"The Anagrammatic Method": Titus Oates and Satiric Word Play in Post-Restoration England

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ABSTRACT This article examines the conflicting attitudes toward deception in the political discourse of late Stuart Britain, using as its example the spurious claims made by Titus Oates (c.1678) that Catholics were conspiring to assassinate Charles II and reintroduce Catholicism as Britain's religion of state. Known to contemporaries as the Popish Plot, this article serves as a departure from traditional scholarship of the conspiracy in which Oates is primarily pursued for his role as a key agitator of Exclusion era politics. Instead, it addresses the irreconciled nature of Oates's public persona as the plot's main discoverer, interlocutor, protagonist, and victim, especially in the days and months following his conviction for perjury in May 1685. Attending to issues of continuity and discontinuity with the first half of the seventeenth century, especially those which concerned the ideological origins of the civil wars, it engages with a visual satire of 1685 in which the validity of Titus Oates's anti-Jesuitical claims were denounced by reconstituting the letters of his name in anagrammatic form. Thus, arguments will be developed on the basis that the Popish Plot was a political event, but an event necessarily steeped in literary assumptions, demonstrating the era's inescapable fascination with ambiguity even as it sought to denounce it. **KEYWORDS**: acrostics; anagrams; deception; literature and politics; Titus Oates; Popish Plot; post-Restoration England; rhetoric; satire

IN "THE USES OF DECEPTION," a landmark study of English Civil War propaganda, Sharon Achinstein demonstrated the ways in which popular fears concerning dissimulation and disguise became a constitutive force in the period's political conflicts. Buoyed by the relative relaxation of press regulation, Cromwell's "able pen-men" set to work on "undeceiving" the populace, frequently deploying in print metaphors of sight and optics in order to better equip audiences to discern "truth."[1] To historians

1. Sharon Achinstein, 'The Uses of Deception: From Cromwell to Milton', in *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. by Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst (Duquesne University Press, 1993), esp. 174-82.

of the English Restoration, many of the same concerns over the dangers of rhetoric can be recognized in the political culture of the later Stuart era, not least when efforts to exclude James II from inheriting Britain's crown became the dominant political issue. "Shelter[ed] . . . under the disguise of affected phrases," partisan polemic was understood as both a necessary communicative tool and as a flawed, corrosive influence which must be continually deciphered if truth were to prevail.[2]

This article examines the ongoing and conflicting attitudes toward deception as a linguistic strategy in the political discourse of late Stuart Britain, using as its example the Popish Plot phenomenon of c. 1678–1685 Like many political conspiracies of the era, the Popish Plot was predicated on the assumption that Catholics were conspiring to assassinate the monarch and reintroduce Catholicism as the religion of state. With its vivid descriptions of violent rebellion, clandestine meetings, and Jesuit casuistry, the plot quickly gained public acceptance. Delivered by one Titus Oates, a former Anabaptist preacher who claimed to have infiltrated a Jesuitical network in the summer of 1677, Oates's allegations were soon proved fraudulent. No formal plan to assassinate Charles II existed. Nor had Oates infiltrated a Europe-wide Jesuitical network to learn of such treasonous intents. Such claims were, in fact, entirely baseless. Despite this, on Oates's word at least thirty-four innocent people lost their lives.

Described in recent decades as "a confusing plurality of interpretations," and as a story "dubiously true," until now scholarly interest in the plot has largely focused on the incongruity of the events first described by Titus Oates in his landmark publication of 1679. Known to readers as *A True Narrative of the Horrid Plot and Conspiracy*, in this publication Oates was at once the Popish Plot's discoverer, interlocutor, protagonist, and victim: a competing array of agendas which cast doubt not only on the credibility of Oates's testimony but also on the provenance of the text itself. Yet to a seventeenth-century audience, the plot delivered by Oates was a standard piece of anti-Catholic polemic. Fully persuasive to a society primed to read in the Catholic 'other' an unending sense of distrust, contemporary observers frequently stressed the conclusiveness of Oates's allegations, citing as precedent the former attempts of Roman Catholics to usurp the English throne.[3]

The primary concern of this article is not with the plot's early reception or with the role played by anti-Catholicism as a preexisting facet of England's historical identity in shaping that reception. There already exists a notable and extensive literature

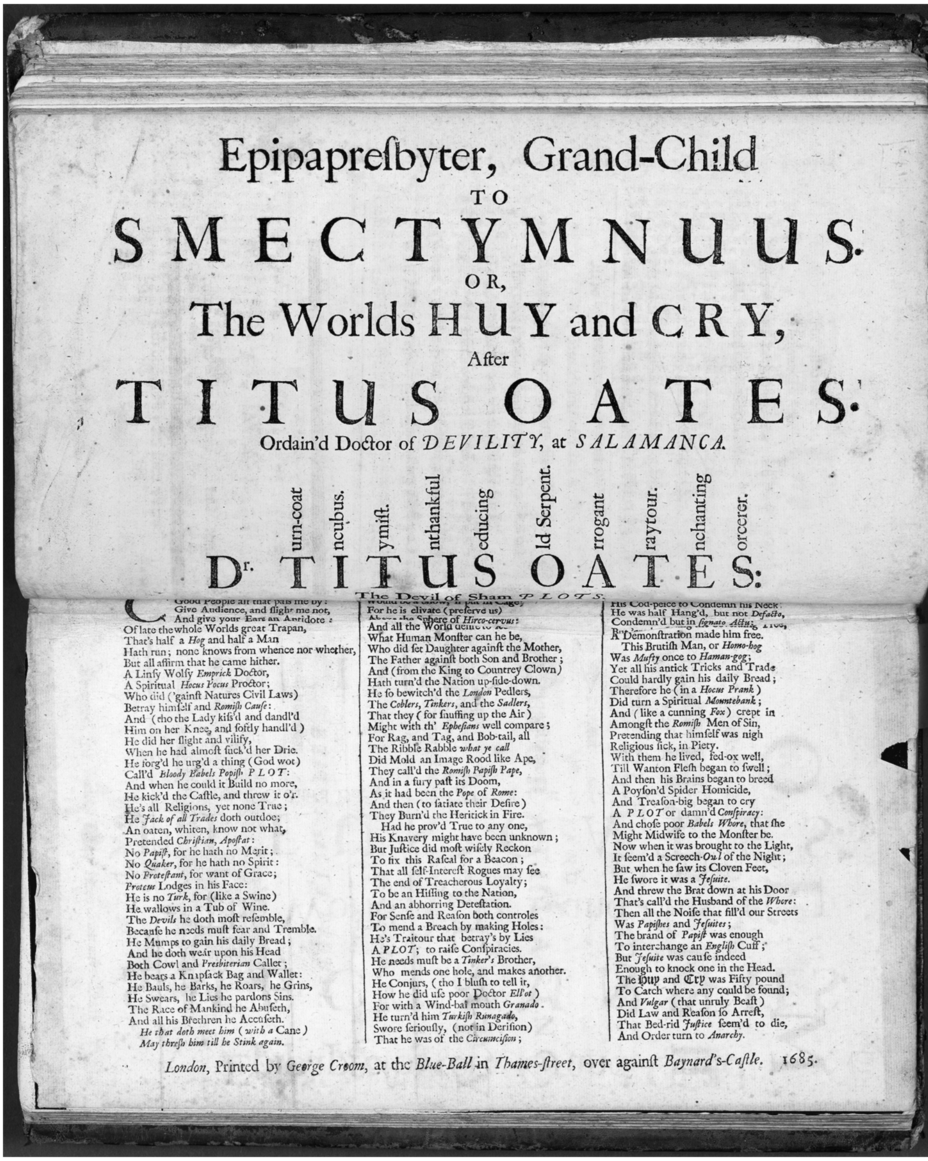
2. John Wilkins, *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (London, 1668), sig. b1^{r}.

