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**'NO NINE DAYS WONDER':  
EMBEDDED PROTESTANT  
NARRATIVES IN EARLY MODERN PROSE  
MURDER PAMPHLETS 1573-1700**

*LYNN ALISON ROBSON BA (HONS), MA*

*DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY*

*UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK*

*DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE*

*LITERARY STUDIES*

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***'From Pamphlets may be learned the Genius of the Age, the Debates of the Learned, the Follies of the Ignorant'***

Myles Davis, *Icon Libellorum or a Critical History of Pamphlets*, 1715

***'As some of the leading actors of history recede from our attention, so an immense supporting cast whom we had supposed to be mere attendants upon this process press themselves forward'***

E.P. Thompson, 'History and Anthropology' in *Persons and Polemics: Historical Essays* (London: Merlin, 1994)

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## ***LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS***

### ***Between pages 30 and 31***

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*Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* (London, 1657)

### ***Between pages 116 and 117***

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*Three Bloodie Murders* (London, 1613)

### ***Between pages 173 and 174:***

Title page: *A pitillesse Mother. That most unnaturally at one time murdered two of her owne children* (London, 1616)

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It would never have been completed without the patience, understanding and unquestioning support of my family.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own work. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.



## ABSTRACT

Prose murder pamphlets first appeared during the final three decades of the sixteenth century and were a successful part of the early modern market for cheap print throughout the seventeenth century. There is a corpus of over 350 extant prose murder pamphlets printed between 1573 and 1700. The literary analysis of murder pamphlets undertaken in this research reveals them as an identifiable genre with recognisable narrative and rhetorical strategies. The Calvinist theology of providence and predestination gave the prose murder pamphlets their distinctive chain-link structure which began with original sin, progressed through sinfulness to murder, condemnation, death and salvation through God's divine grace. The chain-link narrative proved particularly sympathetic to the absorption and promulgation of other Protestant narratives, including those of divine providence, anti-papist propaganda, the control of youth, sodomy, dying, and English historiography. This structure also proposed that murder should be interpreted allegorically, as the narrative pattern was an allegory of an individual's journey through life from the perdition of original sin to the assurance of salvation.

An analysis of the embedded Protestant narratives of the murder pamphlets shows that murder was presented to early modern readers so that it could be scrutinised for its rhetorical, religious and political significance. The representation of murder, therefore, intersected with the religio-political crises and ecclesiastical politics of the seventeenth century. For over a century it carried forward a particular representation of English Protestantism, constructing the reader as an English Protestant 'subject': someone who was a member of the English nation, subject to a monarch and government that should embody godly rule, but who was also an individual Protestant with a godly duty to read and interpret God's purpose. This research demonstrates that although materially fragile, murder pamphlets were culturally robust and a detailed study of them contributes to a more detailed understanding of early modern literary culture.

# NOTES ON CONVENTIONS

## QUOTATIONS

Original spelling and punctuation are left intact except that u/v/w and i/j/y have been modernised.

## CITATIONS

Wherever possible page references to the pamphlets have been given as signature numbers. However, in some of the longer pamphlets occasionally signature numbers disappear or are so erratic that they do not help a reader track down the citation. In these few cases I have given page numbers as references if they have been supplied by the original printer.

When a murder pamphlet is first cited its STC, Wing and/or Thomason number is supplied in a footnote. Thereafter it is referred to in the text by a short title.

A list of extant murder pamphlets is supplied in the Appendix. First, all the pamphlets without named authors are arranged alphabetically by title. They are followed by the few pamphlets that have named authors, listed alphabetically by surname. All the pamphlets that have been read in the course of this research are marked with an asterisk.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BL** British Library
- Bod** Bodleian Library, University of Oxford
- DNB** Stephen, Sir Leslie and Lee, Sir Sidney (eds), *The Dictionary of National Biography From the Earliest Times to 1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917-1922), 22 vols
- ESTC** *English Short Title Catalogue Online database*
- EEBO** *Early English Books Online*
- OED** Oxford English Dictionary
- STC** Pollard, A.W. & Redgrave, S.R. (ed) *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland 1475-1600*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: London Bibliographical Society, 1974), 3 vols
- Wing** Wing, Donald (ed), *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries 1641-1700*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Modern Language Association, 1994), 4 vols.

## Introduction

### *'No Nine Days Wonder':*

### *Cheap Print, Murder and Embedded Protestant Narratives*

At the conclusion of *The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, a pamphlet about a 'wilfull murther' committed in Suffolk in 1620, Thomas Cooper declares that he 'wrote it not for a nine days wonder to vanish like a dreame'.<sup>1</sup> This statement explicitly challenges a critical commonplace about the ephemerality of cheap print: that it was no sooner read than forgotten; that its subject matter was evanescent, and its materiality was fragile.<sup>2</sup> This critical stance originates in the early modern period when it was routine to denigrate 'idle bookes and riffe raffes'<sup>3</sup> with complaints that:

not only Libraries and Shops are full of our putrid papers, but every close stoole and jakes; they serve to put under pies, to lappe spice in, and keep rostmeat from burning.<sup>4</sup>

However, the apparent material disposability of cheap print emphasised by Robert Burton was initially counteracted by contemporary collectors who (for whatever reason) decided that it was worth preserving. In 1640, George Thomason began collecting pamphlets and news items. By his death in 1666, his collection contained 22,158 printed works and was said to encompass every pamphlet issued from the presses between the beginning of the Long Parliament

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<sup>1</sup> STC 5698, p. 62

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories, Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 49; Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 3, 187-9.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. Wheeler (ed), *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James First Keeper of the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), Letter 220, Jan. 1 1612, p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1634), sig. B1r.

and the Restoration of Charles II.<sup>5</sup> Anthony Wood used to browse through the Oxford booksellers buying up ‘penny ballads, and other single sheets, popular songs, pamphlets of sensational murders, hangings, dying speeches, miraculous and monstrous happenings, political events and newsbooks’ and then meticulously cataloguing and annotating them.<sup>6</sup> It appears that Wood was also embarked on something of a rescue mission for, not only did he buy pamphlets, he also picked them up from the places described with such disdain by Robert Burton: from friends, dining halls, local coffee shops, kitchens and privies.<sup>7</sup>

It was not just stationers and antiquarians who were interested in preserving pamphlets. An inventory of a private library taken around 1625 shows that Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey had bequeathed to his grandson, Sir Roger Townshend: ‘The crying murther in 4’ [1624]; ‘Practise of Piety in 8’, and ‘Dent Plainemans pathway &c in 4’; as well as quarto editions of Ben Jonson’s ‘The Foxe’ and ‘Maske of Queens’; other comedies by Chapman and Greene; a pamphlet about the trial of the Gunpowder Plotters, and a copy of ‘Basilicon Doron’.<sup>8</sup> The result of such collections is that enough cheap print has survived

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 394-5; Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press During the English Revolution* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 3; Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6, 161-3, 192-6. The exchange of letters between Thomas Bodley and Thomas James over a period of 10 years also suggests that these two educated men held different views about the cultural value of ‘baggage bookes’ and the desirability of including them in the Bodleian Library’s collection. See *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley*, pp. 3, 35, 219, 222.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas K. Kiessling, ‘The Library of Anthony Wood from 1681-1999’, *Bodleian Library Record*, 16 (1999), 470-498, p. 471. Kiessling suggests that Wood’s interest in ‘letterpress that might be classified under “amusements” or the parade of human folly’ might have stemmed from his income of ‘less than forty pounds a year’ which did not allow him to purchase ‘monumental folio volumes’ (p. 471).

<sup>7</sup> Wood records that he found one pamphlet in ‘Dr Lowers privy house 24. May 1675 in Bow Street, Lond.’ and that another found its way into his collection because of ‘tobacco wrapt in this paper in the beginning of May 1693’ (Kiessling, p. 471; n.3, p. 486)

<sup>8</sup> R.J. Fehrenbach & E.S. Leedham-Green, *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992-), I, p. 82.

to enable research by modern scholars and ensure that a more complete picture of early modern literary culture continues to emerge. Within the collections made by Thomason, Wood and others is an identifiable corpus of prose murder pamphlets.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis contributes to that ever more detailed picture of early modern culture by undertaking a literary analysis of prose murder pamphlets printed between 1573 -1700 in order to examine the way early modern culture represented murder (the most violent of violent crimes) to itself. That analysis reveals the prose murder pamphlet as an identifiable genre with its own recognisable narrative and rhetorical strategies which survived and were commercially successful for well over one hundred years. As it is concerned with the market for murder stories and *how* and *why* these pamphlets were written and read such an analysis necessarily intersects with the political and religious culture and historiography of the seventeenth century. As Raymond argues, pamphlets had a recognisably 'distinctive nature' to early modern readers as well as a contemporary and enduring importance as 'documents of controversial times' (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 6). Raymond's point is effectively illustrated by the inventory of Sir Nathaniel Bacon's library. There, a murder pamphlet shared space with a masque; several comedies; a treatise on kingship; news of the executions of the Gunpowder Plotters, and two works of Protestant piety. It is these last two works – Arthur Dent's *A Plaine-Man's Pathway to Heaven* and Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* – which are most significant for this thesis as I shall argue that

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<sup>9</sup> Two separate collections of murder pamphlets made by Wood are in the Bodleian Library: Wood 365 (35 pamphlets, catalogued chronologically from 1604-1692) and Wood 173 (5 pamphlets).

the narrative of murder in the pamphlets had its foundations in the discourses of English Reformed Protestantism.

### *Cheap print*

In the final three decades of the sixteenth century, there was an explosion in the amount of cheap printed material appearing at the London booksellers.<sup>10</sup> The commercial success of cheap print can be attributed to increases in literacy; the growing population of London during this period, and changes in the economic power of certain social groups such as apprentices, tradesmen and the printers and booksellers themselves.<sup>11</sup> Cheap printed material crossed social and economic boundaries, extending the idea of a 'popular' audience as distinct from an 'elite' one, to one that was heterogeneous in its composition and voracious in

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<sup>10</sup> Spufford, *Small Books*; Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (Athlone Press: London, 1983); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For the importance of London in creating and sustaining this market see Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637-1645* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997) and Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), xxix-xx.

<sup>11</sup> For estimates of early modern literacy see: Spufford, *Small Books*, p. 45 and Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy', *Social History* 4 (1979), 407-435; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 72, 146, 150, 152, 119; Keith Thomas, 'The meaning of literacy in early modern England' in Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 103; James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 408. For descriptions of the audience for cheap print see: H.S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1603-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 82-5; Spufford, *Small Books*, p. 51; Clark, pp. 18-22; Watt, pp. 3-5; Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, pp. 5, 9-13. For estimates of the prices of pamphlets see Spufford, *Small Books*, p. 48; Clark, p. 25; Watt, pp. 261-2. For estimates of London's growing population see: Steven R. Smith, 'The London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Adolescents', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 149-161, p. 149; Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 23-4; J.A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household: Age, Authority and Possessed Young People', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan 1996), pp. 187-9.

its consumption of print, for 'in the seventeenth century the medium was not the message.'<sup>12</sup>

Intersecting with social and economic changes and contributing to the production of this 'watershed for the pamphlet' were 'tensions in the Elizabethan church, and a fermentation of the English language, itself a consequence of the Reformation and Protestant emphasis on vernacular scripture and the loosening of classical rhetoric' (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 11). Consequently, 'popular moralistic pamphlets' concerned with godliness, piety and social transformation formed a significant proportion of the output of the presses (Clark, p. 9). Such godly, didactic pamphlets were 'an aspect of the range and variety of literature available to the Elizabethan reader' (Clark, p. 9) and their writers used literary strategies when forming their narratives (Watt, p. 283; *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 17-18).

Such strategies included the use of lively prose and quasi-fictional narratives. For example, Watt describes how Philip Stubbes 'dramatizes' the death of his wife, Katherine, in his much-printed hagiography, *A Christal glas for Christian women*.<sup>13</sup> Also, she shows how the 'fiction of advice from a parent or sibling' in other pamphlets 'emphasized the veracity of the godly lesson' because it 'came

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<sup>12</sup> Susan D. Amussen and Mark Kishlansky (ed), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 12; Roger Chartier, *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 1-4. For definitions and debates about 'popular culture', see also: Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978); Barry Reay (ed), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1988); Roger Chartier, 'Texts, Printing, Readings' in Lynn Hunt (ed), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 1989), 154-175, pp. 169-172; Morag Schiach, *Discourse on Political Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 23-31; Bob Scribner, 'Is a history of popular culture possible?', *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989), pp. 175-191.

<sup>13</sup> *A Christal glas for Christian women* was first printed in 1591. Subsequently 25 separate editions of it were printed and it was still being sold in 1689 (Watt, p. 283).



out of an event in the real world' rather than the 'abstract, self-contained world of print' (Watt, p. 283). Joad Raymond argues for the importance of 'cony-catching pamphlets' in the development of narratives which endeavoured to sell cheap print concerned with 'morality and social transformation' to a 'broad audience' through the entertainment offered by 'an imaginary reconstruction of an alternative, inaccessible world' (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 17-18). Watt excludes murder pamphlets from her study and Raymond deals with them only briefly, as part of 'the business of news' (pp. 118-121). However, as murder pamphlets shared the characteristics of quasi-fictional narratives and lively prose with the 'cony-catching' pamphlets as well as fusing storytelling with 'Protestant doctrine and conservative piety' (Watt, p. 305) they were a significant presence in the marketplace for godly print. Their continuing commercial success carried religion into public and private spaces which perhaps would not have been penetrated by more serious (and expensively produced) literary works (Watt, pp. 305, 326-7).

This point is effectively illustrated by the writer of one section of *The Penitent Murderer*, printed in 1657.<sup>14</sup> He explained to his readers that he regarded the pamphlet as an important spiritual resource, 'I grant you use prayer, and you read Sermon-notes sometimes, and the Scriptures themselves among your people at home; but how often? and how earnestly is that exercise?' (sig. E5r).<sup>15</sup> The suggestion is not only that *The Penitent Murderer* might find a place in domestic spaces that would otherwise find no room for more obviously godly works but

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<sup>14</sup> Wing Y23; Thomason E.1660[2]

<sup>15</sup> 'Writers were concerned that readers should not regard their accounts as titillating news, but as matter for pious contemplation about sin.' (Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 213).

also that it might be read more often the 'Scriptures' and 'sermon-notes'. This suggestion is confirmed by Randolph Yearwood in the pamphlet's 'Epistle to the Reader':

Now (good Reader) grant me one request, not to look upon the following Discourses as a bare story or a piece of News, and so having read and seen it, there is an end: But read and consider, read and pray that this great and extraordinary passage of divine Providence may profit thy Soul, which is the desire of my heart and Soul, to God himself. (sig. A5v)

Yearwood's hope is that the pamphlet will be used as tool for meditation and self-examination – 'read and consider, read and pray'. He expresses the opinion that what Nathaniel Butler's story has to say is more lasting than 'a bare story or a piece of News'; its significance is not transitory but potentially everlasting as it 'may profit [the reader's] soul'. The reading of murder pamphlets is aligned with the two pillars which sustained English Protestantism: reading the Bible and listening to sermons. The murder pamphlet therefore takes its place in the trinity of 'the Bible, the sermon and the improving book' which was the 'basic means of communication' of English Protestantism.<sup>16</sup>

Nearly thirty years earlier, Thomas Cooper had expressed a similar hope that the message his pamphlet contained would survive:

that it might leave such an impression in thy heart, as might provoke thee to know the Lord by his executing of Justice: and so hereby learne to make use of his Providence in all his workes.  
(*Cry and Revenge of Blood*, 62)

As *The Cry and Revenge of Blood* was written in 1620, it is unsurprising that Cooper uses imagery associated with Calvinist providential doctrine. However,

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Lake, 'Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism, and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England' in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 257-283, p.257.

the message remained the same until 1700: the news of the latest murder, which would be replaced within a week with news of the next one, was narrated within an eschatological framework. This thesis will show the pamphlet writers suggesting to their readers that even though they might be entertained by the story of the murder what they should be concerned with were the four last things: death, judgement, heaven and hell.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the apparent evanescence of the pamphlets' subject matter was always counteracted by the eternal significance extracted from it by the writers.

Some readers, at least, seem to have been convinced by the pamphleteers' claims for the continuing importance of what the murder pamphlets had to say. On the back flyleaf of a copy of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* printed in 1671, is written, 'James Dermer His Booke. Anno Domine February 5 Day 1675. King Charles ye Reigne'.<sup>18</sup> Four years after the date it was printed, James Dermer was proud enough of his ownership of this pamphlet to have claimed it in his own hand. Another reader also inscribed his copy of *Most wicked Cruel, Bloudy, and Barbarous News from Northampton* (London, 1676) with his name: 'John Moffat His Book September'.<sup>19</sup> If this is not enough to show that murder pamphlets could be regarded more highly than their purchase price might suggest, it is clear that *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* was also a legacy from father to son as a dedication is included on the flyleaf, 'this gift James Dermer to his Son William Dermer April 4<sup>th</sup> 1714'. Here is evidence that an 'ephemeral' pamphlet was still cherished 43 years after it was printed. The

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<sup>17</sup> Tessa Watt also notes that despite the 'gruesome entertainment' offered by 'stories of crimes', the 'emphasis on last-minute conversion and salvation' must have been 'comforting' even for 'the lowest dregs of society' (*Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p. 108).

<sup>18</sup> Wing A997

<sup>19</sup> Wing M2932

gap of 29 years between Dermer's claim of ownership and his bequest may indicate that it was given to him when he was an adolescent and he passed it onto his son when he was of a similar age: the subject of a *Murderer Punished and Pardoned* makes this a credible supposition. The pamphlet narrates the story of Thomas Savage, a sixteen year-old apprentice who murdered a fellow servant by whom had been disturbed whilst he was stealing his master's money. His story was particularly interesting as he survived his first hanging and the execution had to be (successfully) repeated. Extant pamphlets show that Savage's story was printed in 1668, 1669, 1671 and 1688.<sup>20</sup> *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* was first printed in 48 quarto pages, but within a year was published in a 72-page version and this was the one reprinted in 1671. It also had at least 13 separate editions. There were also other versions of the story: *Gods justice against murther* (1668) and *The Murtherer turned true penitent* (1688).<sup>21</sup> The first version of *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* is heavily moralised and concentrates on Savage's penitence (see Chapter 5) but the longer versions also included a sermon preached by James Janeway at Savage's funeral, which expounded even more explicitly the lessons that should be learned from the narrative. The text for the sermon was 'Flee also youthful lusts' (2 Timothy, 2:22). A narrative about the desperate end of an adolescent who ignored religious instruction and fell headlong into a life of sinful, metropolitan debaucheries would have been thought suitable for the edification of any young man; clearly James Dermer was convinced by the pamphlet's claims of 'eternal' significance.

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<sup>20</sup> Wing A 996, A996A, A997 and A997A

<sup>21</sup> Wing G959A; Wing M3095B

### *Murder, English Protestantism and the 'embedded' Protestant narrative*

The narrative and commercial links between murder, English Protestant didacticism and cheap print are evident in prose murder pamphlets from the final decades of the sixteenth century until 1700. Despite the relatively low incidence of murder in the early modern period, the writers of the murder pamphlets tried to sell their readers a very different story, producing narratives which created a world in which murder was rife and in which it was interpreted as a symptom of the sinfulness of the individual and of society. Such narratives continued 'to pour off the London presses unabated' showing that 'popular interest in murder was inversely proportional to its incidence' (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 205). The records of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions show that between 1550 and 1625, 93% of indictments for felonies were property offences rather than crimes of violence.<sup>22</sup> This figure is confirmed from the records of felonies committed in Essex between 1559 and 1602. Here, murder and homicide comprised 7% of the capital offences tried at the assizes, as opposed to 18% for burglary and 66% for theft.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society 1300-1980', *Past and Present*, 101, (1983), 22-33.

<sup>23</sup> J.A. Sharpe, 'The History of Violence in England – Some Observations', *Past and Present*, 108, (1985), 206-215. See also John Briggs et al, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History* (London: University College London Press, 1996). Although murder was an uncommon crime, Gaskill points out that the homicide rate in Essex in the seventeenth century was three times that in modern England. This estimate comes from prosecutions for murder and Gaskill suggests that an 'increasing intolerance of brutality' with a concomitant increase in prosecutions accounts for the apparent rise in violent crime in the early modern period (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 205). For the legal history and definition of murder see: Sir William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law* (London: Methuen, 1924), vol. 3, pp. 310-316 and Theodore Blucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. (London: Butterworth, 1956), p. 442. For a social history of murder see: Cynthia B. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the criminal law in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); J.A Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Longman, 1999).

Later in the seventeenth century, Captain John Graunt observed that in London ‘but few are *Murthered*, not above 86 of 22950, which have died of other Diseases and Casualties’. His figure of 22950 deaths was a cumulative one gathered over a twenty year period from the weekly bills of mortality which were published every Thursday at Parish Clerks’ Halls throughout London. So, for example, in 1632 Graunt recorded that 38 people were executed or pressed to death; 7 were murdered; 15 committed suicide, and 7 were ‘overlaid or starved at Nurse’. Out of the total of 22950, 222 people hanged themselves; 86 were murdered; 14 poisoned; 26 were smothered, and 7 shot. Even adding the poisoned, shot and smothered into the total of those murdered still produces a figure smaller than that for the number who killed themselves.<sup>24</sup> Graunt attributes the low murder rate to two causes:

The Reasons of this we conceive to be *Two*: One is the *Government and Guard* of the City by *Citizens* themselves... And the other is, the natural and customary abhorrence of that inhuman *Crime*, and all *Bloodshed*, by most *English men*: for all that are *Executed*, few are for *Murther*, Besides the great and frequent *Revolutions* and changes in *Government* since the year 1650, have been with little *bloodshed*; the *Usurpers* themselves having *Executed* few in comparison, upon the *Accompt* of disturbing their *Innovations*. (p. 30)

There are two strands here: the effective policing of London by the ‘citizens themselves’ and an intrinsic, decent ‘Englishness’ which abhors murder.<sup>25</sup> Murder, in Graunt’s view, is a foreign crime. Foreign to a sense of English identity and also more prevalent in foreign cities such as Paris where ‘few nights scape without their *Tragedy*’ (p. 30). Graunt attributes the lack of taste for

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<sup>24</sup> Captain John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations made upone the Bills of Mortality*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. (London, 1676).

<sup>25</sup> Herrup argues that it was this citizenry – ‘the middling sort’ – who believed they defined the categories of crime and who were most likely to participate in the enforcement of the law which sought to control (*The Common Peace*, p. 2).

bloodshed in England to a reaction against the violence of the Civil War, praising the succeeding governments (republican and monarchical) for their reluctance to execute people in order that peace might prevail, so that their 'Innovations' in government might not be 'disturbed'.

Despite this view of English people as reluctant to spill the blood of their fellow citizens in war or felonious and judicial killings, the murder pamphlet writers present a very different view to their readers. Far from representing murder as an 'un-English' crime they produce a chronicle of English murder showing their English, Protestant readers that they were only one step away from the narrative of sin, crime and condemnation which they were in the act of consuming. One reason for this may be the link between the Calvinist theology of the Reformation church and the regulation of crime, as this period saw an increase in criminal legislation in England.<sup>26</sup> Gaskill suggests that murder 'struck at the heart of the Protestant state', usurping God's right to take life and therefore symbolizing a 'rebellion against providence, nature, authority and Christian society' (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 210). The murder pamphlet writers repeatedly tell their readers that murder could only be prevented by avoiding a life of irreligion (p. 212). For 'irreligion' one must read 'Catholicism' as well as more generalised sinfulness. The proliferation of cheap print and the development of distribution networks which disseminated it made murder more visible to the reading public, despite its low incidence as a crime. The 'visibility' of murder in the early modern period contains a paradox: compared to other

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<sup>26</sup> John Briggs, Angus MacInnes and David Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History* (London: University College Press, 1996), p. 18. Gaskill also sees this relationship and suggests that 'a reasonably coherent ideology' evolved in which the 'principles of Protestant religion informed principles of the common law and vice versa' (p. 212).

felonies, murder was uncommon but the increase in criminal legislation and the consequent *rise* in prosecutions made it more visible. The printing of murder stories contributed to this sense of increased visibility and therefore it is not surprising that a need arose to find ways to represent English murders to English readers.

The links between Protestant didacticism, murder and cheap print in the first half of the seventeenth century have been extensively investigated by Peter Lake.<sup>27</sup> He has discussed what he calls the ‘inherently mixed and morally ambiguous’ nature of the murder pamphlet in terms of its audience appeal, suggesting that this lies in the pamphlets’ ‘capacity to shock and titillate’ which results in an ‘exploitative’ even ‘pornographic’ relationship between the subject matter and its representation (‘Deeds against Nature’, pp. 262, 258-259). Within that ‘exploitative’ relationship there was an opportunity for ‘zealously Protestant writers’ to use the ‘fit between the attitudes revealed in the pamphlets and Protestant ideology’, even though the murder pamphlet remained a ‘theologically contestable genre’ (p. 282). This led to a degree of self-consciousness on the part of some pamphleteers so that the crime of murder could become something of an ideological football, with competing claims for ownership of a ‘godly’ interpretation. This is particularly evident in Lake’s analysis of the different versions of Enoch ap Evan’s murder of his mother and brother printed between

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Lake, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe-Murder’, *Midland History*, xv (1990), 37-64; ‘Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994), pp. 257-283; ‘Popular form, Puritan Content? Two Puritan appropriations of the murder pamphlet in mid-seventeenth-century London’ in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 313-324; ‘“A Charitable Christian Hatred”: the godly and their enemies in the 1630s’ in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds) *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 145-183; *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*.



1633 and 1641.<sup>28</sup> The printing of the first pamphlet sparked the publication of opposing interpretations of the crime by Peter Studley, a local Arminian vicar, and Richard More, a puritan justice of the peace. Arguing that ap Evan's Puritanism had turned him into a murderer, Studley attempted both 'to win the attention of the local government' and reach a 'more popular market'. In turn, Richard More rebutted Studley's assertions point by point ('Shropshire Axe-Murder', pp. 37-39). Both men entered a world of 'popular rumour and gossip', and Studley, in particular, fashioned the 'rather down-market material' of the murder pamphlet to his own 'more sophisticated, anti-puritan and anti-Calvinist purposes' (p. 51). In short, the polemic Studley and More engaged in was 'a straightforward struggle for the cachet, the enhanced charisma or glow of spiritual potency' which would be the result of bringing Enoch ap Evan to a 'coherent and publicly recognizable acknowledgement of his sin' (p. 53).

An important strand running through Lake's work is, therefore, the analysis of the 'process of identity formation' for the 'godly and their enemies' ('Charitable Christian Hatred', p. 150). The identities in question are those of the murderers, the writers and the readers and even of the murder pamphlet itself. The representation of murderers could range from John Barker using his gibbet speech to effect a 'breathtaking inversion of his status as a condemned felon and suppliant sinner' and 'reclaim his role a minister and role model for the godly' ('Charitable Christian Hatred', p. 149), to Enoch ap Evan's more passive role in

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<sup>28</sup> STC 10582 *A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell murther, committed by one Enoch ap Euan who cut off his own naturall mothers head and his brothers* (1633); STC 23403 & 23404 Peter Studley, *The Looking Glass of Schism* 1634 (second edition 1635); Wing M2685 Richard More, *A true relation of the murders committed in the parish of Clune in the county of Salop by Enoch ap Evan upon the bodies of his mother and brother* (1641).

the interpretation of his crime. The writers (and felons) consciously appropriated other narrative forms and discourses such as theological polemic ('Shropshire Axe-Murder'); the conventions of the 'good death' ('Charitable Christian Hatred'), and the puritan conversion narrative ('Popular Form, Puritan Content?') in order to enter the market for cheap print and reach as wide an audience as possible. Consequently, one purpose of the murder pamphlets is to exemplify the 'complex dialectical relationships between the puritan and anti-puritan images' in the early modern period ('Charitable Christian Hatred', p. 183).

In *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, Lake extends these insights on the intersections between 'hot protestantism' and murder pamphlets to the reciprocal relationship between pamphlet literature (about both Protestants and 'papists') and the stage. He is interested (as I am) in the rhetorical and narrative devices employed by the pamphleteers but he looks more at their movements from pamphlet to stage rather than at how the pamphlet writers absorbed other discourses into the narratives of murder and recycled them to produce an identifiable and recognisable commercial genre. The relationship between murder pamphlets and early modern drama is also explored by Frances Dolan. However, her useful and important insights into the representation of 'dangerous familiars' in the pamphlets are focused on the illuminations they provide about early modern gender relations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Frances Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca, NY: 1994). Murder pamphlets have also been used to provide contexts for the understanding of early modern domestic tragedies; see for example: Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1943); Leonore Lieblein, 'The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays, 1590-1610', *SEL*, 23 (1983), 181-196.

Lake and Dolan interpret the murder pamphlets by tracing their movement from page to stage. Gaskill and others negotiate the relationships between the quasi-fictional narratives of the pamphlets and the rhetoric of the supposedly 'factual' narratives of assize records and depositions.<sup>30</sup> In both of these approaches the murder pamphlets become something of a transitional entity: murder passes through them on its way to a representation on stage; or crime, trial and judgement are reported and disseminated to many more people than could possibly fit into a court room.

Gaskill is interested in the place of the murder pamphlets in 'the history of crime and the law in early modern England' and the recovery of 'popular mentalities' ('Reporting murder', pp. 1-2). The pamphlets therefore become evidence of, 'a mental environment in which contrived "fictions" could triumph over observable "facts" (p. 30). Gaskill interprets the evidence he gains from an analysis of the pamphlets as, 'signs of a gradual transition between regulatory systems' (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 203). The systems he identifies are, 'a dual reliance upon providence to discover murder and the voice of the people to prove it' and 'a greater certainty of detection offered by advances in policing, evidence gathering and medico-legal standards of proof' (p. 203). In his view, therefore, murder pamphlets are one of the ways in which a modern scholar can see, 'the structures of Tudor law enforcement undergoing transformation in order to meet the changing needs of the English state and its people' as they, 'bolstered an unreliable system of law enforcement' by insisting upon the 'infallibility of

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<sup>30</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); Malcolm Gaskill, 'Reporting murder: fiction in the archives in early modern England', *Social History*, 23 (1998), 1-30; Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, gender and seventeenth-century print culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

temporal punishment to deter murderers unable to see further than the grave' (pp. 203, 214-215). Murder pamphlets, in Gaskill's view, were both regulated by and part of the regulatory system of, the ideology of state Protestantism and its influence on criminal legislation and prosecution.

Dolan and Lake move from what they term the 'liminal' world of cheap print to the study of central canonical texts by Shakespeare, Heywood and Jonson. However, cheap printed material, in its sheer volume if nothing else, was far from liminal in the lives of the people of London. Freist describes how booksellers, 'actively sought to stimulate the tastes of those in the immediate neighbourhood of their shops', hanging broadsides and title pages outside their doors and cultivating a network of chapmen and hawkers who not only sold the booksellers' merchandise but brought news back to the printing presses (pp. 93-4, 115-117). In 1715, Myles Davies described pamphlets as 'thing[s] below'd by all' as their name was etymologically derived from, 'Pan=*all*' and '*I love*'. With their 'small portable Bulk' and sold 'at no great price' they were 'adapted for every one's Understanding, for every one's Buying'.<sup>31</sup> Joad Raymond suggests that the availability of cheap print in the seventeenth century was of consistent importance, even though the demands of the reading public changed (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 1-3). However, he too moves to canonical writers (Milton, Marvell and Dryden) in order to prove the 'rise' in the political significance of pamphlets and their role in the 'invention of public opinion'.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, the works by Shakespeare, Heywood and even Jonson inhabited the

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<sup>31</sup> *Icon Libellorum or a Critical History of Pamphlets* (London, 1715), 4.

<sup>32</sup> In her review of Raymond's book, Angela McShane Jones points out that *Areopagitica* was 'acknowledged as a failure as a pamphlet because it was deemed too literary' (*Renaissance Journal*, 8 (2003), 45-7, p. 47.

‘liminal’ world of cheap print when they were first printed. They have become ‘central’ as a result of the perception of their literary and cultural ‘value’, accrued through centuries of academic and critical attention. From a cultural perspective, it must be said that the gazes of these scholars appear to be turned ‘upwards’.

Murder pamphlets, therefore, have something to say about the self-fashioning of English Protestant identity; the formation of ‘mentalities’ in the early modern reading public, and a variety of relationships to the print culture which formed and sustained them. As a result, they also have inescapable links to the religio-political crises of the period. It is these aspects which have informed this research. However, rather than charting the external movements of murder narratives or exploring their subordinate relationship to assize records or canonical literary works, this study aims to investigate the murder pamphlets from within and analyse their narrative ‘engine’. Undoubtedly, the narrative foundations of the murder pamphlets had a relationship to authoritative texts and discourses – most significantly The Bible, but also others such as Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, and (as Gaskill points out) the common law of felony and homicide. However there are other discourses as well – those of the Protestant craft of dying, popular representations of sodomy, anti-papist propaganda – that the murder pamphleteers absorbed into their stories, recycled and made their own, creating a genre for a reading public which understood and expected its narrative conventions. Gaskill and Lake also assume that the murder pamphlets constitute a recognisable genre. Gaskill speaks of ‘murder literature’ which was ‘highly stylized’ and suggests that despite the truth claims in the pamphlets’ titles it ‘was

only really important that they remained faithful to the genre of the murder pamphlet' (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 214). Lake describes murder pamphlets as an 'intensely formulaic genre' and talks of a 'canon of pamphletable and pamphleted killings' (*Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp. 11, 14). Joad Raymond agrees that pamphlets as a whole have 'generic and rhetorical elements' (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 25). However, neither Lake nor Gaskill has tried to establish the characteristics of the genre. Christopher Chapman concurs that it is possible to identify generic narrative conventions in murder pamphlets.<sup>33</sup>

The first aim of this research was to establish the corpus of extant murder pamphlets printed between 1573-1700 (see Appendix). Once that was established, the next aim was to define the characteristics of the genre by subjecting a number of the pamphlets to a detailed literary analysis in order to extract from them rhetorical characteristics that identify them as a distinct genre in the lively world of early modern cheap printed material. Once these characteristics were identified it was then possible to examine how the writers of the pamphlets appropriated other discourses into the structure of the murder pamphlet. The results of this examination showed that the early modern prose murder pamphlet was an intrinsically Protestant form. By that I mean not just Protestant in its outlook and interpretation of murder or in its didactic function but at the deepest level of its narrative formation. In using the word 'Protestant' I acknowledge the problems inherent in defining this term and how easily it can slide into the equally unfocussed and problematic label of 'Puritan'. For the purposes of this thesis, 'Protestant' is equated with English Reformed religion

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher Chapman, *The Representation of Murder, c. 1590-1695*, unpublished D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 2001), pp. 34, 42, 46.

developed in the latter half of the sixteenth century and with its roots in Calvinist theology. As Sharon Achinstein asserts, it was this Reformed religion and its 'literary expression' that simply would not go away during the seventeenth century, even as its adherents moved from a position of uniformity with the Church of England to one of dissent.<sup>34</sup>

These pamphlets first began to appear in the final three decades of the sixteenth century when the Catholic threat to English Protestantism was perceived to be acute. In the late 1570s, certain Protestants at Court and in the Church were resisting Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the Duke of Anjou, of which she seems to have been in favour. The Jesuit missionaries Thomas Campion and Robert Persons landed in England in 1580 and Campion was arrested and executed the following year. Throughout the 1580s there were plots against Elizabeth I, culminating in the threat of invasion from Spain from the Armada. The intrinsic foreignness of Catholics to a sense of English Protestant identity is something that is expressed repeatedly in the early murder pamphlets along with an understanding that they were also innately murderous. However, it was apparent that there were also plenty of English Protestant murderers and that there was money to be made in the expanding market for cheap print. Tessa Watt has shown how commercial interests melded with godly didacticism to produce works of 'Protestant piety'. The same is true of the murder pamphlets when current news of violent crime was fused by the writers with a narrative that took its framework from a Christian's journey from his/her birth in original sin, through a life of unrelenting sinfulness to a penitent death and the assurance of

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<sup>34</sup> Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 11.

salvation and eternal life. So important was this structure that it was characteristic of the genre for well over one hundred years, even though the Calvinist theology of providence and predestination on which it was based fell out of favour and the accurate reporting of news began to dominate the form towards the end of the seventeenth century. The structure remains in pamphlets which do not moralise or preach at their readers but seem merely to report the events of a murder, the arrest of the murderer, his/her trial condemnation and execution. So insistent, persistent and long-lived was this structure that I have termed it an 'embedded' Protestant narrative. The apparent rise in murders, anxieties about the Catholic threat to England and the need to show that hopes for an orderly society resided only in English Protestantism combined with the commercial opportunities offered by the burgeoning book trade in London to produce the early modern prose murder pamphlet.

All the scholars (and that includes myself) engaged in an examination of the social and cultural significance of murder pamphlets work on the borders between historical and literary studies. Whatever else we do, we also explore a 'reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of histories'<sup>35</sup> caught, as we are, between the 'fact' of a murder and the literary/narrative strategies used to recount it. We are engaged in the work of interpretation: in making intelligent, informed guesses about *how* these pamphlets were read at the time of their production and then aligning that interpretation with our own knowledge of the historical narratives of that moment. In short, we are all engaged in trying to determine exactly what the murder pamphlets are evidence

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<sup>35</sup> Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), p. 5.



of. Consequently (and inescapably) this thesis involves the much larger question of how to use historical, literary artefacts; of asking what place history has in reading the murder pamphlets and what place the murder pamphlets have in history. As they tell their stories of bloody, violent deaths the murder pamphleteers also inscribe the cultural history of early modern England. The murder pamphlets were doing ‘important cultural work’ (Achinstein, p. 11), and a study of them confirms the complexity and richness of early modern literary culture. It is important to approach early modern culture as a ‘functional whole’ thus avoiding the danger of regarding “popular culture” as a residual or marginalised category, as everything not in some “great tradition” (‘Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?’, p. 182.)

### *Parameters*

For the purposes of this thesis a pamphlet is a ‘small, stitch’d book’ (*Icon Libellorum*, p. 1) produced most often in quarto, although some in octavo are extant. The definition of ‘short’ encompasses anything between 4 and 80 pages. However, I have also included some broadsides in the corpus of murder pamphlets as long as they were written in prose and adhered to the generic characteristics of the murder narrative.

I have excluded any ballads or accounts written in verse for several reasons. The first was practicality: their inclusion would have made the subject of this thesis too large. Secondly, pamphlets and ballads were ‘different cultural forms’ in which murder was represented ‘in divergent ways in different types of narrative’

(*Representations of Murder*, pp. 3, 69).<sup>36</sup> As Chapman points out, ‘pamphlets attempted to provide a detailed narrative with pretensions to authenticity’ while ballads concentrated on the ‘emotional impact’ of particular murders (p. 5). This comment underlines the fact that in the early modern period prose tended to be associated with truth-telling. Also, the prose form proved more flexible than the restricted ‘shape, size and physical appearance’ of ballads which ‘packaged their narratives in [a] rigid, inflexible, framework’ (p. 42).

I have also excluded some pamphlets and broadsides that began to appear from the late 1650s onwards as (although they deal with murder and murderers) they were written in the form of a report from a particular assize session and therefore only provide a list of criminals and the crimes for which they were tried and their sentences.<sup>37</sup> I acknowledge that the appearance of this style of reporting murder is indicative of an important shift in the market for murder stories. However, I do not agree that the murder pamphlet was in ‘decline’ after 1640 (Chapman, pp. 57-8). There are more murder pamphlets extant from the final three decades of the seventeenth century than from any other decade in the previous one hundred years. Also, as I shall show, the ‘embedded Protestant narrative’ of the murder pamphlet was in use up to and including 1700.

Although this thesis will demonstrate clearly that the representation of murder in these prose pamphlets was inextricably linked with the political and religious

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<sup>36</sup> Chapman does use both pamphlets and ballads in his thesis and has listed over 1000 texts.

<sup>37</sup> For example: *The true narrative of the proceedings at Surry-Assizes* (London, 1680) Wing T2812; *A true account of the proceedings against the criminals, at the assizes of oyer and terminer, and goal delivery, at the Market-House holden in New-Windsor for the county of Berks* (London, 1685) Wing T2392. Chapman agrees that the ‘Old Bailey Sessions Papers’ should be differentiated from the prose pamphlets, as they were one of the ‘new genres of crime reportage’ (p. 182).

culture of early modern England, I have excluded any pamphlet that explicitly represents murder as a political act. This rather general term applies mostly to the representation of the execution of Charles I as a murder but also excludes accounts of massacres or the execution of regicides such as Francois Ravailac.<sup>38</sup> The representation of Charles I's execution shifted between murder, regicide, martyrdom or fit punishment for treason depending upon the writer's point of view. Treason was a crime against the state rather than an individual and was a completely different crime from murder. It did not necessarily have to involve another's death (for example, the Gunpowder Plotters) and was a crime with 'a complicated conceptual basis' that was subject to defined standards of proof, unlike ordinary criminal cases where there was no articulated standard of proof.<sup>39</sup> Again in contrast to murderers who were tried at the regular assize sessions, trials for treason had to be convened on a special commission of 'oyer and terminer', were nearly always held in London and the judges and jurors were handpicked for the individual case and were 'closer in function to political pageants than to routine adjudication' ('Criminal Trial', p. 266). Just for the record, I have also excluded any murders committed by animals!<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Examples of such pamphlets include: *Killing noe murder* (London, 1657); *A handkerchief for loyal mourners: or, A cordial for drooping spirits groaning for the bloody murther... of our gracious King* (London, 1659); *The Terrible & Deserved Death of Francis Ravilliack* (London, 1610); *A True Relation of the bloody Execution, lately performed by the Commaundement of the Emperors Maiestie... in Prague* (London, 1621); *A Declaration of the Parliament of England of their just Resentment of the Horrid Murther perpetrated on the Body of Isaac Dorislaus... their Resident at the Hague* (London, 1649); *A Collection or Narrative Sent to his Highness the Lord Protector of the Common-Wealth of England... Concerning the Bloody and Barbarous Massacres, Murders and other Cruelties committed on many thousands of Reformed, or Protestants dwelling in the Vallies of Piedmont* (London, 1655); *A Relation of the Cruelties & Barbarous Murthers... done and committed by Foot-souldiers... upon some of the Inhabitants of Enfield, Edmonton, Southmymys and Hadley* (London, 1659).

<sup>39</sup> John H. Langbein, 'The Criminal Trial before the Lawyers', *University of Chicago Law Review*, 45 (1978), 263-316, p. 266.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Wood did not make this last exclusion and one of his collections contains the pamphlet Wing S5818 *Strange and horrible News Which happened betwixt St Johns Street, and Islington on Thursday morning... being a terrible murther committed by one Sir Sander Duncomes Beares: on the body of his Gardner* (London, 1642) (Bod. Wood 365 (8)).

The necessity of imposing parameters means that I have excluded familiar and famous texts about murder. Thomas Beard's *The Theatre Of Gods Judgements* was a bound, folio-sized book and so outside any definition of cheap print. Also excluded is *Arden of Feversham*, as the story was printed either in bound editions or as a playtext, ballad or poem.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the various accounts of this notorious murder were important in establishing and perpetuating the stereotype of the murderous wife.

The chronological parameters of the study were more straightforward to establish: from 1573 (the date of the earliest extant prose pamphlet) to 1700. The final date obviously closes the century and although murder narratives were still produced after 1700, they were mostly broadsides and their numbers began to decline.

The application of these parameters produces a corpus of over 350 pamphlets (see Appendix) with examples from every decade between 1570 and 1700. In the course of researching and writing this thesis I have read 181 of them.

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<sup>41</sup> The story of Master Arden's murder by his wife, Alice, and her accomplices is found in the *Breviat Chronicle* (1551); Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577); John Stow, *Annals of England* (1580, 1592); Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of God's Judgements* (1597), which was still being printed in 1648; *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham*; *The Complaint and Lamentation of Mistress Arden of Feversham* (1633) (M. L. Wine (ed), *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham* (London: Methuen, 1973), xix-xxii, xxxvii-xxxviii; Andrew Clark, 'An Annotated List of Sources and Related Material for Elizabethan Domestic Tragedy 1591-1625' *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1974), 25-33, p. 26-27). The story is mentioned in prose murder pamphlets but no extant prose version of it exists; see *A world of wonders. A masse of murthers* (London, 1595) and Henry Goodcole, *The Adulteresses Funerall Day* (London, 1635).

Chapter one establishes the generic characteristics of the murder pamphlets by analysing examples from every decade of the period for this study. It proposes the idea of the 'chain-link narrative'. This was based on the understanding that murder was a sin before it was a crime and that a chain of dependency linked together humankind's original sin, murder and the divine grace that offered a chance of salvation. Such a narrative pattern has its foundations in Calvinist theology and ideas of providence and predestination. The 'chain-link' narrative of murder has the following stages: causes of the murder; description of the crime; detection and discovery of the murderer; trial; repentance, and execution.

Chapter two argues that the early modern murder pamphlet is fundamentally a Protestant form, with its ideological roots in the Reformed theology of original sin and justification by faith and its historical roots in the decades which saw an increase in the perception of a Catholic threat to England. It is the influence of that theology that gives the characteristic chain narrative its deep structure and also provides a context for understanding murder. This chapter undertakes a detailed analysis of the influence of the Calvinist doctrine of divine providence on murder narratives. This also makes it possible to analyse the relationship between understandings of providence and evidence in the representation of murder.

Chapter three analyses the use of murder pamphlets as anti-Catholic propaganda by looking at the stereotype of the 'bloody papist'. The chapter shows how the printing of pamphlets employing this stereotype coincided with the most acute religio-political crises of the period: the Gunpowder Plot (1605), the Popish Plot

and Exclusion Crisis (1678-1681) and the Glorious Revolution (1688). The anti-Catholic rhetoric employed by the writers of these pamphlets was also extended to the representation of murders by non-conformist and dissenting Protestants. It is argued that the combination of murder and religious bigotry employed by the pamphlet writers is part of the construction of Protestant historiography and of English Protestant identity. The representation of domestic murders therefore becomes part of the public debate about early modern religion and politics.

The use of anti-Catholic and anti-dissenter stereotypes gave the murder pamphlet an important political dimension at particular historical moments. Chapter four continues to explore the political use of murder pamphlets by analysing four separate accounts of the same murder that were printed in the summer of 1657. The murder of John Knight by Nathaniel Butler was of one apprentice by another and so its representation included anxieties about youth and the political importance of apprentices. An examination of these pamphlets shows how the conventions of the chain-link murder narrative were manipulated to produce a narrative that also engaged with contemporary anxieties about sodomy. The production of a sodomitical narrative is in turn linked to the political instabilities apparent in 1657 after the installation of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector, in the pamphlets' concerns with the issue of domestic governorship.

Chapter five deals with the figure of the penitent murderer. The final link in the narrative chain of the murder pamphlets was the execution of the murderer and one important rhetorical tool in the representation of the condemned murderers was their creation as exemplary penitents. The documentation of a murderer's

penitence was integral to the structure of the murder pamphlets as it was counterbalance to the original sin which caused the murder. Chapter 5 examines the influence of the Protestant craft of dying on the representation of the penitent murderer. The pamphlet writers configure the gibbet as a death bed and insist on the exemplary force of the murderers' good deaths. This reconfiguration of the gibbet as a death-bed rather than a stage on which the drama of state power was played out, leads to a re-thinking of how we should interpret 'last dying speeches'.

# Chapter 1

## *The 'chain-link' narrative*

Early modern murder pamphlets were, before anything else, purveyors of news.<sup>1</sup> The news of murder was the commodity they had to sell and from the numbers of pamphlets that have survived it is clear they sold it into an increasingly crowded and competitive marketplace. Almost exclusively printed in London, they brought the news of the City to its inhabitants, and disseminated that news to the rest of the country.<sup>2</sup> Reciprocally, murderous news from shires and counties (some more distant than others) was brought to London, printed and distributed again. The status of the pamphlets as commodities in a competitive market is illustrated by their titles. Writers invariably promise a 'full', 'true' and 'exact' narrative of the murder, often denigrating competing accounts. The writer of *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* (1657), attacks the 'lying and scandalous Pamphlet' ('The Preface', sig. A4r) which had preceded his in recounting the murder of John Knight.<sup>3</sup> Superlatives abound in descriptions of the 'most horrible and detestable', 'most unnaturall', 'most cruell' murders committed by men and women who are 'monsters', 'unnaturall', 'barbarous',

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<sup>1</sup> This function as recorders and disseminators of news is a constant in murder pamphlets from STC 18286.5 *Sundrye strange and inhumaine murthers, lately committed* (1591), through STC 19614 *Newes from Perin in Cornwall* (1618); Wing B3267, Thomason E375[20] *Bloody newes from Dover* (1641); Wing S5907, Thomason E.423[22] *Strange news from the North* (1648); Wing S227B *Sad and bloody newes from Yorkshire* (1663); Wing B3279 *Bloody news from Shrewsbury* (1673), to the final decades of the seventeenth century when pamphlets recording the trials at a single assize session became more common, for example *A narrative of the proceedings at the sessions house in the Old-Baily* (1675). See also Joad Raymond (ed), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660* (Gloucestershire: Windrush Press, 1993) which includes excerpts from murder pamphlets.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 40-1, 348.

<sup>3</sup> Wing B6285; Thomason E.925[2]



‘bloody’ and ‘pitillesse’.<sup>4</sup> One of the earliest extant examples (printed in 1583) is entitled *A briefe discourse of two most cruell and bloodie murthers, committed bothe in Worcestshire*; the same style was still in use in 1700 when *A Full an [sic] true acount [sic] of the most barbarous and bloody murther committed by Edward Williams* was printed.<sup>5</sup> The overt sensationalism of these titles was a way of enticing prospective readers to exchange their pennies for a few sheets of black-letter type, as were the lurid woodcuts and larger more varied typefaces often employed on their title pages. For example, the title-page of George Crosse’s *The Parricide Papist* establishes his own authority as a ‘Preacher of God’ and therefore his qualification to expound upon ‘this tragicall discourse of murther’. This title-page also seems to be reaching out to readers with cultural aspirations in its use of an elaborate emblem with a Latin motto. In contrast, *A Wonder of Wonders* uses a cruder illustration which nonetheless summarises all the important events of this story laid out in the text above it: Ann Green’s failed hanging; the demonstration of the power of divine providence which left her coffin empty, and her expressions of piety. *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* has no illustration on its title-page but draws a prospective reader’s attention by capitalizing the names of victim and murderer and emphasising that this narrative is as much about Nathaniel Butler’s ‘Unfained Repentance’ as it is about the ‘Horrid MURTHER’ of John Knight (see illustrations overleaf).

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<sup>4</sup> For example: Wing E3612, Thomason E. 117 [20] *An exact and true relation of a most cruell and horrid murther* (1642); Wing F2292, Thomason E.925[1] *A full and the truest narrative of the most horrid, barbarous and unparalled murder committed on the person of John Knight* (1657), STC 809 *Deeds against nature and monsters by kinde* (1614), Wing U86 *The unnaturall grandmother* (1659); STC 24757 *A pitillesse mother* (1616); Wing B3264A *An account of a most horrid and barbarous murther and robbery* (1694);; Wing B685 *Barbarous and bloody news from the parish of St Giles’s* (1690).

<sup>5</sup> STC 25980; Wing F2293E.

2. 2. 2.

# THE Parricide Papist, OR, Cut-throate Catholicke.

A tragicall discourse of a murther lately committed  
at *Padstow* in the Countie of *Cornwall* by a professed Pa-  
pist, killing his owne Father, and afterwarde himselfe, in zeale of his  
Popish Religion, The 11 of March last past. 1606.

Written by G. Crosse, Preacher of the Word of God at  
Blacke Torrington in Devon.



Printed at London for Christopher Hunt, dwelling in  
Pater-noster-row, neere the Kings head.

*H. J. J. J.*

# A Wonder of Wonders.

BEING

A faithful Narrative and true Relation, of one

*Anne Green*, Servant to *Sir Tho. Reed* in *Oxfordshire*, who being got with Child by a Gentleman, her Child falling from her in the house or Office, being but a span long, and dead born, was condemned on the 14. of *December* last, and hanged in the *Castle-yard* in *Oxford*, for the space of half an hour, receiving many great and heavy blowes on the breasts, by the but end of the Souldiers Muskets, and being pul'd down by the leggs, and was afterwards beg'd for an Anatomy, by the Physicians, and carried to *Mr. Clarkes* house, an Apothecary, where in the presence of many learned Chyrurgions, she breathed, and began to stir; insomuch, that *Dr. Petty* caused a warm bed to be prepared for her, let her blood, and applyed Oyls to her, so that in 14 hours she recovered, and the first words she spake were these; *Behold Gods Providence! Behold his miraculous and loving kindness!* With the manner of her Tryal, her Speech and Confession at the Gallowes; and a Declaration of the Souldiery touching her recovery; Witnessed by *Dr. Petty*, and Licensed according to Order.



*Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance :* 2

. B E I N G

An Exact Relation of the Cause and  
Manner of that Horrid MURDER  
committed on the person of

**J O H N K N I G H T**

An Apprentice to Mr. *Arthur Worth* in *Milk-street,*

B Y

**NATHANIEL BUTLER:**

W I T H

His Unfained Repentance for the same.

T O G E T H E R W I T H H I S

Apprehension, Examination and Conviction:

The several Conferences had between him and the  
Right Honourable the Lord Major, and most  
of the pious Ministers about this City.

L I K E W I S E

An Exact Relation of his L I F E, from his  
Cradle to his Death.

*A Discovery of such of his Confederates as have deceived their Masters.*

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*W. J. 40* Written with his own Hand.

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London, Printed by W. J. for Isaac Pridmore at the Golden Falcon near  
the New Exchange, and Henry Marsh at the Third door  
in Swan-Alley on Ludgate-hill. 1657.

However, sensation was not enough – it was also important to be first on the streets with the details of the most recent murder. The speed with which the news of a murder could appear is illustrated by a pamphlet printed in 1678, *Bloody News from Angel Alley...A Full and True Account of the cruel murdering of one Dorothy Jewers*.<sup>6</sup> The title page declares that this ‘antient and industrious widow’ was ‘barbarously robbed and killed by two of her Lodgers’ on ‘Fryday last, the 27<sup>th</sup> September’ which means that the pamphlet was printed within days of the crime and certainly before the week was out. Although the writer declares to his readers that Dorothy Jewers’ lodgers were the murderers, in fact no arrest had been made and unusually this account ends with no evidence that the barbarity of the crime had been contained by the forces of the law. It was more common for murder pamphlets to conclude with at least the news of the arrest of the murderer. The early modern judicial process was a speedy one<sup>7</sup> but pamphlet writing was even quicker and pamphlets were often written and printed in the space between the apprehension of the murderer and his/her trial. *A Horrible Creuel and bloody Murther committed...upon the body of Edward Hall* (1614) and *Murther, Murther or a bloody Relation of how Anne Hamton...by poyson murthered her deare husband* (1641) were both written while the murderers were awaiting trial after arrest and imprisonment.<sup>8</sup> The writer of *Heavens Cry Against Murder* (the first of a series of pamphlets about the murderer Nathaniel Butler, printed in the summer of 1657) concludes his pamphlet with a description of how Butler was arrested for the murder of John Knight and ‘was brought to the Lord Majors, examined, and confessed the matter, and was sent to New-gate’ (sig.

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<sup>6</sup> Wing B3261B.

<sup>7</sup> Assize sessions for London and Middlesex were held monthly at the Old Bailey, lasted 2-5 days and processed between 50-100 felony cases (J.H. Langbein, ‘The Criminal Trial before the Lawyers’, *University of Chicago Law Review*, 45 (1978), 263-316, p. 271).

<sup>8</sup> STC 12630; Thomason E.172[7].

B3v).<sup>9</sup> The murder took place on Thursday August 6<sup>th</sup>, Butler was arrested on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and examined by the Lord Mayor and imprisoned in Newgate that same evening. The Lord Mayor's chaplain, Randolph Yearwood, was sent to see Butler on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August when Butler's confession was recorded. He was brought to trial on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> and executed on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The earliest that *Heavens Cry* could have been written was on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August as that was the day Butler was arrested, and it must have been written before Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>, the day he came to trial.<sup>10</sup>

In his report of Butler's arrest, the writer of *Heavens Cry* not only relates the most current news he has to his readers but also piously states, 'all Christians are bound to pray that God would give him [Butler] a true unfeigned repentance, and forgiveness for this deep died sin of Murther' (sig. B3v). The pamphlet writer's expressed hope is that Nathaniel Butler will find true penitence as swiftly as he finds true justice for his crime. This hope suggests that it was possible for Butler to learn something from his wrongdoing; if Butler could learn something then the reader could also be educated by his example. Thus the reporting of sensational news is given a didactic function.

Arthur Golding, the writer of the earliest extant murder pamphlet, *A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders...and the apprehension, arreignement, and execution of the principall and the accessaries of the same*

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<sup>9</sup> Wing H1346; Thomason E.923[1].

<sup>10</sup> This sequence of events is set out in two other pamphlets about this murder: Wing B6285; Thomason E.925[2]: *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* and *A Full and the Truest Narrative of the most Unparalleled Murther*.

(1573) explains the mixed function of the form in the preamble to his narrative.<sup>11</sup>

The murder of Master Saunders was news as it ‘ministreth great occasion of talk among al sorts of men, not only here in Towne, but also farre abrode in the Countrie, and generally thought the whole Realme’ (sig. A2r). Varied reactions to the news of the murder showed that the crime could be interpreted in different ways. So, ‘some do justly detest the horriblesse of the ungratious facte’ while others ‘lamente the grievous losse of their deare friends’; ‘some rejoyce at the commendable execution of upright justice’ and ‘the godlye bewayle the unmeasurable inclination of humane nature to extreame wickednesse and therewith magnifie Gods infinite mercie in revoking of folorne sinners to small repentance’. These are responsible, useful reactions to the news but there are others who:

delight to heare and tell news without respect of the certaintie of the truth, or regarde of dewe humanitie, every man debating of the matter as occasion or affection leades him, and few folke turning to advised consideration of Gods open judgements to the speedie reformation of their owne secrete faultes. (sig. A2r)

Golding discovers the role of the murder pamphlet in his correction of this kind of feckless reading. He declares that his narrative will give the ‘gentle reader’:

A playne declaration of the whole matter, according as the same is come to light by open triall of Justice, and voluntarie confession of the parties, that thou mayst knowe the truth to the satisfying of they mind, the avoiding of miscredite and also use the example to the amendment of thy life. (sig. A2v)

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<sup>11</sup> STC 11985. This is the same Arthur Golding (?1536-?1605) who was the translator of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1567). It is particularly appropriate that Golding was the writer of the earliest prose murder pamphlet as he showed ‘strong puritan predilections’ and translated Theodore Beza’s *Tragedie of Abraham’s Sacrifice* (1575) and works by Calvin as well as completing Sir Philip Sidney’s own translation of de Mornay’s treatise on the truth of Christianity which was printed in 1587 as *A woorke concerning the trwenesse of the Christian Religion begunne to be translated... by Sir Philip Sidney* (DNB). There is one other pamphlet extant from 1573, Henry Kirkham’s *A true reporte or description of an horrible, wofull and most lamentable murther* (London, 1573) but that is in verse and therefore outside the remit of this study.

Golding's narrative combines news with social and pious utility and delivers satisfaction to the reader. It also has limits: it does not seek to promote 'open detestation' of 'mens misdoings' but rather to show them 'either re claymed by reasonable and godly perswasion, or punished by orderly and lawfull execution, according to the qualitie of their offence'. Above all, the narrative must avoid sensationalism and therefore Golding thinks it neither 'necessarie nor expedient' to relate 'every particuler bymatter' which might 'feede the fond humor of such curious appetites as are more inquisitive of other folks offences than hastie to redresse their owne' (sig. A2v).

Such anxiety about the 'fond humor of ...curious appetites' suggests that Golding fears that readers might experience some kind of vicarious thrill from this story of adultery, witchcraft and murder, and he censors that possibility by insisting on the pamphlet's didactic role. The final pages 'shewe what is to be gathered of this terrible example, and how we oughte to apply the same to our owne behoofe' (sig. C3r). The writer of *Sundrye strange and Inhumaine Murthers* (1591), concludes with a similar wish that readers will be 'warned by these examples and inhumaine actions before recited: that wee may avoid the danger of shedding innocent blood, and feare the judgement of God' (sig. B4v).<sup>12</sup>

In *Bloody Actions Performed* (1653) the pamphleteer tells his readers:

that which is here set downe is printed to the end for Men and Women not onely to heare it and looke upon, but also consider of, and to conclude with the old Proverbe, happy are they that can take warning by other folkes harmes. (sig. B3v)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> STC 18286.5.

<sup>13</sup> Wing B3224; R12.



A pamphlet printed in 1677 - *Horrid News from St. Martins or Unheard-of Murder and Poyson* – makes it clear that the lesson is that one should accept God's judgement for wrongdoing:

she [the murderer] is at present committed to Prison, confessing still to her Crime, but begging those that come to visit her, that they would mediate for her to her Lady, to use her interest to get her a Pardon: But these conceived are vain, Childish hopes: and it will be better for her to repent, and prepare for her later End. (sigs A3v-4r)<sup>14</sup>

In 1694, the writer of the broadside, *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery* was still emphasising the didactic role of the murder narrative:

What Dreadful Remembrances have we, of the Judgements of Almighty God, shew'd against Murtherers in a most remarkable manner, as divers of our Modern Chronicles do set forth, which is enough to deter the basest Person from the Commision of so horrid a Fact as Murther. (sig. A1r)<sup>15</sup>

In the final years of the seventeenth century, this writer could refer his readers to the 'Modern Chronicles' of murder of which Arthur Golding had been one of the first exponents. He can also lament the fact that despite such a corpus of murder narratives 'yet it is daily seen how the Sin increases rather than abates: for how many Instances have we of late of this Nature, both in City and Countrey, and none will take warning till they are involv'd and insnar'd in utter Ruine' (sig. A1r).

By giving their pamphlets a pious, socially useful purpose beyond that of selling sensational news, the pamphlet writers provided a context by which readers could make sense of the murder. As a result the murder narratives became a

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<sup>14</sup> Wing H2864.

<sup>15</sup> Wing A187.

recognisable genre as well as a commodity. The provision of a moral framework for murder and an emphasis on the didactic importance of writing and reading these accounts suggests that the writers were preoccupied not only with sensational news but also with providing narrative satisfaction for their readers: they did not only want to relate the news, they wanted to tell a story, for ‘news is not what happened – yesterday, or last week – but rather stories about what happened’.<sup>16</sup>

In order to tell ‘stories about what happened’ murder pamphlets were often produced after a longer time had elapsed between the crime and its representation in print. With the advantage of time and the benefit of hindsight, the pamphleteers were able to organise terrifyingly random events into an orderly, carefully contextualized narrative and as a result they helped fashion a genre which had elements that were recognisable to both writers and readers. The corpus of prose murder pamphlets shows common conventions of narrative and style. The writers acknowledge important precursors to their own narratives, and in so doing indicate that the pamphlets have created an audience which they must continue to satisfy. This chapter will identify those generic conventions and argue that their foundations lie in Protestant piety: the understanding that murder was a sin before it was a crime and that a chain of dependency linked together humankind’s original sin, murder and the divine grace that offered a chance of salvation.

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘An early information society: News and media in eighteenth-century Paris’, *The American Historical Review*, 105 (1) (2000), 1-35, p.2. Peter Lake concurs: the murder pamphlets were not ‘about what really happened’ but how the story was presented to the readers (*The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, xviii).

### *The chain of 'divers links'*

One way of understanding the narrative structure of the murder pamphlets is to think of it as a chain – each link leading inexorably to the next and always bound to the ones that have gone before. Conceptualizing the narrative pattern of the murder pamphlets in this way has its foundations in the way the pamphleteers presented to their readers both the crime and the possibility of the penitent murderer's salvation. John Taylor illustrates this form of narrative in the opening paragraph of *The Unnaturall Father* (1621):

As a chaine consists of divers linkes, and every linke depends and is inyoak'd upon one another: Even so our sinnes, being the chaine wherewith Satan doth bind and manacle us, are so knit twisted and sodered together, that without our firme faith ascending, and Gods grace descending, wee can never be free from those infernall fetters; for Sloth is linked with Drunkenness, with Fornication and Adultery, & Adultery with Murder, and so of al the rest of the temptations, suggestions and actions wherewith miserable men and women are insnared, and led captive into perpetuall perdition, except the mercy of our gracious God be our defence and safegarde. (sig. A3r)<sup>17</sup>

The Satanic chain that Taylor imagines captures, binds, leads and enslaves humankind. The only thing that can relieve the misery of entrapment and slavery to sin is another chain composed of 'firme faith ascending' and 'God's grace descending' which links men and women to the possibility of salvation and which could anchor them against temptation if only they would grab hold of it.<sup>18</sup> Taylor shows that 'ordinary' sinfulness (Sloth) leads inevitably to exceptional sinning (Adultery and Murder) and subsequent punishment. It is this understanding of the 'chain link' of sinning which gives the murder pamphlet

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<sup>17</sup> STC 23808a.

<sup>18</sup> See also William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine, or, the description of theologie containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation, according to Gods word* (London, 1592) and John Andrewes, *Andrewes Golden Chaine to Linke the penitent sinner unto Almighty God* (London, 1645).

narrative its structure with the following stages: causes of the murder, description of the crime, detection and discovery of the murderer, trial, repentance and execution. One year before Taylor wrote *The Unnaturall Father*, Thomas Cooper divided the unusually long narrative of *The Cry and Revenge of Blood* into chapters that followed this exact scheme.<sup>19</sup> These elements are usually present in all the murder narratives and invariably in this order although occasionally one of the elements may be omitted or individual writers may place more emphasis on one than another. For example, if the account is heavily moralized more emphasis may be placed on the repentance of the murderer than a description of the murder, because that is where the lesson and narrative resolution of the crime lie. If a writer is unable to relate a murderer's penitential end because the pamphlet was printed before the execution, then he will often anticipate such a death for the reader. However, the chain of sin leading to murder extends beyond merely a logical ordering of events to a deeper structure founded on the way murder in particular, and sinning in general, was understood in the early modern period.

***'The unnaturall and inhumane sinne of Murder'***

The ostensible causes of the murders are (as one might expect) greed, sexual jealousy, anger, physical violence, and the need to effect another crime such as robbery. However, these obvious motives for murder are invariably rewritten by the pamphlet writers so that the impulse to murder can be represented as part of

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter 1: 'The providence of God in permitting and ordering such horrible witsnesse'; Chapter 2: The 'Progeny and heynousnesse' of 'the Particular sinne of Murther'; Chapter 3: 'Of the particular Murther at Halsworth'; Chapter 4: 'The Reason why howsoever other sinnes after Judgement, yet this sinne of Murther is seldom undiscovered'; Chapter 5: 'Declareth the Conviction of the Murtherers'; Chapter 6: 'Of the Condemnation and Judgement given upon the Malefactors'; Chapter 7: 'Containing the execution of the Murtherers', and Chapter 8: 'Containing the conclusion of the whole. With promise of further light' (sigs A3r-v).

the fallen human condition. Thomas Cooper identifies the causes of murder as: envy, pride, adultery, jealousy, lust, ambition, covetousness, rage, 'bitter speaking' and 'drunkenness', a list which combines the seven deadly sins with behaviour prohibited by the Ten Commandments (*Cry and Revenge of Blood*, sig. D2r). The cause of the murder, therefore, is the original sin which lies deep in the human soul and this makes murder a sacrilegious act. It was an 'Act of Impiety...to offer violence to anothers Person, and destroy...the Image of God in our Fellow-creature' and therefore, it 'cannot but be esteemed a dreadful crime'.<sup>20</sup> Murder was a sin before it was a crime – 'how execrable a thing, the unnaturall and inhumane sinne of Murder is in the sight of God' - and this understanding meant that there was a causal relationship between sinning and murder.<sup>21</sup> Without exception the murderers are shown leading a life of unrepentant sinning which has a cumulative effect. The more they drink, gamble, commit adultery and swear the more likely they are to commit murder. Francis Cartwright wrote of his own life:

My youth and the morning of my dayes was clouded with a stubborne and head-strong disobedience to my Parents, the first and worst note of a desperate and obstinate sinner...Upon this foundation of my disobedience, the Devill began to build a Mansion for himselfe to inhabite, and so grew my soule a Cage of uncleane Birds, wherein many foule sinnes were bred, and grew to such strength, that I was mastered by them: One impietie begat another, yet still I thought myselfe not sufficiently flesht in wickednesse, till I defaced the image of God, first in my owne soule...and then in anothers body, by homicide.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wing M2932 *Most Wicked, Cruel, Bloody and Barbarous News from Northampton* (1676), sig. A2r.

<sup>21</sup> STC 10582 *A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell murther comitted by one Enoch ap Evan* (1633), sig. A2r. See also: *The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, sigs C4v-D1v.

