

Chapter 13

Publishing *King Lear* (1608) at the Sign of the Pied Bull

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A subject of ongoing debate, contention, and revision, the publication of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in 1608 has divided textual scholars seeking to understand the text's provenance and the substantive differences between the quarto and folio versions of the play. Accounts have often concentrated on the *printing* process, undertaken by the workshop of Nicholas Okes, and how it shaped the textual state of the first quarto, an edition that has sometimes been derided as one of the period's worst printed.¹ Limited attention, however, has been paid to the publisher of *King Lear* – Nathaniel Butter. As Peter Blayney outlines, the publisher was 'the prime mover' in the early modern book trade, responsible for acquiring the text, paying for its manufacture, and often for selling the copies wholesale (to other booksellers) and retail (to individual book buyers). It was, as Blayney clarifies, 'the publisher, not the [trade] printer, who decided that the text should be made public'.² Butter made this decision for *King Lear*. He and his bookshop at the Sign of the Pied Bull near St Austin's Gate in Paul's Churchyard also became a permanent part of *King Lear* through the playbook's title-page imprint. Although books could be bought and traded throughout London and, indeed, across the country, Butter's bookshop – and, therefore, Paul's Churchyard – were a part of *King Lear* wherever it went, introducing a web of cultural and political associations that could shape the experiences of readers.

¹ See, for example, Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of 'King Lear' and their Origins, Volume I: Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Brian Vickers, *The One 'King Lear'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

² Peter W. M. Blayney, 'The Publication of Playbooks', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 383-422 (p. 391).

Rather than concentrating on Okes as the printer of *King Lear*, this chapter prioritises Butter as the play's publisher-bookseller, who (along with John Busby) entered the play in the Stationers' Register on 26 November 1607. The fact that Busby is not named in the title-page imprint for any of the editions and that the next appearance of *King Lear* in the Register is part of a transfer entry from Butter to Miles Flesher on 21 May 1639 suggests that it was Butter who acted as its main publisher.³ By focusing on Butter, this chapter asks why *King Lear* was published in 1608, how Butter "read" the play, and how the environment of St Paul's Churchyard contributed to its publication. It shows how Butter helped to construct the identity of St Austin's Gate through his publications, which favour politically invested subjects with strong Protestant sympathies, and, in turn, how he was influenced by his surroundings – particularly the neighbouring bookshop of Matthew Law at the Sign of the Fox, which specialised in royal propaganda. Paul's Churchyard is, to draw on Laura Varnam's discussion in this volume, 'heterotopic': it involves the contiguity and interplay of different kinds of spaces. It is a site for worship and the propagation of royal proclamations, and it is also a commercial environment that produces accounts of recent events, sermons, plays, and entertainments that create a textual and physical space for "non-elite" participation in political matters – a process that encapsulates Butter's primary publishing strategy. Critics, including Callan Davies in this volume, profitably consider the impact of the playhouse environment on early modern drama. This chapter expands on this avenue of research by considering the *publisher's bookshop* and how this setting informed the selection of plays for publication, as well as disclosing and directing specific readings.

Nathaniel Butter was born into the book trade: his father (Thomas Butter, active 1576-1590), mother (Joan Butter, later Newbery, active 1590-1617), and stepfather (John Newbery,

³ See Gerald D. Johnson's assessment of Busby's practices and his actual involvement in the publication of texts with which he was associated: 'John Busby and the Stationers' Trade, 1590-1612', *The Library*, 6th ser., 7.1 (1985), 1-15.

active 1594-1603) were stationers and they all owned bookshops in and around St Paul's Churchyard.⁴ Butter was admitted to the Stationers' Company on 20 February 1604 and, until his death in 1664, he worked near St Austin's Gate in the south-east corner of the precinct. His earlier imprints specify a location in Watling Street under St Austin's Church (just outside the Churchyard); from 1605, his imprints start to locate his bookshop at the Sign of the Pied Bull at or near St Austin's Gate. This part of the Churchyard did not contain many bookshops. According to the *STC*, only Butter and Law operated regularly in this area between 1605 and 1629, meaning that St Austin's Gate was largely characterised by their publications.⁵ As a long-standing resident and bookseller, Butter became a recognisable figure: he is satirised in Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* as a 'decay'd Stationer', who was 'True Paules bred'.⁶ Butter's popular reputation was, as Kirsty Rolfe examines in this volume, fuelled by his involvement in the publication of newsbooks during the 1620s and 1630s.⁷ Beginning in 1621–22, and in regular partnership with Nicholas Bourne from 1624, Butter was among the first serial news publishers in England, and reported predominantly on the events of the Thirty Years' War.⁸ His newsbooks were unmistakably partisan, expressing support for the Protestant cause. Some even featured the coat of arms of Frederick V, the Elector Palatine (and James I's son-in-law), who was the figurehead of the Protestant cause in the conflict.⁹ Butter's specialism in Protestant

⁴ A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (eds), *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*, 2nd edn rev. and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and K. F. Pantzer, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976-91), III (1991), pp. 33-35, 123-24. Subsequently referred to as the *STC*.

⁵ The other stationer's name connected, during this time, with the south-east corner of Paul's Churchyard is Ellis Bache, who is identified in the imprint of only one publication (*STC* 12770, 1610), itself a reissue of a text published by Bourne and Rockit (*STC* 12769). *STC*, III, p. 246.

⁶ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of Newes* (London, 1631; *STC* 14753.5), Bb1^v.

⁷ See also Leona Rostenberg, 'Nathaniel Butter and Nicholas Bourne, First "Masters of the Staple"', *The Library*, 5th ser., 12.1 (1957), 23-33.

⁸ Folke Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620-1642* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1952), pp. 18-27.

