin (or ‘Mervey’) that was first discovered in a wall of Nevill Holt Hall in Medbourne, Leicestershire, at which time it was translated from Welsh into Latin by one Owen Flood (or Floyd, or Lloyd) for ‘John de Kerby lord of Holt’.<sup>166</sup> Although the purported translator of the prophecy remains mysterious, the individual alleged to have commissioned the translation was a real historical personage: John Kirkby, who had been granted the benefice of Nevill Holt and made Bishop of Ely during the reign of King Edward I. The second half of the biography of the prophecy usually appears as a footnote to the text. It is couched in the voice of one Thomas Gee (or Grey), a schoolmaster and curate, who claims to have discovered the Latin version of the text in a hole in the altar of the church in Medbourne and to have

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<sup>165</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>; BL, Harley MS 1576, fol. 133<sup>r</sup>; BL, Harley MS 252, fol. 120<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 166<sup>v</sup>; Surrey History Centre, Loseley MS 1925, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. An abridged version of the prophecy in Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 232 lacks this provenance-claim. Millstone (p. 79) cites all of these manuscripts except Harley MS 7332 and MS Rawl. C.813.

<sup>166</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>r</sup>.

translated this version into English.<sup>167</sup> The title and footnote work to endow this prophecy with a detailed history: they portray it as the work of the ancient British seer Merlin and claim that it resurfaced once in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, during the reign of Edward I, and again at some unspecified later date, when it was Englished by Thomas Gee. The various indications that the text dates from the late Jacobean period argue that this lengthy biography, in common with the one attached to the Rocca Contrada prophecy in 1625, is spurious.

A copy of the prose prophecy purportedly translated by Thomas Gee survives among the papers of the writer and statesman Fulke Greville, who was sympathetic to the European Protestant cause. The date attached to this copy, 1621, furnishes a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the text.<sup>168</sup> A transcript of the prophecy, acquired by the antiquary Simonds D'Ewes when he was still a law student, is preserved in Harley MS 252 in the British Library. D'Ewes, likewise an advocate of Protestant militancy, produced a page of observations and glosses on the prophecy, which accompanies the text in the Harleian manuscript. It suggests that D'Ewes tried to verify the biography with which the prophecy was supplied. His quest for evidence that a Thomas Gee really had resided at Medbourne proved unsuccessful, and he noted that '[a]t this time 1622' no resident of that village could recall a schoolmaster or curate of that name.<sup>169</sup> D'Ewes mentioned another copy of the prophecy, supposedly extant 'in an olde masse booke in folio in Parchment', and dated this absent document to the reign of Edward VI, purportedly through orthographical analysis.<sup>170</sup> Given the quotations from the King James Bible and the other evidences for a post-1611 composition date, it appears that D'Ewes was either fooled by a copy

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<sup>167</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>168</sup> BL, Add. MS 64887, fol. 23<sup>r</sup>; referenced by Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham', p. 79.

<sup>169</sup> BL, Harley MS 252, fol. 121<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 121<sup>r</sup>.

of this modern prophecy written in a deceptively archaising hand or mischievously invented the story of the Edwardian text found in a mass book to supplement the spurious biography already attached to the prophecy. Much of the text on the verso of D'Ewes's page of notes about this prophecy is frustratingly indecipherable. The final two sentences, however, are legible. Each bears a number supplied by D'Ewes. The first states, '1. Write in a booke otherwise lost if in a paper and without credit.' The second remarks, '2. That it was then highlie esteemed offe by Floid in a hole in the highaltar by Gee in his Massebooke.'<sup>171</sup> Without the context that the illegible material on this page might perhaps have provided, the import of these two sentences cannot be determined for certain. It is possible, however, that they constitute a prescription for the construction of spurious histories for modern pseudo-prophetic texts: a brief list of the rhetorical manoeuvres whereby a newly written text might be presented as a recently discovered artefact.

After the unsuccessful voyage of Prince Charles to secure the hand of the Spanish Infanta in 1623, D'Ewes added references to 'the Bohemian warrs' and 'the Princes journye into Spaine' to his note on the prophecy of the lion-marked king.<sup>172</sup> He thus sustained the fiction that the text was a genuine ancient prophecy that had accurately predicted these recent events. The allusion to the offer of a foreign crown to the lion-king is the probable source of D'Ewes's perception that the prophecy concerned occurrences in Bohemia. Written in or before 1621, the text cannot really have treated the prince's ill-fated 1623 expedition to Spain. It does however seem to have alluded more generally to relations between England and Spain in the late 1610s and early 1620s. The text prophesied both that the lion would 'giue wey to the Eagle' and that the same 'kingly Lyon shalbe stirred vp, and shall rebuke the Eagle, and

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<sup>171</sup> BL, Harley MS 252, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 121<sup>r-v</sup>.

bring him in subjeccion'.<sup>173</sup> Whereas the eagle was a figure for the Holy Roman Emperor in the continental prophecies of the midnight lion, the same symbol represented the King of Spain in a popular English verse prophecy of 1623. 'If 88 be past then thriue' was an anti-Spanish match libel, disingenuously couched as prophecy. It told how the eagle would 'haue helpe | By craft to catch the Lyons whelpe' in the year that saw sixteen joined to twenty-three. The eagle and the lion's whelp were plainly figures for the Spanish king and Prince Charles (son to the lion-king James) respectively, as an early seventeenth-century reader of the poem thus noted on a copy now preserved at St John's College, Cambridge: '*Aquila est insigne Regis hispaniarum ut aiunt Leo Anglorum*' ('The Eagle is the symbol of the King of the Spains, as they say, and the Lion [of the King] of the English').<sup>174</sup> This poetical pseudo-prophecy, allegedly found in St Benet's Abbey in Norfolk, circulated widely and survives in at least twenty-five manuscript versions.<sup>175</sup> It bears witness to the application of the eagle symbol to the King of Spain at least as early as 1623. This figurative practice was perhaps already common when the prose prophecy analysed by D'Ewes was written. If the eagle in that prophecy represented the Spanish king, the references to the initial submission of the lion-king to the eagle and to his later defeat of this aquiline foe might respectively constitute a comment on contemporary politics and an expression of hopes for the future of Jacobean foreign policy.

The writer of the Medbourne prophecy perhaps lamented the decision of King James to pursue an Anglo-Spanish marriage alliance instead of a holy war to reclaim the lost dominions of his Calvinist son-in-law. The vision of the eagle brought at last into subjection by the might of the hitherto dormant lion might evince the desire of

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<sup>173</sup> BL, Harley MS 252, fol. 120<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>174</sup> St John's, MS K.56, Item 72, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>175</sup> See 'Ni4: "If 88 be past then thrive"', in *Early Stuart Libels*, ed. by Bellany and McRae; Millstone, 'The Rector of Santon Downham', p. 78. Copies unknown to Bellany, McRae, and Millstone include: Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 276; TNA, SP 14/143, fol. 123<sup>r</sup>; TNA, SP 16/539/2, fol. 163<sup>r</sup>.

this writer to see the adoption of an aggressively Protestant foreign policy by the Jacobean regime. This prophecy and the militantly anti-Catholic ‘A prince out of the north’ shared much imagery in common and sometimes appealed to the same collectors in the early seventeenth century. Both texts were copied at the same time into Harley MS 7332; and the father-in-law of John Donne, Sir George More of Loseley Park in Surrey, owned a copy of the verse prophecy in his own hand and a scribal copy of the prose prophecy.<sup>176</sup> ‘A prince out of the north’ began in praise of James as a ‘couragious wise and holy’ king but thereafter criticised the non-intervention of the Jacobean government in the European confessional wars. A similar shift in tone occurred in the prose prophecy, which initially echoed the rhetoric of early Jacobean panegyric in its description of James as God’s anointed king and in its references to the birthmark and Tudor blood that demonstrated the credentials of the King of Scots as the hereditary monarch of England. When the text later urged the kingly lion to accept the crown proffered by the people ‘in a Land which is part of another Kings right’, this seeming endorsement of the Bohemian resistance to Ferdinand threatened to undercut the opening defence of the Stuart claim to the English throne according to the principles of primogeniture. Unlike the verse prophecy, however, this prose text seemed to change tone again in its conclusion. The footnote that typically accompanied the prophecy in its various manuscript versions warned enigmatically: ‘Of this new fangle of presumpcion take heed’.<sup>177</sup> Although its object cannot be definitively determined, it is possible that this warning condemned the ‘presumpcion’ of the Bohemian Protestants who deposed their Catholic king and advised English readers against the emulation of their conduct. The tone of this prose prophecy is unstable and the meaning of the text is ultimately obscure; however, its

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<sup>176</sup> Folger, MS L.b.670; Surrey History Centre, Loseley MS 1925.

<sup>177</sup> BL, Harley MS 7332, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>.

appeal to such supporters of Protestant militancy as Greville, More, and D'Ewes constitutes a potential insight into the meanings imputed to the prophecy in its own time. Although it apparently enjoyed a modest manuscript circulation around the time of the Bohemian crisis and the Spanish match negotiations, it was perhaps the difficulty of this text that prevented its attainment of the kind of popularity boasted by the verse prophecy of 'A prince out of the north' at the same late Jacobean moment.

When the symbols of the lion and the eagle appeared in modern English political prophecies in the late 1610s and early 1620s, their use echoed a contemporary, continental prophetic trend that derived its figurative vocabulary from the apocryphal II Esdras and concerned the career of Frederick. In consequence, portraits of the lion-king James as the protagonist of the traditional last world emperor prophecy were not straightforwardly panegyric; rather, it seems, they subtly evaluated the aptness of the Stuart king for this role against that of another northern lion, the Elector Palatine, who had briefly profited from the rebellion of the Bohemian Protestants against their Catholic king. New prophetic compositions adapted the apocalyptic last world emperor legend in the service of contemporary political commentary in the late Jacobean period. The manuscript circulation of these prophecies of empire, which subtly worked to criticise James's apparent lack of imperial ambitions, coincided with the spread of rumours about an ominous encounter between the Stuart king and the prophetic spectre of his erstwhile tutor, the Scottish republican George Buchanan. Although the coterie dissemination of such prophecies does not amount to evidence for the organisation of opposition against the Jacobean government in the late 1610s and early 1620s, the study of these texts does reveal that the prophetic rhetoric of militant Protestants at that time was controversially inflected.

The analysis of prophetic rhetoric in the late Jacobean period finds that the Protestant apocalyptic fervour that characterised the reaction of some Jacobean subjects against the foreign policy of their king was analogised in the fictions of dramatic revelation attached to many political prophecies. Such texts were allegedly discovered in the foundations or altars of religious edifices; in walls; and in the inner recesses of clocks. These archaeological fictions worked to de-emphasise the editorial sleights whereby old texts were rendered apparently topical, such as the substitution of a sequence of dates from 1620 to 1630 for a sequence of dates from 1570 to 1580. Hitherto seldom studied, manuscript political prophecies and their attendant material biographies furnish fresh insights into the style and substance of protest writing at the time of the Spanish match crisis and the commencement of the Thirty Years' War.

## *Prophecy and Polemic in the Civil War and Interregnum*

The present chapter considers the rhetorical exploitation of the prophetic canon by royalist and parliamentary polemicists whose works were published during the English Civil War and Interregnum. It pays particular attention to the published output of William Lilly. While Lilly's use of astrological prediction as a propagandist buttress to the parliamentary cause has been well studied, his partisan expositions of the prophetic texts that he and his suppliers found in institutional and family archives have hitherto been largely neglected.<sup>1</sup> The need for a new study of the exegesis of traditional prophecies in the polemical output of Lilly is argued by the presence of factual errors in the rare existing scholarly treatments of this topic.<sup>2</sup> This chapter aims to shed new light on how Lilly and other polemicists repurposed prophetic texts from manuscript sources to further their political agendas in the 1640s and 1650s. This focus on the rhetorical manipulation of pre-existing vatic texts precludes discussion of professed charismatic prophets of the mid-seventeenth century such as Thomas Tany, Abiezer Coppe and Anna Trapnel, whose published utterances have been substantially discussed by other scholars.<sup>3</sup> The first section of the chapter furnishes a case study of

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. the misattribution of *Vaticinium Votivum* to George Wither in Rusche, 'Prophecies and Propaganda, 1641 to 1651', p. 765; the mistake over the title of Paul Grebner's treatise in Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Ariel Hessayon, '*Gold Tried in the Fire*': *The Prophet Theaurau John Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Ariel Hessayon, 'The

a sixteenth-century continental prophetic treatise that was appropriated for royalist and parliamentary propagandist purposes alike shortly after the establishment of the English Republic. The second and third sections focus on the revival of old Scottish, English, and Welsh prophecies in the Civil War and Interregnum periods. Section two considers how such prophecies were rendered newsworthy by the compilers of printed prophetic anthologies, while section three considers how propagandists reinterpreted these native vaticinal texts in efforts to foster support for their chosen political causes.

### PROPHECY REPURPOSED: THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VISION OF PAUL GREBNER IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

The execution of King Charles I on 30 January 1649 generated fresh interest in the works of the sixteenth-century self-proclaimed prophet Paul Grebner, a scholar from Meissen in Saxony who had presented manuscript copies of his Latin vaticinal treatise, *Sericum mundi filum* ('The Silken Thread of the World'), to several European Protestant potentates including Queen Elizabeth I in the 1570s and 1580s. This treatise recounted the contents of a vision of the political future of Europe, which Grebner claimed had been revealed to him at Lüneburg on 25 June 1573. It predicted the imminent defeat of the papal Antichrist. Thus, claimed an agent for Grebner in a letter that petitioned Francis Walsingham to procure the patronage of Queen Elizabeth for his client, this treatise was 'of happy omen for [the Queen of England] and all

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Making of Abiezer Coppe', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 38-58; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 87-126; Achsah Guibbory, 'England's "Biblical" Prophets, 1642-60', in *Religion and Writing in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-Making and Cultural Memory*, ed. by Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 305-25; Margery A. Kingsley, *Transforming the Word: Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in England, 1650-1742* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2001), pp. 33-67.

other Evangelical [i.e. Protestant] princes'.<sup>4</sup> The manuscript of *Sericum mundi filum* that was presented to Elizabeth survives in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, to which it was gifted by Thomas Nevile, a prominent member of the Elizabethan court who was Master of Trinity between 1593 and 1615.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have interpreted the transmission history of this treatise in various ways: Arthur Williamson states that the prophecies of Grebner were 'gratefully received by the Elizabethan court', while Jerome Friedman treats the early relocation of the manuscript to Cambridge as evidence that Elizabeth was '[n]ot temperamentally suited to [the] sort of speculation' in which it engaged.<sup>6</sup> That mode of speculation, as the German scholar Roland Haase has noted, was 'protestantisch-chiliasmisch': Protestant and millenarian.<sup>7</sup> Grebner's biographer for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* doubts whether the enigmatic Saxon scholar really considered himself a prophet.<sup>8</sup> If, as this biographer implies, the contribution made by Grebner to the genre of Protestant eschatological prophecy was merely a suit for the simultaneous patronage of several Reformed European heads of state, the impact of the treatise exceeded the intentions of its author.

*Sericum mundi filum* did not remain in manuscript for long. Besides the various hand-produced presentation copies from the late sixteenth century that survive

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<sup>4</sup> TNA, SP 82/2, fol. 208<sup>v</sup>: Dr Schulte to Walsingham, 20 November 1587. The letter is translated into English from the original Latin in *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth: Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, ed. by Joseph Stevenson and others, 23 vols (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863-1950), XXI Part 3: *April-December 1587*, ed. by Sophie Crawford Lomas and Allen B. Hinds (1929), p. 412. A discussion of the letter appears in Pollock, 'Political Prophecy in Elizabethan England', p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.16.22; briefly referenced and described in Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp. 175-76. Provenance details can be found in M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900-1904), II (1901), p. 388.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur H. Williamson, 'The Jewish Dimension of the Scottish Apocalypse: Climate, Covenant and World Renewal', in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, ed. by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden: Brill, 1989), pp. 7-30 (p. 9); Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> Roland Haase, *Das Problem des Chiliasmus und der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (Leipzig: [n. pub.], [1933]), p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Franz Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Grebner, Paul', in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, ed. by Rochus Freiherr von Liliencron and others, 56 vols (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875-1912), IX (1879), pp. 622-23 (p. 623).

in continental libraries, Jonathan Green has listed the printed versions of Grebner's prophecies produced in the 1590s and 1600s. These include an English edition, reportedly published in 1590, which is apparently no longer extant.<sup>9</sup> Green shows that portions of the treatise had been translated into Dutch, German, English and French by the turn of the seventeenth century. The Scottish scholar James Maxwell became acquainted with the work of Grebner sometime before he composed his *Admirable and Notable Prophecies* (1615), in which one of the prophecies of this purported visionary was summarised and furnished with an exposition designed to promote the Jacobean Church settlement. Maxwell stated that his exegesis of Grebner emulated the 'most christian, iudicious, and moderate manner of speaking' characteristic of his king, James I. This 'moderate' gloss suggested that Grebner's account of a 'Lyon hauing the Rose and Lillies in his armes [who] shall vtterly destroy the Pope' referred not to the aggressive overthrow of the Romish religion but to the nonviolent 'purgation or purification of the Temple' by a reforming king.<sup>10</sup> Although Maxwell did not offer to identify this supposedly irenic royal reformer explicitly, the obvious candidate was James. The Stuart king famously portrayed himself as a peacemaker. His coat of arms bore two Tudor roses and a shield that depicted the red lion rampant of Scotland, gold lions passant of England, and golden fleurs-de-lys of France.

The contents of the manuscript of *Sericum mundi filum* preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge are presented as a series of 'vexilla' ('banners'), each of which features a separate prophecy. In July 1623, the Suffolk clergyman John Rous visited Cambridge to consult this manuscript. He reproduced some of its contents on twelve

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Green, 'Paul Grebner Bibliography', <<http://researchfragments.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/paul-grebner-bibliography-01.html>> [accessed 2 April 2015]. See also Jonathan Green, 'Translating Time: Chronicle, Prognostication, Prophecy', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), 162-77 (p. 174).

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell, *Admirable and Notable Prophecies*, sig. N4<sup>v</sup>.

pages of his manuscript miscellany.<sup>11</sup> Rous faithfully transcribed the long subtitle of the treatise, which summarised its contents and defensively outlined their prophetic credentials. According to this subtitle, the reader of *Sericum mundi filum* could expect to find the following therein predicted: the overthrow of the antichristian pope and of the Turk; and the happy restitution of the godly (i.e. Protestant) church throughout the world, beginning in the north and spreading thence (*‘ex Septentrione’*) by the dissemination of the Word. Grebner also used this subtitle to assert that the arguments of his treatise sprang not from his own brain (*‘non ex proprio cerebro’*) but from divine revelation (*‘Diuina reuelatione’*) and the sayings of the prophets and apostles of the Son of God (*‘Prophetarum Filii dei et Apostolorum dicta’*).<sup>12</sup> The claim of *Sericum mundi filum* that a last world emperor (*‘extremo Imperatore mundi’*) would arrive to lead the godly cause to victory over the forces of Catholicism piqued the interest and perhaps lifted the spirits of Rous in the summer of 1623 when Prince Charles, the heir to the English throne, was known to be in Madrid, engaged in negotiations to marry the Catholic Habsburg Infanta of Spain against the wishes of many English Protestants.<sup>13</sup>

One of the passages Rous copied from the Grebner manuscript was *vexillum* 173, which began with a prediction of the end of Habsburg rule over the Holy Roman Empire: *‘Romano sceptro et diademate ab Austriaca Doma fatali necessitate deposito et ablato...’* (*‘The Roman sceptre and diadem being by fatal necessity set down and taken away from the House of Austria...’*). The text then told how a Swedish king would be petitioned by the pope to fight on behalf of the Catholic cause in a pan-European confessional conflict. It warned the same king not to accede to that request. Thereafter followed a description of the exploits of a northern king named Charles.

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<sup>11</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fols 22<sup>v</sup>-28<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., fol. 23<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., fol. 25<sup>r</sup>; Millstone, ‘The Rector of Santon Downham’, p. 84.