3. Titus Oates, *A True Narrative of the Horrid Plot and Conspiracy . . . By Titus Otes, D. D.* (London, 1679); Peter Hinds, *The Horrid Popish Plot: Roger L'Estrange and the Circulation of Political Discourse in Late Seventeenth-Century London* (Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2008), 12; Kate Loveman, *Reading Fictions 1660-1740: Deception in English Literary and Political Culture* (Ashgate, 2008), 2.

devoted to that topic.[4] Accepting that there was a self-referential relationship between the formative and latter stages of the plot's formal processes of representation, as well as the discourses by which it was surrounded, this article seeks to expand our understanding of the plot phenomenon by highlighting the critical points at which interpretations of the plot converged. It demonstrates that the Popish Plot was a political event inescapably steeped in literary assumptions. It focuses almost exclusively on the year 1685, with that timely moment when the reliability of Oates's *Narrative* could no longer be sustained, nor could the reputation of Oates as both orator and king's witness be considered anything other than a staged fiction. In the days and months immediately following Oates's conviction for perjury in 1685, this essay argues that commentators embarked upon a distinctive critical strategy to demolish Oates's personal character and the reputation of his plot. This strategy, which involved the use of satiric word play and linguistic transposition, was intended by critics to creatively displace Oates's authority and assign a greater urgency to matters of visual acuity. Indeed, once it is noted that contemporaries favored one linguistic device in particular—the anagram—to simultaneously uphold *and* undermine Titus Oates's spurious missives, these perceptions assume an even greater significance for our understanding of the politics of this era. This 'anagrammatic method', a term that I borrow from Jonathan Swift, saw commentators derive TESTIS OVAT from TITUS OATES, demanding of readers a playful dexterity little seen since Cromwell's pamphlet wars some thirty-five years earlier.

To support these claims, I make use of a satirical print published in 1685. Entitled *Epipapresbyter, Grand-Child to Smectymnuus, or, The Worlds Huy and Cry after Titus Oates,* this white letter ballad revivified the claims of Oates's early supporters by seeking to test or to make subordinate his verbal representations as they converged with a visual spectatorship of the page (figure 1). Like many others produced at this crucial moment in Oates's downfall, the broadside can be seen as challenging the realities of graphic representation while also constituting the very substance of that reality, engineering complicity on the part of the viewer to apprehend Oates and the terms of his guilt. Most important of all, this print attempts to manipulate in varying ways the

4. W. C. Abbott, "The Origins of the Titus Oates Story," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 97 (Jan., 1910); Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); John P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, New ed. (Phoenix, 1972); Harold Love, "The Look of the News: Popish Plot Narratives 1678-1680," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume IV 1667-1695*, ed. By John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 652-56; Hinds, *The Horrid Popish Plot*; Loveman, *Reading Fictions,* John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); John Pollock, *The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II* (London: Duckworth, 1903); Jonathan Scott, "England's Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot" in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 107-31; J. B. Williams, "The Genesis of Titus Oates's Plot," *The Month*, Vol. 120, No. 581 (1912), 483-93


Epipapreſbyter, Grand-Child
TO
SMECTYMNUUS.
OR,
The Worlds HUY and CRY,
After
TITUS OATES.
Ordain'd Doctor of *DEVILITY*, at *SALAMANCA*.

urn-coat
ncubus.
ymiſt.
nthankful
educing
ld Serpent.
rrogant
raytour.
nchanting
orcerer.

Dr. TITUS OATES:

The Devil of Sham *PLOTS*.

Good People all that paſs me by:
Give Audience, and ſlight me not,
And give your Ears an Antidote:
Of late the whole Worlds great Trapan,
That's half a *Hog* and half a Man
Hath run; none knows from whence nor whether,
But all affirm that he came hither.
A Linſy Wolſy *Emprick* Doctor,
A Spiritual *Hocus Pocus* Proctor;
Who did ('gainſt Natures Civil Laws)
Betray himſelf and *Romiſh Cauſe*:
And (tho the Lady kiſs'd and dandl'd
Him on her Knee, and ſoftly handl'd)
He did her ſlight and vilify,
When he had almoſt ſuck'd her Drie.
He forg'd he urg'd a thing (God wot)
Call'd *Bloody Babels Popiſh PLOT*:
And when he could it Build no more,
He kick'd the Caſtle, and threw it o'r.
He's all Religions, yet none True;
He *Jack of all Trades* doth outdoe;
An oaten, whiten, know not what,
Pretended *Chriſtian*, *Apoſtat*:
No *Papiſt*, for he hath no Merit;
No *Quaker*, for he hath no Spirit:
No *Proteſtant*, for want of Grace;
Proteus Lodges in his Face:
He is no *Turk*, for (like a Swine)
He wallows in a Tub of Wine.
The *Devils* he doth moſt reſemble,
Becauſe he needs muſt fear and Tremble.
He Mumps to gain his daily Bread;
And he doth wear upon his Head
Both Cowl and *Presbiterian* Callet;
He bears a Knapſack Bag and Wallet:
He Bauls, he Barks, he Roars, he Grins,
He Swears, he Lies he pardons Sins.
The Race of Mankind he Abuſeth,
And all his Brethren he Accuſeth.
He that doth meet him (with a Cane*)*
May threſh him till he Stink again.