⁹ See *The certaine Newes of this present weeke [23 August 1622]* (London, 1622; *STC* 18507.72), A2^v.

news with an international flavour was likely informed by the Churchyard as a site for trading, translating, and disseminating news from the continent; by the predicted sympathies of his readers; and by the symbolic role of the cathedral as an environment that authorises Protestant agendas.¹⁰

For his practices in news publication, Butter was satirised by other writers. Jonson presents him as an unscrupulous manufacturer of news, a master of the staple who ‘knowes Newes well, can sort and ranke ‘hem [...] And for a need can make ‘hem’.¹¹ In his ‘Continved Inquisition Against Paper-Persecutors’ (1625), Abraham Holland, capitalising on the humorous potential of Butter’s last name, condemns the stationer for being a ‘paper spoiler’ who publishes false reports:

[...] But to behold the wals
Butter’d with weekly Newes compos’d in Pauls,
By some Decaied Captaine, or those Rooks,
Whose hungry braines compile prodigious Books,
[...]
To see such Batter euerie weeke besmeare
Each publike post, and Church dore, and to heare
These shamefull lies, would make a man, in spight
Of Nature, turne Satyrist, and write
Reuenging lines, against these shamelesse men,
Who thus torment both Paper, Presse, and Pen.
Th’Impostors that these Trumperies doe vtter,
Are A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and (---)¹²

The reader is left to complete the line, but the conclusion is obvious: ‘Butter’, the Churchyard’s most recognisable news publisher, is the focus of the satire. Holland’s text also offers a vivid account of Paul’s Churchyard. As well as being the centre of London’s book trade, it was one

¹⁰ For the Protestant leanings of Butter’s readers, see Jayne E. E. Boys, *London’s News Press and the Thirty Years War* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), p. 153.

¹¹ Jonson, Bb1^v.

¹² ‘A. H.’ [Abraham Holland], ‘A Continved Inquisition against Paper-Persecutors’, in ‘I. D.’ [John Davies of Hereford], *A Scovrge for Paper-Persecutors* (London, 1625; STC 6340), A3^v-A4^r. This is a reissue with a cancel title page of the 1624 edition (STC 6339.5). ‘A. H.’ is sometimes identified with Abraham Hartwell.

of the main gathering places for acquiring news, and Holland's description captures something of the visual cacophony of title pages pasted as advertisements on '[e]ach publike post and Church dore' around St Austin's Gate.¹³ Also considered in this volume by Benjamin King-Cox and Daniel Starza Smith, these title pages underscore the ubiquity of trading and exchange within this cultural space. They function collectively as a map for the area: the imprints contain bookseller addresses that connect texts with physical locations and help to characterise certain parts of the Churchyard – especially when stationers in a given area specialised in similar texts. Butter seems to be physically part of the Churchyard – the walls are 'Butter'd' and 'Batter[ed]' with him – and his bookshop emerges as a kind of performance space that develops his popular reputation and authorises topical readings.

Butter's investment in current events is clear through his role (and notoriety) as a publisher of news during the 1620s and 1630s; however, it can also be detected from the beginning of his career. After the exposure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, Butter published a number of texts, such as *The Divell of the Vault* (1606; STC 12568), that reflected on the attempted regicide and emphasised the Catholicism of the conspirators. His interest in international religio-political events is also witnessed in early publications, such as *The Iesuites play at Lyons* (1607), which is described as an eye-witness account of a play performed by a group of Jesuits in 'August last past' that resulted in the providential 'destruction of the Actors'.¹⁴ The pamphlet contains an unsigned address 'To the Reader', which may have been contributed by Butter, and presents the text as a warning to readers that they 'fall not into the presumption into which these Iesuites and their Disciples run headlong'.¹⁵ Butter also published new plays based on the lives of Tudor monarchs that celebrate England's role in

¹³ For the use of title pages as advertisements, see Tiffany Stern, "'On each Wall and Corner Poast": Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London', *English Literary Renaissance*, 36 (2006), 57-89.

¹⁴ 'R. S.', *The Iesuites play at Lyons* (London, 1607; STC 21513.5), A2^r.

¹⁵ *Iesuites*, A3^r.

advancing a Protestant cause and include Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me* (1605), Thomas Heywood's *1 and 2 If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (1605, 1606) and Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1607). These plays, as Teresa Grant considers, highlight the "presentness" of the Tudor past and how it can be applied to a reformist agenda in the Jacobean present and future.¹⁶ A contrastive analysis of Butter's publications suggests that his bookshop promoted a broad brand of Protestantism that had more interest in politically inflected applications with an eye to matters of national and international stability, than specific theological distinctions.¹⁷ Unlike James I, who pursued a policy of religious toleration and aimed to unite Protestant and Catholic conformists, Butter's publications take a hard line against all Catholics, especially when political issues were at stake. They sometimes proved contentious: in 1620, when James was pursuing a pacifist policy with Spain, Butter published a pamphlet describing Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and the new Habsburg King of Bohemia, as 'a Bastard, borne of more then an Illegittimate, yea of an execrable Mariage'.¹⁸ Both Butter and his printer, William Stansby, were imprisoned. What this brief survey aims to show, in other words, is that Butter's publications contributed to the making of "publics", of textual and physical spaces that fostered a "popular", non-elite interest in politics that was orientated towards the future and was distinct from – or at least coexistent with – monarchical

¹⁶ Teresa Grant, 'History in the Making: The Case of Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me* (1604/5)', in *English Historical Drama, 1500-1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, ed. by Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 125-57 (pp. 135-36). See also Varnam's chapter in this volume in relation to the "presentness" of the pagan past.

¹⁷ See, for example, an emphasis on the political repercussions of Catholic influence in Thomas Bell's *The Downefall of Poperie* (London, 1604; STC 1818.5), *ii^v and Daniel Tilenus's *True Copy of two Letters [...] Wherein the principall poynts in controuersie with the Papists, are leanedly and fully confuted* (London, 1605; STC 24072), A2^v.