This Charles, son of another Charles, was to be a second Charlemagne. He would take up arms against the forces of the antichristian Church of Rome and destroy the Spanish tyrant.<sup>14</sup> The ambiguous phraseology of the text made it possible for readers of this prophecy to assume either that Charles and the Swedish king were two separate protagonists or that they were one and the same. When Rous copied this late-sixteenth-century text in July 1623, the treatment of Charles as a figure distinct from the Swedish king would have facilitated the application of the prophecy to contemporary politics. If the full name of King James VI and I (Charles James Stuart) were taken into account, his son and heir might thus be identified as the Protestant crusader of the prophecy: Charles, the son of Charles. Between February and October, when Prince Charles was in Madrid, many stoutly Protestant verse libels that opposed the Spanish match were written and circulated in Britain. These vilified King Philip IV of Spain and articulated the wish for Charles to return home unmarried.<sup>15</sup> The Grebner prophecy might have seemed to promise the fulfilment of this wish. Its account of the defeat of the Spanish king by the hero Charles was potentially interpretable as a prediction that the British prince would reject the Infanta and so thwart the rumoured desire of King Philip to incorporate Britain via this marriage into his projected universal monarchy.<sup>16</sup> Rous renewed his interest in the prophecies of Grebner in the early 1630s, when the military successes of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus induced him to focus on the Swede of *vexillum* 173, instead of Charles, as the Protestant hero of that text. In November 1631, he alluded in his diary to current

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<sup>14</sup> Trinity, MS R.16.22, fols 303<sup>r</sup>-304<sup>v</sup>; BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 26<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g. 'Nv13: "Our Prince whom we soe dearely lov'd"; 'Ni4: "If 88 be past then thrive"', in *Early Stuart Libels*, ed. by Bellany and McRae.

<sup>16</sup> See Thomas Cogswell, 'England and the Spanish Match', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*, ed. by Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 107-33 (p. 112).

reports among hopeful Protestants that the Swedish army was eighty thousand strong and that soon ‘Grebner would be observed in many particulars’.<sup>17</sup>

The suggestion that Gustavus Adolphus was the last world emperor depicted in many of the prophecies in *Sericum mundi filum* reached print in England at this stage of the Thirty Years’ War, when the hitherto outmanoeuvred Protestant faction was heartened by the recent victory of the troops led by the King of Sweden in September 1631 at the Battle of Breitenfeld. In December, Rous noted in his diary that a passage from the Grebner manuscript was reproduced in the first part of *The Swedish Intelligencer*, a publication that ‘did set forthe the Proceedings of the K. of Sweden since his landing in Germany’.<sup>18</sup> The Grebner prophecy printed in *The Swedish Intelligencer* was taken from folio 164 of the Trinity College manuscript. It concerned a ‘Lyon of the House of *Saxony*’ who had hitherto ‘kept [his] faith vntainted vnto the [Habsburg] house of *Austria* and to *Philip* [of Spain]’ but was unwilling ‘to be hoodwinkt as it were any longer’.<sup>19</sup> This sixteenth-century text lent itself to propagandist exposition as a prophecy of the alliance concluded in September 1631 between Gustavus Adolphus and the Elector of Saxony, John George I, who had previously refused to take up arms for the Protestant cause against the forces of the Habsburg states. Also brought to the press in the winter of 1631 was Alexander Gil’s *The New Starre of the North, Shining upon the Victorious King of Sweden*, which celebrated the compact of Gustavus and John George I and noted that the late events on the Continent seemed to ‘comment[] by action upon the *Prognosticall speculations*

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<sup>17</sup> BL, Add. MS 22959, fol. 46<sup>f</sup>; *Diary of John Rous, Incumbent of Santon Downham, Suffolk, from 1625 to 1642*, ed. by Mary Anne Everett Green, Camden Series, 66 (London: Camden Society, 1856), p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> BL, Add. MS 22959, fol. 47<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> William Watts, *The Swedish Intelligencer: The First Part* (London: Nathaniel Butter and Nicholas Bourne, 1632 [1631]), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>; Trinity, MS R.16.22, fol. 164<sup>f</sup>.

written about sixty yeares agoe by *Paulus Grebnerus*'.<sup>20</sup> Gil was somewhat circumspect in his application of the Grebner prophecy to current European events. While the resemblance of the recent exploits of the Swedish king to the prophesied accomplishments of the reforming monarch was undeniable, he stated, it was still possible that the prophecy might 'as well [...] poynt at other times, as this'.<sup>21</sup>

A more thoroughly sceptical reader of Grebner was Joseph Mede, fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, whose interest in prophecies was already established by the late Jacobean period, when he sent many such texts to his regular correspondent in Suffolk, Martin Stuteville. Mede wrote from Cambridge to the expatriate Prussian educational reformer Samuel Hartlib in London on 3 April 1637, in reply to a request from the latter for a transcript of *vexilla* 173 and 238 from the manuscript housed at Trinity College. He enclosed the desired passages and briefly described how the manuscript at Trinity had been a gift to the College from its late Master Thomas Nevile, a former Clerk of the Closet to Queen Elizabeth I. Mede stated that his own acquaintance with the manuscript was of long standing. He had studied it for the second time '[w]hen the warre began in Bohemia' in the late 1610s, in search of some prophetic reference to the conflict that was to usher in the Thirty Years' War, but had found nothing but 'vanitie and fancie'.<sup>22</sup> In this letter to Hartlib, Mede derided the claims of *Sericum mundi filum* to divine inspiration and so pre-empted the scepticism of Grebner's nineteenth-century biographer. Mede advised his correspondent: 'I haue

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<sup>20</sup> Alexander Gil, *The New Starre of the North, Shining upon the Victorious King of Sweden* (London: Augustine Mathewes for Robert Milbourne, 1631), sig. F1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. F2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 32<sup>v</sup>: Joseph Mede to Samuel Hartlib, 3 April 1637. The letter is printed in Joseph Mede, *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede, B. D., Sometime Fellow of Christ's Colledge in Cambridge* (London: Roger Norton for Richard Royston, 1677), sig. Gggg1<sup>v</sup>.

I know not how often to satisfie one or other tould them as I now tell you. And yet euery 4 or 6 yeares it comes vp againe as if it had neuer bene discredited.<sup>23</sup>

According to Mede, Grebner's prophetic treatise belonged to the 'advice to princes' tradition. In a comment concerning *vexillum* 173, Mede asserted that the heroic Protestant 'Charlemaine of the north' had been intended by Grebner to represent a European potentate who was already alive and politically prominent at the time when he wrote, not an individual as yet unborn.<sup>24</sup> The Charles of the prophecy was a figure for Duke Charles of Sudermannia, brother to King John III of Sweden (1537-1592), argued Mede, who reasoned that the Protestant Grebner had composed this *vexillum* to persuade the renowned Catholic sympathiser King John not to align with the Catholic League. Mede expounded the prophecy as a rhetorical threat to John that if his support for the Protestant cause were to wane, his brother Charles would usurp the Swedish throne and command the force that would finally vanquish Catholicism in the long-awaited apocalyptic conflict. *Sericum mundi filum* had commented on events of Grebner's own lifetime, Mede asserted, and *vexillum* 173 should not be taken to refer to 'any other *Charles*' but the Duke of Sudermannia.<sup>25</sup>

In his exposition of the Revelation, *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1627), Mede had argued that Christ would return to earth in the future to reign with his saints for a thousand years.<sup>26</sup> The second, expanded edition of his millenarian treatise had been published in 1632 and had expressed enthusiasm for the contemporary speculation that Gustavus Adolphus was the Protestant crusader from the north described in many prophecies as the conqueror of the Romish Antichrist. Mede had tentatively identified the successes of Gustavus as the events signified by the emptying of the fourth vial in

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<sup>23</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fols 32<sup>v</sup>-33<sup>r</sup>; Mede, *Works*, sig. Gggg1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 33<sup>r</sup>; Mede, *Works*, sig. Gggg2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 33<sup>r</sup>; Mede, *Works*, sig. Gggg2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica: Ex innatis et insitis visionum characteribus eruta et demonstrata* (Cambridge: [T. and J. Buck], 1627), sig. C4<sup>v</sup>.

Revelation 16.8.<sup>27</sup> If he had so chosen, Mede might at that time have adduced the prophecies of Grebner in support of the messianic expectations attached to Gustavus, after the example of the authors of *The Swedish Intelligencer* and *The New Starre of the North*. When Hartlib asked Mede to transcribe portions of the Grebner manuscript in 1637, however, that Swedish king and the fevered speculation his exploits had prompted were nearly five years dead. At a time when there was little apparent propagandist capital to be made from the prophecies of Grebner, Mede argued in his letter to Hartlib that *vexillum* 173 had concerned the religio-political affairs of sixteenth-century Europe and was thus inapplicable to current or future events.<sup>28</sup> In the same letter, Mede exposed a further flaw in the eschatological thesis of *Sericum mundi filum*. As Rous had done in 1623, the author of the millenarian *Clavis Apocalyptica* noted that Grebner had added together the Roman numerals that spelled the Latin word IVDICIUM (*judicium*, judgement) and had thus determined that 1613 would be the date of the Second Coming.<sup>29</sup> History, Mede indicated to his fellow millenarian Hartlib twenty-four years after the date of Grebner's predicted *judicium*, had proven the self-proclaimed visionary of Saxony no true prophet of the last things.

Of the two *vexilla* of *Sericum mundi filum* requested by Hartlib, numbers 173 and 238, Mede concentrated his efforts to discredit Grebner on the former. *Vexillum* 238 told of a Bohemian Protestant king whose warlike triumphs would be comparable

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica: Ex innatis et insitis visionum characteribus eruta et demonstrata*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Thomas Buck, 1632), sig. L13<sup>v</sup>. This edition of Mede's millenarian treatise was published in an English translation by order of the Long Parliament during the English Civil War: see Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation: Searched and Demonstrated out of the Naturall and Proper Characters of the Visions*, trans. by Richard More (London: R. B. for Phil. Stephens, 1643); Kristine Louise Haugen, 'Apocalypse (A User's Manual): Joseph Mede, the Interpretation of Prophecy and the Dream Book of Achmet', *The Seventeenth Century*, 25 (2010), 215-39 (p. 215).

<sup>28</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 33<sup>r</sup>; Mede, *Works*, sig. Gggg2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 32<sup>v</sup>; Mede, *Works*, sig. Gggg1<sup>v</sup>; BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>. See Susanna Åkerman, 'The Myth of the Lion of the North and its Origins in Paul Grebner's Visions', in *Cultura Baltica: Literary Culture around the Baltic, 1600-1700*, ed. by Bo Andersson and Richard E. Schade (Uppsala: S. Academiae Upsaliensis, 1996), pp. 23-43 (p. 42).

to those of the Hussite Bohemian military commander Jan Žižka (c.1360-1424).<sup>30</sup> The letter and the transcripts of *vexilla* 173 and 238 sent by Mede to Hartlib are preserved in British Library, Sloane MS 648. This volume also contains English translations of the same two *vexilla*, made by Mede in 1637 from a defective text sent to him by a now unknown correspondent to be rendered out of Latin. An introductory note on the recto of the leaf that contains these English texts expresses Mede's exasperation 'that men should be so much taken with Grebners prædictions, the euent hauing so often contradicted them'.<sup>31</sup> Mede, who had argued for the identification of the Charles in *vexillum* 173 as no other figure but the Duke of Sudermannia, died in 1639. If he had lived for another decade, he would have witnessed the commencement of a period of renewed interest in *Sericum mundi filum* in Britain. The prophecies of Grebner proved 'invaluable for propaganda purposes during the Republic', at which time a new identity for the heroic Charles, the son of Charles was discovered.<sup>32</sup>

Shortly after the execution of King Charles I, *Vaticinium Votivum; or, Palæmon's Prophetick Prayer* left the press. Dedicated to Charles Stuart, son of the recently deceased king, this anonymous collection featured elegies for Charles I and other royalist miscellanea including a tendentious exposition in verse of a prophecy that purported to derive from the 'faire Manuscript in Latine' presented by Paul Grebner to Elizabeth I.<sup>33</sup> *Vaticinium Votivum* was once regarded by scholars as the work of George Wither.<sup>34</sup> David Norbrook has exposed the absence of any factual basis for this attribution and has pointed out that Wither was not an advocate for the

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<sup>30</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 37<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> BL, Sloane MS 648, fol. 37<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> *Vaticinium Votivum; or, Palæmon's Prophetick Prayer* ([London(?): [n. pub.], 1649), sig. C5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g. Rusche, 'Prophecies and Propaganda, 1641 to 1651', p. 765; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 466.

coronation of Charles II in 1649, as the author of this publication was.<sup>35</sup> The prophecy attributed to Grebner in *Vaticinium Votivum* told of a northern king named Charles who would be married to a Catholic by the name of Mary and would prove ‘a most unfortunate Prince’. It predicted that his northern province would be commanded after his downfall not by a hereditary monarch but by an earl elected to govern. After the earl had served his term of office, the text claimed, a knight would be elected as his successor. The government of this knight would be followed by a period distinguished by the rule of ‘none at all’. This period would conclude when ‘one CHARLS descending from CHARLS’ landed ‘with a mightie Navie, on the Shore of his Father’s Kingdom’, there to reinstate monarchical government and to initiate the establishment of an empire whose eventual scale would cement his reputation as ‘greater then CHARLS the Great’.<sup>36</sup> This purportedly Grebnerian prophecy would have solaced royalist readers with its apparent promise that the son and namesake of the late king (‘CHARLS descending from CHARLS’) would not only govern England as Charles II sometime in the future but also come to be revered as an almighty emperor.

Couched in heroic couplets, the three-page poetical exposition that followed the prophecy attributed to Grebner in *Vaticinium Votivum* lamented the execution of Charles I and culminated in the following lines addressed to his son:

O mai’st Thou Reign in Thy known Realms, who art  
Inthron’d alreadie in Thy People’s heart!  
O mai’st Thou Rule! and spread Thy Fame through th’ whole  
Earth; from the *Artick* to t’ *Antartick* Pole.  
Till the just world with *Grebner* shall maintein  
Thee a mightier Monarch then brave *Charlemain*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> David Norbrook, ‘Some Notes on the Canon of George Wither’, *Notes and Queries*, 43 (1996), 276-81 (p. 279).

<sup>36</sup> *Vaticinium Votivum*, sig. C5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C7<sup>r</sup>.

According to the annotation made by George Thomason on the title page of his copy, *Vaticinium Votivum* was published on 11 March 1649.<sup>38</sup> A verbatim copy of the purported Grebner text printed in that work was published as a broadside, *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus concerning These Times*, two months later. (On his copy of the latter publication, Thomason noted that it had appeared on 8 May 1649.<sup>39</sup>) Neither *Vaticinium Votivum* nor the broadside supplied the number of the Grebner *vexillum* they claimed to reproduce. Legislation to prohibit the composition and printing of scandalous pamphlets was introduced on 20 March 1649 by the Council of State, the republic's equivalent of the Privy Council.<sup>40</sup> Soon after this legislation was passed, it appears, the supposedly Grebnerian prophecy printed both in *Vaticinium Votivum* and as a broadside attracted official investigation. This account of the exploits of a hero named Charles who would recover the lost kingdom of his father, also named Charles, was seemingly impounded as a potential incitement to royalist rebellion against the Commonwealth. The Council of State proceedings for May 1649, held in the National Archives, contain a manuscript facsimile of this text.<sup>41</sup> Adjacent to this text in the volume where it is preserved is an English translation of *vexillum* 173 of *Sericum mundi filium*.<sup>42</sup> The simultaneous analysis of these two documents reveals several similarities in their contents.

Both *vexillum* 173 and the purported Grebner text printed in *Vaticinium Votivum* and as a broadside told of a northern King Charles, son of Charles, who would marry a Catholic but fight in league with the Protestant states of Europe and prove himself a second Charlemagne. Where the latter text named the wife of this

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<sup>38</sup> *Vaticinium Votivum*: BL, 169:E.1217[2], sig. A1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus concerning These Times* ([London(?): [n. pub.], 1649): BL, 246:669.f.14[29].

<sup>40</sup> Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), p. 166.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, SP 18/1, fol. 180<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, SP 18/1, fol. 181<sup>r</sup>.

Charles as Mary, *vexillum 173* did not mention her name. *Vexillum 173* ended with the prediction that the Swedish king would direct his navy against his enemies with great success. The final lines of the other text described how Charles, the son of Charles, would use his navy to invade the land once governed by his father and would establish himself there as king. The correspondences between *vexillum 173* and the prophecy twice printed in 1649 under the name of Grebner suggest the possibility that the latter text was a modern forgery loosely based on the former. Via the insertion of the name Mary, which might be taken to refer to the second name of King Charles I's consort Henrietta Maria, a mid-seventeenth-century 'royalist editor' of *vexillum 173* could encourage readers to make the same assumption expressed in the title of the 1649 broadside: that the prophecies of the sixteenth-century Saxon prophet Grebner 'concern[ed] These Times'.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the editorial suppression of the Swedish nationality of the regal naval commander would facilitate the interpretation of the last lines as a prophecy that Charles, the son of Charles I, was imminently to voyage across the sea from The Hague to establish himself as King Charles II of England.

The royalist text that was published as *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus* and included in *Vaticinium Votivum* in 1649 appeared in print again the following year. It was reproduced in *A Brief Description of the Future History of Europe* (1650), an anonymous prophetic anthology that purported to contain portions of 'that famous Manuscript of PAUL GREBNER extant in Trinity-Colledge Library in Cambridge'.<sup>44</sup> This publication was composed to celebrate the arrival of Charles Stuart in Scotland, where he had been proclaimed King Charles II. It also challenged the arguments of the Fifth Monarchists, the radical millenarian sect that hailed the

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<sup>43</sup> Rusche, 'Prophecies and Propaganda, 1641 to 1651', p. 767; *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus concerning These Times*.

<sup>44</sup> *A Brief Description of the Future History of Europe, from Anno 1650 to An. 1700* ([London(?): [n. pub.], 1650), sig. \*1<sup>r</sup>. All future references to this publication use the abbreviated title *Future History*.

abolition of monarchy in England as the prelude to the glorious thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.<sup>45</sup> The title page of this work advertised its intention to reveal the events due to unfold in Europe between 1650 and 1710, the year when ‘the FIFTH MONARCHIE of the universall Reign of the Gospel of Christ upon Earth’ would be established.<sup>46</sup> In a riposte to the millenarians, the unknown compiler of this anthology stated in the third chapter that the Fifth Monarchy was to be a ‘ministeriall (not personall) Reign and Kingdom of Christ upon Earth’, which would endure not for a thousand years but for ‘a very short time’ prior to the final judgement.<sup>47</sup> The prefatory epistle to readers of this publication asserted that the eschatological schema therein propounded was derived from scriptural passages ‘which Commentator never yet disclosed’ and from the prophecies of ‘strange Authors’ whose works were not to be found ‘in every Library’. Readers familiar with these obscure texts were to note that they were ‘dealt with [...] truly, and cited [...] faithfully’ in the *Future History*.<sup>48</sup>

Doubts about the sincerity of the claims made in the preface to the *Future History* are soon awoken in any reader familiar with one of the most popular prophecies to have circulated in manuscript in the late Jacobean period: the list of forecasts for each year of the 1620s, purportedly found in the foundations of St Denis Abbey in Paris. This apocalyptic text, originally composed in the 1570s as a prophecy of the events of that decade, had been revived around the start of the Thirty Years’ War and embellished at that time with accounts that variously told of its discovery in a heart-shaped leaden container and of its transportation from Paris in the hands of a

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<sup>45</sup> See, e.g. Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 14, 21-22.