Would be a Show, if put in Cage;
For he is elivate (preſerve us)
Above the Sphere of *Hirco-cervus*:
And all the World deſire to [illegible]
What Human Monſter can he be,
Who did ſet Daughter againſt the Mother,
The Father againſt both Son and Brother;
And (from the King to Countrey Clown)
Hath turn'd the Nation up-ſide-down.
He ſo bewitch'd the *London* Pedlers,
The *Coblers*, *Tinkers*, and the *Sadlers*,
That they (for ſnuffing up the Air)
Might with th' *Epheſians* well compare;
For Rag, and Tag, and Bob-tail, all
The Ribble Rabble *what ye call*
Did Mold an Image Rood like Ape,
They call'd the *Romiſh Papiſh Pape*,
And in a fury paſt its Doom,
As it had been the *Pope* of *Rome*:
And then (to ſatiate their Deſire)
They Burn'd the Heritick in Fire.
Had he prov'd True to any one,
His Knavery might have been unknown;
But Juſtice did moſt wiſely Reckon
To fix this Raſcal for a Beacon;
That all ſelf-Intereſt Rogues may ſee
The end of Treacherous Loyalty;
To be an Hiſſing to the Nation,
And an abhorring Deteſtation.
For Senſe and Reaſon both controles
To mend a Breach by making Holes:
He's Traitour that betray's by Lies
A *PLOT*; to raiſe Conſpiracies.
He needs muſt be a *Tinker's* Brother,
Who mends one hole, and makes another.
He Conjurs, (tho I bluſh to tell it,
How he did uſe poor Doctor *Ell'ot*)
For with a Wind-bal mouth *Granado*.
He turn'd him *Turkiſh Runagado*,
Swore ſeriouſly, (not in Deriſion)
That he was of the *Circumciſion*;

His Cod-peice to Condemn his Neck:
He was half Hang'd, but not *Defacto*,
Condemn'd but in *ſignato Actu*; [illegible] Free,
But [illegible]
A Demonſtration made him free.
This Brutiſh Man, or *Homo-hog*
Was *Muſty* once to *Haman-gog*;
Yet all his antick Tricks and Trade
Could hardly gain his daily Bread;
Therefore he (in a *Hocus Prank*)
Did turn a Spiritual *Mountebank*;
And (like a cunning *Fox*) crept in
Amongſt the *Romiſh* Men of Sin,
Pretending that himſelf was nigh
Religious ſick, in Piety.
With them he lived, fed-ox well,
Till Wanton Fleſh began to ſwell;
And then his Brains began to breed
A Poyſon'd Spider Homicide,
And Treaſon-big began to cry
A *PLOT* or damn'd *Conſpiracy*:
And choſe poor *Babels Whore*, that ſhe
Might Midwife to the Monſter be.
Now when it was brought to the Light,
It ſeem'd a Screech-*Owl* of the Night;
But when he ſaw its Cloven Feet,
He ſwore it was a *Jeſuite*.
And threw the Brat down at his Door
That's call'd the Husband of the *Whore*:
Then all the Noiſe that fill'd our Streets
Was *Papiſhes* and *Jeſuites*;
The brand of *Papiſt* was enough
To interchange an *Engliſh* Cuff;
But *Jeſuite* was cauſe indeed
Enough to knock one in the Head.
The Huy and Cry was Fifty pound
To Catch where any could be found;
And *Vulgar* (that unruly Beaſt)
Did Law and Reaſon ſo Arreſt,
That Bed-rid *Juſtice* ſeem'd to die,
And Order turn to *Anarchy*.

London, Printed by *George Croom*, at the *Blue-Ball* in *Thames-ſtreet*, over againſt *Baynard's-Caſtle*. 1685.

FIGURE 1. *Epipapresbyter, Grand-Child to Smectymnuus. Or, the Worlds Huy and Cry, after Titus Oates* (London, 1685). RB 135076, Huntington Library, San Marino.

vertical and horizontal axes of the page, subverting its ideological substance through the principles of form. In this we might think of the broadside as tracing a path or otherwise plotting lines of sight. Fundamentally, the broadside ought to be interpreted as a masterful example of how Oates's later critics sought to 'emplot' him within his own narrative of deception.

This argument builds on the recent work of Kate Loveman and Adam Morton, both of whom have described the polemical strategies endorsed by both readers and writers of the late Stuart era to engage with moments of documented fiction in truly creative forms.[5] As both authors have variously shown, narratives of this era often provided the critical means for readers to orient themselves in relation to texts, invoking a set of practices which both challenged and creatively displaced reader authority while, at the same time, conferring on the text's author a sense of intellectual prowess. I take these claims one step further. As much as being a newly emerging form of sociability, "sceptical reading" as Loveman terms it, gave deception a temporary cultural boon, cementing its value or authority by inviting critics to respond in like manner. This was a sleight of hand *par excellence*, where ambiguity was readily embraced, and reader desire inflamed by the delivery of further acts of pretense. Far more than the preserve of a social elite, these acts of critical reply were discharged by the public at large, spawning a collective effort to outwit an author's documented act of deceit while simultaneously creating a deception of the public's own making.

This argument acknowledges recent findings of scholars who seek to address both the role and the perception of imagery in a post-Reformation world, especially that work which argues for a revised understanding of printed media as a significant communicative tool during periods of political upheaval.[6] Mark Knights, for example, has written extensively on the role played by printed media during the formative years of Britain's "two party system," seeing as crucial the role played by the public as both the mediator and arbiter of competing truth claims on matters of national sovereignty. Building on the work of Habermas's much cited concept of the public sphere, Knights has described how Britain's public became "a collective fiction" in the late seventeenth century, with "contemporaries develop[ing] a series of informal and formal controls" to deconstruct a text's meaning, of which *Epipapresbyter* is inarguably a key example.[7] Assimilating the scholarship of Knights, among others, within the more established

5. Loveman; Adam Morton, "Popery, Politics and Play: Visual Culture in Succession Crisis England," *The Seventeenth Century*, 31,4 (2016), 411–449 and "Intensive Ephemera: The Catholick Gamesters and the Visual Culture of News in Restoration London," in D. Davies, P Fletcher, eds, *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 115–140.