¹⁸ *A Plaine Demonstration of the Vnlawfvl Svccession of the Now Emperovr Ferdinand the Second* ('the Hage' [i.e. London], 1620; STC 10814), ¶3^v.

and elite discourses.¹⁹ Butter's transactional spaces include his printed texts and bookshop at St Austin's Gate, but similar exchanges took place throughout the precinct of St Paul's – in its commercial theatre, as considered by Davies in this volume, and in its wider book trade, as considered by King-Cox and Starza Smith.

Butter's publishing specialism in texts that engaged with contemporary political and religious issues suggests a way of reading *King Lear* and understanding the reasons for its publication in 1608. Previous critics have examined the topicality of Shakespeare's play and the ways in which it touches on Jacobean political debates, such as the union of England and Scotland.²⁰ However, Butter's significant role in the quarto's publication – as the individual who actually selected and invested in *King Lear* – has not been recognised. As Zachary Lesser argues, publishers were, in a sense, the first readers of a text: part of the publishing process involved speculating on a text's meaning for consumers.²¹ For Butter, *King Lear* is a text that explores pressing issues of kingdom division and sovereign authority through a dramatisation of early British history, drawing on chronicle accounts of the legendary monarch Leir, who was said to have ruled in the eighth century BCE. Reading *Lear* through Butter's agenda helps us to understand why this play might have been published in the first place. Although Butter's decision about which texts to invest in was necessarily controlled by his access to them, he still took an active role in choosing which available texts to publish. *King Lear* may have appeared as a quarto edition in 1608 because its application to the ongoing union debate appealed to

¹⁹ See Marlene Eberhart, Amy Scott, and Paul Yachnin, 'Introduction', in *Forms of Association: Making Publics in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Paul Yachnin and Marlene Eberhart (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), pp. 1-16 (p. 5).

²⁰ See, for example, Richard Dutton, '*King Lear*, *The Triumphs of Reunited Britannia*, and "The Matter of Britain"', *Literature and History*, 12.2 (1986), 139-51; Philip Schwyzer, 'The Jacobean Union Controversy and *King Lear*', in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. by Glen Burgess, Rowland Wymer and Jason Lawrence (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 34-47.

²¹ Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chp. 1.

Butter and was one of the main ways in which it was read and understood by him and, potentially, by its early readers. Like Butter's Tudor histories, *King Lear* underscores the utility of the past – in this case the legendary British past, which was appropriated by James I on his accession in 1603, but was also, for example, a vital part of the civic history of London. It was a past that could complement and also act independently of discourses authorised by the monarch.²² By paying attention to the book trade in these histories and their publishers' strategies, a 'creative interplay between official and non-official discourses', to use Andy Wood's phrase, can be witnessed.²³

When James I succeeded to the English throne, England and Scotland became united under the same reigning monarch, while remaining politically and economically independent. James was, however, keen to make provisions for statutory unification, which involved legal reforms, the naturalisation of the *post-nati*, and the adoption of a new Royal Style.²⁴ James made his first public comment on the 'union of the two Realmes' through a royal proclamation on 19 May 1603, expressing his desire that 'with all conuenient diligence' the 'happy Union should bee perfected'.²⁵ However, his plans proved controversial, dominating political debates between 1604 and 1608 – when *King Lear* was published. James felt parliament's opposition to union infringed on his royal prerogative and he antagonised the Houses further by resorting to a royal proclamation to announce his new Royal Style, which was a major source of contention in the debates. On 20 October 1604, James declared that he would 'discontinue the

²² For example, Anthony Munday's *Triumphs of Re-united Britannia* (London, 1605; STC 18279) connects legendary British history to James's accession, but also highlights its importance for the city's Merchant Taylors, who paid for this pageant celebrating the election of a new Lord Mayor.

²³ Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 21.

²⁴ On the importance of the union question upon James's accession, see Jenny Wormald, 'The Creation of Britain: Multiple Kingdoms or Core and Colonies?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1992), 175-94.

²⁵ James I, 'By the King [19 May 1603]' (London, 1603; STC 8314), 1 page.

diuided names of England and Scotland' and would assume 'by Our absolute power' the 'Name and Stile of King of Great Brittain, France, and Ireland'.²⁶

James's promotion of 'Britain' as the preferred collective name for the countries over which he reigned was not a new styling. It is recorded in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (and subsequent medieval and Tudor chronicles) as the earliest name for the whole island. To promote his agenda, James drew extensively on chronicle accounts of ancient British history, which provided a precedent for union through the reigns of monarchs such as Brutus, Leir, and Lud. In his speeches to Parliament (which were also published and made available to the public), James claimed that he 'came from the loines of your ancient Kings' and that the union of the houses of York and Lancaster was 'nothing comparable to the Vnion of two ancient & famous Kingdoms, which is [...] annexed to my Person'.²⁷ Although the historicity of these accounts of Britain's pre-Christian past, which traced the nation's heritage back to its Trojan founder, Brutus, was being progressively challenged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the question of their veracity was not crucial for their application to the union debates, which aimed instead, as Philip Schwyzer observes, to encourage people to 'start thinking and identifying as Britons'.²⁸ As well as providing a precedent for union, these accounts also provided a warning: both Brutus and Leir divided their united kingdoms amongst their successors, actions that led to disorder and civil war. When James's *Basilikon Doron* was published in England in 1603, it contained several important additions to the original 1599 edition, which had been published in Edinburgh when Elizabeth I was still Queen of England. In both editions, James warns against dividing a kingdom, as it will 'leauue the seede of diuision and discord among your posteritie'. The 1603 edition adds a specific reference to early British

²⁶ James I, 'By the King [20 October 1604]' (London, 1604; STC 8361), pp. 2-3.