<sup>46</sup> *Future History*, sig. \*1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. \*2<sup>r-v</sup>.

papal nuncio.<sup>49</sup> A copy of this text was printed in the *Future History* inside a heart-shaped border. An introductory note claimed that the prophecy had been found at St Denis in 1616, ‘written in parchment, and wrapped in lead in the form of an Heart’, and that it had been sent by the pope’s nuncio ‘to the Cardinall of *Bruges*’.<sup>50</sup> The presence in that note of details first attached to this prophecy in the late Jacobean era indicates that the sources consulted by the compiler of the *Future History* were of that period. In these Jacobean manuscripts, the series of forecasts would have referred to the 1620s. In the *Future History*, however, the left-hand column beside this series listed not the years 1620 to 1630 but various non-consecutive years between 1661 and 1710.<sup>51</sup> Hence, despite the prefatory promise that manuscript sources would be ‘cited [...] faithfully’ in *The Future History*, the compiler adapted this prophecy to render it a buttress to the arguments of that work. The last forecast, ‘*Pastor et ecclesia unica*’ (‘one shepherd and one church’), was thus applied to 1710, the year appointed in the *Future History* for the start of the ministerial reign of the gospel of Christ on earth.

*Vaticinium Votivum* (1649) and *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus* (1649) had not specified which *vexillum* of *Sericum mundi filum* corresponded to the prophecy of the Protestant hero Charles, married to a Catholic named Mary, who would recover the kingdom lost by his father. In the *Future History*, this prophecy was reproduced and identified as *vexillum 72* of Grebner’s treatise. The comments that introduced the text instructed readers to account it a ‘Prophecie of our Civil Wars, of the Fate of our late King, and the Restauration of his son to his Fathers Dominions’.<sup>52</sup> Both the designation of this prophecy as one of Grebner’s *vexilla* and the royalist exegesis with which it was supplied in the *Future History* provoked the

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<sup>49</sup> See, e.g. *A Prophecie of the Iudgment Day*; TNA, SP 14/90, fol. 49<sup>v</sup>: George Lord Carew to Sir Thomas Roe, 18 January 1617; Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 231.

<sup>50</sup> *Future History*, sig. D1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

parliamentarian propagandist William Lilly to compose a rejoinder to that work.<sup>53</sup> A year after the publication of the *Future History*, Lilly's *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England* (1651) left the press. *Monarchy or No Monarchy* was an anthology devised to demonstrate, through the 'free and ingenuous opening of all *Prophecies* which are authentically', that the establishment of the English Republic had been foretold and approved by the vatic authorities of the past.<sup>54</sup> Its prefatory epistle, addressed to the reader, deplored the publication in both *Vaticinium Votivum* and the *Future History* of 'a corrupt and purely false Copy' of a prophecy ascribed to Paul Grebner.<sup>55</sup> In this epistle, Lilly declared that the supposedly Grebnerian prophecy had been forged so as to 'stir up Rebellion' against the Republic. This attribution of insurrectionary motives to the publishers of the pseudo-Grebner prophecy was calculated to promote the eschewal of that text among readers who had recently lived through the civil wars and feared the return of any such turmoil in England. In case his emotive reference to 'Rebellion' might prove insufficient to deter any potential adherents to the royalist prophecy falsely ascribed to Grebner, Lilly devoted the first twenty-six pages of *Monarchy or No Monarchy* to the exposure of the impostures of that prophecy.

Lilly correctly observed that the prophecy of Charles, the son of Charles and husband of Mary, did not correspond to the *vexillum* that it claimed to reproduce from *Sericum mundi filium*.<sup>56</sup> The parliamentary prophetic exegete determined that this royalist prophecy, whose equivalent appeared nowhere in the manuscript at Trinity College, was a forgery based on *vexillum* 173. Lilly vilified his polemical opponent as 'a meere Time server' who falsified prophecies in order to ingratiate himself 'with the

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<sup>53</sup> Robert E. Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy: The Cedar of Lebanon Vision from the Mongol Onslaught to the Dawn of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 178; Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, p. 100.

<sup>54</sup> William Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1651), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C1<sup>v</sup>. The contents of *vexillum* 72 in Trinity, MS R.16.22 do not resemble those of the text identified as Grebner's 72<sup>nd</sup> *vexillum* in the *Future History*.

*Presbytery and Cavalry of England*.<sup>57</sup> *Monarchy or No Monarchy* provided a copy of *vexillum* 173 faithfully transcribed from the Trinity manuscript. Lilly labelled this text ‘*Grebneri vera Copia*’ (‘a true copy of Grebner’).<sup>58</sup> He was careful to highlight disparities between the purported antiquarian scholarship of the compiler of the *Future History* and his own treatment of sources. Lilly noted the unwillingness of his rival to give specific details about the provenance of many of the texts printed in the *Future History*. This compiler was wont to claim, remarked Lilly, that the prophecies he anthologised were ‘fetc[h]e[d] from obscure *Manuscripts* concealed in clandestine *Libraries*’. Such reluctance to specify the origins of the texts collected in the *Future History* constituted evidence, according to Lilly, that the compiler had forged these texts ‘to terrifie the Vulgar from assisting the present Authority’.<sup>59</sup> Lilly’s anthology, which adduced prophecies in support of the present authority (the Republic), presented contrastingly detailed accounts of the provenance of the texts it contained.

A note that preceded the faithful copy of *vexillum* 173 in *Monarchy or No Monarchy* described that text as a facsimile of a handwritten transcript taken by a certain ‘Sir R. M.’ directly from the Trinity manuscript and gifted to Lilly in 1638 or 1639. Lilly claimed to have sent this transcript to Cambridge to be checked against the original in 1649 after the appearance of the variant text attributed to Grebner in *Vaticinium Votivum*. He printed what he claimed was a reproduction of part of the letter he had received from his Cambridge correspondent, confirming the accuracy of the transcript.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the faithful Latin copy, Lilly supplied two English translations of *vexillum* 173 in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*. He prefaced the second of these with the following description of the source from which he had obtained it:

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<sup>57</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. C1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D2<sup>v</sup>.

[I]t hapned a Gentleman in the North parts, of a Noble Family, in the year 1649 perused his Fathers Library, found therein the Prophecy of *Paulus Grebnerus* coppied faire, and translated by his Fathers Tutor, at what time he was a Student in *Cambridge*, which was in *Anno* 1618 or 1619.<sup>61</sup>

The document thus described was acquired by Lilly, according to his own account, sometime in or after 1649.<sup>62</sup> His claim that this translation was made by a Cambridge tutor in 1618-19 is suggestive. The contents of British Library, Sloane MS 648 show that Joseph Mede, fellow of Christ's College, consulted the manuscript of *Sericum mundi filium* at Trinity at that time. They reveal too that Mede supplied an unknown individual with English texts of *vexilla* 173 and 238. In *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, Lilly also included an English translation of *vexillum* 238.<sup>63</sup> He had found this text, he stated, 'in the same Paper' as the English version of *vexillum* 173, written likewise in the hand of the man who had tutored the father of his supplier at Cambridge in the late 1610s.<sup>64</sup> It is thus possible that the correspondent for whom Mede Englished two Grebner passages in 1637 was the father of the unidentified northern gentleman from whom Lilly obtained English copies of the same two *vexilla* around 1649.

Lilly declared himself 'willing to shew the Originall' of the document given to him by the northern gentleman 'unto any one'.<sup>65</sup> Through such assertions of his own ability to account for the provenance of the Grebner texts printed in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, Lilly emphasised the suspicious inability of the compiler of the *Future History* to describe the transmission history of the prophecy attributed to Grebner in that treatise. His assault on the credibility of the latter text also involved the exposure of a passage that, in his view, indexed recent events so precisely that it must have

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<sup>61</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D4<sup>r</sup>.

been forged after those events. This was the passage that affected to predict the following sequence of occurrences: the cessation of monarchical government in the unnamed northern province of the first royal Charles, progenitor of the second Charlemagne; the election of an earl to rule; the subsequent transfer of power to a knight by election; and the end thereafter of elective government.<sup>66</sup> These predictions have no equivalent in the authentic text of *vexillum* 173.<sup>67</sup> Lilly argued that the first three constituted an *ex eventu* prophecy of a series of episodes from recent English history: the outbreak of civil war during the reign of King Charles I; the election of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, as the first commander of the parliamentary army in 1642; and the appointment of Thomas Fairfax as Essex's replacement in 1645, at which time Fairfax had not yet been created Lord Viscount Cameron and was still 'onely a *Knight*'. The fourth prediction, claimed Lilly, had been speculative in the late 1640s when this pseudo-Grebner prophecy had been composed. The election of Oliver Cromwell as 'third Lord Generall' of the parliamentary troops, he noted, had since proven its inaccuracy and exposed the forger of this text as a false prophet.<sup>68</sup>

An inconsistency in one of the royalist arguments of the *Future History* was derided by Lilly in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*. This parliamentary writer remarked that his rival prophetic exegete had declared that '[w]e in *England* have gained no better by our civil Warre, but in stead of one Tyrant to advance a douzen over us'. Thus, argued Lilly, the compiler of the supposedly pro-Stuart *Future History* had 'confesse[d] the late King to be a Tyrant' and so unwittingly undermined his own propagandist agenda.<sup>69</sup> Inconsistencies were in fact not absent from Lilly's own arguments. His treatment of the pseudo-Grebner prophecy commented that some of

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<sup>66</sup> *Future History*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>. See also *Vatcinium Votivum*, sig. C5<sup>v</sup>; *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus concerning These Times*.

<sup>67</sup> Trinity, MS R.16.22, fols 303<sup>r</sup>-304<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> *Future History*, sig. A1<sup>r</sup>; Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. B4<sup>f</sup>.

the figures mentioned therein did not appear in *vexillum* 173 and must therefore be the inventions of the modern forger. ‘[I]n truth there is no such name as CHARLES or a *Northern King* or MARY in the true Originall’, he asserted.<sup>70</sup> This observation was only partially correct. Although the name Mary indeed did not appear in the genuine copy of *vexillum* 173 provided by Lilly eighteen pages after this remark in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, that text did detail the exploits of a northern king named Charles.<sup>71</sup>

A further possible example of carelessness on the part of Lilly is detectable in his denunciation of the attempts made by the compiler of the *Future History* to identify King Charles II of Scotland as the lion of the north. Lilly noted that his polemical opponent had named both Grebner and the Scottish Merlin as authorities whose prophecies had told of this heroic northern lion.<sup>72</sup> Predictions of the triumphs of a lion of the north, influenced by the apocryphal II Esdras, formed a sub-genre of the traditional last world emperor prophecies. They had been invoked at various times in the first half of the seventeenth century to express the hopes invested by Protestants in potentates such as Frederick V, James I, and Gustavus Adolphus.<sup>73</sup> One such prophecy was ascribed in the *Future History* to the Scottish Merlin, who, according to the compiler of that treatise, had possessed genuine vatic insight where the more famous Welsh Merlin had not.<sup>74</sup> Lilly suggested that this preference for the obscure *Merlin Caledonicus* indicated that the compiler of the *Future History* was ‘of the *Scottish Presbyterian faith*’.<sup>75</sup> He alleged that the Merlin prophecy printed in both English and Latin in the *Future History* was a recent forgery by the compiler of that

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<sup>70</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs C1<sup>v</sup>, C4<sup>r</sup>; *Future History*, sigs A4<sup>r</sup>, E3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g. Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, p. 60.

<sup>74</sup> *Future History*, sig. E4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. C4<sup>r</sup>.

treatise.<sup>76</sup> This allegation was incorrect. The text was in fact a prose version of ‘A prince out of the north shall come’, the verse prophecy of the career of King James I that had circulated widely in manuscript in the late Jacobean period. A comparison between the late Jacobean poem and the prose prophecy printed in the *Future History* reveals the debt of the latter to the former. Both texts described their protagonist as a northern monarch whose badge would be a rampant lion and whose valour would exceed that of Alexander the Great. Both texts also supplied the following predictions concerning the career of their protagonist: that he would notoriously dissolve a parliament in anger; that he would voyage overseas and be hailed by many kings as an emperor; that he would reduce Rome to rubble; and that he would defeat his eastern foes in the vale of Jehoshaphat, where he would eventually die a natural death.<sup>77</sup>

The failure of *Monarchy or No Monarchy* to identify the Jacobean original of the text credited to the Scottish Merlin in the *Future History* is perhaps attributable to a lacuna in Lilly’s scholarship on popular prophecies. Alternatively, it is possible that Lilly obfuscated the source of that text to serve his rhetorical purposes. Prophecies that belonged to the last world emperor tradition were necessarily antagonistic to republican arguments.<sup>78</sup> Lilly could hence hope to further his polemical agenda through the dismissal of the prose text as an imposture or an irrelevance. ‘A prince out of the north shall come’ had identified its protagonist as ‘C. J. S.’ (Charles James Stuart). In *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, Lilly contended not only that the purported prophecy of the Scottish Merlin had probably been written by the compiler of the *Future History* but also that it was inapplicable to the Stuart dynasty even if not a modern fabrication. Any reference to the Jacobean verse prophecy on which the prose

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<sup>76</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. C4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Ni3: “A Prince out of the North shall come”’, in *Early Stuart Libels*, ed. by Bellany and McRae; *Future History*, sig. E4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> See Arthur H. Williamson, *Apocalypse Then: Prophecy and the Making of the Modern World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), p. 79.

text in the *Future History* was based would serve to undermine Lilly's argument that this prose prophecy concerned neither King James I, whose 'extreme cowardize' disqualified him from identification as its protagonist, nor Charles II of Scotland.<sup>79</sup>

Lilly's scholarship on old prophecies was only intermittently or selectively careful. He appears to have deemed his rhetorical effectiveness dependent on more than displays of sound antiquarianism alone. In his published efforts to persuade readers that the prophets of the past had foreseen and endorsed the Republic, he often made subtle, calculated use of rumour and folklore. To rebut the suggestion made in the *Future History* that the present Scottish king would prove a second Charlemagne, Lilly commented: 'He may, I confesse, in person or bulke be greater then *Charles the Great*; but not in Warre or Atchievements be so happy.'<sup>80</sup> Although the widely reported fact that King Charles II of Scotland was unusually tall was irrelevant to the prophecy under discussion, Lilly thus jocularly employed this detail to add colour to his argument and to appeal to a popular readership. He elsewhere made rhetorical use of the legend that Scottish kings were prone to untimely and unnatural deaths. The *Future History*, Lilly noted, had suggested both that the present King Charles of Scotland would preside over the Fifth Monarchy and that this Fifth Monarchy would begin in 1710. On that date, the parliamentarian propagandist pointed out, Charles II would already be eighty years old. The royalist compiler of the *Future History* 'may well blush at these his mistakes', Lilly wittily remarked, since 'if in the Catalogue of the *Scottish Kings* he ever find any one to have lived sixty yeares, it's a miracle'.<sup>81</sup>

The faithful copy of *vexillum* 173 was another weapon in Lilly's rhetorical arsenal. Whereas Joseph Mede in 1637 had expounded this prophecy as an offer of advice from Grebner to the late sixteenth-century King John III of Sweden, Lilly

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<sup>79</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. D1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B4<sup>r</sup>.

encouraged his readers to regard the text as a genuinely inspired index of events that were yet to unfold. *Monarchy or No Monarchy* argued, in opposition to the *Future History* and *Vaticinium Votivum* alike, that the prophecy of Charles the son of Charles predicted not the restoration of the English monarchy under a valiant King Charles II of Scotland but the exploits of a Swedish hero ‘not yet visible or alive’.<sup>82</sup> Lilly thus chose to treat the Swedish king and the hero Charles mentioned in *vexillum* 173 not as two separate figures but as one and the same. The first episode described in the prophecy, he noted, was the end of the reign of the House of Austria over the Holy Roman Empire. Since the Habsburgs were still in possession of the imperial sceptre and diadem at the time of the publication of *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, Lilly asserted, it followed that the events of the prophecy must post-date 1651.<sup>83</sup> If one of the manuscript copies of *vexillum* 173 from which Lilly worked was the English text produced by Mede in 1637, the propagandist for the Republic chose to ignore the prefatory comments supplied by the Cambridge don to discredit that text. Lilly portrayed Grebner as a truly inspired prophet and implied that the fulfilment of his predictions lay in the future. Whether or not Lilly actually believed in the purported vatic authority of Grebner, he perceived and seized the chance to defeat his polemical adversaries via the treatment of the authentic *vexillum* 173 as inspired prophecy. Through the identification of Grebner’s text as a prophecy of incidents that belonged wholly to the future, Lilly could refute the contention of the royalist compilers of the *Future History* and *Vaticinium Votivum*: that the events prophesied by Grebner had begun and were shortly to conclude with the accession of King Charles II of England.

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<sup>82</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. E3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E3<sup>r</sup>.

*MERCURIUS PROPHETICUS*: TRADITIONAL PROPHECIES AS NEWS IN THE  
MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The work of the Saxon self-proclaimed prophet Grebner received fresh attention and inspired new exegetical endeavours during the Civil War and Interregnum. Similarly, the vaticinal tradition native to the British Isles yielded a rich stock of prophecies whose contents were presented by resourceful editors as relevant to the present social and political upheavals in England. These medieval and sixteenth-century textual relics, preserved until the middle of the seventeenth century in family archives and the manuscript libraries assembled by Elizabethan and Jacobean antiquaries, were reproduced in print by pamphleteers and propagandists after censorship collapsed at the beginning of the 1640s. In spite of their age, these traditional prophecies were rendered newsworthy by contemporary events that seemed to correspond to their enigmatic narratives of British political vicissitudes. Their perceived status as news after the outbreak of the Civil War is underlined by the appearance of such prophecies in works published by the likes of Humphrey Blunden and Francis Coles. Both Coles, an established printer of ballads, and Blunden were also involved in the production of printed newsbooks, which from their inception in 1641 granted the British book-buying public unprecedented access to information on current domestic affairs.<sup>84</sup> Further evidence to connect the publication of old prophecies to the mid-seventeenth-century news trade is to be found in the form of *Mercurius Propheticus*, a sixteen-page anthology of vaticinal texts, printed in 1644. The title of this collection aped

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<sup>84</sup> See Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 21-22. Blunden was involved in the publication of William Lilly's *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (1645), *The Worlds Catastrophe* (1647), and *Monarchy or No Monarchy* (1651). Coles was the publisher of *Twelve Strange Proehesies* [sic] (London, 1648) and *Thirteen Strange Prophecies* (London, 1648). On the career of Coles as a printer of ballads, see A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland: And of English Books Printed Abroad*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, rev. by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986-91), III: Katharine F. Pantzer, *A Printers' and Publishers' Index* (1991), p. 43.

those of two newsbooks founded in 1643: the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus* and its rival parliamentary publication, *Mercurius Britannicus*.<sup>85</sup>

*Mercurius Propheticus; or, A Collection of Some Old Predictions: O! May They Only Prove, But Empty Fictions* named neither publisher nor compiler on its title page. These facts remain unknown. For unexplained reasons, Tim Thornton assumes that the anthology was compiled by William Lilly.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps this assumption is based on the fact, unmentioned but maybe not unobserved by Thornton, that all of the texts collected in *Mercurius Propheticus* were reproduced in sequence in *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, a 1645 work by Lilly.<sup>87</sup> While it is possible that Lilly was the compiler of the small book whose complete contents reappeared in his later, larger prophetic anthology, this cannot be proven. Certain differences between the apparent aims of these two publications indeed challenge that hypothesis. While *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* contained embryonic traces of the republicanism that Lilly would overtly espouse post-regicide in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, and thus aligned itself with the parliamentary faction in the Civil War, *Mercurius Propheticus* was not a partisan call to arms but an appeal for the cessation of hostilities to preserve the nation from a terrible fate. Its preface quoted from Luke 11.17: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.’ In this preface, the compiler declared himself ‘as far from superstition as any man alive can be’ and defended his publication of traditional prophecies on the basis that these vestiges of a less enlightened culture all seemed to ‘speake so directly of the present times as if they had but now been minted’. Every

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<sup>85</sup> See Nicholas Brownlees, *The Language of Periodical News in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 99-100.

<sup>86</sup> Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 62n.