<sup>22</sup> STC 4704 *The Life Confession and Heartie Repentance of Francis Cartwright* (1621), sig. A3r-v.

By using the linked narrative the writers demonstrate their acceptance of the causal relationship between sin and the propensity to murder. In 1598, the writer of Henry Robson's story of extravagance, debt, imprisonment and wife-murder, suggests that 'when Lucifer had found a meanes how to accomplish his will, he never left him, 'til by his divillish practices he had brought him to the gallowes'.<sup>23</sup> Margaret Ferneseede's murder of her husband is directly linked to her sexual promiscuity: because she 'regarded not either into what eare the loathsomenesse of her life was sounded, or into what bed of lust her lascivious body was transported' her move to murder was inevitable.<sup>24</sup> Nor were such terrible events confined to those of low social status: the corruption of sin and murder was also evident in gentry households. 'Maister Calverley', a gentleman from Yorkshire, although at first a virtuous young man, broke his betrothal vow to one young woman and married another instead.<sup>25</sup> The author regards the breach of promise as so serious that he describes Calverley's subsequent marriage as bigamous – the first young woman was 'by private assurance made Maister Calverleys best beloved wife' and she was a wife 'if vowes may make a wife' (sig. A2r). The breaking of this vow undermines Calverley's virtue and sets him on the road to murder:

He was so altered in disposition from that which he was, and so short from the perfection which he had, as a body dying is of life flourishing: and where before his thoughts onely studied the relish of vertue, and her effects, his actions did now altogether practise the unprofitable taste of vice, and her fruites. For though he were a man of good renew as before, hee continued his expence in exceeding riot, that he was forced to morgage his lands, run in great debts, entangle his friends by being bound for him, and in

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<sup>23</sup> STC 21131 *The Examination, confession and condemnation of Henry Robson, Fisherman of Rye, who poisoned his wife in the strangest maner that ever hitherto hath bin heard of* (1598) sig. A2r.

<sup>24</sup> STC 10826 *The Araignment & burning of Margaret Ferne-seede for the Murther of her Late husband* (1608), sig. A2v.

<sup>25</sup> STC 18288 *Two most unnaturall and bloodie Murthers* (1605).

short time so weakened his estate...he grew into a discontent, which so swaid him he would sit sullenly, walke melancholy. (sig. A3v)

The 'discontent' brought about by Calverley's own sinfulness leads him to the murder of two of his three children and the attempted murder of his wife. Fifty years later, Arthur Knight lamented the connection between his sinfulness and the murder he had committed, 'for as Folly perswaded me to lead a sinful life; so Justice hath at length brought me to a sorrowful end'.<sup>26</sup> In 1668, a young apprentice, Thomas Savage, killed a fellow servant who disturbed him whilst he was stealing his master's money. One of the pamphlets describing his crime and subsequent repentance, calls him a 'meer Monster in Sin' who never once 'knew what it was to hear one whole sermon, but used to go in at one door and out at the other'.<sup>27</sup>

The links between a failure to honour one's parents, rejection of religious instruction and a life of sinfulness leading inevitably to murder that were established in the stories of Cartwright, Calverley and Savage are also evident in *The True Narrative of the Execution of John Marketman, Chyrurgian, of West ham in Essex*, printed in 1680.<sup>28</sup> Marketman was a wife-murderer who, 'had been very disobedient to his too Indulgent Parents, and...spent his Youthful days in Profanation of the Sabbath and licentious evils of Debaucheries beyond expression' (sig. A2v). The stylistic similarities to earlier pamphlets suggest that such descriptions were expected and easily provided by the pamphlet writers. However, this particular writer reproduces Marketman's sinful life in his

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<sup>26</sup> Wing K684 *The Speeches and Confession of Arthur Knight & Thomas Laret* (1653), sig. A3r.

<sup>27</sup> Wing A997 *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* (1671), sig. A2v.

<sup>28</sup> Wing T2790.

description of the actual murder, for on that day Marketman ‘came home very much debauched and distempered in Drink’, a state which ‘perplexed his Jealous mind’, allowing ‘Satan to prompt him on to the execution of that he had predetermined’, the fatal stabbing of his pregnant wife (sigs A1v-2r). The continuing importance of this narrative model as a generic characteristic is demonstrated by a broadside printed in 1695. *A Full and True Account of the Penitent Behaviour, Last Dying Words, & Execution of Edmund Allen*<sup>29</sup> tells how Allen’s rejection of his ‘good Parentage’ and education for a life of ‘Follies and Extravagances’, bigamy and the ‘Company of Lewd-Women’ led him to abuse and then poison his wife. His story is given an explicitly pious framework, with the author warning his readers to take heed of this ‘Fatal Example of the Justice of God’ and to consider the ‘great and eminent Hazard of their Pretious and Immortal Souls’ if they (like Edmund Allen) go ‘rushing...to their Destruction’ (sig. A1r). In 1700, readers were still being warned of the inescapable chain of events which could take an affluent young man from the comfort of a paternal inheritance, through ‘drunkennese and whoreing’, to penury, robbery and matricide.<sup>30</sup>

The ‘unfortunate end’ to which sinning brings the murderers is made inevitable by their original sin. According to reformed Protestant theology, the deformity of original sin could only be redeemed by divine grace. The murder pamphlets show only too well that there was no such thing as earthly perfectibility, and

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<sup>29</sup> Wing F2308B.

<sup>30</sup> Wing U88aA: *The unnaturall son, or, a sad and deplorable relation, of the unfortunate end of H. Jackson... who having spent the estate his father left him, in drunkenness and whoreing, murdered his own mother and robb'd the house.*



although the felons do indeed make unfortunate ends both in terms of their crimes and the ignominy of a public execution, the last link in the chain was that of penitence, giving hope of salvation and redemption. Evidence of a ‘serious Repentance’ (*Penitent Behaviour...of Edmund Allen*, sig. A1v) provided a dramatic contrast between the depths of a murderer’s sinfulness and the heights to which their penitence might take them. In this way the murder narrative is an exaggerated allegory of any Christian’s spiritual journey through life: from the perdition of original sin to the assurance of salvation through belief in Christ. Crime and criminal share a history, the trajectory of which can be traced from birth to death. Such an emphasis, narrated through the linked narrative, shows how much the murder pamphlets were part of the spirituality Calvinism engendered, a spirituality which because of its ideas of original sin, divine providence, penitence and redemption, demanded rigorous self-examination and physical evidence of the workings of divine grace. So influential was this model that pamphlets written later in the century when Calvinist theology was no longer as dominant as it had been, cannot quite shake it off. For example, in *Three Inhumane Murthers Committed By one Bloody Person upon His Father, his Mother and his Wife at Cank in Staffordshire* (1675),<sup>31</sup> the writer finds the cause of an ‘Unhappy Young Man’s’ murderousness in his ‘want of...Education’ rather than in his sinfulness. It is a lack which is:

too often occasioned by the Parents dying in their Childrens Minority, leaving them to the Wide World, and the too much freedom of their own Wills; which too often proves the Ruine and Destruction of many a Good Mans Child. (sig. A1r)

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<sup>31</sup> Wing T1093E.

However, despite this suggestion that the understanding of the causation of murder had shifted, *Three Inhumane Murthers* then reverts to descriptions of how the young man's 'flashing, lying and Prodigality' brought him to the murder of his family with poison. Although the writer at first excludes any sense of religion from this account once the murderer is imprisoned religiosity returns. When his accomplice – 'that naughty woman [who] had bewitched him to commit this horrid fact' – was arrested and brought to the prison 'he fell down upon his Knees, and Pray'd God to forgive him all his Sins (sigs A3r-v). He refused to plead at his trial and was pressed to death but died 'very penitent' and 'went with Courage down stares to the place appointed for Execution'(sig. A3v).

An understanding of the unbreakable link between sin and murder also informs the few pamphlets which document the executions of those who maintained their innocence of murder right up to the moment of their deaths. Elizabeth Caldwell chose to re-interpret the crime for which she was dying as adultery rather than murder,<sup>32</sup> a choice also made by John Barker when he denied infanticide but admitted to adultery.<sup>33</sup> Rather than re-interpreting the crimes for which they were condemned, John Hutchins and Francis Newland both maintained their innocence of murder but accepted their deaths as just punishment for lives of unrepentant sinning.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> STC 4704 *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604). A detailed analysis of this pamphlet is undertaken in Chapter 2.

<sup>33</sup> Wing C52, Thomason E1290[3] *The arraignment of hypocrisie or a looking-glasse for murderers* (1652).

<sup>34</sup> Wing T2355A *A True Account of the Behaviour, Last Dying Words and Execution of John Hutchins* (1684); Wing M2256A *Mistaken Justice or, Innocence Condemn'd in the Person of Francis Newland* (1695). These pamphlets are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

### *The 'awful Fact'*

In the murder pamphlets, the actual murder is only one link in the chain and the details of it are not nearly as important as those of the discovery of the murderers, or their penitential deaths. The didactic significance of the narrative lies not in the amount of blood spilt but in how the forces of divine and secular justice revealed the murder and how God's mercy was demonstrated in the murderer's penitence and salvation. It is a critical cliché that these pamphlets are 'bloody', 'sensational' and 'pornographic' in their descriptions of murder<sup>35</sup> but this is not borne out by an extended analysis of their range over the seventeenth century. Certainly, the titles suggest that there will be plenty of blood but there is often a disjunction between the advertisement for the narrative and the narrative itself. The description of George Saunder's murder in 1573 is only two sentences long, and is devoid of bloody adjectives (*Briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders*, sig. A3v). Anyone purchasing *A Pitillesse Mother* in 1616 would have got the horrific story of an infanticide promised by the title and the lurid woodcut on the title-page (see illustration between pp. 173-4). However, the details of the murder are scant compared to the anti-Catholic propaganda of the rest of the pamphlet. The reader must digest 4 pages of warnings against the 'infectious burthen of Romish opinions' and the 'subtill sophistry' of 'Romaine Wolves' and their influence on Margret Vincent, before reaching the description of how she strangled two of her children which occupies barely a page. The remaining four pages of the pamphlet are devoted to documenting her conversion back to Protestantism and her exemplary, penitent death. *The Bloody Husband* (1653) does give a blood-soaked account of Adam

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<sup>35</sup> Lake describes the 'gory titillating details which were such a marked feature of so many of the pamphlets' (*Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 161).

Sprackling's sadistic murder of his wife, but this is just one paragraph of a fourteen page pamphlet.<sup>36</sup> The pamphlet writer is much more interested in establishing Sprackling's rebellious political allegiances; describing his trial (6 pages), and extrapolating the lessons to be learned by his readers. *An Account of the Execution and Last Dying Speeches of Thomas Watson and Thomas Gourdon* (1687), records the fact that Thomas Watson was condemned for 'Killing Mary Watson his Wife...by giving her a Mortal Wound with his Bionet' (sig. A1r) but beyond this ignores the crime completely, focussing entirely on Watson's printed confession and prayer.<sup>37</sup> Four extant accounts of the murder of Dr. Andrew Clench in 1692 give no description of the murder at all (apart from recording it as a 'Fact') again concentrating instead on the figure of the murderer and his penitential behaviour.<sup>38</sup>

These are only four examples of an important characteristic of the majority of the murder pamphlets. It is always unwise to generalize too much about the murder pamphlets for there are examples where the descriptions of the murders are more extended and bloody, however even in these cases it is often difficult to categorize them as gratuitous as invariably they contain a purpose, whether that is overtly expressed or not. For example, *Murther, Murther* has a gruesome account of the effects of poison on Anne Hamton's husband. His body was:

As wofull a spectacle as was sufficient to exhaust tears from the driest eye composed of Pumice stone...his nayles quite pilled of, his hands did seeme onely like two great boyles, his belly seemed as if hot irons had been thrust into it, his visage was so much

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<sup>36</sup> Wing 3254; Thomason E.697 [10].

<sup>37</sup> Wing A286B.

<sup>38</sup> Wing A3765 *The Arraignment, Tryal, Conviction and Condemnation of Henry Harrison, Gent. For the Barbarous Murther of Andrew Clenche*; Wing H892 *The Last words of a Dying Penitent*; Wing H893 *A True Copy of a Letter Writen by Mr. Harrison*; Wing R2069 *Mr. Harrison Proved the Murtherer*.

defaced by the quick operation of the scalding poison, that had they not well knowne the body, they would have sworne it not to have beene the man which they came to visit: they all easily perceived that he was poisoned. (sig. A4r)

‘They’ in this account are the neighbours who enter the Hamtons’ house after the murder has been committed. However they are not represented as just idle spectators but as witnesses to the fact of the murder and what the writer records is as much evidence as news. Equally, the narrative suggests that the readers should not be idle either but should take heed of the lesson of the story. From a commercial point of view, as this pamphlet was printed before Anne Hamton’s trial the writer has little to offer his readers beyond this startling account of the murder and some moralizing on the ‘abomination’ of wives who disobey and murder their husbands. As he promises his readers a subsequent ‘more perfect relation’ of her trial and execution, *Murther, Murther* becomes an advertisement for further narratives by the same writer.

In *Murther, Murther* the pamphlet is used as a way of recording the evidence of murder, publicizing the details of something that would otherwise remain hidden, participating in the public discovery of the crime and the criminal. This function is also clear in two extant accounts of the murder of William Storre: *The Manner of the cruell outrageous murther of Master William Storre* (1603) and *Three Bloodie Murthers* (1613).<sup>39</sup> I argue in Chapter 2 that far from being a gratuitous depiction of a particularly savage crime, these detailed accounts of Storre’s murder were a way of detailing evidence against the murderer, Francis Cartwright, who (unusually) managed to evade justice and was never punished for this murder to which he openly admitted. That the descriptions of the actual

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<sup>39</sup> STC 23295; STC 18287.

murders were open to manipulation for political and/or commercial reasons is also evident in the four extant pamphlets about the murder of John Knight by his friend Nathaniel Butler. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how the manipulation of the descriptions of this murder by at least two of the pamphlet writers allowed an accusation of sodomy to arise from what was otherwise a straightforward murder story.

### *Discovery and detection*

If the description of the murder is sometimes underdeveloped, then the part of the narrative that deals with detection and discovery receives much more attention. This is because the process by which a murderer was apprehended demonstrated the relationship between divine and human justice. For the most part, this meant that divine providence and human agency were shown working together to secure justice. The expectation of the demonstration/intervention of divine providence links directly to the understanding of murder as a sacrilegious act and the perception of the murderer as a sinner who must be (or is predestined to be) saved. The execution of a murderer demonstrated an effective secular justice system; his/her penitence and salvation demonstrated God's mercy.

Discovery counteracted the fundamental concealment of murder. The word derives from the Old German 'murdrum', meaning 'hidden' and the malice aforethought which legally differentiates the crime from manslaughter is usually of necessity hidden from the victim or others who might seek to prevent it.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The term 'wilful murder' was probably used for the first time in statutes during the reign of Henry VIII (Theodore Plucknett, *A Concise History of Common Law* (London: Butterworth, 1956), 5<sup>th</sup> edn., p. 442). Homicide with 'malice aforethought' was regarded as the worst form of this crime (as opposed to 'justifiable' or 'excusable' homicide) and was distinguished by the term

However, as the pamphlet writers like to point out, ‘murder is a crying sin and of it self, commonly its own discoverer’.<sup>41</sup> The relationship between concealment and revelation is captured by the writers of *A murderer punished and pardoned*:

Blood doth cry aloud; the blood of man, when violently shed by cruel hands: for private revenge or covetousness, or the satisfaction of some such base lust doth cry as far from Earth to Heaven for vengeance: And howsoever some horrible Murders may be secretly plotted, and as secretly effected, yet seldom are they long unpunished.<sup>42</sup>

The murder and the identity of the murderer will be revealed either by ‘the guilty-accusing consciences of such persons who have committed this heinous crime’ or by ‘the all-seeing eye of a Sin-revenging God’ (sig. A2r). It is common for the murderers to be shown acknowledging, as George Strangwayes does, ‘the immediate hand of God to be in this wonderfull detection’.<sup>43</sup>

The pamphlet writers show divine providence working in different ways to ensure the revelation of the murder and the murderer. They represent the most desirable way for murder to be revealed as the free confession of the murderer, instigated by his/her tormented conscience. This conscience, the evidence of the power of God working against the inherent evil of humanity, is summoned into action by various means. Firstly, there is the horror induced by committing the crime. After his murder of George Saunders, George Browne was ‘stricken with such a terrour and agonie of harte, as he wist not what to do’, and was unable to look at one of Saunders’ ‘little young children’ without being in danger of

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‘murder’ from the latter part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1497, killing by malice aforethought was excluded from the list of ‘clergyable’ felonies (Sir William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law* (London: Methuen, 1924), III, pp. 310-316.

<sup>41</sup> Wing U86 *The Unnaturall Grandmother* (1659), sig. A2r.

<sup>42</sup> Wing A996, sig. A2r.

<sup>43</sup> Wing U68; Thomason E.972[10 *The unhappy marksman* (1659), sig. C2r..

‘swounding in the street’. This was ‘a notable example of Gods terrible wrath in a guiltie and bloodie conscience’ (*A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders*, sigs A3v-4r). If the terror immediately following the murder was not enough then hearing a sermon could prompt a dormant conscience into life. One of the *Two most unnaturall and bloodie Murthers* recounted in a pamphlet of 1605 was ‘The cruell murther of Maister Browne in Suffolke’, in which his servant, Peter Golding, conspired with Browne’s wife to murder him. After the murder, with the murderer as yet undiscovered, the local vicar vowed that he would ‘ingage my howers in prayers to heaven, and practice on earth, to bring out this deede darker than night, that Justice may right herself on so humane a wrong’. When this ‘worthy divine’ preached a ‘heavenly sermon to terrifie murtherers’ at Browne’s funeral, Golding ‘sate like one had laine six daies in a grave, no construction could be made from his words but frenzie, nor form his actions but distraction’. Finally Golding ‘forced his tongue...to reveale the treason his hand did’ prompted by ‘the terror of God’s power from his [the vicar’s] tongue’ (sigs D2v-3r).

However, if murderers still concealed their guilt then supernatural interventions could make it public. Such interventions included cruentation (fresh bleeding from the wounds on a corpse in the presence of the murderer), miraculous portents and apparitions. In 1581, William Sherwood quarrelled with and killed a fellow prisoner in the Queen’s Bench prison where they were imprisoned for recusancy.<sup>44</sup> Despite the presence of eye-witnesses Sherwood vehemently denied the murder but, ‘he being brought to the slaine bodie, the blood which

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<sup>44</sup> STC 22432 *A true report of the late horrible murther committed by William Sherwood* (1581).



settled, issues out a freshe' (sig. A4v). One of the 'sundrye strange and inhumaine murthers' recounted in a pamphlet printed ten years later was 'a declaration of the monstrous crueltie of a Father that hired one to murder three of his owne children'.<sup>45</sup> At the inquest into the children's deaths not only did 'their wounds began to bleede afresh' in the presence of the murderer, but also:

Behold the wonderfull workes of God, for the fact being still denied, the bodies of the children, which seemed white like unto soaked flesh laid in water, sodainely received their former colour of bloude, and had such a lively countenance flushing in theyr faces, as if they had been living creatures lying asleepe.

At this sight the murderer confessed, and accused the father 'as principal procurer of their untimely deaths'. The lesson is spelt out for the reader:

thus may you see how murtherers are overtaken, and their actions opened by themselves, yea if there were no body to accuse the Murtherer, the murdered coarse would give evidence against him. It hath bene a meane appointed by the Lord to discerne the Murtherer. (sig. A4r)

In this pamphlet divine providence not only revealed the murderer but also provided the evidence against him. The influence of stories of cruentation is apparent in a much later pamphlet but the story of how Henry Jones' guilt for his mother's murder was revealed also shows a shift in the understanding of what was considered adequate proof.<sup>46</sup> After the discovery of his mother's body, Henry Jones was brought to view her corpse but the writer records that there was no bleeding from her wounds which would allow an accusation to be made against him. However, once he was in the room some bloody footsteps left by the

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<sup>45</sup> STC 18286.5 *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers lately committed* (1591).

<sup>46</sup> Wing B3259 *The Bloody Murtherer or, the Unnatural Son his Just Condemnation* (1672).

body were 'found to fit the feet of Henry Jones', this was taken as incontrovertible proof of his guilt and he was arrested (sig. B4r).<sup>47</sup>

Miraculous events or portents were also represented as part of the discovery of murder. The writer of *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers*, described to his readers how on 'the same night & three nights after' the murder of Master Page by his wife and her lover, 'there was seen an ugly thing like a Beare...bearing about him a linnen cloth representing the instrument wherewith the saide M. Padge was murdered', as well as a raven that hanged itself and a ship that 'turned her selfe around' (sig. B4v). Annis Dell and her son were arrested for the murder of a three year old boy four years after the crime when his sister (whose tongue they had cut out to ensure her silence) miraculously regained the power of speech.<sup>48</sup> In a similar fashion, Elizabeth James was revealed as the murderer of her serving maid when the only witness to the murder - 'a poore dumb woman' whose efforts to tell everyone of what she had seen through 'signes and dumb shewes' had been fruitless - was suddenly understood at the same time as a dog dug up the corpse (*Three Bloodie Murthers*, sig. C2v). In this last example, the writer shows the discovery of the physical evidence of the corpse being matched (and confirmed) by the woman's oral evidence which was revealed through the power of divine providence.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For another later example of cruentation see *A True Relation of the Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death of Elizabeth Ridgeway* (1684).

<sup>48</sup> STC 6552 *The horrible murder of a young boy of three yeres of age, whose sister had her tongue cut out* (1606); STC 6553 *The most cruell and bloody murther committed by a Innkeepers Wife, called Annis Dell...four yeeres since* (1606).

<sup>49</sup> See also: *A true report of the horrible murther which was committed in the house of Sir Jerome Bowes* (1607); *Newes from Perin in Cornwall* (1618).

Apparitions were also important in counteracting the fundamental concealment of murder, again supplying the deficiency of a conscience troubled enough to confess freely. The writer of *Strange and Wonderful News from Durham or the Virgins Caveat against Infant-Murther* (1679) describes how an apparition of Mistress Elizabeth B's murdered baby appeared nightly to Mary Coward, a neighbour of the washer woman who was the only other person who knew about the murder.<sup>50</sup> The ghost speaks the name of its murderer and the place of its burial (sig. A3r). After the appearance of the murdered baby's ghost rumours begin and its grave is discovered; a discovery which leads to the arrest and imprisonment of the 'beauteous Elizabeth'. The lesson is clear: 'if we be guilty of such grievous sins, he [God] will send one from the Dead to detect us in this World, and condemn us' (sig. A3v). In *A Strange and Wonderfull Discovery of a horrid and cruel Murther committed fourteen yeares since* (1662), the murderer is discovered by the 'frequent Apparitions of a Spirit in several shapes and habits unto Isabel Binnington, the wife of William Binnington, the now inhabitants of the house where this most execrable murder was committed' (sig. A1r).<sup>51</sup> Like cruentation, the apparition is regarded as reliable evidence.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Wing E6A.

<sup>51</sup> Wing S5845.

<sup>52</sup> See also: Wing W3358A *The wonder of this age: or Gods miraculous revenge against murder... How the skull of a person (murdered about thirty years agoe, in an Inn) was found... How likewise an apparition oblig'd one that was lately come to live in the house to divulge it* (1677); Wing S5881A *A strange, but true, relation of a most horrid and bloody murder committed on a traveller about thirty years ago... here is also an account of an apparition to a certain person that was made executor of a will* (1678); Wing A187 *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery, Committed on the Body of Captain Brown... with the most strange, wonderful and miraculous discovery of the same... by the Apparition of the Gentlemans Spirit* (1694), and Wing S4378 *A true account of the robbery and murder of John Stockden... and the discovery of the murderers by the several dreams of Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Greenwood* (London, 1698).

These examples show that supernatural elements were an important part of the representation of the discovery of murderers in pamphlets throughout the century. Apart from allowing the identification of another characteristic of the genre, they also document the relationship between providence and evidence in the apprehension and condemnation of murderers. There is no simple or gradual shift from a superstitious belief in the reliability of cruentation to the rationality of empirical evidence and courtroom testimony. The pamphlet accounts of the influence of apparitions all come from the second half of the century, while the importance of what we would now term 'forensic' evidence is clear in pamphlets from the first half.<sup>53</sup> For example, Margaret Ferneseede's arrest for the murder of her husband in 1608 is brought about by the evidence provided by her 'boy' of her adultery, her threats to her husband, and the 'disquietness, rage and distemperature of their marriage' (*The Araignement & burning of Margaret Ferne-seede*, sig. A4v). After her arrest she denies the murder and pleads not guilty at her trial but because witnesses attest to her attempts to poison her husband she is convicted and condemned. The writer of *A Full and the Truest Narrative of the most Horrid, Barbarous and Unparalleled Murder* (1657) inserts the successful apprehension of Nathaniel Butler into a framework of divine providence asserting that not only are all the events of John Knight's murder 'a clear Testimony of Gods Providence and Justice' but 'in a perfect and full discovery of the Murderer, the onely hand of God was manifest' (sigs B1r-2v). However, although the author claims that God was directing everything, the actual description he gives of Butler's arrest in fact emphasises the vital role played by human effort and observation. Someone notices scratches on Butler's

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<sup>53</sup> This idea of a gradual shift from providence to evidence is proposed by Malcolm Gaskill. See *Crime and Mentalities*, pp. 242-243.

hands and becomes suspicious after Butler 'seem[ed] smitten in his own heart, faltered in his speech, & made out of the shop with a dejected countenance' when questioned about John Knight. Butler is arrested on suspicion of murder and a search reveals:

his leather Drawers were found to be bloody, and some blood about his Cloathes, also stains of blood on his Stockings, which with the scratches on his Face and Hands, were strong presumptions that he had a hand in this Murder [...] Some of his Hair being plucked off to be compared with the Hair which was found in the young mans hand that was Murdered. (sigs B2v-3r)

The discovery of the bags of money Butler stole with 'Mr Worths mark on it' leaves no doubt of his guilt. This is detailed, physical evidence, suggesting that where possible the murder pamphleteers were eager to provide more evidence than supernatural intervention and guilty looks to convince the readers of the guilt of a suspected murderer. In this example, external proofs help to confirm the power of God's providence in revealing the murderer's identity.

### ***Trial and condemnation***

As the discovery of the murderer was represented as proof of the existence of divine providence, the guilt of the murderer could not be in doubt. This understanding is emphasised by the fact that there was no presumption of innocence in early modern law.<sup>54</sup> If a person was arraigned for a felony then guilt was assumed, and in the majority of the murder pamphlets the murderers are shown confessing and so plead guilty at their trials. From a narrative point of view, therefore, the trial could not provide any suspense. As a result the reporting of trials in the pamphlets varies: sometimes they are represented in detail but

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<sup>54</sup> J.H. Baker, 'Criminal Courts and Procedure at Common Law 1550-1800' in J.S. Cockburn (ed), *Crime in England 1550-1800* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 34, 39.

elsewhere they will only be mentioned in passing. If a trial is represented in detail then there is a narrative intention beyond that of demonstrating that a legal necessity had taken place. In such cases, trials are shown as an opportunity for public scrutiny of the deportment of the murderers which indicated their penitence for the crimes they had committed. By describing the trials of murderers, the pamphlet writers were once again participating in making murder a public matter.

At his trial, George Strangways appeared with 'a countenance that carried in it a mixture of courage and contrition, being as such as seemed rather dejected for offending the Law of God, then any wayes terrified for any torments that could be inflicted upon him by the Laws of man' (*The Unhappy Marksman*, sig. C2r). In 1675, Elizabeth Lillyman was convicted of the murder of her husband.<sup>55</sup> At her trial, the pamphlet writer observed that she 'behaved herself very strangely, seeming altogether unconcerned at what she had done and laughing at it'. Unusually, she entered a plea of not guilty although, 'when required to plead to it, she fell into a kind of raveing, crying out, *She must see her Husband, and she would not plead till she had him there*'. The writer suggests that such behaviour was 'but a faigned Artifice or piece of dissimulation'. This claim, intended to preclude any sympathy for her is supported by her alleged lack of penitence for her 'extravagant and expensive' life, in which she showed herself as lazy and possessed of sexual desire inappropriate for an elderly woman. The husband she murdered was a 'lusty, comely man' who was half her age and she killed him in a jealous rage (sig. A4r-v). It is clear that the public scrutiny of 'the smallest

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<sup>55</sup> Wing C5647.1 *A Compleat Narrative of the Tryal of Elizabeth Lillyman* (1675).

outward gesture' for its 'spiritual significance' started a long time before a condemned felon climbed the ladder to the gallows.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to Elizabeth Lillyman, another husband murderer, Marie Hobry, was represented more sympathetically. Part of the reason for this was her obvious penitence, her 'heartly and unfeigned sorrow for my offence, which I hope may stand as a monument to succeeding Ages'.<sup>57</sup> However, the writer of *A cabinet of grief* does suggest that there could be an alternative ending for murder pamphlets other than the one of retribution on the gallows followed by eternal salvation. This possibility arises because Hobry was an abused wife, certainly beaten and possibly raped and sodomized by her husband.<sup>58</sup> In *A cabinet of grief* she describes her trial:

Being brought to the Court of Justice, in order to tryal the Fact I confest, and *Guilty* was all I cou'd plead, but the Court in tenderness bid me put my self upon Tryal, notwithstanding all I had said, but *Conscience* told me 'twas true, I only pleaded Guilty, which was recorded. (sig. B1r)

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<sup>56</sup> *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 241.

<sup>57</sup> Wing C188 *A cabinet of grief or, the French Midwives Miserable Moan for the Barbarous Murther committed upon the Body of her Husband* (1688), sig. A2r. Three other accounts of this murder are extant: Wing A319D *An Account of the Manner, Behaviour and Execution of Mary Aubry* (1688); Wing H1384 *A Hellish Murder* (1688), and Wing W935 *A warning-piece to all married men and women* (1688). This last is a verse version of Hobry's confession which is recorded in *A Hellish Murder*. *A cabinet of grief*, *A Hellish Murder* and *A warning-piece* seem to be aimed (socially and intellectually) at three different levels of readership.

<sup>58</sup> *A cabinet of grief* (supposedly written by Hobry herself) describes her husband as 'profligate' and reports his 'abuses' of her, although it does not go into detail. *A Hellish Murder* contains two references to Denis Hobry forcing his wife to commit 'the most Unnatural of Villainies' and the description of the events leading up to the murder suggests that he raped her (sig. F1r). This series of pamphlets also has significant political implications. Marie and Denis Hobry were French and the different versions of this murder were printed in the year of the Glorious Revolution. Representations of Frenchness, popery and murder are often tied closely together and linked in turn to political crises in the seventeenth century (for a detailed discussion of anti-papist propaganda and murder see Chapter 3). However, Marie Hobry is portrayed sympathetically in the pamphlets; it is even possible to suggest that she is appropriated into a Protestant scheme of penitence. The accusation of 'unnatural' sexual practices levelled against Denis Hobry is stereotypical of the representation of Catholics.

This description suggests that in Hobry's case a plea of not guilty might have been successful. It appears that the evidence of her penitence combined with that of her husband's abuse could have mitigated against her condemnation. The readers are offered an alternative narrative which reflects the documented reality of the possibility of clemency, even in cases of murder.

In earlier pamphlets the writers were keen to show their readers that sin was always found out and always punished. Humans were 'naturally' wicked (and therefore unquestionably guilty) and the only possibility of redemption came from God's punishing mercy which was firstly demonstrated through the legal system and then through the divine gift of penitence. Murder itself was evidence that Satan continued to work in the world and that all Protestant readers should be alert to his influence on them. Marie Hobry's account of her murder of her husband acknowledges that 'the Devil was busie within me' and she turns to the 'assisting grace of God' to help 'prepare my soul for Eternity' (*A cabinet of grief*, sigs A3r-4v). She, therefore, adheres to the narrative conventions of the murder pamphlets even while the judge at her trial offers her an alternative ending, as well as offering the pamphlet's readers an alternative context for the interpretation of murder. That such interpretations were increasingly possible by the end of the seventeenth century is demonstrated by the writer of *Most Wicked, Cruel, Bloody and Barbarous News from Northampton*, written in 1676.<sup>59</sup>

Unlike his predecessors he refuses to assert a murderer's guilt before the trial:

But whether he voluntarily and with premeditation designed to anticipate her [his mother] Destiny, I shall not venture to assert; since the Law (that equal arbiter of Life and Death) hath not yet given its final award: and therefore I shall only relate matter of

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<sup>59</sup> Wing M2932.



Fact, leaving the Crime in mists only of a violent Suspicion, till Time shall bring Truth to light, and Justice pass a determination of the Case. (sig. A3r)

*A Hellish Murder* (probably written by Roger L'Estrange) seeks to reassert the justness of Marie Hobry's condemnation and therefore the primacy of 'Justice', by offering its readers a full record of her examination and the depositions taken from witnesses which would have been presented in court had she pleaded not guilty. The questions raised by *A cabinet of grief* are firmly subdued by publicly documenting, not some supernatural confirmation of her guilt, but 'Candidly and Conscientiously' giving a 'Just and Punctual Account of all the Informations in the Cause of Marie Hobry' (*A Hellish Murder*, sig. F3v). Here, a pamphlet is used to narrate a trial that never happened in order to dispel the 'Freaks and Crotchets' placed in the 'Heads and Minds of the Common People' by a rival account.

### ***Penitence and execution***

The final links in the narrative are those of penitence and execution, and here, despite evidence of attitudinal shifts towards the role of divine intervention in the administration of justice, the role of God is never in doubt. As the crime of murder is always represented as emerging from human sinfulness it is important that the narrative of murder is resolved in the demonstrable repentance and salvation of the murderer:

Great sins must have great Repentance; 'tis not true except it be very deep; 'tis not true except it be for all as well as some; 'tis not true except it be for sin as sin; 'tis not true except it bewails original corruption as Davids Repentance of his Murder and Adultery, left not his depravity unlamented. (*The Bloody Murtherer or, the unnatural Son his Just Condemnation*, sig. B2v)

The writer of *A murderer punished and pardoned* makes the connection between sin, penitence and salvation explicit by a striking comparison in which the blood spilt by murder is juxtaposed with the saving blood of Christ:

But there is another Blood which doth send forth a louder cry, [then that of the murder victim] namely the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for the sins of men, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel...This blood hath such prevalency and vertue, that when it is applied by Faith unto the most notorious Malefactor guilty of Blood as well as other wickednesse, it doth outcry and drown the voice of blood and every other sin. (sig. A2r)

As we have seen, demonstrations of penitential behaviour were possible at any stage of the story but were of particular importance once the murderers were condemned as this was the point at which the process of dying began. The creation of a narrative of dying penitential murderers is examined in detail in Chapter 5. The pamphlet writers are not particularly interested in unrepentant murderers – they use them as foils but do not devote whole narratives to them.<sup>60</sup>

The penitential performances of the murderers and the lessons which could be drawn from them dominate the final pages of the murder pamphlets. The actual moment of death is given little attention, and is usually confined to an assurance that the condemned felon was ‘turned off’.<sup>61</sup> Of course, not all condemned murderers were hanged; those found guilty of petty treason were burned.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604), *The Bloody Husband* (1653), *A Murderer punished and pardoned* (1668) and *Three Inhumane Murthers Committed By one Bloody Person* (1675).

<sup>61</sup> There are two pamphlets which are more interested in the hanging itself because the murderers survived it. *A Wonder of Wonders* (1651) describes how Ann Greene survived execution for infanticide. This was taken as a sign of her innocence and so she was reprieved. In contrast, when Thomas Savage’s hanging failed (*A murderer punished and pardoned*) the successful execution took place a few hours later. See Chapter 2, pp. 131-3 for a discussion of these pamphlets.

<sup>62</sup> This was usually the execution for wives convicted of murdering (or being involved in attempting to murder) their husbands as this was defined in law as petty treason. The definition of petty treason also extended to any attempt to murder those in authority in the household. So,

However, like the description of murder itself, few words are devoted to descriptions of the physical sufferings of the murderers during their executions. In his examination of the representation of the executions of Catholics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Lake suggests that 'Protestants were reticent, even squeamish' about recounting the physical sufferings of the condemned, in contrast to Catholic writers who spared none of the details. One reason he proposes for such narrative restraint is that this was a politic attempt to emphasise that the punishment demanded by law was being dutifully carried out and so confirm the Catholic priests' status as traitors rather than martyrs. As such, it showed the monarch as moderate rather than sadistic and the condemned as stubborn and wilful rather than as charismatic martyrs (*Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp. 237-8). However, in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* the deaths of *Protestant* martyrs are described with an attention that lingers on their terrible physical sufferings. Clearly there were discourses of martyrdom which were impinged on but were not exactly the same as the discourses of penitential dying. It is equally clear that the behaviour of felons and traitors at their executions could be appropriated and interpreted in different ways. However, the murder pamphleteers always chose the path of restraint when it came to describing executions. There are, I think, two main reasons for this and both are connected with the Protestant 'craft of dying':<sup>63</sup> one is that a Protestant should meet death with physical stoicism and the other is that Protestant piety was focused on the

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Mary Jones was burned for her involvement in her brother's murder of their mother (*The Bloody Murderer or, the Unnatural Son his Just Condemnation* (1672)) and Judith Brown was burned after helping her master, John Cupper, to murder his wife (Wing S4261A *A Just Account of the Horrid Contrivance of John Cupper and Judith Brown his Servant in Poysoning his Wife* (1686)). In contrast, although self-confessedly guilty of attempting to murder her husband, Elizabeth Caldwell was hanged after being found guilty of murdering a child who accidentally ate the poisoned oatcakes meant for her husband (*A true discourse of the practices of Elizabeth Caldwell*).

<sup>63</sup> A detailed examination of this is undertaken in Chapter 5.

internal and spiritual, so that a felon's demeanour as s/he approached death was important because it was evidence of the state of his/her soul. There is a connection here to Lake's description of the different confessional appropriations of executions for treason: too much description of physical suffering could elicit a sentimental sympathy for the person being executed which would undermine the rigorous Protestant message of a stoical, penitential death.

The description of murderers' executions was important because of the opportunity they presented for the expression and recording of 'last words'. In the pamphlet written before his execution, Henry Harrison declared, 'the People expect a Confession always at the time of any Mans Execution' (*Last words of a Dying Penitent*, sig. A1r) and the writer of *Mistaken Justice* concurred, 'the speeches of dying men do, as it were, ordinarily exact more Credit than those of others' (sig. A2v). Although condemned felons, the murderers were also spiritually privileged as recipients of God's grace and therefore what they had to say was important. However, the crowds who attended early modern executions could make hearing those important last words very difficult. This vivid account of Nathaniel Butler's efforts to make himself heard shows the difficulties encountered by condemned murderers as they tried to deliver their homiletic last words:

After a little while he ascended the Ladder, and began his last speech unto the People; and but for the Presse and Noise of the Multitude he might have been heard afar off; for he strecht his voice exceedingly to be heard, insomuch that spending himself in reading of his Papers, he was seen to sweat very much, which occasioned him often wiping his Face, and encreased delay, so that he was desired to abbreviate himself in what he had to say, which accordingly he did; and delivered his Papers into the hand of Mr. *Yearwood* or some other of his acquaintance. (*A full and the truest narrative of...unparalleled murder*, sigs C1r-v)

Mr. Yearwood (the Lord Mayor's chaplain) promised that Butler's gibbet speech and the 'several conferences and discourses formerly had with him in prison...possibly hereafter...should be printed' (sig. C2r).<sup>64</sup> Once again, the pamphlets play an important role in publicizing not only the fact of the murder but the lessons that should be learned from it, made explicit by the final words of the murderers themselves. Print counteracted the deficiencies of the actual experience.<sup>65</sup>

Recording the executions of the murderers and printing their (supposed) final words gave the pamphlet writers a satisfying resolution to their narratives. The disturbing fact of the murder and the uncontrolled violence of the murderer were revealed and then contained through a narrative which had its foundations in an understanding of humanity's spiritual journey from a birth in original sin, through a life of unrepentant sinning, to a penitential death and the assurance of eternal salvation.

### *A history of murder*

While they formulated and perpetuated the conventions of the early modern murder pamphlet, these writers also created a chronicle of early modern murder

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<sup>64</sup> This appears to have been the expected course of events, particularly in the latter half of the century. See, for example: Wing B3805 *Boteler's Case... William Boteler... his last speech faithfully taken* (1678); Wing K625A *A true paper delivered by Edmund Kirk... who was executed at Tiburon... as it was written upon mature deliberation by his own hand, and delivered to a friend of his on the morning of his execution* (1684); *An account of the execution and last dying speeches of Thomas Watson & Thomas Gourdon ... with a true copy of a paper, left by Tho. Watson, in order to be published... written by his own hand in the Marshalsea prison* (1687), and Wing 979A *The last speech and confession of Nicholas Warren. I leave this paper with the S-ffs to be disposed off [sic] according to their discretion for the public good* (1696).

<sup>65</sup> The writer of *An Account of the Manner, Behaviour and Execution of Mary Aubry* (1688) was clearly too far away to hear anything at her execution and was only able to report her gestures that she 'appear[ed] very Penitent' and 'expressed much Sorrow in her Cariage and Gesture' (sig. A2v).

rooted in Biblical and classical history. The first recorded murderer (as far as the pamphlet writers are concerned) was Cain, and all of those who provide a history of murder for their readers begin here, also looking back to the ‘father of murder’ who is the ‘devill’.<sup>66</sup> The violence between Cain and Abel was symbolic of the broken relationship between man and God and Cain’s foundation of a society without God showed that violence and death were always ready to break through the veneer of civilisation. In 1620, Thomas Cooper produced a genealogy of Biblical murderers that began with Cain and proceeded through ‘Lamech the Adulterer’, David, Absalom and Ahab and concluded with the Jews’ ‘murder’ of Christ (*The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, sig. D2r). The writer of Enoch ap Evan’s story finds even more Biblical examples of premeditated killing:

When by Counsell or advise wee Insidiate the life of any, so *Herodias* is said to have slaine *John Baptist*, and *Caiaphas*, *Christ*, *Matt.* 14.8, Or when we command it to be done by the hands of others; And that is either expressly or occultly: By expresse command *Pilat* delivered the Saviour of the World to be Crucified, *Mar.* 15.15. Occultly that is when by private conspiracy wee undermine the live of others, So *David* is said to have slaine *Uriah*, *2 Sam.* 11.14. Thirdly by Sentence: that is when we consult against the Innocent and pronounce them worthy of death: So the *Pharisees* conspired against our Saviour, and the Judges against the life of *Naboth*, when at the command of *Jezabell*, they judged him to be stoned to death, *I Kings.* 21.13 (*A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell Murther*, sig. A2v)

This is an unusually detailed list, but the most important name on it is that of David. Repeatedly, murderers are compared or compare themselves to David. David was a particularly potent example because not only was he an adulterer and murderer but he was also publicly penitent, and that penitence was documented in the Psalms. What we see here is the creation of stereotypes – in this case the penitent murderer – who are measured against familiar archetypes

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<sup>66</sup> STC 12009 Henry Goodcole, *The Adulteresses Funerall Day* (1635), sig. A2v.

for the pamphlets' readers. In the creation of the penitent murderer, the other main archetype is Manasseh, the apostate king of Israel who was taken in chains to Babylon where again he demonstrated public penitence. The heading to Chapter 33 of the second Book of Chronicles of the Geneva Bible, shows why Manasseh was such an important organising figure for the murder narratives, for his story was also a 'chain-link' narrative : 'Mannaseh an idolator; He causeth Judah to err; He is led away prisoner unto Babylon; He prayeth to the Lord, and is delivered; He abolisheth idolatrie and setteth up true religion; He dieth, and Amon his son succeedeth'. The lesson of David and Manasseh was that 'even the wickedest of men, if he repent will receive God's forgiveness' (2 Kings 21).

The Biblical archetypes that writers choose can be very revealing. In his own version of the story of his murder of William Storre, Cartwright compares himself to Cain, Saul, Achitophel, Judas, Herod and Nero. All of these figures were not only murderers but also archetypes for treachery and ungovernable rages; Cartwright explains that his uncontrollable temper was the cause of his crime. However, Cartwright also uses more contemporary exemplars and chooses, 'Varney, Dansecar, Percie, Catesby, Wright and all such Murtherers, Traytors, Pirates, Theeves and unjust persons' (*The Life, Confession and Heartie Repentance*, sigs C4v-D1r).<sup>67</sup>

Cartwright's movement from Biblical archetypes to contemporary examples is typical of the murder pamphlets. The writer of *A world of wonders. A masse of*

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<sup>67</sup> According to Cartwright Sir Francis Varney was an Englishman who became a pirate after a life of 'sensualitie' and extravagance and 'turne[d] Turke', converted to Islam and died as a galley slave; Dansecar was Dutchman who also became a pirate before being murdered by the Turks. Percy, Catesby and Wright were three of the Gunpowder conspirators.

*murthers* (1595)<sup>68</sup> tells his readers that he chose his examples ‘not from straunge languages or from foraine nations which might breed some ambiguitie or doubt as touching the trueth’ but from ‘our own native Country’ (sig. A2v). This writer therefore begins an English chronicle of murder, which is the culmination of the history of murder that began with Cain. The ‘masse of murthers’ he recounts begins in the reign of Henry VI and he then describes others committed in the time of Henry VIII and Edward VI, including the story of Arden of Feversham. He concludes with examples from 1554 (a Spaniard hanged for killing an Englishman); 1571 (Rebecca Chambers burnt for her husband’s murder and Edward Bullock who murdered Arthur Hall); 1573 (‘one’ hanged for murdering a tailor); then George Saunders’ murder from 1573; another from 1584, finally bringing it up to date with two murders in Lincolnshire (sig. F1r-v).

For the purposes of this study the most significant reference is the one to George Saunders, because the pamphlet account of that murder is extant. This is one example of a murder pamphleteer explicitly referring to other printed accounts of murder in the understanding that they were addressing a specific community of readers who were familiar with them. In *The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, Cooper uses the account of a recent murder in Cornwall to illustrate his contention that, ‘the Murtherer in destroying his Brother, destroyes himselfe’:

Hath not the Father murdered the sonne comming home as a stranger, for love of his mony, & when he came to the notice thereof, did he not first murther his wife, that procured him thereto, and afterward layd violent hands upon himselfe? And did not this accident bring his onely daughter to an untimely end? (sig. D1r)

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<sup>68</sup> STC 14068.5.



Although Cooper does not refer to the pamphlet by its title, the story he describes was printed in 1618 as *Newes from Perin in Cornwall of a Most Bloody and unexampled Murther* in which a prodigal son returns home after years away at sea and, unrecognised by his family, becomes the victim of his father's and stepmother's greed. His father recognizes his son after he has murdered him, kills the wife who encouraged him in his filicide and then kills himself. The prodigal son's sister also drops down dead when she discovers this grisly pile of corpses.

The writer of *A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell murder* in 1633 reminds his readers that:

Wee may read of a Gentleman one Master *Calverlee* of Yorke-shire, who laid violent and wicked hands upon his owne Children, and intended the like unto his Wife...One *Cartwright* at *Market-Rayson* in Lincolne-shire, most foulely and upon former premeditation, murdred a Minister and Preacher of Gods word...A Gentlewoman not many yeeres since, cal'd Mistris *Vincent* of an unquestioned life and conversation...shee murdered divers of her owne sweet Children, and suffered for the fact. (sig. A3r)

The pamphlets referred to here are *Two most unnaturall and bloodie murthers* (1605); the three pamphlets documenting Francis Cartwright's crime printed in 1603, 1613 and 1621, and *The pitillesse mother* (1616). Two years later, in 1635, Henry Goodcole not only reminded *his* readers of Enoch ap Evan's story but also evoked a tradition of murder narratives that stretched back to Arden of Feversham and 'Mistresse Page of Plimouth' (*Adulteresses Funerall Day*, sigs B4v-C1r).<sup>69</sup> He brings his litany of murder up to date by recalling the recent crimes of 'Country Tom and Cranbery Besse'. This is a reference to another of Goodcole's own pamphlets, *Heavens speedie hue and cry sent after lust and*

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<sup>69</sup> The story of Page Plymouth was printed in 1591 in *Sundrye strange and inhumaine murthers*.

*murder*, also printed in 1635.<sup>70</sup> These examples show the readers of Goodcole's pamphlet that they were living in 'our latest and worst days' when 'the contempt of the feare of God and the neglect of his Sabbath' had led to 'nefarious acts, equalling if not surpassing these perpetrated in former ages' such as 'Catamatisme, Sodometry, Paracidy, many headed murders and the like' (*Adulteresses funerall day*, sig. A3v). Goodcole also appears to refer to much more recent events, news of murders that was either printed or circulating by word of mouth:

Hath not one brother in the heat of Wine slaine another in the Taverne? A sonne transpersed the very wombe in which he was conceived, and suffered for the fault upon the Gibbet? A man in his drunkennesse casts his knife upon his Wife and missing her, pointed it into the brest of his innocent child, and kild him dead in the instant: hath not the woman offered the like outrage, upon her husband in her fury, and left him dead in the place, and suffered lately for it, for remarkable example. (sig. A3v)

In 1659 the writer of *The Unnatural Grandmother* referred his readers to 'some Instances of Murders that have been committed of late and most remarkable'. These were the murder of John Knight by Nathaniel Butler to which the writer of *The Unnaturall Grandmother* claimed to have been 'an eye-witness to the disturbing of conscience, this young man [Butler] had at the remembrance of that bloody and horrid murther' and the murder committed by George Strangwayes printed in *The Unhappy Marksman* (sig. A2v).

Other contemporary or more recent historical events used by the pamphlet writers are those which involved the killing of Protestants by Catholics; this is another example of the inherent Protestantism of the murder pamphlets. When

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<sup>70</sup> STC 12010.5. The story of their murders of 'severall gentleman' also appeared in *Murder upon Murder*, a broadside ballad printed in 1635.

Cooper moves to define the ‘particular sinne of Murther’ for his readers in the second chapter of *The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, he explains:

that as Ignorance breeding Error, and so Disobedience to the Truth is the Mother of all that grosse wickednesse [murder]...so in that Popery is the chiefe and onely Patron of ignorance, so it becomes also the very Chaos of all errors and delusions, and so proves the maine Broker to all grosse and desperate wickednesse.

The ‘sinne of murther’ is the ‘chiefe darling glorious sinne’ of the ‘Scarlet-coloured Whore’ of ‘Popery’. The Catholic church is represented as the ‘progeny’ of the devil ‘that was a murtherer from the beginning’ (sigs C3v-4r).

George Crosse inserts Inigo Jeanes’ patricide into a European history of murders by Catholics including the assassinations of Henry III of France and the Prince of Orange as well as English ones beginning with, King John ‘long agoe poisoned by Monks’ and moving onto ‘our late renowned Maiden Queene more often attempted with trecheries’ and concluding with the very recent Gunpowder Plot.<sup>71</sup> Seventy years later, John Quicke, tracing the history of murder from Adam’s fall and Cain’s murder of Abel to the ‘poysoning of a whole family in Plymouth’ manages to remind his readers of the fundamental murderousness of Catholics:

How many Murders were in this One? [Cain and Abel] Mankind made and ruined altogether. Certainly they who plotted the blowing up of the King and Kingdom in One hour, they who effected the *Sicilian Vespers*, *Parisian Mattins*, and *Irish Massacres* had been all trained up and Educated in Schools of this, this old, and Grand *Abbadon*.<sup>72</sup>

Many seventeenth-century murder pamphlets participate in the construction of English Protestant historiography and this is examined in detail in Chapter 3.

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<sup>71</sup> STC 5441 George Crosse, *The Parricide Papist or Cut-throate Catholicke* (1606), sig. C1r.

<sup>72</sup> Wing Q207 *Hell Open’d or, The Infernal Sin of Murther Punished* (1676), sig. B2r.

Evoking a history of murder gave legitimacy to each writer's own murder narrative. For those with cultural pretensions the use of classical examples was particularly significant; we have already seen Francis Cartwright comparing himself to Nero. The writer of *Bloody News from Clarken-well* (1661)<sup>73</sup> illustrates his story of murder arising from 'love...grown beyond the wiser bounds of Reason' and 'that ever-waking Devil Jealousie' with a reference to the 'inhumane story of *Clytemnestra*' and 'the adulterer *Egysthus*' (sig. A2r). In 1616, the infanticide Margret Vincent was compared to the 'fierce and bloody Medea' (*A pitillesse mother*, sig. A3v). Although expressly concerned with 'cut-throate Catholickes', George Crosse still manages one reference to the murder of the Roman emperor Mauritius by Phocas (*Parricide Papist*, sig. B4v). In *The Adulteresses Funerall Day*, Henry Goodcole provides his readers with an extract, in Latin, from Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Ovid describes the Age of Iron. Goodcole provides a translation and then traces the legal prohibitions against murder from 'the Civill Lawes of the [Roman] Empire' stating that 'in the flourishing State of *Rome*, there were many temperers of poyson' (sig. A3r), providing classical as well as Biblical antecedents for Alice Clarke's murder of her husband in London in 1635. However, 'pagan' examples were less suitable for Protestant narratives than Biblical ones, so although there are enough classical examples to make them worthy of mention they are always outweighed by English and scriptural ones.

The history of murder – Biblical, classical and contemporary - was used to prove the wickedness of early modern England, emphasising the need for the spiritual

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<sup>73</sup> Wing B3264

vigilance advocated by the pamphlets for, 'England had never so much worke for a Chronicler, never such turnings, tossings, and mutabilities, in the lives of men and women; and the streames of their Fortunes'.<sup>74</sup> This general wickedness (often portrayed as apocalyptic) could also be used to underline the exceptional wickedness of a particular murderer. One of the most striking examples of this use of the historical narrative of murder is found in the story of Elizabeth Ridgeway.<sup>75</sup> In *A True Relation of Four Most Barbarous and Cruel Murders* her crimes are inserted into a familiar history of murder:

Adam being once fallen from the state of Innocency and driven from that Paradise of Pleasure and Security wherein God had placed him, instead of the sublime Life, to be as Gods, which the Devil had promised upon Eating the Forbidden Fruit, he put them upon the destruction of one another...the greatest piece of Manhood we first hear of was an Endeavour to destroy Humane kind. And that the Arch-enemy of Man might effect the utter Destruction of that Creature whose Excellent Creation he so much envied, whilst yet there was but a few in the World, he set one Brother to murder the other...the Enemy of Mankind stirred up Murders, Rapines, Bloodshed, and all things that tended to the Destruction of Humane Society, Nation against Nation, and Family against Family. But of all Murders none so plainly discovers the inherent Cruelty and Enmity which sin has lodged in Humane Nature, as those committed by private Persons upon Premeditation' (sigs A1r-v)

The general survey of human wickedness is focused onto premeditated murder, and in turn that focus is pinpointed onto Elizabeth Ridgeway because her crimes were a 'fresher and most barbarous Example' of such 'inherent cruelty'. The

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<sup>74</sup> STC 14055 *A True Relation of a most desperate Murder, committed upon the Body of Sir John Tindall* (1616), sig. A3v.

<sup>75</sup> The pamphlets about Ridgeway's crimes are: Wing T2905 *A True Relation of Four most Barbarous & Cruel Murders*; *A True Relation of the Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death of Elizabeth Ridgeway*, and Wing N1073 *The Penitent Recognition of Josephs Brethren*, all printed in 1684. *Four Most Barbarous & Cruel Murders* is the basic story which is then expanded on in *Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death*. *Penitent Recognition* is the sermon which was preached to Ridgeway on the Sunday before her execution. *Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death* is not listed in Wing. It is incorporated in BL 694: K2 (6\*), a copy of *Penitent Recognition* and *Four Most Barbarous & Cruel Murders*.

writer demonstrates that Ridgeway's crimes *outdid* the expected murder narrative:

A Female of that Country [Leicestershire] having outdone the *Desperadoes* of this Town [London] for Cruelty, whose often Excesses in Drinking, Debaucheries amongst Women and Heats of Blood produced ther from, a little palliates for their Crimes, as more the Effect of Rashness and Madness, than the Bloodiness of their Natures (sig. A1v)

Here the excessive nature of Ridgeway's crime (by the time of her arrest she had poisoned her mother, a suitor and her husband and attempted to kill his two apprentices) is emphasised by showing her outdoing the usual narrative of a life of sin leading inevitably to murder. In fact the writer almost excuses the male 'Desperadoes' with their 'Rashness and Madness' in order to concentrate the reader's attention on the 'Bloodiness' of Elizabeth Ridgeway's 'nature' and her premeditated crimes.

Ridgeway's gender influences the way she is inserted into the history of murder as there were fewer archetypes for murderous women than for murderous men. There were, it is true, enough 'pagan' examples but far fewer Biblical ones as the murderesses in the Bible tend to be represented as righteous (Jael and Judith). Also, as murder was a crime predominantly committed by men there were fewer contemporary examples.<sup>76</sup> As a result, female murderers were usually portrayed as 'naturally' unnatural. For example, Margret [sic] Vincent's murder of her children was 'a deed beyond nature' (*A pitillesse mother* sig. A4v) and she was

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<sup>76</sup> J. S. Cockburn, 'The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England 1559-1625: A Preliminary Survey' in J. S. Cockburn (ed), *Crime in England 1550-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 57; Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 25; Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London: University College London Press, 1994), pp. 5, 8.

‘more cruell than the Viper, the invenomd Serpent, the Snake or any Beast whatsoever, against all kind’ (sig. A3v). The device of unfavourable comparison to wild beasts is also found in *Murther, Murther* where Anne Hamton’s murder of her husband is found to be worse than the behaviour of ‘fierce lions’ who although ‘by nature...fierce and bloody’ never destroy their mates (sig. A2v). Anne Hamton’s excessive wickedness is established because she was ‘a daughter of Jerusalem’ who had committed an ‘abomination’ and had not heeded scriptural injunctions about the behaviour of married women but had ‘wandere[d] abroad in the twilight to get a prey’ (sig. A2r). The writer of *A True Relation of Four most Barbarous and Cruel Murthers* combines the sense of ‘overgoing’ found in the descriptions of Vincent and Hamton with one that acknowledges his narrative’s place in the chronicles of English murder. As Ridgeway was more desperate, bloody and debauched than any of her male predecessors she is created as a ‘new’ example.

The pamphlets written about Elizabeth Ridgeway’s murders in 1684 have the same generic characteristics as the first pamphlet of 1573. Just as her crime was based in her own life of unrepentant sinning, so it is told using the chain-link narrative of murder. The revelation of her crimes through the operation of divine providence prevented her from continuing her murderous career, and after her arrest a great deal of time and effort was expended by the local Anglican clergy to bring her to a demonstration of true penitence. Added into the narrative is a sense of religious propaganda as the writer, John Newton, was an Anglican clergyman and he finds in Ridgeway’s Presbyterianism (‘a mistaken religious consideration’) the cause of her stubbornness and possibly her criminality. Her

stubbornness links her into the discourses of religious resistance even in the face of death which Lake documents. Her request for mercy was denied.

Elizabeth Ridgeway's story also exemplifies the three intertwined aspects of the narrative of the murder pamphlets. The first is the social/political narrative. The pamphlets narrate the crime of murder from its inception, through its commission and discovery to its social and legal resolution in the punishment of the murderer by the judicial system. By following the commission and containment of the crime, the reader also follows the murderer's life from birth to death and so from the perdition of original sin to salvation through penitence. As a result, the pamphlet writers expound a religious narrative alongside the social one. Informing the religious narrative of the journey from birth to death is the historical narrative of murder. Most importantly, this is a Biblical history of murder, of which the contemporary history of murder is an extension. The acknowledgement of an historical narrative provides archetypes which are used to construct recognisable contemporary stereotypes such as the murderous husband, the murderous wife, the female poisoner and the 'mad patriarch'.<sup>77</sup> The production of contemporary stereotypes in turn produces a reading history of early modern murder pamphlets as readers are referred to the corpus of the murder pamphlets as well as the Bible.

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<sup>77</sup> This term refers to those male murderers (usually from the gentry) who appear to go berserk after a life of increasing profligacy and kill either their wives or their entire families. Examples include: John Rous (*The Unnaturall father*), Sir John Fites (STC 10930 *The Bloudy Booke* (1605)), Walter Calverley (*Two most unnaturall and bloodie murthers*) and Adam Sprackling Wing 3254; Thomason E.697 [10] *The bloody husband and cruell neighbour* (1653)). Although not members of the gentry, Robert Sherburn's and James Selby's murders of their wives in 1682 and can also be included in this category (Wing 3286 *The Bloody Papist* and Wing U66A *The Unhappy Citizen*).



The writers of early modern murder pamphlets established narrative conventions and stereotypes that are recognisable as their own and therefore act as generic identifiers. In order to do this they drew on other discourses and it is an examination of the relationship between these discourses and the representation of murder that forms the basis of the rest of the thesis. This examination begins with an analysis of the influence of the Calvinist doctrine of providence on the construction of the murder pamphlet narrative.

## Chapter 2

### *Providence and evidence*

The previous chapter laid out the importance of the chain-link narrative in the construction of the murder pamphlets, a structure that presupposes a causal relationship between original sin and the crime of murder. The insistence that the narrative pattern should move from perdition to salvation, from crime to punishment, allowed readers to examine the behaviour of condemned murderers for evidence of the operation of divine grace, God's 'undeserved and unmerited...favour towards humanity'.<sup>1</sup> Underpinning the expectation of such evidence was the doctrine of providence, a true understanding of which was the 'foundation and essence of faith'.<sup>2</sup> Defined by Calvin:

providence means not that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that by which, as keeper of the keys, he governs all events.

It involved both mercy and punishment:

for in administering human society he so tempers his providence that, although kindly and beneficent toward all in numberless ways, he still by open and daily indications declares his clemency to the godly and his severity to the wicked and criminal.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Oxford: Blackwell 1999), p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 8. Walsham states that 'for John Calvin [the doctrine of providence] was the very kernel and keystone of Christian life and thought' and he not only wrote about it in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* but also in *A Defense of the Secret Providence of God* (1558).

<sup>3</sup> John T. McNeill (ed), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2 vols, 1.16.4, 1.5.7.

The doctrine of providence insisted upon unknowable, immutable and purposive divine action which had the dual purpose of rewarding and chastising humanity. Providentialism was a 'cluster of presuppositions' which was central to the religious culture of early modern England. It informed political, medical and philosophical discourses as well as religious ones and 'exercised practical, emotional and imaginative influence upon those who subscribed to it' (Walsham, pp. 2-3).

This 'cluster of presuppositions' exerted a narrative influence on murder pamphlets for over one hundred years. and I am not the first to note the importance of providential thinking in them.<sup>4</sup> It is unsurprising that this should be so during the first half of the century when Calvinist doctrine lay at the heart of the Church of England's teaching and liturgy. During the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I such doctrine was 'woven into the attitudes, aspirations and institutions of the church itself'.<sup>5</sup> Edward Cradocke (Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford) declared that providence was 'an order thoughte uppon from everlasting, without any alteration to be looked for' and that God, 'useth us much like a mother frayeth hir chylde with Hodge Goblin, to the intente he might runne into hir lappe'.<sup>6</sup> In 1607, John Pelling, rector of Trowbridge, wrote that such

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<sup>4</sup> Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers*; Lake, 'Deeds against Nature'; Lake, 'Popular form, Puritan content?'; Lake with Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*; Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*. Chapter 3 of this thesis shows how the representation of Catholic murderers was inserted into an English Protestant historiography of providential rescues from the neverending threat of popery.

<sup>5</sup> John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ship of assured safetie... conteyning... a discourse of Gods providence* (1572), p.276, cited Walsham, pp. 9, 16.

doctrine was 'not a matter of speculation, but of practice'.<sup>7</sup> This latter statement demonstrates the practical nature of theology in the seventeenth century, 'theology is not a bare speculative science, which ultimately terminateth in the understanding but...is a doctrine ordered and directed unto practice'.<sup>8</sup> It is this statement of practicality, allied with Walsham's view that providentialism was 'a major element in the subjective experience of the godly' (19) which begins to explain the resilience of providential thinking in the murder pamphlets, since their narratives were a practical application of theology.

After the Restoration, although the Church of England's strong Calvinist tradition did not die out, nevertheless, 'most Anglicans preferred to stress the independence, the uniqueness of the Anglican way, and to deny that the church owed any debt to Luther, Calvin or Arminius' (*Restoration Church*, pp. 315-16). Calvinism and Arminianism were regarded as old-fashioned terms which represented a time of 'hard disputes about God's eternal decrees and strange working of his grace'.<sup>9</sup> Although Restoration churchmen tended to see 'full-scale' predestinarianism as inherently antinomian, the Church of England did still teach predestination, but concentrated on God's love rather than his justice and placed less emphasis on election. One aspect of these doctrinal shifts was that dissenters were portrayed as 'a single enthusiastic, schismatic sect with a

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<sup>7</sup> *A Sermon of the Providence of God* (1607), p. 32, cited Walsham, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Reynolds, *The Rich Mans Charge* (1658), cited in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 280.

<sup>9</sup> John Hackett, *A Sermon preached before the Kings Majesty* (1660), pp. 20-21, cited Spurr, p. 316. In 1666, at Christ Church, Oxford, it was publicly debated 'whether there was any such thing as the providence of God' (Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), pp. 108-09.)

common cant of extravagant antinomianism' (*Restoration Church*, pp. 321-2).

The dissenters themselves chose to move much more to the peripheries of national religious life, seeking to establish their independence from the established church rather than trying to effect change from within it. They too, however, changed their views on providence, emphasising it much less in their teachings (Thomas, pp. 108-09). Presbyterians, Independents and the other dissenters rejected 'rough Calvinism' for a 'rational theology', creating a 'more sociable Protestantism' which emphasized piety over revelation (*Literature and Dissent*, p. 244).

The murder pamphlets, however, tell a different story; here providence remains central to the representation of murder for more than a century. In 1591, the writer of *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers lately committed*, declared:

God seldome or never leaveth murther unpunished...neither can murther be kept so close, but that by one meanes or other the Lord will compel the murtherer to discover and laie open the truth unto the worlde. (sig. A2v)

A pamphlet of 1595 - *A world of wonders. A masse of murthers. A covie of cosonages* – specifically joined murder to other prodigious events to form a narrative which showed that 'tokens of Gods wrath, signes in the ayre' should 'stirre and move us up to prayer to God to amendment of our sinful lives' (sig. A2r). In *A true report of the horrible murther, which was committed in the house of Sir Jerome Bowes, knight* (1607) 'the hand of God' and 'the sword of justice' act in concert to reveal and apprehend the murderer. As we have already seen, one of the murders related in *Three Bloodie Murders* (1613) showed divine

providence working in the discovery of the body of a young girl murdered by her mistress. As evidence of the murder is (literally) unearthed, divine providence works an apparent miracle, making a dumb woman speak and name the murderer (see p. 52). Without the operation of providence, this pamphlet suggests, the *evidence* of murder would have been insufficient proof of the murderer's guilt. The writer of *The Arraignment, Tryall, Conviction and Confession of Francis Deane* (1643)<sup>10</sup> echoed the words of *Sundrye strange and inhumaine murders*:

Gods unfounded and incomprehensible wisdome, which can in no way be circumscribed, is able at all times, and upon all occasions, as well to publish as to punish it in the open eye of the world however hard a person may try to conceal wrongdoing. (sig. A2r)

At his execution Deane testified to his personal experience of divine providence, 'this I know, that I was born in sin, and without the great providence of God assisting man, hee is subject daily to fall into great sins' (sig. A3v). As Deane was an Anabaptist, his reliance upon the doctrine of providence was unsurprising. Equally it was unremarkable in the puritan narratives about the murders committed by Nathaniel Butler in 1657 and Thomas Savage in 1668 (see Chapters 4 and 5). However, in 1674 the writer of *Treason and Murther: or The Bloody Father-in Law* was still evoking ideas of providence to explain the discovery of the murderer of Mistress Alsop. 'Providence' unwilling that 'so bloody a Deed should go undiscovered, had ordered the matter' and provided evidence which condemned her murderous father-in-law.<sup>11</sup> In 1678, the narrator of Sarah Elston's story of husband-murder was still employing a providential framework to explain to his readers its didactic significance:

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<sup>10</sup> Wing A3766; Thomason E.97[13].

I know not whether we should more admire the wisdom or the mercy of God in his proceedings with this poor Creature: had she not been guilty of Blood, 'tis probable she had never known the worth of the precious blood of Christ: had she not been sentenc'd to momentary Flames, 'tis to be feared she had not hereafter escaped Everlasting Burnings [...] 'Tis only the goodness and wisdom of an infinite God, that can make our sin good to us, though evil in itself, and can save even by Destruction.<sup>12</sup>

Equally, a florid pamphlet about an infanticide printed one year later, declared 'the glorious Eye of the divine Providence easily dissipates those Clouds, makes our secret sins as palpable as the Noon-day Sun' (*Strange and Wonderful News from Durham*, sig. A2r). Awaiting execution for the murder of her apprentice-girl in 1681, Leticia Wigington gave voice to the providential oxymoron of punishing mercy expounded by Calvin over a century earlier, 'for whom the Lord loveth he Chastiseth, even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth'.<sup>13</sup> In 1694, *Gods marvellous wonders in England*<sup>14</sup> used the rhetoric and form of 1595 (*A World of wonders*) to recount two murders alongside other 'prodigious' events such as 'raining wheat, storm in Darlington, a Whale in the River Humber'. These 'Wonders' are evidence of 'Gods Mercy' and should make 'all reasonable and thinking people Admire and adore it' (sig. A1v). In the chapter about the murders, the writer emphasises the role of the 'Hand of Providence' in the discovery of the murderers by working on their consciences and employing truth-telling apparitions.