²⁷ James I, *His Maiesties Speech to Both the Houses of Parliament* [31 March 1607] (London, 1607; STC 14395), D2^v; *The Kings Maiesties Speech* [19 March 1604] (London, 1604; STC 14390), A4^v.

²⁸ Schwyzer, p. 35.

history by continuing the line: ‘as befel to this Ile[,] by the diuision & assignement therof, to the three sonnes of Brutus[:] Locrine, Albanact, and Camber’.²⁹ These histories offered both a model for union and a warning against division, aspects which were used by James to promote the re-union of England and Scotland that he saw as being ‘confirmed in me’.³⁰

A considerable number of early Jacobean performances and publications also explored the topical connection between British history and the union debate, including those invested in by Butter. In 1606, for example, Butter published John Davies of Hereford’s *Bien Venu*, which is ostensibly a celebration of King Christian IV of Denmark’s visit to England in July 1606. However, its language and allusions suggest an additional application: England and Scotland’s union. Davies’s ottava rima poem claims to memorialise the ‘union’ of James and Christian, effected through Queen Anne (who was the Danish king’s sister), but it is also clearly intended to evoke the connection between England and Scotland and their conjunction under James’s rule:

O VNION! that enclaspest in thyne armes,
 All that in Heau’n and Earth is great, or good,
 (Thou Heau’nly Harbour from all earthly harmes)
 Thou Damm, that straist the Streames of humane bloud)
 What humane Heart but (maugre Hatreds Charms)
 Will not desire thee, as the Angells food?
 Sith through thy powr thou makst mans powr so strong
 As not to offer, much lesse suffer wrong.³¹

This extended passage contains no direct references to Britain and Denmark, a pattern which recurs throughout the poem. Davies celebrates the benefits of ‘one vnited Might’ that provides shelter from ‘all earthly harmes’ using non-specific language that could be applied to different contexts.³² Adding to the impression that Davies intends to recall England and Scotland’s

²⁹ James I, *Basilikon Doron* (London, 1603; STC 14353), H2^r. Cf. 1599 edition (STC 14348), O2^r.

³⁰ *Speech* [19 March 1604], A4^v.

³¹ John Davies of Hereford, *Bien Venu* (London, 1606; STC 6329), A4^r.

³² Davies, C4^r.

union, the poem draws attention to Britain's united past and James's position as a new leader who restores and solidifies this unity:

Thou Royall Seat of farre renowned Kings,
(Britaines great Monarks, Kings of great Britaine,
Whose name from LVD, thy much inlarger Springs).³³

King Lud was a legendary pre-Roman monarch, who was described in chronicle accounts as having refortified London.³⁴ He was not only an important figure for James, but also for London's civic history: there was, for example, a statue of Lud and his sons at the city's Ludgate – the nearest gate to St Paul's. These legendary histories and figures made, as John Stow outlines in his revised *Survey of London* (1603), 'the first foundation of Cities more honourable, more sacred, and as it were of greater maiestie'.³⁵ They were not dependent on the Stuart king's appropriation of them – although Butter seems to have invested in these histories because of their new "currency".³⁶ Davies's poem is attentive to James's use of the ancient past refocused for a Jacobean political present and it consistently appropriates the material and rhetoric of pro-union accounts, such as John Thornborough's *The Joiefyll and Blessed Revniting* [c. 1605; STC 24036]. Indeed, Davies, a poet and writing master, had connections to the Jacobean court. He worked as a handwriting instructor for Prince Henry, as well as noble families, including the Percys, the Herberts, and the Pembrokes, a connection that may have informed his treatment of the royal visit and its clear application to the union of England and Scotland.³⁷

³³ Davies, B3^v.

³⁴ John Stow, *A Svrvey of London* (London, 1603; STC 23343), B1^r.

³⁵ Stow, B1^r.

³⁶ See also David M. Bergeron, 'King James's Civic Pageant and Parliamentary Speech in March 1604', *Albion*, 34.2 (2002), 213-31, who suggests that James's use of British history was in fact inspired by the civic pageant in 1604 that was staged to mark his accession and which took place four days before his first speech to parliament.

³⁷ P. J. Finkelpearl, 'Davies, John (1564/5-1618)', *ODNB* (September 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7244>> [accessed 12 March 2019].

Butter's publication of *Bien Venu*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register on 29 July 1606, capitalises on the newsworthy quality of both the royal visit and the union debates. The title page presents the text as: 'Bien Venv. / Great Britaines | Welcome to Hir Greate | Friendes, and Deere Brethren | The Danes.' The largest type is reserved for 'Great Britaines', while 'The Danes' appears in the smallest type, which seems to emphasise Britain's central position in the two unions evoked by the poem. Butter's wider output from this period – published at St Austin's Gate but disseminated outside the precinct – also promotes Britain as a united nation, including Robert Pricket's *The Lord Coke His Speech and Charge* (1607), which celebrates 'vertuous King Iames' as 'the Emperiall Maiesty of great Brittaines Monarchy'.³⁸ Some also commented on continental models of divided or twinned countries, as in Anthony Nixon's *Warres of Swethland*, comprising a 'little Treatise that concerns the designes of two Kingdoms'.³⁹

Within the context of Butter's wider output, his interest in *King Lear* is clear: Shakespeare's play draws on the early British history that was so prominent following James I's succession, but, in contrast to a text like *Bien Venu*, features an account of disintegration, rather than unification. The opening lines of the play launch readers into the midst of a political debate and immediately introduce the issue of kingdom division:

Kent[:] I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany then
Cornwell.

Glost[:] It did all waies seeme so to vs, but now in the diuision of the
kingdomes, it appeares not which of the Dukes he values most, for equalities
are so weighed, that curiositie in neither, can make choise of eithers moytie.⁴⁰

³⁸ Robert Pricket, *The Lord Coke His Speech and Charge* (London, 1607; STC 5492); G1^r.