<sup>87</sup> William Lilly, *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (London: John Partridge and Humphrey Blunden, 1645), sigs F2<sup>f</sup>-G1<sup>v</sup>.

text printed in *Mercurius Propheticus*, he claimed, was interpretable as a warning that the continuation of the present civil discord would lead to the ruin of the nation.<sup>88</sup>

The first and longest text included in *Mercurius Propheticus* was a prophecy attributed to Mother Shipton. This text had been composed and embellished, perhaps via combined manuscript practices and oral traditions, over several decades from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century.<sup>89</sup> Mother Shipton was reputedly a Yorkshire-woman who had lived in the reign of King Henry VIII and accurately predicted, among other things, that Thomas Wolsey would never set foot in the city of York. Her prophecy, which had been printed without commentary in 1641, was substantially but incompletely glossed in *Mercurius Propheticus*.<sup>90</sup> An un-glossed prediction in the penultimate paragraph declared that ‘there shall never be warfare again, nor any more Kings or Queenes, but the Kingdome shall be governed by three Lords’.<sup>91</sup> When Lilly reproduced the annotated Shipton text from *Mercurius Propheticus* in *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (1645), he added the following comment in the margin beside this forecast of the downfall of kings and queens and the introduction of aristocratic government: ‘All old prophecies do intimate a final subversion of Monarchy in *England*’.<sup>92</sup> That Lilly wrote this note in 1645 is further evidence of the ‘concealed early parliamentary and republican sympathies’ that Ann Geneva finds in his astrological writings of the early 1640s.<sup>93</sup> In *Monarchy or No Monarchy* (1651), Lilly revived Mother Shipton’s prophecy again, but printed only the short passage that predicted the end of monarchical government.<sup>94</sup> The exegetical

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<sup>88</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus; or, A Collection of Some Old Predictions* ([London(?): [n. pub.], 1644), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, pp. 71-74.

<sup>90</sup> See *The Prophecie of Mother Shipton in the Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (London: Richard Lownds, 1641).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. F4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, p. 56.

<sup>94</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. II<sup>r</sup>.

apparatus attached to the complete version of the Shipton prophecy in *Mercurius Propheticus* (1644) and *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (1645) worked to argue that the Yorkshire prophet had accurately foreseen several events of the century that had passed since her death and thereby to suggest that those of her predictions not yet fulfilled were reliable indices of the future course of the English Civil War. When Lilly compiled *Monarchy or No Monarchy* in 1651, two years after the establishment of the Republic, Shipton's prophecy of no more kings and queens in England no longer required any elaborate preamble to enhance its seeming credibility.

The un-glossed version of the Shipton prophecy that had been published in 1641 was reprinted in 1642 as the second text in a short work entitled *Two Strange Prophecies*. The first text in this pamphlet comprised a copy and an exposition of the Jacobean prophetic verse libel 'If 88 be past'. A disingenuous title claimed that this poem had been discovered in the reign of King Edward IV (1461-83).<sup>95</sup> The libel and the exposition, but not the provenance claim, were copied from a contemporary pamphlet whose title page incongruously attributed the strongly Protestant 'If 88 be past' to Ignatius Loyola and repeated a claim familiar from several 1620s manuscript versions of that poem: that it had been found in St Benet's Abbey in Norfolk.<sup>96</sup> Later in 1642, the contents of *Two Strange Prophecies* were reproduced on the first five pages of *Sixe Strange Prophecies*.<sup>97</sup> This later work perpetuated the attribution of the Jacobean libel to Ignatius and contained, in addition to this poem and the prophecy of Mother Shipton, prophecies associated with the names of Merlin; the Sibyl; the Elizabethan and Jacobean biblical exegete Thomas Brightman; and 'old *Otwell Bins*'.

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<sup>95</sup> *Two Strange Prophecies: Predicting Wonderfull Events, to Betide this Yeere of Danger* (London: G. Smith, 1642), sigs A1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ignatius His Prophecie concerning these Times* (London: John Greensmith, 1642), sig. A1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> *Sixe Strange Prophecies: Predicting Wonderfull Events, to Betide these Years of Danger* ([London(?): Francis Coles, 1642), sigs A1<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>.

None of the final four texts printed in *Sixte Strange Prophetes* was genuinely antique. Verses said to be Merlin's were in fact the work of Thomas Heywood. They were taken from a passage on the career of King James I in Heywood's *Life of Merlin* (1641). Similar in subject matter to the opening lines of the pseudo-Merlinic 1620s poem 'A prince out of the north shall come', the first four lines read:

On Boreas wings then hither shall bee borne,  
Through *Week* ore *Tweed*, a Princely Vnicorne,  
Who brought into the world his owne faire Crest,  
A rampant Lyon figur'd on his breast.<sup>98</sup>

Heywood here provided an *ex eventu* prophecy of the progress of King James VI of Scotland towards London to accept the English crown in 1603. The nationality of the poem's subject was indicated in his identification with the unicorn of Scottish heraldry. His status as a northern monarch was further underlined in the description of Boreas, the north wind, as the vehicle that would convey him southwards to the English capital. Lines three and four referred to the rumour, previously invoked by John Harington in 1602 and by the writer of 'A prince out of the north' in the late Jacobean period, that King James bore a lion-shaped birthmark on his breast. In the prose exposition that followed his poem, Heywood stated that Elizabeth's Stuart successor was marked 'with the exact portraiture of a Lion upon his brest, presaging, that the white Lion of *Scotland* should have a proximity and alliance, with the three red Lions of *England* quartered, with the three Flower de-lyces of *France*'.<sup>99</sup>

Reproduced in *Sixte Strange Prophetes*, Heywood's verse panegyric on the first Stuart king of England appeared to offer support for James's son Charles, scion of the Stuart dynasty and present incumbent of the English throne. Its royalism was

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<sup>98</sup> *Sixte Strange Prophetes*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>; Thomas Heywood, *The Life of Merlin, Sirnamed Ambrosius: His Prophetes, and Predictions Interpreted* (London: J. Okes for Jasper Emery, 1641), sig. Bbb1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> Heywood, *The Life of Merlin*, sig. Bbb2<sup>v</sup>.

shared by the last prophecy printed in the collection, which was written in rhyming couplets and titled thus: ‘The Propheſie of old *Otwell Bins*, kept by M. *Smith* Vicar of Huddersfield [*sic*] 40 yeares’. Although the title claimed that this poem was at least forty years old when published in 1642, the truth that the prophecy of ‘Otwell Bins’ was newly minted could be gleaned easily from several transparent references in the text to contemporary events. The criticism of puritanically inclined ‘Round-heads’ in the following lines proves that the poem post-dated the outbreak of civil war:

Thus strife and fury ſhall increaſe,  
And Round-heads ſhall diſturbe the peace  
Of Religion, while they it toſſe  
In blanketts, and pull downe the Croſſe.<sup>100</sup>

Other lines referred unmistakably to the beheading in 1641 of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford: ‘From Ireland then there ſhall come one, | Muſt looſe his head upon a ſtone’.<sup>101</sup> Charles had reluctantly ſigned the death warrant of Wentworth, his principal advisor, under parliamentary preſſure to find the Earl guilty of treaſons committed while he was lord lieutenant of Ireland. The laſt lines of the poem looked to a future in which ‘England [...] for joy ſhall ſing, | And bleſſe the raigne of their good King’.<sup>102</sup> This royaliſt, pro-epiſcopal text was included in *Ancient and Moderne Propheſies* (1645), where it was diſcredited by the parliamentarian propagandiſt Lilly in the following appraisal of its claims to antiquity: ‘This goes in the name of a Prophecie, though I conceive it forged ſince 1640, by ſome Prelatical Prieſt’.<sup>103</sup>

Heywood’s verſified Stuart panegyric and the prophecy of ‘Otwell Bins’ were both potential rhetorical props to the royaliſt cauſe. So too was the modern proſe commentary on the Jacobean verſe libel ‘If 88 be paſt’, taken without alteration from

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<sup>100</sup> *Sixe Strange Propheſies*, ſig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, ſig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, ſig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Propheſies*, ſig. G2<sup>v</sup>.

the pamphlet *Two Strange Prophecies* by the compiler of *Sixe Strange Prophecies*. In the late-Jacobean libel, the first half of the pseudo-prediction ‘The ninth shal die young, and the first | Perhaps shall reigne’ referred to the death in 1612 of Prince Henry, who would have succeeded to the English throne as King Henry IX if he had outlived his father James I. The second half referred to the resultant installation of Prince Charles (the future Charles the First) as heir apparent. The prose commentary, written not long before it came to the press in 1642, correctly identified the reference in these lines to the present king and expressed the hope that God would long preserve Charles and ‘protect [him] from the wicked plots of his enemies’.<sup>104</sup> This exegesis of ‘If 88 be past’ shared the disdain for puritans and dissenters expressed by the ‘Otwell Bins’ prophecy. It decried those ‘false Prophets [...] who dare presume to preach in Tubs to their Schismaticall Auditors’.<sup>105</sup>

Some of the texts anthologised in *Sixe Strange Prophecies* were critical of Laudianism. One of these was the vatic poem attributed to the Sibyl. This pseudo-prophecy, evidently written after the outbreak of the Bishops’ Wars in 1639, referred to that conflict in its forecast that the ‘blessed’ Scottish Church would eradicate its popish remnants in ‘[t]he sixteen hundred thirty and nint yeare’ while England would retain its ‘perverse Episcopapall pride’.<sup>106</sup> Another text that implied the superiority of the reformed Scottish Church settlement to the episcopacy espoused by the English Church was a poem entitled ‘Master *Brightmans* Prophecies’. This poem recalled the comparison Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) had made between the Church of England and the lukewarm Laodicea of Revelation, Chapter Three, in his

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<sup>104</sup> *Sixe Strange Prophecies*, sig. A1<sup>v</sup>; *Two Strange Prophecies*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>; *Ignatius his Prophecie*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> *Sixe Strange Prophecies*, sig. A1<sup>v</sup>; *Two Strange Prophecies*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>; *Ignatius his Prophecie*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> *Sixe Strange Prophecies*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

posthumously published *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos* (Frankfurt, 1609).<sup>107</sup> It denounced the English Church as ‘[f]ull of lukewarmnesse, glory vaine’ and praised the Scottish Church as ‘in condition | A virgin free from superstition’.<sup>108</sup> The compiler of *Sixe Strange Prophesies* apparently selected the texts for that publication on the basis of their uniform utility as royalist propaganda and disregarded the incompatibility of their various religious allegiances.

In 1644, a moderate royalist prophetic exegete named Christopher Syms issued a challenge to the anti-puritan exposition of ‘If 88 be past’ published in several works of 1642. *The Swords Apology, and Necessity in the Act of Reformation* contained both a critique of a recently published commentary by the parliamentarian Lilly on the medieval, pseudo-Merlinic *rex albus* prophecy and Syms’s riposte to his fellow royalist, the unknown expositor of ‘If 88 be past’. The avowedly royalist commentator on the Jacobean verse prophecy had unwittingly advanced the cause of Jesuitical resistance theorists, Syms suggested, since his vilification of Protestant tub preachers had diverted attention from the greater threat posed by the machinations of Catholic radicals to the security of King Charles:

The treacherous, and bloud-thirsty *Iesuits*, and other *Romanists* have not a more profitable agent, factor, or sollicitor in their *Antichristian* caus, bee hee never so diligent and active[,] than an inveigher against *schismaticks, preachers in tubs*, and round-heads.<sup>109</sup>

Syms prefaced his moderate, considered treatments of secular prophetic texts with the claim that his interpretations were ratified by the scriptural prophecies he had studied

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<sup>107</sup> See Andrew Crome, ‘Constructing the Political Prophet in 1640s England’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), 279-98 (p. 281). *A Revelation of the Apocalypse*, an English translation of *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, was published at Amsterdam in 1611.

<sup>108</sup> *Sixe Strange Prophesies*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> Christopher Syms, *The Swords Apology, and Necessity in the Act of Reformation* (London: Thomas Warren, 1644), sig. C4<sup>v</sup>.

‘these nineteen years ever since his *Majesty* came to the crown’.<sup>110</sup> To underline the superiority of his scholarship to that of his rival exegetes, Syms issued correctives to some misconceptions about the purport and authorship of ‘If 88 be past’. He asserted that the warning in lines eight to ten, ‘oh accurst | Shall be the tyme when as you see | To sixteen joynd twenty three’, referred to the year of Charles’s voyage to Spain, 1623.<sup>111</sup> Syms described the 1642 commentator as mistaken in the assumption that, since the addition of the numbers sixteen and twenty-three produced thirty-nine, these lines indicated the year 1639.<sup>112</sup> The erroneous perception of a reference to 1639 in ‘If 88 be past’ probably accounts for the stern reaction of the Secretary of State Francis Windebank to reports of the circulation of the prophecy in Ipswich in that year. Windebank had written to the bailiffs of Ipswich on 21 April 1639 with orders that they were to discover what they could about the author and the present disseminators of the prophecy. His letter had also warned that the bailiffs withheld information from him ‘at [their] peril’.<sup>113</sup> Syms endeavoured to correct both a seemingly common misconception about one of the dates with which ‘If 88 be past’ was concerned and, he claimed, a recent misattribution of that prophecy to Mother Shipton.<sup>114</sup>

Syms did not specify the name of any publication that had misattributed ‘If 88 be past’ to Mother Shipton. It is likely that the intended target of his censure was a pamphlet entitled *A True Cappy of Mother Shiptons Last Prophesies* (1642), in which four prophetic texts were collected.<sup>115</sup> These were: ‘If 88 be past’; a modern pseudo-prophecy in verse, which began ‘Out of the North shal come an hoast’; a prophecy in Latin, which began ‘*Anglia te prodit tua Gens*’ and was titled ‘The Scots Prophesie’;

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<sup>110</sup> Syms, *The Swords Apology*, sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> See ‘Ni4: “If 88 be past then thrive”’, in *Early Stuart Libels*, ed. by Bellany and McRae.

<sup>112</sup> Syms, *The Swords Apology*, sig. C4<sup>r</sup>; Millstone, ‘The Rector of Santon Downham’, p. 77.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, SP 16/418, fol. 85<sup>r</sup>: Secretary Windebank to the Bailiffs of Ipswich, 21 April 1639.

<sup>114</sup> Syms, *The Swords Apology*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>115</sup> *A True Cappy of Mother Shiptons Last Prophesies* (London: T. V., 1642).

and a prose prophecy of Mother Shipton, slightly longer than any other version published in the early 1640s but not substantially different in narrative content. This pamphlet featured no preface and no commentary on the prophecies it contained. The apparent disinclination of the compiler to exploit the rhetorical manipulability of these texts suggests that the publication of *A True Coppy of Mother Shiptons Last Prophetesies* was financially rather than politically motivated. (Works that purported to contain the predictions of Shipton tended to sell well.)<sup>116</sup> While this publication bears no evidence of an association with a specific religio-political cause, the individual texts collected therein in the mid-seventeenth century also appeared at that time in other contexts, where they were subjected to propagandist expositions.

The Latin prophecy that began '*Anglia te prodit tua Gens*' ('England, your people will betray you') was first printed in 1588 in *A Discoursiue Probleme concerning Prophetesies*, John Harvey's denunciation of the popular interest in secular prophecies in the Armada year. Harvey noted that this prophecy was said to be Ambrose Merlin's.<sup>117</sup> In 1640, it seems, the prophecy was likewise credited to Merlin when it was publicly discussed by Scottish troops in Newcastle after their victory at the Battle of Newburn during the Second Bishops' War. In a letter written to a London correspondent on 8 September 1640, a Newcastle alderman deplored the conduct of the Scottish soldiers who occupied his city. He wrote of their tendency when 'in their Cupps' to recite 'seuerall ould Prophetesies' of a Scottish conquest over England. The letter-writer singled out '*Anglia te prodit...*' as the most 'remarkeable'

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<sup>116</sup> David A. Wilson, 'The Myth of Mother Shipton: Prophet-Making and Profit-Taking', in *Shell Games: Studies in Scams, Frauds, and Deceits (1300-1650)*, ed. by Mark Crane, Richard Raiswell, and Margaret Reeves (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), pp. 309-24 (p. 320).

<sup>117</sup> Harvey, *A Discoursiue Probleme*, sig. H3<sup>r</sup>. An Elizabethan manuscript copy of this prophecy is to be found on the flyleaves of a print copy of *Guillermi Postilla* (Paris, 1479) in the library of St John's College, Cambridge, according to C. W. Previt -Orton, 'An Elizabethan Prophecy', *History*, 2 (1917), 207-18 (p. 208).

of these prophecies and noted that the Scots troops named its originator as Merlin.<sup>118</sup> The soldiers had both translated this Latin prophecy into Scots verse, he claimed, and provocatively declared in public that its contents promised a victory to Scotland in the Bishops' Wars. Their pro-Scottish propagandist exposition probably relied heavily on the second line of the prophecy, which warned England: '*Te circumfodit gens Scotica*' ('The Scottish people will undermine you').<sup>119</sup> The alderman claimed to sympathise in principle with Scotland's rejection of Laudian ecclesiastical reforms. He opined, however, that the maintenance of a Church free from 'Popery and Innouation in Religion' was an end that insufficiently justified the present belligerent means.<sup>120</sup>

A Latin copy of '*Anglia te prodit...*' was printed in *Mercurius Propheticus* in 1644. That publication also supplied a translation and an exposition of the prophecy, both in English verse. *Mercurius Propheticus* shared the disposition of the Newcastle alderman to promote the cause of peace over any factional interest. Its English translation of '*Anglia te prodit...*' read as follows:

England! thy proper native thee betrayes,  
Because all Nations hate thee, and thy wayes;  
Scotland doth undermine thee: France doth gnawe:  
Wales threats: the Irish thee by snares doth awe:  
Thy bravest men do on a suddain dye,  
And thou thy self doth wholly ruin'd lye,  
Yet seest it not, but under fayned peace,  
Dost thine own misery still more increase.<sup>121</sup>

The final two lines affected to predict that England would fail to perceive or to forestall a nascent political crisis at a time of 'fayned peace' (translated from '*pax simulata*' in the Latin original). The England imagined in the expository poem that followed this text in *Mercurius Propheticus* was one in which this crisis had come to

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<sup>118</sup> TNA, SP 16/466, fol. 244<sup>r</sup>: A Newcastle alderman to a friend in London, 8 September 1640.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., fol. 244<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., fol. 244<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

fruition and ‘fayned peace’ had been superseded by civil war. According to this versified gloss, evidently written sometime after the outbreak of the conflict in 1642, the seeming fulfilment of the prophecy in the present tumults did not preclude optimism for a future period of genuine peace in England: it was not ‘too late as yet, | (Though a true Prophecy) to frustrate it’. The expositor-poet urged his muse to deliver the prophecy ‘[t]o (heavens Vice-Gerent) our high Parliament’, where the relevance of the text to present troubles might be debated.<sup>122</sup> If events of the 1640s were found to accord with the crisis described in the prophecy, the poet concluded, parliament must consider ‘how they may prevent | The ill not come, but likely consequent’.<sup>123</sup>

When Lilly reproduced the contents of *Mercurius Propheticus* in *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, he omitted the above-discussed poetic exposition of ‘*Anglia te prodit...*’.<sup>124</sup> This parliamentarian propagandist perhaps found the sympathies of the versified gloss too ambiguous to serve his particular agenda. Although the poem’s designation of parliament, not the king, as God’s representative on earth (‘heavens Vice-Gerent’) potentially evinced an anti-royalist bias, the final lines described the resolution of the present civil discord as the sole responsibility of parliament and might hence be deemed to place the blame for the conflict upon that institution. This equivocal poetic commentary on ‘*Anglia te prodit...*’ did not antagonise the irenic, non-partisan tone of *Mercurius Propheticus* but might undermine the message of support for the parliamentarian cause enshrined in *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*.