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<sup>11</sup> Wing T2071, sig. A3v.

<sup>12</sup> Wing W918A *The Manner of the Burning of Sarah Elston* (1678), sig. A3r.

<sup>13</sup> Wing W2110 *The Confession and Execution of Leticia Wigington* (1681), sig. A2v.

<sup>14</sup> Wing G960A.

On the cusp of the eighteenth century providence still had a role to play in the narration of murder. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 1699 the body of Sarah Stout was found floating in a river near her home. On 16<sup>th</sup> July, Spencer Cowper was tried for her murder but, as there was no direct evidence to link him and the three other defendants to the crime, all were acquitted. Sarah Stout was the daughter of a Quaker family in Hertford which had supported Spencer Cowper's father and brother at a parliamentary election and Sarah had fallen in love with Cowper, although he was already married. Spencer Cowper was a lawyer and judge and his brother, William Cowper, would become the first Lord Chancellor of Great Britain.<sup>15</sup> One evening during the Spring Assizes of 1699, Cowper visited the Stout household and Sarah's body was discovered the following morning. The surviving pamphlets about this murder take great care to report all the evidence in this case which hinged on whether Sarah Stout was murdered or committed suicide:

Eight or Nine Surgeons...unanimously deposed that there was [sic] several remarkable Circumstances, which made them suspect she was Murthered before she was thrown into the water, and the reasons they gave were because several Bruises, or signes of violence upon several parts of her Body, particularly about her Neck, which was supposed to be occasion'd by a small Coard with which she was strangled.<sup>16</sup>

The pursuit of such evidence even led to an exhumation and post-mortem to establish whether she was pregnant (she was not). The most detailed of these accounts is *The Hertford Letter* which expounds the forensic and experimental

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<sup>15</sup> According to *DNB* Spencer Cowper's innocence was 'beyond doubt'.

<sup>16</sup> Wing A292B *An Account of the Full Tryal and Examination of Spencer Cooper, Esq.* (1699), Sig. A1r. Other accounts of this murder are: Wing D1299 *A Dialogue Between a Quaker and his*



evidence and concludes that Sarah Stout was indeed murdered. However, Spencer Cowper was acquitted and so the writer of this account as well as his interested readers were left with a murder without a convicted murderer. Scientific evidence, it appeared, could only go so far – however much it explained, it could not explain everything. So the pedantic and rational writer of *The Hertford Letter* falls back on divine providence and hints of portents that may point towards the murderer. He explains how ‘Mr Stevens’, one of those tried for Stout’s murder, ‘was taken with a strange Fit...which disturbed the whole Court’ and also how:

a *Wine-Cooper* in *Southwark* (who came down as an Evidence for the Prisoners) fell into a sort of Distraction; and all the time of the Trial was mightily discomposed in his Mind, so that he was fain to be tyed in Bed, yet would often ask how the Trial went and whether they were like to be cleared, and would often tell the People about him that he had done a very bad thing, but would not confess what, though often urged to it. (p. 27)

In the end, God alone with his omniscience and providence will reveal the murderers:

But I shall conclude, desiring that the Authors of this Horrid Murder may be detected, and brought to condign Punishment; but that the Innocent may be cleared from all Aspersion thrown undeservedly on them, which I doubt not, but that the Great *Jehovah*, in his own time, will bring to pass. (p. 27)

Contained within the phrase ‘the Great Jehovah in his own time’ are the precepts of Calvinist providential doctrine - divine sovereignty, omniscience and unknowable purposes which will be revealed - still being dispensed to an educated readership in 1699. These words provide a direct narrative link to those

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*Neighbour in Hertford about the Murder of Mrs. Sarah Stout* (1699) and Wing D75 *The Hertford Letter* (1699).

which were used by the writer of *Sundry Strange and inhumaine murders* in 1591: 'God seldome or never leaveth murther unpunished'. The belief that it is impossible to escape God's justice is the same.

The murder pamphlets demonstrate that providential doctrine was a vital component in the framework of their narratives for over a century, during a time when that same doctrine became less important to the teaching of the established church. Malcolm Gaskill has argued that over the course of the seventeenth century there was a detectable movement from a 'reliance upon providence to discover murder' to a 'greater certainty of detection offered by advances in policing, evidence gathering and medico-legal standards of proof' (*Crime and Mentalities*, p. 203). Clearly there was a relationship between ideas of providence and evidence in the early modern period. There is however the question of whether that should be only understood as a relatively straightforward one of movement – from providence *to* evidence, from sacred to secular. The murder pamphlets suggest that the relationship between providence and evidence was more complex than is allowed for in a 'linear' reading of early modern 'mentalities'. Their writers insist that the process of understanding God's providence always involved the interpretation of evidence whether that was the interpretation of Scripture or the interpretation of murder. I will argue that there is a deep connection between providential thinking and the narration of murder as there is a fundamental narrative congruence between them, for both seek to order and explain human experience.

Although central to Reformed theology, providential doctrine was inherited rather than invented. The idea of providence was firmly entrenched in Classical and Christian thought preoccupying Aristotle, the Stoics, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. It was these links between pre-Reformation doctrine and Protestant theology which helped providential doctrine to gain 'near universal acceptance' (Walsham p. 2), intensifying assumptions which had 'long been part of the machinery of pre-Reformation minds' and cutting across the invisible iron curtain which contemporary polemic erected between Geneva and Rome (Walsham, p. 225). However, Protestants were particularly concerned with the doctrine of providence because they had removed any idea of intermediaries from an individual's relationship with God. Also, they insisted on humankind's depravity and impotence and therefore its complete reliance upon God's mercy. This 'heightened awareness of the awesome and irresistible power of the Almighty was a logical corollary of elevating divine grace above strenuous human effort and making it the sole criterion for salvation' (Walsham, p. 7).

The Reformation doctrine of providence referred first of all to the immutability of God's unchanging and eternal decree. It wove together past, present and future, for it insisted that God had foreseen every eventuality and that everything that had happened, was happening or would happen did so for predetermined ends. God's foreknowledge was linked to direct and purposeful action the evidence of which was seen in His government of events on Earth. Providence, therefore combined knowledge and power, or as Calvin said 'it pertains no less to [God's] hands than to his eyes'. It was the insistence on purposive action – God

seeks to 'instruct', 'correct', 'tame', 'arouse' (*Institutes*, 1.17.1) - which differentiated this doctrine from those involving an understanding of Fortune and Chance, which emphasised the mutability of human experience rather than the immutability of God's plan:

God's providence, as it is taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous happenings [...] Suppose a man falls among thieves, or wild beasts; is shipwrecked at sea by a sudden gale; is killed by a falling house or tree. Suppose another man wandering through the desert finds help in his straits; having been tossed by the waves, reaches harbour; miraculously escapes death by a finger's breadth. Carnal reason ascribes all such happenings, whether prosperous or adverse, to fortune. But anyone who has been taught by Christ's lips that all the hairs on his head are numbered will look farther afield for the cause, and will consider that all events are governed by God's secret plan. (*Institutes*, 1.16.2)

This shift in understanding was an inevitable consequence of the Protestant diminution of 'the institutional role of the Church as the dispenser of divine grace' (Thomas, 76) and the subsequent elevation of the individual's direct relationship with God:

Truly God claims, and would have us grant him, omnipotence – not the empty, idle, and almost unconscious sort that the Sophists imagine, but a watchful, effective, active sort, engaged in ceaseless activity. (*Institutes*, 1.16.3)

A rejection of Chance and Fortune and a reconfiguration of the relationship between individual and God also meant a rejection of miracles. Reformed theologians did believe in miracles, but they also believed that the time for them had past. Miracles 'were the swaddling-bands of the early Church, necessary for the initial conversion of unbelievers, but redundant once the faith had securely established itself' (Thomas, p. 124). Portentous events still occurred (as we see

from Calvin's explanation above) but they should be understood in a different way – as demonstrations of God's 'special' or 'particular' providence which suspended the natural order to punish, admonish or reward humanity. This redrafting of the interpretation of 'spontaneous interruptions of the normal sequence' (Walsham, p.12) meant that it was no longer necessary that supernatural actions and cures should be performed by an intermediary in order to effect conversion (Thomas, pp. 25-6). If it was part of God's plan that an individual should be converted and saved, then He acted directly on that man or woman through the operation of divine grace. The resultant change would indeed *seem* miraculous to observers, but would in fact be part of God's purpose which was hidden from human view until the moment had arrived that it should happen:

Yet since the sluggishness of our mind lies far beneath the height of God's providence, we must employ a distinction to lift it up. Therefore I shall put it this way: however all things may be ordained by God's plan, according to a sure dispensation, for us they are fortuitous. Not that we think that fortune rules the world and men, tumbling all things at random up and down, for it is fitting that this folly be absent from the Christian's breast! But since the order, reason, end and necessity of those things which happen for the most part lie hidden in God's purpose, and are not apprehended by human opinion, those things, which it is certain take place by God's will, are in a sense fortuitous. (*Institutes*, 1.16.9)

Here we see that the transition from an understanding of Fortune's mutability to the Reformation notion of purposive providence is in part a narrative shift. For Calvin divine providence gave 'order, reason, end and necessity' to an apparently chaotic world. As a Protestant one must train oneself to read that narrative properly, to be alert for the cryptic signs of God's purpose – to look everywhere and at all times for the evidence of God's providence. Equally writers of murder

pamphlets sought to impose a narrative order on the chaotic events of the crime, also giving it 'order, reason, end and necessity', translating the uncontrollable and 'unnatural' events of a moment into a story that bound together past, present and future, fitting the story into the framework of God's omniscient and omnipresent vigilance.

The notion of a hidden, immutable divine purpose is of course integral to the Calvinist doctrine of pre-destination. The reading and interpretation of signs of God's 'secret' or 'effectual' will (as opposed to his 'revealed' will which was disclosed in Scripture) was vital in establishing whether an individual was one of the elect or reprobate. On the one hand, such belief had the potential to be egotistical and self-confirming as successes and setbacks could both be interpreted as evidence of divine approbation. The other side of believing that all human endeavour was governed by the combination of a fixed but ultimately unknowable divine purpose and the predetermined separation of humanity into the saved and the damned, was a pre-disposition towards self-hatred, melancholy and despair.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the doctrine of providence (out of which pre-destination emerged) exerted a powerful influence on the formation of Protestant piety.<sup>18</sup> Providential thinking, 'played a key role in domestic decision-making, in household divinity, and in the private management of crisis and calamity' (Walsham, p. 17). Despite its tendency to make God appear as a cruel and

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<sup>17</sup> John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> In the earliest version of *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Calvin treated predestination as an aspect of the doctrine of providence. From the 1539 edition onwards it was treated as a topic of importance in its own right and was expounded in Chapter 3 of the 1559 edition (McGrath, p. 137).

deceitful tyrant who was arbitrary and even sadistic, the idea that misfortune could be sanctified by interpreting it as evidence of God's favour acted as a powerful consolation and was the source of stoical courage and patient suffering:

When that light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care. For as he justly dreads fortune, so he fearlessly dares commit himself to God. His solace, I say, is to know that his Heavenly Father so holds all things in his power, so rules by his authority and will, so governs by his wisdom, that nothing can befall except he determine it...Ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it. (*Institutes*, 1.17.11)

The murder pamphleteers provide evidence of such an interpretation of divine providence by showing the stoicism and reverence with which penitent murderers approached their deaths. They concentrate exclusively on those murderers who were thus proved to be members of the elect and recipients of God's grace. Not one pamphlet writer makes an unrepentant (and therefore reprobate) felon the central focus of the narrative, although such characters may have a subsidiary role in the story. It might be argued that writers seeking to persuade their readers to avoid a sinful life would find more moral force in the admonitory example of a murderer's desperate end and inevitable damnation than in an exhortatory one of redemption. That an exhortatory narrative pattern dominates the murder pamphlets throughout the seventeenth century suggests that commercial interests were best served by avoiding too much emphasis on the double nature of predestination. Certainly, Green suggests that, in commercial

terms, double predestination was not a success.<sup>19</sup> He shows that in the years between 1590 and 1660, when high Calvinism was at its peak in England, devotional works which were strongly double-predestinarian were not the most popular and were outsold by those which concentrated more on the love of Christ and a desire for the reader's conversion. So, for example, Christopher Sutton's *Disce more: learne how to die* (1600) was reprinted at least 15 times between 1600 and 1683. There were 57 numbered editions of Lewis Bayly's *Practise of Pietie* (1612) and probably 30 more reprints during the seventeenth century. Green argues that their popularity suggests that there was a reaction against the extremes of Calvinist introspection and holy desperation quite early in this period which was sustained over the decades. From 1620s, works which espoused a middle ground or were open-ended in their appeal tended to sell much better than those directed at the elect and this was before the anti-Calvinism of the sects of the 1640s and 1650s and the episcopalians of 1650s and 1660s had exerted its influence (*Print and Protestantism*, pp. 363-5).

The murder pamphlets fit into this context of production and consumption. However, they also demonstrate the ambiguities and complexities of providential doctrine. On the one hand, the writers needed the narrative of providence to bring together sinning, murder, discovery and punishment into a coherent pattern; on the other, by showing that the worst possible sinners can gain redemption, they rejected the notion of election and reprobation by offering to the readers at least

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<sup>19</sup> Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).



the *possibility* that anyone can be saved. The paradoxes of providential doctrine required some inspired double-thinking from those who espoused it. This proved its extraordinary elasticity (Thomas, p. 82) but it was also one of the reasons its adherents were often characterised as hypocritical. For example, miseries which befell the wicked were a foretaste of the hell to which they were destined; but those which befell the elect were ‘fatherly chastisements’ by which God manifested his care (Walsham, p. 15). This kind of thinking was particularly necessary when it came to understanding the role of evil and evildoers in God’s divine plan. At its heart, the idea of providence rested on the idea that virtue would be rewarded and vice punished, but any observation of the world quickly showed that this was not the case. Evil things befell the clearly virtuous and one way of dealing with this was to propose an inverse relationship between prosperity and piety. Bad things were interpreted as a sign of election as God tested faith with intolerable burdens. For example, in the murder pamphlets the victims are invariably virtuous but they are visited with sudden death. In the early modern period, sudden death was considered the worst kind as it did not permit any preparation. However, if as Calvin states, God alone decrees the moment of death, then it was possible to interpret violent and sudden death within providential teaching. Despite this, narratively speaking, the spiritual fate of murder victims is always left unresolved – the authors assert strongly the inevitable damnation or salvation of the murderers but not of their victims.

Evil – in the form of murderers – threatened chaos and destruction. The murder pamphlets controlled evil through narrative, not only ordering it into an

understandable ‘history’, but fitting it into a framework of providential thinking so that none of the deaths they recounted was meaningless. Violence might be terrifyingly random in its physical manifestation but at least, in its textual representation, it could be shown as subject to divine providence and secular law. This textual control of evil is also evident in Calvin’s explanation of the relationship between God’s omniscience, providence, His permission of evil and free will:

Thieves and murderers and other evildoers are the instruments of divine providence, and the Lord himself uses these to carry out the judgements that he has determined with himself...well and good, he works through them...when we are unjustly wounded by men, let us overlook their wickedness (which would but worsen our pain and sharpen our minds to revenge), remember to mount up to God, and learn to believe for certain that whatever our enemy has wickedly committed against us was permitted and sent by God’s just dispensation (*Institutes*, 1.17.5, 1.17.8)

Viewed through the lens of providential doctrine, the murder pamphlets are *exempla*: they seek to make the murderer less terrifying by representing him or her as one of God’s ‘instruments’, a sign that the hand of God is working in the world. Reading the story of a murder can help form a truly Protestant piety by allowing the reader to ‘mount up to God’ by meditating on the nature of God’s permission of evil.

### ***Elizabeth Caldwell: a Calvinist heroine?***

The narrative influence of a combination of providence, the interpretation of evil and exemplum is effectively illustrated in *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604). Written by Gilbert Dugdale, it recounts a story of adultery, poison, attempted murder and inadvertent death amongst the Cheshire

gentry which had taken place some 18 months previously.<sup>20</sup> During his narration of the story Dugdale explains that Elizabeth Caldwell's moral and physical trials were:

sent from God as an example to thousands. For where so many live, one or two pickt out by the hand of God, must serve as an example to the rest, to keep thousands in feare of Gods wrath, and the worlds terror (sigs. B2r-v).

However, it is not just Elizabeth Caldwell's evildoing that should work as an admonitory example, her righteousness should also be an exhortatory one, for 'the deceitfull devil' who led her into adultery, 'hath sometime permission from GOD to attempt the very righteous' (sig. B2r). In their insistence on God's control over the actions of both Elizabeth Caldwell and the devil, these statements prove the providential thinking underlying the pamphlet's narrative. However, the narrative also shows the complexities and paradoxes of the doctrine. What emerges is a story that at first seems conventional enough (and indeed has been characterised as such): adulterous wife seeks to murder her husband, is arrested and punished.<sup>21</sup> However what it actually demonstrates is a complex web of association between sin, guilt, criminal responsibility and repentance; between depraved human impotence in the face of temptation and redeemed spiritual vigour in the face of death. It ends by demanding that the reader reach a different conclusion about Elizabeth Caldwell's guilt from that

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<sup>20</sup> This is the name on the title-page of the pamphlet. A dedication to 'the right honourable, and his singuler good Lady, the Lady *Mary Chandois*' concludes the pamphlet and is signed 'Robert Armin'. In it Armin declares that he has 'placed my kinsmans name' to 'this strange worke' as he 'was present at all her troubles, at her coming to prison, her beeing in prison, and her going out of prison to execution' (sig. D4r). This phrasing suggests that Armin must have had some hand in writing the pamphlet. It is the same Robert Armin who was a member of the King's Men and is known to have supplemented his income by writing pamphlets (*DNB*). The plague which prevented James I's entry into London in 1603 would also have closed the theatres.

<sup>21</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 30.

handed down by the Assizes in Chester. This narrative complexity is partly achieved through the pamphlet's structure. Packed into its 16 quarto pages are a dedicatory prologue to Lady Mary Cholmsly [Cholmondeley] (a local aristocrat famed for her unrelenting litigations);<sup>22</sup> a narrative which records the sequence of Elizabeth Caldwell's sin, crime, imprisonment and trial; a reproduction of the text of her final letter to her husband; a report of her scaffold speech and execution, and a final letter from Robert Armin. This is not a univocal text; although it is filtered through Dugdale's (and possibly Armin's) authorship, Elizabeth Caldwell's voice emerges with increasing power and clarity. Indeed Robert Armin refers Lady Mary Chandois specifically to Elizabeth's letter 'of her owne indighting', suggesting that the strength of her voice will make Lady Mary 'the more wonder that [Elizabeth Caldwell's] virtues could so aptly tast the follies of vice and villanie' (sig. D4r).

The events which made up the crime are reported in what Armin calls 'the Booke' of the pamphlet and Dugdale entitles 'the practice of Elizabeth Caldwell against the life of her owne husband' and they are sensational enough to satisfy the most idle of readers. Elizabeth Caldwell was the daughter of a careful and generous 'gentleman' who, 'fatherly and carefully trained his daughter from her infancie, she being framed and adorned with all the gifts that nature could challenge, and wanting no good education' (sig. A4r).

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<sup>22</sup> In 1581, Lady Mary began a series of law-suits in order to succeed to her father's estate. Her opponent was her father's half-brother who claimed all the estates as the next male heir in descent. The contest lasted for forty years until 1620 when they were persuaded to take equal shares. James I described Lady Mary as 'the bold lady of Cheshire' (*DNB*).

However, she was betrothed and then married too young – ‘the like matches doe not often proue well’ – to Thomas Caldwell, who was, at least, her equal in birth. Their marriage foundered on Thomas’ restlessness and neglect, as he left ‘her oftentimes uerie bare, without prouision of such meanes as was fitting to her’ (sig. A4r). Emotional and economic neglect caused Elizabeth to ‘withdrawe her affection’ from her husband and made her susceptible to the adulterous advances of ‘her bloody loue *Jefferie Bownd*’ and ‘that untimely actor *Isabell Hall*’, at whose house the lovers met. In the spring of 1602, at the instigation of her lover and go-between, Elizabeth attempted to murder her husband with poisoned oatcakes. The attempt failed, but a child in the Caldwell household (not their own) died. After a trial and lengthy imprisonment (because of her pregnancy) Elizabeth was executed, with Isabell Hall, on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1603. Bownd had been pressed to death some weeks earlier, on the same day that Elizabeth’s son was born.

Gilbert Dugdale offers his readers providence as an interpretative tool to help them understand Elizabeth’s crimes as evidence of her elect status, so that they see that the trials she undergoes ultimately prove her piety and virtue. Dugdale provides this providential framework about half way through the pamphlet and it gives ‘order, reason, end, sense and necessity’ to the events of the murder. With this in mind, it is possible to examine more closely the rhetorical presentation of Elizabeth Caldwell within the providential framework that Dugdale provided to his readers.

The feature which characterizes Elizabeth Caldwell at the beginning of Dugdale's story is her extreme passivity. It is so extreme – she is shown as constantly acted upon by others rather than initiating anything herself – that it is perhaps better characterised as impotence. Human impotence in the face of temptation was a fundamental tenet of Calvinist theology. The human condition was one of degeneration and derangement from 'our original condition' (*Institutes*, 2.1.10) which made people particularly susceptible to temptation and sin. Christ alone could restore the redeemed condition of 'righteousness, innocence and purity' (*Institutes*, 2.1.8). Elizabeth's 'discontentment' and penury caused by the continual absence of her husband, made her susceptible to the vigorous advances of Jeffrey Bownd, 'a man of good wealth, [who] spared nether cost nor industrie...to withdrawe her to his unlawfull desire' (sig. A4r-v). Dugdale gives the sense that Elizabeth had little agency in her adultery, describing her as a 'silly soule' easily overcome by stronger wills and persuasive powers. Elizabeth's impotent susceptibility to sin is compounded by the characterisations of Bownd and Hall as agents of the Devil. On the first page of the pamphlet, in the dedicatory epistle, Dugdale describes to Lady Mary Cholmsly how 'in my melancholie walkes [I] bethought me of the strange invasion of Sathan, lately on the persons of *Elizabeth Caldwell*, and her bloody lover *Ieffrie Bownd*, together with that untimely actor *Isabell Hall*' (sig. A3r). Lover and go-between act in concert with 'devillish and most hellish practices' and have 'harts...deeply possest by that filthy enemy to all goodnes', but it is Hall who is most associated with diabolical possession as she is characterized as a witch. She is described as 'an old woman...late wife of John Hall' who Bownd

‘preferred as an instrument to worke [Elizabeth] to an unlawfull reformation’. Hall is presented as ‘verie expert’ in murder ‘beeing an ancient motherly woman’ and a ‘beldame’. All these epithets – her age, her widowhood, the implication of ugliness – would characterize her for contemporary readers as a witch (Thomas, pp. 562, 568, 572). The use of poison as murder weapon would have made such accusations definite, for ‘as women of all ages have been counted most apt to conceive witchcraft, and the divells speciall instrument thereof: so it also appeareth, that they have been the first inventers, and the greatest practicers of poisoning.’<sup>23</sup> It is Hall and Bownd who decide to use ‘Ratsbane’ to murder Thomas Caldwell and they are the ones that procure it.

Maintaining the providential framework of his narrative presents Dugdale with some problems. It is vital that Elizabeth’s lack of agency in adultery and attempted murder is total, for only then will her transformation into active, redeemed member of the elect be wholly successful. However, it was an unavoidable fact that it was Elizabeth who gave the poisoned oatcakes to her husband. Trying to get around this as best he can, Dugdale offers a convoluted and fuzzy description of how the poison was obtained and administered. It was, he says, Isabell Hall’s plan to bake the poison into some ‘oaten cakes’ which

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<sup>23</sup> Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), cited in David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), 166-7. The connection between women, poison and witchcraft was specifically evoked at the trials of Frances Howard and Anne Turner for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in 1615. For a pamphlet account of this murder see STC 18919.7 *The just downfall of ambition adultery and murder* (1615). Dugdale displaces the conventional vituperation of husband murderers (and hence the association of poison and witchcraft) onto Isabell Hall, employing her throughout the pamphlet as a rhetorical foil for Elizabeth Caldwell. Activity is placed against passivity; stubborn denial against willing confession, and ‘easie repentance’ against exemplary penitence.

Thomas Caldwell 'much affected' and give these cakes to Elizabeth who would then give them to her husband:

[Bownd] bought the poyson, and brought it to Elizabeth Caldwell, and wished her to send it to Isabell Hall with all speede; whereuppon she received it, and instantly uppon the receite thereof, Halls wife sent her maide to Elizabeth, and willed her to send the spice she spoke to her for: so the maide innocently went as her dame commanded her, and received the poyson, and brought it to the sayd Isabell Hall her dame, who presently did take it, and minister it...in oaten cakes: the which having done, she sent them to Elizabeth Caldwell. (sig. B1r)

All this unnecessary to-ing and fro-ing and the flurry of confusing pronouns succeed in obscuring Elizabeth's exact role in the poisoning. When Elizabeth finally receives the poisoned oatcakes she again takes little positive action, leaving them on the windowsill of her bedchamber, not urging her husband to eat but 'keeping her bed', showing herself physically as well as psychologically inert, and allowing her husband to *choose* to eat them. Dugdale records that when Caldwell 'demaunded of her if he might take any of them, she answered, yea, all if he would' (sig. B1v). Caldwell did take them, but also distributed them to the rest of the household.

Once her husband leaves their bedchamber Elizabeth's psychological and spiritual inertia lift, but the physical remains and it is this which prevents her from averting the unintentional death which occurs:

as she even trembled with remorse of conscience, yet wanted the power to call to him and refraine them, insomuch as he himselfe did not only eat of them, but the most part of the folkes in the house, children and all, yet God bestowed his blessing so bountifully on them, as were all preserved from daunger, saving one little girle which could not so well digest the...and by reason she had beene long visited with sicknes, shee went home and died



presently, while the rest by vomit were saved. But that which maister Caldwell did vomit up againe, two doggs and a cat did eate, and they died presently also. (sig. B1v)

Elizabeth may have been impotent in the face of diabolical temptation but as this passage shows she was not completely spiritually inert – again this may be necessary to prove her fitness to be one of the elect. She is also shown attempting to dissuade Bownd and Hall from their plans by ‘laying before them the great and heavie punishments, provided for such offenders both in this world, and the world to come’ (sig. A4v). Bownd and Hall were however inured to ‘such perswasions’ and ‘still persevered in there former wicked intentions, and drew her to associate them in this villany’ (sig. B4v). However weak it may be at this point in the story, nevertheless Elizabeth Caldwell does show that she possesses those vital Protestant traits of introspection and spiritual audit, ‘shee often times entring into consideration with herself, what a damnable part it was, first to abuse her husband’s bed, and then in seeking to deprive him of his life, was greatly tormented in her conscience’ (sig. A4v).

Despite Dugdale’s suggestion that the child died from a ‘long...sicknes’ rather than the effects of the poisoned oatcakes, nevertheless Elizabeth was arrested and tried for her murder.<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth’s arrest and long imprisonment are the conditions of her spiritual redemption:

From her first entrance into prison, till the time of her death, there was never heard by any, so much as an idle word to proceede out of her mouth, neither did she omit any time, during her imprisonment, in serving GOD, and seeking pardon for her sinnes,

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<sup>24</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that Elizabeth Caldwell was hanged – had she been convicted of the attempted murder of her husband she would have been burned at the stake for petty treason.

with great zeal and industrie, continually meditating on the Bible, excluding herself from all companie, saving such as might yeelde her spirituall comforts. (sig. B2r)

The previously inert and impotent Elizabeth is transformed into someone zealous and industrious, pursuing those central Protestant tasks of reading the Bible and self-examination. Elizabeth's vigorous spiritual agency proceeds from divine providence which has bestowed upon her the saving grace of Christ. She has not earned it through her actions; it was freely given, although unmerited. The 'devillish practices' of Bownd and Hall are shown in fact to be circumscribed by an omniscient God who gives 'permission' to the 'deceitfull devil' to 'attempt the very righteous' (sig. B2r).

Elizabeth's languid and ineffectual voice is also transformed into a powerful instrument which proselytises - seeking 'to convert all the rest of the prisoners' (sig. B2v) - and preaches from the ladder of the gibbet.<sup>25</sup> Such an example was she of the power of divine providence that Dugdale reports that she was visited by 'many of all sorts...as no fewer some daies then three hundred persons' (sig. B2r). The gift of grace gives Elizabeth so much moral and spiritual authority that Master John Battie (one of the preachers who attended her) exhorted 'the Learned' to 'repare unto her themselves' not just to teach but also to learn. The fact that such authority should arise from a criminal is a question which Dugdale addresses directly:

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<sup>25</sup> Hilary Hinds states that there are references to women preaching and prophesying in tract and sermon literature from the early seventeenth century (*God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-century radical sectarian writing and feminist criticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 47).

For if she espied in any one, of what calling or degree soever, that wil-fully or carelessly abused Gods holy ordinaunces, she would reprove them for it...though some disdained she should seeme to doe, in regard of her owne former offence, though indeede none might better doe it then shee, having smarted even at her soule for her sinnes. (sig. B3v)

The trials she has undergone are proof of her election rather than reprobation, and so she becomes a righteous example because, rather than in spite of, her manifest sinfulness.

Dugdale constructs a narrative which demonstrates the transformation effected in the elect by the workings of divine providence. This allows him to concentrate the reader's attention on Elizabeth's penitence rather than her guilt – for in spiritual terms that is what is important. This emphasis and the authority it therefore confers on Elizabeth's actions and words (because they are evidence of her election) has direct implications for the way in which Thomas Caldwell is represented. This remarkable text eschews the conventional representation of the virtuous, blameless murder victim and instead proves Thomas Caldwell's culpability in the origins of the crime. He represents the 'derangement' of 'concupiscence', of how 'perversity never ceases in us, but continually bears new fruits' (*Institutes* 2.1.9).

Dugdale establishes Caldwell's neglect of his spousal responsibilities (duties of care and protection) as fundamental to Elizabeth's criminal actions. However, Caldwell was not only feckless before the crime but also vindictive after it. Once she had delivered her child in prison, 'it was generally reported' that Caldwell 'made sute to the Judge to procure a warrant to have his wife executed...within

13 daies or thereabouts after she was delivered' (sig. B3v). In her final letter to her husband Elizabeth emphatically establishes Caldwell's guilt. Although she begins conventionally enough, adopting the style of a humble penitent - 'although the greatnes of my offence deserves neither pittie nor regarde, yet give leave unto your poore sorrowfull wife to speake unto you' (sig. B4v) - nevertheless she soon establishes and maintains a tone which never wavers from the confident and authoritative. Like Dugdale, she contextualizes her own crime within Caldwell's neglect of her as she blames her attempted 'destruction of your body' on 'my weaknes, my povertie, and your absence'. Whereas the first is integral to a Calvinist interpretation of the human condition, the latter two are attributable only to Thomas Caldwell's failure as a husband. Elizabeth's susceptibility to the wiles and plots of Bownd and Hall is represented as a direct result of Caldwell's neglectful sinning. Elizabeth berates him for 'the desolutenesses of your life' (sig. C1v), his 'profanes' and Sabbath-breaking. Logically, she establishes an equality between herself and her husband in terms of moral weakness. She laments, 'how weake and wretched wee are and unable to stand of ourselves, when it shall please [God] to take his grace from us, and leave us to ourselves'. It is a statement of her own condition, because she is an 'example, which the providence of God, for some secrete cause best knowne to himselfe, hath appointed to come to passe', but it also applies to Thomas Caldwell. Elizabeth exhorts her 'good husband' to 'tender the welfare of your soule, goe no futher in your sinful race' because if 'you continue in your abominations, and shut your eares against the worde of Exhortation, you cannot have any hope of salvation' (sig. C2r). They may be equal in sinfulness but

divine providence has given Elizabeth moral and spiritual ascendancy over her husband:

None can better speak of it [repentance], for none better knowes it then myselfe, my sorrowfull hart hath smarted for it, and my soule hath been sick to the gates of hell, and of death to finde it and have it. (sig. C1v)

Such authority allows Elizabeth to transform her husband into the criminal undergoing trial and condemnation. Boldly using the image of the attempted murder she manages to complicate the question of who exactly will be enduring punishment and death. First of all she slyly reminds her husband that he knows ‘how suddenlie death may strike’ and then evoking her own long imprisonment and trial, she exhorts him not to delay in seeking salvation for ‘though he deferre the Sessions, yet they will come’ and God will dispense judgement, punishment or mercy as is fitting on that ‘day of reckoning’ (sig. C3v). Elizabeth effaces her own presence in the courtroom and replaces it with her husband’s. She warns that Caldwell’s behaviour ‘provokes [God] to proceede to execution against you’ (sig. C4v) and that there is an eternal spiritual death beyond the death of the body which she is soon to experience, as well as a different system of judgement and condemnation which outlasts the temporal one:

The word must judge us, in this life it worketh effect, for which it was sent: it either converts or hardens, it is the favour of life, unto life, or of death, unto death, it is offered to all: to those that imbrace it, it brings life, to those that will not be reformed by it, it brings death, to those that love it and desire it, it is the quicking spirit, to those that refuse it, it is the killing Letter. (sig. C2v)

The purpose of her letter is not (as it first appears) to prostrate herself before her husband’s betrayed authority and beg for his forgiveness. She does not need his

forgiveness because hers is a 'true repentance' which is the 'rare gift of God' and divine forgiveness makes earthly forgiveness superfluous.

The combined effect of Dugdale's narrative and Elizabeth's letter is to establish her independence from Thomas Caldwell's legal, moral and social authority. This in turn, makes her independent of other patriarchal structures such as Church and courts. The didactic tone of her final letter and the prophecy with which she closes it - 'you see the judgements of God are begunne already in your house, happie shall you be if you make holy use of them, otherwise, heavior may be expected, especially if you persist' (sig. C4v) – establish her as a preacher and prophetess, a representation which continues in her gibbet speech. At its outset she asks 'that the Lord would give a blessing unto the speeches that she deliverèd, that they might tend to the converting of many of the hearers' and even provides a text, 'St. Paules admonition...let him that thinketh he stands take heede of a present fall' (sig. D1r). She then makes a radical claim:

Then made knowne that she could teach as the Preachers, for they taught as they found it in the word, and she was able to speake from a feeling hart, very confidently affirming, that her sinnes were the greatest reason of the dulnes and hardnes of her hart and the separation of Gods mercies from her (sigs D1v-2r)

She places the core of her femininity – 'a feeling hart' – in direct opposition to 'the word' of the male preachers. Her teaching is as good as 'the Preachers' because of the spiritual transformation effected in her by divine providence and that same providence has provided her with experience which makes her equal with the reading 'preachers'. Her letter demonstrated her authority over the written word; her last words demonstrate her authority over the spoken. She

continues to demand an equality of perception by comparing herself to the prophet Elisha, because he was mocked as she has been. The text, however, talks of the 'Prophet Eliza' rather than 'Elisha' – whether or not this was a typesetting error it still gives an interesting slant to the narrative, confirming Elizabeth's authoritative representation. The equation of herself with Biblical judges and teachers continues:

Then said shee, that if the great and tall leaders of the Church of God have fallen, as David, Salomon [sic], and Manasses, how then could shee stand, being but a bramble and weake wretched woman? (sig. D2r)

The 'great and tall leaders' are brought *down* to her level of weakness and wretchedness, (just as Thomas Caldwell was) and allow her to claim an equality of authority.<sup>26</sup> The freeing of herself from the authority of her husband through the operations of providential, divine grace gives Elizabeth some independence in the way she chooses to define herself against scriptural authority.

The authority Elizabeth was able to claim from the evidence of divine providence working in and through her also allowed her to redefine the crime for which she was being executed. Throughout her scaffold speech she refers only to her 'sinnes' and not to her 'crimes'. She represents to herself and to the crowd gathered to hear her final words and watch her die, that the sin for which she is being executed is adultery, 'she complained much of adultery, and saide it was that filthy sinne which was the cause of her death, and was perswaded in her conscience that her afflictions was rather for that, than any murder she ever committed' (sig. D1v). The other sin for which she accepts guilt is neglect of

Sabbath observance, it was, 'one of her chiefe and capitall sinnes...and although the world did recon and esteeme it a small matter, yet she knew it to be one of her greatest sinnes' (sig. D1v).

The insistence on sinning rather than criminality removes Elizabeth Caldwell from a temporal and earthly system of justice and punishment, to a spiritual one of divine judgement and eternal salvation. This is emphasised by Elizabeth's final words to the Keeper of Chester Gaol, 'I trust in my God I am ready, and farewell to the Lawe, too long have I beene in thy subiection' (sig. B4r). The 'Lawe' that she is happy to leave behind can be interpreted in several ways. Firstly there is the 'Law' of the Old Testament – the covenant of death from which Christ was sent to redeem humans. Within this interpretation, Elizabeth accepts Christ's redemptive power and also once again the doctrines of justification by faith and divine providence. However, as we have also seen, she rejects the moral (and therefore by implication) the *legal* authority of her husband. This statement also frees her from judicial authority, as is shown by her interpretation of her death as a just punishment for adultery at a time when adultery was not a felony but fell within the jurisdiction of the church courts.<sup>27</sup>

Such startling statements of interpretative independence arise solely from the power of providence and not from Elizabeth's own actions:

Concerning repentance, shee spake thus, that it was not in the power of man to repent when hee list, but the only gift of God, protesting before the Lord of heaven and earth, that during the

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 64-5 for the significance of her choice of archetypes.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 253-259.



time of her imprisonment, being a full yeare and a quarter, she had sought the Lord with many bitter teares, with broken and contrite heart, to see if his Majestie would be intreated, and yet she found not such assurance as she desired: ...in the mercies and merites of Christ Jesus, shee hoped her sinnes were pardoned' (sig. D2r)

Although powerfully Calvinist in its construction, this pamphlet does not employ the potentially self-destructive doctrine of double predestination, but insists on the constant possibility of Christ's redemptive powers and the heavenly salvation which makes earthly injustices negligible. So, for example, in her letter to her husband Elizabeth reminds him that:

sith none can have salvation without true Reformation, both inward and outward, amendement, in changing the affection, words, and works, from evill to good, which till you feele in your soule & conscience to be effectually wrought, you have not repented.

She urges him to 'defer not time' because the 'the doors of Gods mercy are open' and if he delays there is 'nothing but woe, woe, and vengeance' (sigs B4v-C1r).

The providential framework of this pamphlet leads writer and reader to reach an interpretation of Elizabeth's guilt which is ultimately at odds with that handed down by the Assizes, and which shows the interpretation of guilt and repentance as an entirely personal, rather than communal decision.<sup>28</sup> This pamphlet promulgates 'hot Protestantism' and in doing so suggests that people espousing such views may be dangerously independent and subversive of the authority of the judiciary.<sup>29</sup> Criticism of the judicial system was of course criticism of the

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<sup>28</sup> Herrup underlines the importance of communal participation in early modern justice so that 'the struggle against criminality was the collective equivalent to the personal struggle for a good character – a continuing battle between the weakness of humanity and its potential.' (*The Common Peace*, 4).

<sup>29</sup> This phrase is used in *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*. Elsewhere, Lake suggests that a perception arose in the ruling elite during the first three decades of the seventeenth century that Calvinism

monarch who stood at the head of it – such an obvious example of the possible disruptive effects of the hotter sort of Protestants would probably not have been welcome to the newly installed James I. *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* is unique within the murder pamphlets as crime and punishment span two reigns. The attempted murder of Thomas Caldwell was committed in the final year of Elizabeth's reign; Elizabeth Caldwell was executed in James I's. It is well known that James made a practice of demonstrating both his clemency and authority towards convicted felons on his progress south in 1603.<sup>30</sup> In these actions he was mimicking the power of the providential God with his 'fatherly chastisements' and it would not have been out of the question that Elizabeth Caldwell could have been a candidate for James' magnanimity. That such an appeal was considered is clear in the role of Lady Mary Cholmsly who 'very worshipfull and lovingly made earnest sute, unto the Judge for [Elizabeth's] deprive till the Assise following: y<sup>t</sup> which by no meanes would be granted' (sig B4r). After this failure Lady Mary and others 'had an intent...to have used meanes to the King for a petition', but this never came to fruition. The judges' rejection of Lady Mary's 'earnest sute' is in direct contrast to their granting of Thomas Caldwell's request to have Elizabeth's execution expedited. In this way Caldwell's culpability in his wife's crimes and his vindictiveness are associated with an obdurate judiciary which rejects a female

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was associated with Puritanism (as distinct from mainstream Protestantism) and Puritanism with popularity and subversion ('Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice' in Richard Cust and Anne Hughes, *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (London: Longman, 1989), 72-106, pp. 84-6)

<sup>30</sup> See John Nichols, *The Progresses, processions and magnificent festivities of King James I* (London, 1828), I, pp. 85-93.

plea for mercy. Just as Thomas Caldwell refused his wife forgiveness, so the judges refused her mercy.

The implications which arose from the providential framework he gave to his narrative were clearly apparent to Gilbert Dugdale as he is careful to record Elizabeth's prayer for the King:

Most religiously she prayed for the Kings most excellent Majestie, and sayd she might call him her King while shee lived, that his sacred & royall Person, might be a bright shining lampe of Gods glory in the advancement of the Gospell of Christ, and the overthrow of poperie & superstition, in these his Kingdomes and dominions. (sig. D1v)

Any implied criticism of James is defused at the same time as he is inserted into God's providential plan for the defence of English Protestantism against the forces of Catholicism. Such a statement also reflects on the representation of Bownd and Hall with their 'allurements', winning Elizabeth to an 'unlawfull reformation'. Dugdale associates them specifically with popery, so often allied in the early modern period with accusations of witchcraft. Such an interpretation is reinforced by Elizabeth's statement that 'touching Papistrie, she ever hated it, knowing it contrary and flatly opposite against the truth of the great God of heaven and his holy word, praying for the confusion and desolution of the great whore of Babilon' (sig. D1r). If James I is a Protestant hero – the 'bright shining lampe of Gods glory' – then Elizabeth Caldwell is a Calvinist heroine.

Gilbert Dugdale uses the narrative framework of providence to give his readers evidence of Elizabeth Caldwell's election. In order to do this he manipulates what we would now call 'forensic evidence' (adultery, poisoned oatcakes and a

child's death) to prove that although a self-confessed adulteress, Elizabeth did not intend to murder the child. Dugdale attempts to hide her manifest intention to murder her husband by representing Thomas Caldwell as at least equally culpable as Elizabeth herself in the sensational events of 'this Cheshire chance'. Such manipulation elicits the reader's sympathy and also provides a basis for an appeal for clemency. The pamphlet is evidence of the failure of earthly justice - the courts are shown as working in opposition to, rather than in concert with, an understanding of divine justice. Within the narrative world of the pamphlet Thomas Caldwell is represented as equally worthy of punishment as his wife - he has broken no secular laws but certainly flouts divine ones. Of course, there is a problem here: providential doctrine would insist that all of Elizabeth Caldwell's actions and sufferings were predetermined, so the efforts of Lady Mary Cholmsly to secure her a pardon were fruitless, just as the judge's refusal to grant her clemency was inevitable. It all comes down to interpretation - if God's purposes are hidden then people must strive to reveal them by interpreting them accurately. However, humans are made fallible and are separated from a knowledge of God by original sin and so any interpretations they make may also be erroneous.

Whilst confirming Calvinist teaching, *A True Discourse* avoids the self-defeating introspection of double predestination as it holds out the possibility of redemption to the neglectful, Sabbath-breaking, vindictive Thomas Caldwell. If Elizabeth Caldwell, adulteress, child killer and potential husband murderer, is one of the elect, then there is surely hope for anyone. It restores hope to a

doctrine that in Calvin's words was a 'dreadful' one (*Institutes*, 3.23.7) – both awesome and terrible in its extinguishing of hope, in its insistence on the hidden nature of God's purposive action.

This detailed study of Elizabeth Caldwell's story has shown not only how stories of murderers could be examined for evidence of God's providence visibly working in the world but also how the doctrine of providence was employed as a structuring device for the narrative. Providential doctrine is here woven into the very fabric of a murder story and does, I would suggest, provide a sense of eternal significance to a set of ephemeral events – something else captured within the doctrine of providence as it bound together past, present and future under God's omniscient gaze.

### *Interpreting the evidence*

In *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* Gilbert Dugdale suggests that what is important is not just the events themselves but how they are interpreted. He insists that readers should take more notice of the evidence of Elizabeth's election than of the evidence that showed she intended to murder her husband. Spurr and Thomas argue that providential doctrine became less central to Anglican and even dissenting theology as the seventeenth century progressed and therefore it should be possible to demonstrate a similar movement in the structure of murder pamphlet narratives. They should provide evidence of Gaskill's 'linear' transition away from a reliance on providence to a reliance on the externally verifiable facts. In part, this idea of a progression from an

'unenlightened' (benighted?) reliance on testimony and evidence that was 'symbolic, subjective and suggestive' to a preference for that which was 'factual, objective and conclusive' (Gaskill, p. 242) is supported by the pamphlets<sup>31</sup> but there are examples throughout the seventeenth century which suggest that the idea of a simple linear transition does not take sufficient account of the complexity of providential thinking or of its persistence as a narrative device. Just as the doctrine of providence has a narrative congruence with the construction of murder stories for general consumption, equally it appears that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination was itself systematic and concerned with demonstrable method: it was 'logical rigour' which demanded that Calvin conclude that God actively chose to redeem or damn (McGrath, p. 137). McGrath makes a clear distinction between Calvin's exposition of predestination and the subsequent development of *Calvinism*. He suggests that the 'rigorously logical system centring on the doctrine of predestination' which is the 'popular conception' of Calvin's own religious thought was in fact developed by his followers in the 'new spirit of the age, which regarded systematization and a concern for method as not only intellectually respectable but also highly desirable' (p. 135). Here, Calvinist theology is characterized as essentially 'scientific', an idea enhanced by the careful scrutiny necessary for *proofs* of election. The mental habits demanded by Reformed theology therefore emphasised the need for the close observation and rational interpretation of

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<sup>31</sup> Pamphlets where forensic evidence is fully detailed or is considered more important than providence, include Wing 3259 *The Bloody Murderer* (1672); Wing M2932 *Most Wicked, Cruel, Bloody and Barbarous News from Northampton* (1676); Wing S5874A *A strange and Wonderful relation of a Barbarous Murder committed by James Robison* (1679); *A hellish murder* (1688); Wing M2256A *Mistaken Justice* (1695).

evidence. Providential doctrine is an important part of the narrative foundations of the murder pamphlet; the ‘scientific’ interpretation of evidence itself lies at the heart of that doctrine.

In order to demonstrate this more fully, I will undertake an analysis of two different versions of the same murder – that of William Storre by Francis Cartwright in 1602. First of all the authors choose two different ways to present this story: interpretation of *evidence* and the workings of divine *providence*. Secondly, one of the writers (if one accepts Gaskill’s analysis of the progression towards more concrete standards of proof) is precociously prescient in his presentation of the facts of the case. If, however, one accepts that such logical presentation and an insistence on evidence lies at the centre of reformed theology then this is less surprising. Combined with the need to provide evidence is the rhetoric involved with persuading an audience to accept the ‘colour’ given to an argument in order to prove its quality.

The story of William Storre’s murder is recounted in three pamphlets: *The manner of the cruell outragious murther of William Storre* (1603), *Three bloodie murders* (1613) and *The life, confession and heartie repentance of Francis Cartwright* (1621).<sup>32</sup> The facts (and they are not disputed) were as follows: on

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<sup>32</sup> The pamphlets printed in 1603 and 1613 are essentially the same. The 1613 account includes testimonies taken at the inquest and transposes ‘To the Reader’ from the end to the beginning of the pamphlet. 1603 ends with Cartwright’s flight after he is examined by the magistrate, 1613 adds 4 more paragraphs, detailing the fate of the corrupt magistrate who allowed Cartwright to escape and also of Storre’s widow, after ‘the course of Justice (contrary to all expectation) being scoffed’ by Cartwright’s pardon. The writer describes Mistress Storre’s efforts to appeal against Cartwright’s pardon and suggests that Cartwright was still living abroad. The story of this murder seems to have had enduring popularity. Not only do the three accounts of it span 18 years but it is

30 August 1602, Francis Cartwright attacked and murdered William Storre, the vicar of Market Rasen. Cartwright was arrested swiftly as the murder was committed in front of witnesses, in the open and in daylight. However, he escaped (probably with the help of a corrupt magistrate) and fled to Europe. His father obtained a pardon for him and Cartwright subsequently returned to England.<sup>33</sup> This is the story related in *The Cruell Outragious Murder and Three Bloodie Murders*. Francis Cartwright's own version completes the story, with an exciting tale of escapes, fights, near shipwrecks and attacks by pirates. Finally returning to England he married and had a family, however, he also killed another man in an angry brawl and came close to making it three homicides while serving on a ship. This story is unique in my reading of the corpus of murder pamphlets as it is the only one in which a self-confessed murderer eludes justice.

The writer(s) of the first two pamphlets (although they are directly contemporary with the Elizabeth Caldwell pamphlet) deliberately eschews the providential framework of *A True Discourse*: there is absolutely no mention of the Devil; little of God and almost no attempt to explain the horrific events as determined by God's hidden purpose, although he still maintains the linked narrative. Instead what the reader is presented with is *evidence*. Peter Lake has described this

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also referred to in *A True Relation of a most barbarous and cruell Murther committed by one Enoch ap Evan* (1633), 'one Cartwright at Market-Rayson in Lincolne-shire, most foulely and upon former premeditation, mured a Minister and Preacher of Gods word' (sig. A3r).

<sup>33</sup> In his *Life, Confession and Heartie Repentance*, Francis Cartwright explains that his pardon was unpopular. Not only was it 'questioned at the Bench of Assisse for about five yeares together' but also 'his Majestie himself...was in point of Justice very willing that some defect, if possible, might have beene found in my pardon, and so should I have undergone the the just stroke of the Law: which not only others, but even my selfe wondered how I could escape' (sig. B2r).



particular pamphlet as ‘pornographic’ in its violence and placed it prominently in the section entitled ‘titillation’ in his most recent work (‘Deeds against Nature’, pp. 259-60; *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, pp. 14-17). Such an interpretation is based on the description of the murder which appears in both of the earlier pamphlets:

But Cartwright being double armed, both with Force and Furie, would abide no parly, but presently at the first blow, cutte his left Legge almost off; and then making at his Head, M. Storre casting up his Armes to defend it, (for other weapon had he none) hee gave him two mortall woundes on the forepart therof thorow the Braine-pan, cut off three of his fingers and gave him two other grievous woundes on the outside of either Arme betweene the Elbow and the Hand; the one to the middest of the Arme, and the other more than halfe in sunder, deviding the maine Bone two ynches one part from the other.

Thus massecred, hee fell backward into a Puddle of water, and striving to recover himselfe, the Splinter-bone of his Legge halfe cut thorow afore, knapt in two, and his Heele doubled backe to the Calfe of his Legge. Cartwright not yet satisfied with the Bloode he had already gotten, continued his rage still more fiercely upon him, and gave him another gash on the outside of the right Thigh to the very bone: And againe on the left Knee, his Legge being bended as he lay, he cut him the fashion and compasse of an Horse-shoe, battering in peeces the Whirle-bone, and the nether part of the Thigh-bone, that it was most grievous even to behold. Some smaller woundes he had, and sundry other blowes which came not to his skinne; as appeared by the mangling of his Apparell. (*Three Bloodie Murders*, sig. A4v)<sup>34</sup>

Taken in isolation from the rest of the pamphlet it is possible to argue that this is a gratuitously violent description of Cartwright’s murderous attack aimed solely at simultaneously thrilling and horrifying an avidly salacious reader. More

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<sup>34</sup> All quotations from the earlier pamphlets are taken from *Three Bloodie Murders* as this is the fuller of the two versions and apart from the differences noted above is a verbatim reprinting of the 1603 pamphlet.

horror, more copies sold.<sup>35</sup> However, examined more closely, what is remarkable about this account is its anatomical precision: the writer is exact about how many wounds were inflicted to which limb; whether it was right or left; exactly how far apart those wounds were; which blows caused which wounds; the names the bones affected, and the shape and size one of one of the wounds - 'the fashion and compasse of a Horse-shoe'. He is also precise about the order of events, the sequence in which the wounds were inflicted and when exactly William Storre fell to the ground. Surely any writer with an eye on the potential market for his pamphlet would have turned the puddle William Storre fell into to one composed of blood and gore rather than the much more prosaic 'puddle of water'. In fact, there is remarkably little blood in this account – we only know that Francis Cartwright 'was not yet satisfied with the Bloode' and so continued his assault. It seems that this writer eschews several opportunities to heat up this account (for instance, it is Storre's 'Apparell' which is described as 'mangled' rather than his body) and the fact that he does so should make us pause to consider why.

The main reason is that the pamphlet writer's concern is the presentation of evidence and he introduces the narrative with an explanation of specific political reasons for publication:

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<sup>35</sup> In this context, the first account (*The manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther*) has a very restrained title page, with the title, coat of arms of Oxford University, date and printer's name. In contrast, the 1613 version has a lurid woodcut of the murder, showing Master Storre's severed leg pouring blood and Francis Cartwright wielding a huge, sabre-like sword. As with other pamphlets the picture is there to attract readers and does indeed seem to trade on the titillation provided by such graphic descriptions. However, the content in its restraint and precision is entirely at odds with the advertisement of the woodcut. See illustrations overleaf.

THE  
MANNER OF  
THE CRVELL OVT.  
RAGIOVS MVRTHER OF  
WILLIAM STORRE *Maſt. of Art, Mi-  
niſter, and Preacher at Market Raiſin in  
the County of Lincolne:*

COMMITTED

*By Francis Cartwright one of his pariſhioners,  
the 30. day of Auguſt Anno. 1602.*



AT OXFORD,  
Printed by Ioseph Barnes. 1603.

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# Three Bloodie Murders:

The first, committed by *Francis Cartwright* vpon *William Storre*, M<sup>r</sup>. of Art, Miniler and Preacher at *Markes Rasin* in the countie of *Lincolne*.

The Sec<sup>o</sup>n, committed by *Elizabeth James*, on the body of her Mayde, in the Parish of *Egham* in *Surrey*: who was condemned for the same fact at *Saint Margarets hill* in *Southwark*, the 2. of *Iuly* 1613. and lieth in the *White Lion* till her deliuerie: discovered by a *dombe Mayde*, and a *Dogge*.

The Third, committed vpon a *Stranger*, very lately. neere *High-hay* foure miles from *London*: very strangely found out by a *Dogge* also, the 2. of *Iuly*. 1613.



Imprinted at *London* for *Iohn Trundle*, dwelling in *Barbican* 1613.

For that some of CARTWRIGHT'S favourites wanting colour to excuse altogether the foulnesse of his fact, doe yet indeavour to qualifie the same in what measure they can, affirming that hee being a young man, was provoked, and stirred up by evill wordes to commit that in the heate of his blood, which otherwayes he would never have committed. And some others, being themselves of a loose conversation, or at the least enemies to the Ministrie of the Gospell, would seeme to extenuate the crime, by imputing it, as a just reward due, not only for the partie murdered, but also to most of his calling for their over-bold checking, and (as they tearme it) domineering over their betters; because indeed they reprove the generall corruptions that so abounde in every corner. (sig A2r)

The issue here is not *versions* of the truth but the rhetorical presentation of facts: efforts to 'colour' and 'qualifie'.<sup>36</sup> These rhetorical skills were particularly important in legal argument.<sup>37</sup> Also there are hints of class conflict: the resentment of the gentry of 'loose conversation', at being upbraided by their social inferiors who own the 'Ministrie of the Gospell'. It is above all about standards of proof, for in this pamphlet, 'there is nothing set downe, but that which is to be justified by very sufficient prooffe'. To this end, the writer enlists the help of 'foure substanciall Juries' who provide 'testimonie' of Master Storre's probity and righteousness. Those 'juries' are made up of 'the better sort of his Parishioners'; 'the Worshipful in the Countrie, to whom he was best knowne'; 'the chief of such Ministers among whom he conversed', and men 'from the Universitie where he was brought up' (sig. A2v). The pamphlet writer constructs the elements of the trial that never took place: evidence, witnesses and juries. The reader is the judge, the verdict unquestionable.

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<sup>37</sup> See Wesley Trimpi, *Muses of One Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 252-53, 256-57 and Kathy Edcn, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 7-8

Politics lie at the heart of this story because the motive for Francis Cartwright's murderous attack lay in 'some controversie betweene the Lords and the rest of the Inhabitants of Market Raisin...concerning the Commons and Libertie in the Towne-fieldes' (sig. A3r). Tempers were threatening to run out of control after 'Evening prayer one Sabaoth' and Master Storre intervened. Although 'not willing to intermeddle in that matter', Storre agreed to act as an intermediary between the gentry and the townspeople because they saw him as a 'man indifferent', despite a history of 'small unkindnesse' between himself and Francis Cartwright, 'a young man of unbridled humour, the onely Sonne and Heire to one of the same Lordes of the Towne' (sig. A3r). After consultation, Storre did 'incline more to the right of the Free-holders and the rest of the Commons' and this opinion fanned 'young Cartwright's' resentment to murderous rage.

The pamphlet writer adopts throughout a moderate, even pedantic, tone calculated to extinguish any heat from the account – or rather to redirect any charge of immoderate behaviour at Francis Cartwright, with his 'hot stomacke' and 'unbridled humour'. Self-righteously, the writer declines to write down the 'base and odious termes' Cartwright used towards Storre 'for modestie sake, I forbear to rehearse them' (sig. A3v), but he does record Cartwright's threat against Storre's life, 'that hee would (but for the Law) cut his Throat, teare out his heart, and hang his Quarters on a May-pole' (sig. A4r). The rhetorical juxtaposition of moderation against intemperance does its work effectively. Master Storre is portrayed as a mouthpiece of godly wisdom, combining 'loving

exhortations' with some 'sharpe, and nipping reprehensions' as 'occasion served' in a sermon heard by Francis Cartwright. Cartwright's own actions are not represented as prompted by the devil, instead his 'stomacke filled with raw humors' and his 'minde [was] fraught with rancor and malice'. It was Cartwright *himself* who 'wrested all thinges he heard, unto the worst sense, as purposely spoken against him' (sig. A4r). Again on the morning of the murder, there is no hint from the writer that Cartwright's decision to go 'to a Cutler's shop' and purchase a 'short sword' was prompted by the workings of Satan. Francis Cartwright is no Elizabeth Caldwell, made impotent by her human nature and susceptible to devilish wiles. Instead he is active, driven by 'Force and Furie', his 'passions' and his desire for 'revenge' (sig. A4r).

What drives this narrative forward is not a framework of providence, but the need to record evidence. The writer of *Three Bloodie Murders* is careful to insert into his account the presence of an eye-witness to the murder, 'a Mayde' whose cries of alarm caused Cartwright to flee. This is important, because when he records the subsequent arrest and escape of Cartwright, he at first suggests the magistrates may have had a 'lacke of their due information of the trueth'. However, the reader knows this is unlikely because of the immediate involvement of the Constables and the presence of the witness. The truth must be then that it was by 'the corrupt and favourable affection of the Magistrate' that a 'slender bayle' was set and the opportunity given for Cartwright's escape. Injustice piles up, as a royal pardon is 'purchased' and Widow Storre's appeal hangs in the balance while Cartwright's 'counsaile' attempt to 'finde any

erronious proceeding that might hold Plea in law to stoppe her suite' (sig. B2r). This is where the account in *Three Bloodie Murders* stops, but we know from Cartwright's own narrative that Mistress Storre's appeal did fail on just such a legal technicality. *The Cruel Outragious Murder* and *Three Bloodie Murders* offer no hope of eternal salvation or damnation to offset such manifest injustice. True, Master Storre made the requisite godly death (against the odds he survived for nearly a week after the attack) but that was consistent with his godly life and did not involve a dramatic conversion.

Perhaps the writer of these first two narratives was unable to use a providential framework because there was nothing it could offer the reader in terms of resolution. The narratives of *The Cruel Outragious Murder* and *Three Bloodie Murders* are unusually open-ended – the anticipated outcome of apprehension and execution cannot be provided and the corruption of the judiciary has made such a resolution impossible. There are also political ramifications: reading *Three Bloodie Murders* alongside Francis Cartwright's own account of his life, it is possible to speculate that the former was printed at about the time of Cartwright's *second* trial for murder, and so it constitutes evidence of Cartwright's guilt in another murder – guilt which has long gone unpunished.

If the writer of the first two pamphlets was unable or unwilling to employ providential doctrine in the service of his narrative, no such inhibitions hampered Francis Cartwright. In *The Life Confession and Heartie Repentance of Francis Cartwright, Gentlemen*, Cartwright uses divine providence to explain how he



avoided punishment for not one but *two* murders, and thereby justify his continuing existence. The disasters and deaths which dominate his life are construed as evidence of God's interest in him and therefore of his elect status. This is, of course, the exact reverse of Elizabeth Caldwell's representation, where her penitence and punishment were the evidence of her election and of God's providence. Elizabeth Caldwell was both an admonitory and exhortatory exemplar, Cartwright presents himself as only an admonitory one, for he has 'beene deeply branded with shame of the world outwardly, and with the terrors of God inwardly' and so may 'be a dreadfull thunderclap of warning and affright to all, presuming and persevering sinners' (sig. A2r). Gilbert Dugdale presents Elizabeth's salvation as certain, no such certainty emerges from Francis Cartwright's narrative. This is despite Cartwright's claim to be the recipient of God's 'special' as well as 'general' providence. While incarcerated for killing a second man (some years after the murder of Master Storre), Cartwright's son fell mortally ill – 'touched by the angrie hand of God' (sig. B4r). Cartwright's penitence secures a miraculous recovery, 'My gracious God heard me, and past and beyond all earthly hope and meane; in an instant restored him to health' (sig. B4v).

Everything in Carwright's eventful life is interpreted as evidence of divine providence and consequently nearly every page of the pamphlet contains a reference to providential doctrine. One of the reasons Cartwright gives for 'this publique declaring of himself' was:

that by this Discourse of mine, the world may see the power and goodnesse of the Almighty, that hath not forsake me when I fled

from him and my selfe, but hathe even then powred on me the freshest Balme of his mercies...giving mee leave to surfet on sinne, that I might lothe it; to dye my hands in the blood of Christ to purifie mee; and to wallow in sensualitie and securitie, that my true repentance at last might lodge me safe in the repose of a quiet conscience. (sigs A2v-3r)

Cartwright describes his murderous rage against William Storre as God's will: 'it pleased God in his just judgment for my hardnesse of heart and contempt of his Word...to give over my hand to wound deeper than my heart intended' (sig. A4r). These two statements show the antinomian direction interpretations of providential doctrine could take. Francis Cartwright represents himself as powerless before God's plan for him - there is no sense of free will here at all. It is, ultimately, a strange representation of God - directing Cartwright's hand to commit the murder forbidden by that same God's 'Word and Commandements'. Again, when Cartwright returns home after his pardon was secured he describes how 'new provocations were daily offered me, whereby I was in danger to draw more blood upon me, or make myself incapable of my pardon' and that these were 'all...things God suffered mee to be tempted with' although this time God also sustained him in his rejection of those 'provocations' (sig. B2r). When Cartwright kills a second man who 'heaped injuries upon me, beyond the temper of any humane sufferance' he describes himself as 'the lucklesse instrument' of the man's death and interprets this event as God-given and God-driven so that he, 'might then truely see that God was not at atonement with my soule for the first, when he permitted me to be a Destroyer of the second' (sig. B3r). Such justification might convince a reader of the influence of divine providence if Cartwright ever showed any reformation in his behaviour - but although he

declares his penitence several times there is no *evidence* of it. His imprisonment for the killing of Master Riggs had, Cartwright declared, 'buried the old man so much in me, as that there remained not to much of him in my corruption' (sigs B4v-C1r). However, as soon as he was released he squandered what remained of his money on 'recreations', 'pleasures' and usurers and then tried to restore his family fortunes by becoming 'an earnest Suitor about the Court'. Failing in this he took to sea, leaving his destitute wife and children behind and yet again fell victim to his ungovernable temper, only prevented from killing someone else by being sent summarily home.

During that journey home, Cartwright once again experienced the effects of God's 'special providence'. The ship he was on collided with another and threatened to founder 'upon a Rocke that was then menacing her' (sig. C2r). Recovering from this, they were attacked by Turkish pirates – 'still the Judgement of God pursued me' – and only saved because the crew gave the pirates their cargo of two lions intended as a present for King James I. The whole of this incident is related by Cartwright only as it refers to him, as proof of God's continuing interest and of his own guilt. The ship foundered because it was 'unwilling to venter herself with so heavy a burthen as I was charged with'; Cartwright fears lest 'the Sea-men should lay all this mis-adventure on me'; the lions are a divine gift, 'the Lord provided an unexpected deliverie', and the whole episode appears to have been staged for his benefit, 'this I applied to my soule, and confest the wonderfull workes of God' (sig. C2r-v). This is not an isolated incident, every time Cartwright sets foot on a ship, storms rage, an

external manifestation of the 'troubled Sea' to which he likens his conscience (sig. A4v), and proof (if more was needed) of 'how God followed me with mercy and threatening judgement' and his 'Omnipotent hand' (sig. B1v). Ultimately, Francis Cartwright represents himself as the hero of a story of divine providence.

The final event he records is his narrow escape from death when he accidentally fell on his sword during his journey home after the encounter with the Turkish pirates. Such a death would, he concedes, have been an exemplary one, 'that I by whose unhappy Sword, two before had fallen, should now after the Law was appeased, and all my recited dangers escaped, be exposed to an exemplary and wretched end upon my owne Weapon' (sig. C3r). However, despite the 'horror' of such an outcome, he once again (literally) lives to tell the tale. The best interpretation of such a narrative is that Francis Cartwright was an extraordinarily fortunate man, but the doctrine of providence precludes (or rather re-writes) ideas of fortune and chance. Without the need to demonstrate true penitence for a crime for which he should have been executed, Cartwright could then have produced an adventure narrative, full of hair's-breadth escapes and exciting incidents. Clearly he felt some need to write about his life. The reasons could be as diverse as an attempt to effect a complete social rehabilitation or (given his history) a desperate need for money. The narrative of penitence is, however, necessary to his story, and therefore the only way to explain his life is to employ the doctrine of providence. It is, however, a spurious layer, a cynical and superficial device and he cannot entirely suppress either the exciting nature

of his story or the need to justify his actions, rather than admit his shame and contrition.

Francis Cartwright's use of the doctrine of providence in his narrative demonstrates why accusations of hypocrisy were often levelled at those who espoused it. However, Calvin's own exposition of providential doctrine anticipated such interpretations, and he is scathing about them:

Then whatever does happen now, they so impute to God's providence that they close their eyes to the man who has clearly done it. Does an assassin murder an upright citizen? He has carried out, they say, God's plan...Thus all crimes, because subject to God's ordinance, they call virtues. (*Institutes*, 1.17.3)

Calvin is clear that 'God's providence does not exculpate our wickedness':

Why shall a murderer be punished, who has killed one whose life the Lord has ended? If all such men are serving God's will, why shall they be punished? On the contrary, I deny that they are serving God's will. For we shall not say that one who is motivated by evil inclination, by only obeying his own wicked desire, renders service to God at His bidding...God requires only of us what he commands. If we contrive anything against his commandment, it is not obedience but obstinacy and transgression. (1.17.5)

So much for Francis Cartwright's attempts at justification. Cartwright reveals the thinness of the veneer of his penitence and humility in his account of Master Storre's murder. He adopts a florid, oratorical style to convey the depth of his depravity to the reader:

O frightfull remembrance! O the deep sting, O the dismal sound of this crying sinne! Was it not heinous enough for mee to kill a man, but must I by my fury bee put on such a one, whose Coat and qualitie added many degrees to the foulnesse of the Murther: a Minister of Gods Word, mine own Pastor and Watchman of my soule. (sig. A3v)

The passive 'bee put on such a one' again portrays Cartwright as God's instrument in an unlawful killing. However, a peevish note enters Cartwright's account as he describes how Master Storre was a 'zealous detester of my lewd courses' who used 'sharpe reprehensions' to him 'both in private and publike' and 'did thereby kindle in mee an hatred, not of mine owne lewdnesse, but of his person'. Both these statements seek to absolve Cartwright of responsibility. Having raised the theme of culpability Cartwright is ready to expatiate further:

I might perhaps by way of extenuation say, that had he used greater words and, milder reprehensions to me, he might by Gods blessing have plucked me out of the figure of Satan, and so had prevented this shortning his owe days by my hand. I might say that my distemper was enraged by his unseasonable corrosives, which might perhaps have beene allayed and cured by gentle Balmes. (sig. A4r)

Although immediately Cartwright asserts that he 'accuses', 'arraigns' and 'condemns' only himself, the rhetorical effect is already complete: the mitigation has come first, not the confession, and it is powerful despite its conditional tense. Cartwright's position would be more convincing if he did not attempt the same effect when recounting the argument in which he killed a second man. Master Riggs was 'urged by his owne rashnesse...to seeke his owne fall by my hand...grosly, and strangely, three or foure severall times he heaped injuries upon me...he must needs pursue me...and in my way home assaulted me with his Sword' (sig. A4r). Again, Francis Cartwright, whilst appearing penitent, manages to evade responsibility.