³⁹ Anthony Nixon, *The Warres of Swethland* (London, 1609; STC 18594), A2^r.

⁴⁰ William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (London, 1608; STC 22292), B1^r. Further references will be given after quotations.

The play's first audiences and readers would probably have noticed a connection between this discussion of division and the Jacobean union debates that made use of ancient British history as both a precedent for union and a warning against division. Indeed, images of division dominate the play. Lear's first action when he appears on stage is to request a map to help illustrate his plan to allocate each of his daughters a section of Britain:

Mean time we will expresse our darker purposes,
The map there; know we have diuided
In three, our kingdome; and tis our first intent,
To shake all cares and busines of our state,
Confirming them on yonger yeares.
(B1^v)

Accompanying Lear's voluntary divesting of his monarchical power, the map is, as John Gillies observes, a 'signal of national decay rather than the celebration of national mystique'.⁴¹ As revealed through the rest of the play's action, the map's boundaries and newly applied lines of division fragment the kingdom. A parallel critique can be seen in James's speech to Parliament in 1607, in which he describes the isle of Britain as a united whole, claiming that its greatness is increased through the removal, rather than the outlining, of internal boundaries: 'For who can set downe the limits of the Borders, but as a Mathematicall line or Idea?'⁴² James presents the 'diusion of the kingdomes' as an unsubstantial and abstract concept. Similarly, as a stage prop, the map in *King Lear* is undescribed and undefined, rendering it ultimately unknowable, especially for readers of the playbook. It draws attention to the arbitrary nature of national divisions, and Lear becomes, in Gillies' phrase, a 'manic cartographer'.⁴³ Underscoring Britain's increasing fragmentation, the play applies the same language introduced in the opening scene to different types of division. The growing animosity between Albany and

⁴¹ John Gillies, 'The scene of cartography in *King Lear*', in *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 109-137 (p. 111).

⁴² *Speech* [31 March 1607], G3^v.

⁴³ Gillies, p. 117.

Cornwall is consistently labelled as a 'division', as is the war between Britain and France, the falling out between Goneril and Regan, and the characters' inner conflicts, represented externally through Edgar's disguise as Tom of Bedlam and internally through Lear's own madness. The play stages a progression from macro to micro levels of disintegration: the kingdom is divided in the opening scene and, shortly before the end, Albany declares 'I am almost ready to dissolve' (L2^v).

While the play is consistently interested in the destruction accompanying various types of division, it does not offer a clear perspective on the issue of kingdom division and how it relates to Jacobean politics. As Schwyzer summarises, 'the play is so cagey and ambiguous on the union question that it admits of flatly contradictory readings'.⁴⁴ *King Lear* can be read as a unionist work: it opens with a discussion of the dukes of Albany and Cornwall, which suggests an immediate connection to James I's court. These titles had been assigned to his two heirs: Prince Charles was created duke of Albany (which was associated with Scotland) at his baptism in 1600, and Prince Henry was created duke of Cornwall in 1603. Through the prominence of these titles, Shakespeare draws attention to questions of *Jacobean* rule, and in Butter's 1608 edition of *King Lear*, Albany is given the play's final lines, which the Folio assigns to Edgar. While it is outside the purposes of this chapter to engage with the provenance of Q1, the allocation of these lines to Albany firmly situates the playbook within contemporary union debates. As Richard Dutton observes in his cautiously pro-union reading, these lines could be seen to position Albany – an individual with Scottish ties – as the re-united nation's next ruler, thus prefiguring James and his sons.⁴⁵ However, the conclusion is far from reassuring, and Shakespeare's departure from the historical narrative would have been apparent to Jacobean audiences and readers, not solely because of the play's unexpected tragic ending,

⁴⁴ Schwyzer, p. 39.

⁴⁵ Dutton, pp. 146-47.

but also for its effective negation of James's genealogy.⁴⁶ As Schwyzer explores in an anti-unionist reading, the chronicle tradition reveals that neither Albany nor Edgar inherit the kingdom. Instead, the monarchical line continues through Cordelia, and her nephews Cunedagius and Marganus.⁴⁷ Shakespeare's rewriting of this history allies Jacobean attempts at promoting an illustrious line of descent, which can be seen in George Owen Harry's royally-sanctioned *Genealogy of the High and Mighty Monarch, James* (1604; STC 12872), with the fragmentation and division that inheres throughout the play. *King Lear* can be read as disrupting the traditional narrative of succession that was central in Jacobean unionist accounts and negating their triumphalism.⁴⁸

However, by focusing on Butter's investment in *King Lear*, it is possible to clarify what this play meant for one of its first (and most important) readers. When Butter's early Jacobean publications are considered collectively, they tend to support unionist readings. *King Lear* demonstrates the dangers of a divided kingdom; *Bien Venu* celebrates the security and 'Heau'nly Harbour' provided by 'one vnited Might'; and Pricket's *The Lord Coke His Speech and Charge* champions the absolute sovereignty of James: 'he is ouer vs the Lords annointed, [...] Vnto his Highnesse then let our liues submission bend'.⁴⁹ Indeed, the title page of *King Lear* prominently advertises the play's performance in front of James I on St Stephen's Night (26 December). While references to royal performances on playbook title pages were a common promotional strategy, this case is particularly significant, as it links the play's dramatisation of British history with James's court and his implicit approval. The phrasing of the performance account strategically heightens the newsworthy quality of the play's royal

⁴⁶ See also Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Matter of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 151-68.

⁴⁷ Schwyzer, pp. 39-43.

⁴⁸ See also Dutton, p. 146. For the rhetoric of unionist accounts, see Bruce R. Galloway and Brian P. Levack (eds), *The Jacobean Union: Six Tracts of 1604* (Edinburgh: Clark Constable, 1985).