6. See for example Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England : An Historical Oversight* (New Haven [Conn.]: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2010); Mark Knights, "Possessing the Visual: The Materiality of Visual Print Culture in Later Stuart Britain," in *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture : Texts and Social Practices, 1580-1730*, ed. by James Daybell and Peter Hinds (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain. Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005); Adam Morton, "Popery, Politics, and Play"; Helen Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures: Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (London: Yale University Press, 2008)

7. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 5 & 7

histories of later Stuart politics and its popular representation provides a means to better assess how word-image relations became a distinctive feature of the Popish Plot's critical reception. While it is true that recent critics of the plot can claim a share in many of the same interests, overall, we are yet to see how the formal properties of political conflict achieved a significance in dismantling Titus Oates's credibility, especially during the plot's late phase. This was, after all, the period in which exclusion had proven itself to be an unrealizable political aim with James, Duke of York, having acceded to the English throne in February 1685. Consequently, it was the period too in which perceptions of Oates turned unequivocally from a model of support into one of overt distrust.

The anagram, which according to Christopher Ricks is a device "seen and not heard," had a long and illustrious history prior to the arrival of Titus Oates.[8] At its simplest, it is a literary or poetic device in which linguistic transposition is utilized to create a new or additional meaning out of a preexisting word. Rules dictate that transposition ought only to occur once, with the anagram in its 'purest' form making use of all available letters without duplication, repetition, or omission. One way we might think of the anagram is as a kind of technological tool in which the practitioner seeks to clarify through temporary distortion meanings that might otherwise remain hidden or not immediately apparent. Equally, the anagram draws for its effect on making associative qualities that are potentially oppositional, or both like *and* unlike in character or sentiment. As Stephen Collet wrote in 1823 "it is . . . on proper names that anagrams have chiefly been exercised, and much of their merit arises from the association of ideas."[9] Thus, on a more complex level, the anagram was a device understood to possess unique, divinatory qualities, the outcome of which might be to produce some "grateful news . . . to them for whose pleasure and service it was intended."[10]

This being the case, the ultimate objective of the anagrammatist was to create a word or phrase that functioned as incisive commentary on their chosen subject. But with these elemental, almost alchemical, qualities also came the possibility for contention. Just what qualified as an anagram was a matter open to debate, with popular accounts of the device often fueled by a desire to set out the varying rules and methods necessary for the anagram's execution. Henry B. Wheatley, nineteenth century author and founding member of the *Index Society*, dedicated an entire volume to the history of the practice. According to Wheatley, there are "three principal classes" upon which the anagram might be fashioned. First, "those which discover a new word when

8. Christopher Ricks, "Shakespeare and the Anagram", in *Proceedings of the British Academy, Volume 121, 2002 Lectures*, 2003, 111–146 at 111.

9. Stephen Collet, *Relics of Literature* (London: Thomas Boys, 1823), 122.

10. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy : A Critical Edition*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 196.

read backwards"; secondly, "those in which the whole of the letters are transposed, and thrown into a new form; finally "those formed by a division of one word into several, without transposition."[11] Generally speaking, it is the second and third of Wheatley's classes that have tended to predominate.

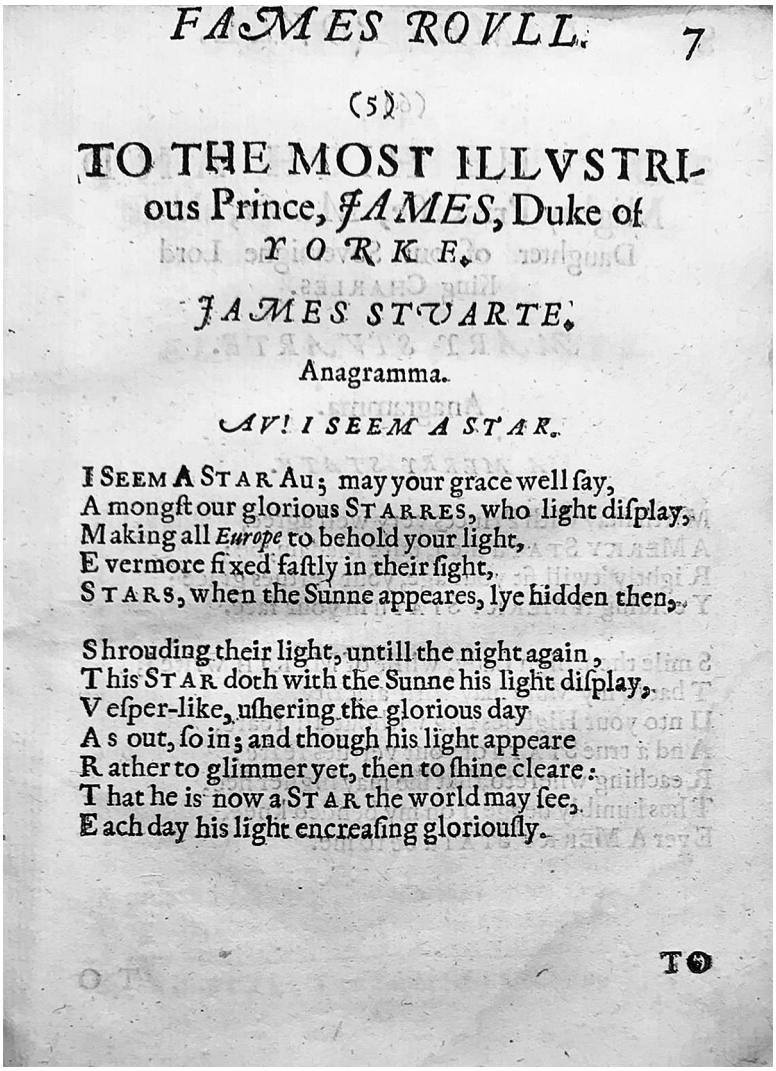
According to Wheatley, anagrams underwent something of a revival in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a statement well supported by the sheer volume of material printed on the subject. Although we find mention of the anagram in classical texts, especially those of Greek origin, the combined providential, structural, and rhetorical qualities of the anagram ensured that it was a resource well suited to this later age of classical learning. This was the "golden age of anagrammatism" with noted figures such as George Puttenham and William Drummond helping to establish the anagram's popularity as both a literary and divinatory tool.[12] Commonly, the anagram relied on manuscript circulation and a working knowledge of Latin to produce its most incisive examples. Prominent nobles and members of the royal family were a favored subject, as were individuals caught up in episodes of political scandal. The Overbury Affair, for example, from which emerged "Frances Howard/Car Findes A Whore," is an excellent case in point.[13] Thought by many to have been murdered for his in-depth knowledge of Frances Howard's affair with social climber Robert Carr, the death of former court favorite Sir Thomas Overbury became a cause célèbre of the early seventeenth century much like the political intrigues delivered by Oates would be some seventy years later.