Cartwright attempts exactly the same effect as Gilbert Dugdale: by introducing the idea of the victim's culpability in the murder, he seeks to call into question

his own guilt. In both pamphlets, the success of such a rhetorical strategy depends upon how much a reader is convinced of Elizabeth Caldwell's and Francis Cartwright's 'tolerable criminality' (*The Common Peace*, pp. 172-73). Dugdale succeeds because Elizabeth's penitence never wavers; her confession precedes her plea for consideration of her husband's culpability; she has more moral authority, and her voice is mediated by Dugdale's and vice versa. Cartwright speaks only for himself and therefore his attempt appears more self-serving. Ascribing all his troubles and crimes to God's 'Omnipotent Power', Cartwright shows how providential doctrine could be employed as self-justification. His penitence and reformation are consistently undermined by his uncontrollable temper and his inability to read signs correctly. Here, providence does not give narrative coherence but ultimately destabilizes the narrative.

For an adept reader, such instability would be confirmed by the final section of the pamphlet: 'Francis Cartwright's Resolution and Religion'. Gilbert Dugdale showed that a correct interpretation of providential doctrine confirms stalwart Protestantism and as a result can produce a formidable Protestant narrative. Francis Cartwright's antinomian approach produces an unstable narrative (moving uneasily between confession, penitential tract, romance and adventure story), an instability confirmed by his wavering religious allegiance. What is clear from the pamphlet's final section is that Cartwright's 'religion' is far from 'resolute'. He declares:

An Heathenish Pagan, Infidell, or Atheist I am not: neither am I of the Romish Religion, though (I confess) there are many carnall reasons which do perswade me to imbrace and put into practice some of their Opinions and Doctrine, as praying to Saints;

because I hold myself unworthy to pray to God, Purgatory that I might have an end of torment. (sig. D1v)

He suggests that he would be 'new moulded and tutored in...Monasteries' and praises the 'favours and courtesies' he has received from Catholics. Indeed, he says that he would be welcomed 'into their Cloysters or for their Warres; and be esteemed' although he is 'neglected by mine owne Nation'. Nevertheless, he insists that he does not 'encline to beleieve the Romish Doctrines' and 'acknowledge[s] that all the glorie of our salvation is due to God, who worketh all in all' (sig. D1v). Here, it seems, is an unequivocal statement of Protestant belief and Cartwright insists that he will 'stand with my Sword in my hand...in defence of the Gospell and of true Christian Religion' and 'interpose my selfe' between any 'Minister of God's Word' and their enemies (sig. E1r). So beguiling are the endless possibilities for self-justification offered by providence that Cartwright seems to lose any sense of the irony of his statements. However, despite such a display of martial and steadfast Protestantism, as he draws his 'heartie repentance' to its close, Cartwright mentions again that he is 'delivered from the danger and infection of the Romish Religion' (sig. E2r); for him to be 'delivered' he must first have been at least tempted to succumb.

The messages given to the reader about Cartwright's religion are decidedly mixed ones and his avowals of hearty Protestantism begin to sound like his exclamations of penitence in the first part of the pamphlet: there are too many of them to convince the reader of his sincerity. From the evidence of his life-story, told by Cartwright himself, the reader deduces that he was unable to sustain any control over his murderous temper and self-indulgent destructiveness, or display



true penitence. Why then should that reader believe Cartwright's protestations that he 'abhorre[s] Popish satisfaction' and his desire that 'the ancient discipline of the Primitive sincere Church were more thoroughly revived' (sig. E2v)? Although I have suggested that Cartwright's statement of Protestant integrity is as suspect as his claims for narrative integrity, nevertheless he does claim that murder pamphlets have a role to play in promulgating Protestant doctrine. He links his desire for a revival of the 'ancient discipline of the Primitive sincere Church' to the 'publike confession' of 'every scandalous crime'.

*A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* and *The Life, Confession and Heartie Repentance of Francis Cartwright* are two examples of how providential doctrine influenced the narration of murder. Gilbert Dugdale uses it as the weft that holds the warp of his story together. The result is a stable narrative with a steadfast heroine at its centre. Every action taken by Elizabeth Caldwell, every word spoken or written by her is recorded and interpreted as evidence of her election and proof of the divine providence. In contrast, Francis Cartwright applies liberal amounts of providence to the surfaces of his story, attempting to represent himself sometimes as Job (the storms that rage, the trials that befall him); sometimes as the hero of a picaresque romance; sometimes as a true penitent.<sup>38</sup> As a result *The Life, Confession and Heartie Repentance* is an entertaining but unstable narrative.

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<sup>38</sup> Cartwright was 'enforced...publikely to submit my selfe to the Church, and so in the Convocation house before my Lords Grace of *Canterburie*, and the rest of the Reverend Bishops and Cleargie in the Parliament time: I did acknowledge my fault, and gave testimonie of my Contrition and Repentance, and made a true profession of my Religion' (sig. B2v).

However, the influence of providential thinking does produce remarkable similarities between two such apparently disparate narratives. The authors of both use the idea of providence to divert the reader's attention from the crime that was committed. Dugdale consistently attempts to obscure the fact that Elizabeth Caldwell *did* intend to kill her husband. In doing so he suggests that it was divine providence that prevented that murder and caused instead the unintentional death of the child. This is very close to the antinomian protestations of Francis Cartwright that God guided his hand to murder both Master Storre and Master Riggs just so Cartwright would be the recipient of God's punishments for the rest of his life, and thereby provide evidence of his election. Both narratives suggest that murder may be part of God's plan. They also demonstrate a separation between earthly and divine justice. Instead of divine providence and secular authorities working together to apprehend and punish murderers - 'the hand of God' working with 'the sword of justice' - in the stories of Elizabeth Caldwell and Francis Cartwright 'hand' and 'sword' are completely separate. Dugdale's project is to persuade the reader to reach a different verdict from that of the Assize Court in Chester. Francis Cartwright's story is one of manifest injustice caused by judicial corruption and he seeks to persuade the reader that he has been justly punished, although it is not the punishment demanded by law. The tool both employ in their efforts to persuade is divine providence and its insistence on the hidden nature of God's purposive actions. The internal logic of providential protestantism as it is used by these two writers places its proponents ultimately against monarch and judiciary, because they both reject the idea of communal justice in favour of individual interpretation.

The question of interpretation of the signs of divine providence is also evident in two pamphlets from the middle decades of the seventeenth century. *A Wonder of Wonders* (1651) and *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* (1668) explore the relationship of divine providence to state and juridical power so usefully exploited by Dugdale, Cartwright and the writer of the William Storre pamphlets. On December 14<sup>th</sup> 1650, Anne Green was hanged for the murder of her illegitimate child, although the title page of *A Wonder of Wonders* suggests that the baby was ‘dead born’ rather than wilfully killed by its mother.<sup>39</sup> Certainly, Green pleaded not guilty at her trial. She was condemned and ‘hanged in the Castle-yard in *Oxford*, for the space of half an hour, receiving many great and heavy blowes on the brests, by the butt end of the souldiers Muskets, and being pulled down by the leggs’ . As her body had been ‘beg’d for an Anatomy, by the physicians’ it was cut down and carried to an apothecary’s house (sig. A1r). There it was observed that she ‘breathed, and began to stir’ and ‘within 14 hours’ she had recovered sufficiently to ‘walk up and down the chamber’. The pamphlet writer declares that Green’s first words as she regained consciousness were, ‘behold God’s providence, and his wonder of wonders’ (sig. A4r-v). This pious exclamation was at one with the demeanour she had maintained throughout her imprisonment, trial and execution. Green’s salvation from execution is represented as the proof of her innocence for which she had prayed on the ladder to the gibbet. It is also described as a miracle, so that when a ‘great man’ sought

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<sup>39</sup> Anne Green’s story is also found in *Newes from the Dead. Or a true and exact narration of the miraculous deliverance of Anne Greene* (Oxford, 1651). It is a mixture of scholarly poems (some in Latin) and a prose account that concentrates on the miracle of her survival rather than on her crime and penitence.

to have her execution carried out again, 'contrary to all Law, reason and justice' he was prevented by 'some Honest Souldiers' who declared:

That there was a great hand of God in it, and having suffered the Law it was contrary to all right and reason, that any further punishment should be inflicted upon her, which words brought a final end and period to their dispute and controversie. (sig. A4v)

Twice the writer invokes the idea of reason, linking it to the evidence of God's providence which supersedes and corrects the faults of secular power. Unsurprisingly, in the year after the execution of Charles I, 'right and reason' and the 'great hand of God' are shown directing the eloquent 'honest souldiers' rather than the aristocratic 'great man'.

The influence of political power on the interpretation of providential signs is not only apparent in the way Thomas Savage's story is told in *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* but also in the dates when it was reprinted: 1668, 1669, 1671 and 1688. The coincidence of story and dates suggest that it was part of non-conformist efforts to 'de-criminalize' their beliefs during the 1660s and 1670s. However, just as in the narratives of Elizabeth Caldwell, Francis Cartwright and Anne Green, the law of God is shown to have primacy over the 'Law of the Land'. In *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* the miracle of Anne Green's deliverance is replaced by the miracle of free grace as the punishment meted out on earth is transformed into the path to Thomas Savage's salvation. The mercy and forgiveness unavailable to a guilty man within an earthly system of justice can be given by God's providence to a truly penitent one, for they 'outcry and drown the voice of every other sin' (sig. A2r). Thomas Savage had to die in order

to show the power of divine grace, whereas Anne Green had to live to show the same thing. At his execution, one of Savage's friends (like Green's) tried to hasten his death, by striking him on the chest 'with all his might' (p. 45). Like Green, Savage survived his execution but he was hanged again within four hours. The writer of *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* insists that this story is evidence of the power of divine providence, 'but Behold here is an instance of Free grace! His sins did abound but God's grace did super-abound' (p. 46).

The doctrine of providence was central to Reformed theology and was woven into the fabric of the Church of England from its inception. That same doctrine was also an important narrative and generic thread in murder pamphlets for over 100 years. Although this may partly be explained by regarding the murder pamphlets as one of the vehicles for the dissemination of 'hot protestantism' (as they could be scrutinised as evidence of God's providence) this is not sufficient as an explanation for its longevity when such doctrine was no longer central to the theology of the Church. This chapter has suggested that the logical structure of providential doctrine is congruent with the need to organise random, chaotic and shocking events. Thus the pamphlet writers were able to give murder 'order, reason, sense and necessity' and satisfy their readers with a tidy and familiar narrative. However, we have seen that in the pamphlets by Gilbert Dugdale and Francis Cartwright and in those about Anne Green and Thomas Savage, providential doctrine with its insistence on the interpretation of signs is employed to express opposition to, dissent from, or dissatisfaction with the political and judicial system. Readers are asked to scrutinize the nature of judicial probity and

trustworthiness as it is represented (deliberately or not) by the pamphlet writers. Such a scrutiny would discern that Protestant subjectivity can be formed through the representation and reading of murder within a providential framework. Throughout the seventeenth century the conventions of the prose murder pamphlets were employed to invite a debate by 'private persons' about the 'public matter' of murder.

## Chapter 3

### *'Religion matters': murder, papists, Protestants and propaganda*

The previous chapter examined the ways in which providential doctrine shaped murder narratives throughout the seventeenth century. The assertion, therefore, that 'religion matters'<sup>1</sup> in the representation of murders and murderers is not a startling one as from the earliest extant pamphlets murder is placed within a theological framework with the emphasis on the doctrine of original sin and double predestination. A chain of sinning leads the murderer to the heinous sacrilege of killing the 'image of God', and s/he then meets inevitable retribution brought about by a conjunction of divine providence and the human system of justice. Humanity (and by implication the reader) is only a footstep away from the commission of such sins and therefore the pamphlets work as tools for spiritual guidance, stressing the need for constant vigilance as well as giving apocalyptic warnings of damnation. However, apart from confirming general human sinfulness and the redemptive power of divine grace, some of the murder pamphleteers deliberately used their murder narratives as propaganda. Confessional allegiance – particularly Catholic – is shown instilling criminality and treachery in its adherents. Although the first pamphlets using the rhetoric of murder as propaganda are aimed at Catholics, as the century progresses the same rhetoric is used to describe murders by other non-

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory* (London, Merlin, 1978), 58.

conformists, such as Anabaptists and Quakers.<sup>2</sup> The production of these pamphlets appears to have been crisis related as they were produced at particular moments of politico-religious pressure: the arrival of the English Jesuits Edmund Campion and Robert Persons in 1580; the Gunpowder Plot; the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, and the Glorious Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The murder pamphlet narratives were particularly suited to being used as religious propaganda. In early modern anti-papist rhetoric, Catholics were created as the ‘perfectly symmetrical negative image’ to true English Protestants (‘Anti-popery’, p. 73). In general, the success of the murder narratives depended upon the creation of just such a binary opposition between the active, sinful murderer and his/her passive, innocent victim, so it was straightforward to absorb the conventions of anti-Catholic polemic into those of the murder pamphlets. Equally, just as Catholicism was regarded as ‘foreign’ (both in terms of being ‘un-English’ and also representing allegiance to a foreign ruler) so murder is represented as ‘foreign’ to any sense of humanity as it is ‘unnaturall’ and ‘barbarous’. The understanding that murder was rooted in original sin also finds a parallel in the representations of Catholics: like murder, papists were spawned by the devil and so writers could claim that papists were by definition murderers, or even vice versa.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the term ‘propaganda’ emerged from a new Catholic congregation which was established in Rome in 1622 and had its own printing office: Tipografia della Congregazione de Propaganda Fide (Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 326).

<sup>3</sup> Joad Raymond describes how the Popish Plot was ‘a crisis mirrored in print’ (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 331)



Murder then, like popery, could be used as a 'unifying other' showing that 'all those not directly implicated in the problem (popery) became part of the solution (non-popery)' ('Anti-popery', p. 82). As the murder pamphleteers showed the 'problem' in the crime of murder, they also suggested the 'solution' to the reader. What was being created was the idea of the 'other' which would help define the 'self'. This sense of personal subjectivity was extended in anti-papist propaganda to one of national subjectivity, creating and perpetuating the 'foreignness and otherness' of popery in such a way that it both threatened and constituted the 'autonomy of a Protestant England'.<sup>5</sup> This sense of binary opposition is important but the way a reader's subjectivity was created by the murder pamphleteers is, in fact, more complex. On one level, readers could be reassured that they were not like the 'bloody' and 'unnatural' murderer about whom they were reading, and that the threat of his/her 'barbarousness' had been contained and removed. At another level, however, the reader could be a potential victim as the pamphlets showed how randomly murder could strike and also how close that possibility was: in the street, in a neighbour's house, even in one's own home. More disturbingly, the reader could be a potential murderer, linked to the criminal in the narrative by inescapable human sinfulness. The enemy, therefore, was within the individual. The pamphlets which use murder as anti-Catholic propaganda all look at English murderers thereby suggesting that the most dangerous enemy to English Protestantism were English

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<sup>4</sup> In *The Cry and Revenge of Blood* (1620), Thomas Cooper asserts that the 'sinne of Murther' is the 'chiefe darling and glorious sinne' of 'that Scarlet-coloured Whore'. The 'Divel' was the father of the Catholic Church and he was 'a murtherer from the beginning' (sig. C3r).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context', *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000), 587-627, p. 587.

Catholics such as 'Church-Papists' who were 'the most dangerous subject[s] the Lord hath' (*Cry and Revenge of Blood*, sig. C1v).

Religious conformity and political loyalty were bound together when the monarch was created head of the English church, a tie consolidated by loyalty oaths such as the Elizabethan Oath of Supremacy and the early Stuart Oath of Allegiance.<sup>6</sup> 'Popery' was conceived as inherently foreign and tyrannical, 'involving allegiance to a foreign ruler (the pope) and acceptance of his right to excommunicate and depose foreign princes' and therefore it was 'a solvent of the ties of political loyalty' ('Anti-popery', p. 79). In a political climate which associated open avowals of Catholicism with treason,<sup>7</sup> the linking of murder to religious confession was an overt invitation to the reader to consider the relationship between the murderer, his/her victim and the state. In doing so, ideas of Catholic 'other' and Protestant 'self' were also brought under scrutiny. The other discourse into which these propagandist murder narratives were inserted was the historiography of England's providential rescues from the threat of popery.

The existence of propagandist murder narratives confirms that 'a strain of populism' ran through the English Protestant image of Rome as Anti-Christ from its inception. This was partly because Protestants regarded the rationality, enlightenment and scriptural knowledge of their doctrine as the means by which the laity would be

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur F. Marotti, 'Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological Fantasies' in Marotti (ed), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Lake and Questier show how the Elizabethan state construed the Catholic threat represented by Campion and Persons 'in terms of secular obedience and treason' ('Puritans, Papists', p. 597).

freed from the spiritual and civil tyranny of Catholicism which was maintained through ignorance, superstition and 'unthinking traditionalism' ('Anti-popery', 77). The didactic tenor of this self-definition is maintained in the populist form of the pamphlet.<sup>8</sup> The pamphlets examined in this chapter show that the manifestation of the murderer as religious traitor is specifically related to extreme political crises during the seventeenth century, confirming that, 'at the popular level...anti-popery was crisis related representing a symbolic means of dealing with an inherently foreign popish threat and latterly expressing and controlling worries about internal divisions in terms of such a threat' ('Anti-popery, p. 83). However, in their respective studies of the influence of popular propaganda on the events surrounding the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis (1678-1681), neither Harris nor Knights includes any murder pamphlets, although titles such as *The Bloody Papist* might well have suggested themselves.<sup>9</sup> As Tim Harris asserts, 'a propagandist cannot run counter to the assumptions and prejudices of the audience...to be effective a propagandist must know the sentiments and opinions, the current tendencies and stereotypes, among the people he is trying to reach' (*London Crowds*, pp. 97-98). The writers of the murder pamphlets knew exactly how to reach 'the sentiments and opinions' of their readers, and employed the rhetoric which Harris again suggests was most likely to reach a particular audience, 'the pithy and vitriolic statements found in newspapers, ballads, broadsides and the shorter pamphlets were more likely

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<sup>8</sup> Protestantism was 'the first movement of any kind, religious or secular, to use the new presses for overt propaganda' (Eisenstein, 303).

<sup>9</sup> Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-81* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

to have a mass appeal' (*London Crowds*, p. 100). Although the term 'mass' seems inappropriate as a description of the early modern reading audience (I prefer Lake and Questier's description of an 'uncontrollably general audience' ('Puritans, Papists', p. 589)), yet it does suggest a larger readership than that reached by other kinds of publications. The generic stereotypes of the murder pamphlets – violent husbands, passive wives, infanticidal mothers, murderous offspring, reprobation and election, condemned cell and gallows conversion narratives – are here turned to explicit political use.

### *The Bloody Papist established*

The earliest extant pamphlet which deliberately connects the crime of murder with the religion of the murderer is *A true report of the late horrible murther committed by William Sherwood* (1581), which describes the murder of one Catholic by another whilst they were both imprisoned on charges of recusancy. The date of the pamphlet and the fact that murderer and victim were recusants is significant. In 1580, Edmund Campion and Robert Persons had landed in England at the head of a Jesuit mission, after a decade in which the Catholic threat to the Protestant government had appeared to intensify.<sup>10</sup> They insisted that their intentions were entirely spiritual, as they only sought to strengthen existing Catholics in their faith and recover those who had left the church. The Elizabethan government, however, regarded their activities as political and treasonous. Campion was arrested in July 1581, given a 'show trial' and executed on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Lake and Questier have shown how the Jesuits

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<sup>10</sup> In 1570 the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis* had promised divine favour to any Catholic who succeeded in assassinating Elizabeth I and in 1571 the Ridolfi Plot was discovered. The projected marriage between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou in the late 1570s caused 'noisy expressions of

transformed their 'spiritual' mission to one involving issues of 'secular obedience and treason' through the circulation of manuscript and print. Robert Sherwood was executed in June 1581, when the confrontation between the Jesuits and the English Protestant state was moving towards its climax. In that same month, Persons reported to the Pope that, 'they are publishing most threatening proclamations against us, as well as books, sermons, ballads, libels, fables, comedies'.<sup>11</sup>

Before Persons and Campion arrived in England, recusancy was on the increase, whether because there was an actual increase in the number of Catholics refusing to attend Protestant divine services or because the authorities were getting better at detecting them ('Puritans, Papists', p. 599). The printing of *A true report of the late horrible murther committed by William Sherwood* which involved a conflict between two recusants that ended in one murdering the other showed firstly that the authorities were seeking to punish recusancy (both murderer and victim were in prison) and secondly that Catholics would turn on each other, making them unstable, untrustworthy and violent. Lake and Questier have identified recusancy as the 'wedge issue' selected by Campion and Persons 'that could be used to prise apart the government's rendition of the division between religion and politics...the key to this strategy was to be able to move the issue of outward conformity out from under the rubric of allegiance and obedience (politics) and to discuss it instead entirely in terms of conscience (religion) ('Puritans, Papists', p. 599). The writer of *A True*

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alarm from the pulpits and form the press' (Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 199-200.

*Report* keeps the representation of Sherwood's crimes firmly within the realm of politics. Although he made an unrepentantly Catholic end, Sherwood was executed as a felon and not as a martyr.

The writer of *A True report* opens the pamphlet with a careful differentiation of a 'Protestant' style of writing from a papist one.<sup>12</sup> He refuses to 'speake much of them which be gonne, and be thought to bite them back which be dead'. This is different from:

those Papists which beeing hotte in cruelty, did not onely curse the dead continually, but did take up and burne the bones of divers good men into ashes, to signifie unto the worlde, that no drinke would coole their thirst, but blood, no Sacrifice could content the[m], but the warme hart bloode of Martyrs, and the death of the Saints of God.  
(sig. A2r)

Here he begins to establish that 'we' (writer and reader) are the exact opposite of 'them' (papists and murderers). There is only a comma between cursing and sacrilegious and barbaric acts. The introductory pages of the pamphlet continue with horrific images of the cruelty of 'Papists', who are 'lyke madde Dogges...byting all that come in their way' (sig. A2v), and are also an 'infection' and a 'plague' (sig. A3r). The pamphlet's narrative, its writer promises, will issue such a warning against Catholics that all 'good Christians...will learn to spew them out of their stomackes for ever' (sig. A2r). When not de-humanised as animals, illnesses, or

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Persons, *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Persons, S.J.*, ed. Leo Hicks Catholic Records Society Publications, vol. 39 (Catholic Record Society, 1942), 66, cited in 'Puritans, Papists', p. 596.

<sup>12</sup> Lake and Questier suggest that when it came to 'retelling for public consumption the events of a public execution' Protestants writers were 'reticent, even squeamish' about dwelling on the physical sufferings of condemned Catholic priests (*Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 237).

rotten food, Catholics are steeped in blood, with a blood lust which threatens to pollute both public and private spaces:

[They] delight their eies with beholding our chanelles, running and reking, with the warme blood of Protestauntes [...] they will washe their handes in the blood of their owne brethren, in their owne chambers. (sig. A2v)

The images of streets running with blood and of Catholics killing so indiscriminately that their murderousness encompasses their own confessional allies are strong ones. Their use appears to be aimed at recalling for the reader the horrors of ‘the tragicall & furious massaker in France’ on St Bartholomew’s Day, August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1572.<sup>13</sup> As Foxe makes clear in the 1597 edition of his *Acts and Monuments*, accounts of the massacre were in print and widely known, ‘because the narration of this lamentable storie is set forth in English at large, in a booke by it selfe, and extant in print already, it shall the lesse neede now to discourse that matter with any new repetition’ (p. 1947).<sup>14</sup> Foxe’s own account of the St. Bartholomew massacre describes how:

The greatest slaughter was in the first three daies, in which were numbred to be slaine, as the story writeth, above ten thousand, men and women, old and young, of all sortes and conditions. The bodies of the dead were carried in Cartes to be throwne in the River, so that not onely the River was all steined therewith, but also streames in certaine places of the citie did run with goare blood of the slaine bodies. So great was the outrage of that Heathenish persecution, that not only the Protestantes, but also certaine whom they thought indifferent papistes they put to the sword in the steed of Protestantes. (p. 1948)

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<sup>13</sup> John Foxe, *The seconde Volume of the Ecclesiasticall historie conteyning the acts and monuments of martyrs... Newly recognized and enlarged by the author Iohn Foxe* (London, 1597), p. 1947. The Marian burnings of more than 300 Protestants were the impetus for Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. This important English Protestant martyrology was first published in 1563, reprinted five times during Elizabeth I’s reign and then again in 1610, 1632, 1641 and 1684 (Kenyon, 3).

<sup>14</sup> Foxe could be referring to Anne Dowriche’s *The French Historie, that is, A lamentable discourse of three of the chiefe and most famous bloodie broiles that have happened in France for the Gospell of Jesus Christ* (London, 1589).

Foxe goes on to describe how the violence and madness enacted on the streets of Paris spread to all parts of France. *Acts and Monuments* was read systematically and thoroughly, used as an appendix to the Bible, and was often the book in which families recorded their histories of births, deaths and marriages.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, therefore, it carried forward the association of Catholicism with murder.

In contrast to the rhetoric of the opening pages of *A true report of the late horrible murder* which predicts rebellion and national disaster, the actual story of the murder is a mundane one with its origins in an argument over money. Richard Hobson (a young man of 'good parentage') and William Sherwood ('a Gentleman') were both imprisoned in the Queen's Bench for 'popery'. This imprisonment identifies them both as criminals but Sherwood was clearly more criminal than Hobson as he was also 'a derider of Gods Ministers, a disturber of Preachers, a contemner of the service confirmed by her Maiestie, calling it divelish' (sig. A3v). They quarrelled over a debt, which Sherwood refused to repay, and because Sherwood's hands 'itched to commit murder' (because of his shameless and very loud popery) he stabbed and killed young Hobson. He compounded his criminality by denying the murder (despite eye-witnesses) but his guilt was confirmed when Hobson's wounds began to bleed again in Sherwood's presence. Tried and convicted Sherwood showed himself 'false and dissolute' on the night before his execution, 'driving of[f]

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 12. Clifton asserts that *Acts and Monuments* was 'the book most read in England after the Bible and influential beyond this as a source for a host of Rome-baiting pamphlets' ('The Popular Fear of Catholics During the English Revolution', *Past and Present* 52 (1971), 23-55, p. 35).



his Christian brethren with dry scoffes' (sig. B2r) and on the scaffold made 'obstinate speeches' confirming the Pope's supremacy and his own contempt for all Protestants (sig. B2v). At the moment of his execution, however, rather than being 'a meeke Lambe', he 'fled downe the Ladder to flye from the Butcher, thereby shewing the unstableness of his faythe' (sig. B3r). William Sherwood was eventually executed 'in the midst of his Lattine Pater noster' (sig. B3v), his treasonous liturgy cut short by the forces of Protestantism.<sup>16</sup> In this context, Sherwood's adoption of a Latin prayer was not a personal, spiritual choice but a political one for, as the writer suggests, if the readers 'see how boldly he imbraced foraine jurisdiction' then they will understand how 'the happy peace of this land' (sig. B3v) is threatened by incipient armed rebellion (sig. B1r). The lesson of the pamphlet is clear: if a Papist will kill a friend and fellow believer, then what would he do to those of the 'contrary profession' (sig. B2r)?

William Sherwood is shown as cowardly, violent, untrustworthy and fundamentally criminal. However, this is not an *individual* portrait, but a generic one for (the writer insists) all papists are like that. It is important for the readers to understand that it is the influence of the Pope which has embedded criminality into all Catholics:

he that hath beene planted in Poperie, his Grapes are Grapes of Gall: his clusters are always bitter: If the Pope hath once given them a Soppe, they are rightly never sober after: if the[y] have once powred his licker into them theyr Vessels can hardly be made cleane. (sig. A4r)

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<sup>16</sup> See *Antichrists Lewd Hat*, pp. 241-42 for similar examples from pamphlets about the executions of other Catholics who were not convicted of murder.

The image of man as the vine conflates two passages from the gospels of St. Matthew and St John. In Matthew, Christ warns against ‘false prophets’ for ‘ye shall know them by their fruits...a corrupt tree bringeth foorth evill fruite’ (7, vv. 15-17). However, the image of the vine also offers hope to any Christian (in this context, Protestant) who turns towards Christ, ‘that true vine’, who offers cleansing and sanctification, ‘through the wordes which I have spoken unto you...I am that vine: ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth foorth much fruite’ (John 15: vv. 1, 3, 5).<sup>17</sup> Vines, of course, produce the grapes which make wine, and bread and wine together evoke the Eucharist and through that the Last Supper. The ‘soppe’ the Pope gives to his followers is the same as that which Christ gave to Judas Iscariot to identify him as His betrayer, just as it is also the communion wafer or bread. The image of a Papist ingesting evil during Mass through the communion wafer and then being intoxicated not by the Holy Spirit but by evil, brings the doctrinal conflict about transubstantiation to the heart of the pamphlet. The evocation of the evidence of Judas’ treachery connects this passage to the description of a Papist at the beginning of the pamphlet as like ‘Judas [when he] offered a friendlie kisse’ (sig. A3r). Similarly the imagery of ingestion recalls the writer’s hope that the lessons of the pamphlet will cause readers to ‘spew’ out the Papists’ poisonous influence. The images of ingestion, the evocation of shared rites (the communion), with one looking so like the other but with the possibility of evil enfolded within it, confirms the insidious nature of ‘popery’ – that it is practised by

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<sup>17</sup> *The Newe Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ translated out of Greeke by Theod. Beza...Englished by L. Tomson Imprinted at London by Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes Majestie* (London, 1582). The Geneva Bible was ‘cheap, relatively small and pocketable; failure to produce cheap editions of the Bishop’s Bible in 1568 helped to make the Geneva Bible the Bible of the people’

those who look like faithful Englishmen but in fact give their allegiance to a threatening foreign power.

The revelation of the threat of treachery from within the fabric of the nation is a central theme in George Crosse's pamphlet *The parricide papist*, written and published in 1606, less than a year after the Gunpowder Treason, 'the late discoverie of so damnable a stratageme, as was never plotted against any Christian or Heathen State' (sig. B2r). The attempted murder of the king, his family and his government was the ultimate treachery, and this pamphlet illustrates it in its full horror by allegorizing it into the story of parricide in Cornwall. Crosse tells how Inigo Jeanes of Padstow after murdering his father (also called James) then killed himself by cutting open his own stomach. The use of disembowelling as a method of suicide recalls part of the punishment for those convicted of high treason, the execution that the Gunpowder plotters and those Catholic priests accused with them had recently undergone.<sup>18</sup> Again this would seem to keep the issue of Catholicism within a criminal rather than spiritual realm. According to Crosse, 'no reason but his [Inigo's] unreasonable Religion plunged him into these inexorable enormities' (sig. B4r). Inigo Jeanes was formerly a professed Catholic and although he appeared to have recanted, was probably a 'Church-papist, under the influence of a 'paltry Popeling' of a priest. The crime of parricide alone is outside humanity and human law, but it is made worse by Inigo's Catholicism which, 'not onely opposeth the Creature against

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(Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> The conspirators were executed on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 1606; Father Henry Garnet on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Pamphlet accounts of the trials of the plotters were available in 1606. The inventory of Sir Roger Townshend's library made in 1625, records 'Proceedings against the late Traytors in 4' [i.e. quarto], dated '1606' (*Private Libraries in Renaissance England*, I, p. 82).

the Creator, man against GOD, and man against man, but transformeth theyr whole natures, ingendering in them unnatural thoughts and desires' such as, 'execrable Sodomitries' and 'thrice detested Parricides' (sig. B1r).<sup>19</sup> Catholicism is the origin of criminality turning its adherents into things outside humanity.

Closse entwines a local story of murder with that of national and international Catholic treachery, 'the Prince of Orange [William the Silent]; and the French King deceased [Henry III], murdered by Papists, and he that now raigneth, asailed to be slaughtered by your unhallowed hands' (sig. C1r). He places his own narrative of murder inside a discourse of religious controversy and treachery against James I:

and seeing our Popish pamphleteers cuculate nothing more than surmised calumniation against the persons of our godly and most painfull ministers not beeing otherwise able to discredite their doctrines I wil expose to their Owle-sight eyes examples of their owne Sectaries to be looked upon, and seriously considered, wherein to shunne the just taxation of slaunder, which is most proper to their Popish practices. (sig. A3v)

An acknowledgement of the work of 'our Popish pamphleteers' legitimates Closse's own contribution and his text becomes part of the defence of Protestantism.

These two pamphlets about English Catholic murderers employ the rhetoric of European massacres and assassinations to confirm popery as foreign and also to demonstrate its insidious nature. The external threat conceals itself within the

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<sup>19</sup> Sodomy was 'the archetypically popish sin' not only because it was proverbially associated with monastic life but also because it involved 'the abuse of natural faculties and impulses for unnatural ends' and so 'perfectly symbolized the wider idolatry at the heart of the popish religion' ('Anti-popery', p. 75). See also Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), ch. 2. By the time of the Popish Plot, accusations of sodomy, like much anti-papist rhetoric, had become a free-floating signifier which was applied to any kind of religious non-conformism, see Paul Hammond, 'Titus Oates and "Sodomy"', in Jeremy Black, ed., *Culture and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

intimate fabric of English family life and so becomes an internal threat to the stability of England and her Protestant monarchy. In the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, Catholicism represented a personal threat to the monarchs and through them to the stability of the English nation as a whole. The internal threat was countered by the ideology of a hereditary Protestant monarchy. This is the thinking which underpins *A true report* and it is overt in Crosse's use of allegory in *The parricide papist*. The murders in these pamphlets are represented as single eruptions of the plague of Catholic rebellion and violence which constantly sought to destroy Protestantism in England. *A true report* and *The parricide papist* were written and printed at moments when that Papist threat seemed most dangerous.

The production of pamphlets using murder as anti-Catholic propaganda was crisis-related, and therefore there is an absence of extant pamphlets dealing explicitly with male Catholic murderers of some seventy years.<sup>20</sup> The next cluster of murder pamphlets connecting murderousness to confessional allegiance appeared in the final two decades of the seventeenth century encompassing the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis (1678-1681), the Glorious Revolution (1685) and the accession of William and Mary. During the same period texts about the Gunpowder Treason and the St. Bartholomew Day's Massacre were reproduced, including *The Histories of the Gunpowder Treason and the Massacre at Paris* (1676), Gilbert Burnet's, *A*

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<sup>20</sup> Representations of Catholic murderers did not disappear altogether in the intervening decades. See: *A Pitiless Mother* (1616) and Wing B3267, Thomason E.375[20] *Bloody newes from Dover* (1647) – both of these pamphlets are about maternal infanticide and will be discussed later in the chapter. See also Wing M2582, Thomason E.173[22] *The Apprentices Warning-piece* (1641) in which Peter Moore implicates 'White a Papist' in the origins of his murder of his master. Moore describes how White 'did oftentimes seduce me to abuse Gods Ministers, and to spend my time in Diabolicall study

*relation of the barbarous and bloody massacre of about an hundred thousand Protestants begun at Paris, and carried on all over France, by the Papists in the year 1572 (1678) and A Seasonble [sic] Warning to Protestants from the cruelty and treachery of the Parisian massacre (1680).* The stories of murders by male Catholics are therefore part of English Protestant historiography, intertwining with other texts such as Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and narratives of treason and massacres to promulgate the powerful emotional and ideological force of anti-popery. They sustain the association of Catholicism with murder, producing what is best understood as 'cultural memory'. The cultural memory which these texts produced was one of the reasons that the Popish Plot – entirely a fabrication of print – was able to gain such credence.<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Scott has argued persuasively that the, 'Restoration succeeded too well, for it restored not only the structures of early Stuart government, but subsequently its fears, divisions and crises. The most important of these fears – because the most politically destructive – was religious, and it is the problem of popery which gives the seventeenth-century experience its essential unity.'<sup>22</sup>

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of reading Magicke, in which I tooke too much delight, which now doth very much oppresse my soule' (sig. A4r).

<sup>21</sup> David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 177. Geoffrey Holmes pinpoints the rhetoric surrounding the Gunpowder Plot as helping to forge 'an inescapable association of "Popery" with violence and terror' which in turn laid the foundations for the 'melodrama, tragedy and pure fantasy' of the Popish Plot some seventy years later (*The Making of a Great Power* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 120. Raymond shows how the Popish Plot was 'shaped by shared memories of...earlier events', in particular the 'fears and jealousies of 1641' (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 331, 355-359). It is ironically appropriate that recycled texts should be associated with the Popish Plot which was, as Dolan points out, all about the 'power of stories' where 'narrative was the event' (Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender and Seventeenth-century Print Culture* (Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis 1677-1683* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 6-9.

### *The Bloody Papist re-cycled*

As we have seen, the first extant papist murderer pamphlet was produced in the summer of 1581 when Campion and Persons were active in England. The fear of murderous Jesuits is an important strand in the story of Robert Brown, ‘a Romish priest or Jesuit’, who murdered his illegitimate child. Brown’s story was printed in 1679 in *A Strange and Wonderful Relation of a Barbarous Murder committed by James Robison [sic] a Brick-layer upon the body of his wife*,<sup>23</sup> although the crime had actually been committed some two years previously. The figure of the male infanticide is not unusual in the murder pamphlets<sup>24</sup> but the narration of Brown’s crime not only confirms the endemic ‘cruelty’ of Catholics but also suggests the existence of corrupt Catholic households far from the visible Catholicism at Charles II’s court.<sup>25</sup>

In 1677, Brown was living in Northumberland and whilst visiting the house of John Clavern ‘a very zealous Roman-Catholique in those parts’, met and immediately desired Clavern’s niece, ‘a beautiful virgin...likewise of the Romish profession’

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<sup>23</sup> Wing S5874A.

<sup>24</sup> Examples include: *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers* (1591); *Two most unnaturall and bloodie murders* (1605) *Newes from Perin in Cornwall* (1618); *Treason and Murther* (1674) and Wing B3266 *Bloody news from Devonshire* (1694).

<sup>25</sup> Charles II’s queen, Catherine of Braganza, had 14 priests in her household, 10 of whom were English or Irish. The Duke of York had married the devoutly Catholic Mary of Modena in 1673 and she also maintained priests in her household (*Popish Plot*, pp. 21-27). Charles II’s leading mistress was Louise de la Keroualle (a French Catholic) and his chief ally was Louis XIV, ‘the living embodiment of Popish absolutism on a grand scale’ (*Making of a Great Power*, p. 122). In 1677, Andrew Marvell’s *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England* was printed in which he warned of ‘a design...to change the Lawfull Government of *England* into an Absolute Tyranny and Convert the established Protestant Religion into down-right Popery’ (p. 3). Despite such perceptions of Catholic power, Bishop Compton’s census of 1673 confirmed that the Catholic community was actually very small (*Making of a Great Power*, p. 121). Kenyon estimates that there was a steady decline in the numbers of Catholics throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century and by 1676 there were approximately 260,000 (4.7% of an estimated population of 5 million), although the largest Catholic community was in London (*Popish Plot*, pp. 21-27).

(sig. A3v). When Brown attempted to seduce her he was rebuffed and so resorted to 'his cursed arts and villainous designs' and using 'certain powerful drugs to incense and stir up an impatient desire to venereal copulation', as well as violence, 'blasted all her Virgin honours' (sig. A4r). Odours of witchcraft still identify the papist in 1679. The girl became pregnant and Brown desperate, as he tried and failed firstly to marry her off to 'one of his creatures' and then to abort the pregnancy with more drugs. After the birth of his son, Brown murdered him with a 'pen knife' and threw the weighted corpse into a pond in the orchard. The murder was undiscovered for a year, during which time the Popish Plot exploded and Brown had 'fled for Religion, or rather Treason'. As the niece's maid lay dying (she was the only other person privy to these horrific events) she asked for a 'protestant Minister' and confessed all. The niece was arrested, tried and condemned as an 'accessary to wilful murder' but eventually reprieved 'by the mediation of Friends and much cost and trouble' (sig. A4v). Unusually for the murder pamphlets the known murderer remains unpunished at the end of the narrative.<sup>26</sup>

The point of publishing this account in 1679 is clear: it was only a year since Titus Oates had printed the articles claiming that there was a Catholic conspiracy to kill the king and put his Catholic brother, James, on the throne and the continuing anti-Catholic hysteria made such a story commercial.<sup>27</sup> However, there is a question

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<sup>26</sup> There is one other example of this: Francis Cartwright who murdered William Storre in 1603. The difference in Cartwright's story is that he was a self-confessed murderer who obtained a royal pardon. Nevertheless, in *The Life and Heartie Repentance of Francis Cartwright* (his own account of his life) he feels the need to defend himself against suggestions of Catholicism. The different versions of this murder are examined in detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>27</sup> An unsolved murder was very much part of the events of the Popish Plot. In 1678, Oates was questioned by the Privy Council about the veracity of his claims and one of the reasons that he was believed was that Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey, the justice of the peace to whom he had sworn an oath



about why it was preceded by the story of James Robinson's cold-blooded and vicious killing of his wife, particularly as the story of the infanticide was *old* news compared to the currency of the wife-murder: Robinson was executed on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1679. The pamphlet writer makes it clear in his concluding paragraph that the two accounts should be read together, as they are connected by their message to the reader, 'let these sad Examples be a warning to all, least subtle villains by cunning devices, contrive their ruine and destruction, not only of body, but of Eternal welfare too' (sig. A4v).

'Subtle villains' with 'cunning devices' recall the image of the concealed and treacherous papist. Overtly, these accounts are only connected by the crime of murder, as they are distant from each other not only in terms of time and geography but also by the contrast of a Catholic whose criminality emerges from his religious profession with a murderous husband of no stated religion. However, as the writer makes clear, they are closely connected in terms of *narrative* intention. Narrative intimacy suggests the possibility of reading wife-murder as anti-papist allegory in the late 1670s and early 1680s, just as parricide could be interpreted in this way in 1606. Robinson was of 'a headstrong humour, rash and self-will'd'; terms which echo the representations of William Sherwood and Inigo Jeanes. He married a 'beautiful and civil Maiden' who briefly inspired in him a 'most wonderful Conversion' (sig. A1v). The surface meaning of this is that Robinson turned away from dissolution towards marital sobriety but the parallel meaning of religious

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of veracity, was found dead, possibly murdered. His death was attributed to Jesuits. See Alan Marshall, *The Strange Death of Sir Edmund Godfrey: Plots and Politics in Restoration London* (Thrupp: Sutton, 1999) for a full account of this incident.

conversion is important. The religious imagery continues as the writer describes Robinson's relapse when he was 'incensed' in his cruelty towards his wife by 'a notorious Harlot he kept', recalling the personification of the Catholic church as the 'whore of Babylon'. Religion and politics combine as the pamphlet writer describes how Robinson plotted with his 'secret Caball' to murder his wife.<sup>28</sup> The decision to graft Robert Brown's story onto James Robinson's and insist that they should be read together may well have been an opportunistic one in the summer of 1679. Nevertheless, this pamphlet does suggest a shift in the use of the rhetoric of murder as religious propaganda as Robinson's dissolute and drunken life and the inference of his political sympathies (like Charles II, he had a 'Caball') are sufficient to suggest that he may be at the very least understood as a crypto-Catholic. It does not really matter that the pamphlet writer is unable to state unequivocally that Robinson *was* a Catholic, just the suggestion of it by political and social association is sufficient to prove his criminality. This is different from *A true report* and *The parricide papist* where overt Catholicism determined political allegiance to a foreign power. In *A Strange and Wonderfull Relation* a murderous English Jesuit priest from Northumberland is associated with a murderous husband from London whose dissolute and drunken habits mirrored those of the Court, which was itself perceived as endangered by Catholic influences. Here politics infers religious allegiance rather than the other way around.

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<sup>28</sup> The original 'cabal' of 'ministers carrying out secret and self-interested designs' was formed by five of Charles II's chief advisers in 1667. Two of them, Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington and Sir Thomas Clifford, were crypto-Catholics (Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 244).

Beyond the political implications, the pairing of the stories of Robinson and Brown suggests that Catholicism is fatal to all natural and sacred bonds; through the twin figures of infanticide and wife-murderer the entire fabric of family life is torn asunder. Domestic government provided by overt and crypto-Catholics is shown as tyrannical, violent, weak and false. This trend is continued in *The Bloody Papist*, a broadside published in 1683, four years after the Popish Plot was exposed as a complete fabrication and two years after Charles II had outmanoeuvred the final 'Exclusion' parliament in 1681. The Whig initiative to exclude the Duke of York from the succession had failed but anti-Catholic paranoia was still very much in evidence. In 1681, the City of London authorities had placed an inscription on the monument to the Great Fire which attributed the disaster to, 'the treachery and malice of the popish faction'. Although the inscription was removed during James II's reign, it was restored under William III and was only finally removed in 1830 (*Popish Plot*, 13).<sup>29</sup>

*The Bloody Papist* describes Robert Sherburn's murder of his wife, committed late in December 1682. The writer is uncertain whether Sherburn 'were bred up so [as a Papist] from his Infancy, or since revolted and Apostasiz'd thereunto', but, "'tis certain that for diverse years past he has own'd himself of that perswasion, and very Zealous and Obstinate therein'. The characterisation of Robert Sherburn is true to the stereotype of the earlier pamphlets: his is a 'Mock-Religion' and again a direct connection is made between the 'barbarous crime' of wife murder which goes

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<sup>29</sup> See *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 342 for examples of pamphlets printed between 1679 and 1689 which draw on memories of the Great Fire and the suggestion that it was started by papists.

against 'the Laws of God and man, and the dictates of Reason' (sig. A1r) and Sherburn's Catholicism:

It being nothing strange that those whom God hath so far forsaken as to give them up to believe *a Lie* (for *Popery* in the whole body of it is no other) should likewise be left without *Natural Affections*, and abandon themselves to *Work* all kind of *Wickedness with Greediness*. (sig. A1r)

Sherburn's open avowal of Catholicism has made him more likely to commit murder the sin 'of *deepest dye*', and more precisely, wife-murder, which crime 'swells beyond all Proportion of Ordinary Impiety, and grows monstrously Detestable'. 'This Notorious Papist', having '*Throtled* or Suffocated her [his wife], and by Trampling upon her, and many furious *Blows* on her Stomach & Bowels, beat the Breath out of her Body and killed her' is discovered by his neighbours, arrested, examined, imprisoned and awaits 'his deserved *Doom*' (sig. A1v) at the time of publication.

The writer of the broadside appears to eschew the hysteria of the pamphlets from earlier in the century and only offers religion as one possible motive for the murder alongside some others:

What inducements the Devil made use of to tempt him to this horrid Villany is not yet certainly known; Whether any Dissatisfaction he might perceive in her as to Religion, or any Inclination to leave their *Superstitions* and Embrace the Protestant Faith...or whether it were some private Grudge or desire to be rid of her...or some falling out between them...about 10 *l.* or some other sum of money...is left to the proofs that shall appear at the Trial. (sig. A1v)

However, it is significant that it is the difference in confessional allegiance between husband and wife which heads the list of proffered motives. The contribution Sherburn's Catholicism made to the crime is emphasised in the final paragraph of

the account where the author notes that ‘the *Papists*’ had given out that Sherburn ‘was *Distracted*’ when he committed the murder, a victim of recurring ‘Phrensy’ since he was ‘Distemper’d in mind in his Youth about 20 years ago’. The author’s scepticism about this claim leaps from the page, the tone one of wariness about Catholic speciousness, although couched in terms that appear to offer accurate and rational reporting:

they believe his Phrensy might again revert and seize him; and though he now seem’d recovered of his late Sickness, and to be very well again, and went about his Business; yet they affirm he was still Melancholy and in one of those Frantick Fitts, not knowing what he did, Committed this Lamentable Mischief. But how far they will be able to make these things appear, or whether they are only related in favour of him, and for the Credit of their Religion, I shall not undertake to determine. (sig. A1r)

Perhaps hysteria was devalued as a rhetorical tool so soon after the Popish Plot, but this apparently more measured, even-handed tone, still succeeds in underlining for the reader many anti-Catholic stereotypes: the wily reasoning of Jesuits; their cowardliness, and the possibility of their intemperate violence. The faithful reporting of facts only serves to trap Catholics into an inescapable rhetorical prison: if they are mad then they must be feared; if they hide behind claims of madness they are cowardly and treacherous, and if Sherburn truly was mad, even his insanity was inconsistent often appearing like sanity, confirming both untrustworthiness and concealment.

The title of *The Bloody Papist*, its use of anti-papist stereotypes established almost a century before and then revived in polemic of the Popish Plot demands that a reading of the murder is made through the events of very recent history. Reading a

murder through the events of the late 1670s and thus providing another interpretation of those events is also achieved by the author of *The unhappy citizen*, published eight years after *The Bloody Papist* in 1691. Once again a murder is the nexus which joins together politics, religion and crime. *The unhappy citizen* narrates 'the Life and Death' of James Selby, who murdered a prostitute 'Mrs Bartlett' and was also suspected of the murder of three other women. It is difficult to claim that the prostitutes Selby murdered are representative of a female conception of the nation state, but again there is a conjunction between uncontrolled male power, Catholic sympathies and violent crime. However, at no point in this pamphlet is Selby shown as a professed Catholic; instead, as in the portrayal of James Robinson, his Catholic sympathies are inferred from his political allegiances and his behaviour.

*The unhappy citizen* was printed in May 1691<sup>30</sup> and its writer demonstrates through his exploitation of the association of Toryism with Catholicism that, nearly two years after the accession of William and Mary, there were anxieties about threats to the stability of the Settlement of the Protestant state.<sup>31</sup> *The unhappy citizen* is undoubtedly propagandist in its outlook. On its title page much is made of James Selby's membership of the 'Grand Tory-Club in the Reign of King Charles II' and his burning of the effigies of the 'Duke of Monmouth, Shaftesbury & Argyle, Lord

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<sup>30</sup> Selby was executed on May 2 and Wood notes that he purchased his copy of the pamphlet on May 14 (Bod. Wood 173(5)). There is another pamphlet dealing with this murder which also emphasises Selby's politics, Wing L2910 *A London Tory vying in cruelty with an Irish rapparee: Or an account of a most barbarous murder committed... by James Selby, a distiller. With brief hints of the murderers former conversation and practices* (1691).

<sup>31</sup> In 1691, the threat from the deposed James II and his Irish allies was not entirely extinguished. The Battle of the Boyne, on 1 July 1690, was a total defeat of James' forces, but the Treaty of Limerick, which marked the final surrender of the Irish, was not signed until October 1691, after the Battle of Aughrim on 3 October. See also Wilfred Prest, *Albion Ascendant: English History 1600-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 47.

Russel, Colonel Sidney, Doctor Oats' and a 'Non-conformist Minister'. Although describing the murder of Mrs Bartlet and Selby's execution, the pamphlet writer places Selby's actions firmly within the context of the events of 13 years earlier: the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. This revisiting of the religious controversies of the previous twenty years is, in effect, more important than 'the Fact' of the murder.

The narrative is organized so that the reader can only reach a description of the murder by first reading Selby's history, both personal and political. The narrative begins with the familiar structure of debauched youth leading to an inevitably violent and criminal end. Selby was 'a very lewd man...a great Company-keeper' who enjoyed drinking, swearing and 'ridiculing Religion' as well as being a 'very forward person among the London Apprentices'. However, within this familiar tale a much stronger connection is made between Selby's politics (and therefore his religion) and his murderousness than between his misspent youth and his crime. Selby, 'began betimes to be a Reformer, and was very active against the Dissenters from the Church of England; especially in breaking down their Pulpits and Pews'. Exploiting connections between popular celebrations, bonfires and Protestant historiography,<sup>32</sup> the pamphlet-writer describes how vehemently Selby celebrated when the Duke of Monmouth was 'cut off' after his defeat at Sedgemoor in 1685, by lighting 'the greatest Bonfire that was seen about London (that of the Burning of the City for Popish Recreation, in the year 1666, excepted)' (sig. A2v). Connected in the

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<sup>32</sup> The publication of the description of a pope-burning procession on November 5<sup>th</sup> 1673 (*The Burning of the Whore of Babylon, As it was Acted, with Great Applause* (London, 1673)) 'made play with the memory of the fires of the Protestant martyrs, the attempted fire of the Gunpowder Treason, suspected Papist involvement in the great fire of London, and the traditionalist bonfires of 5 November' (*Bonfires and Bells*, p. 86).

same sentence are Selby's celebrations of a political event and the conflagration that had consumed the City 25 years previously and which was blamed on a papist conspiracy. The description of his celebratory bonfire is used to stoke (!) anti-Catholic paranoia. It was at these celebrations that Selby burned the effigies of Monmouth, Shaftesbury, Algernon Sidney and Lord William Russell and, as if the connection between his celebrations and Catholicism was not already explicit enough, the writer describes how Selby had 'proposed...to Burn a *Geneva Bible*', the potent symbol of the English Reformation (sigs A1v-2v).

A contemporary reader would hardly need the statement that Selby, 'drank King James's Health and confusion to the Whigs' to identify him as a Tory (sig. A2v). According to *The Character of a Tory*, a broadside published in 1681, 'a Tory is a Monster with an English Face, a French Heart, and an Irish Conscience...Roary, Whorey, Sworey, Scorey, that's a Torey'. Selby (according to the account of his life) was certainly 'roary, whorey' and 'sworey'. However, as this description makes clear Tories were considered by their opponents to be *at heart* Catholic (because French), and therefore not only traitors but also incipient tyrants, 'he [the Tory] belongs to the Scarlet whore...that whenever Popery and Tyranny shall make a Match, he would fain be the Bride-man.' The characterisation of the Catholic church as the Whore of Babylon is familiar, but there is also a transformation of physical debauchery ('whorey') to spiritual promiscuity, and thence to treason. Importantly for an understanding of how allusions to a murderer's Tory allegiance would have been read by a contemporary audience, *The Character of a Tory* moves on to connect political and spiritual allegiances (however well hidden) with an inbred



tendency to violent crime, as 'you may call him [the Tory] a Noddite, one of the Race of *Cain* the murderer.' In the context of this particular broadside what Tories seek to murder is English Protestantism, as any Tory is 'the Catts-foot wherewith the Romish monkeys claw the Protestant Religion till the blood comes', but it is a small step from the imagined murder of Protestantism to the actual murder of English women, surely in the understanding of writer and readers good Protestant whores and preferable therefore to the 'Scarlet whore' of Catholicism.

Having spent the first 3 or 4 pages of his pamphlet making readers fully aware of Selby's political and therefore religious allegiances, the writer of *The Unhappy Citizen* has still not reached the murder of Mrs. Bartlet for which Selby was executed. Instead he seeks further to emphasise Selby's criminality by suggesting that he was responsible for murdering three other woman 'in a lew'd Coffee-House' by cutting their throats (sig. A2v). This alleged crime is given an explicitly political context by metaphorically associating it with the Rye-House Plot<sup>33</sup> of 1683:

'Tis remembred, that a certain Divine Preaching upon the famous *Keeling's Plot*, said, *That cutting of Throats would have been counted but a Scotch way of Trimming, and the Destruction of Princes; no more but perfecting the HISTORY of the REFORMATION.* We here find one of his Disciples, taking a more effectual Course to suppress *Bawdy-Houses* than they had thought of in the late Reigne, to extirpate Conventicles; and surely 'tis the most compendious way to Reform the World in that point by cutting the Whores throats and burning down their Harbours. (sig. A2v)

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<sup>33</sup> The Rye-House Plot of August 1683 was in fact two plots: one planned by former Cromwellians to assassinate the King, and another by Whigs and non-conformists (in which the Earl of Essex, Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney were implicated) to capture the King. Essex, Russell and Sidney were members of the 'Council of Six' of Whig Exclusionists which also included the Duke of Monmouth and Lord Grey. All three were tried and executed for their part in the conspiracy.

It is referred to here as ‘the famous Keeling’s Plot’ as it was Josiah Keeling who betrayed the originators of the plot, Richard Rumbold and Richard Goodenough, to the authorities. Rumbold had employed Keeling to test the strength of support for the conspiracy in the City of London, but he was a double agent. Keeling gave evidence at the trials of the conspirators and as a result received a general pardon for all treasons in September 1683. He became something of a popular hero: portraits and a flattering printed description of him were widely sold. However in 1689, a House of Lords enquiry into the evidence given at the trials showed that given by Keeling to have been false and in 1691 (the year *The Unhappy Citizen* was printed) Keeling was arrested for drinking King James’s health (like Selby), fined and seems to have died in prison. Gilbert Burnet described Keeling as an ‘anabaptist...who was sinking in his trade [as a white salter or oil-man] and began to think that witness would be the better trade’ (*DNB*). More recent scholarship characterizes him as a ‘hot-headed fellow’ who had been ‘excommunicated’ from a Baptist church.<sup>34</sup> As a previously radical Protestant who remained loyal to James II, Keeling was an enthusiastic ‘trimmer’.<sup>35</sup>

The writer of *The Unhappy Citizen* thus forges a link between the memory of a minister satirically connecting Scottish Presbyterians (the alleged allies of the Whigs in the Rye-House Plot) who wanted to assassinate the King in order to ‘[perfect] the History of the Reformation’ and the unrepentantly Tory James Selby who is identified as ‘one of his Disciples’. The political conspiracy of 1683 is thus

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<sup>34</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The History of my Own Time*, edited by Osmond Airy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), vol 2, p. 360. Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 146.

connected to Selby's murder of three women in a 'Bawdy-House'. As a result, some eight years after the events of the Rye-House Plot, the pamphlet writer resurrects the idea that it was a conspiracy engineered by Tories to discredit the Whigs by associating them with 'non-conformist subversives' who (they said) threatened a popular uprising that would undermine the monarchy (*London Crowds*, p. 132).<sup>36</sup> This long-winded attempt to unravel this passage shows just how convoluted contemporary perceptions of the plots and counterplots of the late 1670s and 1680s were.<sup>37</sup> The Tory propagandists of 1683 directed fears of arbitrary government, insurrection and murder towards the Whigs and non-conformists, employing the same rhetoric as Titus Oates had done in the Popish Plot which identified *Jesuits* disguised as Presbyterians being sent to Scotland to stir up revolt. The writer of *The unhappy citizen* turns the rhetoric full circle and re-establishes the link between Tories, Catholics and Scottish Presbyterians, and by doing so, re-inserts 'Keeling's Plot' and Selby's crimes into the narrative of Popish Plot.

The planned murder of the (then) King and heir to the throne is conflated with the murder of the prostitutes, and the suppression of 'Bawdy-Houses'. Again this places the reading of Selby's murderousness within the political and religious conflicts of Charles II's reign but perhaps calls on an even more distant memory. This particular passage associates the suppression of brothels with religious persecution, as Selby is

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<sup>35</sup> 'One who inclines to each of two opposite sides as interest dictates' (*OED*).

<sup>36</sup> John Carswell, *The Porcupine: The Life of Algernon Sidney* (London: John Murray, 1989) states that the Rye House Plot was 'the governmental strategy of 'turning' the original Popish Plot against the Whigs' (p. 199). Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis* asserts that Sidney was certainly in contact with the Scots and the events of May 1683 gave the government the perfect reason to arrest those it most feared (pp. 265-91).

characterized as 'taking a more effectual Course to suppress Bawdy-Houses, than they had thought of in the late Reigne to extirpate Conventicles'. Tim Harris suggests that there was a direct connection between the increasing persecution of dissenters throughout the 1660s and the 'bawdy-house riots' of Easter 1668, which he interprets as an explicitly political protest, motivated by grievances against both the licentiousness of the Court and the legislation against non-conformists. The rioting apprentices shouted slogans that included the threat that they would pull down Whitehall itself which was 'presumably, in their eyes, the biggest bawdy house of the lot' (*London Crowds*, p. 82). The Duke of York seems to have been a target for the rioters as he later complained that two tenants who paid him for their wine licenses had had their houses destroyed. The seriousness with which the government viewed these riots is shown by its unprecedented indictment of the ringleaders for treason. Harris suggests that the point of the riots was to demonstrate that if the government demanded enforcement of the penal laws against dissenters, then the inhabitants of the City would, in their turn, execute the laws against bawdy houses. So, the 'crowd politics' of 1668 demonstrated opposition to the Court through riots which were fermented out of a heady (although not altogether logical) brew that connected monarchical licentiousness, Catholicism and religious persecution (pp. 82-91). It is these connections which the writer of *The unhappy citizen* resurrects demonstrating that a brothel is not only the scene of a crime but also a politically contentious space.

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<sup>37</sup> See *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 346 for an explanation of the representational complexities of the Meal-Tub Plot in 1680. See also Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*.

The brothel where Selby supposedly murdered three women is pressed into further rhetorical use by the pamphlet writer, for if a 'lew'd Coffee-house' was the site of a murder which is explicitly related to the religious and political conflicts of the time then another Coffee-house, this time 'a very Civil House' is shown as the place where Selby most clearly articulated his 'seditious' discourse, as he 'without any occasion given, did impudently express his disaffection to Their Most Gracious Majesties Government, and magnified the late King' (sig. A4r). In this section of the pamphlet the writer attempts to unite fears of Tories (and through them James II) with fears of dissenters and the political unrest *they* threaten. He also tries to effect an uneasy balancing act for whilst condemning supporters of James, nevertheless he cannot wholly condemn Charles II. Whores of course, should be condemned for their immorality but so must their murder, clearly it is difficult to incorporate propaganda and morality. This passage illustrates the ambiguous, unfocussed nature of the rhetoric of religious propaganda later in the seventeenth century. It also shows the contemporary need to re-interpret and re-read the political and religious conflicts of the latter half of the seventeenth century during its final decade. The 'Fact' of Mrs Bartlet's murder can only be reached through this propaganda and is very brief in comparison to what has gone before it. A single sentence suffices to describe how Selby killed her by 'strangling or throatling her, and then with a Knife cut her Throat, giving her a Wound the breadth of 8 inches, and the depth of 4' (sig. A3r).

The description of Selby's execution which concludes *The unhappy citizen*, echoes the representations of Robert Sherwood (*A true report*) and Inigo Jeanes (*The parricide papist*) for all are characterized as threatening 'Confusion, Cruelty and

Barbarousness' (*Unhappy Citizen*, sig. B1v) to the nation, not only because of their crimes but because their confessional allegiance marked them as incipient traitors. However, unlike Sherwood, Selby died penitently. In *A True Report* Sherwood remained defiantly outside a conception of an English Protestant identity, at once confirming the intractability of criminal papists and emphasising the continuing threat they posed. Inigo Jeanes, the 'parricide papist', chose to take his own life in a way that mimicked the painful and drawn out death of traitors, so again the narrative confirms the stereotype of the treacherous papist. *The Bloody Papist*, whilst adopting a seemingly more balanced approach, nevertheless continues to manipulate the stereotypes, creating Sherburn as a papist 'other', and although it cannot recount his execution, his guilt is never in question. However, the publication of Selby's story not only re-defines the papist murderer's relationship to the state – he was an unhappy *citizen* rather than a de-humanized alien – it also holds out the possibility of his re-assimilation into the structure of a stable and Protestant England through his acceptance of the narrative path of a 'good', penitent death. It also suggests that those created in print and memory as irredeemably 'other' can, in fact, be reinserted into a Protestant narrative of 'self'.

As the narrative of the propagandist murder pamphlet is modulated the reader's attention is directed towards a different hate figure. *A true report* and *The parricide papist* hold up the figure of the treacherous Englishman, behind whom is the vaguer (although nonetheless powerful threat) of European Catholicism, best exemplified by references to the Pope. Catholicism is conceived not as an 'overt enemy' but one that 'rose by stealth and deception' ('Anti-popery', p. 73). *The Bloody Papist* and

*The Unhappy Citizen* manipulate the same fears towards a single and much more easily identified figure, for both suggest that behind the faces of Robert Sherburn and James Selby lays the feared figure of the autocratic James II and the possibility of English Protestants dying once again at the hands of a Catholic monarch.<sup>38</sup> James II's personality was invoked as proof not only of his Catholicism but also of his potential for violence. At the height of the Exclusion Crisis, in a letter dated March 6, 1679, Lord Shaftesbury described James, (then Duke of York) as 'heady, violent and bloody (cited in *Making of a Great Power*, p. 122). One year later an anonymous poem, 'The Responses: Or, Letany for Letany called James 'a plotting false Duke that delight[ed] in Blood' (cited in *London Crowds*, p. 115). An uncontrollable temper which could look like temporary madness and which led to violence, blood lust, plots and treachery are all terms made familiar by the intertwining of the rhetoric of murder with that of religious bigotry. Again, there is a dialogue between the representation of the English Protestant 'self' and the Catholic 'other', as in the murder pamphlets from the last two decades of the seventeenth century, it is the monarch who is being constructed as the 'other' rather than as the staunch defender of faith.

The perception of the threat posed by James II appears undiminished fourteen years later. *Bloody News from Devonshire* (1694) describes the murder of four children by

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<sup>38</sup> I do not think that it is a coincidence that the name 'James' is so common in these pamphlets. In *The parricide papist* 'James' was the father murdered by his treacherous Catholic son. The fact that 'James' was Robinson's Christian name may have made the decision to harness together his story and Robert Brown's irresistible. The connection between James Selby and the King to whom he remained loyal is much more explicit. What is clear is the fact that 'James' moves from being victim to murderer. I have no explanation (beyond coincidence) for the fact that all the other papist murderers are called 'Robert'!

their 'Inhuman Father' and is prefaced by an advertisement for 'The Anatomy of an Arbitrary Prince', a publication which will show:

King James the *Second* set forth in his proper Colours, and what *England* may expect from such an one: Wherein is set forth his Unlawful Actions when King of *England*...Written for the Information and Satisfaction of all the *Grumbletonians* in their Majesties Dominions, but especially of the poorer sort.

There is no suggestion in this pamphlet that the murderous father from 'Devonshire' was a Catholic but the placement of the advertisement on the page facing the beginning of the narrative does influence its interpretation. The image being presented to the reader is that of a King as father to his people. The male infanticide of *Bloody News from Devonshire* is shown as 'Raving and Distracted' when he was arrested and it is reported that he 'remains in a very Disordered Condition, under Great Horrors and Disturbance of Mind' in 'Exeter jayl' (sigs A2r-v). As we have already seen from the representation of Robert Brown, the infanticide priest, such a murder associated Catholicism not only with intemperate violence but also with domestic disintegration and corruption.

The creation of the male papist infanticide has its foundations in the figure of the recusant Catholic woman who also murders her children. On 'Holy Thursday' 1616, Margret Vincent, a 'discreete and civill woman...graced with good parts from her youth', strangled her two young children in order to prevent them being raised as Protestants and, therefore in her view, to save their souls.<sup>39</sup> The Catholicism which

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<sup>39</sup> In a letter to Dudley Carleton written on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1616, John Chamberlain reports that 'yesterday was a woman condemned at the Sessions House for a lamentable murder of two of her owne children: she dwelt at Acton and was a woman of goode fashion both for meanes, shape and behaviour, but being a violent recusant and urged by her husband to conforme herself, and to have her



so fatally divided her from her husband is described as 'a witchcraft begot by hell', an 'enchantment' which turns her from a 'witty', educated, serious-minded gentlewoman who 'delivered much conference in Religion', to a 'Christian woman... more unnaturall than Pagan, Caniball, Savage, Beast or Fowle' (*A Pitillesse Mother*, sig. B1v). The pamphlet writer employs the familiar anti-Catholic rhetoric, but he also uses the narration of the murder to demonstrate the effectiveness of a Protestant scheme of repentance which rescues Margret Vincent from certain damnation. Prevented from committing suicide and awaiting her trial in Newgate Prison, Margret Vincent persisted in showing her self an 'obstinate Papist', not only through her confession, but also by continuing to wear a crucifix and by throwing from her the 'English bible' which she was given to read (sig. B1r). However, the 'Godly Preachers' were nothing if not persistent, and finally, through their persuasions, Margret was brought to a sense of her sinfulness and true repentance which in turn earned her the 'mercies of God' (sig. B2r).