⁴⁹ Pricket, C1^v.

connection: it was ‘played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon S. Stephans night’ (A4^r). As Peter Blayney observes, the lack of specificity encourages readers to suppose that the performance happened on 26 December 1607, just before the play reached the bookstalls, whereas it actually took place in 1606.⁵⁰ By advertising its close connection with the Jacobean court and, by extension, with James’s policies, *King Lear* underscores its “currency”, in terms of both its value as a new textual commodity repurposed from the commercial stages and its position as a topical history that appears to have been recently performed at court.

A contrastive analysis of Butter’s output suggests that he did not promote unionist readings to the same extent as he invested in anti-Catholic texts supporting a Protestant agenda, a religio-political orientation that clearly and consistently characterises his publication strategies. However, this emphasis might help to clarify Butter’s reading of *Lear*. Butter’s Protestant publications tend to highlight the importance of the nation’s unity against a common (Catholic) enemy. His publications express little sympathy for either Protestant non-conformists or Catholics – including Jesuits *and* loyalist Catholics.⁵¹ His “brand” of Protestantism is rather vague in terms of theological distinctions and reformist leanings, but it seems firmly linked to ideas of political stability and has an international flavour in its promotion of militant resistance to Catholicism across Europe. Although *King Lear* is theologically plural (despite its allusions to Samuel Harsnett’s *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, 1603), Butter may have read the play as a pre-Christian history brought into a Protestant present that reinforces the political advantages of a united Britain against Catholic influences at home and abroad. And while *King Lear* and *Bien Venu* are closely linked to the histories promoted by James and his union project, Butter cannot be comfortably

⁵⁰ Blayney, *Texts of ‘King Lear’*, p. 83.

⁵¹ Butter published a defence of conformist ministers – John Freeman’s *Apologie for the Conformable Ministers of England, For their Subscription to the present Church Gouernment* (London, 1609; STC 11366.5) – alongside texts that condemned all Catholics, such as Tilenus’s *True Copy* (1605) and Pricket’s *Lord Coke* (1607).

described as a royalist publisher. His publishing strategies are most closely aligned with the Jacobean court when James encouraged unity against a Catholic enemy, seen most clearly in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot. Butter's later publications retain an interest in militant Protestantism and are much less supportive of James's pacifist policies, especially following the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. Considered collectively, his publications reveal and construct multiple publics of non-elite producers and users of history who sometimes read the past in the same way as the monarch, but could also challenge, resist, or qualify these readings.

Butter's bookshop and publications shaped the identity of St Austin's Gate in Paul's Churchyard. His texts were made visually conspicuous through title-page advertisements pasted around the walls, posts, and doors, effectively announcing Butter's interest in topical matters of church and state. Although the entire precinct of St Paul's had a reputation as a social gathering place for acquiring news and engaging in political debate, Butter seems to have been one of its most recognisable personalities. For readers who purchased their copies of *King Lear* directly from him in the bustling, news-saturated hub of Paul's Churchyard, Butter's emerging reputation and the politically inflected Protestantism of his other publications may have encouraged them to see the play as a commentary on a unified Protestant and Jacobean nation. Butter's authorising role and the environment of St Austin's Gate are also evoked through title-page imprints. Not only do they serve a practical function of identifying Butter as the publisher and wholesaler of his texts, they also help to fashion his reputation, situate his publications in a physical landscape, and conjure an image of this setting. These imprints could have interpretative currency for readers, including those who acquired their books elsewhere. While other booksellers in London and across the country would have stocked *King Lear*, Butter was always a part of the material text, his imprint creating a kind of legible space for performing and constructing identities. Indeed, the play's title page contains one of Butter's most detailed imprints: 'Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his

shop in Pauls Church-yard [1] at the signe of the Pide Bull [2] neere St Austins Gate [3]. 1608.’ As outlined in the *STC*, Butter’s imprints rarely contain all three elements of his address.⁵² The 1608 edition of *King Lear* demonstrates a clear interest in advertising Butter’s involvement and in linking the play with Paul’s Churchyard – a setting known for its interest in news and political debate – and, more specifically, with St Austin’s Gate, a small area dominated by Butter’s bookshop and that of his neighbouring bookseller, Matthew Law.

Between 1605 and 1629, Butter and Law were the only “permanent” booksellers operating at St Austin’s Gate and they defined the area as one invested in staunchly political and Protestant debate. Law’s output was closely tied to the Jacobean court, demonstrated especially by the fact that, between 1601 and 1609, he was the exclusive publisher of William Barlow (Bishop of Lincoln from 1608). Barlow was a royal chaplain and leading churchman involved in state politics. He was commissioned to write the official accounts of the rebellion of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, in 1601 (*Sermon preached at Paules Crosse*, 1601; *STC* 1454); the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 (*The Summe and Substance of the Conference*; 1604; *STC* 1456); and the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 (*Sermon Preached at Pavles Crosse*, 1606; *STC* 1455). As Adam Hooks proposes, Law’s early output positions him as ‘an organ of official propaganda’, who bolstered the king’s reputation and authority.⁵³ While Law and Butter share an interest in newsworthy religio-political texts, their connection to James was different. For Law, politics and history were allied to the monarch; for Butter, they could be used for alternative, non-elite discourses in textual and physical spaces – like Paul’s Churchyard – that might supersede sovereign use.

⁵² *STC*, III, p. 34.

⁵³ Adam G. Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare: Biography, Bibliography, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 105.