Ursula Mühle-Moldon has posited that the compiler of *Mercurius Propheticus* selected texts for that pamphlet of 1644 partly on the basis of their seeming relevance to current reports of the attempts of the royalist party to procure military aid from

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<sup>122</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B2<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. F4<sup>v</sup>.

foreign powers.<sup>125</sup> One text that referred to the arrival of foreign troops on British shores in *Mercurius Propheticus* was a poem entitled ‘Another Prophecy very ancient, in old Meeter’. In fact composed not in ‘old Meeter’ but in fashionable heroic couplets, this poem betrayed its seventeenth-century origins in its first four lines:

In that same yeare that fully shall expire,  
The sixth great wonder of the worlds Empire;  
Then Tyders HEMPE shall end I dare aread,  
Then *E* shall fall, and *I* shall stand in stead[.]<sup>126</sup>

The third line referenced HEMPE, the popular sixteenth-century *ex eventu* prophecy of the English succession from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I. After the demise of the last monarch in this ‘Tyders [i.e. Tudors] HEMPE’, the fourth line affected to predict, I (or J) would wear the English crown. This I was James, the first Stuart monarch of England, who had succeeded Elizabeth in 1603. The opening description of the Stuart succession was followed in line five by a retrospective prediction of the ‘great plague’ of 1603. Line seven, ‘At *Maries Masse* a Court they hold’, perhaps referred to the accession of King James I on 24 March, the day before the annual Marian Feast of the Annunciation. While the poem perceptibly alluded to real events of the early years of James’s reign in its opening lines, subsequent lines contained vague references to such episodes as a ‘fierce fought battell by a King’ on Hounslow Heath and the passage of ‘a huge host [...] over the Sea | Concluding a peace’.<sup>127</sup>

Whereas the first half of ‘In that same yeare that fully shall expire’ was history disguised as prophecy, the second half was speculative. When *Mercurius Propheticus* was published in early 1644, the conjectural descriptions of a battle on Hounslow Heath and of the voyage of a military host over an unnamed sea lent themselves to

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<sup>125</sup> Mühle-Moldon, *Säkulare Prophetien*, p. 32. See, e.g. Michelle A. White, *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 84.

<sup>126</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B4<sup>r</sup>. See also Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Propheesies*, sig. G1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B4<sup>r</sup>; Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Propheesies*, sig. G1<sup>v</sup>.

topical interpretation. Hounslow Heath was where the Earl of Essex, Captain-General of the parliamentary army, had mustered troops in August 1643 to defend the city of Gloucester against the royalist force by which it was besieged.<sup>128</sup> Extant newsbooks from this time attest to the prevalence of speculation about the possible arrival of French and Danish soldiers to swell the ranks of the royalist militia in Britain.<sup>129</sup> When *Mercurius Propheticus* left the press, readers who followed the news might have regarded the predictions in the second half of ‘In that same year...’ as plausible indices of imminent events of the Civil War. It was easily conceivable that Hounslow Heath, already an army base, might soon see further military activity and that a battalion from France or Denmark might cross the sea to Britain in answer to Charles’s requests for assistance. The ready topical applicability of the poem supports the hypothesis that it was written at the end of 1643 or start of 1644. Other factors, however, raise the possibility of an earlier composition date.

Manuscript copies of ‘In that same year...’ survive in two miscellanies that were compiled over long periods beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century and ending midway through the seventeenth century. MS V.b.303 in the Folger Shakespeare Library is a collection of political texts in various hands, compiled over the approximate period 1550-1650. ‘In that same year...’ appears in a section of the manuscript that contains copies of parliamentary speeches and political prophecies from the late 1610s and early 1620s.<sup>130</sup> The location of the poem offers grounds for its tentative identification as a late Jacobean text. Additional MS 15891 in the British Library opens with transcripts of the correspondence of the Elizabethan courtier Sir Christopher Hatton (*d.*1591) and closes with a series of reports on events of the Bishops’ Wars (1639-40). Intermediate pages contain topical poetry and transcripts of

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<sup>128</sup> Stanley D. M. Carpenter, *The English Civil War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 145.

<sup>129</sup> See, e.g. *Mercurius Aulicus*, 3-9 December 1643, sig. Dddd1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>130</sup> Folger, MS V.b.303, p. 231.

political speeches from the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. An undated copy of ‘In that same yeare...’ features in this middle section. As it does in the Folger manuscript, the poem here shares a page with a copy of the apocalyptic St Denis prophecy. Records of speeches from the first parliament of Charles’s reign occupy the pages that immediately follow. The position of the poem suggests the hypothesis that it was entered into Additional MS 15891 in the early Caroline period. In this manuscript, ‘In that same yeare...’ forms the longer of two parts of a composite poem entitled ‘A Prophecy found by Sir William Morrice’.<sup>131</sup> The verse prophecy included by John Harington in his 1602 manuscript tract on the succession to the English crown constitutes the first, shorter part of this composite poem.<sup>132</sup> The legend that Harington’s verses, which began ‘A King of Brittish blood in Cradell crownd...’, were presented by the Welsh MP Sir William Maurice to the first Jacobean parliament accounts for the title given to the blended poem in the British Library manuscript.<sup>133</sup>

On the verso of the page that features the poem compounded of ‘A King of Brittish blood...’ and ‘In that same yeare...’ in Additional MS 15891, another poetic prophecy sits above the St Denis text. This untitled prophecy begins ‘A peace shalbe dissembled, | That peace may wel be trembled’. The poem imagines a multifaceted military assault on England by forces from various regions and nations: Flanders; France; Normandy; Gascony; Wales; Germany; Scotland; Spain.<sup>134</sup> A copy of this poem appears in *Mercurius Propheticus*, misleadingly titled: ‘This following Prophecy was shewed by Sir *William Norris* to King *James*, upon the uniting of the

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<sup>131</sup> BL, Add. MS 15891, fol. 204<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>132</sup> York Minster Library, MS XVI. L. 6, p. 259 [163].

<sup>133</sup> Bodl., MS Tanner 169, fol. 62<sup>v</sup>; referenced by Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>134</sup> BL, Add. MS 15891, fol. 204<sup>v</sup>.

two Crownes of England and Scotland under the name of Great Britaine'.<sup>135</sup> As mentioned above, the prophecy William Maurice reportedly invoked to hail the union of the crowns was 'A King of Brittish blood...', not 'A peace shalbe dissembled...'. The misattribution of the latter poem to William 'Norris' (a compositor's erroneous rendering of 'Morris') in *Mercurius Propheticus* suggests that the compiler might have used a manuscript source, such as MS 15891, in which this poem appeared in close proximity either to a copy of the original text of 'A King of Brittish blood...' or to a copy of the compound prophecy involving 'In that same yeare that fully shall expire'. This inference potentially supports the hypothesis that 'In that same yeare...' circulated in manuscript for some time before *Mercurius Propheticus* ushered into print its seemingly topical predictions of a battle on Hounslow Heath and the overseas voyage of a foreign militia. The available evidence concerning the composition date of 'In that same yeare...' is, however, ultimately inconclusive. It is not possible to determine beyond doubt whether this poem was a Jacobean work whose applicability to the condition of Britain in the 1640s was fortuitous or whether it was a pseudo-prophetic invention of the Civil War period, in which contemporary anxieties about the probable future course of the conflict were deliberately registered.

Unlike the poem it follows in the British Library manuscript, 'A peace shalbe dissembled...' can be traced back with certainty to a time long before the outbreak of civil discord in the 1640s. A copy of this verse prophecy is preserved in Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. D. 1062, where it appears as one of a group of political prophecies that cover thirty-eight pages, all in the hand of a single scribe.<sup>136</sup> Internal evidence and handwriting style suggest that these prophecies were entered into the manuscript sometime between the birth of Edward VI (1537) and the accession of Mary I (1553).

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<sup>135</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>. See also Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. F4<sup>v</sup>, where the poem is reproduced without this title.

<sup>136</sup> Bodl., MS Rawl. D. 1062, fol. 102<sup>r</sup>.

Another copy of ‘A peace shalbe dissembled...’ features in British Library, Sloane MS 2578, an anti-Catholic manuscript anthology of political prophecies that Sharon Jansen has dated to some time between 1554 and 1556, during the reign of Mary.<sup>137</sup> It is thus apparent that this prophetic poem was composed no later than the mid-sixteenth century. Its prediction of catastrophic conflict in England accounts for its revival in print during the Civil War. The poem warned the English nation:

Great Mars omnipotent,  
He shall be vigilant:  
His bloody brands of steel  
To whet, thou shalt them feel  
So sore upon thy side,  
That wo shall thee betide[.]<sup>138</sup>

This decades-old prophecy, which imagined the god of war unleashed in England, was ripe for topical interpretation as royalists and parliamentarians clashed violently in the 1640s. The final couplet in the poem, ‘England, thou shalt be sure, | These torments to endure’, offered the war-torn nation small cause for optimism.

The passage that described England besieged by multiple enemies in ‘A peace shalbe dissembled...’ opened with the words ‘Flanders shall joyne with France | With bill, speare, gun and lance’.<sup>139</sup> A separate prophecy that shared the themes of this passage was likewise printed in *Mercurius Propheticus*. One Latin version and two English versions of a short prophecy of the ruin of England, beginning ‘*Flan: Fran: consurgent*’, or ‘Flanders shall rise with France’, occupied the upper portion of the page on which ‘A peace shalbe dissembled...’ began. The Latin text bore the title ‘Another old Prophecy transcribed out of an ancient manuscript’.<sup>140</sup> According to C.

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<sup>137</sup> BL, Sloane MS 2578, fol. 107<sup>r</sup>; Jansen, ‘British Library MS Sloane 2578’, pp. 32, 36.

<sup>138</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>; Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. F4<sup>v</sup>; Bodl., MS Rawl. D. 1062, fol. 102<sup>r</sup>; BL, Add. MS 15891, fol. 204<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

W. Previt -Orton, such prophecies of an anti-English military alliance between Flanders and France originated in the ‘long fifteenth century’.<sup>141</sup> Evidence exists for their circulation in the 1530s, when their prediction of England’s destruction could be repurposed as a warning of the likely consequence of the Henrician break with Rome. The extant records pertaining to the arrest of the prior of the White Friars in Scarborough, a participant in the Pilgrimage of Grace, refer to his interest in a prophecy that began ‘France and Flaundres shall arise’.<sup>142</sup> In May 1588, the diplomat Henry Killigrew remarked in a letter to Francis Walsingham that his fears over the on-going Anglo-Spanish war were somewhat allayed by his memory of a prophecy that began ‘*Fran: Flan: consurgent*’, which he had first heard ‘in Q. Maries daies’. This prophecy, he claimed, had promised that England could not be conquered by Spain until it had been attacked first by France and Flanders; then by Denmark; and finally by Scotland.<sup>143</sup> In 1603, the prophecy that France, Flanders, and various other nations and regions would rise up against England was printed as part of the composite ‘Scottes Prophecie in Latine’ in *The Whole Prophecie of Scotland*.<sup>144</sup>

The section of ‘A peace shalbe dissembled...’ that began ‘Flanders shall joyne with France’ seems thus to have been borrowed from an already established prophetic tradition. The creation of new prophetic texts via the elaboration or amalgamation of pre-existing prophecies was a common practice. Sometime in the sixteenth century, ‘A peace shalbe dissembled...’ was in its turn incorporated into the middle section of a longer text, which became known as the prophecy of Humphrey Tindal, sometime vicar of Wellingore in Lincolnshire. In the reign of Elizabeth, a copy of ‘Humfery

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<sup>141</sup> Previt -Orton, ‘An Elizabethan Prophecy’, p. 211.

<sup>142</sup> TNA, SP 1/127, fol. 53<sup>r</sup>: John Borobie’s petition to the king and the Council in the North, 5 December 1537; referenced by Madeleine Hope Dodds and Ruth Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536-1537 and the Exeter Conspiracy, 1538*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915; repr. 2015), I, p. 83.

<sup>143</sup> TNA, SP 84/23, fol. 266<sup>f</sup>: H. Killigrew to Francis Walsingham, Middelburg, 14 May 1588.

<sup>144</sup> *The Whole Prophecie*, sig. C5<sup>v</sup>; referenced by Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*, p. 107.

Tyndall viccar of Wellinger his profice' was entered in red ink onto three blank parchment pages at the end of a mid-to-late-fifteenth-century manuscript of the Prose Brut, now preserved as British Library, Harley MS 24.<sup>145</sup> This manuscript was acquired and ornately bound by the antiquary Simonds D'Ewes in the Jacobean or early Caroline period. D'Ewes, whose interest in political prophecies is documented in the previous chapter, supported the parliamentary faction in the Civil War. No complete manuscript copy of the Tindal prophecy besides that formerly owned by D'Ewes is known to survive. Two editions of the text were printed in the 1640s. The first, which left the press in July 1642, bore this title: *The Prophecy of Humphrey Tindal Vicar of Wellenger, Shewing the Downfall of the Clergy, and the Woefull and Miserable Condition of this Kingdome*. The second, published in 1644, divided the text into two sections and gave them the collective title: *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration, Made by Humphrey Tindall Vicar of Welling Two Hundred Yeares Past*.<sup>146</sup> The title page of the later pamphlet claimed that its two-centuries-old contents had been 'some sixty years since coppied out by a worthy Gentleman and ever since kept private'.<sup>147</sup> This account of the transmission history of the predictions ascribed to Humphrey Tindal might have been wholly spurious, as were many of the biographies provided for prophetic texts in the early Stuart period. The copy of the Tindal prophecy in Harley MS 24 does, however, fit this description of an Elizabethan text kept in private hands until the mid-seventeenth century. It is thus possible, although unprovable, that it was Simonds D'Ewes who supplied the manuscript on which at least one of the 1640s print editions of this composite poem was based.

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<sup>145</sup> BL, Harley MS 24, fols 219<sup>v</sup>-220<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>146</sup> In *Säkulare Prophetien*, p. 30, Mühle-Moldon acknowledges that the printed prophecies attributed to Humphrey Tindal are composite texts. She seems unacquainted, however, with the manuscript copy of the Tindal prophecy in Harley MS 24.

<sup>147</sup> *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration, Made by Humphrey Tindall*, sig. A1<sup>r</sup>.

A poem in rhyming couplets, beginning ‘The time will come as true as the Creede, | Of Priests and Clerkes we shall have no need’, was the first component text of the patchwork Tindal prophecy.<sup>148</sup> As these two lines suggest, this poem originally formed an *ex eventu* prophecy of the Henrician Reformation. It is thus apparent that the title page of *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration* (1644) gave a false account of the age of the prophecy of Humphrey Tindal. If one of its constituent texts was not written before the 1530s, this prophecy cannot have been uttered for the first time by a Lincolnshire vicar two hundred years before 1644. Copies of the poetic prophecy of the obsolescence of priests and clerks survive in Sloane MS 2578 and Bodleian, MS Arch. Selden B.8, both compiled in the 1550s.<sup>149</sup> The title of the copy in the Selden manuscript claims that the prophecy was found in an altar in Suffolk ‘at the pullynge downe of the alters in the tyme off kyng Edward the Syxte’. A later transcript of the poem, extant in a seventeenth-century miscellany in the Beinecke Library, bears a title that describes its discovery in the altar of Ixworth Abbey in Suffolk.<sup>150</sup> (In the 1630s and 1640s, Simonds D’Ewes lived only a mile and a half away from Ixworth Abbey and had family ties there.)<sup>151</sup> Another copy of this text survives in Bodleian MS, Ashmole 1386, where it contributes to an anti-Protestant composite prophecy. Internal evidence again dates that blended text, titled ‘A prophecie taken out of dyuers authors’, to the reign of Queen Mary I.<sup>152</sup> In the Ashmole manuscript, ‘The time will come as true as the Creede’ is followed immediately by a copy of a late-fourteenth-century poem known to modern scholars

<sup>148</sup> *The Prophecy of Humphrey Tindal Vicar of Wellenger*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>149</sup> BL, Sloane MS 2578, fols 109<sup>r</sup>-110<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Arch. Selden B.8, fol. 272<sup>r</sup>. See Jansen, ‘British Library MS Sloane 2578’, pp. 36, 41; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 463.

<sup>150</sup> Beinecke, MS Osborn fb.7, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>151</sup> J. Sears McGee, *An Industrious Mind: The Worlds of Sir Simonds D’Ewes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), p. 197.

<sup>152</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, pp. 245, 247.

as the ‘Second Scottish Prophecy’.<sup>153</sup> The latter poem, which begins with the line ‘When Roome is remoued into Englande’, was another of the constituent texts of the later sixteenth-century patchwork prophecy attributed to Humphrey Tindal.<sup>154</sup> The second edition of the Tindal prophecy, printed in 1644, was divided into two sections, of which the later began, ‘When Rome is removed into England’.<sup>155</sup>

The origins of the Second Scottish Prophecy have been traced to the late fourteenth century by Reinhard Haferkorn.<sup>156</sup> The prophecy was revived, according to Haferkorn, during the Anglo-Scottish wars of the late fifteenth century, when it served as pro-Scottish propaganda around the time of the English capture of Berwick (1482). It was exhumed and circulated again, he notes, in response to the Henrician Reformation in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Early to mid-sixteenth-century copies survive in a number of manuscripts including the following three, which all contain not only the Second Scottish Prophecy but several of the texts that would eventually be fused to form the prophecy of Humphrey Tindal: Bodleian, MS Rawl. C. 813 (fol. 115<sup>r</sup>); Bodleian, MS Rawl. D. 1062 (fol. 98<sup>r</sup>); and MS Ashmole 1386, discussed above. The first line (‘When Rome is removed into England’) was interpretable as a prediction that an English monarch would usurp the authority hitherto exercised by the pope over the Church in England. Line four (‘Moche care and sorough shalbe brought into England’) could be deemed to predict ruinous

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<sup>153</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, p. 247; see Rossell Hope Robbins, ‘Political Prophecies’, in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, ed. by John Edwin Wells, Jonathan Burke Severs, Albert E. Hartung, and Peter J. Beidler, 11 vols (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967-2005), v (1975), pp. 1516-36 (p. 1524).

<sup>154</sup> See BL, Harley MS 24, fols 219<sup>v</sup>-220<sup>r</sup>; *The Prophecy of Humphrey Tindal Vicar of Wellenger*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>; *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration, Made by Humphrey Tindall*, sig. A4<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>155</sup> *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiration, Made by Humphrey Tindall*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>156</sup> Reinhard Haferkorn, ‘*When Rome is Removed into England*’: *Eine politische Prophezeiung des 14. Jahrhunderts*, *Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie*, 9 (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1932), p. 90.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

consequences for such a change in ecclesiastical government. This text thus lent itself to propagandist exploitation by opponents of the 1534 Act of Supremacy.<sup>158</sup>

Another text that contributed to the blended prophecy ascribed to Humphrey Tindal was a poetic catalogue of abuses of the age, which began, ‘When pride is most prest, and lechery most rife’. Once all of the conditions it listed had been fulfilled, this prophecy warned in its final line, ‘In the Land of *Albion* shall be much confusion’.<sup>159</sup> This poem survives, according to the *Index of Middle English Verse*, in fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century manuscript versions: BL, MS Royal 17. B. XVII, fol. 2<sup>v</sup> and BL, Additional MS 8151, fol. 200<sup>v</sup> respectively.<sup>160</sup> It is also one of the constituent texts of the prophecy ‘taken out of dyuers authors’ in MS Ashmole 1386.<sup>161</sup> Texts in the ‘abuses of the age’ tradition, to which ‘When pride is most prest...’ belongs, enjoyed long-lived popularity and can be found satirised in the 1623 Folio text of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, where the Fool’s prophecy enumerates the events that will come to pass before confusion commences its reign in Albion.<sup>162</sup> ‘When pride is most prest...’ appeared in print in the middle of the seventeenth century not only as a passage of the prophecy of Humphrey Tindal but also in *Mercurius Propheticus*, where it bore the title: ‘An old Scotch Prophecy delivered many yeares since by the Bishop of Rosse to a great Lady’.<sup>163</sup> The version of this poem in *Mercurius Propheticus* contained some lines evidently forged in the early 1640s to bolster the text’s credentials as a prophecy of the Civil War. These lines stated, with suspicious

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<sup>158</sup> See Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*, pp. 141-42. The transcript Jansen provides of the Second Scottish Prophecy is taken from TNA, SP 1/232, fol. 253<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>159</sup> *The Prophecy of Humphrey Tindal Vicar of Wellenger*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>; *Two Prophecies Full of Wonder and Admiracion, Made by Humphrey Tindall*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>; BL, Harley MS 24, fol. 220<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>160</sup> *The Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 642.

<sup>161</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1386, p. 247.

<sup>162</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of King Lear*, in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (London: Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623): *Tragedies*, sigs Rr2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, TLN 1735-50 (III. 2. 79-93). See John P. Cutts, ‘The Fool’s Prophecy – Another Version’, *English Language Notes*, 9 (1972), 262-65.