Margret Vincent's Catholicism is not represented as criminality imbued within her (as is Robert Sherwood's or Robert Brown's), but as a fatal error which she acquired - 'if Popish perswasions had not beene, the world could not have spotted her with the smallest marke of infamy' (sig. B2r) - and which could be washed away by her re-conversion to Protestantism. Although the different confessional allegiances of husband and wife are shown as gruesomely destructive to the sacred bond of matrimony and the natural bonds of motherhood, unity is re-established by

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children otherwise educated, she tooke this course to rid them out of the world rather than have them brought up in our religion' (Norman Egbert McClure (ed), *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, II, pp. 1-2).

assimilating her back into a narrative of Protestant conversion and penitence. It is a narrative which is offered to a national readership - 'Countrymen of England' – and which therefore offers religious unity as a solution to social and political tensions.

Marotti points to the recusant Catholic woman as an 'important character in the religious and cultural drama of early modern England'. If married to a Protestant husband she represented resistance to state authority as well as the persistence of a Catholicism conceptualised as female within the 'masculinized' Protestant nation (*Catholicism and Anti-catholicism*, 3-4).<sup>40</sup> The Catholic queens of the first four Stuart monarchs placed that threat very close to the heart of the state, literally 'in bed' with a supposedly Protestant king.<sup>41</sup> The allegorical understanding of the monarch's relationship to the nation as one of *marriage*, therefore allows an allegorical reading of the infanticide pamphlets involving 'unruly' and disobedient wives and mothers:

Princes are married to the commonwealth; & the wife hath power of the husbands body, as he the husband of hers. The Common-wealth then hath power of the Prince in this point. Their Wives ought to be as Mothers to every Subject. And were he not a Foole, that would not desire a Naturall Mother rather than a Step-Mother? Queenes ought to

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study of the influences of gender stereotypes on representations of Catholics in the early modern period, see Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*.

<sup>41</sup> Henrietta Maria, Catherine of Braganza and Mary of Modena were, of course, all openly Catholic. The question of Anna of Denmark's Catholicism is not as clear. She certainly seems to have been converted to Catholicism from the Lutheranism of her upbringing at some stage. The Venetian ambassador to James I's court noted in July May 1603 that the Queen, 'although in public she went to the heretical [Anglican] church with her husband, yet in private she observed the Catholic rite'. At the Coronation in August 1603 she was asked to take the Sacrament after the Protestant rite but refused despite the persuasions of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Contemporary accounts suggest that she was known as a Catholic in Court circles but often declined to use her influence in political matters involving Catholics. In 1618, a report to the Doge of Venice said 'some consider her a Catholic because she never would go to the English church, but really her religion is not known'. When she died in 1619 the Archbishop of Canterbury reported that she died an Anglican, abjuring the intercession of saints as necessary to salvation. However, the official report of an English Queen's death which confirmed her Protestantism would be politically expedient. (Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 162-172).

be nurcing Mothers to the Church: Who then would seeke a dry-Nurse, that might have another. (Thomas Scott, *Vox Regis* (1624), pp. 13-14, cited in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*, p. 3)

The ruler of England is here presented as doubly married: to 'Commonwealth' and Queen. 'Every subject' is a child of both the nation and the royal couple and the state is conceptualised as a family. The image of the Queen of England breast-feeding the English church suggests that the continued health of Protestantism rests with maternal rather than paternal authority and also therefore criticizes the idea of 'mixed' marriages. The dangers of such marital mismatching are illustrated by *The pitillesse mother*, but Scott's words also attack the idea of marriage of Protestant kings and princes to Catholic wives. The rhetoric of 'naturalness' is familiar from the murder pamphlets which always characterise Catholicism as 'unnatural' and alien. Within this scheme of representation, therefore, infanticide becomes a crime against the whole nation, specifically the Protestant nation. It also suggests that the crime of killing children is indicative of a nation turning against itself. Robert Brown – the *English* Jesuit infanticide – turned to the 'Step-Mother' and 'dry-Nurse' of papistry and as his child's mother was also Catholic, there was no corrective to his murderous impulses. Margret Vincent's 'natural' Protestantism was perverted for a time by the 'enchantment' of Catholicism and the result of that was the most 'unnatural' crime a mother could commit – the murder of her own children.

The representation of infanticide therefore links anti-papist propaganda from each end of the seventeenth century. It is also used to create and maintain anti-sectarian paranoia, so that both recusant Catholics and radical Protestants (such as

Anabaptists) were perceived as equal threats to national stability. It has already been noted that there appear to be no surviving pamphlets between 1616 and 1679 which specifically use murder as anti-papist propaganda. However, the rhetoric associated with the representation of papist murderers is adopted by writers narrating murders involving radical Protestants, particularly during the years of the Civil War. I have argued for the importance of allegorical interpretations of these propagandist pamphlets and so it is unsurprising that the writers should become preoccupied with stories that illustrated the disintegration of the Protestant state into civil conflict. Such a development also raises questions about the representation of Protestant subjectivity. In the pamphlets about Catholics it was straightforward to maintain the distinction between 'self' and 'other'; in those about murders by 'sectaries' or dissenters it is more problematic because the murderers are still Protestant, however extreme or questionable their views might be.

### *The Protestant 'other'*

*Bloody newes from Dover* (1647) demonstrates concern about the splintering of Protestant unity. It is the story of a maternal infanticide and there are strong links between the representation of Mary Champion's crime and that of Margret Vincent, thirty years earlier. Both pamphlets use vivid woodcuts as illustrations of the content of their narratives. The title page of *A pitilesse Mother* shows a well-dressed woman strangling a naked infant on a richly furnished and canopied bed; lying on the elaborately embroidered counterpane is the dead body of another child. Behind the woman is a pop-eyed devil, complete with wings, scales and talons, who is handing the woman the cords with which she has killed her children (see illustration

overleaf). This is a murder in a wealthy, 'gentle' household. The title page of *Bloody newes from Dover* suggests a humbler household as the figures are dressed more plainly but it is still a truly graphic description of the events narrated within the pamphlet. A female figure, labelled 'Anabaptist', holds out the decapitated head of her baby towards a male figure, labelled 'Presbyterian'. The baby's headless trunk lies on the floor behind the woman, and in front of her is a large knife. This captures the moment in the text when Mary Champion holds out their baby's head to her husband with the words, 'Behold husband thy sweet babe without a head, now go and baptize it; if you will you must christen the head without the body' (sig. A3r). There is a similar moment in *A pitillesse Mother* when Jarvis Vincent, confronts his wife:

Oh Margret, Margret, how often have I perswaded thee from this damned Opinion...that hath undone us all. Wheruppon with a gastly look and fearfull eye shee replied thus, O Jarvis, this had never beene done, if thou hadst beene ruled, and by mee converted, but what is done, is past, for they are Saints in heaven and I nothing at all repent it. (sig. A4v)

Just as the rhetorical image of the communion wafer was used to in *A true report of the late horrible murther* (see p.146) to illustrate the doctrinal conflict between Protestant and Catholic, the picture of the gruesome head of a murdered infant in *Bloody newes from Dover* concentrates the attention on one of the important issues that divided Protestants, that of infant baptism.<sup>42</sup> As the pamphlet writer opines,

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<sup>42</sup> Certainly other pamphlets about Anabaptists printed during the 1640s and 1650s concentrate on this issue: *The Anabaptists groundwork for reformation* (London, 1644); *Katabaptistai kataptysoi. The dippers dipt. Or, The Anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and ears* (London, 1647); *The Anabaptist washt and washt, and shrunk in the washing* (London, 1653), and *The anabaptists Meribah: or waters of strife* (London, 1656). These pamphlets seem to concentrate on the Anabaptists' 'peculiar errors' and often take the form of disputations. Two pamphlets printed in 1672 emphasise their deceitfulness and untrustworthiness: *The Anabaptist preacher unmask'd, in a*

# A pittilesse Mother.

That most vnnaturally at one time, murt  
two of her owne Children at A & on within fixe miles f

*London vppon holy thurs/day last 1616. The ninth of May  
Being a Gentlewoman named Margret Vincent, wife of  
M<sup>r</sup>. Iarvis Vincent, of the same Towne.*

With her Examination, Confession and true discouery of a  
proceedings in the said bloody accident.

Whereunto is added *Andersons* Repentance  
was executed at Tiburne the 18. of May being Whitson-Euc.

Written in the time of his prisonment in Newgate.



'thus may we see where division and controversie doth arise, sad effects will suddenly follow' (sig. A3v). The writer of this pamphlet frames the story of the infanticide within another crime committed 'at the beginning of the Reign' of Charles I when a Catholic mother killed her 4 year old son rather than allow him to be educated as a Protestant, as his father wished. Once again, a pamphlet writer uses the memory of an earlier period of religious controversy (late 1620s-1630s) to illustrate the contemporary crime he is narrating. Catholicism and radical Protestantism are presented as equally threatening to the English Protestant nation.

Like Catholics, Anabaptists were particularly vilified because it was believed that they opposed the existing social and political order.<sup>43</sup> At every level of their social, spiritual and domestic lives they rejected ideas of national unity, giving primacy to the importance of individual judgement, objecting to the payment of tithes, refusing to swear oaths, rejecting war and military service and denying a right to private property. They subverted the idea of a national church to which every man woman and child belonged by believing in adult baptism and insisting that reception into a

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*further discovery of his lying wonder out of Lincolneshire and The Anabaptists lying wonder attested by his brother independent... their juggle and deceit.*

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 26. Horst agrees that while Anabaptist was 'little more than a term of abuse' in the sixteenth century the 'contemporary reality' of rebaptism 'stirred the public and worried the officials' (*The Radical Brethren* (Nieuwkoop: de Graaf, 1972), p. 32). He describes anabaptism as 'a current of lay non-conformity which took its inspiration chiefly from the protestant Reformation' and which became the 'leading form of sectarianism' during the early Reformation in England (p. 177). Lake says that Anabaptist was 'part of the iconography of international protestant insult' and that it represented the 'clearest embodiment of an irresponsible protestant radicalism which, unchecked, could lead to anarchy and disorder' (*Anglicans and Puritans?* pp. 22-23). Hooker lamented the 'high tearmes of separation' that existed between 'the brethren' [Anabaptists] and 'the rest of the world.' Anabaptists were 'more earnest' in the 'defense of error' than 'sound believers of truth apprehended according to the nature of that evidence which scripture yeeldeth'. They were 'poor beguiled soules' and were a danger because they were 'eager to take and to seeke all occasions of secret conference' and 'cast off the care of those verie affayres which do most concern theyr estate.' ('Preface', *Of the lawes of ecclesiastical politie* (1593))

church was a voluntary act. Their interpretation of the doctrine of election led them to understand that their baptism by total immersion had washed away all past and future sins. Their refusal to swear oaths meant that they were perceived as dangerously treacherous, as it was impossible to define or confine their loyalty. Radical 'sectaries' therefore threatened internal disunity in contrast to the images of rebellion associated with the representation of Catholics.<sup>44</sup> In time of Civil War, internal disunity was a greater preoccupation than any supposed external threat from European Catholicism. The presence of 'sectaries' made it difficult to maintain the representation of an English, Protestant 'self' that was so much a part of the anti-papist pamphlets.

The disintegration of the idea of a unified Protestant 'self', so important to the forging of a national identity in the late sixteenth and earlier seventeenth century, is shown in *Strange news from the North* (1647) a bizarre pamphlet describing ritual animal sacrifice leading to matricide amongst some 'sectaries' near York.<sup>45</sup> The murderers are never presented as anything less than seriously deluded but the writer ends his pamphlet with a heartfelt plea for unity at a time of national strife, 'let us meet often at the throne of Grace, that we may be helpful to each other, to prevent these foul and gross sins of our unhappy days' (sig. A4r). No longer able to rely on the material throne of monarchy, the nation must rely on the heavenly throne to foster unity. The barbaric events recounted in the pamphlet are a direct result of the

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<sup>44</sup> Clifton has described how there were 'outbreaks of panics and disturbances' about Catholic uprisings related to the political crises of 1640-1642, but that these had subsided by 1643 because the opening months of the Civil War 'exposed the true weakness of English Catholicism...which decades of peace had hidden' ('The Popular Fear of Catholics During the English Revolution', *Past and Present* 52 (1971), 23-55, pp.24-33).



splintering of unified Protestantism, 'persons maintaining many strange points, and manifesting new and strange notions, in the exercise wherof their blind zeal led them to the committing of a horrible murther' (sig. A3r). However, the pamphlet writer is careful to inform his (no doubt) horrified readers that not all 'sectaries' are likely to commit such crimes, whereas, as we have seen, no such distinction was made about the criminality of Catholics. These 'two or three' murderers make, 'a brand and mark of infamy for all other (though different) professors who are now by the rude world entitled (though falsly) by the name of Sectaries' (sig. A4v).

As the identification of some kind of vilified 'other' was important in religious propaganda in the early modern period, uncertainty about the definition of the religious antagonist meant that the coherence of the Protestant self-image (and by implication that of the reader) also slipped out of focus. The murder pamphlets relied heavily on the establishment of binary oppositions for their narrative success - active, sinful murderer against passive, virtuous victim - and this was one reason why they could be used so successfully as religious propaganda. However, once the certainty of this binary opposition wavered then the narrative structure of the murder story began to unravel. The pamphlet writers had to adopt other strategies (with varying degrees of success) to try to rescue the situation. As we have already seen, one strategy was to lock the story of a Protestant infanticide into that of a Catholic one, and by sharing rhetoric and representation, define the 'true' Protestant against two poles of fanaticism rather than just one.

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<sup>45</sup> Wing S5907; Thomason E.423[22].

A similar strategy is employed by the writer of *The arraignment tryall, conviction and confession of Francis Deane*, printed in 1643, describing the murder of a Mr. Daniel by Francis Deane and John Faulkner.<sup>46</sup> On the pamphlet's title page Deane and Faulkner are described as Anabaptists 'lately received into that sect'. However in his final speech Deane refuted Anabaptism and the idea that his sins were 'but motes in Gods eyes' compared those of other Protestants which are like 'beames' (sig. A3r) to acknowledge that 'I was born in sin, and without the great providence of God assisting man, hee is subject daily to fall into great sins: and in this am I now taken' (sig. A3v). Dying on the same scaffold with Deane was a 'popish Priest' who was hanged, drawn and quartered. Whilst this pamphlet avoids *directly* condemning Anabaptists nevertheless there is an inference that Deane's beliefs contributed to his commission of murder. Placing him on a scaffold beside a Catholic dying a traitor's death serves a dual rhetorical purpose, at once confirming salvation for those who follow the Protestant path to repentance and conversion and suggesting that radical protestants such as Anabaptists are nothing but 'papists in disguise' in the danger they represent to a nation at war with itself.<sup>47</sup> Although such a presentation rests on the similarity between the papist and sectarian 'other', by placing a vocal, repentant Francis Deane next to a silent, treacherous papist it also draws on the idea of defining the Protestant 'self' in its *difference* from catholic 'otherness'. There is an uncertainty in Deane's presentation which is different from the anti-papist murder pamphlets which are always definite in their guidance to readers. This may be due to

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Wing A3766; Thomason E.97[13]

<sup>47</sup> 'The fear of Catholics in the later 1640s and 1650s took the form of talk about "papists" (especially Jesuits) "in disguise" and the disguise most commonly employed was sectarianism' ('Popular Fear of Catholics', p.33).

an uncertainty about audience response to Deane's story. Many of this pamphlet's readers would have been Londoners, and in the spring following the Battle of Edgehill, Parliament's supporters in London (whilst not Anabaptists themselves) may have agreed with Francis Deane that 'those Cavaliers' were 'reprobate people...whose inhumane cruelties the like were never heard of' (sig. A3r). Of course, in the earlier anti-papist murder pamphlets accusations of 'inhumane cruelties' were usually reserved for papists.

The creation of an alternative puritan 'conspiracy theory' which shared the rhetoric of the anti-Catholic one was a feature of the increasing political and religious tensions of the 1620s and 1630s ('Anti-popery', pp. 81-82). A pamphlet of 1633 (*A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell Murther*) describes in prose and ballad how Enoch ap Evan 'cut off his owne naturall Mothers Head and then his Brothers' (sig. A1r), because, as practising Anglicans, they 'to stand at Communion were loath/But kneeled with reverence at the holy act' (sig. B1r). Here again an outward sign of religious profession is used to signify crucial doctrinal conflicts, but it becomes the *motive* for murder rather than just a representation of difference. 'Puritans' are 'wolves' and 'miscreants'<sup>48</sup> and the lessons to be learned from Enoch ap Evan's example are set out in terms that are familiar from such pamphlets as *A true report*, *The parricide papist* and *A Pitillesse mother* employing images of sexual

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<sup>48</sup> A letter mentioning this murder from James Howell to a Lady Sybilla Brown was published in Howell's *Fourth Volume of Familiar Letters upon Various Emergent Occasions* in 1655. Howell describes 'these unhappy separatists the Puritans' as wanting to 'bring all things at last to a confusion' as they are of 'a revengeful sanguinary humor, and thirsting after blood' (p. 103).

debauchery, monstrous births and an excessive, 'un-human' criminality which emerges directly from aberrant religious profession:

Oh let all such that broach Schismes in our reformed, settled, and well governed Church, whom this mainly concernes, take into their mature considerations, how they trouble mens minds, invegle their credulity, and distract their consciences: And let this fearfull act trumpet in their eares, and preach unto their hearts a speedy reformation; for how can the tree be good that beareth such *Gomorrhah* fruit? Or the conception be perfect that beareth such a prodigious Monster? To be a Murderer or an Homicide, is fearefull and terrible; but to be Fratricide, or matricide, most execrable and abominable, but to proove both wonderfull and almost past beliefe. (sig. A4r)

In his extended study of this murder and its various textual manifestations Peter Lake has shown how the treatment of Enoch ap Evan can be linked to 'a long tradition of conformist writing' with its origins in the 1590s ('Shropshire Axe-Murder, p. 50). The original pamphlet sparked the publication of opposing interpretations of the crime by Peter Studley, an Arminian vicar, and Richard More, a puritan justice of the peace. Each claim the crime and its interpretation as their own, 'a straightforward struggle between ministers for the cachet, the enhanced charisma or glow of spiritual potency, which would attend bringing a notorious and disturbed malefactor like Enoch to a coherent and publicly recognizable acknowledgement of his sin' (p. 53). Whilst one side of this debate may have structured itself on the example of conformist writing, the rebuttal by Richard More shows that the representation of a puritan murderer was open to interpretation, its definition less settled and therefore more problematic than that of a Catholic murderer.

The printing of different versions of Enoch ap Evan's story show that the representation of a 'godly' murderer was open to interpretation. *The arraignment, tryall, conviction and confession of Francis Deane* indicates some uncertainty not only about how sectarian murderers should be represented but also about the sympathies of the intended audience. Uncertainty about the exact sympathies of a pamphlet's expected audience coincide with a post-Restoration attempt to represent a murderer who was a professed Quaker at a time of intensifying religious persecution. *The Bloody Quaker or The Glocestshire Murder discovered* was published in 1668 and from the title one expects a torrent of anti-sectarian invective, with an explicit connection made between Farmer Restal's Quakerism and his murderousness. However, the narration begins with a general warning about 'covetousness' rather than dissenting religious belief and, even when specifically attacking Restal's religion, does so for his hypocrisy rather than his profession of faith:

This Miscreant of whom we thus write was...a great follower of the sect called *Quakers*, a seeming Saint but real Devil, one that could *thee* and *thou* it with the best, turn up the white of the eye, and exclaime against the ungodliness of the times, when *Satan* had taken possession of his heart, and was no further religious then only to serve his own wicked and covetous ends. (sig. A2v)

So far, so axiomatic it seems, as the hypocritical 'sectary' was as culturally enshrined as the whorish 'papist'.<sup>49</sup> However, after appearing to place Farmer Restal carefully within the rhetoric of anti-puritanism, the writer of *The Bloody Quaker* then qualifies (and considerably weakens) his argument:

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<sup>49</sup> A consistency of representation which can be traced from the characters of Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610) to Alderman Gripe in William Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* (1671).

I do not speake this against any that are zealous professors of the truth, I wish the number of them were more, who do worship God in the sincerity of their hearts; but only to shew you how that many people take upon them the vizor of Religion only for sinister ends, some that are poor to get maintenance by it, others under the colour thereof to rebel against their superiors, some that they may cousen with the less suspition, and others not to be afraid to act the highest villainies therby, thinking the pretence thereof would carry them above the thoughts of being suspected for such persons. (sig. A2v)

This is very different from a criminality deeply embedded in the human soul by means of treacherous religious allegiance. Rather, Restal's murderousness is all to do with his fallen humanity and nothing at all to do with his professed Quakerism. Indeed, as the final line makes clear, in a clumsy and somewhat backhanded compliment, it is precisely *because* Quakers are respected for their spiritual sincerity that villains like Restal choose to imitate them with a surface performance of their idiosyncratic and recognisable speech patterns. It is this dissimulation which gives this pamphlet a recurring refrain: 'O damn'd hypocrite! O deep dissimulation' (sig. A3r).

A reason for this particular writer's cautious use of anti-dissenter rhetoric may be found in the date of this pamphlet's publication. There had been an intense period of persecution of dissenters in the early years of Charles II's reign.<sup>50</sup> This persecution had subsided during the years 1666-1669 following the Plague and Great Fire and the fall of the Earl of Clarendon, the architect of the acts which sought to impose religious uniformity. However, Clarendon's political demise in 1667 caused an increase in tension between Anglicans and the dissenters who were optimistic that

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<sup>50</sup> Act of Uniformity and the Quaker Act in 1662; Conventicle Act in 1664, and the Five Mile Act in 1665.

the penal measures against them would be revoked. Instead of this, however, in 1668 a proclamation was issued which reinforced 'Obedience to the Laws in Force, concerning Religion and Church Government'. The failure of the plans for increased toleration led to the Easter riots in London. It is also probable that the persecution of dissenters in the City of London (where they made up approximately 15-20% of the population) was far from popular, partly because the problem of definition and identification was acute as it was impossible for communities to divide themselves between recognizable conformists and non-conformists (*London Crowds*, pp. 64, 85-87). People may also have resented persecution of dissenters as it was non-conformist ministers (often those ejected from their livings in 1662) who remained in the City throughout the Plague whilst their Anglican counterparts fled. This problem of identification contributed to and was reinforced by the reluctance of the City's government and judiciary to enforce the penal laws, resulting in intermittent periods of persecution when coercion from the central authorities was too great to resist (*London Crowds*, p. 71). According to Pepys, the City of London was intractably sympathetic to non-conformism, 'public matters in an ill condition of discontent against the height and vanity of the Court...but that which troubles most is the Clergy, which will never content the City, which is not to be reconciled to Bishoppes.'<sup>51</sup> So, the uncertain treatment of Farmer Restal and his crime may reflect an understanding by the pamphlet's author of the lack of coherence in feelings about dissenters amongst his primary readers – the inhabitants of the City of London.

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<sup>51</sup> Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, ed. R.C. Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (1970-1983), III, p. 271, cited in *London Crowds*, p. 81.

This chapter has shown how some murder pamphlets were used as religious propaganda at particular politico-religious pressure points through out the seventeenth century. Used in this way, they contributed to establishing and perpetuating a sense of Protestant identity by defining the 'otherness' of Catholic and dissenting Protestant non-conformism. The crises these pamphlets responded to were those when a sense of Protestant identity appeared to be most threatened; threats, of course, which were as much products of textual representation as these writers' self-conscious appropriation of them. Whilst describing the extremes of criminal behaviour to which fallen human nature could be driven, these pamphlet writers confirm and construct a Protestantism defined by its rejection of any extreme religious allegiance which places the individual at odds with the demands of national loyalty. The murder pamphlets from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century represent only one extreme, that of the Anti-Christ of popery, despite quarrels within Protestantism itself. Later pamphlets (from the 1630s onwards) represent the threat of puritan extremism, sometimes enfolding those representations within the rhetoric inherited from the anti-papist tradition. The concerns with a splintering of Protestant unity are most clearly articulated in murder pamphlets printed during the Civil War. The murder pamphlets published in the final two decades of the century appear to establish a Protestant identity which is conservative and which moderates between the extremes of foreign 'popery' and divisive, rebellious dissent. What remains constant is the identification of Protestantism with an English (eventually British) national identity.



However, on the evidence of these few pamphlets, their writers seem less assured when representing the links between inherent criminality and dissenting Protestantism. The problem appears to be one of taxonomy. By labelling one Catholic as evil and murderous, one may easily apply that to *all* Catholics with the result that a fearsome threat is homogenised and ultimately dehumanised. However, using a similar strategy in the representation of dissenting Protestant murderers presents an obvious dilemma: the writer and reader of the pamphlet are most probably Protestant, and all non-conformists are also Protestant, so the writers cannot claim a universal criminality for Protestants, for they would then be damning themselves as well as the nation. The pamphlet writers do not offer any solutions to their problem but try adapting different narrative devices with varying degrees of success.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps this uncertainty exemplifies the difficulties encountered by historians in identifying a coherent group of early modern believers who homogenise into identifiable ‘puritans’.<sup>53</sup> Their representation is far from stable so therefore any interpretation of them must also be unstable. Although the pamphlet writers represent the Catholic threat with more stability and confidence, in a recent study Dolan has identified similar problems for historians in determining ‘exactly what it meant to be a “Catholic” in early modern England’ and suggests that the textual representations which survive of them in such propaganda as these murder pamphlets prove that ‘Catholics were central figures in narratives and fantasies’ and

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<sup>52</sup> In ‘A Charitable Christian Hatred’ Lake has posed questions about the use of murder and murderers brought to justice as exemplars of the efficacy of the puritan conversion narrative. Intimations of this propagandist use of murder have been seen in this chapter in the stories of Margret Vincent and James Selby.

<sup>53</sup> See Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, ‘The Puritan Ethos’ in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, pp. 1-31, for a summary of the academic debates surrounding the terms ‘puritan’ and ‘puritanism’.

promoted an anti-Catholic prejudice which was ‘split off from lived experience’ of ‘relatively peaceful co-existence with known Catholics’ (*Whores of Babylon*, pp. 3, 38). This does not mean, I think, that the threat from religious fanatics was not very real at certain points in the history of early modern England but that the propagandist texts which *represent* that threat do so in a way that allows their readers to *imagine* murderous papists and puritans rather than actually identifying them. The Jesuit missionary, Robert Persons, already knew this in 1580 when he reported to the rector of the English College in Rome, that:

there is tremendous talk here of Jesuits, and more fables perhaps are told about them than were told of old about monsters. For as to the origins of these men, their way of life, their institute, their morals and teaching, their plans and actions, stories of all sorts are spread abroad, not only in private conversation but also in public sermons and printed books, and these contradict one another and have a striking resemblance to dreams. (Persons, *Letters*, (see note 9 above), cited in ‘Puritans, papists’, p. 596)

Even though the ‘bloody papists’ and ‘papists in disguise’ in these pamphlets may have been more imaginary than real - ‘split off from lived experience’ - yet they clearly had a long and healthy life in the imagination of writers and readers. The pamphlet writers entwine murders which break ties of family, kinship and national loyalty with a cultural memory of religious criminality and in so doing the murder pamphlets become part of Protestant historiography in a century which appears obsessed with its own history. They are part of a ‘pamphlet culture’ that ‘reconstituted memories’ (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 355). These murder pamphlets depict the threat from religious and political extremists as violent death involving the breaking of all the social, sacred and intimate ties which bind societies together. They were part of a network of early modern narratives and discourses

which fashioned 'the lens of the past, the lens of history' (*Algernon Sidney*, p. 14) through which readers could view and interpret the idea of a national Protestant identity. The murderers and their crimes are represented to readers in the ways which the readers expect: fulfilling expectation and perpetuating it; recycling recognizable stories and rhetoric; writing for a market and at the same time creating it; filling the imagination with monsters, and contributing towards the creation of a national and cultural memory of providential rescues from 'popery', confirming a British Protestant identity which (by the end of the century) rejected any form of divisive religious 'non-conformism'.

## Chapter 4

### *'The sequel of his life': Nathaniel Butler and a Narrative of Murder and Sodomy*

The narrative logic and conventions of the murder pamphlets made them a responsive medium for the promulgation of religious propaganda throughout the early modern period. The chain-link pattern of dependency and causality was easily adapted to the presentation of murderous papists and dissenters as vilified 'others'. Four extant pamphlets about the same murder printed in the summer of 1657 also exploit the sense of otherness that could be created through the prose murder narratives.<sup>1</sup> At 'about 4 or 5 o'clock' in the morning of Thursday August 6<sup>th</sup> 1657, Nathaniel Butler killed his friend and fellow-apprentice, John Knight. The murder was committed in the house of John Knight's master, Arthur Worth, in Milk Street in the City of London. Master Worth was away at Bristol Fair, and during the '14 or 15 nights' of his absence, Butler and Knight had secretly shared a bed, and it was on this bed that the murder took place. Nathaniel Butler was arrested on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August, tried, condemned and executed on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August in sight of the house in Milk Street where he had committed the murder.

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<sup>1</sup> Wing H1346, Thomason E.923[1] *Heavens Cry Against Murder*; Wing B6285, Thomason E.925[2] *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance*; Wing F2292, Thomason E 925[1] *A Full and the Truest Narrative of the Most, Horrid, Barbarous and Unparalleled Murder*, and Wing Y23, Thomason E1660 [2] *The Penitent Murderer*. This is the likely order in which they were printed. *Heavens Cry* was clearly the first as it only goes as far as Butler's arrest; *Blood Washed away* disputes details of the story as told in *Heavens Cry* and also describes Butler's execution; *A Full and the Truest Narrative* prints an injunction from the Lord Mayor forbidding any further publications about the murder in 'Book, Pamphlet or Ballad' until after Butler's execution, and the dedication to *The Penitent Murderer* is dated 'Saturday Sept. 12. 1657', nearly a fortnight after Butler's execution on August 31<sup>st</sup>. It is clear from references in the pamphlets that there are other accounts of this murder. The writer of *A Full and the Truest Narrative* refers disparagingly to the fact that 'other passages as well as lying as Non-sensicall are spread through their Pot Pamphlets, and Paper Murderers' (sig. C3v).

The basic story which all the pamphlets tell is the familiar ‘linked’ one showing that Butler’s life of disobedience, debauchery and petty crime led him inevitably to the murder. He was an unsettled and rebellious apprentice and was a member of a gang of who stole money and goods from their masters. Butler murdered John Knight because he wanted to steal some money from Master Worth and Knight tried to prevent him. The representation of the crime as ‘barbarous’ and ‘bloody’ and of Butler as a ‘butcher’ and a ‘fiend’ is typical as is the emphasis on his penitence in the final three pamphlets. However, the over-arching narrative constructed by the four pamphlets shows that extra links are being added to the chain as Nathaniel Butler is constructed as a sodomite as well as a murderer.

The excavation of a possible sodomitical narrative from the story of this murder coincides with evidence of increasing civic control over its representation. The injunction from Sir Robert Tichborne, the Lord Mayor, stated:

For as much, That there is care taken, that after the Execution of the Late Desperate Murderer *Nathaniel Butler*, there shall be Published a true and Exact Relation of this sad Act; as also of his Confession, and the legall Proceeding on the whole &c. It is therefore (by Command from the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor) forbidden that any Person or Persons presume to put in Print any Book, Pamphlet, or Ballad; of, or concerning the same. And it is desired that the reader suspend his censure untill then; for that in the last *Monday* and *Thursday* News Books, and in other Pamphlets there was some misinformation, which order the said Clerk, to his commendation, punctually observed. (*A Full and the Truest Narrative*, sig. B1r)

*A Full and the Truest Narrative* is the third pamphlet in the series and it is the final one – *The Penitent Murderer* – that is most clearly under civic control. Not only was it printed after Butler’s execution, it was compiled by Randolph Yearwood (the Lord Mayor’s chaplain) and is prefaced by a dedication written

by Robert Tichborne himself. Tichborne had more than a textual relationship to this crime. He granted Butler two weeks between his conviction and execution in order to demonstrate his penitence and himself visited Butler three times in the condemned cell in Newgate.

It is in these final two pamphlets that the articulation of Butler as a sodomite is most apparent. However, such a representation of him would not have been possible without the elements of the story that are established in the first two pamphlets, *Heavens Cry* and *Blood washed away*: an absent household governor; uncontrolled youth; inappropriate male friendship, and the ‘over-consumption’ of alcohol, sex and money. As Butler is transformed from murderer to sodomite these narrative elements are put to explicit political use: anxieties about uncontrolled youth and domestic government are transformed to anxieties about the government of the City of London in the summer following Oliver Cromwell’s installation as Lord Protector. Robert Tichborne’s role in Butler’s penitential end and its representation is employed to demonstrate his control over civic government. Such a move could only be effected by creating Nathaniel Butler as excessively ‘other’: as the only sin worse than murder was sodomy, representing him as a sodomite made him more unnatural, more barbarous than the usual murderer. The influences, therefore, that brought such a figure – ‘abhorred but exotic’<sup>2</sup> – to a godly end were indeed powerful. This shows that the reading and interpretation of sodomy had important political and religious components – encoded within the term were assumptions about political papists, foreigners, political instability and treachery.

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), p. 77.

### *The story: young men, the City and the household*

The main concern of the writer of the first pamphlet in the sequence - *Heavens Cry against Murder* - is to provide an unbroken narrative of 'the Parentage, Education, Life and Death' of Nathaniel Butler in order to 'shew what ill courses Youth may follow, not being guided by good Counsel, nor the Spirit of God; both of which this young Man wanted and regarded not' (sig. A4v). It is clear that he is employing the chain-link narrative that was stereotypical of murder pamphlets. He also uses the contrast between the active sinful murderer (Butler) and his passive innocent victim (Knight) to dramatize that youth was a time when a choice had to be made between 'a religious profession...in which the liberties of the flesh and blood may be restrained' or the 'way of death' where 'liberty and full head' was given to 'youthful affections and lusts of the flesh'. Choosing 'the way of death' meant one would sink into complete indulgence in the 'five sins of youth': pride, sensual pleasures and delights, mocking religion, rashness, lustfulness and wantonness.<sup>3</sup> Youth was 'the season of greatest trial, wherein nature will soon discover itself; whether filthiness or holiness; the righteous commands of God, or the wretched lusts of the flesh shall be dearer to him'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> W.P., *The Prentises Practise in Godlinesse and his True Freedom* (London, 1613), cited in J.A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household: Age, Authority and Possessed Young People', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan, 1996) pp. 188-89. Thomas Brooks, *Apples of Gold for All Young Men and Women and A Crown of Glory for Old Men and Women* (1662), cited Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1540-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Burton, *Apprentices Companion* (1681), cited in 'Well-Ordered Household', pp. 188-89.

The representation of Butler and Knight in *Heavens Cry* follows this pattern: that of one character ('Youth') with two possible faces. The writer shows them as friends from childhood, not only 'ingraft[ed] into the visible Church in the same Font' (sig. B2v) but also brought up in the same village and educated at the same school. However, despite this, their divergent paths through life were determined by the care and direction they received from their parents, for 'Parentage gives something of Honor to a child'. Butler's parents are described as 'fallen into decay, and suspected of their Credit', and as poor governors to their son, 'not being guided by good Counsel, nor by the Spirit of God' (sig. A4v). John Knight, in contrast, was 'well-descended from a worthy and worshipful Family' who ensured his 'vertuous education' (sig. B2r). Leaving school and families, Butler and Knight went to London together to take up their apprenticeships, with two different masters, a 'drawer of cloath' and a 'silk-man' (sig. A1r).<sup>5</sup>

The writer of *Heavens Cry* proposes that the young men's childhood homes were instrumental in the choices they made as adolescents. The moral and physical boundaries of the early modern 'imagined ordered household' were represented as excluding the dangers and uncertainties of the world and thus providing an 'ideal' space in which youths would develop into mature adults (*Youth and*

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<sup>5</sup> The population of the City of London was relatively youthful. Sharpe has estimated that in 1600 around 40% of its population was under 21 ('Well-Ordered Household', pp. 187-89). According to Tim Harris, by 1695, approximately 55% of the male population of London was under 25 (*London Crowds*, pp. 23-24). See also Steven R. Smith, 'The London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Adolescents' *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 149-161, p.149. Butler and Knight were part of the migration that increased London's population and their educated background was increasingly typical of apprentices. It has been estimated that by the middle of the century, 18% of apprentices were sons of gentlemen or esquires; 23% were sons of yeomen, and 43% were sons of artisans, professional men and other urban workers which included those from wealthy mercantile and business backgrounds (*London Crowds*, pp. 17-18). 'Apprentices were drawn from all levels of society: some were orphans or paupers' sons, few of whom could expect to rise from the ranks of obscure workingmen; while others were sons of gentlemen or wealthy merchants and could expect to become prominent businessmen and citizens' ('London Apprentices', p. 150).



*Authority*, 29).<sup>6</sup> The master and the patriarchal authority he exercised provided the gerontocratic ideal towards which young men should aspire, ('London Apprentices', 150) not only ensuring a righteous life for themselves but also the continuing prosperity of a Christian commonwealth ('Well-Ordered Household', 188). The physical boundaries of the house reinforced the master's moral authority, providing workspace during the day and a place for virtuous rest during the night, well away from the influence of the riotous life of the street and alehouse.<sup>7</sup>

When Knight and Butler first arrived in London they both entered 'ideal' households. John Knight's master was of 'an ancient and religious family' and he lived with him 'almost two yeers, honestly, civilly, dutifully and (by his Master's example) religiously' (*Heavens Cry*, sig. B2r). Nathaniel Butler found himself with a master who 'look[ed] narrowly at his Behaviour' and was 'willing (if possible) to keep him in Religious and Honest Carriage and Obedience' (sig. B1r). Butler rejected his master's 'Councels and often-Advices to him' and as a

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<sup>6</sup> Alan Bray explains that 'the inhabitants of seventeenth-century England lived, in effect, in a potential multiplicity of families' as a result of 'the practice...of adolescents leaving their parents' home to act as servants in households higher up the social scale, often with their parents then receiving children in similar circumstances from below.' Alan Bray and Michel Rey, 'The Body of the Friend: Continuity and Change in Masculine Friendship in the Seventeenth Century' in Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 1999), 65-84, pp. 82-83. In *The Penitent Murderer* the responsibilities of masters is outlined: 'Do not parents that send up their children to you put a great trust in your hands? Are not their children dearer to them than all their outward comforts, and shall they miscarry under your want of care?'

<sup>7</sup> Some companies required apprentices to be home at nine o'clock at night and forbade them from playing football, dancing, mumming or making music in the streets (Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 29). The apprentice indentures required that during their term, 'the said apprentice his said master well and truly shall serve, his secrets keep close, his commandments lawful and honest everywher he shall willingly do: hurt nor damage to his said master he shall none do'. City and company regulations prohibited apprentices from 'wearing any clothing except that provided by their masters and assessed fines for engaging in dancing or masking, for being present at tennis courts or bowling alleys, for attending cock fights and brothels, and for keeping chests and trunks without permission' ('London Apprentices', pp. 150-51).

result he was ejected from a household with well-defined boundaries. Master Abbat, seeing that his guidance 'to be of non-effect, resolved to rid his house and hands of him as soon as he could' (sig. B1r). Two masters later, Butler was living in a household which was the antithesis of the ideal – his excessive and uncontrolled behaviour was matched by the early modern nightmare of poor governorship. Nathaniel Butler rejected the good governorship and careful surveillance of two masters (there was 'no good sign in a Servants oft removes' (*A Full and the Truest Narrative*, sig. C2r)) and was 'set over' to a third who 'gave him the reins', and as a result he became 'loose and dissolute' (*Heavens Cry*, sig. B1r). Butler bribed this master to hire another worker so that he could pursue 'Freedom of Excess and Riot' and he formed a gang with other apprentices who 'cozen[ed] and deceive[d] their Masters in Cloath and other Goods' (sig. B1v). His final master, Master Munday, did not keep Butler 'as Christian and Religious Masters ought to do their Servants, within Order, Discipline, and Obedience' and as a result the young man 'burst out first to get Companions for Drinking and Gaming; especially, at Dice for Monies, and that at unlawful places and hours' (sig. B1r).

The image of Butler 'bursting out' of the social, moral, religious and physical space of the household into the life of the street and alehouse is a powerful one and it confirms Griffiths' representation of the world of early modern apprentices as one of contested spaces. London's alehouse culture was represented in sermons and conduct literature, as a 'counter-culture to patriarchal values' which encouraged profligacy and disobedience (*Youth and Authority*, p. 202). Alehouses provided space for 'Drinking and Gaming...Excess and Riot'

(*Heavens Cry*, sig. B1v), and were often visited after dark and on Sundays. On the day before John Knight's murder, he and Butler went 'drinking together' before spending the afternoon fishing (*A Full and the truest Narrative*, sig. B1v). This was on a Wednesday, a work-day, when Butler and Knight should both have been industriously about their masters' business.<sup>8</sup> It was to 'help maintain him in these ungodly ways' of 'gaming and drinking, and other base and dishonest discourses' (*Heavens Cry*, sig. B1v) that Butler formed the ring of apprentices who stole from their masters.<sup>9</sup> One of the most disturbing aspects of Butler's criminality for early modern readers, therefore, was the ease with which he moved between the disorder of the alehouse and the order of the patriarchal household, breaching the door which supposedly shut out the social and moral dangers of street-life. He found 'free ingress, though at unfit hours, into his Master's house, and egress without controle' (*Heavens Cry*, sig. B2r).

The writer of *Heavens Cry* exploits early modern anxieties about the dangers of uncontrolled youth. In his representation of Butler and Knight he shows that young men (and, in particular, apprentices) were both a threat and a promise to society: Butler, disordered and uncontrolled, cuts off the promise contained in the righteous, hardworking John Knight. Society desired maturation to responsible adulthood but whilst apprenticeship indentures encouraged the perfection of professional skills they also 'forestalled the enjoyment of adult privileges' (*Youth and Authority*, p. 28). An act passed in 1556 act by the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ordinance for Abolishing Festivals*, June 8<sup>th</sup> 1647, allowed apprentices 'reasonable Recreation and Relaxation from their constant and ordinary Labours' on 'every second Tuesday in the Moneth throughout the year', C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait (eds). *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660*, 3 vols. (London: HMSO, 1911), Vol. 1, p. 954.

Common Council of the City of London prevented any apprentice from taking up the freedom of his company until he was at least twenty-four years old; this meant that no apprentice could marry until then. Indentures required an apprentice to pledge that he would not commit fornication nor marry during the term of apprenticeship ('London Apprentices', p. 150). The space in which 'adult privileges' could be experienced was the street – outside the master's household and encompassing alehouses and brothels. Invariably portrayed as oppositional to patriarchal authority, nevertheless these places contributed towards the physical maturation of youths even while they endangered spiritual development with carnal temptations. The convivial opportunities presented by street-life were important, for it was in that 'male space' that young men 'distanced themselves from the cosy domestic world of childhood and their mother's care and staked a claim for a place in the ranks of adult men' (*Youth and Authority*, p. 207).

The ambiguity of the experience of metropolitan street-life is at one with the perception of apprentices as both threat and promise. The convivial homosociability of the apprentices' free time could easily degenerate into drunkenness and fighting. However, the early modern representation and understanding of street-life shows that if uncontrolled and disordered sexuality was confined to the places where it was expected to occur, then (however much it was disapproved of) it was socially acceptable. If, however, the behaviour of the streets and alehouses was transported into the house, then what was familiar became threatening and would, as a result, make other 'familiar' domestic activities (such as sharing a bed) 'unfamiliar' in their turn. These cultural

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<sup>9</sup> Griffiths cites prosecutions involving apprentices stealing sums of £3, £7, £8 and £10. According to the pamphlets (and they all agree on this) the sum stolen by Butler after the murder

perceptions are important in understanding the significance of Nathaniel Butler's story because the murder showed the violence and uncontrolled sexuality of the street invading the household. What should have been separate spaces lost their expected boundaries. Nathaniel Butler corrupted by his uncontrolled life in the streets and alehouses carries that corruption into a godly household and pollutes its bedchamber (its innermost space) with the crime of murder. His corruption stains the idea of the ordered household just as John Knight's blood stains its floorboards. Popular texts, like the murder pamphlets, created and perpetuated the 'ideal household' in order to negate cultural anxieties brought about by observable disruptions, such as the threats of ungovernable sexuality and violence.<sup>10</sup> The Nathaniel Butler pamphlets show not only that youth was a contest between good and evil, but also that the households inhabited by apprentices were the battlegrounds on which that contest was fought out. The placing of such corruption and violence within a familiar narrative framework brings them under control.

This is achieved by the writer of *Heavens Cry* as he tells a simple story in a straightforward way. The readers are presented with a familiar stereotype who acts within an accepted pattern of sinning and punishment.<sup>11</sup> The description of

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was £100.

<sup>10</sup> Pamphlets about servants and apprentices murdering their masters include: STC 12630 *A Horrible Creuel and bloody murther* (1614); *The Apprentices Warning-Piece* (1641); Wing H2865 *Horrid News of a barbarous murder committed at Plimouth* (1676), and Wing S255 *Sad News from Ratcliff* (London, 1691). Those giving an account of apprentices/servants being murdered by their masters or mistresses include: Wing E3684; Thomason E.364[2] *An exact relation of the bloody and barbarous murder committed by M<sup>r</sup>files Lewis* (1646), and Wing W2110 *The Confession and execution of Leticia Wigington* (1681).

<sup>11</sup> Foul-mouthed apprentices with a lust for gaming and debauchery were familiar from plays such as Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston, *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and Philip Massinger, *The City Madam* (1658) as well as other pamphlets, such as Richard Head, *The English Rogue* (1665) and Francis Kirkman, *The Unlucky Citizen Experimentally Described* (1673) (*Masters and Servants*, p. 30; 'London apprentices', pp. 153-54).

Butler's life and of the murder occupies only 6 of the 27 pages of the pamphlet. The majority of the pamphlet is spent on scriptural exegesis about the heinousness of murder in general rather than of this crime in particular. It is clear that some of the details of the story are merely rhetorical 'colour' to emphasise the didactic message of the story as later pamphlets directly challenge some of the 'facts', stating (for example) that Butler and Knight were not brought up together and only met in London.<sup>12</sup> However, the writer of *Heavens Cry* makes explicit the connection between Butler's desire for money and the murder of his friend. This first narrative of the consequences of excessive and uncontrolled desires, I shall argue, makes possible the developing articulation of sodomy in the other three pamphlets about this murder.

### *Representations of the murder*

The narrative cohesion of *Heavens Cry* is achieved by its writer's concentration on the desire for money. The writer reports that Butler's father, 'a man not worth trusting' (sig. A1v) was unable to obtain credit. As we have already seen, Butler bribed one of his masters to employ others to work in his place. He also gambled, stole and took loans from John Knight:

But being many times hard put to it for Means, he would repair to his School-Fellow, *John Knight*, whom he after murdered, to supply his wants; who, for old acquaintance, did, by his own Confession, always furnish him with monies, which he misused; for he only employed them to his former Trade of Drinking and Gaming at Dice. (sig. B1v)

It was the sight of 'several Bags and Sums of Money' in Master Knight's shop which turned Butler from a thieving, dissolute apprentice to a 'bloody

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<sup>12</sup> This challenge is most direct in *Blood Washed away by Tears of Repentance* but neither of the subsequent pamphlets returns to *Heavens Cry*'s version of events.

Assassinate', for 'not being satisfied with seeing, he resolved to enjoy the money to himself' (sig. B2r-v). Butler murdered John Knight in order to get the money and the 'heavy bags' he stole are directly linked to 'his sin-loaden conscience' (sig. B3r). The weight of the crimes he had committed (physical and moral) made it impossible for Butler to find 'any quiet in his soul'. His guilt was evident in his 'disturbed, distracted and disquieted' behaviour at Knight's funeral and it led directly to his arrest on suspicion of murder (sig. B3r). Even the report of Butler's penitence concentrates on the money before the murder, 'Ministers are and have been with him...who finding him sorrowful and wondrous penitent: crying out against the money, *The money, ah that money*' (sig. B3v).

With such a textual context, the description of the murder is bloody but flows unremarkably from the motivation provided by the pamphlet writer:

His Friend being innocently and fast asleep, this *Butler* took his knife, and struck into his cheek; but the blow was not, though dangerous and deep, so fatal as he wished: at which stroke the young man wakened, and amazedly caught this *Butler* by the hair of the head; and striving with him, *Butler* fearing his crying out, with force of his other hand, stopt his mouth, so with the knife struck him a second blow into the throat, so that the edge of the knife came forth under the side of his tongue, which proved fatal to him; and so striving as long as life was in him, *Butler* by his own strength and the others weakness and wounds, forced him to lie on the Bed till he was dead, all in gore-blood. (sigs B2v-3r)

These are the facts of the murder: the first violent attack with a knife; Butler's failure to complete the killing quickly and silently; the ensuing and increasingly bloody struggle, and Butler's smothering hand. The facts are reproduced by the writers of the other three pamphlets, but they change the context of the murder and consequently alter the interpretation of Butler's actions and of the relationship between him and John Knight.

The context of robbery provided by the writer of *Heavens Cry* is given less emphasis by the other writers. In *Blood Washed Away*, Butler confesses that, ‘the Devill made me his enemy & Murderer for the sake of filthy lucre and dishonest gaine, which was the only motive that the Devil and my corrupt heart suggested to me, to perswade me to do this evill’ (sig. C2r). Whilst agreeing with the writer of *Heavens Cry* on this point of motive, the writer of *Blood Washed Away* removes all the other ‘colour’ which made the earlier account so cohesive, insisting on the honesty and probity of Nathaniel Butler’s parents. *A Full and the Truest Narrative* devotes just one sentence to the motive for the murder, ‘this new bed-fellow murthers his intimate and bosome Friend for the base lucre of money, which having thus got he was as restless as before’ (sig. B1v). In *The Penitent Murderer* the motive of robbery is mentioned but displaced in favour of Nathaniel Butler’s ‘cursed nature’ and the reasons given by the other accounts of the murder explicitly rejected:

The ignorance and blindness of many that came to see him [Butler] he heartily bewailed; They would aggravate his bloody fact, and ask him whether the sight of the bags were not the first temptation to the murdering of his Brother? But alas, said he, it was not the sight of the bags, nor the instigation of the Devil, that could have put me upon such wickedness, had there not been a cursed nature within me, by means wherof I was a Murderer before I slew my Brother. (sig. B2v)

As the authors of the other pamphlets play down the financial motivation for the murder, their descriptions of it stand out as more starkly violent and inexplicable. What emerges instead, as the writers attempt to interpret the crime for the pamphlets’ readers, is a narrative which emphasises the erotic possibilities inherent in the story of the murder and helps create Nathaniel Butler as a sodomite as well as a murderer. The writer of *Heavens Cry* establishes the key



rhetorical elements from which an accusation of sodomy could be made: uncontrolled desire; poor self-government compounded by a failure of patriarchal surveillance, and established criminal behaviour.<sup>13</sup>

### *Murderer to sodomite*

Sodomy was a statutory offence with its roots in ecclesiastical rather than common law and it was defined as ‘carnal knowledge between two men, between human and animal, or “unnaturally” between man and woman’ (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 28).<sup>14</sup> The law of 1563 described it as ‘the detestable and abomynable vice of buggery commytted with mankynde or beast’ (cited Goldberg, p. 3). Despite this clear description Coke suggested that sodomy had a certain invisibility about it when he defined it as ‘the detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians *not to be named*’ (Coke, *Third Part of the Institutes*, p. 58, cited in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, pp. 44-47, my italics). On the one hand it was defined in law but on the other it was something unspeakable; if it was ‘not to be named’ then how could it be identified? Despite Coke’s documented horror, Herrup suggests that his ‘contemporaries certainly did not find it unmentionable’ and that although sodomy was ‘much maligned in prescriptive literature’ it was ‘more ambivalently received in daily life...denounced, but little prosecuted, often vilified, but rarely punished’ (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 27).

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<sup>13</sup> Cynthia B. Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> For detailed accounts of the representation and interpretation of sodomy in early modern culture and literature see: Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*; Paul Hammond, ‘Titus Oates and “Sodomy”’; Alan Stewart, *Close Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University

There are several reasons for the discontinuity between the definition of sodomy as a 'detestable' felony and its rare 'visibility' in recorded prosecutions.<sup>15</sup> The first was practical: unless one participant was under the age of discretion then legally both partners were equally culpable (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 28). This made sodomy exceptionally difficult to prove as it was uncommon to find disinterested witnesses and if a complaint was made then the complainant had to be willing to incriminate himself. Secondly, the 'ubiquitous homosociability' of early modern society meant that 'male companionship was the expected preference, male friendship the standard path of social mobility, and shared beds and chambers the normal practice' (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 30). Whilst such visible homosociability was the social norm, nevertheless, 'the patriarchal structures of the household provided both proximity and spaces, as well as habits of deference to authority, which could allow sodomy to take place' (*Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, p. 44). The conditions which could produce sodomitical behaviour were so thoroughly woven into the domestic, social and political life of early modern society that it was effectively invisible, its perception a matter of interpretation rather than empirical observation

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Press, 1997); Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodomities: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> The two most notorious convictions for sodomy during the first half of the seventeenth century were those of the Earl of Castlehaven and Bishop Atherton. No printed accounts of the Earl's trial in 1635 appeared in England until the 1640s, and then versions were issued in 1643, 1679 and 1699. *The Arraignment and Conviction of Mervin Lord Audley* (1643) confirmed ideas of Catholic and Irish failings as well as adding to the sexual slanders about aristocrats that were the staple of parliamentary presses at that time (*House in Gross Disorder*, 126). Castlehaven's sister, Lady Eleanor Davies, wrote two pamphlets declaring his innocence: *The Word of God to the City of London* (1645) and *The Crying Charge* (1649). John Atherton (1598-1640), Bishop of Waterford and Lismore was hanged on December 5, 1640 for 'incest, buggery, and other enormous crimes'. His story is told in: *The Life and Death of John Atherton, Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lysmore* (London, 1641), and Nicholas Barnard, *The Penitent Death of a Woefull Sinner, or, The Penitent Death of John Atherton, late Bishop of Waterford in Ireland who was executed at Dublin the 5 of December, 1640* (London, 1641). This pamphlet was also printed in 1651. Beyond these it is rare to find an account of a trial and/or execution for sodomy in extant pamphlets. I have found only two: *A gardner at the gallows* (London, 1667) and *An account of the proceedings against Captain Edward Rigby* (London, 1698).

(*Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, pp. 44-47). However, that same homosociability which was valorised and approved, provided the context from which an accusation of sodomy *could* be made if necessary. As a result of this and the difficulty of eliciting a confession and proving it, sodomy, even more than categories of non-sexual crime, “‘existed” only when somebody chose to see it’ and the law tended to ‘see’ sodomy when it disrupted the social order rather than just individual lives (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 35). Consequently, sodomy was articulated in accusation rather than the proof of an ‘undefined [sexual] act by those threatening social stability’ (Goldberg, p. 17). An accusation of sodomy required the re-interpretation of otherwise ‘normal’ behaviour. Sodomy arose from understandable human sinfulness – sexual desire – but once the accusation was made the sodomite (like the murderer) was constructed as excessively sinful, excessively monstrous, excessively alien – almost beyond understanding. This meant that sodomy could not be a facet of self-definition, it had to be imposed externally through accusation. That accusation had, in turn, to be supported by other evidence which would make a sodomitical interpretation of events wholly possible.

Sodomites were perceived as difficult to identify as their ‘desires had no focus; they ran in indiscriminate streams that undermined allegedly categorical boundaries between men and women, humans and animals, nobles and commoners’. Sodomy was ‘desire unfettered’, it was ‘about ‘desiring everything’, not just sexual gratification but also property and luxury (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 33). Sodomites were ‘over-consumers’ and their excessive desires threatened the community, not only because they weakened the

homosocial bonds on which so much of public life depended, but also because sodomy was ‘an act of corruption as well as desire’ that affected more than the individuals involved in the act (*House in Gross Disorder*, pp. 34, 38).<sup>16</sup>

The control of immoderate desires and the teaching of self-government (of which sodomy was so clearly a failure) were central to the education of early modern youth. Nathaniel Butler was an exemplary ‘over-consumer’, and his uncontrolled desires led him to murder his friend. His willing confession proved his criminality; proven criminality made an accusation of sodomy credible. However, a credible accusation of sodomy demonstrated more than just a failure of self-government; it crucially showed a failure in domestic government as well. The absence of Master Worth, the governor of John Knight’s household, was therefore an important component in the construction of a sodomitical narrative within the rhetorical framework of the murder pamphlets. Effective government of the home should never have allowed such a perversion of social relationships. Where such perversions were made visible it was vital to demonstrate that domestic government had been re-established because of the early modern

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<sup>16</sup> *The Life and Death of John Atherton* explicitly connects the Bishop’s uncontrolled sexual desires to his unfettered political ambitions and avarice; a combination which inevitably leads to sodomy:

Yet so far basenesse did in him prevaile,  
That unto Lust he himselfe set to saile,  
Defloured Virgins, Marriage beds defiled,  
With many other vitious crimes too vilde  
To be conceived, beyond all measure proud,  
Impudence and ambition did him shroud.  
Amongst his flock he sow’d seditious strife ...  
Lastly through pride, high fare, and lustfull life,  
Incest committed with the Sister of his wife,  
For which he sued his pardon, and then fled  
To Ireland, where a worser life he led. (sig. A2r)  
...If ye will Bishops be, be such as was  
That Godly Timothy, make him your glasse,  
Shun avarice, shun extortion, shun vaine pride,  
Shun hate, dissimulation, let your Guide

analogy which viewed the household as a microcosm of the state.<sup>17</sup> Ordered domestic government was an extension of ordered national government, because each household was a 'private commonwealth that could teach a public lesson, a readable miniature to both teach and display the rudiments of order' (*House in Gross Disorder*, p. 13). An accusation of sodomy, therefore, was not just about *sexual* behaviour but (most crucially, perhaps) about political trustworthiness. Foreigners and papists were often characterised as sodomites and it was as much a political accusation as a personal one. An accusation of sodomy proposed a direct link between disordered sexual behaviour, foreignness, dissenting religious confession and treachery.<sup>18</sup>

The need to re-assert control is translated in the pamphlets about Butler into a textual control of his representation. The writer of *Heavens Cry* put in place all the rhetorical building blocks that were necessary for the creation of a narrative about sodomy. However, it is still necessary to explain why such a commodification of Butler and his crime was necessary and the answer lies in the interplay between narrative, exemplarity and city politics. The world of apprentices in early modern England was based on homosociability, whether that was within the home of the master or in the alehouses and brothels which

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Be godlinesse. Shun Lust, shun Buggery,  
Shun Incest, Rape, and shun Adultery ( sig. A3r).

<sup>17</sup> See also Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984) and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Herrup explains that the prosecutors at the Earl of Castlehaven's trial emphasised his ties to Catholicism and Ireland in order to link his fate to that of the nation. He was shown as a traitor 'to his God, to his gender, to his status, and to his country' (*House in Gross Disorder*, pp. 59-60, 62, 68, 81-2). Stewart describes how accusations of sodomy were an important part of John Balc's descriptions of monasteries, as sodomy represented an 'abuse of invested power' as well as typifying papists (*Close Readers*, p. 38). Hammond discusses the 'Renaissance habit...of imagining sodomites as satanic subverters of the moral order, conceptualised through a weird taxonomy which linked them with werewolves, Jesuits and Spanish spies' ('Titus Oates and "Sodomy"', p. 98).

provided the counter-culture to the patriarchal home. A crime which directly disrupted the homosocial boundaries of domestic authority and apprentice indentures and was possible because it was common practice for fellow servants to share a bed was therefore very dangerous indeed. For, in keeping with an understanding of young men as both a threat and a promise to society, apprentices (because they represented the future of civic government) were also seen as a potentially destructive and anti-authoritarian political force.<sup>19</sup> If an accusation of sodomy was made against a member of a such politically important but potentially unstable social group as apprentices, then it had implications beyond that of merely sexual criminality. Murder was bad enough but if it was possible to make sodomy 'visible' in the narratives of John Knight's murder, then the forces which brought the threat of Nathaniel Butler under control – not just in his punishment but in his conversion and in the representation of both – were shown as more powerful than the disruption of sodomy. A City government which showed itself at once swift in the apprehension of the murderer and in meting out the appropriate judicial punishment, yet merciful in its allowance of time for Butler to show himself truly penitent, must gain approval from those who read the pamphlets.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Smith notes that 'the apprentices of London, during the seventeenth century, ... were well known for their political activism' and that 'the frequency with which apprentices acted in concert during the Puritan Revolution to petition the government and to demonstrate in the streets indicates that apprentices thought of themselves and were thought of as a separate order or sub-culture' ('London Apprentices', pp. 149, 157). They were traditionally associated with unrest at festivals and holidays, in particular Shrove Tuesday, when rioting apprentices would destroy brothels (*London Crowds*, pp. 23-24).

<sup>20</sup> Literacy was relatively high amongst apprentices because of the increasing wealth of their families and the requirements of their indentures. They were therefore a considerable audience for cheap print. The writer of *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* makes it clear 'all young men' were both the intended audience and potential subject of Nathaniel Butler's story (sig. C1v).

The manipulation of the narrative of the murder which makes an accusation of sodomy credible begins in *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance*. In this account, Butler's need for money is connected more explicitly to his sexual sins than in *Heavens Cry*. He confesses to 'vaine and wicked pleasure, as all manner of gaming, and disorder, and untimely practices...passing from sin to sin, and from wickednesse to wickednesse...and by giving way to one, to idlennesse, I came to gaiming, from that to uncleanesse' (sig. C2r). 'Untimely practices' and 'uncleanness' are less specific descriptors than those used by the writer of *Heavens Cry* but they carry connotations of illicit sexual acts. Through his desire for the entire spectrum of sins Butler is led to 'covit' the 'filthy lucre' that would 'support' them (sig. C2r). Uninhibited desire is therefore connected via sexual sinning to the crime of murder. This concentration on Nathaniel Butler's sinful desires rather than on the crime itself leads to a very different account of the murder:

About...the 14 or 15 night I had lyen with him, at 4 of the clock in the morning, I resolved to act my bloody tragidy, better becoming a fi[e]nd, then a friend, I gave him a stob in the face, whilst he was asleep, and the young man awaking, and put in a great fright, by this so sudden a cruelty, by a common desire, strove for his life, and caught hold on the haire of my head, indeavouring if he might, to keep that I resolved to bereave him of, and plucked a lock from the same, and though I had great relentings of heart, and checks and feares; and horrors of conscience, upon this proceeding, which convinced me of the barbarousnesse of the act; yet that considering that I had given him a stob in the face, which would have been looked upon by all, as an intended Murther, and thinking (being blinded by the Devil) that by adding to my cruelty, and perfecting my sin, to counsell my cruelty, and to avoid the shame. He being acquainted with my friends, and the place of their residence, I fear'd he would by his means make it known to them, and that make me odious amongst them to my great disgracement, therefore I was tempted of the Devil, and my base heart by nature prone to wickednesse as a child of wrath, to dispatch him forth with out of the way, that so my cursed intentions might be the more secret before the eyes of the world, thus did my own blindnesse of heart, cheat me of, and so destroy

my life, whereupon I claped my hands on his mouth, and so by violence kept him down, and stop his breath, by which means he was strangled to death, and for the other wounds, they were given not to his living, but dead body, which cursed unnaturall act of mine doth continually rack and torment my spirit. (sig. C3r-v)

It is worth quoting this section in full both to illustrate the considerable expansion of the description in *Heavens Cry* (see above, p. 198), and also to see how the reader's attention is directed away from the deadly struggle on the bed to Butler's lengthy internal struggles. There is a distinct shift of emphasis towards Nathaniel Butler and away from John Knight thus losing the equality which was so much a feature of *Heavens Cry*. Even John Knight's blood is absent from this account as it ends not with the 'gore-blood' of *Heavens Cry* but with Butler's smothering hand. In *Heavens Cry* Knight died from stab wounds; in *Blood washed away* 'he was strangled to death' by the hands which Butler 'claped...on his mouth'. Butler decided to smother Knight not because he might cry out but because the *evidence* of the attack might do so and condemn Butler for his attempted murder of his friend. The vivid description of Butler's 'checks, feares and horrors of conscience' give him a human interiority denied him by the writer of *Heavens Cry*, who objectified him as, 'this Butcher', and 'this Harpy'. However, the disturbing confession of post-mortem mutilation - 'for the other wounds, they were given not to his living, but dead body' - makes Butler at once more alien - 'cursed and unnaturall' - a 'dangerous familiar' indeed.

Butler's action of post-mortem mutilation is significant. It negates the sense of subjectivity which had moved him closer to the reader by emphasising that he was more of a 'fi[e]nd' than a 'friend' and as a result Butler's 'unnaturalness' is intensified. Secondly, it has the effect of criminalizing John Knight's body as it



was only the bodies of executed felons that were used for experimental post mortems in the early modern period.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in its concentration on Nathaniel Butler this narrative annihilates John Knight twice: first as the murder victim and then as a textual creation. Thus it loses the rhetorical thrust of *Heavens Cry* with its use of the metaphor of conjoined duality. It is the control of Butler's textual representation which is the central concern of the remaining two pamphlets: *A Full and the Truest Narrative* and *The Penitent Murderer*. In the process his representation loses the sense of individuality and interiority that is a feature of *Blood washed away* and it is replaced instead by 'singularity'. The idea of singularity moves his representation towards exemplarity, something which relies upon a set of external actions and which is imposed from the outside. By that I mean that the identification of an exemplar is something done retrospectively, by another agency and thus, exemplarity, like the early modern understanding of sodomy, is not a feature of *self*-definition or identification.

In the third account, *A Full and the Truest Narrative* the sodomitical possibilities of John Knight's murder are articulated more fully. His representation changes to one which emphasises more obviously female qualities. Explaining why Butler and Knight had been secretly sharing a bed together, the writer of this pamphlet says:

it is supposed that he [John Knight] was a youth somewhat timorous, and fearing to lye alone, in his Masters absence he requested Nathaniel Butler to be his Bedfellow...Thirteen or fourteen nights they lay together, and as it seems they were very familiar and intimate. (sig. B1v)

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this and the consequent contemporary horror and fear of post-mortem mutilation and dissection see Douglas Hay (ed), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-*

Ostensibly this is a reasonable explanation for the activities that led to the murder. However, Knight has moved from being an example of virtuous youthful masculinity (he fought desperately for his life) to a 'youth somewhat timorous': fearful, passive and distinctly feminine. The introduction of 'supposed' and 'seemed' as qualifications to their ensuing statements brings a note of ambiguity into the account and also emphasises the importance of interpretation in understanding the adjectives 'familiar' and 'intimate'. There is a suggestion that such words can have double meanings which are perversions of the terms of male friendship. This suggestion is amplified when the writer of the pamphlet describes how Butler made a 'shew of love and friendship' on the day before he murdered Knight and then asks the question 'what mischief is at the bottom of that heart which dissembles Love?' (sig. B1v).

The perception of sodomy was very much a matter of interpretation in early modern society and the issue of interpretation is important in *A Full and the Truest Narrative*. In its preface the reader is framed as 'an inquirer after truth' which, although it 'seeks no corners, yet is sometimes hard to be found'. In the search through 'a chain of dependencies' the writer, who is a 'Lover of truth' will guide the inquirer towards 'satisfaction' with the narrative (sig. A2r-v). It is clear from the preface that things will only be 'seen' in this narrative if their representation prompts it. In *Blood Washed Away* the reader is imagined as a 'Christian Reader' who will 'read considerately' and learn from the 'words of a dying man' that it is 'as much the work of a Christian to oppose and wrestle with sin and temptations, as to perform and close with holy duties' (sigs A3v-4r).

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*Century England* (New York: Pantheon, 1975) and Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Although they imagine the reader differently, both these pamphlets provoke a sense of equality between writer and reader. There is little sense of equality with the imagined reader in *Heavens Cry*, where the relationship is represented as that between a teacher and pupil. No reader is addressed directly, but the pamphlet's aim is baldly stated: it is, 'written for the prevention of that sin, too frequent in our present times: especially upon that horrid Murder committed by *Nathaniel Butler* upon *John Knight* in Milk-street' (sig. A3v).

In his pursuit of a narrative that permits more than one interpretation, the writer of *A Full and the Truest Narrative* produces two descriptions of the murder. The first is short and to-the-point and pre-empts Butler's own account of the murder – the 'Confession from the mouth of the said Butler' – which is advertised on the pamphlet's title page. In essence this first description is a brief relation of the facts, 'On the *Thursday* morning by break of day he cut the mouth and throat of his bedfellow, and strangled him on his bed, being both in their shirts' (sig. A4v). However, that final phrase 'being both in their shirts' is a new addition to the story and will be amplified by Butler's own words.