There is no evidence that the two booksellers directly collaborated on any texts, but their publications probably influenced each other, an exchange that represents a kind of indirect collaboration – over investment and meaning – at St Austin’s Gate. In addition to Barlow’s works, Law was the main publisher of Shakespeare’s English history plays during this period: he produced reprints of *Richard II* (Q4 1608, Q5 1615), *Richard III* (Q4 1605, Q5 1612, Q6 1622, Q7 1629) and *1 Henry IV* (Q4 1604, Q5 1608, Q6 1613, Q7 1622), after acquiring the rights from Andrew Wise, a bookseller at the Sign of the Angel in Paul’s Cross, on 25 June 1603.⁵⁴ The English histories contained prominent title-page attributions to Shakespeare and were his best-selling plays, aspects which possibly shaped Butter’s publishing strategies, including his investment in *King Lear* and *The London Prodigal* – both of which contain prominent attributions to Shakespeare, the latter usually regarded as false. In his publication of Shakespeare’s histories, Law acted independently of the King’s Men and their leading dramatist, as he inherited the rights to these previously printed plays from Wise. It is unclear how Butter acquired his plays – most of which are first editions – and whether Shakespeare and the King’s Men were involved in the publication of *Lear*. The fact that Butter’s plays tend to come from different theatrical companies reveals that, unlike some stationers, such as Wise, Butter did not specialise in plays from one company. He may not have had close contacts with either the King’s Men (who performed *King Lear* and *The London Prodigal*), or the other companies, such as Prince Henry’s Men (who performed *When You See Me You Know Me* and *The Whore of Babylon*) and Queen Anne’s Men (*1 and 2 If You Know Not Me*), to assist in his acquisition of playscripts. Indeed, Heywood implicitly attacked Butter for the poor quality of his ‘corrupt and mangled’ plays that came to press ‘without any [...] direction’, which perhaps indicates that Butter was proactive in securing texts.⁵⁵ While exploring how a play like *King*

⁵⁴ See also Amy Lidster, ‘At the Sign of the Angel: The influence of Andrew Wise on Shakespeare in print’, *Shakespeare Survey* 71 (2018), 242-54.

⁵⁵ See Heywood’s address in *The Rape of Locrine* (London, 1608; STC 13360), A2^r.

Lear came to be published remains a matter of considerable speculation, Butter's practices suggest that he was most interested in how these relatively new commodities from the commercial theatres could respond to his non-dramatic publications, taking part in a cross-genre exchange that favoured politically invested Protestant histories and ensured that plays could be read beyond the theatre and positioned in a new performative space: as printed texts in bookshops.

The fact that six editions of plays advertising their connection to Shakespeare – *I Henry IV* (1604, 1608), *Richard III* (1605), *The London Prodigal* (1605), *Richard II* (1608), and *King Lear* (1608) – were all published at St Austin's Gate between 1603 and 1608 (when only three other "Shakespearean" editions were published elsewhere) reveals that this area of Paul's Churchyard was a central point for Shakespearean publication during the early Jacobean period.⁵⁶ It raises the possibility that Shakespeare's playbooks could be interpreted in geographical and political relation to each other, much as theatrical repertories were responsive to the offerings at different London theatres. For example, Law's 1608 edition of *Richard II* appeared in the same year as Butter's *Lear*. The latter was entered in the Stationers' Register on 26 November 1607 and probably appeared on the bookstalls in early 1608, likely pre-dating the fourth quarto of *Richard II*.⁵⁷ In Law's edition, which consists of two issues containing variant title pages, the 'Parliament Sceane and the deposing of King Richard' is printed for the first time and advertised on the title page of one issue.⁵⁸ The provenance of the Q4 scene is a complex issue: critics are divided over whether it was censored during Elizabeth's reign or

⁵⁶ The only other play by Shakespeare to be printed between 1603 and 1608 was *Hamlet* (Q1 1603; Q2 1604), published and sold by Nicholas Ling (and John Trundle for Q1). Thomas Pavier published *A Yorkshire Tragedy* in 1608 with an attribution to 'W. Shakespeare'.

⁵⁷ Blayney has shown that Okes printed *Lear* between December 1607 and January 1608. See *Texts of 'King Lear'*, pp. 148-50.

⁵⁸ William Shakespeare, *Richard the Second* (London, 1608; STC 22311), A1^r. Further references will be given after quotations.

represents a later addition to the play.⁵⁹ By whatever means Law acquired the new scene and inserted it within his text, what is especially interesting in the context of this chapter is the ways in which this scene encourages a dialectic with Butter's publication of *King Lear* and, through its connection to Law's wider output, a specific political reading that emphasises the authority and prerogative of the monarch in relation to Jacobean union debates.

The Parliament scene is most often discussed in relation to *Elizabethan* politics. Cyndia Susan Clegg offers a persuasive reading of this scene and its possible censorship by proposing a connection to Robert Persons's *Conference About the Next Succession* (1595) and showing how it presents parliament as an agent of deposition.⁶⁰ In the Q4 text, Northumberland, who represents the voice of parliament, requests that Richard publicly read out a list of the commons' complaints:

No more, but that you read
These accusations, and these greuous crimes,
Committed by your person, and your followers,
Against the State and profit of this Land,
That by confessing them, the soules of men
May deeme that you are worthily deposde.
(H2^v)

The scene stages a power negotiation between Richard and his nobles, acting transparently (as they claim) on behalf of parliament and the needs of the people, and requiring Richard 'in common view' to resign his title, so they can 'proceed without suspition' (H1^v). In contrast to Holinshed's account, where, as Clegg identifies, parliament is presented as 'consenting to abdication', Shakespeare's dramatisation shows the commons summoning the king to his deposition.⁶¹ The Q4 scene stages resistance to the monarch and may have provoked

⁵⁹ For a summary of different views, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, "“By the choise and inuitation of al the realme”: *Richard II* and Elizabethan Press Censorship", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.4 (1997), 432-48.

⁶⁰ Clegg, pp. 437-46.

⁶¹ Clegg, p. 443.