<sup>163</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>; Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. G1<sup>r</sup>.

accuracy, that there would be upheaval in England ‘[w]hen the yeare of our Lord God is comed and ganne, | One thousand six hundred forty and twayne’.<sup>164</sup>

*Mercurius Propheticus* (1644) anthologised medieval, sixteenth-century, and more recent pseudo-medieval prophecies. Some were English and others apparently Scottish in origin. The prophecy of Humphrey Tindal, printed in two editions in the early 1640s, likewise brought together disparate native vaticinal texts. Many of its constituent prophecies had been composed or revived in the early to mid-sixteenth century as anti-Reformation propaganda. When these texts were printed in the early 1640s, spuriously packaged as the two-hundred-year-old prophecy of the enigmatic Tindal of Wellingore, it was no longer their original or construable confessional biases that recommended them for topical interpretation but their unanimous warning of great turmoil in England. The collection of texts printed in *Mercurius Propheticus* and the sayings attributed in print to Humphrey Tindal all worked to imply that prophets in former times had predicted the civil strife of the mid-seventeenth century. These publications showed no obvious political partiality. They were perturbed responses to the outbreak of civil war, not propaganda for either the royalist or the parliamentarian faction in the conflict. Ample evidence of partisanship can be perceived, however, in other mid-century printed assemblages of prophetic texts.

#### MONARCHY OR NO MONARCHY: WILLIAM LILLY AND PARTISAN PROPHETICAL EXEGESIS

As previously noted, all of the prophecies collected in *Mercurius Propheticus* (1644) were reprinted in sequence in a longer work compiled by William Lilly, *A Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (1645). Lilly’s anthology contained many other texts besides the ones appropriated from that earlier publication. The first text in

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<sup>164</sup> *Mercurius Propheticus*, sig. B3<sup>v</sup>; Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. G1<sup>r</sup>.

*Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* had allegedly been uttered by an Italian monk in the presence of an English ambassador in Rome in the year 1488. It contained only seven words and ran thus: ‘*Mars. Puer. Alecto. Virgo. Vulpes. Leo. Nullus.*’ Immediately beneath this sequence, the following English translation was supplied: ‘A Souldier. A Boy. A Fury. A Maid. A Fox. A Lyon. None.’<sup>165</sup> In the gloss on the prophecy, Lilly explained that ‘each of the first six words represents the quality of a King or Queen of *England* to Raigne in order after the decease of King *Henry* the seventh’.<sup>166</sup> His account of the origins and significance of the text began with a reference to the legendary prophecy that the descendants of Cadwallader, the last king of the ancient Britons, would someday reign again in England. This prophecy had been fulfilled, Lilly remarked, ‘seven hundred ninety and odde yeers’ after its utterance, when the Welsh Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, had defeated Richard III at Bosworth to become King Henry VII of England in 1485.<sup>167</sup>

Three years into the reign of Henry VII, claimed Lilly, an English ambassador in Rome had consulted a monk reputed the foremost practitioner of divination in that city. This ambassador had requested insights into the projected duration of the Tudor dynasty. The monk had obliged him with a text of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy. Baffled by this prophecy, the ambassador had requested an explanation and had been offered a second meeting with the monk. In this second meeting, the monk had conjured a series of apparitions, each of which corresponded to one of the epithets of which the prophecy was constituted.<sup>168</sup> Lilly’s account of this spectacle reminds the modern reader irresistibly of the ‘show of kings’ presented to Macbeth by the Weird Sisters in

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<sup>165</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

Shakespeare's play.<sup>169</sup> The first five apparitions, according to Lilly, followed the same routine. Each in turn would place a crown on its own head; pace up and down the room several times; set down the crown where it might be picked up by the next apparition; and then disappear. The sixth, male apparition behaved at first as expected: it assumed the crown left vacant by its predecessor and walked back and forth across the room. Then, however, 'when it was expected that he should in gentle wise lay down the Crowne, as al the rest had done, *Behold both he and the Crowne vanished out of sight, and appeared no more*'.<sup>170</sup>

Lilly finished his treatment of the 'Mars...' prophecy with a partial exposition of the apparitions reportedly summoned by the Italian monk. The first, *Mars* (the soldier), represented the pugnacious Henry VIII, son and heir to Henry VII. The second, *Puer* (the boy), represented Edward VI, who had succeeded to the English crown aged just nine and had died at fifteen. The third apparition, *Alecto* (the fury), betokened Mary I, who had been 'a Fury or Devill to the English Protestants'. *Virgo* (the maid), the fourth apparition, stood for Elizabeth I, the virgin queen.<sup>171</sup> *Vulpes* (the fox), which came fifth in the sequence, represented James I. Lilly refused to explain this epithet because, he claimed, '*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*' ('Nothing but good [should be spoken] of the dead').<sup>172</sup> This view was evidently not shared by the unknown republican author of a duodecimo history of English monarchs published in 1652: *A Cat May Look upon a King*. This later publication took for its title a phrase first printed in 1546 in John Heywood's *Prouerbes*.<sup>173</sup> The frontispiece of *A Cat May Look upon a King* featured a woodcut of King James I, readily identifiable from the

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<sup>169</sup> *Macbeth*, IV. 1. 68-123.

<sup>170</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>173</sup> John Heywood, *A Dialogue Conteynyng the Number in Effect of All the Prouerbes in the Englishe Tongue* (London: [Thomas Berthelet], 1546), sig. H3<sup>r</sup>.

motto that encircled the image: ‘*Beati pacifici*’ (‘Blessed are the peacemakers’), famously a favourite maxim of the irenic first Stuart king of England. Beneath the woodcut was a copy of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy, with the word ‘*Vulpes*’ enlarged and capitalised to emphasise its identification with the pictured monarch.<sup>174</sup> The aim of this publication, as its introduction declared, was to demonstrate that ‘King *JAMES* was the Fountain of all our late Afflictions and miseries’.<sup>175</sup> Although this work analysed the reigns of almost all English monarchs from William the Conqueror to James I (saving only Edward VI on account of his youth and Mary and Elizabeth on account of their gender), by far its largest section was devoted to the evaluation of the reign of James. This king had so misgoverned his realm, it claimed, that he had ensured the outbreak of civil war during the reign of his son and the subsequent fall of the English monarchy.<sup>176</sup> In *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies*, Lilly stated his resolve to maintain a tactful silence concerning the reign of *Vulpes*, the fox, and in so doing implied that James I had been a less than exemplary king. He ended his gloss on the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy with the identification of *Vulpes*, and so left the reader to draw the obvious inference: that *Leo*, the lion, represented Charles I, with whose death the English monarchy would vanish like the crown in the sixth apparition. This first text in *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies* thus contemplated the possible extirpation of monarchical government in England, four years prior to the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of the Republic.

The publication of vaticinal texts abated in the hiatus between the First and Second Civil Wars. When the conflict resumed, so too did the flood of prophecies from the printing presses. The presence of Mother Shipton’s name on the title pages of several prophetic anthologies of 1648 attests to the perceived marketability of her

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<sup>174</sup> *A Cat May Look upon a King* (London: William Roybould, 1652), sig. [\*]1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. [\*]5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E9<sup>f</sup>.

imputed sayings at that time.<sup>177</sup> 1648 also saw the reappearance of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy in print. George Wither recounted the history and contents of that prophecy thus in his political poem, *Prosopopœia Britannica*:

For, through these Islands this *Tradition* goes,  
That *He*, who made the *English Damask Rose*,  
Or, els some other, being curious growne,  
To know the future fortune of his *Throne*,  
Receiv’d, in *hieroglyphic-wise* exprest,  
Their *Portraitures*, who, when he was at rest,  
Should in his *Kingdome*, after him succeed;  
With words, in *Latine Verse*, thus Englished:  
*A Man, a Child, a Furious-One;*  
*A Maid, a Fox, a Lion, None.*<sup>178</sup>

Wither seems to have borrowed certain details from the exposition of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy in Lilly’s anthology. His versified biography of the prophecy included the claim that it was first delivered in visual form in the reign of the Tudor Henry VII, who ‘made the *English Damask Rose*’ when his marriage to Elizabeth of York united the respective white and red roses of York and Lancaster. In the following lines, Wither pre-emptively declared his sympathy with those readers generally inclined to dismiss old prophecies as superstitious relics:

I would not, any much should trust, or feare  
Such *Prophecies*; yet, when events appeare  
To answer unto that which was foretold,  
*Wise men* should make what use of them they could[.]<sup>179</sup>

While the trustworthiness of prophecies like this one was doubtful, Wither conceded, coincidental correspondences between their contents and current events should not be

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<sup>177</sup> e.g. *Twelve Strange Proehesies* [sic], *besides Mother Shiptons* (London: Francis Coles, 1648); *Thirteen Strange Prophecies, besides Mother Shiptons* (London: Francis Coles, 1648); *Fourteene Strange Prophecies, besides Mother Shiptons* (London: Richard Harper, 1648).

<sup>178</sup> George Wither [as ‘Terræ-Filius’], *Prosopopœia Britannica: Britans Genius* (London: Robert Austin, 1648), sig. B7<sup>r</sup>; referenced by David Norbrook, ‘Levelling Poetry: George Wither and the English Revolution, 1642-1649’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 21 (1991), 217-56 (p. 254).

<sup>179</sup> Wither, *Prosopopœia Britannica*, sig. B7<sup>r</sup>.

ignored but should be ‘used’. Wither thus asserted that the rhetorical manipulability of prophetic texts was to be appreciated and exploited even when the notion that such texts were divinely inspired was widely rejected. These lines antagonise the thesis of Keith Thomas that the perceived value of prophecies declined over the seventeenth century in tandem with the faith reposed in their claims to inspired status.<sup>180</sup>

Wither, who had fought on the parliamentary side in the Civil War, gave a measured interpretation of the prediction that the lion would be succeeded by ‘none’. This final part of the prophecy did not necessarily portend the eradication of the English monarchy after the death of King Charles, the sixth English monarch after Henry VII, he suggested. Instead, the fulfilment of the prophecy might be perceived in the present status of Charles as parliament’s captive:

Lo, that *prediction*, is this day fulfilled;  
Six, as it was fore-typifi’d, have held  
The *Scepter* of that *King*; and, now there’s *none*,  
Who either weares the *Crowne*, or fills the *Throne*[.]<sup>181</sup>

As the prophecy thus arguably stood accomplished in Charles’s lifetime, Wither asserted, there was still time for the subjugated king to reverse his present fortunes. Charles might again wear the crown and fill the throne of a stable English monarchy, on condition of his willingness to ‘harken to | Their counsell, who will tell him what to do’.<sup>182</sup> This treatment of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy contributed to Wither’s poetic ruminations on the possibility of a constitutional monarchy.

In *Monarchy or No Monarchy* (1651), which defended the Republic, Lilly articulated the argument that had been implicit in his treatment of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy in *Ancient and Moderne Prophecies*. Whereas that earlier publication had

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<sup>180</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 512.

<sup>181</sup> Wither, *Prosopopœia Britannica*, sig. B7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B7<sup>r</sup>.

offered no gloss on ‘*Leo*’ and ‘*Nullus*’, the 1651 anthology stated plainly: ‘The late King *Charles* was he signified by the *Lion*. After him is imported there shall no more Kings succeed in *England*.’<sup>183</sup> This prophecy was the second of eight texts Lilly gathered under the heading ‘*Severall ancient English Prophecies*, affirming there shall be no more *Kings* in *England*, or all of them tending unto the abolishing or finall extirpation of Monarchy’.<sup>184</sup> The ‘*Mars...*’ text was also invoked elsewhere in print in 1651 to endorse the Republic. A broadside pseudonymously attributed to ‘J. L. Philalethes’, entitled *Old Sayings and Predictions Verified and Fulfilled*, alleged that the Scots were engaged in a plot to place their king, Charles II, on the English throne: ‘[W]ee having cast off their King, it is their designe to settle him upon us againe’.<sup>185</sup> To encourage English readers to resist any attempted restoration of the monarchy, the broadside cited this prophecy, which portended no future return of ‘Monarchcall [*sic*] bondage’ after the succession of ‘*Leo*’ by ‘*Nullus*’.<sup>186</sup>

Lilly claimed in his prefatory epistle to the readers of *Ancient and Moderne Prophetes* that he had first seen the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy in 1623, when a copy was brought to him by one ‘R. Thornehull’, a secular priest. ‘[M]any hundreds’ of copies survived in privately owned manuscripts, this parliamentarian propagandist stated.<sup>187</sup> It is possible that this text really was in existence around the time of the Spanish Match crisis, when *Vulpes* (James I) occupied the English throne and alarmist rumour held that the prospective marriage of his heir, Prince Charles, to the Infanta would subsume the lion-crested, Protestant British monarchy into the projected universal monarchy of the Catholic, Habsburg King of Spain. This hypothesis is weakened,

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<sup>183</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. H4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>185</sup> ‘J. L. Philalethes’, *Old Sayings and Predictions Verified and Fulfilled, Touching the Young King of Scotland and His Gued Subjects* (London: [n. pub.], 1651).

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophetes*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

however, by the apparent non-survival of a single one of the ‘many hundreds’ of Jacobean manuscript copies mentioned by Lilly. A handwritten text of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy, evidently transcribed from one of the mid-seventeenth-century printed versions, is extant in a commonplace book compiled by the Yorkshire royalist John Gibson during his time as a prisoner in Durham Castle in the 1650s.<sup>188</sup> No earlier manuscript copies of the prophecy have been discovered. It is unlikely, but possible, that Lilly’s claim to have encountered this text in the first quarter of the seventeenth century was genuine. His assertion that the text dated back to 1488 was almost certainly spurious. The accuracy of the ‘prophecy’ with regard to the ages, genders, and famous attributes of the sequence of English monarchs that followed Henry VII strongly argues that it was composed when most of the reigns it described were already firmly in the past.

While the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy was apparently a recent invention, many of the prophetic texts anthologised and tendentiously expounded by Lilly really did date from past centuries. *The Worlds Catastrophe* (1647) contained an English translation of the prophecy of Ambrose Merlin, the enduringly popular text originally written in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century. Deprived of ‘convenient time’ to translate this medieval prophecy himself, Lilly explained in the preface to his treatise, he had accepted an offer of assistance from ‘*Elias Ashmole* Esquire, my noble Friend’.<sup>189</sup> Despite their opposed political sympathies, the royalist Ashmole and the parliamentarian Lilly shared astrological and antiquarian enthusiasms and had become friends in 1646. Ashmole translated the Merlin prophecy for Lilly from a Latin

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<sup>188</sup> BL, Add. MS 37719, fol. 15<sup>v</sup>. See Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 130-31.

<sup>189</sup> William Lilly, *The Worlds Catastrophe; or, Europes Many Mutations untill 1666* (London: John Partridge and Humphrey Blunden, 1647), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

version printed at Frankfurt in 1608, entitled *Prophetia Anglicana*.<sup>190</sup> In his own gloss on the translated text, Lilly implied that the last lines concerned mid-seventeenth-century events. '[T]his age', he claimed, 'is near to the very end of the prophecy (and so we may fully expect a grand Revolution)'.<sup>191</sup> The final portion of the Merlin prophecy featured predictions like 'the Crab shall contend with the Sun' and '[t]he splendour of the Sun shall languish'.<sup>192</sup> Lilly's key to the terms of the prophecy, printed in the preface to *The Worlds Catastrophe*, identified the crab as Scotland and the sun as 'Monarchy and Kings'.<sup>193</sup> His gloss thus worked to suggest that Merlin had predicted Anglo-Scottish wars and the future fall of the English monarchy. In 1651, two years after the regicide, Lilly remembered the prophecy of Ambrose Merlin and included the passage concerning the crab and the sun in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, where he supplied it with the following explanatory note: 'An astrologically prediction of *Merlines*, concerning the extirpation of Kings'.<sup>194</sup>

A medieval text that borrowed themes from Geoffrey's Merlin prophecies became an important focus of the propagandist exegetical talents of Lilly in the Civil War and Interregnum. The subject of this text was *rex albus*, the 'white king' who was predicted to inherit the English throne from the 'lion of justice' and to experience a troubled reign that would end when he was succeeded by the 'eagle's chick', a foreign invader. Originally an *ex eventu* prophecy of the reigns of three successive twelfth-century Kings of England, this text, which began '*Mortuo leone justicie...*' ('The lion of justice being dead...'), survives in many manuscript versions, the

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<sup>190</sup> See Charles Bowie Millican, 'The First English Translation of the "Prophecies of Merlin"', *Studies in Philology*, 28 (1931), 720-29 (pp. 721-22).

<sup>191</sup> Lilly, *The Worlds Catastrophe*, sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. G1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>194</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. I1<sup>v</sup>.

earliest of which date back to the thirteenth century.<sup>195</sup> Sometimes known as ‘the prophecy of the eagle’, the text was conceived in the beginning as a description of the following series of events from recent history: the death of King Henry I (figured as the ‘lion of justice’) in 1135; the subsequent accession of King Stephen (the ‘white king’), whose reign was blighted by a protracted civil war; and the voyage from France to England of Henry FitzEmpress (the ‘eagle’s chick’), the Plantagenet Duke of Normandy who succeeded to the English throne as Henry II when Stephen died in 1154.<sup>196</sup> The unknown writer of this prophecy appropriated the description of Henry I as a ‘lion of justice’ from the Merlin prophecies in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*.<sup>197</sup>

An anonymous English translation of the medieval *rex albus* prophecy was printed in 1643. *The Prophecie of a White King of Brittain*, a black-letter pamphlet, claimed that the *rex albus* text had been found ‘by the Lady Poston of the County of Norfolk, amongst the evidences of *Edw. the fourth his time*’.<sup>198</sup> It told how a Latin copy of the prophecy dating from that period could be ‘seene in Sir *Robert Cottons* Library, that famous Antiquary of *England*’.<sup>199</sup> The vast manuscript library gathered by Cotton, the Elizabethan and Jacobean antiquary, had been closed by order of King Charles in 1629, perhaps on the advice of the Duke of Buckingham, the royal favourite who had reason to resent Cotton’s ‘monopoly of manuscripts and official papers’ that might be exploited rhetorically to the detriment of the dominant faction at court.<sup>200</sup> It is possible that *The Prophecie of a White King of Brittain*, published shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, invoked the name of Robert Cotton to

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<sup>195</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 66.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>197</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 174; Judith A. Green, *The Government of England under Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 95.

<sup>198</sup> *The Prophecie of a White King of Brittain: Taken out of the Library of Sir Robert Cotton* (London: G. Linsey, 1643), sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A5<sup>t</sup>.

<sup>200</sup> Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton*, p. 80.

imply resistance to Charles, the monarch who had thus attempted to draw a veil over the historic documents in which the ancient rights and privileges of English subjects were inscribed. It is also possible, however, that the note on the derivation of this English text from a Latin manuscript once owned by Cotton was a statement not of allegiance but of fact. A version of the *rex albus* prophecy made in the second half of the fifteenth century, when Edward IV reigned in England, survives among the Cotton manuscripts in the British Library.<sup>201</sup>

The absence of any commentary in *The Prophecie of a White King of Brittain* (1643) frustrates modern scholarly attempts to attribute a political motive to this publication. No ambiguity surrounds the aims of *A Prophecy of the White King: And Dreadfull Dead-Man Explained*, compiled by Lilly and published in 1644. Lilly recruited the *rex albus* text to his parliamentary propagandist agenda. His edition of the prophecy quickly became a bestseller: by his own account, it sold one thousand eight hundred copies in the first three days after it left the press.<sup>202</sup> Lilly's pamphlet brought together three versions of the prophecy: a bilingual text that alternated Latin sentences and their English translations; a verbatim reproduction of the English text previously printed in *The Prophecie of a White King of Brittain* (1643); and a Latin text, beginning '*Mortuo leone justicie*'. Lilly supplied his edition of *rex albus* with nine pages of exposition. The prophecy, composed no earlier than the mid-twelfth century, was falsely described in his commentary as 'at least nine hundred' years old. The commentary also claimed that the text was Welsh in origin.<sup>203</sup> Lilly began his analysis of the text with an obliquely expressed denial of any intention to encourage

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<sup>201</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.vii, fol. 129; see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 261.