The writer of *A Full and the Truest Narrative* asks the reader to interrogate the *appropriateness* of Butler and Knight's friendship as this was the standard of judgement for early modern friendship.<sup>22</sup> What was inappropriate about Knight and Butler's friendship was its secrecy and this secrecy allows the writer to hint at sexual impropriety, which in turn is intertwined with the issue of intensifying

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<sup>22</sup> 'The highly praised alliance of friendship was frequently eroticized, yet what kept (or did not keep) the celebrated closeness of friendship from appearing to be the sin of sodomy was not the degree of physical contact, but the appropriateness of the relationship' (Robert Matz, 'Slander,

criminality occurring in the absence of patriarchal surveillance. The process of innuendo, criminality and eroticism culminates in Butler's description of the murder:

I made proffer many a time with my knife to cut Johns throat, and once put my knife up again: And between three and foure of the clock, on Thursday morning, I took my knife and cut his Mouth to his Ear, at which he schrieked out and cryed Murder. Then I put my right hand into his Mouth, and so lay strugling together for about half an houre, and at length I strangled him; after which I looked about the Chamber, and the Devill instigated me to cut his Throat, which I did with my right hand, we both being naked. (sig. B4r)

Suddenly the reader is given details as to the length of time it took for the murder, 'so lay strugling together for about half an houre', which seems a very long time in which to accomplish a stabbing and smothering.<sup>23</sup> The level of innuendo increases when the reader is told that far from being more modestly clothed in their shirts, Knight and Butler were 'both...naked'. Even the money, supposedly the motive for the murder, is eroticized. Returning to his home after the murder Butler tells how he 'put of all my cloaths and went to bed, and put the two Bags of money in the bed with me' (sig. B4v). In effect, the money replaces John Knight as the bed-fellow of a naked Nathaniel Butler and this maintains the connection between Butler's uncontrollable, unfocused desires and the murder. This is a new detail and does not appear in either *Heavens Cry* or *Blood washed away*, the pamphlet which trumpets most loudly that it was written by Nathaniel Butler himself. Although these are (again) supposedly Butler's own words, the lengthy internal, spiritual wrestling of *Blood washed away* is replaced by brief,

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Renaissance Discourses of Sodomy and *Othello*', *English Literary History* 66 (1999), 261-76, p. 262).

<sup>23</sup> In *Othello*, Iago makes it clear that time (as well as appropriate behaviour) is crucial when insinuating sexual crime. 'Or to be naked with her friend in bed/An hour, or more, not meaning any harm?' (4.1. 3-4)

physical action, 'I made proffer many a time with my knife to cut Johns throat, and once put my knife up again'. The focus of Butler's confession in *A Full and the Truest Narrative* emphasizes the physical nature of the murder. This oral confession documented by the writer of *A Full and the Truest Narrative* on 'Monday August 10 1657' is different in significant details from that recorded by the writer of *Blood washed away*.

This pamphlet concludes with the injunction 'left by the head City-Martial, directed to the Clerk at Stationers Hall' on 'Monday at night which was the tenth of *August* last' which forbade the printing of details of the crime or execution until after Butler's death (see p. 188). This injunction suggests an increasing civic interest in the crime as well as an anxiety about controlling Nathaniel Butler's representation. The Lord Mayor, Sir Robert Tichborne took a personal interest in Butler. He sent his own chaplain, Randolph Yearwood to visit Butler on the day of his arrest and at the trial granted Butler two weeks between sentence and execution in which to demonstrate his penitence for John Knight's murder. Also, Tichborne himself visited Butler three times during that fortnight. Randolph Yearwood acted as one of Butler's spiritual guides during this time, was with him on the evening before his execution and preached the sermon at his burial.

This surprising degree of civic interest in one dissolute and murderous apprentice also extends to his textual representation. There is every reason to accept *The Penitent Murderer* as 'the true and exact relation of this sad fact' promised by the injunction printed in *A Full and the Truest Narrative*; it is, in fact, the 'official'

version of Nathaniel Butler's story, presenting the interpretation of events that the City government wanted its readers to accept. Facing the title page a declaration from Robert Tichborne states that, 'this is that Exact Narrative concerning *Nathaniel Butler*, which was some time since promised to come forth by my appointment'. It is dated 'Saturday Sep. 12. 1657', nearly a fortnight after Butler's execution on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The pamphlet was printed by Thomas Newcomb, a man who seems to have been involved in City politics and who had his own political ambitions. In 1649, Newcomb was imprisoned for printing John Lilburne's *Outcry of the Young Men and Apprentices of London*. However he clearly made his peace with the government and printed Milton's *Second Defense of the English People* in 1654; the Parliamentary newsbooks *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Weekly Intelligencer*, as well as Acts of Parliament and Commonwealth state documents. In *The London Printers Lamentation* (1660) he was described as 'of Milton's strain and so publicely known' (sigs A2v-3r). Despite this accusation, his career flourished after the Restoration (apparently a good printer was always in demand) and his interest in city politics remained as he was made a Common Councillor in 1663. Newcomb's involvement in politics is in contrast to the printers and booksellers of *Heavens Cry* (Henry Brome) and *Blood washed away* (Isaac Pridmore) who were known for dealing in general broadsides, ballads and plays – generally uncontroversial, popular and informal items. In keeping with the more ambivalent nature of *A Full and the Truest narrative*, its printer, Thomas Mabb, printed John Tatham's *London Tryumphs* in 1658 and 1661 (significantly either side of the Restoration), accounts of the pageant connected to the annual Lord Mayor's procession. After the Restoration, Mabb not only gave evidence against a fellow printer accused of

producing an anti-government book, but also published the official account of his trial and execution.<sup>24</sup>

*The Penitent Murderer* is a compilation of different accounts of Butler's final fortnight in Newgate by friends and visiting divines. It concentrates on documenting his penitence, creating him as an exemplary penitent with little of the room for interpretation that was evident in *A Full and the Truest Narrative*. It was 'collected by Randolph Yearwood', dedicated to Tichborne and begins with an 'Epistle to the Reader' written by Tichborne himself (sig. A5r-v). In this epistle, Tichborne describes the pamphlet as a 'Publike Attest' which will 'magnifie the free grace of God' to its readers. He is confident of the didactic effect of 'this Narrative' on 'the bad', as it will 'make the[m] (if possible) penitent and truly reformed'. If the reader is 'a gracious, good man, or woman' then they will be able to 'rejoyce' in this clear evidence of God's mercy to sinners. In one way, the narrative has come full circle to the rigid didacticism of *Heavens Cry*, but there are crucial differences. In that first narrative, Butler was represented as 'a bloody murtherer', a 'Harpy', a 'Butcher', a recognisable stereotype with no internal life, who committed the most heinous of all crimes. The murder was straightforward, no different from other murders reported in the pamphlets and newsbooks and narrated in the same way. By the time *The Penitent Murderer* was written and printed, Butler's representation was quite different. The stereotype of a penitent was just as rigid as that of a murderer but as an exemplary penitent, Butler's internal life was of paramount importance to the readers – his words and behaviour must be the external proofs of a spiritual

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<sup>24</sup> Henry R. Plomer, *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers: 1641-1667* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1907).

change. The accusation of sodomy is most clearly articulated in this pamphlet, and this narrative shift makes the story told by *The Penitent Murderer* very untypical indeed, as does the overt political involvement of the Lord Mayor.

The structure of *The Penitent Murderer* is also different from the other pamphlets. At 80 octavo pages it is the longest of the narratives and it is, in effect, a palimpsest of different accounts of the time between Nathaniel Butler's sentence and execution. Written by Robert Tichborne, Randolph Yearwood, other visiting divines and friends, each account overwrites and expands on the others creating Nathaniel Butler as an exemplary penitent who is both admonitory and exhortatory.<sup>25</sup> At times contradictory, it can either be read as a sequential narrative or each section can be read independently without reference to the whole.<sup>26</sup> *The Penitent Murderer* demands that the reader re-visit Butler repeatedly in his condemned cell in order to witness and interpret the performance of his exemplary penitence.

The longest section is 'An Exact Narrative of the Life and Death of Nathaniel Butler' and it gives an account of the murder which is familiar from the other pamphlets:

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<sup>25</sup> *The Penitent Murderer* comprises: 'Three conferences held with Nathaniel Butler (during his imprisonment) by the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, under his Lordships own hand'; 'A brief account of a visit given to Nathaniel Butler...by Tho. Case, a Minister of the City of London'; 'Certain observations of Thomas Parson, Minister at Michael Wood-street London'; 'Some passages between Nath. Butler and a friend of his that came to visit him, which have been omitted in the other conferences'; 'An Exact narrative of the Life and Death of Nathaniel Butler; 'A recollection of the sum of two Discourses between S.T. and N.B. in Newgate on Thursday Aug. 13 and Thursday Aug. 20, 1657, both continuing several hours', and *A Serious Advice to the Citizens of London, by some Ministers of the Gospel in the said City*.

<sup>26</sup> For example, at the beginning of the pamphlet Randolph Yearwood writes of Butler: 'I verily believe that you will see him yet once more; not as a Malefactor in an obscure disparaging Goal, but as an Angel of God in the Kingdom of Christ, whither (I am confident) he is gone' (sig. A3r). The author of a later section creates Butler as a sexual abomination and condemns him to hell.



But in the morning very early he did indeed fall violently and inhumanely upon the Youth, who lay harmlessly asleep upon the bed. The first wound not being mortal, awaked him, whereupon he struggled and made a noise (not considerable enough) which was heard into another room of the same house. Then *Butler* chopt his fist into the mouth of the Young man and so they two lay striving and tumbling very near half an houre, before the fatal blow was given; but at length he did most barbarously murder the Young man, giving him a very ghastly deadly wound cross the throat (sig. C2r-v).

Differing from *Blood washed away*, this account makes the slash across Knight's throat the fatal blow rather than a post-mortem mutilation. It also adds the presence of witnesses who heard Knight crying out. However, it is the context and interpretation of these by now familiar events which make parts of *The Penitent Murderer* the account which makes overt the accusation of sodomy and which asks the reader to reconsider the interpretation of such statements as, 'so they two lay striving and tumbling very near half and houre'.

The introduction to this section describes Butler as a 'very lewd Young man, being addicted to divers sins' (sig. C1r). The reader is told that 'he lived in Fornication, frequenting the company and houses of Harlots; in so much that (as he himself under his own hand informed me) he judged, this very sin of Whoredom did draw him on to that shedding of blood' (sig. C1v). In contradiction to *Heavens Cry* (which insisted on money as the sole cause and motive of the murder), this writer makes an explicit connection to unrestrained sexual sinning, even privileging Butler's written over his oral confession. The section concludes with 'An Admonition to all persons whatsoever, especially to Parents, and Children; Masters and, Servants' which gives a specific interpretation of the murder for its readers. Although similar to *Heavens Cry* as

the writer produces an interpretation based on scriptural exegesis, it is very different in content. In *Heavens Cry*, the writer used this specific murder in order to produce a general lecture on the heinousness of all such crimes. In 'An Admonition', Butler's murder of his friend is given a specific and sodomitical interpretation. The writer begins with a general condemnation of 'riotous deboist, drunken, swearing, cursing, whoring wretches'; then implicates Butler in this debauch categorising him as a 'great Company keeper, and great Gamester', and points up the moral of the tale, 'and what did he grow to at last?'. He then moves on to condemn 'Fornication, Uncleaness and Whoredom' as they endanger 'Reputation, 'tis a dishonour to a Man or a Woman'. As we have already seen, sodomy was understood to arise from unfocused sexual desire, rather than the specific desire of one man for another. The biblical text that the writer of 'An Admonition' uses to illustrate his condemnation of such uncontrolled sexual sinning elucidates that understanding. It is Deuteronomy 23.17, which declares 'There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a Sodomite of the sons of Israel etc.' (sigs E4v – F1r).

This is the first overt reference in the pamphlets to sodomy and it has several implications. Firstly, the biblical injunction (taken from the Pentateuch, the books of the Law) makes it clear that sodomy is both a sin and a crime, and is connected to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose punishment was all about the importance of good governorship and the inevitability of divine surveillance.<sup>27</sup> The reference to Sodom and Gommorrah also connects the

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<sup>27</sup> And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that

accusation of sodomy to the fulfilment of a prophecy of doom and destruction. Finally, despite the law at this time suggesting that both men and women could be involved in sodomy and that it was a result of general sexual promiscuity, the text from Deuteronomy *genders* sexual sinning: whores are female and sodomites are male. The writer and/or printer have capitalized 'Sodomite' drawing the reader's attention to it. As this murder is about one man murdering another on a bed in the early hours of the morning, the accusation of unnatural and criminal sexual activity is clear.

The biblical text clarifies the paragraphs which precede it, inviting a re-reading and a re-interpretation of events. However, having made this point, the writer seems to withdraw from the accusation and goes on to condemn the defilement of the 'marriage-bed' by general fornication. However, it is the bed on which the murder was committed which is the one made visible to the reader. The final salvo from this writer confirms that the interpretation the reader must make is that Knight and Butler were sodomites:

To live in chambering and wantonness is the way to lie down in the chambers of death. Remember the two young men named in the Narrative who were lately bedfellows above ground, and are now become chamber-fellows below; for the fear of the Lord prolongeth dayes, but the yeares of the wicked shall be shortned; break off then speedily from all sin, as you hope for long-lasting life here, and for everlasting life hereafter. (sig. F2r)

The reasons why this rhetoric is explicit about sodomy begin with the use of the word 'chambering'. It is unique to this account of the murder and it means 'sexual indulgence, lewdness, luxury and effeminacy' (*OED*). The second reason

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which he hath spoken of him. And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous: I will go down now, and see whether they have done

is the representation of John Knight. In *Heavens Cry* John Knight was the passive, innocent, virtuous victim of Nathaniel Butler's murderous greed. In *Blood washed away*, the representation was the same although Knight's body was criminalized by Butler's post-mortem mutilation. *A Full and the Truest Narrative* suggested Knight's effeminacy, by depicting him as timorous rather than bravely fighting for his life. In 'An Admonition', Knight is represented as an equal, active, sexual and criminal partner to Butler, implicated in his own death, sinning in the bed on which he was murdered and condemned to hell, 'the two young men...lately bedfellows above ground...are now become chamber-fellows below'. Partners in sodomy were regarded as equally culpable; the absence of a social hierarchy between murderer and victim which makes this murder so unusual is here used to support an accusation of sodomy.

The writers of this section of *The Penitent Murderer* and *A Full and the Truest Narrative* manipulate the early modern understanding of two hallmarks of male friendship: the embrace and the bed ('The Body of the Friend'). Nathaniel Butler destroyed the bond of friendship by murdering John Knight. Such a terrible crime made it possible for the pamphlet writers to call into question the whole significance of that friendship, as the early modern understanding of friendship was that it was more of a 'public relationship' than the modern 'private and comforting relation' ('The Body of the Friend', p. 65). Within that public relationship 'bodily intimacy' established and gave meaning to social relationships, 'and the good-humoured homoeroticism we sometimes see in the

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altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. (Genesis 18, vv. 17-21)

gift of the friend's body signalled the place of comforting security such relationships established in an insecure world' (p. 82).

Within this context, the 'publicly displayed intimacy' of an embrace between two male friends would have been 'readily intelligible' to early modern readers as a familiar sign of 'loyalty and obligation' (pp. 66-68).<sup>28</sup> However, such an embrace undertaken in secrecy, and in transgression of the rules of domestic government was open to a different interpretation. The descriptions of the murder in all four of the pamphlets turn an embrace of loyalty and obligation into the embrace of death.<sup>29</sup> The emblematic significance of sharing a bed, in which the epithet 'bedfellow' suggested the 'intimacy of a friend' that one could trust (pp. 70-71) was again shattered in the action of John Knight's murder. Hence, it was possible for the pamphlet-writers to manipulate gestures which spoke of trust, security and reciprocity and reinterpret them so that the feared figure of the sodomite emerged. This rhetorical manipulation shows that the reason sodomites were so feared was not that the act itself was 'perverted' (as it grew out of uncontrolled but normal sexual desire) but because by giving a relationship a sodomitical interpretation, the symbolism of 'familiar' gestures and actions (such as embraces and bed-sharing) became unstable. So, if a narrative created a sodomite then it was important that the representation was tightly controlled. *The Penitent Murderer* is the narrative which most explicitly creates Nathaniel Butler as a sodomite, and it is therefore no coincidence that it is the pamphlet which not only arises out of an injunction that sought to control the textual representation of

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<sup>28</sup> Bray bases his interpretation on the recorded observation of an embrace between King James I and Robert Carr but suggests that the gesture was 'readily intelligible...because it was so familiar...and not just for a King or for King James' (p. 67).

the murder but is also the one most concerned with control in its narrative structure. It commodifies Butler as an exemplary penitent, a device which rescues his representation from the lack of control represented by a sodomitical desire and places it within boundaries which were readily recognisable to the reader.

There are several reasons for the City's need to demonstrate an authoritative textual relationship to John Knight's murder. Firstly, this was a murder which (unusually) lacked an internal hierarchy. Typically, murders narrated in the pamphlets were those which breached accepted hierarchies: spouse murders; murders of masters/mistresses by servants and vice versa; murders of and by children.<sup>30</sup> Nathaniel Butler and John Knight were the same sex and the same age: this was murder between equals. The circumstances of the murder placed the intimacies of male friendship (occurring at night) within a private, unregulated and unguarded space *against* the civic and guild authorities which sought to regulate the working and social relationships of apprentices. The murder therefore was not just a criminal act but also a political one, symbolizing the threat apprentices posed to the commonwealth. For in early modern understanding sodomy symbolized a self-inflicted breakdown of control; the danger of a foreign, papist invading force; contagion; corruption, and treason. Exaggerating the threat posed by Nathaniel Butler by representing him as a sodomite recreated the murder as a crime against the city itself rather than

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<sup>29</sup> Another of the public, ritualistic and physical signs of friendship was eating together (p.69). On the day before the murder, Butler and Knight were seen sharing a meal together.

<sup>30</sup> For example: *The trueth of the most wicked and secret murthuring of John Brewen* (1592); *A pitillesse Mother That most unnaturally at one time murthured two of her owne Children at Acton* (1616); *A Horrible Creuel and bloody Murther* (1614); *Newes from Perin in Cornwall* (1618); *A true account of a barbarous and most cruell murther comitted by one Enoch ap Evan* (1633);

against John Knight, and therefore re-established the hierarchy that the murder lacked. By placing an accusation of sodomy within the narrative of the murder, Butler's crimes became even more heinous and the agencies which promoted his penitence became, by association, more powerful. If, however, Herrup's assertion that accusations of sodomy would often surface when 'a disruption to civic calm was threatened, but not yet realized' (*A House in Gross Disorder*, p. 36) is correct then one must wonder what disruptions were perceived as threatening to the 'civic calm' of London in the summer of 1657.

The spring and early summer of 1657 were politically turbulent. In March, the *Humble Petition and Advice* was presented to Parliament which sought to make Cromwell King.<sup>31</sup> The commanders of the army, Lambert, Fleetwood and Desborough, bitterly opposed Cromwell's acceptance of the Crown and although they fought against it they were defeated in the House of Commons. However, clearly the threat of disturbance, even rebellion, continued for on April 20<sup>th</sup>, Bulstrode Whitlocke, one of the Commissioners and Great Seal of the Treasury, wrote that Cromwell was:

satisfied in his private Judgment that it was fit for him to take upon him the *Title of King*...but afterwards by solicitation of the Commonwealth's Men and fearing a Mutiny and Defection of a great part of the Army in case he should assume that Title and Office, his Mind changed'.<sup>32</sup>

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*Three Bloodie Murders* (1613) and *The Examination, confession and condemnation of Henry Robson, Fisherman of Rye* (1598).

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), p. 149; Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell Our Chief of Men* (London: Arrow, 1973).

<sup>32</sup> Wilbur Cortez Abbot, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell: The Protectorate 1655-1658* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), IV, p. 508. Fraser reports that on Wednesday 6 May, Cromwell told several people that he intended to accept the crown, but a meeting with Fleetwood, Desborough and Lambert on the following day whilst he was walking in St. James's Park changed his mind (pp. 610-12). Edmund Calamy was one of the writers of 'A Serious Advice to the City of London' (the final part of *The Penitent Murderer*) and he too was opposed to Cromwell accepting the Crown.

On Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, Cromwell made a speech declining the crown at a meeting of the Commons in Banqueting House in Whitehall (Abbot, p. 512). Abbot notes that 'there is small record or none of popular opinion of the refusal of the crown' (p. 516). On 26<sup>th</sup> June, Cromwell was installed for a second time as Lord Protector with all the trappings of a coronation, but without a crown (Fraser, pp. 615-17). It was, apparently, 'a solemn day of rejoicing' with 'bells ringing bonfires burning and all demonstrations of joy that could be contrived'. In his capacity as Lord Mayor, Sir Robert Tichborne carried the sword of the City, walking in front of Cromwell after his arrival at the hall.<sup>33</sup>

Although the political crisis of the spring appeared to be settled, nevertheless threats of conspiracy and disruption remained. Early in August 1657, while Cromwell was staying at Hampton Court and travelling backwards and forwards to Whitehall, there was an assassination attempt against him (Abbot, pp. 594-95).<sup>34</sup> A letter from Francisco Giavarina to the Doge of Venice suggested that Cromwell's absence from Whitehall during August, was 'for more rest and to be away from the affairs of state' (p. 602). Certainly there were suggestions that his health was poor, and he was still at Hampton Court on August 11<sup>th</sup>. Although Cromwell attended Council meetings in Whitehall on August 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, he again left for Hampton Court and remained there, with his wife, until September 2<sup>nd</sup> (pp. 597; 603).<sup>35</sup> This meant that the country's 'protector' and 'governor'

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<sup>33</sup> Laura Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait and Print 1645-1661* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 123-25.

<sup>34</sup> This was only one of several plots against Cromwell in 1657, three of which were uncovered in January (Fraser, pp. 594-95).

<sup>35</sup> 'In the summer of 1657, "Old Oliver" as he was often termed by friends as well as enemies, was compelled to bow his head further before the combined onslaughts of age and ill-health. His signature – OLIVER P – on both official documents and private letters began to look positively shaky in marked contrast to the firm letters of a year or two back' (Fraser, p. 619).



was absent from the City during the period which encompassed the murder and Butler's arrest, trial and execution. As one closely associated with Cromwell, it is reasonable to assume that Tichborne would have been aware not only of Cromwell's poor health but also of the attempt on his life. Neither illness nor the assassination attempt fostered a feeling of stability, for England was now ruled 'precariously by the authority of one ageing and none too robust man' (Fraser, 619). In June 1657, Richard Cromwell (Oliver's son), wrote that 'the Publique Peace is tumbled and tossed as if it were nothing to break the veins of one another to a deadly gasping...wisdom hath taken the wings of the morning and I fear left us' (Fraser, p. 619).

These reasons alone would have made it important for the government of the City of London to demonstrate its control over the behaviour of two representatives of such a politically active and potentially volatile group as apprentices. As well as this I think that Robert Tichborne was eager to project his image as the 'godly' governor of the City, perhaps looking forward to a time after the government of Cromwell. Tichborne was the author of two works of Puritan spirituality: *A Cluster of Canaan's Grapes* and *The Rest of Faith*. Both were first printed in 1649 and then re-issued in 1657. Tichborne was an Independent, and clearly his reputation for piety was something that defined him for both his supporters and opponents.<sup>36</sup> If one accepts at least the underlying

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<sup>36</sup> That they were well-known is shown by a clear reference to the former in *The Pretended Saint and the Prophane Libertine. Well Met in Prison. Or a Dialogue Between Robert Tichborne and Henry Marten, Chamber Fellowes in Newgate* a pamphlet printed in 1660 after Tichborne's arrest and imprisonment. 'Tichborne' laments, 'this methinks is a sad dispensation, that the Grapes of Canaan should be thus sower, and our glory so suddenly turned into Shame' (sig. A2v) (Henry Marten was a radical politician, soldier and unrepentant regicide). This is only one of several satirical pamphlets published about Tichborne in 1660. Others are: *Brethren in Iniquity: or a Beardless Pair* and *Two City Juglers Tichborn and Ireton* (John Ireton, brother of the Parliamentarian general, was Lord Mayor in 1658). All the pamphlets identify Tichborne by his

truth of Tichborne's satirical portrayal in the pamphlets printed after his arrest in 1660, then it is clear that the issue of moral and sexual control of the City was important to him during his tenure as Lord Mayor. In *Brethren in Iniquity*, Ireton describes Tichborne's 'Apish Government of the City, your severe Discipline of the Herb-women and Haglers' (sig. A2v) and berates him, 'Sir, were not you the great overseer of the Ale-Houses, the Pot-informer, the Bawds and Whores Secretary, the great Caball of all lewdness in the Town; for all your starcht superciliousness?' (sig. A3v).

Two sources of anxiety about civic disruption therefore coincided in the summer of 1657: the failing health and authority of Oliver Cromwell and the clear evidence from the story of Nathaniel Butler and John Knight that the 'cultural revolution' of Puritanism had failed.<sup>37</sup> Control over the representation of the crime in the pamphlets meant that the City government could at least demonstrate textual control and through that demonstrate the power of Puritanism, not just in the swift administration of justice but also in the appropriation of Nathaniel Butler as an exemplary penitent. The process of such a commodification involved the creation of Nathaniel Butler as even more of a

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piety. In *The Pretended Saint* his rhetoric is 'puritanical' as he wishes that Marten would 'have past away the time in opening a Text of Scripture that we might have sung a Psalm of Lamentation together' (sig. A4r). Unsurprisingly, they all insist on his hypocrisy as well. The *Two City Juglers* has Tichborne declare that 'I made Religion my Stalking-Horse whereby I did compasse my Game, and was counted a Saint, while in very truth I was a white Devill' (sig. B1r). His hypocrisy is often linked to accusations of financial dishonesty, an accusation also made in *The Mystery of the Good Old Cause Briefly Unfolded* (London, 1660) and which persists up to the present day and is found in A.L. Rowse, *The Regicides and the Puritan Revolution* (London: Duckworth, 1994), pp. 116-18.

<sup>37</sup> This phrase comes from Christopher Durston, 'Puritan Rule and the Failure of the Cultural Revolution' in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, pp. 210-233. He describes how 'Puritan efforts to eradicate ungodly leisure pursuits and improve the nation's moral standards also ended in dismal failure...as moral behaviour remained impervious to the pressure of the reformers' (p. 229). In the election campaign for the second Protectorate parliament in the summer of 1656, throughout the country 'the electorate decisively rejected candidates' associated with Puritan reforms (p. 232).

monster than he was in the earlier pamphlets, *Heavens Cry* and *Blood Washed Away*, for that would then make his textual rehabilitation even more dramatic. The circumstances of the murder – already widely publicized – made an accusation of sodomy credible if they were properly manipulated. Sodomy was culturally associated with Catholicism, and Catholicism with treachery, so the insertion of ‘some Priests and other Papists’ and ‘Popish ladies’ into *The Penitent Murderer*, visiting Butler in Newgate in order to ‘seduce’ him to their religion, and Butler’s repudiation of their advances (sigs B3r-v, B7v) also demonstrated a government able to protect the citizens of London from the dangers of the Antichrist and foreign invasion.<sup>38</sup>

However, the story of this murder not only demonstrated the dangers of uncontrolled youth but also the failure of domestic government. This was not just a narrative of *bad* domestic government (although this was the focus of *Heavens Cry*), but equally of the failure of good government – Master Worth’s authority did not survive his physical absence from his home. Focussing on this element of the narrative, *The Penitent Murderer* concludes with *A Serious Advice to the Citizens of London by some Ministers of the Gospel in the said City*.<sup>39</sup> The ‘Serious Advice’ given is that boundaries – legal, moral and physical – need to be re-imposed upon a city which ‘is made as *Sodom*’ and where it is a ‘wonder...that desolation doth not seize upon your houses, that you are not swept away with the Beesome of sudden destruction’. The writers mourn the

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<sup>38</sup> It was this association between Catholicism (and Irishness), treachery and sodomy which not only allowed the accusation to be made in the first place but also made the case against the Earl of Castlehaven credible to the jury, despite contradictory evidence from witnesses (*House in Gross Disorder*).

recalcitrance of the citizenry to heed the reforming voice of a godly government, ‘ ‘tis the daily and inward grief of our spirits, God knows it, that our Ministry is so successless, that we see so little fruit of the word preached by us, that in a City where there is such plain and powerful preaching, such horrid sins should be committed’ (p. 2). The failure of Puritan reforms has led to ‘the low ebb of Discipline and Government’ and the divines, ‘ judg that to be one Cause of the many disorders which are among us; we heartily wish it may be restored in Church, in State, in Families, if this be wanting all things run up to strange confusion’ (p. 10).

The people of the city are exhorted ‘to submit to *Government*, and to bless God that you live in a place where Laws are Executed’ for, they are asked, ‘what Confusion, Cruelty, Barbarousness, would overspread all, if by wholesome Laws, and the cares of good Magistrates in the Execution of them, we had not some Boundaries to the Lusts of men? (p. 4). These ‘good magistrates’ are themselves exhorted to ‘see what is the sad fruit of *Alehouses*, *Whore-houses*, and such places’ and if they do, to impose the limits of the law upon them, ‘we hope your zeal will continue, nay be heightened in the suppressing of them’ (p. 5). Masters and mistresses of households are advised, ‘what ever liberty you grant [servants] at other times, hold them to a close sanctification of the Sabbath’ (p. 8). The restriction of physical liberty in order to promote spiritual health will be ensured if the heads of households, ‘look to the keys and doors of your houses and to have them in your own custody not in your servants’ (p. 9). They are encouraged to ‘keep up Discipline, or rather restore it again’ because there is a

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<sup>39</sup> This section of the pamphlet was printed separately in 1659 and reproduced almost verbatim in *The Unhappy Citizen* (1691) another pamphlet which exploits associations between politics,

direct link between domestic disorder and civic disorder, for such 'discipline' is 'almost lost amongst us in the City' (p. 9).

The final passages of *A Serious Advice* are directed at, 'you that are Governours (we mean Governours of families)'. The writers ask, 'give us leave...to stir you up to make more conscience of the Family-duties and engagements that lie upon you, in reference to your children and servants' for:

doth not the neglect of your family-duties make all the endeavours of our godly magistrates, and godly ministers to be ineffectual and frustraineous? God hath put it into their hearts to do good, but tis but little, they can do in publick, because you are so remiss in private.(p. 7)

The civic and the domestic are inextricably entwined although the weary tone of much of this section seems to imply that the civic can have little effect on the domestic, although the domestic can dangerously disrupt the civic. The writers of *A Serious Advice* conclude that, above all, it is the *physical* presence of the 'governor' which alone will maintain his authority over his household:

In the pursuit of your own pleasures and conveniences have a care of your Families; Many of you go to your Country houses (we condemn you not for it) but what becomes of your servants ...Whilst you are in your pleasant gardens gratifying yourselves in your creature-enjoyments, who takes care of them that are left behind to pray with them, to instruct them, to see they sanctifie the Sabbath, the health of some Masters bodies is the ruine of their servants souls. (p. 9)

This is an attack on the pleasures of 'creature-enjoyments', an emphasis on physical gratification at the expense of spiritual and moral health. That, of course, is what lies at the heart of condemnations of sodomy. Master Worth's absence (albeit on business) created the conditions which allowed unfettered

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Catholicism and treachery (see chapter 3).

sexual desire and murderousness into an unregulated domestic space. Governors 'in pursuit of their own pleasures and conveniences' are here made culpable of John Knight's murder. There seems little confidence here that domestic governors are the agents of state government – that their houses are, in microcosm, the ordered and godly nation. The governors represented in this passage are not industrious and prudent, but idle in country-houses accrued from their wealth, uncaring and wasteful, not vigilant of their own or their households' spiritual well-being. Clearly, however, the parenthetical 'we condemn you not for it' is an attempt to defuse the bitterness of this attack, although it is not wholly successful. The phrase may be there to take away any suggestion of criticism of Cromwell who, by the beginning of September, had only just returned from an extended stay at his 'country-house' - Hampton Court – which had been for the 'health of [his] body'. So close was the perceived association between domestic order and national order in early modern England, that one possible interpretation of this passage was that Knight's murder was a direct result of Cromwell's absence from London, or of his weakening authority on government.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The possibility that this section contains an anti-Cromwellian sub-text is supported by the divines who put their names to it as joint authors. Edmund Calamy was one of the authors of *Smectymnuus*, and held the living of St. Mary Aldermanbury. A Presbyterian, he had opposed the trial and execution of Charles I and Cromwell's possible assumption of the Crown. He promoted the Restoration, and was a member of the deputation which went to meet Charles II in Breda. He was ejected from his living (which he had held since 1639) in 1662 and was the first dissenter to be imprisoned under the Act of Uniformity. His fellow authors Thomas Case, Thomas Jacomb(e), Arthur Jackson, Roger Drake, Matthew Poole, Simeon Ashe, Thomas White, Thomas Dolittle and James Nalton were also Presbyterians and supported the Restoration of Charles II. Case, Drake and Nalton were all implicated in Love's Plot in 1651. Ashe was strongly opposed to the extreme party of the Cromwellians. They were all ejected from their parishes in 1662 (*DNB*). Thomas Dolittle was also one of the divines who acted as spiritual guide to Thomas Savage in 1668. See *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* (1668).

Despite the close civic control of Nathaniel Butler's representation in *The Penitent Murderer*, *A Serious Advice* appears to strike a very different note. Most of this final pamphlet is an attempt at a triumphant vindication of Robert Tichborne's godly government of the City of London and of the strength of Puritanism. The creation of Nathaniel Butler as a sodomite and then as a heartfelt penitent demonstrates the authority of Mayor and the message as civic, godly authority succeeds in regulating deficient domestic authority. However, *A Serious Advice* acknowledges the failure of Puritan attempts to reform sexual and moral behaviour and consistently evinces a mistrust of domestic governors, showing a relationship between civic and domestic authority which is full of tension rather than harmony. The writers of this homily hope, rather than expect, that magistrates will suppress alehouses and brothels; that masters will make sure that their servants observe the Sabbath, and that apprentices will eschew 'jeering godliness'. London does not rejoice in civic calm and good government, but is a place where 'Scarlet sins...swarm'; threatened by 'Romish locusts' in 'City and Suburbs'; where the 'reins' of discipline are 'very loose' in the hands of poor governors, and domestic and moral boundaries are dangerously easy to breach. *A Serious Advice* maintains this under-confident tone until its final sentence, 'that Governors and Governed may thus discharge their duties, shall be the great design of our Ministrie by Gods assistance, and our constant prayer at the Throne of Grace' (p. 12): there is no certainty in reformation here.

It is ironic that the text which demonstrates evidence of close civic control and articulates most strongly the accusation of sodomy is the least coherent in terms of narrative structure. At times it is downright contradictory: different

contributors assure the readers with unshakeable confidence that Nathaniel Butler's soul is bound for heaven and hell, and Butler's penitence announces the success of the godly revolution while *A Serious Advice* suggests its failure. Anxieties about political instability and a weariness with division and debate coincide in this remarkable statement from Randolph Yearwood, the personal chaplain of a hard-line, Independent Lord Mayor:

It's often known that one man hateth another meerly because he passeth in the world under one or other of these dividing names, whereas (it may be) the man deserves no such name; but if he do, I am sure it is not fit nor Gospel-like to leave loving a man of a different minde in some circumstantial matters of Religion. You will not be able to come off in the day of account by this plea. Indeed I hated such a man, and I thought I did well, for he was called an Episcopal man, or a Presbyterian, or an Arminian, or Anabaptist, or a Schismatick and Sectary. The Lord God will demand, was not such a man thy brother, was he not thy neighbour (nay, did he not fear my name? notwithstanding this or that nick-name maliciously put on him) and shouldst thou have hated thy Brother, thy Christian Brother, a man that lived in all good conscience by thee. (*The Penitent Murderer*, sig. G2r-v)

These words suggest that labels do not express the whole truth of an individual nor is bigotry the way forward to Christian government. The breaching of boundaries and the 'strange confusion' which arises from it is the subject of the four pamphlets which are the subject of this chapter. Ironically, perhaps, it is the broken boundaries of friendship and ordered domesticity which then allowed the writers of the final two pamphlets to break narrative boundaries and articulate an accusation of sodomy for their readers.

The writer of *Heavens Cry* promised his readers that his narrative would describe murder to them by first defining it ('what it is', 'the kindes of it' and 'the Damnableness of it'); then laying out 'the fearful Judgments of God denounced



against it in his holy Word'; setting out 'the principal Causes of it' and finally proposing 'some Remedies to prevent it'. Using the Butler murder as his example he produced a satisfying, coherent narrative that set out for its readers the social, judicial and above all scriptural framework into which they could insert this 'bloody and unparallel'd murder'. Thus they could make sense of it and be reassured that its random violence could be controlled through various strategies such as prayer; 'contentedness in all states and conditions'; the 'fear of God'; 'keeping godly society', and 'living faithfully, and thankfully, and submissively in some honest laborious and conscionable calling'. The writer of *Heavens Cry* proposes good governorship as the answer to the problem of wayward apprentices. In stark contrast, *The Penitent Murderer* sees domestic governorship as the problem rather than the solution. Whereas the writer of *Heavens Cry* suggests private, inward looking strategies to contain murderousness that were based within the household under the guidance of a godly domestic governor, the writers of *The Penitent Murderer* propose a public solution: the private space of the household must be regulated by civic authority. Specifically, *The Penitent Murderer* suggests that Robert Tichborne would be able to wield such authority as he is shown to have a central role not only in producing the conditions for the demonstration of Nathaniel Butler's penitence but also in the control of its textual representation.

Through the narratives of four separate pamphlets the story of Nathaniel Butler has moved from one of straightforward murder to a politically motivated account which includes an accusation of sodomy and proposes the godliness of the Lord Mayor as the agent of social change. All four pamphlets were written for

commercial gain, entwining a story of murder with social anxieties about youth and giving readers what they expected from a murder story. However, *The Penitent Murderer* also seeks to make political capital from a time of particular uncertainty when politicians such as Robert Tichborne were possibly thinking about the next ruler and their own position in any future government. John Knight's murder struck at the heart of order in the Protestant state: the gerontocratic government of the 'imagined ordered household'. The violently shortened lives of Butler and Knight – full of youthful potential – threatened the continued stability of the state. The imposition of a sodomitical narrative onto the facts of the murder confirms this sense of political instability, evoking symbolic associations between the murder, the creation of a treacherous, threatening 'other' and prophecies of doom and destruction.

## Chapter 5

### *'To Heaven on a Gibbit': penitent murderers and the 'craft of dying'*

The final link in the chain-link narrative of the murder pamphlets was that of the execution of the murderer. The pamphleteers did not dwell on the physical sufferings involved in execution by hanging or (less commonly) burning. Instead they directed the reader's attention to the comportment of the murderer from the moment of his/her condemnation to the moment of death. The writers also narrated the felons' final words to the crowd assembled to watch the execution. Actions and words were carefully constructed for an audience's scrutiny in order that it might gain some intimation about the veracity of a murderer's penitence and the final destination of his/her soul. The representation of the deaths of penitent murderers owed more to the English Protestant 'craft of dying' than to discourses of state power and theatrical performance. The conventions of the craft of dying allowed condemned murderers to articulate a spiritual independence which could be at odds with the piety expected by the state church. Thus the representation of the dying behaviour of these condemned murderers had an important political component which was articulated in a spiritual, pious register. It was possible to make a 'good' death whilst maintaining one's innocence for the crime for which one was condemned. The inescapable chain of events which formed the narrative of the murder pamphlets demanded that after such a demonstrably 'bad' life, murderers

should make an exemplary death. The representation of the deaths of penitent murderers in the pamphlets involves the manipulation of rhetoric and engages with early modern ecclesiastical politics as well as allowing a re-interpretation of J.A. Sharpe's paradigmatic reading of early modern executions.<sup>1</sup>

### *The gibbet as a death-bed*

The writer of *Blood washed away by Tears of Repentance* reminded the readers of his pamphlet that it was possible to reconcile the barbarity of a murderer's crime with the exemplary penitence and spirituality of his death by placing this apparent paradox within the framework of the words of one the Fathers of the Church:

Sorrowful friend, it is the True saying of Saint Austine, God regards not what Death we Dye, but with what frame of Spirit we give up the Ghost; knowing that a man may go to Hell on a Feather-bed, and to Heaven on a Gibbit. (sig. B1r)

While there is an obvious contrast between the softness of bed on which most people would want to die and the hardness of the gibbet to which their actions may bring them, nevertheless there is also a parallel drawn which suggests that a gibbet should be regarded as a death-bed. As this writer makes clear, the site of physical death does not determine the destination of the soul, so that it is possible to lead a 'bad' life and make a 'good' death. A pamphlet of 1608, *The Araignement & burning of Margaret Ferne-seede for the murther of her late Husband*, describes three men 'likewise...condemned' with Ferneseede who although 'the course of their lives had not taught them to live well: yet the care of their soules remembered them to dye well (sig. B2r). Within the context of the Nathaniel Butler murder discussed in the

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-

previous chapter, the 'death-bed' then has three possible interpretations: the bed of death on which the murder was committed; the site of Knight's damnation (at least in the eyes of one of the authors of *The Penitent Murderer* see previous chapter, pp.217-19), and the gibbet which was the site of Butler's salvation. This triple reading of a death-bed exemplifies the paradox of so many of the murder pamphlets: that the virtuous victim is effaced by a narrative emphasis on the repentance and death of the murderer. Most of the pamphlets which relate the final days or weeks of a condemned murderer's life represent a truly penitent sinner who is destined for eternal salvation whilst the spiritual fate of the murder victim is usually ignored. Their writers put forward a paradoxical didactic message: a warning to repent early in case you suffer the violent and unexpected end of a murder victim but, at the same time, a reassurance that it is never too late to repent.

The idea of understanding the gibbet as a death-bed is also found elsewhere in the representation of dying murderers. John Barker, vicar of Pitchley in Northamptonshire, was executed for infanticide on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1637 and one of the ministers attending him told him that it was 'better to go to heaven from the gallows than from a down bed to hell'.<sup>2</sup> In 1681, Leticia Wigington, condemned for 'whipping her apprentice girl to death', compared her imprisonment on 'the hard boards' of Newgate with the process of dying in her own much softer bed:

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Century England', *Past and Present* 101 (1985), pp. 144-167.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Lake, "'A Charitable Christian Hatred'", p. 149. The phrase is recorded in a manuscript separate account of Barker's execution in Northamptonshire Record Office Isham (Lampport) Mss 2570 (p. 301). It does not appear in the printed account Wing C52, Thomason E1290 [3] *The arraignment of hypocrisie or a looking-glasse for murderers* (1652) which concentrates solely on Barker's gallows speech, in which he denies the crime of infanticide but admits to that of adultery.

the Lord is minded this way to bring me to him, as to let my person suffer this shameful Death, and to be a Spectacle to the World, and be scandalized in a very gross manner, but seeing it is the good Will and Pleasure of my Redeemer to take me to himself this way, I take it as well as though I dyed in my Bed, and imbrace it with more Joy, considering the great Conflict my dear Saviour suffered for me.<sup>3</sup>

In 1668, Hugh Baker one of the divines visiting Thomas Savage (an apprentice condemned for the murder of a fellow servant whilst stealing his master's money) in the condemned cell of Newgate, tried to allay Savage's fears of his imminent execution with these words:

Why, said I, you have a greater mercy in some respect than those that die in their beds, for they are full of sickness and pain and cannot so well mind repentance as you who are well and have nothing else to mind.<sup>4</sup>

Baker attempted to convince the young sinner (Savage was 16 years old) that his death was in fact superior to 'those that die in their beds' because he had the mental clearness to prepare for it more fully. Given time to prepare, Savage had an opportunity to demonstrate true penitence and provide an example to those who would watch his death. Spiritual readiness for death gained through mental clarity and within an adequate time span was the most desirable attribute of an early modern 'good death' and allowed a person to die with the reverent stoicism that was its hallmark.<sup>5</sup> In 1680, John Marketman was described as 'going to his long home with the Courage of an Old Roman, and the Meekness, patience, Submission and

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<sup>3</sup> Wing W2110 *The Confession and Execution of Leticia Wigington* (1681), sig. A1v.

<sup>4</sup> *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* (1668), sig. C2v.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan Death-Bed, c.1560-c.1660' in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, 122-44, p.127; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 183, 203; Lucinda McCray Beier, 'The Good Death in Seventeenth Century England' in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed), *Death Ritual and Bereavement* (London: Routledge, 1989), 43-61, p. 45.

resignation of a Primitive Christian' (sig. A2r).<sup>6</sup> In common with the descriptions of other condemned murderers in the pamphlets, Thomas Savage and John Marketman were regarded as dying from the moment that judgement was passed upon them. The moments on the gibbet constituted the point of death; the process of dying had begun days or weeks before. Leticia Wigington described herself as a 'dying woman' (sig. A2v); Nathaniel Butler was regarded as a 'dying wretch' by one of his many visitors and announced to the crowd in his gallows speech, 'Sirs, I am now a dying man' (*The Penitent Murderer*, sig. D3v); George Strangwayes signed himself as 'your dying brother' in his final letter to his brother-in-law, and, in 1692, Henry Harrison called himself a 'dying man without the least Hopes of Pardon here'.<sup>7</sup> The process of dying involved an element of performance: Wigington understood that her death would be a 'spectacle' and Baker knew that Thomas Savage's stoical death would be an example of God's grace and mercy. Death-beds, whether hard or soft, shameful or virtuous, were all about the quality of performance, involving prescribed actions and words as well as a consciousness of the audience gathered to watch the death.

Overwhelmingly, the narration of the deaths of murderers insisted upon the importance of dying well after a sinful life because 'it is the Art of all Arts and the Science of all Sciences, to learne to die.'<sup>8</sup> The writers of the murder pamphlets absorbed the rhetoric of the craft of dying into their own narratives from the earliest

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<sup>6</sup> Wing F2308A *A Full and True Account of the Penitence of John Marketman*, sig. A2r.

<sup>7</sup> Wing U68; Thomason E.972[10] *The Unhappy Marksman* (1658), sig. D1r; Wing H893 *A True Copy of a Letter Written by Mr Harrison, in Newgate, to a near relation, after his Condemnation for the Murther of Dr. Clinch* (1692).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Hill, 'A Direction to Die Well', in *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (London, 1613), p. 113.

examples, thus making representations of dying, penitent murderers an important and recognisable component of the whole genre. There are several reasons for the sympathetic congruence of early modern murder narratives and the arts of dying. The printed literature of the English Protestant craft of dying was a familiar one, first appearing in the late sixteenth century and consistently popular throughout the seventeenth.<sup>9</sup> The demonstration of the dying penitence of a condemned murderer provided narrative resolution to an otherwise violent and disturbing story. Finally, the demonstration of the efficacy of the Protestant scheme of dying behaviour (in its various interpretations) had a didactic function.

One of the earliest extant examples of the influence of the Protestant craft of dying on the representation of the deaths of murderers is Arnold Cosbie who was executed on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1591, for killing Lord Boorke.<sup>10</sup> After his condemnation Cosbie was imprisoned in the Marshalsea where ‘learned preachers came and conferred with

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<sup>9</sup> Examples include: William Perkins, *A salve for a sicke man* (1595); Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (1612) which had gone into 11 editions by 1619; Robert Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (1613); Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651); Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory* (1673); Charles Fitz-Geffrey, *Death’s sermon Unto the Living* (1620); George Ferebe, *Lifes farewell, or a funerall sermon. At the funerall of John Drew Gentleman* (1615); Philip Stubbes, *A Christal Glas for Christian women* (1592), which was still being published in 1632; *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton, of East Newton, Co. York* (1659).

<sup>10</sup> The manner of the death and execution of Arnold Cosbie, for murdering the Lord Boorke, who was executed at Wanswoorth townes end on the 27 Ianuarie 1591 (1591). There is another pamphlet about this murder: STC 20593 *The most horrible and tragicall murder of the right honorable, the virtuous and valorous gentleman, John Lord de Bourgh...committed by Arnold Cosby* (1591). It appears to predate *The manner of the death and execution* as it only goes as far as Cosbie’s arrest. Much is made of the victim’s virtue and nobility and Cosbie is described as ‘a man of proud conceipte, borne to mischief, and predestined to destroe that which his loathed life is, so farre unable to redeeme’ (sig. A2v).

<sup>11</sup> The actions of reading and writing were central to the spiritual preparations for death: ‘as a practice, the writing of letters, songs or confessions of faith helped imprisoned Christians maintain their focus as they retraced the links in the case for their willingness to die, almost as a lwyer would compile evidence.’ Also, active Bible reading was seen as ‘foreshortening the temporal distance to death, focusing attentively without distractions, and actively calling on God to help’ (Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 126-7).



him, shewing him that this life was but fraile and transitorie, and in no sort comparable to the life to come'. The preachers told Cosbie that he might be:

assured to dwell and live for ever among the Angels of God, if so by repentaunce of his former sinnes he would nowe call upon God, and steadfastly beleeeve that by faith in Christ Jesus, he shoulde have free remission of all his sinnes.

Brought to a sense of his sin and his spiritual peril, Cosbie 'burst into bitter teares and grievously lamented both his follie and his fall' and acknowledged that only God could pardon him (sig. A2r). His time in prison was spent in self-examination, pious conversation, reading and writing, 'meditating upon the New Testament, and having continuall conference with those that came to comfort him, he sometime red and sometime wrote such things as might best content his sinfull mind'.<sup>11</sup> At Cosbie's execution the spiritual support continued when, 'Doctor Fletcher Lord Bishop of Bristow' was sent:

to comfort him against the feare of death, who perswaded him to defie murther and to acknowledge his offence: which he did openly confesse before all the people, and shewed himselfe sorie for the same, asking forgiveness both of God and the worlde.

Cosbie's spiritual reformation was manifested through outward signs:

then after praiers which the prisoner seemed to poure forth from a penitent heart, confessing that he had before committed sundry hainous offences, stil calling upon God to forgive him even to the last gaspe, he was turned off from the ladder and there hanged till he was dead. (sig. A2v)

He also left his last words in the form of a printed 'elegie written by himself in the Marshalsea after his condemnation', in which he sketched out a life of sinning, 'a

youth misspent in wast and wantonness'; mourned his offense against God; begged forgiveness from his victim, and overwhelmingly sought an assurance of God's pardon, fixing his eyes firmly on heaven 'the haven of bliss', leaving behind 'worlde, countrie, kin, and friends' (sigs A3r-4r).

The description of Cosbie's penitent death exemplifies the craft of dying which developed in the English Protestant Church after the Reformation. In 1500 there was one dominant model of Christian dying provided by the rites of the Catholic church and described in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick which was itself influenced by the medieval *ars moriendi* ('The Puritan Death-bed', p. 123). No Christian wished to die without these rites and the liturgy instructed that the priest administering to a dying person should oversee a guided profession of faith, listen to a confession of sins, provide absolution, administer the Holy Eucharist to the dying person alone and then give them the sacrament of extreme unction. The priest was also provided with psalms and collects to recite (*Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 181; 'Puritan Death-bed', p. 122). This model instructed the dying that they had duties of reconciliation, restitution and charitable giving. After the Reformation, the 1552 Prayer Book redefined the role of the minister at the death-bed: the confession of sins to a priest was optional; extreme unction was abolished, and the Communion of the Sick was to be shared by a 'good number' of people besides the one who was dying ('Puritan Death-Bed', p. 123). The changes instituted after the Reformation emphasised the spiritual autonomy of the individual in his/her relationship with human and divine agencies. This was particularly true of the expression of personal

repentance which had to be manifested through obviously penitent words and actions.

The role of the individual in the expression of repentance was expatiated in 'An Homily of Repentance and of True Reconciliation unto God'.<sup>12</sup> The relationship between inner state and outward behaviour is clarified in the four parts of repentance described in the homily. The parts are: 'contrition of the heart' which required a 'through feeling of our sins' gained by reading or hearing Scripture; 'an unfeigned confession and acknowledging of our sins to God'; 'faith...wherby we do apprehend and take hold upon the promises of God touching the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins', and, finally, an 'amendment of life, or a new life...for they that do truly repent must be clean altered and changed' (pp. 537-45). The homily likened the four parts of repentance to 'an easy and short ladder, wherby we may climb from the bottomless pit of perdition...up into the castle or tower of eternal and endless salvation'. There is a particular resonance in the image of a ladder for those condemned to die for murder, as they ascended to the gibbet via a ladder. Representations of their dying behaviour showed them moving from the 'perdition' of the murder they had committed to assurance of 'endless salvation' through a public demonstration of true penitence.

Repentance was the counterpoise to sinning, for both combined inner, spiritual actions with outward, physical ones. So, repentance concerned a turning to God

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<sup>12</sup> *The Two Books of Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), pp. 536-37.

‘with our whole heart’, that must be manifested on the body with signs such as ‘weeping and mourning’. Such signs were considered:

very needful and necessary, that so we may partly set forth the righteousness of God, when by such means we do testify that we deserved punishment at his hands and partly stop the offence that was openly given unto the weak. This did David see, who being not content to have bewept and bewailed his sins privately, would publicly in his Psalms declare and set forth the righteousness of God in punishing sin, and also stay them that mought have abused his example to sin the more boldly. (‘Homily’, p. 530)

As this passage makes clear, publicity was an important part of repentance – not just in the public demonstration of the outward signs of penitence but also in the use of words with which to convey it; just as David’s private repentance found a public voice in the Psalms.<sup>13</sup> The words and behaviour together demonstrated the gift of God’s ‘free grace’,<sup>14</sup> and this was the reason that publicity was important, ‘there is therefore none other use of these outward ceremonies, but as far forth as we are stirred up by them, and do serve to the glory of God and the edifying of the other’ (p. 531).

The way of repentance was a mixture of passivity and activity. One must ‘flee’, ‘turn’, show ‘fervour’ and ‘earnestness’, but in the understanding that one cannot do this relying on ‘our own strength and might’ (p. 534) but on God’s alone. Most importantly, it was never too late to repent, ‘if ye will speedily return unto him, he will most mercifully receive you into favour again. Whereby we are admonished that repentance is never too late, so that it be true and earnest’ (p. 526). The mixture of

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<sup>13</sup> The singing of psalms at the gibbet was an important part of the final actions of condemned criminals. The Penitential Psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143) were the ones most often employed, particularly Psalm 51.

passivity and activity and the acknowledgement that true repentance could never come too late are central to the narration of dying behaviour in the murder pamphlets.

The first English Protestant 'conduct books' for the dying were published in the late sixteenth century, and they, with the Prayer Book, homily, funeral sermons and accounts of godly lives, formed the web of discourses which described and perpetuated the craft of dying. The most influential of these publications was William Perkins' *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (1595) ('Puritan Death-Bed', p. 125). Perkins stated that there were three things expected of the Christian when dying. First, it was most important to die in faith, placing one's whole reliance on God's special love and mercy, and focusing one's 'inward eye on Christ crucified'. This inner faith was expressed by outward signs of prayer and thanksgiving which were the evidence of 'a repentant and believing heart'. Secondly, one should die readily and, lastly, render up one's soul into God's hands (cited in *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 160). The dying person should also give a 'testimony of saving faith' through words and actions ('Puritan Death-bed', p. 142). In all of these requirements a godly minister was not necessary, although one was often present. Arnold Cosbie's dying was conducted in accordance with the scheme laid out by Perkins, although it predated the book by four years. Ministers played a significant role in offering guidance and support to Cosbie but there is no record of them giving communion to him and the most important moments for Cosbie appear to be those of discussion, meditation, reading and writing not of formalised confession and absolution.

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<sup>14</sup> I use this term deliberately as it is the phrase most often used by the pamphlet writers and therefore

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**suggests a mutual understanding of the phrase between writers and readers.**

Arnold Cosbie, then, despite his heinous crime was able to die a ‘good’ death, in early modern terms. Such a death was not so sudden nor so painful that it distracted the dying person from his/her spiritual and temporal duties. The time and comparative freedom from suffering allowed for the distribution of worldly goods;<sup>15</sup> to describe and provide for a funeral, and meant that the dying person could make peace with God and set an example for the living by his or her obvious piety. The best way to die was with stoicism, at once demonstrating the power of God’s grace, offering solace to family and friends and emulating Christ’s example. In Phillip Stubbes’ *A Christal glas for Christian women* (1592) he describes how his wife Katherine ‘godly disposed of all things’ bequeathing her son to his care with the instruction that ‘above all things’ he should be ‘brought up and instructed in the exercise of religion’ (sig. A4v). Throughout her ‘very long and grievous’ illness, ‘golden sentences were never out of her mouth’ and ‘she never shewed any signe of discontentment, or of impacience’ (sig. A3v). The condition of the dying person’s soul was the overriding concern and took precedence over his/her physical ills. In ‘A Direction to Die Well’ Hill insists that ‘you are first to set your soule in order’ before calling for the attention of ‘godly Physitians’ (134).

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<sup>15</sup> By committing a felony, all convicted murderers forfeited their property to the Crown. However, there is still an element of bequest in many of their final actions: George Strangwayes chose not to plead and therefore his heirs retained his estate, although it also meant that Strangwayes was executed by pressing (*The Unhappy Marksman*); John Hutchins gave his ‘hat and an Orange’ to his brother before he stepped onto the ladder (Wing T2355A *A true account of the Behaviour, Last Dying Words and Execution of John Hutchins the Sollicitor who was Executed on a Gibbet erected in Fleet –Street, for the murther of John Sparks, a Water-Man* (1684) sig. A2v). Thomas Watson ‘delivered the books he had brought with him, together with his Hat, Cravat, and other things of the like Nature to his Friends’ (Wing A286B *An Account of the Execution, and Last Dying Speeches of Thomas Watson and Thomas Gourdon* (1687), sig. A1r). Like other penitent murderers, Watson also bequeathed the written account of his crime and confession to the printing press.

True, good deaths should occur at home, in one of those (hopefully) feather-beds, but the rhetorical transformation in the murder pamphlets of gibbet to death-bed supplied this deficiency whilst never letting the shame of execution slip from the attention of criminal and spectators. The importance of spectators highlights the emphasis on sociability in the descriptions of early modern death-beds. Visitors were important to the process of dying as they provided physical, moral and spiritual support. Family members, friends and neighbours offered prayer, comforting advice and the reading of scripture and books of devotion, as well as practical services such as the drawing up of wills. However, there was not just a one-way flow of help and comfort, support also came from the example of the dying person to the living. The dying person had a duty to instruct onlookers to 'serve God heartily...to be loving one to another...to be kind to your surviving alliance...to meditat of death by your example' ('A Direction to Die Well', p. 151). Those gathered around a death-bed could 'heare and learne what the Spirit of God hath taught' the sufferer (*A Christal glas*, sig. B1r). Reconciliation with enemies and the acknowledgement of wrongdoing were also important:

as the Soul is still undressing, she takes off the roughness of her great and little Angers and Animosities, and receives the oil of mercies and smooth forgiveness, fair interpretations and gentle answers, designs of reconcilment and Christian atonement in their places. (*The rule and exercises of holy dying*, p. 83)

Houlbrooke translates this sociability to a consideration of the, 'integrative potential' of last dying speeches made from the gibbet when 'the attendant crowd became the criminal's sympathetic supporters as he prepared to meet his maker' (*Death, Religion and the Family*, p.215). As we have already seen in the description of



Arnold Cosbie's death, condemned murderers received visitors offering support and spiritual guidance and many of the murder pamphlets show the penitent murderers giving as much comfort as they received.

The printed narrations of good deaths, however, relied on 'selective description and careful interpretation' (*Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 183) in order to convey their messages to the reader. As a result realistic factors were often subsumed or even excluded. In death-bed accounts of the godly, painful and humiliating suffering was subsumed to the didactic impact of spiritual revelation. Despite having 'an extreame hot and burning quotidian Ague' (*A Christal glas*, A3v), and (apparently) not sleeping at all from the time she fell ill until the moment of her death, Katherine Stubbes is shown as lucid throughout, offering support, encouragement and homiletic advice to family and friends.<sup>16</sup> This is also true of the pamphlet accounts of condemned cell penitence where the actual physical conditions of Newgate were excluded to allow the reader to focus on the dynamic interaction between prisoner and spiritual guides. John Turner, who was executed in 1662, described the condemned cell at Newgate as, a most fearful, sad, deplorable place' with 'neither bench, stool nor stick for any person there. They lie like swine upon the ground, one upon the other, howling and roaring – it was more terrible to me than death'.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> Beier gives examples of early modern accounts of children's' deaths from smallpox which ignore the suffering they must have undergone and replace it with literary representations of preternatural spirituality ('The Good Death', pp. 54-55)

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Babington, *The English Bastille* (London: Macdonald, 1971), p. 56. Also, a contemporary description of Anthony Wood's reaction to an execution captures the horror of witnessing such a violent death. On July 25th 1654, he attended an execution of two Royalists in Oxford. 'This was the first or 2<sup>nd</sup> Execution that A.W. ever saw, and therefore it struck a great Terror into him, to the disturbance of his Studies and Thoughts' (William Huddesford, *The Lives of those Eminent Antiquaries: John Leland, Thomas Hearne, Anthony a Wood* 2 vols (Oxford, 1772), I, pp. 78-79. In contrast, the pamphlet accounts of executions rarely dwell on the suffering that must have been

same place is described in *The Penitent Murderer* as sanctified by Nathaniel Butler's godliness, 'O this dark Dungeon! The best Room that ever I came in; and this contemptible Bed, the best I ever lay in' (sig. B4v) and it is made to appear as though he occupies it alone, apart from his spiritual guides. *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* takes this rhetorical device one step further by showing how Thomas Savage's developing spirituality affected the way he viewed his physical conditions. When first entering the condemned cell at Newgate a spiritually ignorant Savage regarded it as 'a hole...a hell upon earth' and thought it 'heaven' to be with the company of the other prisoners, his companions in drinking and swearing (p. 7). After intensive teaching from his spiritual guides he declared, 'I had rather be here with bread and water with such company than to have the company of wicked persons, with the greatest dainties' (p. 23).

In contrast to such good deaths, a bad death was a sudden one without warning, with no time for spiritual or temporal preparation. This general description encompasses the sudden death of a virtuous person; an unrepentant death after a life of flagrant sinning; a quick death from a disreputable illness, as well as a failure to meet the final test of life with appropriate stoicism despite having time to prepare for it. The worst death was:

the death of sinners: for them we must mourn most, and their death is most miserable. Their birth is bad, their life is worse, their departure worst of all: their death is without death, their end is without end, and their want is without want. But precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. ('A Direction to Die Well, pp. 122-23)

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involved in executions, preferring to confine themselves to simple phrases such as 'and he was turned off by the Executioner' (*A True account of the Behaviour and last Dying Words and execution of John Hutchins* (London, 1684)).

The care of the soul and the preparation for death were of such paramount importance that 'even the godly feared unprepared death' ('The Good Death', p. 59).

This fear and also the personal effort that was required to complete a godly death is captured in a passage from *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned*:

O saith he [Thomas Savage], I believe it, it is hard work to die, I could carry it out as bravely as any (do you think I could not?). But to consider that as I die, and am sentenced from Gods Bar, so I must be for ever, immediately either be everlastingly happy, or everlastingly miserable. To consider this would make a stout heart to tremble; those poor creatures that were here the other night (meaning the other condemned Prisoners) they know now what it is to be in an eternal state, and if they are gone to hell, O Lord, how miserably they are disappointed, who hoped to have gone to heaven and are sent from thy Bar to endless burning: Lord what a mercy is it I have a little time longer left, let it be improved to thy glory, and let my soul live and I shall praise thee. (p. 16)

From this brief summary of the literature of the craft of dying it is clear that most murderers were represented as having 'good' deaths. They were given time to prepare; their spiritual well-being was the prime concern to those guarding or caring for them, and they often represented as displaying exemplary courage in the face of a frightening and painful death. If sincerely and properly penitent they are shown as assured of eternal salvation; such an assurance demonstrated the power of God's grace. In contrast, their victims, because their deaths were sudden and violent, uniformly suffered a 'bad' death. Unprepared, there was no certainty that they would have been able to make their peace with God. Nathaniel Butler lamented that although he 'had begg'd and obtained a space of Repentance from his Judges' he had not 'afforded his Brother [John Knight] one moment to beg pardon at the hand of God (*The Penitent Murderer*, sig. B1r). This paradox lies at the heart of the

penitent murderer pamphlets. The victims must be constructed as virtuous in order to maintain an important moral hierarchy within the crime. However, they nearly all die 'bad' deaths and have no time to demonstrate their piety or repentance.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the murderers have ample time and generally represent the efficacy of spiritual guidance and the power of God's saving grace. Clearly, within the context of the murder pamphlets it is possible to live a bad life and die a good, not to say exemplary, death. Equally, it is possible to die a bad death at the end of a virtuous life. Although I have already suggested that the representation of penitential murderers who are assured of salvation provided a satisfying narrative resolution to the story nevertheless the idea that however godly a reader might be s/he may still experience a 'bad' death, like that of the virtuous murder victims, is an unsettling one. The penitent murderer pamphlets offer an interpretation of how an individual's life relates to the nature of their death. Overwhelmingly, the scheme they put forward is one that is consistently and recognizably puritan: a life of unrepentant sinning can only be rescued by the power of divine grace. As the century progressed, that consistency moved the rhetoric of penitential dying towards a stance that was in opposition to the state religion.

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<sup>18</sup> The only victim who seems to have been prepared for her death and therefore assured of salvation was Adam Sprackling's murdered wife (Wing 3254; Thomason E.697 [10] *The Bloody Husband and Cruell Neighbour* (1653)). Her response to Sprackling's sadistic torture is one of stoic, passive courage, returning 'loving and sweet expressions' to his raging, accepting a blow to her face 'she was very patient and sayd little to him'. When he struck her down with 'the Iron Cleaver or Chopping Knife...she recovered herself to her knees, and kneeling cryed and prayed to God for pardon for her own sins, and for her Husbands sin, beseeching God to forgive him, for she forgave him' (sig. A3r-v).

### *A 'Puritan' Model*

The penitent murderer pamphlets give a central role to the condemned man or woman showing them facing death with a steadfast faith that is often acquired (or re-awakened) in the period between condemnation and execution. This narrative characteristic is identifiable whatever the expressed denomination of the murderer. By appropriating of the discourse of the craft of dying established in the final decades of the sixteenth century, the murder pamphlet writers constructed a narrative model which continued to be commercially successful throughout the seventeenth century. There are also examples of pamphlets written expressly for condemned prisoners, offering 'proper prayers' and 'serious meditations' on their wicked lives and the need for repentance.<sup>19</sup> The pattern of dying behaviour established in the murder pamphlets therefore became integral to the pamphlets' structure and readers would have expected that particular narrative form.<sup>20</sup>

It is possible to trace the influence of the dying, penitent murderer narrative established in *The manner of the death and execution of Arnold Cosbie* (1591)

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<sup>19</sup> *The Penitent Prisoner: His Character, Carriage upon his Commitment; Letany, Proper prayers, serious Meditations, Sighs, Occasional Ejaculations, Devotion going to Execution, and at the place of Execution* (London, 1675). The second part of Gabriel Powel's *The Resolved Christian* (1600) was designed specifically for those sentenced to death with different sections for those who were 'unpenitent and obstinate'; 'penitent' and 'broken-hearted'; 'fearful of death', or wrongly condemned to death. Simon Patrick's *The Devout Christian Instructed How to Pray and give Thanks to God, or a Book of Devotions for Families and for Particular Persons in most of the Concerns of Humane Life* (1673) offers 'A Prayer for Condemned Malefactors'. There were subsequent editions in 1674, 1678, 1681, 1684, 1686, 1689, 1694, 1697, 1700. Wing S4261A *A Just Account of the Horrid Contrivance of John Cupper and Judith Brown his Servant in Poysoning his Wife... Together with their Dying Confessions* (1686) includes this description of Cupper, 'in Contemplation of approaching Death and Judgement, with tears at the Gibbet he bewails his wicked Act of poysoning his Wife and ... repeats that excellent prayer for Condemned Malefactors, written by Dr. Patrick in his Devout Christian' (sig. A4r).