The ability of the anagram to demonstrate an individual's widespread acclaim also made it a popular feature of printed collections of verse, helping to cement in the popular imagination the basic principles of poetic design while simultaneously facilitating a two-way accord between script and text as a standard mode of transmission. Mary Fage's verse miscellany of 1637, entitled *Fames Roule: Or the Names of Our Dread Soveraigne Lord King Charles*, is but one of many popular examples of works devoted to the uniquely onomastic qualities of anagrammatic verse. In this collection containing over four hundred entries, Fage pairs anagram and acrostic verse to produce a volume that is solely dedicated to members of the Caroline Court. Interestingly, Fage chooses to catalogue her entries by virtue of social prominence, adding, it might be said, an even greater urgency to a practice that was already reputed for its ability to infer or pass comment on its subject's merits.

11. Henry Benjamin Wheatley, *Of Anagrams : A Monograph Treating of Their History from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (Hertford: Printed for the author by S. Austin, 1862), 57.

12. William Drummond, "Character of a Perfect Anagram", in *The Works of William Drummond, of Hawthornden* (Edinburgh: Printed for James Watson, in Craig's Closs, 1711), 230

13. The *Early Stuart Libels* project records four extant entries produced in relation to the Overbury Affair, as does Bellany's monograph dedicated to the same. For examples see BL Harley MS 646, fol. 26^{r}; Bodleian Malone MS 19, p. 5; Folger MS V.a.162, fol. 37^{v}; Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources." Ed. Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae. *Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I* (2005) http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts /libels/ accessed 29 September 2019.



FAMES ROVLL. 7

(5)

TO THE MOST ILLVSTRI-
ous Prince, *FAMES*, Duke of
YORKE.

IAMES STVARTE.

Anagramma.

AV! I SEEM A STAR.

I SEEM A STAR Au; may your grace well ſay,
A mongſt our glorious STARRES, who light diſplay,
Making all *Europe* to behold your light,
Evermore fixed faſtly in their ſight,
STARS, when the Sunne appeares, lye hidden then,

Shrouding their light, untill the night again,
This STAR doth with the Sunne his light diſplay,
Veſper-like, uſhering the glorious day
As out, ſo in; and though his light appeare
Rather to glimmer yet, then to ſhine cleare:
That he is now a STAR the world may ſee,
Each day his light encreaſing glorioufly.

TO

FIGURE 2. "Anagram and Acrostic on James Stuart," *Fames roule: or, The names of our dread soveraigne Lord King Charles* (London, 1637). Shelfmark C.39.e.54, British Library, London.

Importantly, in Fage's volume, verse title and verse proper operate self-referentially. Once announced, each entry continues the theme established by its anagrammatic title, providing for the reader a poetic pairing that operates not only linguistically but in sentiment also. Thus, the verse dedicated to the then infant Duke of York makes the anagram of its title a stylistic, symbolic, and an organizational feature whose theme of "stars" is duly repeated throughout the verse below (figure 2). Once stated, the letters of James's name are then used to literally spell out

the supposed attributes of his person, furnishing the encomium verse below with its acrostic structure. To add yet another visual twist, the verse repeats in its opening line a re-versioning of the anagram featured in the original title: I SEEM A STAR AU.[14] According to Betty S. Travisky, Fage's publication was issued during a period of "intense interest in wordplay . . . where delights in language ranged from the coining of ink-horn terms to the construction of elaborate metaphysical conceits."[15] From this brief example we see also how the better practiced of poets, Fage included, were able to exploit on the page the more visually attuned aspects of this orthographic re-structuring.

As the seventeenth century progressed, print technology helped the anagram reach a greater readership with more varied skills. Whereas Puttenham had ultimately understood the anagram to operate on the same metrical and structural principles as patterned verse, by the middle of the century the more complex intellectual strains of the device had become absorbed into 'mainstream' culture. Publications such as *Wits Recreations* (1640) and other popular mid-century jest and verse miscellanies took the more selective, rarefied aspects of manuscript circulation, not least verse libel, and distilled them into a more readily consumed format. Enthusiastically featured amongst them was the anagram. Gone in these revised formats however were the expressly deferential approaches to what still remained an essentially poetic device, replaced instead by observations on everyday life in which the anagram was exploited for its aphoristic qualities. Abraham Wright's *Parnassus Biceps* (1656) is a good example of this. Proclaiming on the title page that it was "Composed by the best Wits that were in both the Universities before their Dissolution," the compendium trades on the facets of scholastic learning, re-deploying content with a known pedigree but nevertheless retaining topicality through direct references to the popular figures of the day. Featured among them are choice examples of both anagrammatic and chronogrammatic verse. Such entries, however, are now one of many examples of patterned rhyme being marketed to audiences on the proviso that their content might be thought exemplary or of special relevance.

The inherent instability of a character like Oates, then, who in his later days was understood to have created an external identity at odds with his internal motivation, was arguably a subject well fitted to the demands of anagrammatic practice. And to early plot enthusiasts, the biography of Oates invited a similar kind of thinking. Although not born into affluence, Oates had employed a rhetoric in which the

14. For a comparable example in the works of Shakespeare see Helen Vendler's commentary regarding Sonnet 14 in which the conceit of stars is similarly used to organise the verse's structure. Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 104-106.

15. Betty S. Travitsky, "Relations of Power, Relations to Power, and Power(Ful) Relations: Mary Fage, Robert Fage and Fames Roule", in *Pilgrimage for Love : New Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts*, ed. by Sigrid. King (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 95.