<sup>202</sup> William Lilly and Elias Ashmole, *The Lives of those Eminent Antiquaries Elias Ashmole, Esquire, and Mr William Lilly, Written by Themselves*, ed. by Charles Burman (London: T. Davies, 1774), p. 66; referenced by Harry Rusche, 'Merlini Anglici: Astrology and Propaganda from 1644 to 1651', *English Historical Review*, 80 (1965), 322-33 (p. 324n).

<sup>203</sup> William Lilly, *A Prophecy of the White King: And Dreadfull Dead-Man Explained* (London: John Sherley and Thomas Underhill, 1644), sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

readers to identify the ‘white king’ as Charles I: ‘I will avoid all misconstruction, that my intentions might point out any particular man living (as some may knavishly surmize)’.<sup>204</sup> This denial was disingenuous. Lilly drew parallels, albeit inexplicitly, between the narrative content of the prophecy and contemporary events. A passage towards the end of his exposition hinted that Charles would have been therein named as the protagonist of the prophecy if Lilly’s fear of reprisals had not impelled him to exercise circumspection: ‘I am of opinion [the white king’s] Tragedy (if any such shall ever be) is not yet acted; I dare not affirme it is acting.’<sup>205</sup>

On 3 June 1644, two months before *A Prophecy of the White King: And Dreadfull Dead-Man Explained* left the press, King Charles and his son and heir had escaped from Oxford, the royalist army headquarters, when it was besieged by parliamentarian forces. Lilly cautiously invited readers of the *rex albus* prophecy to perceive a presage of the recent royal flight from Oxford in that medieval text. His commentary remarked that the prophecy told of a trap laid for the white king in or near ‘some antient Towne, perhaps *Wallingford, Kingston, or Reading*, or if he goe farther, it may be *Oxford, Bristoll, Bath, or Salisbury*, but I conceive the White King shall hardly make so long a progresse without first being surrounded’.<sup>206</sup> In a feat of deflective rhetoric, Lilly laid claim to the opinion that one of the three towns closest to London was more likely to be the site of the siege than Oxford, Bristol, Bath, or Salisbury. He could, however, rely on readers’ familiarity with recent events in Oxford to guide their interpretation in a different direction from the one he thus ostensibly recommended. This passage from his paraphrase of the prophecy, wherein he described the feats of soldiers who ‘in their heat pursue from house to house the flying enemy, the unfortunate White King’, evinces his expertise at ‘applying old

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<sup>204</sup> Lilly, *A Prophecy of the White King*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C1<sup>r</sup>.

predictions to the circumstances of the revolutionary decades'.<sup>207</sup> The medieval text, according to Lilly, told how the months following the death of the white king would be marked by 'a serious consultation or debate of the States of the Kingdome, whether they shall againe admit of Monarchy'.<sup>208</sup> This debate would end with the accession of the eagle's chick, an individual not directly descended from the white king. Lilly noted the absence in the prophecy of any reference to the 'issue' of this monarch and claimed that the text thus hinted at the adoption of a new style of English government, probably aristocratic, after the decease of the heirless eagle's chick.<sup>209</sup> According to this parliamentarian propagandist, the *rex albus* prophecy was ancient and had predicted that one more king would reign in England between the death of Charles and the abolition of the monarchy.<sup>210</sup>

Lilly followed his paraphrase of the *rex albus* prophecy with a copy and an exposition of the prophecy of the 'Dreadfull Dead-man', a text first printed in John Harvey's *A Discoursiue Probleme concerning Prophetes* (1588).<sup>211</sup> This text told of an incompetent English king (the 'Dreadfull Dead-man') who would be succeeded by 'a royall Y of the best bloud in the world'. The ruler thus figured as a royal *upsilon* would 'set[] the *English* in the right way'. According to Lilly, the monarchs denoted by the dreadful dead man and royal Y were the same as those denoted by the white king and eagle's chick respectively in the *rex albus* prophecy.<sup>212</sup> Christopher Syms likewise stated that the 'white king' and 'dreadful dead man' were identical; however, he disagreed with his rival prophetic exegete over the equivalence of the royal Y and the eagle's chick. Syms's view of the implications of these two texts for the

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<sup>207</sup> Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 90.

<sup>208</sup> Lilly, *A Prophecy of the White King*, sig. C1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs C1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs C2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>; Harvey, *A Discoursiue Probleme*, sig. I2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>212</sup> Lilly, *A Prophecy of the White King*, sig. C3<sup>v</sup>.

future government of England also differed markedly from Lilly's. His royalist readings of both prophecies argued that the conclusions of former exegetes had been based on grammatical misconstructions. Though the English *rex albus* text replicated and expounded by Lilly had told how the white king would die before the accession of the eagle's chick, remarked Syms in *The Swords Apology*, careful grammatical analysis of the original Latin text revealed that the object of the verb *occidere* (to fall) was not the white king, but the offspring of the eagle. Syms identified this 'eagles chicken' as an emissary from the Romish Church and thus argued that the prophecy foretold the white king's triumph over Jesuitical attempts to corrupt religious practice in England, Scotland, and Wales.<sup>213</sup> In his pamphlet, *The White King Raised, and the Dreadful Dead-Man Revived* (1647), Syms argued that expositors of the dreadful dead man prophecy had misidentified the subject of the final clause in this sentence:

And after that shal come a dreadful dead-man, and with him a royal Y, one of the best blood in the world, and hee shal have the crown, and set England on the right way, and put out al heresies.<sup>214</sup>

Whereas interpreters of this sentence had hitherto assumed that the royal Y was therein predicted to wear the English crown and to reform the Church, claimed Syms, the 'hee' in the second clause actually referred to the dreadful dead man, 'whom those expositors conclude to bee also the White King, and both al one, as indeed they are'. Syms suggested that the royal Y, an overseas voyager to England, was not a foreign claimant to the English throne but 'a Princes[s], a woman', brought into England by the dreadful dead man.<sup>215</sup> The implication of this novel exegesis was that the royal Y was Henrietta Maria, the wife of the dreadful dead man and white king Charles I.

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<sup>213</sup> Syms, *The Swords Apology*, sigs C3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>214</sup> Christopher Syms, *The White King Raised, and the Dreadful Dead-Man Revived* (London: [n. pub], 1647), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>. See Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*, p. 227.

<sup>215</sup> Syms, *The White King Raised*, sigs A2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

Syms contended that the white king of the prophecy was so called ‘because hee did or shall wear white robes at his coronation, or at some other notable and royall solemnity, wheras others did usually weare purple, or skarlet’.<sup>216</sup> In *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies* (1645), Lilly remarked that King Charles I had elected to wear white robes at his coronation in 1625, ‘[c]ontrary to the custome of all the Kings and Queens of *England*’.<sup>217</sup> This observation constituted one of several footnotes with which Lilly supplemented the commentary from *A Prophecy of the White King* when he reproduced it in *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies*. Whereas his earlier treatment of the white king prophecy had only implicitly put the case that the fulfilment of that medieval political forecast was perceptible in present events, Lilly’s new footnotes were more direct. In these glosses on his original gloss of the prophecy, Lilly explicitly identified King James I as the lion of justice and said of his son, King Charles: ‘if his Majesty be not really the *White King*, sure he is very like him, and he hath already acted such things as the *White King* must’.<sup>218</sup> Another footnote alluded to the flight of the king from Oxford in the summer of 1644.<sup>219</sup> The last of these supplementary notes glossed the prediction that the white king would be ‘enforced to seek ayde in forraigne parts’ as a prophetic reference to Charles’s recent appeals to various ‘Prince[s] of *Europe*’ for military assistance.<sup>220</sup> Lilly provided no notes to elucidate the final three pages of his paraphrase of the prophecy, which concerned the death of the white king; the accession and career of the eagle’s chick; and the long-term fate of monarchical government in England. In common with his exposition of the ‘*Mars...*’ prophecy in the same publication, Lilly’s newly expanded gloss on the white king prophecy in *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies* cautiously promoted an anti-

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<sup>216</sup> Syms, *The Swords Apology*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>217</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies*, sig. E1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E3<sup>r-v</sup>.

monarchist agenda. While they stopped short of direct discussion of the potential constitutional aftermath of the death of King Charles, Lilly's treatments of both these prophecies contained sufficient clues to encourage the inference that the present king was the prophetic protagonist fated to rule shortly before the abolition of monarchy.

On 26 January 1649, the day before Charles I was sentenced to death, a pamphlet entitled *The Prophecy of the White King Explained* received its imprimatur from licenser Theodore Jennings, an Independent.<sup>221</sup> This work contained a pretended paraphrase of the white king prophecy, clearly forged so as to identify Charles firmly as its protagonist and to justify the forthcoming execution of the king by order of the High Court of Justice. The paraphrase suggested that the medieval text had foretold such events as the premature death of Prince Henry in 1612 and the voyage of Charles and Buckingham to Madrid in 1623. It claimed falsely that the original prophecy had told how the white king would 'rise to the Crown by flying over the head of his Brother', who would be 'removed out of the way by poyson, death, banishment, or some way or other'.<sup>222</sup> The rumour that Prince Henry had been poisoned by Robert Carr had emerged shortly after the death of the young heir and was revived in print in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>223</sup> A modern interpolation designed to make the medieval text appear predictive of Prince Charles's abortive efforts to obtain a Spanish bride read thus in *The Prophecy of the White King Explained*:

[The white king] shall ride, and travell farre, to seek him a wife, he shall goe into *Spain* or *Italy*, or some other Kingdoms, to effect it, but shall return unsatisfied.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> On Jennings, see C. V. Wedgwood, *A King Condemned: The Trial and Execution of Charles I* (London: Collins, 1964; repr. London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2011), p. 124.

<sup>222</sup> *The Prophecy of the White King Explained, Compared with Severall Copies, Both Welsh, Latine, and English* ([London(?): Robert Ibbitson, 1649), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>223</sup> Miranda Wilson, *Poison's Dark Works in Renaissance England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), p. 46; *A Cat May Look upon a King*, sig. D2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>224</sup> *The Prophecy of the White King Explained*, sig. A2<sup>f</sup>.

Other newly forged passages featured barely veiled references to the Bishops' Wars and to Charles's unpopular attempts to levy ship money.<sup>225</sup> Mentions of contemporary events at Naseby, Oxford, and Newark were likewise silently added to the medieval version of the prophecy to enhance its seeming topical relevance.<sup>226</sup> These various additions, which worked to suggest that the prophecy was already fulfilled in several particulars, helped to lend the appearance of authority to the following 'prediction' concerning the ultimate fate of the white king:

[H]e shall come to be tryed for his life, in which the gentle worthies of the Parliament and their Army, will not suffer wrong to be done unto him, But will give him an ample, publick and legall Tryall.<sup>227</sup>

This pamphlet, licensed for publication just four days before the execution of King Charles, took substantial liberties with the original text of the white king prophecy in order to further its propagandist agenda: to argue the legitimacy of the unprecedented decision taken by the Rump Parliament to put the monarch on trial for treason.

In *Monarchy or No Monarchy* (1651), Lilly furnished a new interpretation of the white king prophecy that took account of the changes made to the structure of English government since the regicide of 1649. He identified the eagle's chick as Charles, the son of the recently executed King Charles I.<sup>228</sup> Where Lilly had argued in the 1640s that the eagle's chick would be the last monarch to govern England, recent events necessitated a different approach to the text. To fashion his exposition into an endorsement of the newly established Republic, Lilly argued that the white king ('*Charles Stuart, late King of England*') was the last of the English monarchs and that his son, the eagle's chick, had only ever been predicted to rule over Scotland as

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<sup>225</sup> *The Prophecy of the White King Explained*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>228</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. H3<sup>r</sup>.

Charles II.<sup>229</sup> Whereas Lilly had only implicitly identified Charles I as *rex albus* in *A Prophecy of the White King* (1644) and *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies* (1645), in *Monarchy or No Monarchy* he supplied the medieval prophecy with a title that positively named the dead king as its protagonist: ‘A Prophecy of the *Wite* [sic] *King*, wrote by AMBROSE MERLIN 900 years since, concerning CHARLES the late KING’.<sup>230</sup> Lilly, who had first ascribed the medieval *rex albus* prophecy to Merlin in the prefatory epistle of *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies*, here repeated its spurious attribution to that most famous of legendary prophetic authorities.<sup>231</sup> His exposition of the white king prophecy in *Monarchy or No Monarchy* began, unlike his former paraphrases of the text, with a long evaluation of the appropriateness of the phrase *leo justicie* as an epithet for King James I. Lilly alluded in this commentary to the lion-shaped mole that was said to have marked the skin of the first Stuart king of England. He perhaps encountered that legend in Heywood’s *The Life of Merlin* (1641).<sup>232</sup> Lilly declared this natural stamp no reliable indicator of the qualities of its possessor. James had so notably lacked the characteristically leonine attribute of courage, Lilly stated, that he deserved to be remembered as ‘the most pusillanimous Prince of spirit’.<sup>233</sup>

After it had invoked the legend of the Stuart royal birthmark to criticise James I for meekness, Lilly’s exegesis of the *rex albus* text referenced another Jacobean rumour. It recalled the tale, first circulated in manuscript in the early 1620s, that the ghost of the sixteenth-century Scottish resistance theorist George Buchanan had infiltrated the dreams of King James to inform the monarch of the manner of his death. Whereas the late Jacobean versions of this story had all dated the dream to sometime in or before 1622, Lilly manipulated the existing legend to suggest that

<sup>229</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. H3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. F3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>231</sup> Lilly, *Ancient and Moderne Prophesies*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>232</sup> Heywood, *The Life of Merlin*, sig. Bbb1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>233</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. F3<sup>v</sup>.

James had received his nocturnal visit from Buchanan soon before his death in 1625. In fulfilment of the prophecy, Lilly claimed, the carbuncle stone that the king usually wore in his hat had fallen into a fire ‘not long after’ his dream-encounter with Buchanan; and ‘very shortly after’ that, James had died as the apparition had warned he would.<sup>234</sup> Sixteen days after Lilly’s version of the Buchanan prophecy was first printed, the text was republished in an anonymous republican tract, *The Lord Merlins Prophecy*, which was composed entirely of unacknowledged extracts from *Monarchy or No Monarchy*.<sup>235</sup> In the late Jacobean period, accounts of the king’s portentous dream had been shared by the likes of John Rous and Joseph Mede with their fellow East Anglian prophetic enthusiasts. Lilly, whose possible access to the prophetic correspondence of Mede is discussed above in the study of the Grebner treatise, embellished early accounts of this dream vision to enhance the seeming accuracy of Buchanan’s prophecy of the circumstances under which James would die. This effective induction of a famous resistance theorist into the canon of British prophets promoted his republican propagandist agenda.

The supposed utterance of the spectre of Buchanan was not the only political prophecy of Jacobean origin revived in *Monarchy or No Monarchy*. ‘Balaam’s Ass’, the prophetic treatise whose author John Williams had been executed as a traitor under King James I, was also remembered in this publication. Under the heading ‘Mr Williams his Prophecie about the foureteenth year of King James’, Lilly included a copy of the verse libel in which Williams predicted the destruction of Whitehall in 1621, beginning ‘Christ went to Court some seven yeares since’.<sup>236</sup> This prophetic poem had continued to circulate in manuscript from the time when its author was arrested in 1619 into the mid-seventeenth century. Certain surviving copies show

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<sup>234</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. F4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>235</sup> *The Lord Merlins Prophecy concerning the King of Scots* (London: G. Horton, 1651), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>236</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. K3<sup>r</sup>.

evidence of tendentious adaptation. The Caroline copy in British Library, Harley MS 4931 gives the date of the desolation of Whitehall not as 1621 but as ‘sixteen hundred forty one’.<sup>237</sup> So too do two other extant manuscript copies, roughly contemporaneous with this one.<sup>238</sup> This widely adopted change worked to render Williams’s verse libel newly applicable to the Civil War period. His poetic condemnation of the Jacobean court was thus transformed into a prophecy of the flight of the royal family from London in January 1641 (O.S.), when Charles failed to arrest the Five Members. The version of ‘*Christ went to Court...*’ included by Lilly in *Monarchy or No Monarchy* also gave the date of the ruin of Whitehall as 1641. Beside the final lines of the poem, which told how the value of an *Asse* would exceed that of all the horses in the Whitehall mews in the year after the destruction of the palace (i.e. in 1642), Lilly noted: ‘In 1642, the King had no Horse ith’ Mewes’.<sup>239</sup> This republican propagandist thus worked to suggest that the downturn in the fortunes of King Charles in the 1640s had been predicted by the convicted traitor Williams before his death in 1619.

In his republican prophetic anthology, Lilly demonstrated some familiarity with the details of the treason case brought against John Williams some three decades previously. His comments beneath the copy of Williams’s poem included a detail that can be found too in Jacobean manuscript reports on the contents of ‘Balaam’s Asse’: that the treatise threatened ‘that King *James* his escape from the powder treason, was not a preservation, but a reservation for a worse turne’.<sup>240</sup> Lilly claimed to have reproduced the prophetic verse libel from a transcript made for a ‘Mr. *B*’ by a Kentish knight, James Oxenden, who owned a Jacobean manuscript copy.<sup>241</sup> Sir James Oxinden of Deane House at Wingham, Kent, was a supporter of parliament in

<sup>237</sup> BL, Harley MS 4931, fol. 13<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>238</sup> BL, Add. MS 4457, fol. 121<sup>r</sup>; Bodl., MS Ashmole 1382, fol. 270<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>239</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sig. K3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K3<sup>r</sup>.

the Civil War.<sup>242</sup> The identity of ‘Mr. B.’ is unknown. Lilly admitted that the verses by Williams were not readily interpretable as a prophecy of the 1649 regicide and the establishment of the Republic. In a publication conceived as a defence of the abolition of monarchy, he conceded, they were ‘nothing to the purpose’. The ‘strangeness’ of the verses, he claimed, justified their inclusion.<sup>243</sup> James Howell, a moderate royalist who had spent the Civil War years in the Fleet prison, had different reasons to include a copy of the same libel and an account of the fate of its author in the third edition of his *Familiar Letters* (1655). Howell glossed the word ‘grass’ as ‘grace’ and argued that ‘grass’ had subsisted at Whitehall ‘till the soldiers coming to quarter there trampled it down’.<sup>244</sup> This gloss worked to give the poem a royalist inflection: it implied that the habitation of Charles, king by the grace of God, had been desecrated by the parliamentary troops billeted there during the Civil War. Howell concluded his commentary on the prophecy of Williams with a pessimistic meditation on the future of Britain: ‘I find all things conspire to make strange mutations in this miserable Island, I fear we shall fall from under the *Scepter* to be under the *Sword*’.<sup>245</sup>

A prose text beginning ‘The Lily shall raigne in a noble world’, known to modern scholars as the ‘*Lilium regnans*’ prophecy, was another vaticinal text that attracted interest both in the late Jacobean period and in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1623, the compiler of the Cambridge University Library manuscript anthology of political prophecies, MS Ee.5.36, copied the prophecy from John Rous.<sup>246</sup> This text had originated in the fourteenth century as an *ex eventu* prophecy of the fortunes of

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<sup>242</sup> Alan Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), p. 47.

<sup>243</sup> Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, sigs K2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>244</sup> James Howell, *A New Volume of Familiar Letters, Partly Philosophical, Political, Historical*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 4 vols (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1655), III, sig. Hh2<sup>r</sup>. An early eighteenth-century manuscript copy of Howell’s annotated version of the poem survives in a volume of the Egmont papers in the British Library: Add. MS 47127, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>245</sup> Howell, *Familiar Letters*, III, sig. Hh2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>246</sup> BL, Add. MS 28640, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>; CUL, MS Ee.5.36, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

King Edward III.<sup>247</sup> When it reached print in the 1640s, the text was described as an artefact discovered at the residence of Master Truswell, Recorder of Lincoln.<sup>248</sup> An early to mid-sixteenth-century manuscript version of the prophecy, preserved in MS L.b.546 in the Folger Shakespeare Library, bears a title that refers to the discovery of its original, ‘not vnwryten by mans Juggement not this CC yeres’, in the house of a Master Creswell, Recorder of Plymouth.<sup>249</sup> The title of the 1642 printed version of the prophecy, which labelled the text ‘in all mens judgements [...] not unwritten these 300 yeres’, was apparently adapted from some such manuscript source. In addition to the prophecy once owned by ‘Master Truswell’, this pamphlet of 1642 contained a text that summarised the sayings of fourteen ancient prophets concerning a hero-king who would win the holy cross. The same eclectic prophecy accompanies ‘*Lilium regnans*’ in MS L.b.546.<sup>250</sup> British Library, Harley MS 559, a mid-sixteenth-century collection of political prophecies, also contains texts of both ‘*Lilium regnans*’ and the sayings of the fourteen prophets. In this manuscript, it is the latter text that is said to have been found at the Plymouth home of Master Creswell in a copy ‘not vnwritten this hundred yeres’.<sup>251</sup> A close relationship between these two prophecies apparently existed for at least a hundred years prior to their appearance together in print in 1642.