<sup>20</sup> Houlbrooke confirms that the puritan influence on the literature of the craft of dying also persisted into the late seventeenth century in such publications as Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* (1673) (*Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 170).

throughout the seventeenth century. The expression of a 'godly' death reached its culmination during the Protectorate with *The Penitent Murderer* (1657) which, in narrative organization and emphasis, is remarkably similar to 'Concerning the Visitation of the Sick' from *A Directory for the Publique Worship of God Throughout the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland* which replaced the Book of Common Prayer in 1644.<sup>21</sup> The *Directory* states that it is 'the duty of the Minister...privatly and particularly to admonish, exhort, reprove and co[m]fort them [the dying], upon all seasonable occasions, as far as his time, strength, and personall safety will permit' (sig. L4v). It is clear from this account that Nathaniel Butler died an exemplary, penitent and overwhelmingly godly death:

After his Sentence, he was conveyed back to prison; penitently acknowledging, that he had neglected the good Word of God, and therefore was the longer kept off (through ignorance of the Gospel) from closing with Christ Jesus. But after a few days discourse with several Ministers and others, who opened the Scriptures to him, he began to understand (through the grace of God) the Word of Grace. And though he had many good Books brought to him by divers visiting Friends, yet he chiefly looked into the holy Scriptures themselves, and found very much advantage, light and peace. (*Penitent Murderer*, sig. C3v)

According to the 'Visitation of the Sick', the minister should explain to the dying person that 'times of Sicknesse and affliction are speciall opportunities put into his hand by God to minister a word in season to weary souls' and that:

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Lake has written on the Nathaniel Butler pamphlets and *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* in 'Popular form, Puritan Content? Two Puritan appropriations of the murder pamphlet in mid-seventeenth-century London', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 313-324. He analyses the pamphlets as 'long conversion narratives' (p. 313) rather than as narratives of dying, although he rightly identifies the way both Butler and Savage were coached 'in the distinctive rhetoric and behaviour patterns of the godly' (p. 321). Lake describes the pamphlets about Butler and Savage as 'a curious meeting of the popular, the profane and the Puritan, at a time when conventional accounts of the failure of godly reformation in the 1650s picture the cultural gap between "the people" and "the

diseases come not by chance, or by distempers of body only, but by the wise and orderly guidance of the Good hand of God...And whether it be laid upon him out of displeasure for sin, for his correction and amendment, or for Triall, and exercise of his graces, or for other speciall and excellent ends, all his sufferings shall turn to his profit. (*Directory*, sig. K1r)

Thomas Parson, visiting Butler in the condemned cell, told him that, 'God should snatch him as a Fire-brand, and that in such a way, making sin, so great sin to be overruled by his great good' and also 'that as it [the sin of murder] was the deserved fruit of a bad Cause, so it was the accidentall cause of a good fruit, the Lord overshooting Satan in his own bow' (*Penitent Murderer*, sig. B6r-v).

As care of the soul was paramount when helping the afflicted prepare for death it was most important that the attendant minister should, 'if he suspect him of ignorance... examine him in the Principles of Religion, especially touching Repentance and Faith, and, as he seeth cause instruct him...also touching the Covenant of Grace, and Christ the Son of God, the Mediator of it, and concerning the Remission of Sins by faith in him' (*Directory*, sig. K1v). Of those visiting Butler, Sir Robert Tichborne:

found him very ready to acknowledge his actual sins, and to charge himself with them, and the aggravations that did accompany them, and this with sad tears of complaint, and indignation against himself and his sins, but did take no notice of his sinful Nature, which my self and a Friend with me...perceiving, we endeavoured by Scripture to shew him his sinful Nature as the Root of all his sinful actions.

After this instruction, Butler 'acknowledged his former Ignorance herein' (*Penitent Murderer*, sig. A6v). The 'opening up' of Scriptures to him, particularly those involving forgiveness and assurance of salvation (such as Romans 8, v. 17) was so successful that Thomas Case found that Butler, 'express not only a sense of guilt of

Blood but a right Gospel-notion of the sinfulness of sin; All sin, the least sin' (sig. B1v). When he visited him, Case was particularly gratified to discover:

that, which indeed was the thing which I came purposely to the Prison to enquire after, viz. A right apprehension of *Original Sin*, the *Corruption of his Nature*, which he looked upon as the Fountain and Spring-head of his Murder...In a word he had as right a notion of the state of Unregeneracie as ever I found in any new Convert. (sigs B1v-2r)

Butler also showed 'an high appretiation of Jesus Christ...an high apprehension and admiration of Free-grace' (sig. B2r).

Apart from offering guidance in reading and instruction, the minister should also, 'exhort the sick person to examine himself, to search and try his former ways and his estate towards God' (*Directory*, K1v). Tichborne noted that this inwardness was already evident in Butler's behaviour, 'though his lips said little, yet to my apprehension his soul spake very much, for it wrought in his body as if it was raised up by Faith, through what was held out to him' (*Penitent Murderer*, sig. A7v). Another divine (probably Randolph Yearwood) recorded that Butler, 'would make very diligent and frequent search into his soul, concerning the sincerity of his sorrow, and would not easily beleieve that his repentance was true, or that he had a right to the precious promises of the Gospel' (sig. C5v).

It was important that those visiting the dying should 'settle...scruple, doubt or temptation' and seek to 'raise him [the dying person] up by setting before him the freeness and fullness of Gods grace' (*Directory*, K2r). This last admonition was particularly important as 'care must also be taken that the sick person be not cast



down into dispaire by such a severe representation of the wrath of God due to him for his sins, as is not mollified by a seasonable propounding of Christ and his merit for a door of hope to every penitent Believer' (*Directory*, K3r). Despair was the ultimate sin, and (particularly in the condemned cell) could prompt a felon to suicide. The writer of *The Unhappy Marksman* (printed one year later), criticized those who came to visit George Strangwayes, 'rather as if they came to fright his soul into a distracting despair, than to fortifie her with comforts fit to undergoe so sad a conflict' (sig. D1v). In 1616, John Barterham hanged himself in his cell after his indictment for the murder of Sir John Tindall, to which he had pleaded not guilty. Barterham was 'narrowly watched' in case he should have 'either knife, garter, or ought else by which the devil might put him minde to catch an advantage to endanger his life'.<sup>22</sup> Crucially, Barterham is not recorded as receiving any spiritual support and the writer of the pamphlet suggests that when he heard that his sentence would be to 'hang alive in chaynes' he 'purposed to lay violent hands upon himselfe' in order to 'avoid that shame, and that torture' (sig. C1r). Taking advantage of his keeper's absence Barterham hanged himself 'with a small piece of corde, fastened to a weake tenter-hooke' (sig. C1v). His bad death cut him off from any hope of salvation:

Fool that he was, to avoid a hanging he hung himselfe; to shun one shame of a publicke gallows, where (happily) God might have sent him the grace of repentance, and with the good theefe saved him, even at the last howre; he ran desperately to a more infamous execution. (sig. C4r)

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<sup>22</sup> *A True Relation of a most desperate Murder, committed upon the Body of Sir John Tindall, Knight* (1616), sig. B4v.

The divines visiting Butler were clearly aware of a similar danger. Thomas Case saw that part of his instruction had had a dangerous effect on Butler's spiritual awareness, 'this consideration stuck so deeply upon his spirit, that it had well nigh sunk him into despair'. However, another visitor is represented as God's emissary bringing much needed divine consolation and encouragement, 'God sent in some relief by the hand of one that visited him in prison' (*Penitent Murderer*, sig. B1r). On the last night of his life Butler was surrounded by avid spiritual support, 'that night being his last night, I kept him company in Newgate, so did divers others; continuing with him in the Dungeon...till towards midnight, conferring with him, and endeavouring to comfort him to the end; he delighted all the time of his Imprisonment, in Christian Company, and spiritual Discourses' (sigs C6v-7r). The efficacy of such support is appreciated by the condemned man himself:

wonderfully did he bless and admire the goodness of God in calling such a cruel enemy to mankind as he was...into the prayers, compassion, and care of so many of his precious Servants, both Ministers and others. He did particularly acknowledge the extraordinary pains, care and tenderness of the Chief Magistrate of the City, to be beyond all president, or expression. (sig. B2v)

While this passage shows that the guidance and support from ministers was vital to Butler's salvation, it also demonstrates that an equally important part was played by lay people. This representation extends to the crowd gathered to watch his execution, as Butler, 'in a short time...passed through many thousands of people, many of whom prayed for his soul, and shewed compassion otherwise to him' (sig. D1v).

The *Directory* suggests that the minister should 'make known the danger of deferring Repentance...to awaken his Conscience and rowze him out of a stupid and

secure position' and also 'exhort those about the sick person to consider their own mortality' (*Directory*, sig. K4v). In keeping with the importance of spiritual autonomy in the godly death as well as the vital spiritual role played by lay people in Butler's penitent end, it is Butler himself who is shown taking on this role, 'his Fellow-Prisoners profaneness and desperate security he exceedingly lamented; the ignorance and blindness of many that came to see him he heartily bewailed' (sig. B2v). Warning the complacent not to rely on their own merits for salvation Butler declared:

they [most people] live free from such gross and scandalous crimes, they think themselves in good estate, and that they shall be saved: But alas, said he, they have the same nature that I had, and until their natures are changed and renewed, they are accounted as guilty of all sins before God, and as incapable of heaven and salvation, as if they had committed them in the greatest act. (sig. B3r)

The ministers who had committed so much time, energy and effort to Butler's dying felt themselves amply rewarded. As Thomas Parson noted, Butler's behaviour was exemplary:

His Carriage to my Observant and Impartiall apprehension seemed to be excellently attempered to his present condition, being sweetly submissive, neither servilely dejected under the Apprehensions of his past sins and present state, nor forwardly confident as though he forgot he were such a Malefactor: His deportment did in my Judgment (not without some admiration, then & after in the reviewing thoughts of it, of the *Decorum* and sutableness of it to his present condition) speak a well mixed and compounded sence of his own deserts, and divine mercy; which also did his words. (sig. B5r)

Supported and guided, Butler was able to make his own confession to God, 'then (as all along) he was ready to take all occasions of a full, free and impartial confession of Sins, cloathing them with their agravating Circumstances, to make them out of

measure sinful' (sig. B5v). He was apparently willing to make restitution to any person he had wronged, as well as forgiving those who had wronged him:

I do here humbly beg my pardon from all the World, for all the wrong and injury that I have in any kind unto any one: And indeed I should be glad, if I could, to make restitution to every one, but that I am not able to do: and therefore I must content my self with begging their pardon and forgiveness...I do truly forgive all the World for all the wrongs that I have suffered from everyone therein, even those evil Companions of mine which have in any kind been the Devils instruments in tempting me. (sig. D6v)

He showed suitable humility in his gratitude to those who had allowed him to prepare so thoroughly for his death, 'I have great reason also in all humility to thank the good people of this City for their many prayers to God for me, and for their kind visits of me' (sig. D8r), and acknowledged 'the infinite goodness of God, who oft-times makes a poor Creatures extremity to be his own opportunity' (sig. D7r).

All of Butler's words and actions are represented as exemplifying the effectiveness of the puritan model of dying, not least by providing spiritual enlightenment and comfort to his teachers and supporters, 'about five o'clock he fell into such a rapture and extasie of consolation as I never saw, nor (I beleeve) any of my fellow-Spectators' (sig. D1r). After confession, humility, restitution and bearing witness to the effects of God's saving grace, Butler declared, 'I am now another manner of Creature then formerly I was...this is some change, and I think a great change, and I hope a good change' (sig. D5r). I have already argued in the previous chapter for the political motivations that lay behind Butler's representation in *The Penitent Murderer*, and shown how the writers of its final section ('A Serious Advice to the Citizens of London') acknowledged the failure of the godly revolution. Although the

influence of the *Directory for Publique Worship* on *The Penitent Murderer* is clear enough, the *Directory* had already failed to change the way people worshipped or conducted important rites such as baptism, marriage and burial by the time Nathaniel Butler's story was printed.<sup>23</sup>

However, even in such a truly 'godly' death, which relied for its effectiveness on the evidence of Butler's election and the drama of his death-bed repentance, Randolph Yearwood still uttered a warning to his readers:

Do not think that you can repent when you please, if you put off Repentance, you put it to peradventure...Delays in matters relating to life are most dangerous. I hope no man nor woman will presume that the Lord is in any way obliged to wait upon them so long as they please, indeed it pleaseth him to wait to be gracious, but who knows how neer to a period the time of Gods attendance on sinners is? (sig. F2v)

This statement appears to contradict the whole mood of the pamphlet, perhaps emphasizing the exceptional nature of Butler's life and death and warning the readers that just as they should avoid the dissolution and violence of his life so they should avoid the drama of his death-bed conversion. There were doubts about the possibility of dying well after a bad life, when the fear of damnation might supersede the love of God and bring about despair which could confuse the sufferer and paralyze the will. This was particularly true of repentance gained under the exigent conditions of imprisonment and imminent execution. However, no Christian opinion could entirely rule out the possibility of late repentance as it would call into question the power of God's mercy (*Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 212).

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher Durston, 'Puritan Rule and the Failure of Cultural Revolution, 1645-1660', in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, 210-33, pp. 226-29.

The influence of the narrative of Butler's dying can be detected in murder pamphlets published in the subsequent decades of the seventeenth century where the pattern and effect of his godly death are replicated, particularly in descriptions of the executions of young men. In *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned*, Thomas Savage's progress from ignorant sinner to saved penitent exactly mirrors that of Nathaniel Butler.<sup>24</sup> Like Butler he is given extra time by the Sheriff of London, 'which he improved to the great advantage of his soul'; he is visited by numerous divines who give him texts to meditate upon and provide him with guidance and comfort, and although 'he found it no easie thing to be a true Christian' (p. 11) and is shown 'wrestling with God by prayer' on the final Sunday of his life, after which he showed such true penitence that 'all the company were exceedingly melted, and their hearts beyond ordinary measure warmed and raised, that the room did ring with sighs and groans' (p. 17). The effect of Savage's godly dying goes further than the divines gathered in the condemned cell with him, for at his execution, 'whilst he did thus pathetically express himself to the people especially to God in prayer, there was a great moving upon the affections of those who stood by, and many tears were drawn from their eyes by his melting speeches' (p. 42). The implicit message of this account is that the effect of his piety will also influence the still larger audience of the pamphlet's readers. The multiple editions of Thomas Savage's story confirm this.

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<sup>24</sup> Accounts of Butler's and Savage's crimes and dying behaviour were still being published in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1710, *A Warning to Youth: The Life and Death of Thomas Savage* was published and in 1802, Rev. John Duncan wrote *The London Apprentice: A Narrative of the Life and Death of Nathaniel Butler, Who was Executed in Cheapside, Sept. 1657. For the murder of John Knight, His Fellow Apprentice* (Lincoln B. Fallor, *Turned to Account: The*

In 1672, Henry Jones, awaiting execution for the murder of his mother was advised in a letter from the divine Thomas Jackman to:

Read much in the Scriptures, and such soul-searching Books as may help awaken, direct, comfort and further you in the way of Salvation; especially look at those books as treat of Conversion, Repentance, and the last things, as Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell: it would do well also to get such books as have been set forth of penitent Malefactors, as Bishop Atherton, Nathaniel Butler, Thomas Savage and others, who being cast into prison for great crimes, were through Divine mercy brought to Repentance, and left the world not without hope of Salvation.<sup>25</sup>

Henry Jones chose to follow the advice of his spiritual guides and showed himself 'diligent in reading the Holy Bible, and good books' (p. 15) and achieved a penitential death. However, Jones' good death, whilst following the model of Nathaniel Butler and Thomas Savage, also demonstrated the importance of spiritual independence in godly dying. The narrative shows that much remained hidden from those who visited Jones in the condemned cell. His actions demonstrated his penitence but the words which manifested his inner spiritual condition were his own and only discovered after his execution. Jackman records that Jones was 'very frequent and fervent in prayer' but did not know what those prayers actually were until 'some forms of which (we conceive) for the assistance of his Memory were found after his death, in writing, in the Prison' (p. 22). Henry Jones' prayers are printed in the pamphlet and thus become models for the reader. This sense of

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*forms and functions of criminal biography in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 310, 327).

<sup>25</sup> Wing B3259 *The Bloody Murtherer or, The Unnatural Son his Just Condemnation at the Assizes held in Monmouth March 8 1672*, (London, 1672), 17. The inclusion of Bishop Atherton in this trio of exemplary penitents is fascinating, as he was executed for sodomy. In the previous chapter I examined the relationship between early modern discourses of sodomy and the representation of

independence from the authoritative figures who sought to control Jones' dying is compounded by his death by pressing, the form of execution determined by a felon's refusal to plead at his trial; a refusal which involved silence on the part of the accused which induced a perception of covertness and guilt in the judge and jury.<sup>26</sup>

There is a narrative modulation, centred on the idea of spiritual independence, in these pamphlets about the deaths of three young men. *The Penitent Murderer* exemplifies the kind of godly dying prescribed by the *Directory Of Publique Worship* which sought (but failed) to impose uniformity upon religious practices during the Commonwealth and Protectorate. There an agreement between convicted felon and government control which is shown as instrumental to the expression of Butler's spiritual autonomy. Agreement between murderer and spiritual guides is also evident in *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned*, but by 1668 the Restoration government had criminalized the 'godly' religious practices of Thomas Savage. Savage's spiritual autonomy and that of the ministers who visited him is therefore directly opposed to the uniformity of the restored Anglican Church and the revised Prayer Book of 1662.<sup>27</sup> The representation of Savage's death (and the debt it owes

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Nathaniel Butler. The writer of *The Bloody Murtherer* appears to be perpetuating the link between young male murderers and the crime of sodomy.

<sup>26</sup> A felon who refused to answer the indictment 'Culprit, how wilt thou be tried?' with 'By God and my country' (the only answer allowed) was judged to be 'mute of malice'. This was regarded as tantamount to a conviction and judgement followed immediately (J.H. Baker, 'Criminal Courts and Procedure at Common Law 1550-1800' in J.S. Cockburn (ed), *Crime in England 1550-1800* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 34).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Doolittle was a Presbyterian minister with a living in London during the Commonwealth and Protectorate. After the Restoration he was ejected from his living and in 1666, in common with other non-conformist ministers and in defiance of the law, set up preaching places when churches were lying in ruins after the Great Fire. Thomas Vincent had similar experiences to Doolittle: ejected from his living in 1662 after the Act of Uniformity he set up a school with Doolittle, and preached constantly during the Great Plague, setting up a wooden meeting-house which attracted large congregations. Robert Franklin was repeatedly imprisoned for illegal preaching after losing his living in 1662. James Janeway was another ejected non-conformist minister who also preached during the



to that of Nathaniel Butler) suggests that the ‘dissenting’ God is more powerful than the ‘Anglican’ God, which had failed to keep Savage from wrongdoing. In *The Bloody Murtherer*, Henry Jones uses Butler and Savage as models of godly dying but the account of his final days emphasises his separateness from those who sought to guide him. Unlike Butler and Savage he is not shown in constant dialogue with his spiritual guides. Jones achieved a good death (and the reader is given to understand that the stories of Butler and Savage were instrumental in that), but his dying behaviour is spiritually independent – forged in a solitude that was both physical and spiritual. What is clear, however, is that the spiritual independence of each of these three is linked to the selective interpretation of texts: Butler is shown reading the Bible; Savage ‘diligently heeded’ a text he was given and ‘turned it down in his Bible’ (p. 3), and Jones (we are led to suppose) not only read the pamphlets about Savage and Butler but also the penitential psalms, noting down ‘the most comfortable Promises, and places fit for his Condition’ (p. 38).

### *Innocence, scepticism and deaths ‘in opposition’*

The emphasis on spiritual independence (and therefore a meditation on the relationship of individual to state control) found in *The Bloody Murtherer* is noticeable in two pamphlets from the final two decades of the seventeenth century describing the deaths of convicted murderers who maintained their innocence. *A true account of the Behaviour, Last Dying Words and Execution of John Hutchins the Sollicitor who was Executed on a Gibbet erected in Fleet –Street, for the murther of*

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Plague at illegal conventicles. A meeting-house was built for him after the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 and he was a very popular preacher (*DNB*).

*account of the Behaviour, Last Dying Words and Execution of John Hutchins the Sollicitor who was Executed on a Gibbet erected in Fleet –Street, for the murther of John Sparks, a Water-Man*, was printed in December 1684 and describes how Hutchins was arrested and tried for the murder of John Sparks during a drunken brawl (the crime was committed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and Hutchins was executed on 17<sup>th</sup>). The writer employs the rhetoric of *The Penitent Murderer* and earlier pamphlets, but also demonstrates that maintaining his innocence in the face of the authority of the judicial system did not prevent Hutchins from dying in a godly way. At first this seems a contradiction as demonstrable, sincere repentance for the crime for which one was condemned was a vital part of the proof of a godly death. As a result the pamphlet's narrative is full of the tension between the efforts of the ministers who visited him in Newgate and Hutchins' pursuit of his own good death. The writer resolves this apparent contradiction by showing that Hutchins accepted his condemnation as punishment for, 'the many sins he had committed' (he was 'above fifty years of age' and had led the familiar life of riot, excess and debauchery (sig. A2r)) rather than 'the Fact' of the murder which he consistently denied:

But seeing he was Condemned by Law, and to suffer for the Fact, and the certain date of his Life limited, he betook himself to Pious Meditation, as deeply conscious of his many offences under the Load of which he laboured, confessing that he had been all along a debauched person, and misimployed his time in the vanities of the World, but above above all he was Guilty of Sabbath-breaking, Profaneness and keeping Company with Lewd Women, and that for those, and his other inormities, God had suffered him to be Accused and Condemned for a Murther, he said he was innocent of. (sig. A1v)

As a true penitent, his outward and public behaviour was evidence of the spiritual change he had undergone. Attending the regular Sunday sermon at the church in

Newgate Prison, Hutchins 'appeared very devout giving extraordinary attention to the Pious admonitions there delivered, often sighing and casting his Eyes toward Heaven'. His 'frequent retiring to Places of as much secrecy as the Prison would allow' for private prayer and meditation was observed with approval as was 'his attention to such Ministers, as came to administer sacred consolation to him' and the tears which 'plainly shewed a sad Remors [sic], for the many miscarriages of his misspent Life'. However, Hutchins remained resolute in his denial of murder, despite the eminence of the divines who visited him, including 'Dr *Stillingfleet* Dean of St. *Pauls*, who laboured to bring him to a free confession' (sig. A2r). In the cart on the way to his execution and on the gibbet itself the Ordinary continued to urge Hutchins 'to a free and Ingenious Confession... seeing he was overtaken by Justice, and had but a few moments to live'. Hutchins however was as obdurate as the Ordinary and refused to confess to anything other than the 'many heinous Offences and Wickednesses for which he believed God was highly displeased with him' and resolutely 'disowned the Murther' (sig. A2r). 'Urged to confess his sins' Hutchins 'kneeled and prayed...earnestly beseeching him [God] in this his great extremity, to take pity on him, and not to shut the Gates of his mercy against his Soul, but that it might find rest and comfort after Death' (sig. A2v). After this prayer, the Ordinary prayed with Hutchins and his fellow prisoners 'in the Carr' again exhorting Hutchins to confess to the murder which he again denied. Hutchins then asked for his brother to whom he gave 'his Hat and an Orange', sang the psalm, 'he bearing a part thereof', and mounted the ladder. Even then a 'stander by' asked Hutchins to confess to the murder; but again Hutchins denied it and 'desiring earnestly the Prayers of

such as were present, forgiving all men, and placing himself to the best advantage' he was 'turned off' (sig. A2v). Willingly submitting to death; singing God's praises; acknowledging his own sinfulness; begging forgiveness from those he had wronged, and disposing of his worldly goods, Hutchins died a 'good' death. In the absence of any unambiguous comment from the pamphlet writer, the reader must assume that Hutchins' exemplary death led to his salvation:

'Tis sad and doleful to consider, how rashly men run upon pointed ruine, and court as it were their own destruction. Anticipating the stroak of Death by Nature due to *Adams* sinful Progeny, by compelling Gods offended Justice to cut them off before their time, for their inormous Crimes, but among many Examples of this deformed Nature, a Bolder Murther has not of late been done than this, for which the Person before mentioned Suffered, wherefore not to detain the Reader on a long Preamble, I shall Impartially proceed to the Relation. (sig. A1r)

Beginning (conventionally enough) with a meditation on general human sinfulness, the writer remains vague about whether 'Gods offended Justice' is divine justice alone or God working through a secular justice system. Equally, although he acknowledges the murder as beyond doubt, the fact that John Hutchins 'suffered' for it rather than deserving condemnation is again equivocal: he would have 'suffered' whether he was guilty or innocent. Where such guilt is acknowledged or self-evident then the pamphlet writers usually declare it loudly and luridly. Finally, the writer emphasizes his impartiality in this narration and so casts the reader in the role of judge rather than pupil.

No such ambiguity is evident in *Mistaken Justice: Or, Innocence Condemn'd, In the Person of Francis Newland, lately Executed at Tyburn, for the Barbarous Murther of Mr. Francis Thomas* (1695). Here the writer (Mr. J.H) is in no doubt that there

had been a miscarriage of justice and an innocent man had been executed. Therefore, the reader is not cast in the role of impartial judge but is made complicit with the pamphlet writer in acknowledging manifest injustice. This is achieved through the manipulation of the narrative of the dying murderer familiar from earlier pamphlets. As in the pamphlet about Henry Jones this is done by making Francis Newland's death an entirely personal matter, apparently rejecting any understanding of his death as part of a state theatre of punishment. In this pamphlet, in contrast to the one above, the minister colludes with the condemned man in ignoring the injustice of the earthly verdict and concentrating instead on heavenly justice: on salvation and reward rather than punishment; on eternal life rather than an ignominious physical death. In the pamphlet about Hutchins, the Newgate Ordinary hurried him to the moment of his death to produce a demonstrable agreement between magistracy and ministry but in the end was defeated; Mr. J.H. plays out the role of supporter and comforter with much more success. As before, the success of Mr. J.H.'s strategy is based upon the careful selection and interpretation of the evidence of Newland's godly death – in effect, he reads Newland's behaviour for the reader.

Mr. J.H.'s description of 'the Temper of Soul' he found in Francis Newland adheres to the one already made familiar by the other pamphlets. First of all he 'sets out 'the Nature of Sin in General, and that in Particular, for which he [Newland] was Condemned' and 'urges the Necessity and Nature of Repentance and Faith in Jesus Christ'. Newland then tearfully acknowledged his sinfulness, 'he weep'd, and even trembling, because his Sins so dreadfully reflected...upon him; and were so many and great, and his Repentance so mean, that God wou'd not have Mercy upon him'.

Mr. J.H. then examined Newland's religious knowledge, 'I asked him divers Questions, as to his knowledge of the fundamental Principles of our Faith; ...so I might know how to suit my Discourse as well then as after'. As a result of instruction, comfort and support Newland was able to show a willing acceptance of death and a submission to the knowledge that the manner and time of his death were God's will, as he 'blessed the Lord that it was the Occasion of his serious thinking on the his past Life; and said it might be the Wonder of the World that God had not suffered him to be Hang'd long agoe, and thrown into Hell for his former Sins'. After his confession, he was able to turn his whole attention to Heaven, 'he car'd not what all the Earth said or thought of him, if God would but have Thoughts of Mercy towards him; for his Thoughts were now quite other from what they were'. Finally, he exhorted his former companions in debauchery, 'to learn from him what to do, as he had done, lest they might meet with the same fate he was to suffer' (sigs D2v-3v). He completed his preparation for death by taking Communion on the morning of his execution (sig. E1r).

Once achieved, Francis Newland's spiritual readiness was unshakeable. A temporary reprieve was delivered to him in the condemned cell offering a hope of life, but far from producing a moment of drama it failed to disturb his serenity, 'though I did observe him, I did not perceive any great Alteration in him' (sig. D4v). On the cart at the execution, Newland did not produce a final speech, but sang 'the fifth verse of Psal. 32' (I will acknowledge my sin unto thee: and mine unrighteousness have I not hid). He took a personal farewell of those on the scaffold with him, and left Mr. J.H. with thanks and a blessing, 'the Lord be with you, and reward you for all your

Kindness to me; for I cannot; But now I hope we shall meet in Heaven, where you will have your reward' (sig. E1v). On the ladder of the gibbet Francis Newland demonstrated how well prepared he was for his good death, defined within the parameters of the craft of dying. Innocent of the crime for which he was condemned by the law, he acknowledged his sinfulness in God's eyes, separating fallible earthly justice from God's omniscience. Here, the gibbet is not a stage for the demonstration of the combined power of magistracy and ministry, it might just as well be a death bed in a bedchamber, surrounded by friends, family and spiritual supporters and guides – the final moment of his life was one of intimacy and calm, of farewell and blessing.

In his description of Newland's death Mr. J.H. transposes every tradition of the execution into a religious register. In keeping with the pattern established in earlier pamphlets this extends to a rhetorical transformation of the meaning of physical conditions. So, on the morning of Newland's execution, Mr. J.H. visited him and found him dressed 'more like a Bridegroom than a person to be Hang'd: he answered me, he hop'd he was one, and to be Married to one with whom he shou'd have Everlasting Peace' (sig. D4v).<sup>28</sup> However, this deliberate emphasis on Newland's piety in the face of an unjust sentence is placed by Mr. J.H. within an explicitly political framework. The pamphlet begins with a description of the evidence presented at Newland's trial and the writer reports that the judge was dubious about the verdict but also suggests that corruption in the judiciary secured

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<sup>28</sup> Dressed for his execution, Thomas Savage declared, 'what have I got on my dying cloaths? dying Cloaths did I say? They are my living cloaths the cloaths out of which I shall go into eternal glory, they are the best cloaths that ever I put on' (*A Murderer Punished and Pardoned*, p. 21).

the unjust verdict. The final page of the pamphlet demonstrates how Mr. J.H. uses his record of Newland's pious stoicism in the face of injustice to mount a furious attack on the judiciary and the Church:

It is certain and notorious, that Justice is often very ill administered in this Nation; and the fault of that may, at last, be reducible to the Judges...I have not known a better Constitution in the World, than our Civil Government, if it be well understood, and things were managed accordingly. And our Ecclesiastical Constitution would appear far better than it doth (were it not too much hampered by the State) if the Governours of the Church did but well consider what doth belong to them in common, and exert that power and authority with that Resolution and Constancy that doth become Christian Bishops. But as things are, and for a long time have been ordered, we are reduced to such a degenerate State and condition, as is unworthy of the name of Christian; just such as hath, in former times, preceeded some of the greatest calamities and Revolutions that have been known in this Nation; and such as perhaps, is now again not far off, if they, to whom it doth belong to take care of this Remedy, do not look better about them. (sig. E2v)

The three pillars of state power – judiciary, government and established church – are shown as having failed Newland and what triumphs is his independent spirituality. Newland's death is used to show the reader the 'degenerate State and condition' of a society that would execute an innocent man. Mr. J.H. understands the political power of published accounts of the 'death-beds' of condemned felons, and ends his pamphlet with a warning of civil unrest and rebellion unless the authorities 'do not look better about them'.

The understanding of the political importance of publicizing good deaths shown by Mr. J.H. in 1695 is a constant that can be traced throughout the penitent murderer pamphlets, from Arnold Cosbie asking pardon from Queen and God before his execution, to Nathaniel Butler exemplifying the righteousness of the godly



revolution and Thomas Savage re-iterating the godly 'craft of dying' surrounded by dissenting divines at a time of religious persecution. It is also apparent that selective interpretation on the part of the writer is a deliberate ploy to enlist the sympathies of the reader. The question posed by these accounts is how one should interpret the manifestation of spiritual independence that was one of the foundations of a good death, particularly when it was demonstrated by condemned murderers who were politically or religiously opposed to the government.

In 1658, George Strangwayes was executed by pressing for the murder of his brother-in-law, John Fussell. As he was 'formerly a Major in the King's Army' and declared his allegiance to 'his Lord and Master my King' the reader can be in little doubt about Strangwayes' unrepentant Royalism. He is, however, presented sympathetically: he was 'the compassionated object of all beholders' (sig. C2r) with 'a brave and generous soul included in a stout and active body' (sig. A2v) despite being a convicted felon.<sup>29</sup> His penitence is manifest and genuine, 'acknowledging the hand of God to be in this wonderfull detection' of his guilt and showing 'a countenance that carried in it a mixture of courage and contrition, being such as rather seemed dejected for offending the Law of God, than in any wayes terrified for any torments that could be inflicted on him by the Laws of man' (sig. C2r). Moved by his obvious penitence the executioners hastened Strangwayes' death by quickly piling on the weights so that his suffering was reduced to 'eight to ten minutes' (sig. D3r).

Although the writer leaves the reader in little doubt about Strangwayes' political loyalty, nevertheless s/he is deliberately ambiguous about his religious affiliations.<sup>30</sup> The issue of whether he died a godly Protestant, Arminian Anglican or Catholic is raised but left tantalizingly unresolved. The 'judicious reader' is told that on the morning of his execution, Strangwayes prayed and the retired 'for some small time of private conference' with one of the ministers attending him 'concerning the clear demonstration of the faith he dyed in and about receiving the Sacrament'. However, it is reported that far from giving a 'clear demonstration', Strangwayes and his spiritual guide 'appeared something to differ in opinion' (sig. D2v). Strangwayes' documented last words are equally ambivalent. He declared that 'for my Religion (I thank my God) I never had thought in my heart to doubt it, I die in the Christian Religion'; however, the writer adds in parenthesis that he 'never mentioned the Protestant' (sig. D2v). It appears that it was less contentious in 1658 to present Strangwayes' Royalism sympathetically than to state his confessional allegiance. If the minister attending him was Presbyterian or Independent then the issue of 'the Sacrament' would have been as problematic as if the minister was an Anglican and Strangwayes a Catholic.

The description of Strangwayes' death seems to be asking more of its readers than an endorsement of his godly end with their sympathy and approval. The date of his death and the clear message from the writer to equate Strangwayes' Royalism with

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<sup>29</sup> Unusually for the murder pamphlets both victim and murderer are presented as virtuous but flawed.

<sup>30</sup> It is probable that this pamphlet was written by a woman. In the pamphlet's introduction the writer states, 'wherefore it was thought fit by one that is not onely a lover of truth, but an honorer of both the parties deceased, ere a farther travel hath warmed *her* with Impudence, to unvail a Report in so

his sanctity is a request to the readers to associate this condemned murderer with the 'martyred' Charles I.<sup>31</sup> The title page of *The Unhappy Marksman* gives the publication date as '1659', However, one extant copy has the date corrected to 'March 12 1658', the date on which it was purchased.<sup>32</sup> This could be a type-setting error but as Strangwayes execution was on January 31<sup>st</sup>, so close to the anniversary of Charles I's execution and he was dressed similarly to the King and displayed an equally brave, pious demeanour it is arguable that there was a deliberate effort to make the Royalist resonances in this pamphlet even more explicit by dating it exactly ten years after Charles' death. The influence of the craft of dying and the penitent murderer pamphlets is apparent in the representations of the executions of the regicides in 1660. In *The Speeches and Prayers of Major General Harrison, Mr John Carew, Mr. Justice Cooke... Together with Severall occasionall Speeches and Passages in their Imprisonment till they came to the Place of Execution* the writer 'sets forth in a commendatory way 'the words of dying men' as it is important 'that men may see what is it to have an interest in Christ, in a dying houre' (sig. A4r-v). However in *Rebels no Saints: or a Collection of the Speeches, Private Passages, Letters and Prayers of those Persons lately Executed* (1661), the reader may 'easily find' from the record of 'these last Dying Speeches...that their *Simulata Sanctita*

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clear and impartial a discovery, as may neither deform the Truth, nor disgust their relations' (A2r, my italics).

<sup>31</sup> Strangwayes careful presentation of himself 'cloathed all in white; waistcoat, stockings, drawers, and cap, over which was cast a long mourning Cloak; a dress that handsomely emblem'd the condition he was then in, who though his soul wore a sable roab of mourning for her former sins, it was now become her upper garment, and in some few minutes being cast off, would discover the immaculate dress of mercy which was under it' (sig. D3r) also recalls Charles I. Fumerton discusses the care with which Charles prepared an 'afterlife' for himself in 'cultural memory' with his 'studied performance of kingly self-possession' (*Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), pp. 4-14).

<sup>32</sup> Bodleian Library. Wood 365:16.

was but *duplex iniquitas* and their burning Zeal but *Ignis fatuus*' and that the 'last Legacy they leave their Surviving Friends is Rebellion cloaking it under the Fair Pretence of Conscience and Religion' (sigs A3v-4r).

A similar manipulation of narrative and reader is found in the accounts of the murderous life of Elizabeth Ridgeway.<sup>33</sup> Ridgeway killed her mother, her husband, her lover and a servant, as well as attempting to kill two apprentices and after her condemnation she was visited by John Newton, a local vicar from Leicester. 'An Homily on Repentance' (see above) insisted that the proof of penitence would be written on the body with sighs and tears but Newton's accounts of his dealings with Elizabeth Ridgeway show a fundamental distrust of the performative aspects of godly dying and also suggest that the physical manifestations of penitence were as easy to dissimulate as the rhetoric associated with it.<sup>34</sup> Newton represents his efforts to determine true repentance and administer appropriate spiritual guidance to a condemned murderer as constantly frustrated by Elizabeth Ridgeway's manipulative use of the conventions of dying penitence: she was a 'reserved, stupid, uncertain,

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<sup>33</sup> *A True Relation of Four most Barbarous and Cruel Murders; A True Relation of the Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death of Elizabeth Ridgeway, and The Penitent Recognition of Joseph's Brethren: A Sermon occasion'd by Elizabeth Ridgeway*, all published in 1684. The final two pamphlets were written by John Newton 'sometime Fellow of Clare-Hall Cambridge, & now Vicar of St Martin's, Leicester', the town where the murders were committed and where Ridgeway was executed. The copies of these accounts in the British Library (BL 694: K2 (6\*)) are organised into one pamphlet, which begins with the sermon, goes on to *A true Relation of Four most barbarous Murders* and concludes with *Fact, Trial and Carriage*. Newton himself wrote the sermon and the final account, but all three are introduced by a letter from Newton to the mayor of Leicester, Andrew Freeman.

<sup>34</sup> Newton's scepticism is not surprising in itself as publications questioning the validity and efficacy of late, 'death-bed' repentances proliferated as the seventeenth-century progressed, and were written by those with Anglican confessional allegiance. Examples include: Henry Hammond, *Of a Late and Death-Bed Repentance* (Oxford, 1645); Thomas Beverley, *The General Inefficacy and Insincerity of a late or Death-Bed Repentance* (1670); James Ellesby, *The Great Danger and Uncertainty of a Death-Bed Repentance* (1693); William Assheton, *Discourse concerning a Death-Bed Repentance*

yea, and false Creature' (*A True Relation of the fact, carriage and Death*, sig. B3v). Crucial to an interpretation of Newton's Anglican scepticism of Ridgeway's penitence is the characterization of her as a Presbyterian. The daughter of a farmer, she 'was brought up, and continued, until she was about 29 Years of Age, being always looked upon as a Religious Maid, and a Follower of the Presbyterians'. Newton connects her Presbyterianism with demonic possession: not only was she, 'a Devil in the Shape of a Saint' (*A True Relation of Four most Barbarous & Cruel Murders*, sig. A2r), but 'her Instructor in those wicked practices, to secure her for his own, kept her from any penitent Acknowledgment' (sig. A3r) and he records that her final confession included an assertion 'that for eight years past she had lain with a Familiar Spirit' (sig. A3v). This account reports that 'after Sentence, great Endeavours were used by many to work in her a Confession and Remorse of such barbarous Crimes' (sig. A3v) but that Ridgeway 'could not, to the very last, be brought to any penitent Behaviour, refusing the assistance of two Eminent Divines who offered to go with her and assist her at the Place of Execution' (sig. A3v). It is reasonable to assume that her Presbyterian allegiance could have been one of the reasons for her rejection of the Anglican divines.

Newton's frustrations with the role of spiritual guide arose from Ridgeway's refusal first of all to confess to her husband's murder and then (once she had done so) the instability of that confession as she retracted certain elements or refused to expand on it and give the full details of her crime. As Newton hurries backwards and

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(1696). Henry Hammond was chaplain to Charles I after his capture by Parliament in 1647; Assheton was an Anglican minister (*DNB*).

forwards from Ridgeway's cell the reader senses that she was enjoying manipulating a clergyman (as indeed, Nathaniel Butler and Thomas Savage may have done) who otherwise might have paid this Presbyterian woman little attention. Ridgeway's dissenting religious allegiance appears to lie at the heart of Newton's distrust of her penitence. When Ridgeway finally confessed to the murder, Newton records the event with evident scepticism, the repeated adjective 'seeming' falling with heavy emphasis to undermine the evidence of her remorse, 'this she constantly asserted with seeming remorse and sorrow until her very death; which she underwent without much apparent consternation, and yet with much seeming contrition' (*A True Relation of the Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death*, sig. C1v). Newton explains his scepticism to the reader, 'the words of condemned criminals are not to be rashly believed, especially, where Concealment is founded upon a mistaken religious consideration' (sig. C2v). This statement is in direct contradiction to the conventions of the penitent murderer pamphlets outlined earlier in this chapter. In all of those the final words of condemned criminals were given credence even if there was perceived to be 'mistaken religious consideration'; this was definitely the message of *The Unhappy Marksman*.<sup>35</sup> Newton's interpretation of Ridgeway's penitence was based upon his antipathy to her Presbyterianism and the conventions of the 'godly' death. In his printed sermon *Upon the Recognition of Joseph's Brethren*, which was preached at the service Elizabeth Ridgeway attended on the Sunday before her

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<sup>35</sup> See also Wing F2315C *A Full and True Relation of a most Barbarous and Dreadful Murder: Committed on the Body of Mrs Kirk* (1684) and *An Exact and True Relation of the Behaviour of Edmund Kirk, John Bennett, Morgan Reading and Andrew Hill During their Imprisonment and at the place of Execution* (1684).

execution, Newton explicitly attacks the spiritual independence which (as we have seen) was considered so important:

Can you, during your silence and obstinacy, counsel your self in all the methods of an effectual Repentance and saving Faith? Can you assure your self of the prevalence of your own Prayers...or can you hope for the effectual fervent Prayers of the Righteous who can discover in you no such Contrition, as may move 'em to Compassion? (sig. E2r)

The uncertainty about the veracity of Ridgeway's penitence denied her mercy at her execution – she may have appeared to be making a 'good death' in terms of contrition but she was denied a 'good death' in terms of physical suffering. Convicted of 'petit treason' for murdering her husband, Ridgeway was burnt at the stake. She asked to be hanged before being burnt but this request was denied her.<sup>36</sup>

As a result she had to undergo the full horror of burning, 'as soon as the Fire touched her she gave one Shriek, and leaping besides the Block, with the Rope and the Smoak she was soon choaked and afterwards burnt according to the Sentence' (sig. A4r).<sup>37</sup> Newton interprets Ridgeway's dying performance as manipulative and insincere for his readers, although an alternative, 'godly' interpretation would stress Ridgeway's insistence on preserving her spiritual independence; her rejection of an

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<sup>36</sup> That such an execution was possible is clear from the account of another husband murderer, Marie Aubry/Hobry. At her execution in 1687 she is described as, 'appearing much afflicted under the sense of so great a Crime, affecting for the most part retiredness and avoiding as much as in her lay, the concourse or company of such, especially, whom came only out of curiosity to see her, and so continued to indulge herself in Melancholiness than any thing that was apparent to the contrary' (*An Account of the Manner, Behaviour and Execution of Mary Aubry*). Aubry/Hobry's behaviour was not only appropriate but consistent and at her execution, after her prayers and penitence she 'was set upon a stool... and a Rope being fastened through a Hole of the Post, or stake, and the Noose of it put over her Neck: the stool being taken away, she hung there for near the space of a quarter of an Hour, in which time, the Bavins and Faggots where piled about her, and at the Expiration thereof, fire set to them, which consumed her in about half an hour or more to Ashes'. It appears from this account that Aubry was at least unconscious and probably dead by the time the fire was lit.

Anglican form of penitential dying, and the fulfilment of one of the most important criteria in the craft of dying that of playing an active role in the 'drama of [her] own death-bed' ('The Puritan Death-Bed', 131).

In the accounts of the deaths of Francis Newland, George Strangwayes and Elizabeth Ridgeway the writers selectively describe and interpret their behaviour for explicitly political ends. It is possible to view their authorial decisions to manipulate the conventions of the dying murderer pamphlets as cynical and propagandist. This demonstrates a movement away from the unquestioning acceptance of penitential performances in earlier penitent murderer pamphlets.<sup>38</sup> However, such a shift also indicates that the literary conventions of dying murderer pamphlets were recognizable. That those conventions were important as part of a generic tradition is demonstrated by a series of pamphlets associated with the murder of Dr. Clench in 1692, in which one writer criticizes a self-serving appropriation of them.

Henry Harrison was arrested and condemned for the murder of Dr. Clench and in *A True Copy of a Letter Written by Mr. Harrison* he represents himself as a conventional penitent. Like John Hutchins and Francis Newland before him he declared his innocence but determined to die with appropriate submission, taking

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<sup>37</sup> Such an interpretation of Ridgeway's dying behaviour appears to be connected to the representation of the cowardly deaths of papists which were used to emphasise the instability of their faith and therefore their untrustworthiness. See Chapter 3, pp. 143-44.

<sup>38</sup> Writers of earlier pamphlets do provide examples of false penitence or obstinate refusals to show repentance but they usually do so to provide a foil to the truly penitent murderer which, rather than casting doubt on the quality of their repentance, emphasises it through contrast. Examples include: *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604) in which Isabell Hall died 'with an easie repentance in the worlds eye' (sig. D3r), in contrast to the truly penitent Elizabeth Caldwell; and *A Murderer Punished and Pardoned* (1672) in which Savage's accomplice in the murder, Hannah



Christ as his example who was, 'falsly Accused, Condemned and suffered a shameful death upon the Cross; I being now to suffer a shamful Death'. In his *Letter*, Harrison wrote of his contrition and showed a proper understanding of how to prepare himself for death:

I am now preparing myself for another World and do heartily forgive all My Enemies...For if I had my Deserts, he might have taken me off in the midst of all my Sins, and have rewarded me with the Punishment of the everlasting Prison (*Hell*) prepared for all impenitent Sinners; But I hope he will give me the Grace of his holy Spirit to repent my self of all my Sins; which I have, and do, and shall, with a humble, lowly, obedient Heart, and not in the least cloke, or dissemble them before my heavenly Father.

Harrison consciously adopts the rhetoric of godly dying which would have been so familiar to his readers. He is also assigned the authorship of *The Last Words of a Dying Penitent* (1692) a title which seems to be evoking the tradition of Nathaniel Butler and *The Penitent Murderer*. In keeping with that exemplary, didactic tradition the pamphlet concludes with some 'Comfortable Sayings in the Holy Scripture' which Harrison offers to his readers with an orthodox declaration of submission:

For I do bless the day wherein I was falsly accused; for by that means I was brought to a sight of my former Sins, and do acknowledge it is God's Justice and just Judgment, for which I give Praise to his Holy Name, that I have this time to bewail, and repent my self of all my Sins, begging Pardon of all those I have any ways wrong'd, forgiving heartily every one that has wronged me; even those I do most heartily forgive who are the occasion of my Death; as I hope God will forgive me, and receive me into his Everlasting Kingdom, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, his only Son, my Lord and Saviour, *Amen.* (sig. D2r)

However, despite the framework, the majority of the pamphlet (32 pages) is taken up not with a description of Harrison's journey towards death but a detailed rant that

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Blay, preferred to remain 'very rude and debauched, being seldom sober' (sig. A1r) in Newgate,

gives an 'Exact Account of the Passages, Proceedings, and Reasons on which was grounded the first Suspicion of his being concerned in the Bloody inhumane Murder of Dr. Clinch' (sig. A1r). There is a dissociation between the tradition the title invokes and the actual content of the pamphlet: the title page would make the reader expect one thing, but the pamphlet delivers something completely different, for here the 'judicious reader' is not required to gauge the veracity of a criminal's dying penitence but the quality of the evidence against him.

It is the interpretation of the evidence against Harrison which informs Robert Rowe's *Mr. Harrison Proved the Murtherer* (1692). In *The Last Words of a Dying Penitent*, Harrison had implicated Rowe in Dr. Clench's murder in order to prove his own innocence. Rowe therefore had a very good reason to assert that 'the long tryal' of Harrison, using 'credible and substantial Testimony' had satisfied 'the World' as to his guilt. By placing his own trust in the 'forensic' evidence of witnesses, Robert Rowe casts doubt on the veracity of Harrison's use of the conventions of dying penitence:

upon his [Harrison's] great Devotion and Penitence, after his Condemnation, (at least to all human appearance; for the heart God only can judge) and his repeated Protestations of his Innocence to the last moment of his Life, a great many People were very inclinable to harbour some favourable thoughts of him, and indeed a very strong Belief, that he was wrong'd. I confess truly, the whole Continuation of his protested Innocence, with all its Circumstances, was able to startle and stagger a great many tender Ears; it being a little hard to conceive, that any Dying man, especially with his Professions of Piety, could look eternity in the Face, with so many repeated Asseverations, to the very pledging of his Salvation upon the truth of his Innocence; if really Guilty. (sig. A2r)

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rather than following Savage's carefully documented path to salvation.

Whilst appearing to give such behaviour his approbation, as a 'great many people' were 'inclinable' to believe Harrison's 'Devotion', 'Penitence' and 'Protestations of ...Innocence' as external manifestations of an inner truth, in fact, Rowe interprets this behaviour as *concealing* rather than revealing truth. Words are shown dissociated from truth rather than expressing it and are suspect because they inspire emotion – they 'startle and stagger' - which clouds reasoned and reasonable evidence. Just as Newman did in his representation of Elizabeth Ridgeway, Rowe challenges one of the fundamental ideas governing the interpretation of godly dying: that the words of the dying are especially significant, as 'the speeches of dying men do, as it were, ordinarily exact more credit than those of others' (*Mistaken Justice*, sig. A2v).

The aspect that troubles Rowe the most, however, is Harrison's misuse of the dying murderer narrative. Reverting himself to the conventions of that narrative, Rowe suggests that Harrison's wicked life of violence, gaming and debauchery could only end in a 'Shameful death'. He then declares:

The remembrance of which Crimes, with Contrition, and an hearty Repentance for the same, had been of much better concern for his Eternal Condition after Conviction and Condemnation, than a vain and endless endeavouring to wash the *Ethiopian* white; but I hope the Lord had Mercy on his Soul, his last farewell to this world being seemingly very Penitent. (sig. B2r)

Spending time composing a narrative in a vain attempt to prove his innocence has, Rowe suggests, distracted Harrison from the narrative he *should* have been following. Harrison's pamphlet was, 'most shamefully and ridiculously Composed, ill befitting the Exit of a Convicted, Condemned, Dying Man, who had a far greater

Work to perform' (sig. D4r). In order to convince the reader that Harrison's own accounts were travesties of the narrative of the craft of dying, Rowe offers two penitential narratives of his own. He recounts the stories of two murderers who also professed their innocence up to the last moment, only to have their executions delayed – one because of lack of evidence and the other because the rope broke. Both felons then confessed to the murders which previously they had denied and made properly penitential ends (sig. A2r-v).

Rowe's contentious attitude towards Harrison's representation of his own dying extends to 'a Printed Paper, published the Day after the Execution of *Mr. Harrison*, Intituled, *His Last Dying Words, Behaviour and Confession*, which he made at the Place of his Execution'. In it Harrison 'is said to bewail himself for his Former Wicked Ill-spent Life, Lamenting with Tears that he should come to such an untimely End'. He also singled out Rowe as 'a great Occasion of my Death' and his 'one Enemy in the World.' Fulminating, Rowe declares:

if Mr. Harrison did really pronounce the said Words before recited, in the Last Moment of all his Life, being then ready to be carried before the Tribunal Seat of Christ...and had so little Charity as not to forgive me, who had never any way wronged, or hurt him, and so died; it was a mark of his true Repentance (sig. E1r-v).

By insisting on his penitence, Harrison had, as far as Robert Rowe was concerned, merely sketched the behaviour of a godly death. In every element – confession, contrition, humility, last words and publication – Harrison had failed and cynically used the recognized conventions of dying behaviour for his own ends. The sarcasm and scepticism of Rowe's account seem far removed from the description of Arnold Cosbie's death one hundred years earlier, yet it was the narrative conventions

established by *The Manner of the Death and Execution of Arnold Cosbie* to which Robert Rowe was explicitly referring his readers.

### *Re-reading 'last dying speeches'*

The pamphlets examined in this chapter have shown that their writers understood that the success of the narratives rested on selective description and interpretation. J.A. Sharpe also acknowledges the importance of performance, selective description and careful interpretation in the representation of the deaths of condemned murderers in his influential article on early modern executions. The interpretation of the gibbet as a death-bed and hence the temporal and topographical terminus of the whole process of penitent dying, not only challenges Sharpe's paradigm in significant ways but also resolves some of the difficulties he encountered in his own interpretation of 'last dying speeches'. Sharpe uses some pamphlet sources to show that the early modern execution was 'carried out in a context of ceremony and ritual' ('Last Dying Speeches', p. 146), and he agrees with Foucault that it was a 'political ritual' belonging 'to the ceremonies by which power is manifested'.<sup>39</sup> He argues that the combined force of magistracy and ministry was visited upon and displayed through the body of the condemned criminal and the effect of that power was articulated in his/her final words. By giving a gallows speech the criminal was 'helping to assert the legitimacy of the power which had brought them to their sad end' (p. 156). The idea of 'political ritual' was powerful in executions for treason

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<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977), p. 47, as cited in 'Last Dying Speeches', p. 166.

and Sharpe elides traitors with murderers, although the crimes are distinct from one another: a traitor, first and foremost, had committed an offence against the state; a murderer had broken God's laws before any secular ones.<sup>40</sup> The pamphlets examined in this chapter have shown that the only power the condemned murderers are represented as willing to submit themselves to is that of God's saving grace. If they acknowledge a punitive power it is that of God alone; the 'power which brought them to their sad end' was not that of the law and the state but their sinful human nature and their own actions which were predestined by God. Also, the demonstration of the importance of spiritual independence in the deaths of penitent murderers has shown that the relationship between the criminal and the state was not as stable as Sharpe proposes. The political importance of the representation of penitent murderers lies not so much in a demonstration of their submission to the state but in the rhetorical manipulation of their piety.

It is important to understand first of all that looking only at the representations of the behaviour of condemned criminals at their executions is misleading – for as the pamphlets make clear, the execution was the point of death, and could only be understood within the whole process of *dying* which had begun at the moment of condemnation. This is articulated most clearly in the title of the pamphlet about Arnold Cosbie: *The Death and Execution of Arnold Cosbie*. 'Death' and 'execution' are here carefully separated although they are obviously related activities. For

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<sup>40</sup> This is shown in pamphlets which provide definitions of murder as they always cite Biblical prohibitions against murder before legal ones. See *A true Relation of a Barbarous and most cruell Murther, committed by one Enoch ap Evan* (London, 1633) and *Heavens Cry Against Murder* (London, 1657).

Sharpe the dominant discourses in executions are those of judiciary and stage and he makes much of the performative nature of a properly penitent end. The processions from Newgate to the place of execution;<sup>41</sup> the siting of executions close to the scenes of murders,<sup>42</sup> and dramatic dialogues between zealous clerics and recalcitrant prisoners are certainly centred on performance. That performance was initiated by the judicial process, as well as representing its culmination. However, although certain elements of executions were dictated by the state and consequently organised to reinforce the legitimacy of state power, as we have seen ‘ceremony and ritual’ were also important in dying well, whether the rituals were laid down by the Anglican prayer book, regarded as an expression of spiritual independence, or prescribed by social expectations.

Sharpe is sceptical about the ‘suspiciously stereotyped’ gallows speeches he examines in his article, but as we have seen, deliberateness and a consciousness of the effect one was having on an audience were attributes of a ‘good’ death and sufficiently praiseworthy to merit publication so that others could learn from such exemplarity. Certain sorts of speech were expected from the dying. People in early modern England learned how to die by attending death-beds and also through the proliferation of death-bed accounts; ‘dying’ conduct books; biographies of exemplary lives, and funeral sermons. Attendance at executions and the publication

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<sup>41</sup> Anthony Babington, *The English Bastille*, pp. 32-33, gives a detailed description of the processions from Newgate to Tyburn.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Nathaniel Butler was executed within sight of the house in Milk Street where he murdered John Knight; Francis Nicholson was executed ‘upon the Green over against Hampton-Court and near the place where he did the Murther’ of John Dimbleby (Wing N1108 *The Confession of Francis Nicholson* (1680), and John Marketman’s request to be executed in ‘the town where he did

of accounts of the deaths of penitent criminals can also be understood within this context: if early modern executions were regarded as theatre, the evidence from the murder pamphlets (which Sharpe cites as his main source) suggests that it was the theatre of dying rather than the theatre of punishment which was emphasised in their representation. One of Sharpe's main examples is that of the execution of the Earl of Essex. Robert Hill includes the Earl's scaffold speech in 'A Direction to Die Well', not because it is an example of how to submit oneself to state authority, but because it shows what a godly death he had (pp. 126-27). His pious stoicism offers an uplifting example to others.

Sharpe insists that executions were 'spectacular events' ('Last Dying Speeches', p. 150) planned not only as entertainment for the crowds gathered to watch but also as 'reinforcement of certain values' (p. 156), those of obedience to the conformities of church and state. This emphasis on the power of spectacle is directly challenged by Laqueur who places the crowd rather than the state at the centre of the representative significance of executions.<sup>43</sup> He describes executions which were, 'more risible than solemn as they lurched chaotically between death and laughter'. Held in 'unprepossessing locations, with little attention to dramatic detail', executions were 'the most aleatory of occasions and those responsible did very little to make them otherwise, to insure the triumph of a prescribed interpretation', and as a result, they were 'utter disasters as "imposing demonstrations" of authority, religious or secular'

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perpetrate the wicked act' of his wife's murder was granted (*The True Narrative of the Execution of John Marketman* (London, 1680), p. 3).

<sup>43</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions, 1604-1868' in A.L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (eds), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 305-55.



(p. 309). Despite the differences in interpretation, both Sharpe and Laqueur deflect attention from the condemned criminals: for Sharpe they are stage furniture, passive objects accepting the stage directions of juridical power; for Laqueur the crowd is at the centre of a gruesome carnival. Laqueur offers a Bakhtinian, subversive reading of Sharpe's 'ceremony and ritual'; replacing 'solemn state theatre' with street theatre. In fact, the pamphlets dealing with penitent murderers focus the reader's attention wholly on the spiritual rehabilitation of the condemned person. Spectacle was involved, but, as Leticia Wigington made clear, it was the spectacle of a 'shameful' death which was the natural result of a sinful life. Such shame could only be redeemed and transformed by performing a good death. Sharpe also makes much of the drama of possible reprieve but his assertion is not borne out by evidence collected from assize records which suggests that more condemned felons were pardoned than were executed and that such reprieves were most commonly handed down in court after condemnation.<sup>44</sup> Accounts from the pamphlets of the tension of awaiting possible reprieves make it clear that such pardons were expected to be brought to a convicted felon in the condemned cell before an execution rather than

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<sup>44</sup> According to Amussen, one third of convicted felons were executed during this period. This of course means that two thirds were not and therefore must have been reprieved (Susan Dwyer Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline and Power: the Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 34, (1995), 1-34, p. 11). Houlbrooke points out that the numbers of criminals suffering capital punishment fell between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with ¼ of those indicted executed during Elizabeth I's reign and 1/10 in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (*Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, pp. 25-26). Herrup notes that between 1590-1640, 80% of those found guilty of felonies in Eastern Sussex were reprieved from execution. The brutal, premeditated killing of adults (e.g. poisoning, assaults on members of one's own household, surprise assaults) invariably led to execution but other felonious killings involving quarrels, anger and a sense of 'immediacy' and without a 'situation of unquestioned advantage' were often subject to clemency (*The Common Peace*, pp. 165, 172-73). For pamphlet accounts of reprieves at Assizes see: *The Confession and Execution of eight prisoners suffering at Tyburn* (1676); *The Confession and Execution of seven prisoners suffering at Tyburn* (1677); *The True Narrative of the Sessions begun at the Old Bayly on Wednesday the fifteenth of October 1679* (1679).

on the gallows themselves.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the initial audience for such magnanimity was small and the political capital to be made from such a pardon, limited.

Clearly it is possible to argue, as Sharpe does, that magistracy and ministry had interests in common: that the demonstrable power of the judiciary reinforced the power of the state church and vice versa. However, there are sufficient examples in the pamphlets to show that when it came to dying personal spiritual choices often superseded impositions from state religion. This chapter has shown murderers such as Henry Jones, Francis Newland and Elizabeth Ridgeway choosing their own paths to 'good' deaths. Thomas Savage's spiritual guides were without exception dissenting divines who had been ejected from their livings under the Clarendon Code. The description of Edmund Kirk's execution in 1684 confirms that the gibbet was a place that allowed a variety of dying performances.<sup>46</sup> Executed with Edmund Kirk were Andrew Hill and Morgan Reading who were convicted of breaking into the Duke of Ormerod's house, and John Bennet, executed for stealing a mare. During the procession from Newgate to Tyburn:

Reading had a Book in his hand intituled Pryers for the Sick; Hill appeared very Penitent, calling upon God Almighty for Mercy...Kirk had a Bible in his hand and seemed very Penitent but with Chearful Countenance: Bennet had no Book in his hand, nor said anything. (*An Exact and True Relation of the Behaviour of Edmund Kirk*, sig. A2v)

Arriving at Tyburn and after 'Mr Ordinary' had prayed with them:

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<sup>45</sup> The only possibility of a gallows pardon that I have come across is recorded in *Mistaken Justice or Innocence Condemn'd in the Person of Francis Newland* (1695). Sharpe cites one other but that was to someone convicted of sodomy rather than murder.

<sup>46</sup> Wing F2315C *A Full and True Relation of a most Barbarous and Dreadful Murder Committed on the Body of Mrs Kirk* (1684); *An Exact and True Relation of the Behaviour of Edmund Kirk, John Bennet, Morgan Reading and Andrew Hill During their Imprisonment and at the place of Execution* (London, 1684).

Reading declared he dyed a Roman Catholick...Hill blam'd a former Companion and pray'd heartily, but appeared a very ignorant person...Kirk made no confession, but pray'd the same Prayer which he had penn'd in Prison. (sig. A2v)

None of the men adhered to the performance that Sharpe suggests was required by the combined powers of judiciary and state church. One of them died an unrepentant Catholic; another refused to accept the full blame for his crime, and not only did Edmund Kirk not provide a confession at the gibbet, he adhered to a personal spirituality expressed by a prayer he had himself written – all in different ways declarations of independence from the 'state theatre' that Sharpe outlines. However, what is also clear is that two of these convicted felons had spiritually prepared themselves for death.

The pamphlets about Edmund Kirk's crime and punishment also undermine Sharpe's insistence on the *power* of executions. Kirk was executed on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1684 for having murdered his wife on 25<sup>th</sup> May, only *two days* after he had attended the execution of John Gower, another uxoricide. Kirk (a 'drawer at the Rose Tavern) had requested leave from his master so that he could go to Tyburn and watch the execution. On his return from the hangings, Kirk 'brought back the Speeches and Confessions of them which he particularly related to the family'. If visual spectacle and printed account were supposed to strike terror into Kirk's heart then as performances of state power they signally failed. This much Sharpe acknowledges (p. 167) but, just as Edmund Kirk remained apparently unaffected by the admonitory example of John Gower's death he also rejected his gallows performance which itself exemplifies Sharpe's interpretation of early modern executions. On the

morning of his execution John Gower had maintained the stance of innocence of his wife's murder that he had adopted at his trial. At Tyburn a dramatic scene is recorded in which two divines attempted to persuade Gower to confess by praying with him and singing psalms. They were eventually successful and with a dramatic flourish, Gower spoke to the crowd of his contrition and provided them with a confession.<sup>47</sup> However, Gower is described as 'very penitent and exceedingly sorrowful' *before* he admits his guilt, a demeanour which surely requires some explanation. If he was preparing himself for death according to the religious and social customs of the Protestant death-bed then his penitence was entirely appropriate, as he could acknowledge his general sinfulness whilst still maintaining his innocence of murder.

If we relocate the performance of condemned criminals into the discourses of the craft of dying rather than those of state power then some of Sharpe's quandaries are resolved. It is no longer 'puzzling' that the 'phenomena' of the 'set-piece execution and the scaffold confession' should be equally applicable to 'high-born' traitors and 'lowly felons' (p. 158), for they were both drawing on the expected pattern of early modern dying behaviour. Neither is it surprising that condemned murderers were willing to die penitently (p. 152), nor that they combined obedient submission to the execution with and 'active and convinced godliness' for it was this melding of physical passivity with spiritual activity which was important in godly dying. Sharpe does acknowledge that in the demonstration of such 'passive valour' the condemned

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<sup>47</sup> *The last Speech, Confession and execution of the Two prisoners at Tyburn on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this Instant May 1684* (London, 1684).

were employing a central characteristic of the craft of dying, but then retreats from exploring the 'importance of this religious dimension' any further to re-assert that 'the public execution remained one of the principal methods by which the power of the state was demonstrated' (pp. 159-60). However, insisting on the centrality of dying discourses makes it understandable that resistance to the 'norm' of the last speech was thought 'reprehensible' (p. 155) as condemned prisoners unable or unwilling to demonstrate penitence would be thought of as damned. It also explains why the form of the last speech was 'a more general account of past sinfulness and delinquency' (p. 150) as this was the form of confession expected from those dying. Equally the condemned were expected to forgive those who had wronged them, so John Marketman's forgiveness of his wife's lover is no longer 'remarkable' in this context (pp. 145-46). It also explains why clergymen were so eager to 'work on' condemned criminals (p. 153) as the care of the soul was the highest priority in tending to the dying.<sup>48</sup> The discourses of godly, Protestant dying were the bedrock which formed and supported the representation of penitential dying in the murder pamphlets.

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<sup>48</sup> In 1546 the first 'visitor to Newgate' (a member of the clergy of Christ Church) was appointed by the Common Council of the City of London. His duties were 'faithfully and diligently to visit all the poor and miserable captives within the prison of Newgate, and minister unto them such ordinary service at times convenient as is appointed in the King's Majesty's book for ordinary prayer. Also that ye learn without book the most wholesome sentences of holy scripture that may comfort a desperate man...and in all extremes and sicknesses ye shall be diligent and ready to comfort them with the most pithy and fruitful sentences of God's most holy word. (Babington, p. 45). This role developed into that of 'Mr Ordinary' who appears so frequently in all the murder pamphlets, exhorting, guiding and accompanying condemned felons to their executions. As the seventeenth century progressed this post encompassed not only providing individual spiritual support for prisoners but also holding morning and evening prayer services every day in the jail (1667); officiating at the Sunday service in Newgate chapel (1684), and preaching to the condemned prisoners at the end of every sessions (1694) (Babington, p. 64).

This chapter has shown how the strong narrative structure of the murder pamphlets dovetailed with the equally strong narratives of godly dying. The murder pamphleteers appropriated the rhetoric of the English Protestant craft of dying and created the pious signifier of the penitent murderer which persisted throughout the seventeenth century. Equating the gibbet with a death-bed suggested that there was a uniformity to the Protestant experience of dying and (by association) to the formation of Protestant subjectivity. However, dying on a feather-bed at home surrounded by friends and family was essentially a private experience, although it might subsequently have been made public in print. The death of a condemned murderer was always a public experience: from trial, to condemned cell and finally to the gibbet. So, the representation of penitent murderers always had political significance. The narratives of godly dying were appropriated by the murder pamphleteers and then manipulated to express dissent from magistracy and ministry by insisting on the importance of independent spirituality in the Protestant subject. The aesthetics of the craft of dying were recycled into the literary expression of dying penitent murderers. It was in cheap print, therefore, that a sense of Protestant identity and spirituality was maintained throughout the seventeenth century.

## Conclusion

### *Embedded Protestant Narratives and the 'Christian reader'*

Let this discourse bee unto thee as an Epitomy or briefe abstract (to thee) of the miseries of man, and the illusions of Sathan; in reading of which if thou hast a remorse or feeling of the want of grace in men, then pray to him that is the giver of grace, that hee may be graciously pleased to make the ungracious world more gracious.

*A Horrible, Creuel and bloody murther* (1614), sig. A3r

The analysis of the corpus of extant early modern murder pamphlets shows that murder and murderers were presented to readers so that they could be scrutinised for their rhetorical, religious and political significance. The representation of murder intersected with the religio-political crises and ecclesiastical politics of the seventeenth century. The pamphleteers therefore engaged with and attempted to manipulate public opinion. The interpretative tool they offered to readers was a Protestant narrative of linked events, beginning in original sin, progressing through sinfulness to murder, condemnation, death and salvation through God's divine grace. The Calvinist theology of providence and predestination gave the prose murder pamphlets their deep, distinctive, chain-link structure. The chain-link narrative proved particularly sympathetic to the absorption and promulgation of other Protestant narratives: those of providence, anti-papist propaganda, the control of youth, sodomy, dying, and English historiography. It also proposed the possibility of an allegorical interpretation of murder as the narrative pattern was itself an allegory of an individual's journey through life from the perdition of original sin to the assurance of salvation.

Offering murder as evidence of divine providence insisted that its representation could be used as a spiritual tool for promoting piety and a proper understanding of God's power. Publicizing the swift apprehension and condemnation of murderers showed that divine providence would never let a murder go unpunished and allied divine forces of justice with secular ones. Recording a condemned felon's exemplary penitence promoted the efficacy of the Protestant narrative of penitence and was evidence of the workings of 'free grace'. However, as the representations of Elizabeth Caldwell and Francis Cartwright demonstrated, portraying murder as part of the God's revelatory mechanism and associating that with the importance of reading and the individual interpretation of signs meant that murderers were shown opposing the government and judicial forces which had condemned them and sought to regulate their criminality. It could even suggest that murder was part of God's plan and that murderers represented through the rhetoric of providence could take on the appearance of hero or heroine rather than that of disordered criminal. Despite a detectable movement during the century to less reliance on the revelations of providence to detect a crime and/or its perpetrator, nevertheless providential thinking remained an integral component of the structure of murder narratives.