Elizabethan censorship, as it seems to support Persons's notorious (and suppressed) account that 'the king was deposed by act of parliament and himselfe conuined of his vnworthy gouernment'.⁶²

The exploration of the role and power of parliament in Q4 resonates with early Jacobean political concerns, an angle that is less often examined by critics. Regardless of whether the scene was written during the Elizabethan or Jacobean period, it first appeared in print in 1608 at a time when James was engaged in increasingly heated debates with his parliament, centring around the issue of union and parliament's right to be an agent of monarchical opposition. James explicitly outlined his views on the respective responsibilities of the king and parliament and, in his 1607 address, suggested the impropriety of the Houses' resistance and its potential for political instability: 'Euery honest man desireth a perfect Vnion [...] If after your so long talke of Vnion in all this long Session of Parliament, yee rise without agreeing vpon any particular; what will the neighbour Princes iudge, whose eyes are all fixed vpon the conclusion of this Action, but that the King is refused in his desire, whereby the Nation should be taxed, and the King disgraced?'⁶³ Significantly, the title page of Law's playbook labels the addition as 'the Parliament Sceane': on a Jacobean publication, this designation has much more application to the ongoing union disputes in parliament, than to a recollection of Elizabethan issues concerning succession. Law's contribution to royal propaganda through an investment in Barlow's works also suggests a way of reading this scene and the play as a whole: parliament's resistance to Richard and its work as an organ of monarchical deposition is emphatically condemned. *Richard II*, with its new addition, offers a vivid account of the divesting and division of monarchical authority with disastrous consequences – and one that,

⁶² [Robert Persons] ('R. Doleman'), *Conference About the Next Svccession to the Crowne of Ingland* ('N.' [i.e. Antwerp], 1594 [i.e. 1595]; STC 19398), V7^r.

⁶³ *Speech* [31 March 1607], C2^v.

in application to Jacobean politics, discredits parliament's opposition to union in line with James's own speeches to the Houses.

Linguistic parallels between *King Lear* and the parliament scene in *Richard II* encourage comparative readings between the plays and their examination of monarchical authority. Throughout, *King Lear* draws on images of negation, nothingness, and undoing.⁶⁴ Lear undoes the union of Britain and divests himself of his monarchical power, leading to his country's and his own destruction. Indeed, of all Shakespeare's plays, *King Lear* records the greatest number of occurrences of 'nothing' and its variants: they are used over thirty times.⁶⁵ The parliament scene in *Richard II* employs a similar rhetoric of negation, as Richard resigns his royal title and power:

I, no no I, for I must nothing bee,
Therefore no no, for I resigne to thee.
Now marke me how I will vndoe my selfe:
I giue this heauie waight from off my head,
And this vnweildie Scepter from my hand.
(H2^r)

Adding to this enactment of resignation, Richard is identified, throughout the inserted scene, by the speech prefix 'Rich.', in contrast to the play's earlier use of 'King', thus staging an additional "textual" deposition. Although patterns in speech prefixes cannot be attributed to a specific publication strategy (and most likely derive from the manuscript source), their presentation in the printed text contributes to a readerly experience that draws attention to Richard's resignation of power and the correspondence with King Lear's (voluntary) divestment, both leading to division and civil war. While it is not my intention to propose that

⁶⁴ For a political reading of 'nothingness' and a summary of critical work on the signification of 'nothing' in *Lear*, see Brian Sheerin, 'Making Use of Nothing: The Sovereignities of *King Lear*', *Studies in Philology*, 110.4 (2013), 789-811 (esp. pp. 791-92).

⁶⁵ Calculated through an *EEBO-TCP* search for 'nothing' in works authored by 'Shakespeare'. After *Othello* (1622), Q4 *Richard II* contains the next greatest number of occurrences (twenty-five, showing an increase in three from the Q1 text). Q4 is not transcribed through *EEBO-TCP*, so the total for this scene has been counted manually.

the parliament scene was added because of its parallels with *King Lear* and Jacobean politics, the simultaneous publication of these two plays in 1608 at neighbouring bookshops establishes interpretative connections between them. In contrast to Law's promotion of royal authority and propaganda that positions parliamentary resistance in starkly negative terms, Butter's publications register more tension in their connection to James I. They privilege a unified Protestant political state that may or may not complement royal policies – although the case of *Lear* seems to have done. While there are important distinctions between Butter's and Law's agendas, the parallels in their early Jacobean publications, rather than their differences, may have been most apparent to readers who encountered *Richard II* and *King Lear* at St Austin's Gate or who imaginatively located and connected the plays through their imprints and attributions.

During the first three decades of the seventeenth century, the book trade at St Austin's Gate was characterised by Butter's and Law's publications. The much-debated first quarto of *King Lear* prominently advertises Shakespeare's authorship, but it also promotes Butter as its publisher, permanently linking his name and reputation to Shakespeare's play and to the environment of Paul's Churchyard. While focusing on Butter does not clarify the provenance of Q1, it highlights the significance of this text as a *book* for early Jacobean readers. Indeed, Butter's edition was the only *King Lear* that readers could purchase until 1623.⁶⁶ The play piqued Butter's interest because it dramatised the chronicle histories that were gaining currency and encouraged an application to Jacobean union debates. It is likely that Butter saw this play as offering a "politic" reading that resonated with his overall output, as well as the publications offered nearby by Law, which collectively created a textual and geographical web that may have shaped readers' responses. An examination of Butter's and Law's practices at St Austin's Gate also reveals wider significance: as publishers, they produced books that could encourage

⁶⁶ Q2 '1608' [i.e. 1619; STC 22293] is substantially derivative from Q1.

topical political dialectics, construct multiple, non-elite “publics” and performance spaces, and reposition commercial drama within a new medium that could be used by a diverse range of consumers.

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