The pamphlet of 1642 that contained both ‘*Lilium regnans*’ and the digest of old prophecies concerning a crusader king featured no partisan commentary on these texts and was of indeterminate political allegiance. Later in the seventeenth century, propagandists found material ripe for rhetorical manipulation in both prophecies. Although the text concerning the king who would win the holy cross had originally

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<sup>247</sup> Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy*, p. 125.

<sup>248</sup> *A True Coppie of a Prophesie which Was Found in Old Ancient House of One Master Truswell, Sometime Recorder of a Towne in Lincoln-shire, which in All Mens Judgements Was Not Unwritten these 300 Yeres* (London: Henry Marsh, 1642), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>249</sup> Folger, MS L.b.546, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>251</sup> BL, Harley MS 559, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>.

given the name of its hero as ‘Edward’ many times, Thomas Pugh included a copy in *Brittish and Out-landish Prophesies* (1658), a prophetic anthology that endorsed the government of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell. Pugh purged the text of all references to ‘Edward’ to encourage the identification of Cromwell as its hero.<sup>252</sup> The ‘*Lilium regnans*’ prophecy was the topic of a letter sent by Lilly to his friend Ashmole on 12 February 1661. Lilly had found in his library ‘an old greasy booke, written or copied in H[enry] the 8<sup>th</sup> his tyme’. This book, he claimed, contained many political prophecies including an English translation of ‘*Lilium regnans*’.<sup>253</sup> Lilly, the former propagandist for the parliamentary cause in the Civil War and later for the Republic, offered to compose a commentary on this prophecy and to publish both text and commentary in the *London Gazette* as a service to King Charles II, the recently restored English monarch.<sup>254</sup> He boasted of his ability to manipulate old prophecies in order to persuade readers to support a given contemporary cause: ‘I well know, how to humor the people in such like business’. Lilly, who in *Monarchy or No Monarchy* (1651) had derided the compiler of the royalist *Future History* (1650) as ‘a meere Time server’, abandoned his republicanism in the changed political circumstances of the 1660s and declared himself ‘very willing to serue his Majesty with my penn’.<sup>255</sup>

The letter of Lilly to Ashmole clearly demonstrates his recognition both of the interpretive flexibility of old prophetic texts and of his own skill at the rhetorical manipulation of such texts. Via the comparison of medieval, sixteenth-century, and Jacobean manuscripts to the published output of Lilly and other prophetic expositors of the Civil War and Interregnum, this chapter has explored some of the rhetorical manoeuvres whereby the prophetic texts of the past were applied to present events in

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<sup>252</sup> Thomas Pugh, *Brittish and Out-landish Prophesies: Most of above 1000 Years Antiquity, the Rest Very Ancient* (London: Lodowick Lloyd, 1658), sigs H2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>253</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 423, fol. 256<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 256<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 256<sup>v</sup>.

the mid-seventeenth century. Lilly's offer to reinterpret '*Lilium regnans*' as a prophetic endorsement of the Restoration gestures towards the continuation of the practice of propagandist prophetic exegesis beyond the period studied in this thesis.

## *Conclusion*

On the eve of the Restoration, the prophecy that had been falsely attributed to Paul Grebner in *A Brief Description of the Future History of Europe* and in two other royalist publications at the dawn of the Republic enjoyed a new lease of life. This text, which had described the successive election of an earl and a knight and ‘none’, was adapted and printed in July 1659 as *A Prophecy, Lately Found amongst the Collections of Famous Mr John Selden*. The royalist allegiance of this pamphlet, from which Grebner’s name was absent, was evident in its penultimate sentence, which obliquely predicted the return of the monarchy with this quotation from the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil: ‘*Redeunt Saturnia regna*’, Englished as ‘Happy dayes return’.<sup>1</sup> This same phrase had been used at the beginning of the century to hail the accession of James, the first Stuart King of England.<sup>2</sup> A passage newly incorporated into the pseudo-Grebner prophecy in this pamphlet was of manifestly recent composition. It told how the knight of that text would be succeeded by an ‘*Obscure person*’ whose ‘*younger Sonne may, more happily, tune the Harp*’. Concerning the ambitions of this younger son, the text remarked: ‘It shall goe well if a *Monk* dance to his tune.’<sup>3</sup> The obscure person and his son were readily identifiable as Oliver Cromwell and his successor as Lord Protector: his son, Richard Cromwell. The reference to General George Monck was similarly obvious. Although the title page implied that this text had been found in the antiquarian library of the scholar John Selden, its true status as

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<sup>1</sup> *A Prophecy, Lately Found amongst the Collections of Famous Mr John Selden* (London: [n. pub.], 1659), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>; Virgil, *The Bucolikes*, sig. D2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment*, sig. H4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *A Prophecy [...] of Famous Mr John Selden*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

a new and topical edition of the prophecy printed a decade previously under the name of Grebner must have been obvious to any reader familiar with the earlier text.

To test the authenticity of *A Prophecy, Lately Found amongst the Collections of Famous Mr John Selden*, a reader of this cheap pamphlet required no access to exclusive manuscript libraries. He or she needed only to refer to a copy of any one of three print publications: the broadside *The Prophecie of Paulus Grebnerus* (1649); *Vaticinium Votivum* (1649); or the *Future History* (1650). The addition of forged passages to the (already forged) pseudo-Grebner prophecy in this pamphlet of 1659 reveals that the editors of prophecies continued to alter the content of their source texts to enhance their contemporary applicability in the era of print, when these unscrupulous practices could not have been expected to avoid detection. This suggests that such editors did not rely on the existence of credulous consumers. Perhaps they instead expected their readers to treat purported prophecies in the manner advocated by George Wither in *Prosopopæia Britannica*: to acknowledge their obvious or probable spuriousness but to ‘make [...] use’ of such texts nonetheless in cases where they proved a useful vehicle for the discussion of current affairs.<sup>4</sup> In his February 1661 letter to Ashmole, Lilly declared it the task of the prophetic expositor and editor to ‘humor the people’.<sup>5</sup> Scholars of early modern political prophecy have often echoed his assessment of the commonalty as apt to regard prophecies with credulous reverence.<sup>6</sup> The present project has aimed to show that the rhetorical manipulability of prophetic texts and traditions was recognised, valued, and exploited by a more diverse public than scholarship has usually allowed.

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<sup>4</sup> Wither, *Prosopopæia Britannica*, sig. B7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 423, fol. 256<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 512; Dobin, *Merlin’s Disciples*, p. 17. With a different focus from that of the present thesis, Tim Thornton has emphasised the heterogeneity of early modern attitudes to prophecy: *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, p. 13.

This thesis has argued that the rural cleric Gervase Smith knowingly altered the original significance of a Marian political prophecy in 1606 to speculate on the fate of the Jacobean government. It has analysed Jacobean plays that alerted their audiences to the artificiality of various arguments in whose support prophecies were cited. ‘Balaam’s Asse’, the apocalyptic treatise by the Catholic former lawyer John Williams, has been treated both as an example of biased scriptural exegesis and as a shrewd exposure of that practice as employed by King James in the ‘Monitory Preface’. The prosecution and execution of Williams have been found to exemplify the creative official interpretation of the treason law to police unofficial prophetic speculation on political themes. The study of the purported prophecies that circulated in manuscript towards the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War has shown that English consumers of continental news accounted these texts valuable contributions to the discussion of current events, even as they overtly dismissed them as old wives’ tales. Finally, this thesis has investigated how propagandist editors of prophecies exploited the rhetorical affordances of these texts in print in the mid-seventeenth century.

A commitment to archival research has enabled this project to trace some of the rhetorical sleights whereby editors and interpreters of old prophecies applied these texts to new circumstances. It has also enabled fresh scholarly light to be shed on the hitherto marginal episode of the delivery of the prophetic treatise ‘Balaam’s Asse’ to Whitehall. Avenues for future research exist in the continental manuscript collections that have largely fallen outside the scope of this thesis. The exchange of prophecies between England and the continent during the period covered by Chapter Three, for example, warrants further investigation.

The findings of this thesis are relevant to several areas of early modern studies. The analysis of the adaptation and reinterpretation of prophetic texts offers

fresh insights into the '[b]reaking and remaking [of] sources' by early modern antiquarians.<sup>7</sup> Letters delivered inside apples and prophecies allegedly buried inside leaden hearts suggest lines of enquiry for studies of the material text. 'Balaam's Asse' and the manuscript-circulated prophecies of the late Jacobean era will interest scholars of early seventeenth-century apocalypticism and protest literature alike.

This thesis contributes to knowledge of the political prophecy in England in a period that has received comparatively little attention in the scholarship on that topic. Previous work has portrayed 'slippery and polysemic' prophecy as an ungovernable form that 'betrayed' the faith of its interpreters.<sup>8</sup> The present study, by contrast, has foregrounded the phenomenon of prophetic rhetoric: the manipulation of prophetic texts and traditions in the service of argument. It has explored how this phenomenon is reflected, and reflected upon, in a wide range of archival and literary sources from a period delimited by the accession of King James I and the restoration of the English monarchy under his grandson, Charles II.

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<sup>7</sup> Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples*, pp. 17, 22.

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per homines in terra  
et bene volentes et in  
multis Reges et terram  
per hanc papa perhibet.

non in illis quibusdam  
a papa antea perhibet

Archi v. 18

et facit hanc meam et mittit meam in  
vniuersam de spiritu meo et propitiam.

11 Regis Leo, fuit affinis a plancie in desertum vbi pax et pascua  
et festi, sed docuerunt illum vbi videt qua scripsit hanc prima dicitur.

12 Et interim adueniens et Rex meus quod uigilantissime plectitur o homo arguibile  
in ego quidem nisi id tempus, et aliis, hoc protinus igno, dominum hoc meum,  
morum nullam inuoluntate enim ab eorum, uel ego que, rei potius fuisse metropolitano,  
13 Apostolica in eandem inuoluntate et mandacio emanant, et de alio ad quosdam homines  
quosdam tunc inuoluntate et mandacio emanant, Casse igitur o Rex meus de Episcopo illo  
14 faciente, da enim inuoluntate facientes, tangunt de fete laborat Argus postquam  
nam quas ille inuoluntate inuoluntate, hoc hoc ad populum legitimum inuoluntate, ita in  
afflicto pene inuoluntate, vbi in inuoluntate illo inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 Baldono vno illo inuoluntate et omni exceptione maiore modo in hanc inuoluntate  
16 concurrens de, quorum inuoluntate inuoluntate, quoniam aera populari inuoluntate  
nullam inuoluntate, enim inuoluntate se erunt, vbi inuoluntate, ora inuoluntate  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Sed non dormiat nec dormit qui custodit fideles. Sicut ego pater o rex  
12 meus per hanc inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

Sed in eorum inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
11 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
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19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 excluditur interuentus Sylligos et Anna, quorum dicitur persequitur, sine inter-  
retas simul tempore distinctissima non admittit, ita in hoc ego et inuoluntate inuoluntate  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
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18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

Et sic finit peruenit in Antiochia temporibus, qualiter cadit hoc inuoluntate  
11 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Sed valeat hoc tantum, cum te o rex meus, vult deus ego hoc hanc de tempore  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Ergo ad te Regem meum et inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 sunt sanguinem (sicut quod credo sine culpa sua) fundato) etiam breve  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Perpende etiam o Rex meus propter lapsum teipsum offensa, quod cum neq. odio  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Desire igitur o rex meus de vindicta vltimis cogitare, aut quo Supplicij genere  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

11 Valeat igitur feliciter Rex meus  
12 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
13 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
14 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
15 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
16 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
17 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
18 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
19 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum  
20 inuoluntate modo inuoluntate inuoluntate, et hoc inuoluntate, obfandi h in eorum

The letter found in the  
Apple, Novemb. 5. 1613.

In signissimo Dno meo Jacobo  
Regi

Male sit succedat que audet  
huc hoc Jacobo regi inuoluntate  
aperire.

Figure 1 Lincolnshire Archives, MS 8ANC7/154: 'The letter found in the Apple, November 5 1613'

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## *Appendix*

### **Bodl., MS Rawl. C.813, fol. 166: The Medbourne prophecy**

[*recto*]

///The Prophetie of MERVEY or MARLIN as found in Holt house  
in a wall written in Welche, in gould letters and translated by Owin  
Floyde, and brought by John De Kerbye Lord of Holt which translation  
is this vnder written, out of Latyne by me Thomas Gee.///

There shalbe fro a king of England, out of his loynes, in the North, a Prince borne  
with a fleshe mould on him in fourme of a Lyon. He is chosen of God for his  
Annoynted to keepe his comaundement. He is Gods good Shepherd God giueth him  
lawes and Prophettes to gouerne and teach his flocke in Iesu Christe the sonne of God  
5 for their Saluation, by his owne writing which is \a/ diuine kind of Prophetie  
thoroughout the whole scripture, and euery day some Prophetie or odyr is fulfilled  
and shalbe to the worldes end. This Kingly Lyon shall come in like a Lame, full of  
Peace and slowe to wrathe and establish the Lawes for the gouernement of his pepill.  
They shall not knowe his Kingly power, his wisdome is greate and aboue his lawes, to  
10 raise any of his people to his vse and pull downe att his will and pleasure. They shall  
murmure against him and after escape greate and fearefull dangers and be called of  
his pepyll a Britaine King. Many strang wonders shalbe heard and seene in the fower  
Elementes to forwarne and tell. Great warres shalbe for the truth of Godes word, and  
many shall flye to thee for that which thou art chosen. Bee mercifull vnto thy pepyll,  
15 and lett hem labor in thy vineyard, to that which thy Prophettes shall teache them, to  
the glory of God that made both hyuen and earth. Peace is in this Lame, for he shall  
giue waye to the pepyll of his land, that is taught by false Prophettes to goe and fight.  
Note them there ground of Religion is blood, by the suggestion of the Deuill, and to  
deuoure thy seede and thee O King. Doe nothinge hastily, but let hem <h> be wed out  
20 of thy Garden. Thy Palme shall shewe his victorie er winter be gon, thy ioyfull  
tydings of Sommer. God blesseth the pepyll in a land which is part of a nodyr kinges  
right, their porcion shalbe warrs both by Sea and land, they shalbe as a walle of Brase

vnto thy kingdome. They shall saue thy seide, in them thou art beloued. Ioine thy loue  
with theirs for they doe ylde thee all Earthely seruice, and shall offer Tribute to be  
25 their king. Refuse not them yf noe tribute thou takest nor to be their king

///For if that thou doest them forgoe  
woe falleth to thee, or thine, and manie moe.///

Thy seide shall Trauell, and warrs shalbe. A bold wyuar shalbe inforced to complaine  
to the Lyon his Lord. The Lyon is a mercifull king and a right Iudg and will Restore.  
30 Stoute when he is moued to wrath. God wilbe knowne as he hath Created man after  
his owne Image to serue him with an vpright hart. Soe with his worde he made all  
thinges in heauen aboue, and in the earth beneath and the water vnder the earth, for  
the vse of man. Not that man should imboulden himselfe into the secrettes of his  
Diuine power, of the least thing that God hath made. For example man behold thy  
35 selfe, or any thing which hath lief in yt, and there thou shalt see the wonderfull  
werkmanshipp of God, and what God hath giuen man besides all odyr his Creatures  
Sence Reason Feilling Seeing hearing Speekeing Tasting Smelling Thinking  
Remembring discourseing and Infinite mocions besides which is exercised in mans  
bodie, and most admirable in order doe receiue their beginninge from a vnitie and  
40 indiuisible substance in man called the Soule, after this life to liue for euer with Christ  
Jesus that keepeth his Comaundement, and not anie <that> thing that hath lief the like,  
but only man. Here is Gods almightie power. God hath giuen power to his Lyon to be  
a king ouer many Nacions serue him

[*verso*]

and blessed shall his daies be in the <Lord> Land to the wonder of all pepyll. In his  
45 latter age the Lyon and the Eagle worketh and Religion shall flourish on both sides.  
The Lyon shall giue way to the Eagle and his Prophettes to gader home his lost one.  
Deferr not tyme with thy lord and God, and wash him cleane fro all his spottes to the  
eye of the world, that God his Redimer may be glorified. This kingly Lyon shalbe  
stirred vp and shall rebuke the Eagle, and bring him in Subieccion, but a people that  
50 doe know their God shalbe strong, be not afraide nedyr doubt, for god is our guide,  
for that, that is determind shalbe done, that all the earth may be refreshed as he hath  
declared to his seruantes his Prophettes. Feare God and giue glory to him for the  
houre of his Iudgment is come and worship him that made heauen and earth the Seas  
and the Fountaines of wayters. The Lyons seide is blessed in the woeman like vnto the

55 Oliue tree, she shall mourne and be comforted and such as doe wickedly against the  
Couenant of God, the Lyon shall ouercome them by gile and spare not any, his  
Iudgment shall come on them, for he shall magnifie himselfe aboue all. In his estate  
<all> shall he honor the God of Forces, and a god whom his fathers knewe not. The  
Eagle shall warr with the Lyon, and the Lame shall ouercome him, for he is Lord of  
60 lordes and king of kinges, and they that are with him are called and chosen, and  
faithfull. Praise our God allyee his seruantes and yee that feare him both smale and  
greate.

I *///Thomas Gee///* fond this Prophecie in *///Medborne Church///*  
in a hole in the Alter, written in Latyne translated by  
Owin Floyd scholemaster there. Of this newe fangle  
of presumption take heede. The Latyn of this Prophecie  
is in this booke alsoe. I was Schoolemaster and Curate  
there it is in the holy Church all.

### Notes

1. **Lines 7, 16, 59:** ‘Lame’ = ‘Lamb’
2. **Lines 14-15:** Possible reference to Matthew 20.1-16, the parable of the workers in the vineyard
3. **Lines 49-50,** ‘a people that doe know their God shalbe strong’: taken from Daniel 11.32
4. **Lines 52-54,** ‘Feare God [...] that made heauen and earth the Seas and the Fountaines of wayters’: taken from Revelation 14.7
5. **Lines 57-58,** ‘In his estate shall he honor [...] a god whom his fathers knewe not’: taken from Daniel 11.38
6. **Lines 59-61,** ‘the Lame shall ouercome [...] and they that are with him are called and chosen, and faithfull’: taken from Revelation 17.14
7. **Lines 61-62,** ‘Praise our God allyee his seruantes and yee that feare him both smale and greate’: taken from Revelation 19.5

### Transcription conventions

1. Semi-diplomatic transcription
2. Raised letters lowered, contractions expanded, and supplied letters italicised
3. <xxx> = scribally deleted text
4. \xxx/ = text inserted by the scribe either between the lines or in the margins
5. Lineation not retained; line numbers supplied editorially
6. Ampersand silently replaced by ‘and’; terminal -es graph by ‘es’; fossil thorn by ‘th’
7. *///xxx///* = text in italic script

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Eng. Poet.	<i>c.</i> 50	Poetical miscellany composed in the second quarter of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century; owned by Peter Daniell of Oxford
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Rawl. C	813	Poems, prophecies; 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> century (Welles anthology)
Rawl. D	398	Poems, tracts collected by Thomas Hearne, 17 <sup>th</sup> century
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Rawl. Poet.	26	Verse and prose miscellany, <i>c.</i> 1615-60
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249 John Harington's epigrams: presentation copy gifted to Prince Henry, 19 June 1605

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