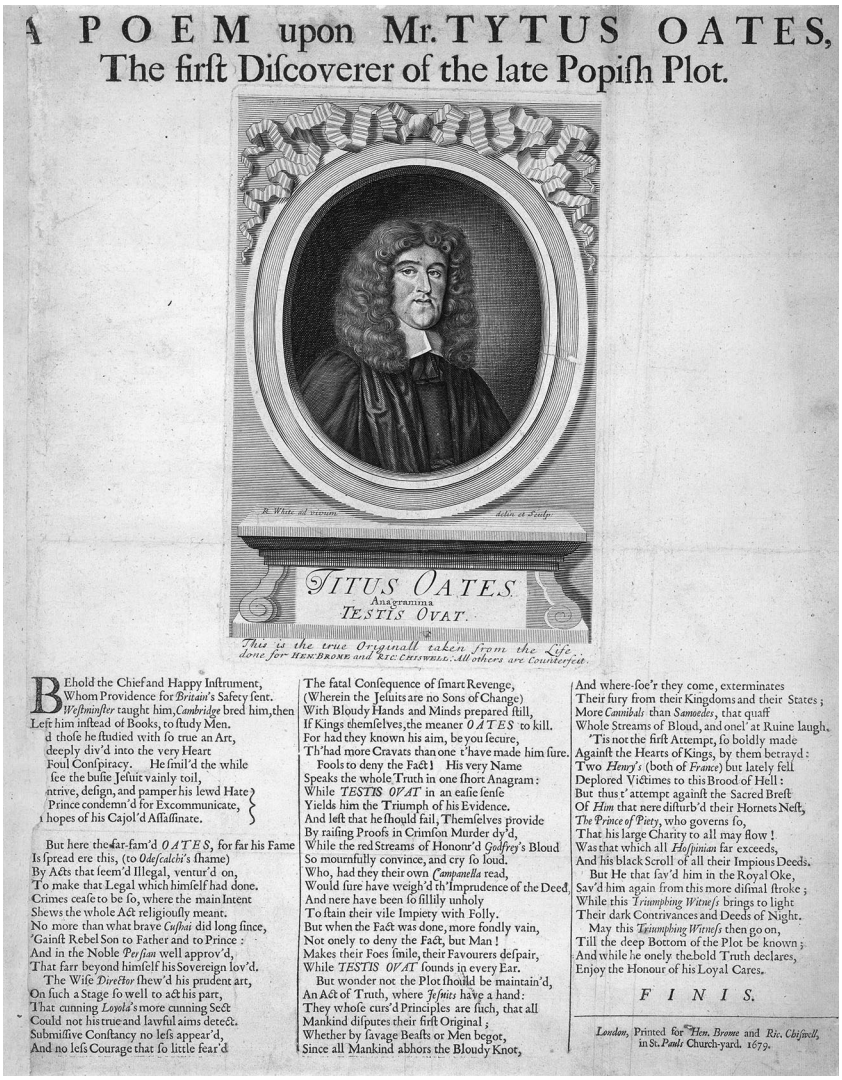
self-appointment of an honorific title had helped to elevate his social status. From as early as September 1678, Oates referred to himself as the "First Discoverer of the Plot," and it was readily understood that in achieving this status he had somehow exceeded the limitations of his humbler beginnings. Likewise, Oates had achieved public favor on the basis that his interventionist practices against the Jesuits had a revelatory quality, making transparent for the first time information which had previously been concealed from public view. In short, Oates had revealed to his audience news of a covert nature, supposedly dismantling a hidden conspiratorial network whose origins far preceded his own powers of intercession. It was by these terms, then, that Oates was said to have been equipped with providential foresight. With the divine assistance of god, Oates had 'divined' a hidden plot and thus effectively become divine in nature himself.[16]

In ways entirely consistent with anagramming practice, contemporaries readily saw in Oates's name evidence of his remarkable being. From TITUS OATES they derived the Latin TESTIS OVAT, a conscious statement of assent which roughly translates as "the witness rejoices." Understood in this context to attest to the truth status of Oates's person as well as the timeliness of his pronouncements, this choice phrase often came paired with a portrait likeness of its subject. The British Museum holds in its collection examples executed in both intaglio and mezzotint engraving, the majority of which feature as their inscription this same purposeful spelling out of Oates's name.[17] Often accompanying this studied arrangement of Oates was the acronym "D.D.": a reference to Oates's self-appointed title, "Doctor of Divinity." Over time, the two terms would blend and combine to construct a new term entirely. Not quite a portmanteau, the arrangement of Oates's name, together with his D. D. title, would go on to become a stock in phrase of the Popish Plot era. To lionize Oates in this manner, however, was perfectly acceptable. Standard anagramming practice dictated that an individual's exemplary character should provide the source for their linguistic transformation. And as Camden had remarked seventy years earlier, "each man's fortune is written in his Name . . . names are divine notes . . . to notifie future events; so that events consequently must lurk in names, which only [the anagram] can . . . pry into."[18]

16. For a civil war example which parallels the circumstances of discovery put forward by Oates, see *The King's cabinet opened: or, Certain packets of secret letters & papers . . . Published by special order of the Parliament* (London: Printed for Robert Bostock, dwelling in Pauls Church-yard, 1645]. Like Oates's *Narrative*, *The King's cabinet* opened was said to contain intercepted [familial] letters authored by Charles I and which traded on similar rhetorical and presentational strategies to achieve public credibility.

17. For examples executed in mezzotint see: *Titus Oates D.D. The first discoverer of the Plott*, BM number 1864,0813.162; *Titus Oates D.D. Anagramma Testis Ovat*, BM number 1902,1011.5288. For examples executed in intaglio engraving see: *Titus Oates, Theologiæ Doctor und Clericus*, BM number Bb,13.231; *Titus Oates D.D. the first discoverer of the Plott*, BM number 1849,0315.90; *Titus Oates Anagramma Testis Ovat*, BM number P,5.206.

18. William Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain* (At London Printed by G. E. for Simon Waterson, 1605), 151.



A POEM upon Mr. TYTUS OATES,
The first Diſcoverer of the late Popiſh Plot.

R. White ad vivum. delin. et Fecit.

TITUS OATES
Anagramma
TESTIS OVAT.

This is the true Originall taken from the Life done for HEN: BROME and RIC: CHISWELL: All others are Counterfeit.

BEhold the Chief and Happy Inſtrument,
Whom Providence for *Britain*'s Safety ſent.
Weſtminſter taught him, *Cambridge* bred him, then
Left him inſtead of Books, to ſtudy Men.
d thoſe he ſtudied with ſo true an Art,
deeply div'd into the very Heart
Foul Conſpiracy. He ſmil'd the while
ſee the buſie Jeſuit vainly toil,
ntrive, deſign, and pamper his lewd Hate
Prince condemn'd for Excommunicate,
hopes of his Cajol'd Aſſaſſinate.