In contrast to the ambiguities and paradoxes of the Calvinist doctrine of providence, the use of murder as anti-papist propaganda would appear quite straightforward. Representing all papists as murderers and foreign to any sense of Englishness, helped confirm English Protestant identity. The murder pamphleteers used the allegorical scheme inherent in the chain-link narrative to show that papist murderers were a threat to the nation as well as the individual. In doing so, the pamphlets became part of the inscription of the providential history of England's salvation from repeated



Catholic threats. Their use as anti-papist propaganda was crisis related appearing at moments when that Catholic threat seemed most acute: the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in England, the Gunpowder Plot, the Popish Plot, the Exclusion Crisis and the events leading up to the Glorious Revolution. In this way the murder pamphlets helped sustain a cultural memory which associated Catholicism with violence, treachery, tyranny and disorder. The predominance of the *male* Catholic murderer in these pamphlets invited a reading of the relationship between murderer and victim as an allegory of the relationship between patriarchal monarch and the nation. The anti-papist murder pamphlets usually involve stories which show the violence of the murderer ripping family life apart: parricides, infanticides and wife murders. In the first half of the seventeenth century the patriarchal figure is the murder victim (*The parricide papist*) but in the second half, the patriarchal figure becomes the murderer (*The Bloody Papist*), a presentation of the anxieties associated with the return of an openly Catholic monarch. Along with this shift in presentation, it is also apparent that whereas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century an accusation of popery was a *de facto* accusation of political treachery, in the latter half of the seventeenth century the *political* accusation of being a Tory immediately inferred Catholicism.

The rhetoric associated with anti-popery and murder was also employed by murder pamphleteers to represent other non-conformist murderers. These pamphlets first appeared in the 1630s when the conflict in ecclesiastical politics between Archbishop Laud's reforms and his Puritan opponents was becoming apparent. They continued to appear during the Civil War when the focus of their narratives was the threat posed by Anabaptists and were also printed in the early 1660s when the Quaker became the

threatening figure of the murderer. Pamphlets dealing with non-conformist or dissenting murderers are fewer in numbers than those aimed at Papists. By employing similar rhetorical strategies and crimes the writers invited readers to associate the threat posed by other non-conformists to that posed by Catholics, suggesting that English Protestantism was defined by its rejection of any extreme religious adherence that threatened the fabric of the nation.

The use of the rhetoric of foreignness which was used in the anti-papist murder pamphlets was also used in the imposition of a sodomitical narrative onto the murder of John Knight in 1657. The analysis of the four pamphlets about this murder demonstrates that the cause and effect of the chain-link pattern could be self-consciously manipulated to take narrative control of the representation of Nathaniel Butler in order to gain a specific political effect. The over-arching narrative produced by the four pamphlets links God's providential discovery of the murderer and his gift of true penitence to Nathaniel Butler to an affirmation of the efficacy of Sir Robert Tichborne's godly government of the City of London. The use of the anti-papist narrative and the narrative of sodomy demonstrate the involvement of the representation of murder with the 'high' political narratives of early modern England. The pamphlets about bloody papists and a murderer who is constructed as a sodomite seem to propose the same solution to the treat of 'foreign' criminality: the godly governor who will regulate the state and therefore the household.

The pamphlets about Nathaniel Butler's murder of John Knight demonstrate the importance of the representation of penitent murderers in the genre. Penitence and execution were the final links in the chain of the murder narrative. The murder

pamphlets overwhelmingly concentrate on murderers who made exemplary, penitent ends. There appears to have been no interest from the writers (and so, by inference from the readers) in any other kind of death. In creating the penitent murderer, the pamphlet writers appropriated the discourses of the Protestant 'craft of dying', transforming the gibbet into a death-bed. This showed readers that it was possible to die a 'good' death, with the assurance of salvation after a demonstrably wicked life. However, a concentration on the figure of the murderer also highlights one of the paradoxes of the murder pamphlets. The moral hierarchy maintained in the representation of murder is invariably portrayed as that between the active, sinful criminal and his/her passive, virtuous victim. However, the spiritual fate of the victim is always unresolved, as within the terms of the craft of dying, a murder victim dies a 'bad' death: violent, sudden and with no opportunity to prepare themselves.

The representation of penitent murderers adhering to the conventions of English Protestant dying behaviour is a way of expressing both uniformity with and dissent from the state church, as the 'craft of dying' insisted upon the importance of spiritual independence and the individual's relationship with God. So, in 1657, a penitent Nathaniel Butler is shown dying in accordance with the procedure laid down the *Directory of Publique Worship*. Eleven years later, Thomas Savage adhering to exactly the same scheme, is guided by dissenting divines ejected from their livings in 1662 after their refusal to use the Book of Common Prayer. Both deaths are 'godly' within an understanding of the Protestant craft of dying; however, Butler's death was politically and religiously conformist while Savage's was politically and religiously oppositional.

The analysis of pamphlets undertaken in this thesis shows that they successfully combined godliness, the representation of murder and commercialism. In doing so they created a recognisable rhetoric of murder which would have been expected by those purchasing them. That rhetoric carried forward a particular representation of English Protestantism from the 1570s until 1700. We have already seen how the figure of the murderer and the crime s/he committed was used to represent English Protestantism: its rejection of papists; its ability to apprehend and punish criminals; the importance of spiritual independence; the need to interpret signs, and the success of its scheme of repentance. In the process of consuming these murder stories the reader was also being constructed as an English Protestant 'subject': someone who was a member of the English Protestant nation, subject to a monarch and government who embodied godly rule but who was also an individual Protestant person with a godly duty to read and interpret God's purpose for him or her. Ideally, the two should be firmly linked together. However, as we have seen, in the murder pamphlets they were often held in tension, and although the chain-link narrative remained unchanged, it could be used to express both adherence to and dissent from the government.

Some pamphlet writers imagined a 'good reader', others thought of them as 'gentle', 'benevolent' or even, 'An Inquirer after Truth'. However, overwhelmingly, the reader constructed by the murder pamphleteers was 'Christian'. As the murder pamphlets publicized English murder for an English, Protestant audience the reader was placed within the sinful/criminal matrix of murder as both possible victim and possible perpetrator. As we have already seen, the narrative success of the pamphlets lay partly in the opposition they created between the passive virtuous victim and active sinful murderer: the contrast emphasised the hierarchy inherent in the murders and also

made the penitence of the murderers more dramatic. However, such an opposition also gave the murder pamphlets a narrative duality: the writers stressed a murderer's 'unnaturalness' and thus his/her distance from the spiritually vigilant reader but also represented fallen humanity as 'naturally' sinful, an understanding which brought the unnaturalness of murder much closer to the reader. The proximity of murder was emphasized by the overwhelming number of domestic murders narrated in the pamphlets and also by the identification of murderers as neighbours and friends: hatmakers, vintners, pin-makers, farmers, apothecaries, apprentices, innkeepers, water-men, vicars, midwives; men, women and children.

The world which threatens to encompass murderer, victim and reader, therefore, is not an inverse one but an obverse one.<sup>1</sup> What the murder pamphlets portray to their readers is not a topsy-turvy world but a parallel one: the social disorder which the crime of murder threatens to bring about is the corresponding counterpart of social order rather than its opposite or reverse. The potential for disorder exists within order, just as homes contain murderers and the potential for sin exists within each reader's soul. Secular law seeks to contain the potential for such disorder just as God seeks to contain sinfulness. So, for example, although the murder of a husband by his wife does disrupt an accepted social hierarchy, what such a murder actually reveals is the potential for violence which exists within the domestic responsibilities of marriage. Responsible domestic patriarchy cut both ways: the wife should honour and obey her husband, but the husband should protect and cherish his wife. This is why although the punishments for spouse murder were different for men and women (a murderous wife was burned for petty treason; a murderous husband was hanged like any other

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Lake argues for the murder pamphlets' representation of an inverted world. See 'Deeds Against Nature' and *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*.

murderer) the pamphleteers represented spouse murders with equal amounts of horror and opprobrium. In fact, some husband murderers are represented with a degree of sympathy, while wife murderers are unequivocally condemned.<sup>2</sup>

It takes much less effort to move across into a parallel world than to turn a world upside down; and this is the message not only of the murder pamphlets but Protestant piety in general. The readers of the pamphlets are represented as only a footstep away from the path of immoderate sinning that led the murderers to their crimes and punishments. All humanity is born into sin and it is only constant spiritual watchfulness which will prevent it from taking the wrong path. An understanding that the pamphlet writers portray an obverse world to their readers is central to the interpretation of the representation of penitent murderers which was such an important part of the genre. As they demonstrate their penitence the condemned murderers actively turn from one side of their human nature to the other: from the 'confused, mutilated and disease-ridden' soul which was their inheritance from Adam to a soul which can regain 'true and complete integrity' by 'that restoration which we obtain through Christ'.<sup>3</sup> This potential is always present, contained within humanity's natural sinfulness:

Man's nature deformed; yet his soul bears, though almost obliterated, the image of God...Man was created in God's image. For although God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul...we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in [Adam]. (1.15; 1.15.3-4)

As murder is defined in the pamphlets as a sacrilegious act the murderers have, in effect, killed the 'image of God' twice: once in their inheritance of original sin and a

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<sup>2</sup> For 'sympathetic' portrayals of husband murderers, see: *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604); *The manner of the burning of Sarah Elston* (1676); *A cabinet of grief* (1688).

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.15.4.

second time in murdering their victims. Calvin's words are exemplified in the representation of penitent murderers struggling to identify themselves as one of the elect for, again, election and reprobation are corresponding counterparts of each other rather than inverted opposites, which is why providential signs could prove so difficult to interpret. The commission of a murder could be seen as a sign of divine disfavour as a wicked reprobate demonstrates his/her eternal and predestined distance from God. However, as we have seen, the pamphlet writers invariably represented the crime of murder as an opportunity for God to prove his infinite mercy in the assurance of salvation for the murderer, while the fate of the victim's soul was usually left unresolved. As the murder pamphlets are in part an exaggerated allegory of every person's spiritual journey from birth to death and then (hopefully) to eternal life the 'virtuous' reader is constantly reminded of his/her own sinfulness and the ease with which everyday sins can turn to spectacular ones, of how simple it is to step from the world of domestic order in which they are reading the pamphlet to the obverse one it represents.

The embedded Protestant narratives of the murder pamphlets permit this construction of the reader and the obverse world the pamphlet writers propose. Those embedded narratives made the murder pamphlets a recognisable genre, and meant that their writers could appeal to and sustain a fascinated audience. These narrative foundations maintained the genre of the murder pamphlet throughout the seventeenth century, and were most obvious at times of acute politico-religious crisis. The generic narratives of murder survived the appearance of newsbooks in the 1630s and 1640s, which often

carried the same stories.<sup>4</sup> However, the influence of the newsbooks is detectable in a gradual shift away from all murder pamphlets containing an element of providential moralising to a division between those that maintained it and others which merely reported the news. From the late 1650s onwards the number of broadsides and pamphlets which report in factual detail all the cases tried at a single Assizes session increased.

The investigation of early modern prose murder pamphlets has shown that although materially fragile, they were culturally resilient. The representation of murder in cheap print intersected with religio-political crises and ecclesiastical politics, raising questions about what it meant to be an early modern English Protestant subject. The political engagement of the murder pamphlets and their commercial success shows that, far from being liminal, they were an integral part of early modern literary culture, demonstrating its richness, vitality and complexity.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the story of Ann Green an Oxford woman who survived her hanging for infanticide. This was the subject of a pamphlet *A wonder of wonders* (London, 1651) and was also reported in two editions of *Mercurius Politicus* in December of that year (Joad Raymond, *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660* (Gloucestershire: Windrush, 1993)).



## APPENDIX

### List of Pamphlets

- \*An account of the apprehending & taking, of Mr. John Robinson, and William Criss, for the murder of Mrs. Mary Robinson, particularly how they were discovered by a letter, from an unknown hand (London, 1699)*  
Wing A232
- \*An account of the condemnation, behaviour, execution and last dying words of Captain Francis Winter who was condemned at the Sessions-house in the Old-Baily... for the murder of one John Chandler (London, 1693)*  
Wing A264A
- \*An account of the confession and execution of Captain Vratz, Geo. Boraski and John Sterne (London, 1682)*  
Wing A265aA
- \*An account of the discovery and seizing of Mr. Harrison, and Mr. R-, on the account of the murder of the late Dr. Clench (London, 1692)*  
Wing A277
- An account of the examination of Capt. Holland, before a committee of Lords, upon the murder of the Earl of Essex (London, 1689)*  
Wing A286
- \*An account of the execution and last dying speeches of Thomas Watson and Thomas Gourdon (London, 1687)*  
Wing A286B
- \*An Account of the full tryal and examination of Spencer Cooper, Esq at Harford Assizes (London, 1699)*  
Wing A292B
- \*An account of a horrid and barbarous murder committed on the body of a young person supposed to be of good quality in the fields beyond Whitechapel-Church (London, 1684)*  
Wing A183
- \*An Account of the Manner, Behaviour and Execution of Mary Aubry (London, 1687)*  
Wing A319D

*An account of a most barbarous and bloody murther committed yesterday in Covent-Garden, by Mr. Parry* (London, 1699)  
Wing A186A

*\*An account of a most horrid and barbarous murther and robbery, committed on the body of Captain Brown... by his own tenant and servant and seven more villains... with the most strange, wonderful and miraculous discovery of the same... by the apparition of the gentleman's spirit to divers persons of good quality* (London, 1694)  
Wing A187

*\*An Account of a murder committed by William Blisse* (London, 1672)  
Wing A189

*An account of the penitent bahaviour, last speech and confession of Captain Charles Walsingham* (London, 1689)  
Wing A335A

*An account of the proceedings against Nat. Thompson, Mr. Farwell & Mr. Paine ...for their endeavouring to shamm off the murther of Sir Edmund Bury-Godfrey* (London, 1682)  
Wing A348

*An account of the proceedings at the Sessions-House in the Old-Bayly, on February the 28<sup>th</sup> 1682 against Christopher Urats, George Boroskie, John Stern* (London, 1682)  
Wing A361

*An account of the tryal and examination gf [sic] Count Conningsmark* (London, 1682)  
Wing A412A

*An alarme for sinners containing the confession, prayers, letters and last words of Robert Foulkes, late minister of Stanton-Lacy* (London, 1679)  
Wing F1644

*The Apprehension, arraignment and execution of Elizabeth Abbot* (London, 1608)  
STC 23

*\*The apprentices warning piece. Being a confession of Peter Moore, formerly servant to Mr. Bidgood, apothecary in Exeter, executed there the last assises for poysoning his said master* (London, 1641)  
Wing M2582; Thomason E.173[22]

*\*The araignement and burning of Margaret Ferne-seede for the murther of her Late husband Anthony Ferne-seede* (London, 1608)  
STC 10826

- \*The arraignment of hypocrisie: or, A Looking-glasse for murderers and adulterers* (London, 1652)  
Wing C52; Thomason E1290 [3]
- \*The arraignment, tryal, conviction and condemnation of Henry Harrison, Gent. For the barbarous murther of Andrew Clenche* (London, 1692)  
Wing A3765
- \*The arraignment, tryall, conviction, and confession of Francis Deane a salter, and of Iohn Faulkner a strong-water man (both Anabaptists, and lately received into that sect) for the murther of one Mr. Daniel a solíciter... Also whereunto is added an Anabaptists sermon* (London, 1643)  
Wing A3766; Thomason E.97[13]
- Barbarous and bloody news from the parish of St. Giles's: being a true account of two horrid murders, committed on the bodies of a widdow gentlewoman, and her niece... by most cruelly cutting their throats [sic], and afterwards robbing them* (London, 1690)  
Wing B685
- The bawdy-house tragedy: or the mischief that attends low company. Being an impartial account of the Barbarous murther of Mrs Mary Duckenfield* (London, 1698)  
Wing B1167
- \*The behaviour of John Hutchins in Newgate together with his dying words as he was going to be executed* (London, 1684)  
Wing S4199
- \*Blood washed away by tears of repentance* (London, 1657)  
Wing B6285; Thomason E.925[2]
- \*Bloody actions performed. Or, A brief and true relation of three notorious murthers* (London, 1641)  
Wing P3355
- \*Bloody actions performed or a briefe & true relation of three notorious murthers* (London, 1653)  
Wing B3224; R12
- A bloody and barbarous murther committed near Cork in Ireland* (London, 1677)  
Wing B3225
- Bloody and barbarous news from Bishopsgate-street* (London, 1678)  
Wing B3225

*\*The Bloudy Booke: or the Tragical and Desperate End of Sir John Fites* (London, 1605)  
STC 10930

*The bloody husband and cruell neighbour. Or, A true historie of two murthers* (London, 1653)  
Wing 3254; Thomason E.697 [10]

*The bloody innkeeper, or Sad and barbarous news from Gloucester-shire* (London, 1675)  
Wing B3256

*\*The Bloody lover, or, barbarous news from Gloucester a full and true relation how an inhumaine villain named William Hall, did on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October last, most cruelly murder a maid, whose name was Sarah Butt, that was his sweet-heart* (London, 1673)  
Wing B3257

*\*The bloody murther in Gloucester-shire* (London, 1668)  
Wing B3260

*\*The Bloody murtherer discovered, or, A true relation of the examination and confession of John Rendor, late butler to Esq. Bluck* (London, 1674)  
Wing B3261

*\*The Bloody Murtherer or, the Unnatural Son his just Condemnation at the assizes held in Monmouth March 18 1672. With the suffering of his Sister and servant for the Murther of his Mother, Mrs Grace Jones* (London, 1672)  
Wing B3259

*The bloody murthers executed* (London, 1675)  
Wing B3261A

*Bloody newes from St. Albans being a perfect relation of a horrible murder committed on Wednesday last, upon Mriss Bass, a widdow...also a barbarous and inhumane murder committed by a farmer near Colchester upon his wife... likewise a cruell and divelish plot discovered at Wem in Shropshire* (London, 1661)  
Wing B3275

*\*Bloody News from Angel-Alley...A full and true Account of the murdering of One Dorothy Jewers* (London, 1678)  
Wing B3261B

*Bloody news from Chattham. Or, a true and imprtial account of a most barbarous murther, committed upon the body of a widdow, and her son. On twelf-day past, by her pretended sweet-heart.* (London, 1675)  
Wing B3262A

*Bloody news from Clarken-well. Being a true relation of a horrid murther committed by John Mason upon Gregory Reeves* (London, 1661)  
Wing B3264

*\*Bloody news from Clerkenwell or, A full and true relation of a most horrid and barbarous cruelty committed by a journey-man-cooper, who lived in Tumble-Down-Dick's Court... most inhumanely and without any provocation, kill'd his wife in a most cruel manner: she then being great with child* (London, 1670)  
Wing B3264A

*\*Bloody news from Covent Garden* (London, 1683)  
Wing B3265A

*\*Bloody news from Devonshire being a true though lamentable relation of four barbarous and horrid murders, committed by an inhuman father upon the bodies of his son and three daughters, at a village near Combe in the county of Devon* (London, 1694)  
Wing B3266

*\*Bloody newes from Dover. Being a true relation of the great and bloody murder committed by Mary Champion (an Anabaptist) who cut off her childs head, being 7 weekes old, and held it to her husband to baptize. Also another great murder committed in the north, by a Scottish commander, for which fact he was executed* (London, 1647)  
Wing B3267; Thomason E.375[20]

*Bloody news from Hampshire, or, the inhumane husband and most barbarous father* (London, 1675)  
Wing B3269A

*\*Bloody news from Shrewsbury, being a true and perfect relation of a horrible villain, by name Thomas Reynolds, who lately lived at Aldow, neer Ludlow, in the county of Salop. He before he was eighteen years of age, murdered Alice Stephens, and her daughter Martha, cutting their throats as they were asleep, and having done, set their house on fire... also he twice attempted to murder one Mis. Corfeilds, but was disappointed* (London, 1673)  
Wing B3279

*Bloody news from Southwark: or, a perfect relation how the master of the Ship-Inne... was found barbarously kill'd upon his bed* (London, 1676)  
Wing B3279A

*\*The bloody papist: or, a true relation of the horrid and barbarous murder committed by one Ro Sherburn of Kyme in Lincolnshire (a notorious papist) upon his wife, whom in inhumane manner he murder'd on her bed* (London, 1683)  
Wing B3286

- \**The bloody Quaker or the Gloucester-shire murder discovered* (London, 1668)  
Wing B3291aA
- The bloody Whitsuntide, or, the tragicall moneth* (London, 1663)  
Wing 3295aA
- Bloud justly reveng'd: or a true relation of the confessions and behaviour of the two person's hang'd in Fleetstreet ...for murthering Sir R.S.* (London, 1675)  
Wing B3223 A
- The bloody mother, or the most inhumane murthers , committed by Jane Hattersley upon divers infants* (London, 1609)  
STC 3717.3
- A Bloody new-yeares gift or A true declaration of the most cruell and bloody murder of maister Robert Heath* (London, 1609)  
STC 13018.3
- \**Boteler's case* (London, 1678)  
Wing B3805
- \**A briefe discourse of two most cruell and bloudie murthers, committed bothe in Worcestershire* (London, 1583)  
STC 25980
- \**A briefe reply to the narration of Don Pantaleon Sa; By one of the sisters of the gentleman murdered on the New-Exchange* (London, 1653)  
Wing C4439; Thomason E.724[9]
- A briefe and true relation of the murther of Mr Thomas Scott preacher of Gods word and batchelor of Divinitie... the 18 June 1626* (London, 1628)  
STC 22106
- A Brief and true remonstrance of the illegal proceedings of Roger Osburn...with his Irish complices against Samuel Waad the younger* (London, 1654)  
Wing B4537
- \**A Cabinet of grief, or, The French Midwife's miserable moan for the barbarous murther committed upon the body of her husband with the manner of her conveying away his limbs and of her execution, she being burnt to ashes on the 2d of March in Leicester-fields* (London, 1688)  
Wing C188
- \**The case of a murther in Hertfordshire* (London, 1699)  
Wing C872

*\*The case of Mrs. Mary Stout widow* (London,1699)  
Wing C961

*\*The case of Mrs Mary Stout, widow* (London, 1700)  
Wing C962

*\*The case of Spencer Cowper Esq.* (London,1700)  
Wing C1005A

*\*A Caution to married couples being a true relation how a man in Nightingale-Lane, having beat and abused his wife, murdered a tub-man that endeavoured to stop him from killing her with a half-pike* (London, 1677)  
Wing C1561

*\*A Compleat narrative of the trial of Elizabeth Lillyman found guilty of petty treason and condemned at the sessions at the Old Bayly the 10<sup>th</sup> of this instant July, to be burned to death, for the barbarous and bloody murder of William Lillyman her late husband* (London,1675)  
Wing C5647

*Conceal'd murder reveild. Being a strange discovery of a most horrid and barbarous murder... by Mary Anderson... on the body of Hannah Jones an infant of 8 weeks old* (London, 1699)  
Wing C5693

*\*The confession of Francis Nicholson (who committed that most barbarous murder upon the body of John Dimbleby, servant to Mr. Marriot) at the place of execution..near the place where he did the murder on Wednesday last, being the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1680* (London, 1680)  
Wing N1108

*The confession of George Caswell Gent. Executed at Tyburn on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1691 for the murder of Andrew Hickson. With a true copy of a paper delivered by him at the place of execution* (London, 1691)  
Wing C1215A

*\*The confession and execution of Leticia Wigington of Ratclif, who suffered at Tyburn... being condemned for whipping her apprentice girl to death* (London, 1681)  
Wing W2110

*The confession and execution of Mr. Barney* (London, 1684)  
Wing C5744B

*The confession and repentance of George Sanders, Gent* (London,1680)  
Wing C5757B

*Cruel and barbarous news from Cheapside in London* (London, 1676)

Wing C7415

*\*The Cruel French lady, or, A true and perfect relation of the most execrable murders committed by a French lady upon the persons of her own father, two brothers and a sister* (London, 1673)

Wing C7418

*The cruel mother; being a true relation of the bloody murder committed by M. Cook upon her dearly beloved child* (London, 1670)

Wing C7420

*The Cruel murderer, or, the treacherous neighbour, being a true and full relation of the horrid murder of Alice Stephens and Martha her daughter: with the manner of burning their bodies...committed by Thomas Reignolds of Aldon...in the county of Salop... together with his trial and execution* (London, 1673)

Wing C7421

*The cry of blood or the horrid sin of murder display'd... several murders committed in one week* (London, 1692)

Wing C7449aA

*The crying murder. Contayning the cruell and most horrible butchery of Mr Trat curate of Old Cleave* (London, 1624)

STC 24900

*\*Deeds against nature and monsters by kinde; tried at the goale deliverie of Newgate... the one of a London cripple named Iohn Arthur that...strangled his betrothed wife* (London, 1614)

STC 809

*\*A dialogue between a Quaker and his neighbour in Hertford, about the murder of Mrs Sarah Stout* (London, 1699)

Wing D1299

*The distressed mother: or, sorrowful wife in tears, being a full and true account of a most horrid, barbarous and bloody murder, committed at Chatham...by one Mrs Katherine Fox* (London, 1690)

Wing D1703

*A dreadful account of a barbarous bloody murder committed on the body of one Mr. Cymball* (London, 1695)

Wing D2148A

*A dreadful account of the horrid murder of Mr. Tilly* (London, 1694)

Wing D2149



*\*Dreadful news from Southwark, or, a true account of the most horrid murder committed by Margaret Osgood on her husband (London, 1680)*  
Wing D2153

*The dying speech of Robert Frances of Grays-Inn, Esq; July 24. 1685. Delivered by his own hand to the ordinary, at the place of execution, desiring the same might be published. (London, 1685)*  
Wing F2054

*An exact narrative of the bloody murder and robbery committed by Stephen Eaton, Sarah Swift, George Rhodes, and Henry Pritchard, upon the person of John Talbot, minister (London, 1669)*  
Wing E3665

*\*An exact relation of the barbarous murder committed on Lawrence Corddel a butcher, who was buryed alive at Christ-Church, on Fryday last being the 21 of June (London, 1661)*  
Wing E3682

*\*An exact relation of the bloody and barbarous murder, committed by Miles Lewis, and his wife, a pin maker upon their prentice (London, 1646)*  
Wing E3684; Thomason E.364[2]

*An exact and true relation of a most cruell and horrid murther committed by one of the cavaliers, on a woman in Leicester, billeted in her house (London, 1642)*  
Wing E3612; Thomason E.117[20]

*\*An exact and true relation of the behaviour of Edmund Kirk, Morgan Bennett, John Reading and Andrew Hill During their Imprisonment and at the Place of Execution (London, 1684)*  
Wing E3615

*\*The examination, confession and condemnation of Henry Robson fisherman of Rye, who poysoned his wife (London, 1598)*  
STC 21131

*The execution and confession with the behaviour & speeches of Capt. Thomas Walcot, William Hone, and John Rouse (London, 1683)*  
Wing E3848

*The Execution of Henry Berry (London, 1679)*  
Wing E3815A

*\*The Execution of Mr Rob. Foulkes Late Minister of Stanton-Lacy in Shropshire (London, 1679)*  
Wing 3853

- The execution of two persons at Tyburn for the murdering of Sir Edmund-bury Godfrey*  
(London, 1679)  
Wing E3855B
- Fair warning to Murderers of infants being an account of the Tryal, Condemnation and Execution of Mary Goodenough* (London, 1692)  
Wing F105
- Four bloody murders lately committed by a zealot in France* (London, 1673)  
Wing F1651
- Four great and horrible murders, or Bloody news from Islington* (London, 1674)  
Wing F1656
- A full account of a bold and barbarous murther committed on the body of William Culliford*  
(London, 1684)  
Wing F2261A
- A full account of a most tragycal and inhuman murther* (London, 1699)  
Wing F2262A
- A Full and certain relation concerning the horrid plot of the papists and the barbarous and bloody murther of Sr. Edmund Bury Godfrey, one of His Majesties justices of the peace* (London, 1678)  
Wing F2275A
- \*The full discovery of the late horrid murther and robbery, in Houlbourn, being the apprehension, examination, and commitment of John Randal: formerly butler to Esq. Bluck, where the same was done* (London, 1674)  
Wing F2348
- A Full and particular relation of the most horrid and barbarous murther* (London, 1691)  
Wing F2286C
- \*A full and perticuler relation of that strange, horrible and (in England) unheard-of murther which was committed on the body of the late famous Dr. Clench* (London, 1692)  
Wing F2286B
- \*A full relation of a barbarous murther, committed upon the body of Esq. Beddingfield... by Mr. Barney* (London, 1684)  
Wing F2357
- \*A full relation of the birth, parentage, education, life and conversation of Mrs. Margaret Martel the barbarous French-woman* (London, 1697)  
Wing F2360A

*A Full an [sic] true account of a most barbarous and bloody murther committed by Edward Williams on the body of Mr. Hinton ...and committed Mrs Hinton to the gatehouse...for being accessory to the same (London, 1700)*

Wing F2293E

*A full and true account of a bloody and barbarous murther found to be committed upon the person of a woman in Kent-street (London, 1690)*

Wing F2292B

*A full and true account of a most barbarous murther and robbery committed by John Davis on the body of Esq. Bowles's lady (London, 1699)*

Wing F2293A

*A Full an [sic] true acount [sic] of a most barbarous and bloody murther committed by Edward Williams on the body of Mr Hinton (London, 1700)*

Wing F2293E

*A Full and true account of a most barbarous murther and robbery committed on the body of Mrs Johannah Williams (London, 1699)*

Wing F2293G

*\*A full and true account of the confession, behaviour, last dying speeches and penitent end of Greenway Feild who was executed at Tyburn for the murther of Andrew Charleton on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1689. With the paper he read under the gallows, signed by his own hand, desiring it might be printed as a warning to all people &c to prevent their coming to untimely ends (London, 1689)*

Wing F2302B

*A full and true account of a most... vile... murder (London, 1700)*

Wing F22946A

*\*A full and true account of the penitence of John Marketman...for murthering his wife (London, 1680)*

Wing F2308A

*\*A full and true account of the penitent behaviour, last dying words & execution of Mr. Edmund Allen, gent. Who was condemned...for abusing his... wife by cruelly beating her...and inhumanely poysoning of her (London, 1695)*

Wing F2308B

*A Full and true account of the strange discovery of the supposed murther of Mr. Thomas Tedder in Black Swan-Alley in Pauls- Church-Yard (London, 1699)*

Wing F2311aA

*A full and true account of the taking of Count John Conigsmark* (London, 1681)  
Wing F2311AB

*\*A full and the truest narrative of the most horrid, barbarous, and unparalled murder committed on the person of John Knight* (London, 1657)  
Wing F2292; Thomason E.925 [1]

*\*A full and true relation of the examination and confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangall, of two horrid murders, one committed by William Barwick upon his wife... the second was committed by Edward Mangall upon Elizabeth Johnson... and her bastard child* (London, 1690)  
Wing F2322

*A full and true relation of a horrid and bloody murther committed between Ravenden and Bedford* (London, 1679)  
Wing F2315

*\*A full and true relation of a most barbarous and dreadful murder; committed on the body of Mrs Kirk, wife of Edmund Kirk drawer at the Rose-Tavern in Pye-Corner.* (London, 1684)  
Wing F2315C

*A further and more particular account of the barbarous murther of Philip Parry Esq. Committed by Mr Thomas Bond near Covent Garden* (London, 1700)  
Wing F2550

*\*Gods justice against murther or The bloody apprentice executed. Being an exact and true relation of the bloody murther committed by one Thomas Savage... upon the maid of his house his fellow servant* (London, 1668)  
Wing G959A

*\*God's marvellous wonders in England* (London, 1694)  
Wing G960A

*\*Gods revenge against murther: containing the confessions, prayers, discourses, and last dying sayings of Mr. Edward Harrison, who was try'd, convicted and deservedly sentenced... for the late unheard of murther of Dr. Clench* (London, 1692)  
Wing 890A

*\*Great and bloody news, from Farthing-Ally, in St. Thomas's Southwark, or, the true and faithful relation of a horrid and barbarous murther. Committed on the body of Walter Osily, by his own wife on the 31 of this instant July* (London, 1680)  
Wing G1645A

*Great and horrible news from the west of England* (London, 1679)

Wing G1657

*Great news from Middle-Row in Houlbourn: or A true relation of a dreadful ghost which appeared in the shape of one Mrs Adkins [...] with the full account of how she discovered the murther of two children* (London, 1679)

Wing G1727

*\*Heavens Cry against murder* (London, 1657)

Wing H1346; Thomason E.923[1]

*\*A hellish murder committed by a French midwife, on the body of her husband.* (London, 1688)

Wing H1384

*\*The Hertford letter: containing several brief observations on the late printed tryal, concerning the murder of Mrs. Sarah Stout.* (London, 1699)

Wing D75

*\*The horrible murther of a Young Boy of three yeres of age* (London, 1606)

STC 6552

*Horrible news from Yorke-shire: or, Adultery punish 'd with murther* (London, 1676)

Wing H2861

*Horrid news of a barbarous murder committed at Plimouth* (London, 1676)

Wing H2865

*\*Horrid news from St. Martins: or, Unheard-of murder and poyson* (London, 1677)

Wing H2864

*\*A horrible, creuel and bloody murther committed at Putney* (London, 1614)

STC 12630

*A hue and cry after Edward Kerby, a stone-cutter, and his wife Margaret with their two sons Joseph and Benjamine Kerby. Being a full account of the wicked robbery... set it afterwards on fire* (London, 1700)

Wing H3275

*\*An impartial account of the trial of Lord Cornwallis* (London, 1679)

Wing I78

*In the county of Palatine in Durham, near Ferry-Hill, Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>. 1682 was acted the most horrid and barbarous murder* (London, 1682)

Wing I124

*\*A just account of the horrid contrivance of John Cupper and Judith Brown his servant in poysoning his wife* (London,1684)  
Wing S4261A

*\*The just downfall of ambition adultery and murder* (London, 1615)  
SRC 18919.7

*Lamentable account of the murther of Sir William Hescot* (London, 1684)  
Wing L25)

*The lamentable and bloody murder of that worthy and innocent gentleman Lieutenant Dallison* (London, 1678)  
Wing L251

*Lamentable news from Southwark: or The cruel landlord. Being a true relation of the cruelties of a wretched usurer against a poor woman that was his tenant.*  
(London,1675)  
Wing L276B

*\*The last confession, prayers and meditations of Lieuten. John Stern, delivered by him on the cart immediately before his execution to Dr. Burnet. Together with the last confession of George Borosky, signed by him in prison, and sealed up in the lieutenants paquet* (London, 1682)  
Wing B5814

*The last speech, confession and execution of John Smith...a notorious highwayman*  
(London, 1684)  
Wing L505bA

*The last speech and confession of John Thompson, Richard Crook, alias Hide...for killing two boys* (London, 1688)  
Wing T1002

*The last speech and confession of Nicholas Warren* (London, 1696)  
Wing W979A

*\*The last speech and confession of Peter Caesar, a Portugal, at the place of execution together with his confession at Justice-Hall in the Old-Bailey* (London, 1664)  
Wing L504EB

*\*The last speech and confession of Sarah Eelstone* (London, 1678)  
Wing L504F

*\*The last Speech, Confession and Execution of the Two Prisoners at Tyburn on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this Instant May* (London, 1684)  
Wing L505cA

*\*The Last Words of a Dying Penitent* (London, 1692)  
Wing H892

*A letter of a sad tragedy by Prince Griffin at Sayton; neere Chester: and his severall attempts against Lady Causely. And the bloody murther for which he is fled into Scotland* (London, 1648)  
Wing C4439; Thomason E.724[9]

*The life, apprehension, arraignment and execution of Charles Courtney* (London, 1612)  
STC 5878

*\*The Life, Confession and Heartie Repentance of Francis Cartwright, Gentleman* (London, 1621)  
STC 4704

*The life and death of Griffin Flood informer* (London, 1623)  
STC 11090

*The life and death of Lewis Gaufredy* (London, 1612)  
STC 11687

*The Lives, Apprehension, arraignment and execution of William Porter, John Bishop, Gentlemen* (London, 1608)  
STC 24053.5

*A London Tory vying in cruelty with an Irish rapparee: Or an account of a most barbarous murder committed... by James Selby, a distiller. With brief hints of the murderers former conversation and practices* (London, 1691)  
Wing L2910

*\*The manner of the cruell outragious murther of William Storre...preacher at Market Raisin in the county of Lincolne* (Oxford, 1603)  
STC 23295

*\*The manner of the death and execution of Arnold Cosbie, for murthering the Lord Boorke* (London, 1591)  
STC 5814

*A miraculous discovery of three horrible murders and robberies* (London, 1673)  
Wing M2014A

*\*A mirrour for murtherers, or a caveat for disobedient children wherein is briefly set forth the life and death of Enoch ap Evan* (London, 1633)  
STC 10581.5

*A mirrour of mercy and judgement, or, An exact true narrative of the life and death of Freeman Sonds Esquier* (London, 1655)  
Wing B3759

*\*Mistaken justice: or innocence condemn'd, in the person of Francis Newland, lately executed at Tyburn for the barbarous murther of MR. Francis Thomas* (London, 1695)  
Wing M2256A

*More bloody news from Essex* (London, 1677)  
Wing M2694C

*\*A more exact and full relation of the horrid and cruel murther lately committed upon Cossuma Albertus, a Prince of Transilvania, by his own servants* (London, 1661)  
Wing M2697

*A most barbarous murther* (London, 1672)  
Wing M2868B

*\*The most cruell and bloody murther committed by an Innkeepers wife called Annis Dell and her sonne George Dell* (London, 1606)  
STC 6553

*Most horrible and bloody news from Houlbourn* (London, 1674)  
Wing M2894A

*\*A most horrible & detestable murther committed by a bloudie minded man upon his owne wife* (London, 1595)  
STC 17748

*The most horrible and tragicall murther of the right honorable, the vertuous and valorous gentleman John, Lord Bourgh* (London, 1591)  
STC 20593

*A most horrid and bloody murther* (London, 1683)  
Wing M2895

*Most strange and wonderful news from a place call'd the Leister by Castle-Street* (London, 1694)  
Wing M2921aA

*A most, straunge, rare and horrible murther committed by a Frenchman of the age of too or three and twentie yeares by Aevsham* (London, 1586)  
STC 11377



- \*Most wicked, cruel, bloody and barbarous news from Northampton: a or a true relation how a person there...killed his mother, a woman of fourscore and ten years of age* (London, 1676)  
Wing M2932
- Mr Baxter baptiz'd in bloud, or, A sad history of the unparallel'd cruelty of the Anabaptists in New-England* (London, 1673)  
Wing B1170
- \*Mr. Harrison Proved the Murtherer* (London, 1692)  
Wing R2069
- \*Murder and petty- treason: or, Bloody news from Southwark* (London, 1677)  
No record in Wing. Copy in British Library. Shelfmark: RB.23.a.8837
- \*Murder will out : an impartial narrative of the notorious wicked life of Capt. Harrison, who was arraign'd, try'd, and convicted...for the late barbarous, cruel, and unheard of murder of Doctor Clench* (London, 1692)  
Wing M3090A
- \*A murderer punished and pardoned: or a true relation of the wicked life, and shameful-happy death of Thomas Savage, imprisoned, justly condemned, and twice executed at ratcliff, for his bloody fact in killing his fellow-servant... To which is annexed a sermon preached at his funeral* (London, 1668)  
Wing A996
- \*A murderer punished and pardoned ... To which is annexed a sermon preached at his funeral. The twelfth edition: with the addition of the leud life and shameful death of Hannah Blay , who was condemned and executed for being guilty of the bloody murther committed by Thomas Savage. With other new additions* (London, 1669)  
Wing A996A
- \*A murderer punished and pardoned, or, A true relation of the wicked life and shameful-happy death of Thomas Savage... To which is annexed a sermon preached at his funeral* (London, 1671)  
Wing A997
- \*A murderer punished and pardoned, or, A true relation of the wicked life, and shameful happy death of Thomas Savage* (London, 1679)  
Wing A997A
- \*Murther, Murther or a Bloody Relation of How Ann Hamton...by poyson murdered her deare husband* (London, 1641)  
Thomason E.172[7]

*Murther revealed, or, a voyce from the grave* (London, 1659)

Wing M3087

*Murther upon murther ... six horrid and bloody cruelties* (London, 1684)

Wing M3090

*Murther upon murther: being a full and true relation of a horrid and bloody murther, committed on the bodies of Mrs. Sarah Hodges, wife of Mr. Thomas Hodges, Mrs Elizabeth Smith and Hannah Williams, at the Loyal Coffee-House* (London, 1691)

Wing M3088

*Murther will out, or, an unrighteous discharge, no security for the murtherer* (London, 1662)

Wing M3093A

*\*Murther will out, or, A true and faithful relation of an horrible murther committed thirty-three years ago* (London, 1678)

Wing M3093

*\*The murtherer turned true penitent* (London, 1688)

Wing M3095B

*Murthers reward* (London, 1685)

Wing 3097A

*News from Bishops-gate-Street. Being a true relation of a most barbarous and bloody murder, committed by one Jacob Turner, a broad-weaver; upon the body of Mary Turner, his wife...with an account of the coroners inquest, who sate upon the deceased* (London, 1689)

Wing N948B

*News from Fleetstreet. Or, the last speech and confession of the two persons hanged there for murther on Friday the 22 of October, 1675. With an exact account of all the circumstances of their murthering the knight for which they dyed* (London, 1675)

Wing N957

*News from Goodmans fields* (London, 1675)

Wing N960

*\*News from Goodmans Yard in the mineries or a full and true relation of a most horrid murder committed by Elizabeth Lillyman* (London, 1675)

Wing N960A

- \*Newes from Perin in Cornwall: of a most bloody and unexampled murther very lately committed by a father on his owne sonne...at the instigation of a murderous step-mother* (London, 1618)  
STC 19614
- News from the sessions, or, the whole tryal of George Allen the butcher who murthered his wife in the fields behind Islington, on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of this instant February and the manner how the same came to be discovered* (London, 1675)  
Wing N1016
- A particular and exact account of the trial of Mary Compton, the bloody and most cruel midwife of Poplar* (London, 1693)  
Wing P588A
- The penitent murderer, or, An exact and true relation taken from the mouth of Mr William Ivy (lately executed) concerning the murder by him... of William Pew* (London, 1673)  
Wing P1235
- \*The Penitent Recognition of Joseph's Brethren: A Sermon occasion'd by Elizabeth Ridgeway. Who for the Petit Treason of Poysoning her Husband was on March 24 1683/4... Burnt at Leicester* (London, 1684)  
Wing N1073
- A perfect narrative of the robbery and murder committed near Dame Annis so Cleer, on Friday night, the second of July, 1669. Upon the person of Mr John Talbot: quondam, preacher to a regiment of His Majesties forces in Portugal, and lately, since his return, curate of Laindon in Essex* (London, 1669)  
Wing P1503
- \*A Pitillesse Mother that most unnaturally at one time murthered two of her owne children* (London, 1616)  
STC 24757
- \*The poysoner self-poysoned: or, a most true and lamentable relation from Lewis in Sussex, how one Robert Brinkhurst a cutler treacherously poysoned one William Moor* (London, 1679)  
Wing P2743B
- A relation of a bloody and barbarous murder committed on the body of Mr Wright, a Protestant minister* (London, 1693)  
Wing R783A
- \*A relation of the apprehending and seizing of Mr John Cole, a plumber, on the account of the murther of the late Doctor Andrew Clench* (London, 1692)  
Wing R813

- \*A remarkable account of the penitent carriage and behaviour of the whip-makers wife*  
(London, 1689)  
Wing R915A
- \*A Reply to the Hertford Letter wherein the case of Mrs Stout's death is more particularly considered* (London, 1699)  
Wing R1074
- Sad and bloody newes from Yorkshire* (London, 1663)  
Wing S227B
- A sad and dreadful account of a most unusual and barbarous murther committed upon the wife of one William Langstaff...at Merton Abbey, in the county of Surry, on the 22d of January 1689* (London, 1690)  
Wing S233
- Sad and dreadful news from Kings-street in Westminster, or a most lamentable relation of the untimely end of Lady Phillips* (London, 1684)  
Wing S235
- The sad and dreadful relation of a bloody and cruel murther committed by Mr. Thomas Low*  
(London, 1684)  
Wing S237
- \*Sad news from Ratcliff: being a full and true relation of a horrid and bloody murther committed upon the bodies of an antient gentlewoman (Captain Giddings wifes mother) and his sisters child, who was a girl of two years and a half old, and a maid-servant in the house, by Robert Condinge servant to Captain Giddings, William Thomas, and William Rogers, all seamen or pretended seamen; who afterwards robbed the house* (London, 1691)  
Wing S255
- A sad and true relation of a most barbarous and bloody murder committed by one Thomas Watson, a weaver, upon the body of Mary Watson, his wife* (London, 1686)  
Wing S246A
- The several tryals of Edward, Earl of Warwick and Holland, and Charles Lord Mohun before the House of Peers in Parliament, upon the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> days of March 1699, for the murder of Mr. Richard Coote* (London, 1699)  
Wing S2813
- A Spectacle for usurers and succors of poor folkes blood* (London, 1606)  
STC 23030.3
- \*The Speeches & Confession of Arthur Knight & Thomas Laret* (London, 1653)  
Wing K684

*A strange and horrible murther committed in White-Fryers upon Mr John Blackston*  
(London, 1684)  
Wing S5817

*Strange and horrible news which happened betwixt St. Johns street, and Islington on*  
*Thursday morning* (London, 1642)  
Wing S5818; Thomason E.124[24]

*A strange and horrible relation of the bloody and inhumane murther committed on the body*  
*of a Jewish woman, by the command of her father, a Jewish priest. Or The bloody*  
*servant* (London, 1674)  
Wing S5818A

*A strange and lamentable account of a bloody, barbarous murther* (London, 1693)  
Wing S5819A

*A strange and wonderful account of a most barbarous and bloody murther, committed by*  
*five notorious villains, On Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of this instant May about ten at night, in*  
*a widdow-womans house at Grays in Essex, where entring, they robb'd the house*  
*and murdered all the family except the woman herself* (London, 1680)  
Wing S5841A

*\*The strange and wonderful discovery: being a full and true relation of the skin of a*  
*humane body, flay'd off, in all its proportions, with hair, brest, ears &c. which was*  
*found in a pond near the Faulcon* (London, 1684)  
Wing S5843

*\*The strange and wonderful discovery of Mr Edmond Hally, who departed from his house*  
*in Winchester-street London on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1684 and was found murdered &*  
*cast up by the tide, after about 40 days absence, near Rochester on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the*  
*instant April 1684* (London, 1684)  
Wing S5846

*\*A strange and wonderfull discovery of a horrid and cruel murther committed fourteen*  
*years since upon the person of Robert Eliot* (London, 1662)  
Wing S5845

*Strange and wonderful news from Borton... or a sad and dreadful account of a barbarous*  
*and bloody murther committed by one John Jones of Monmouth-shire upon the*  
*person of a Jew* (London, 1686)  
Wing S5850

*\*Strange and Wonderful News from Durham or the Virgins Caveat against Infant-Murther*  
(London, 1679)  
Wing E6A

*Strange and wonderful news from Linconshire, or, a dreadful account of a most inhumane and bloody murther committed upon the body of one Mr. Carter, by the contrivance of his elder brother, who was soon after found out by the appearance of a most dreadful and terrible ghost* (London, 1679)

Wing S5862A

*Strange and wonderful news from London: or, a true narrative of several most remarkable occurrences there* (London, 1679)

Wing S5863A

*\*A strange, but true, relation of a most horrid and bloody murder committed on a traveller about thirty years ago in the west of England... here is also an account of an apparition to a certain person that was made executor of a will* (London, 1678)

Wing S5881A

*Strange news from Staffordshire: being a true relation of two bloody murders committed by one Andrew Simpson, upon the bodies of a young man and a young woman* (London, 1679)

Wing H2871

*Strange news from Stratton in Cornwall: or, a true relation of a cruel bloody murther committed by one J.R. upon his own father* (London, 1680) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Wing R658

*\*Strange news from the north; or The sectaries sacrifice: being a true relation of a horrid murther committed by three sectaries at a place called Kerbymoorside in the county of York; who first offered a cock, secondly a hen, thirdly a dog, fourthly a calf, and lastly their own deer mother in sacrifice* (London, 1648)

Wing S5907; Thomason E.423[22]

*\*The strange and wonderful relation of a barbarous murder committed by James Robison, a brick-layer, upon the body of his own wife, at Spittle-town, about a mile from Dochester, in the county of Dorcet [...] As also the full and true relation of a barbarous and bloody murder committed by Robert Brown a Romish-priest* (London, 1679)

Wing S5874A

*\*The sufferers legacy to surviving sinners or, Edmund Kirk's dying advice to young men, wrote by his own hand in Newgate* (London, 1684)

Wing K625

*\*Sundrye strange and inhumaine murthers, lately committed the first of a father that hired a man to kill three of his children... the second of Master Page of Plymouth.* (London, 1591)

STC 18286.5

*\*Three bloodie murders: the first committed by Francis Cartwright upon William Storre*  
(London, 1613)  
STC 18287

*\*Three inhumane murthers committed by one bloody person upon his father, his mother and his wife at Cank in Staffordshire and the Manner how he Acted this Bloody Tragedy*  
(London, 1675)  
Wing T1093E

*\*Treason and murther, or, The Bloody father-in-law being a true and perfect relation of a horrible murther committed at Ham, neer Stratford in Essex on the wife of James Alsop by her husbands father and brother... together with the manner how they were severally taken... their commitment to Chelmsford goal and their tryal at the assizes*  
(London, 1674)  
Wing T2071

*The trial of Edmund Audley at the Sessions-House in the Old-Baily , for the murder of Mrs Hannah Bullivant* (London, 1698)  
Wing T2184A

*The trial of Laurence Braddon and Hugh Speke, gent., upon an information of high-misdemeanor, subornation, and spreading false reports* (London, 1684)  
Wing T2196

*The trials of Robert Green, Henry Berry and Lawrence Hill for the murder of Sir Edmund-Bury Godfrey* (London, 1679) (reprinted in Dublin, 1679)  
Wing T2257

*The triumphs of divine justice over bloody inhumane murtherers and adulterers* (London, 1697)  
Wing T2294

*\*A true account of a bloody and barbarous murther committed on the body of John Sparkes waterman, by John Hutchins* (London, 1684)  
Wing T2325C

*A true account of the behaviour execution and last dying speeches of Thomas Kelsey*  
(London, 1690)  
Wing T2355

*\*A true account of the behaviour of Mr Francis Newland who was executed at Tyburn on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1695... Together with a paper delivered to the ordinary attested with his own hand; desiring that he would publish it for the benefit of his friends and acquaintance* (London, 1695)  
Wing T2356

*A true account of the behaviour of Thomas Randal who was executed at Stonebridge for killing the Quaker* (London, 1696)  
Wing S4206C

*A true account of the behaviour, confessions, and last dying words of Abraham Bigs, Richard Cabourn, Jane Langworth and Elizabet Stoakes* (London, 1684)  
Wing T2354

*\*A true account of the behaviour, last dying words and execution of John Hutchins, the sollicitor: who was executed...for the murther of a John Sparks, a water-man.* (London, 1684)  
Wing T2355A

*A True account of the discovering and apprehending of Count Connigsmark* (London, 1682)  
Wing T2364

*\*A True account of the horrid and barbarous murther of Thomas Thynn Esq* (London, 1682)  
Wing T2371

*A true account of the most horrible and bloody murther committed by a notorious Papist, one Thomas Resthall upon the body of his own wife* (London, 1689)  
Wing T2385A

*A true account of a murther committed by three foot pads* (London, 1686)  
Wing T2329

*\*A true account of the robbery and murder of John Stockden...an the discovery of the murderers by the several dreams of Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Greenwood* (London, 1698)  
Wing S4378

*\*A True Copy of a Letter Written by Mr. Harrison...after his Condemnation for the Murther of Doctor Clinch* (London, 1692)  
Wing H893

*The true confession of Mr George Norton, concerning the murther of Mr Harris the dancing-master on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June last. Taken out of his own papers delivered by him to Mrs Mary Edwards, before he took the fatal draught of poyson, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, of which he died the next following day, which was appointed for his execution at Tyburn* (London, 1699)  
Wing N1312aA



- A true copy of the letter that was sent by Gerhard Dremelius... to his father... some days before he was executed for the murder of Oliver Norris esq* (London, 1700)  
Wing D2164
- A true copy of the paper delivered by James Clough who was executed on Friday last* (London, 1680)  
Wing C4379
- \*A true copy of the papers that were delivered by Mr William Cress and Edward Robinson to the reverend Mr. Allen, ordinary; at their execution* (London, 1699)  
Wing C6884
- \*A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (London, 1604)  
STC 4704
- A True discovery of Mr. Edmund Halley of London, merchant who was found barbarously murdered at Temple-farm, near Rochester in Kent* (London, 1684)  
Wing T2681
- \*A True and exact relation of the horrid and cruel murder lately committed upon Prince Cossuma Albertus by his own attendants* (London, 1661)  
Wing T2447B
- A true and full relation of a most barbarous and inhuman murder committed upon the body of a man found in Parkers-Lane, near Little-Queen-Street, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, between the hours of nine and ten at night* (London, 1688)  
Wing T2479B
- \*A True and impartial account of the birth, parentage, education and life and conversation of Edmund Audley* (London, 1698)  
Wing T2490
- \*A True and impartial account of the cruel and bloody murder committed upon the body of Thomas Thin esq* (London, 1682)  
Wing T2490A (Bookseller: J. Deacon); Wing T2490B (Bookseller: J. Millit)
- A true narrative of a base and bloody act done by a bayliff and his follower on the body of one Walter Midgly* (London, 1678)  
Wing T2770
- A True narrative of a most barbarous and bloody murder committed in Wood-street* (London, 1690)  
Wing T2770A

- \*The true narrative of the confession and execution of Francis Nicholson who was executed this present Wednesday being the 27<sup>th</sup> of this instant October 1680 (London, 1680)*  
Wing T2777B
- The true narrative of the confession and execution of the prisoners at Kingstone-upon-Thames, Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of this instant March, 1681 (London, 1681)*  
Wing T2780A
- The true narrative of the confession and execution of the three prisoners at Kingstone-upon-Thames in the county of Surrie... with the account of their particular facts for which they suffered (London, 1680)*  
Wing T2781aA
- \*The true narrative of the execution of John Marketman, chyrurgian [sic], of Westham in Essex, for committing a horrible and bloody murder upon the body of his wife, that was big with child when he stabbed her (London, 1680)*  
Wing T2790
- A true narrative of three wicked and bloody murders committed in three several months (London, 1680)*  
Wing K2840BA
- \*A true paper delivered by Edmund Kirk, vintner (who was executed at Tyburn the 11. Of July) for barbarously murdering his wife (London, 1684)*  
Wing K625A
- A true and perfect account of a young-man who was found dead in a pond in Wood's-Close Fields, on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> instant... supposed to be murdered by some bloody villains (London, 1686)*  
Wing T2518
- A true and perfect account of the proceedings of the General Sessions of the Peace... upon the 15 and 16 of January instant, or, the trials, examination and confession of the woman that burned her child, and the baylif that killed another of his fellow bailiffs in Soehoe (London, 1674)*  
Wing T2521
- A true and perfect narrative of the late terrible and bloody murder of Sr, Edmondberry Godfrey (London, 1678)*  
Wing T2533 (reprinted: T2534)
- A true and perfect relation of a most horrid and bloody murder committed by a Roman Catholicke gentlewoman (London, 1688)*  
Wing F2294aA.5

- A true and perfect relation of a most horrid and bloody murtehr [sic] committed by one Philmore's wife in Blew-boar-Court* (London, 1686)  
Wing T2543A
- A true and perfect relation of three inhumane murders, committed by William Blisse alias Watts...upon the bodies of Will. Johnson his near kinsman, and Robert Porter servant to Mr. Nichols* (London, 1672)  
Wing T2571B
- \*A true and perfect relation of the trial and condemnation, execution and last speech of that unfortunate gentleman Robert Foulkes* (London, 1679)  
Wing 2570
- \*A true and perfect account of the examination, confession, trial, condemnation and execution of Joan Perry, and her two sons, John and Richard Perry, for the supposed murder of Will. Harrison, Gent.* (London, 1676)  
Wing O614A
- A true recitall of the confession of the two murderers John de Paris, and John de la Vigne* (London, 1616)  
STC 19208.5
- A true relation of a barbarous bloody murther committed by Philip Standsfield upon the person of Sir James Standsfield his father* (London, 1688)  
Wing T2870B
- \*A true relation of a barbarous and most cruell murther, committed by one Enoch ap Euan who cut off his own naturall mothers head and his brothers* (London, 1633)  
STC 10582
- A true relation of all the bloody murders that have been committed in and about the citie and suburbs of London, since the 4<sup>th</sup> of this instant June* (London, 1677)  
Wing T2898
- A True Relation of a cruel robbery and bloody murther committed on the body of Mr. John Talbot* (London, 1669)  
Wing T2873
- \*A True relation of the Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death of Elizabeth Ridgeway* (London, 1684)  
No record in Wing. Copy in British Library: Shelfmark BL 694: K2 (6\*)

- \*A true relation of four most barbarous and cruel murders committed in Leicestershire by Elizabeth Ridgway; the like not known in any age. With the particulars of time, place (and other circumstances) how she first poisoned her own mother; after that, a fellow servant; then her sweetheart; and last of all her husband (London, 1684)  
Wing T2905*
- \*A True relation of the ground, occasion and circumstances of that horrible murther committed by John Bartram (London, 1616)  
STC 14054.5*
- \*A true relation of the horrible bloody murther and robbery committed in Holbourn... at the house of Esq; Bluck... the murther committed upon one Widow Brown, an ancient retainer (London, 1674)  
Wing T2966A*
- A True relation of an horrid and barbarous murder committed by three French officers on an Irish captain in Smithfield Dublin (London, 1689)  
Wing T2899A*
- A True relation of a most barbarous and bloody murder lately committed on the body of Mr. Tho. Clarke, minister and school-master in the parish of St. Margarets Westminster (London, 1688)  
Wing T2886C*
- A True relation of the most horrible murther committed by Thomas White of Lane Green in the parish of Auffley in the county of Salop, gent, upon the body of his wife Mrs. Dorothy White (London, 1682)  
Wing T3007*
- \*A true relation of the most horrid and barbarous murders committed by Abigail Hill at St. Olave's Southwark on the persons of foure infants... Together with a true account of the strange and stubborn end she made, and her jeering of her executioner at the houre of her death. And a caveat to all other women that are suspected for the like unnaturall and most unmercifull practices (London, 1658)  
Wing T3008; Thomason E.1881[2]*
- \*A true relation of the horrible bloody murther and robbery committed in Holbourn... at the house of Esq; Bluck... the murther committed upon one Widow Brown, an ancient retainer (London, 1674)  
Wing T2966A*
- A true relation of the horrid and barbarous murther committed upon the bodys of Mr. Loggins, gent. And the ostler of the Kong's-head in Coleshill (London, 1686)  
Wing T2967*

*A true relation of a horrid murder committed upon the person of Thomas Kidderminser of Tupsley... together with a true account of the strange and providential discovery of the same nine years after: for which Moses Drayne... was executed at Brentwood... in the year 1667, being thirteen years after the commission of the said murder* (London, 1688)

Wing T2884

*A true relation of the life and conversation of Margaret Martel that murder'd mistress Pullin* (London, 1697)

Wing T2994A

*\*A true relation of the most barbarous and bloody murther of Thomas Thinn Esq* (London, 1681)

Wing T3006

*\*A true relation of a most desperate murder; committed upon the body of Sir Iohn Tindall, knight... by one Iohn Barterham Gent.* (London, 1616)

STC 14055

*A True relation of the most horrible murther committed by Thomas White of Lane Green in the parish of Auffley in the county of Salop, gent, upon the body of his wife Mrs. Dorothy White* (London, 1682)

Wing T3007

*\*A true relation of the most horrid murder committed by Mr. George Strangwayes on the person of his brother-in-law* (London, 1659)

Wing T3008

*A true relation of the most inhumane and bloody murther of Master James, Minister... At Rockland in Norfolk* (London, 1609)

STC 14436

*The true relation of the murder of Widow Brown* (London, 1680)

Wing T3010

*\*A true report of the late horrible murther committed by William Sherwood, prisoner in the Queenes benche, for the profession of Popery* (London, 1581)

STC 22432

*A true and sad account of a barbarous bloody murther, committed upon the person of John Mulleney a hatter, late of the town of Liverpool... who was murthered and cut to pieces by one John Loe* (London, 1685)

Wing T2577A

*A true and sad relation of two wicked and bloody murthers* (London, 1680)

Wing 2581 A

- A true and sad reration [sic] of the great and bloody murder committed at Ratcliff in Stepney Parish neer the city of London, upon the body of John Hunter, a sea man, who was stabbed in the heart with a long knife, by one Mr. Smith and his wife and a young maid* (London, 1647)  
Wing T2581; Thomason E.372[5]
- \*The true relation, of the most barbarous and bloody murther of Thomas Thinn Esq, who was shot in his coach, by several outlandish ruffians, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this instant Feb. 168.* (London, 1681)  
Wing T3006
- \*A true report of the horrible murther,, which was committed in the house of Sir Jerome Bowes* (London, 1607)  
STC 3434
- True, strange and wonderful news from the city of London* (London, 1678)  
Wing W83A
- True valour cowardly slain. Or a full and plain account of the most barbarous murther of ensign van Soult* (London, 1698)  
Wing T3124
- A true and wonderful relation of a murther committed in the parish of Newington, the 12<sup>th</sup> day of this present January. By a maid who poysoned herself, and cut the throat of a child* (London, 1681)  
Wing T2586
- The tryal and condemnation of George Borosky alias Borotzi, Christopher Vratz, and John Stern, for the barbarous murder of Thomas Thynn, Esq.* (London, 1682)  
Wing T2141
- The tryal and condemnation of John Williams, alias, Matchet, John White, Francis Jackson, Walter Parkhurst. Being four of the five notorious highwaymen taken on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March last past* (London, 1674)  
No record in Wing. PRO Sp.30/Case F; BL RB.23.a.18030
- The tryal of Charles Lord Mohun, before the House of Peers in Parliament, for the murder of William Mountford; which began the 31 of January 1692* (London, 1693)  
Wing T2181
- The tryal of Philip, earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, before the peers in Westminster-Hall on Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1678* (London, 1679)  
Wing T2209
- The tryal of Philip Standsfield, son to Sir James Standsfield* (Edinburgh, 1688)  
Wing T2210 & T2211

*\*The tryal of Spencer Cowper Esq; John Marson, Ellis Stevens and William Rogers, gent. Upon an indictment for the murther of Mrs. Sarah Stout, a Quaker (London, 1699)*  
Wing T2224

*Two horrible and inhumane murders doen in Lincolnshire by two husbands upon their wives (London, 1607)*  
STC4768

*\*Two most unnaturall and bloodie Murthers: The one by Maister Calverley a Yorkshire Gentleman, practiced upon his wife (London, 1605)*  
STC 18288

*\*Two notorious murders one committed by a tanner on his wives sonne nere Hornechurch in Essex, the other on a grasier nere Ailsburie in Buckinghamshire (London, 1595)*  
STC 18289

*\*The unhappy citizen. A faithful narrative of the life and death of James Selby (London, 1691)*  
Wing U66A

*\*The unhappy marksman. Or a perfect and impartial discovery of that late barbarous and unparallel'd murther committed by Mr. George Strangwayes, formerly a major in the Kings army, on his brother-in-law Mr. John Fussel an attorney... Also the behavior of Mr. Strangwayes at his tryal. The dreadful sentence pronounced against him. His letter to his brother-in-law, a Member of Parliament. The words by him delivered at his death; and his stout, Christian-like manner of dying. Published by a faithful hand (London, 1659)*  
Wing U68; Thomason E.972[10]

*\*The unnatural grandmother, or a true relation of a most barbarous murther committed by Elizabeth Hazard... on her grandchild of about two years old (London, 1659)*  
Wing U86

*\*The unnaturall husband: or, the murderer rewarded (London, 1695)*  
Wing U86A

*\*The unnatural son, or, A sad and deplorable relation, of the unfortunate end of H. Jackson, at Horsham near Sussex who having spent the estate his father left him, in drunkenness and whoreing, murthered his own mother and robb'd the house (London, 1700)*  
Wing U88aA

*The vain prodigal life and tragical penitent death of Thomas Hellier (London, 1678)*  
Wing V19

*Varieties of villainy: as murther, maiming, theft, perjury upon perjury (London, 1693)*  
Wing P3165

- \**A warning for bad wives: or the manner of the burning of Sarah Elston... For murdering her husband Thomas Elston* (London, 1678)  
Wing W918A
- A warning to young men, or A Man of Bloods in an Impartial relation of the Horrid Murther Acted by Robert Brinkhurst* (London, 1680)  
Wing W943
- \**A warning-piece to all married men and women. Being the full confession of Mary Hobry, the French midwife, who murdered her husband on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1687/8... For which she reciev'd the sentence to be burnt alive* (London, 1688)  
Wing W935
- The wonders of free-grace or a compleat history of all the remarkable penitents that have been executed at Tyburn and elsewhere for these last thirty years* (London, 1690)  
Wing M1262
- The wonder of this age: or God's miraculous revenge against murder* (London, 1677)  
Wing W3358A
- \**A Wonder of Wonders Being a faithful Narrative and true Relation of one Ann Green* (London, 1651)  
Wing B5620; Thomason E.621[11]
- \**A world of wonders. A masse of murthers. A covie of cosonages* (London, 1595)  
STC 14068.5
- \*Alsop, James, *Treason and murther discovered* (London, 1674)  
Wing T2070
- Brewer, Thomas, *The Bloody Mother* (London, 1610)  
STC 3717.3
- \*Closse, George, *The parricide papist, or Cut-throate Catholicke* (London, 1606)  
STC 5441
- \*Cooper, Thomas, *The cry and revenge of blood. Expressing the nature and haynousnesse of wilful murther* (London, 1620)  
STC 5698
- Crimsal, Richard, *A cruell murther committed lately upon the body of Abraham Gearsay* (London, 1635)  
STC 5418



- \*L'Estrange, Roger, *The accompt clear'd: in answer to a libel, intituled, A true account from Chichester, concerning the death of Habin the informer, &c. By Roger L'Estrange* (London, 1682)  
Wing L1192
- \*Golding, Arthur, *A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders, a worshipfull citizen of London* (London, 1573)  
STC 11985
- \*Goodcole, Henry, *The adulteresses funerall day in flaming, scorching and consuming fire* (London, 1635)  
STC 12009
- \*- *Heavens speedie hue and cry sent after lust and murder* (London, 1635)  
STC 12010.5
- \*- *London's Cry Ascended to God.* (London, 1620)  
STC 12011
- \*- *Natures Cruel Stepdames* (London, 1637)  
STC 12012
- Jennings, Abraham, *Digitus Dei or an Horrid murther strangely detected declaring the suspicion, apprehending, arraignment, tryal, confession and execution of Richard Rogers...for murdering one Ruth Anton* (London, 1664)  
Wing J555A
- \*Kyd, Thomas, *The Truth of the most wicked and secret murthering of John Brewen* (London, 1592)  
STC 15095
- Mather, Cotton, *Speedy Repentance urged* (Boston, 1690)  
Wing M1156
- \*More, Richard, *A true relation of the murders committed in the parish of Clune in the county of Salop by Enoch ap Evan upon the bodies of his mother and brother* (London, 1641)  
Wing M2685
- \*Munday, Anthony, *View of sundry strange examples. Reporting many straunge murthers, sundry persons perjured, signes and tokens of Gods wrath* (London, 1580)
- Partridge, N., *Blood for blood, or Justice executed for innocent blood-shed* (London, 1670)  
Wing P630

- \*Quick, John, *Hell open 'd, or, The infernal sin of murther punished being a true relation of the poysoning of a whole family in Plymouth, wherof two died in a short time... with an account of the several discourses and religious means used by divers godly ministers to bring them to repentance* (London, 1676)  
Wing Q207
- \*Smith, Samuel, *The behaviour and execution of Robert Green and Lawrence Hall, two of the persons condemn'd...for the most notorious & barbarous murther of Sir Edmondbury Godfrey* (London, 1679)  
Wing B1704
- \*Studley, Peter, *The Looking Glass of Schism* 1634 (second edition 1635)  
STC 23403 & 23404
- \*Taylor, John, *The unnaturall father; or the cruell murther committed by One John Rowse of the town of Ewell* (London, 1621)  
STC 23808a
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Wing T1882
- Whitehead, George, *The murther in Gloucestershire no Quakers act* (London, 1688)  
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Wing Y23; Thomason E.1660[2]

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