But here the far-fam'd *OATES*, for far his Fame
Is ſpread ere this, (to *Odeſcalchi*'s ſhame)
By Acts that ſeem'd Illegal, ventur'd on,
To make that Legal which himſelf had done.
Crimes ceaſe to be ſo, where the main Intent
Shews the whole Act religiouſly meant.
No more than what brave *Cuſhai* did long ſince,
'Gainſt Rebel Son to Father and to Prince:
And in the Noble *Perſian* well approv'd,
That farr beyond himſelf his Sovereign lov'd.
The Wiſe *Director* ſhew'd his prudent art,
On ſuch a Stage ſo well to act his part,
That cunning *Loyola*'s more cunning Sect
Could not his true and lawful aims detect.
Submiſſive Conſtancy no leſs appear'd,
And no leſs Courage that ſo little fear'd
The fatal Conſequence of ſmart Revenge,
(Wherein the Jeſuits are no Sons of Change)
With Bloudy Hands and Minds prepared ſtill,
If Kings themſelves, the meaner *OATES* to kill.
For had they known his aim, be you ſecure,
Th'had more Cravats than one t'have made him ſure.
Fools to deny the Fact! His very Name
Speaks the whole Truth in one ſhort Anagram:
While *TESTIS OVAT* in an eaſie ſenſe
Yields him the Triumph of his Evidence.
And leſt that he ſhould fail, Themſelves provide
By raiſing Proofs in Crimſon Murder dy'd,
While the red Streams of Honour'd *Godfrey*'s Bloud
So mournfully convince, and cry ſo loud,
Who, had they their own *Campanella* read,
Would ſure have weigh'd th'Imprudence of the Deed.
And nere have been ſo ſillily unholy
To ſtain their vile Impiety with Folly.
But when the Fact was done, more fondly vain,
Not onely to deny the Fact, but Man!
Makes their Foes ſmile, their Favourers deſpair,
While *TESTIS OVAT* ſounds in every Ear.
But wonder not the Plot ſhould be maintain'd,
An Act of Truth, where *Jeſuits* have a hand:
They whoſe curs'd Principles are ſuch, that all
Mankind diſputes their firſt Original;
Whether by ſavage Beaſts or Men begot,
Since all Mankind abhors the Bloudy Knot,
And where-ſoe'r they come, exterminates
Their fury from their Kingdoms and their States;
More *Cannibals* than *Samoedes*, that quaff
Whole Streams of Bloud, and onel'at Ruine laugh.
'Tis not the firſt Attempt, ſo boldly made
Againſt the Hearts of Kings, by them betrayd:
Two *Henry's* (both of *France*) but lately fell
Deplored Victimes to this Brood of Hell:
But thus t'attempt againſt the Sacred Breſt
Of *Him* that nere diſturb'd their Hornets Neſt,
The Prince of Piety, who governs ſo,
That his large Charity to all may flow!
Was that which all *Hoſpinian* far exceeds,
And his black Scroll of all their Impious Deeds.
But He that ſav'd him in the Royal Oke,
Sav'd him again from this more diſmal ſtroke;
While this *Triumphing Witneſs* brings to light
Their dark Contrivances and Deeds of Night.
May this *Triumphing Witneſs* then go on,
Till the deep Bottom of the Plot be known;
And while he onely the bold Truth declares,
Enjoy the Honour of his Loyal Cares.

FINIS.

London, Printed for *Hen. Brome* and *Ric. Chiſwell*, in St. *Pauls* Church-yard. 1679.

FIGURE 3. *A Poem upon Mr. Tytus Oates* (London, 1679). CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license © Trustees of the British Museum.

Typical of this practice is a broadside of 1679 (figure 3). Entitled *A Poem upon Mr. Tytus Oates, The first Discoverer of the late Popish Plot,* the broadside takes up Oates's invitation to honor his exceptionality. Composed of three columns of heroic verse, at its center is an engraved likeness of Oates drawn, we are told, "ad vivum." The arrangement of the portrait is typical of its day. A central, decorative oval provides the architectural frame in which Oates's person is seated, while his choice of dress—ecclesiastical bands, gown, and wig—reinforces through a recognizable sartorial code the sense of Oates's public grandeur and academic prowess. As with all classically

inspired motifs, the oval in which Oates sits is supported by a marble pedestal, and it is here that we see in the print the first direct reference to Oates's orthographic immanence. The inscription reads "Titus Oates/Anagramma/Testis Ovat." This engraving was executed by Richard White, perhaps the foremost line engraver of his day. The statement of ownership that sits immediately beneath Oates's portrait, then, is intended without irony. White cautions that "This is the true Originall taken from the Life/All others are Counterfeit." One assumes that White felt justified in making this assertion because of the crowded nature of the Popish Plot marketplace. Indeed, one need not look too far to find similar "ad vivum" portraits of Oates in circulation, not least the one that was to accompany Oates's 1679 *Narrative*.[19]

At this juncture, however, Oates's character was not yet the subject of intense public derogation. Instead, observers sought to commend his actions and translate into a visual code the more prominent aspects of his esteemed character. Thus, the verse opens by inviting the viewer to "Behold the Chief and Happy Instrument/Whom Providence for Britain's safety sent." The character of Oates is clearly invoked here in some utile way. His personhood is the tool by which conspiratorial events have been revealed, just as the anagram is now the tool by which that revelation is substantiated. A short while later the verse confirms the anagram's function:

> Fools to deny the Fact! His very Name
> Speaks the whole Truth in one short Anagram;
> While TESTIS OVAT in an easie sense
> Yields him the Triumph of his Evidence.[20]

As critics have consistently noted, however, the anagram is a device which enacts a process of change, but a change which is wholly dependent upon the grammatical integrity of language as a system of rules. While contexts may mix and overlap, the newly created anagrammatic word *is* only and *can only be* constituted from the orthographic character of the phrase or word from which it derives. This artful "shuffling", in which "discomposure and composure" are promoted as one, relies on the fact that meaning can be just as readily unmade as it can be created.[21] And while commentators frequently set out to provide a set of rules to guide the anagrammatist in their activities, in reality the practice of that operation was often compromised by the indeterminacy of language itself. To each set of rules offered by critics came a corresponding set of caveats by which those rules may become undone.

19. Close inspection reveals the accompanying portrait to Oates' *Narrative* to itself have been pirated from a pre-existing work by David Loggan. Compare *Titus Oates D.D. the first discoverer of the Plott*, BM number 1849,0315.90 with the anonymous *Titus Oates D.D. the first discoverer of the Popish Plott,* BM number 1849,0315.89, of which the latter appears only a copy of the former in reverse.

20. *A Poem upon Mr. Tytus Oat*es, Letterpress and engraving (London: Printed for Hen. Brome and Rich. Chiswell, 1679).

21. Ricks, 111.

William Drummond's essay the *Character of a Perfect Anagram* (c. 1615) is an apt case in point.[22] With great taxonomic certainty Drummond sets out thirteen "Laws" which make for the most "perfect" of anagrams, point one of which is to deny the anagrammatist any deviation from that which has already been established. Drummond opens by writing that "in an anagram there must not be fewer nor more nor other Letters, but the same, and as many as in the Name." This we are told is "the Law of an Anagram," after which Drummond proceeds to document at length the many "exceptions" that may be tolerated. These include vast amounts of omission and substitution, as in "E for AE, V for W, S for Z, and C for K, and contrariwise."[23] Although it benefitted the anagrammatist to construct their phrase "father . . .[away] from Licence," when combined with expediency, the "malleable character of . . . language" often introduced to the process far greater potential for ambivalence or manipulation.[24]

Such aspects then were arguably a contributing factor to the strategy adopted by Oates's critics as they recombined the letters of his name to varying effects. With the substitution of a "U" for a "V," Titus Oates had become Testis Ovat. And from Testis Ovat, "the witness rejoices," came repeated the same character sequence but with its earlier function overwritten. Following Oates's public transformation from hero to villain, critics redeployed the same turn of phrase, but a change of context now furnished the statement with an in-built irony. The phrase, "Testis Ovat," and the varying semantic permutations it was made to perform, introduced an air of pathos, with Oates's salutary statement newly inflected to connote not celebration but quasi-mourning. That 'testis' has its Latin root in 'testi'—"testicles"—with a similar correspondence evident in "ovat" to female reproductive organs, is a fact unlikely to have been lost on a seventeenth-century audience. Oblique commentary on Oates's sexual practices as either subversive or incongruent with his outward persona was just one of many strategies to which the inconsistency of language came to be both paired and exploited.[25] This fertile refashioning of language as a literary tool found a ready home in the visual strategies employed by Oates's later critics.

❧

If the strategy of early commentators had been to invite or to implicate themselves within the processes of speech production, part of the concern of later critics was to directly reflect on the dangers of that speech. Commentators adopted this second system of redress in order that they might minimize and thus rebuke rhetorical

22. Drummond, "Character", 230. Drummond's essay is thought to have been composed sometime during 1615 but was not published until almost one hundred years later, in 1711.

23. Drummond, 230 & 231.

24. Wheatley, 57.

25. For just one example of how this manifested visually see the engraving *Bob Ferguson or the Raree-Show of Mamamouchee Mufty*, together with its accompanying verse, of 1685. BM Number P,6.241.

ambiguity as an inevitable facet of communication. Certainly, this was to become a dominant theme throughout Oates's criminal trial and, as we will now see, a constituent feature of the graphic satire contemporaneous to that event.

The broadside to which I now turn, and whose title deserves quoting in full, plays with the facets of linguistic attribution as they overlap with aspects of graphic representation. Entitled *Epipapresbyter, Grand-Child to Smectymnuus, or, The Worlds Huy and Cry after Titus Oates, Ordain'd Doctor of Devility, at Salamanca,* this publication cannot be more precisely dated than 1685. The reference in the title however to the common law practice of "hue and cry" makes it likely to have been issued either immediately preceding or immediately following Oates's perjury trial in May of the same year. Just as that practice solicited members of the public to apprehend a criminal by physical intervention, so this print can be seen as summoning a public to apprehend, both metaphorically and practically, the terms of Oates's guilt as it combined with the unreliability of his confessional identity.

Furthermore, this is a broadside whose title is almost wholly unpronounceable, arguably intentionally so. Much of the print's satiric effect is built on a conceit of making language fantastic as coded words are generated precisely to be unscrambled. As will soon become apparent, the print combines in its title a number of recognizable linguistic devices already touched upon in this article. It is these devices, and the linguistic conventions from which they derive, that become the measure by which much of the print's meaning subsequently unfolds. A brief scan of the title identifies at least four or five phrases that would have likely troubled viewers in their estimation of the print. I isolate here just three on the assumption that together they give meaning to the whole.

The first, *Epipapresbyter,* is an acronym of sorts in which the three stem words—Episcopalian, Papist, and Presbyterian—are combined and contracted to create a new unit of meaning. In fact, this is a word of many meanings and of none. Individually each component is instantly recognizable, describing through amalgamation a seventeenth-century confessional landscape that was, paradoxically, inherently divided. It its totality, however, *Epipapresbyter* bears no known correspondence to any single expression or utterance, only blending together components of preexisting words whose origins lie elsewhere. The print, however, provides little by way of guidance to the viewer in this regard, merely coining a new phrase in the expectation that meaning might remain purposefully enigmatic. Outwardly, *Epipapresbyter* maintains a familiar appearance, displaying as discrete elements words designed to capture the viewer's imagination. Yet the term *Epipapresbyter* is as ambiguous as it is expressive, echoing on both a conceptual and aesthetic level the more limited conditions of communication in its privileged guise.

But "resolving a mysterious expression" was arguably also part of the pleasure to be gained from engaging with prints of such a provocative nature.[26] Just as the

26. *The Academy of Pleasure . . . With a Poeticall Dictionary* (London: Printed for John Stafford at Fleet-bridge, and Will. Giltspur-street, 1656), sig. $G5^{V}$.

preference of anagrammatic practice dictated that puzzlement, especially as it combined with the exercise of one's wit, was a key means of delivering meaning, it seems the same strategy might also apply in this particular context. As a matter of fact, the work of Adam Morton lends much credibility to this theory. Morton has documented the specifically ludic quality of printed satire during the Popish Plot era, arguing that playful puzzlement was a strategy knowingly pursued by creators with audience interpretation in mind. "Dependent upon close-reading," writes Morton, "audiences entered a game with the [print's] creator: as their intelligence was flattered by recognizing the satires' array of allusions so they fostered appreciation of the commentary's skillfulness essential to increasing the appeal of its political points."[27] Responding to this print then, in all its incongruity, was likely a familiar experience to many of Oates's critics, and what is more, one that was built on a necessary functionality. In this scenario, audience members are arguably being solicited to proceed along a similar path, resurrecting for entertainment value acts comparable to the anagrammatist's (and by implication, Oates's) own.

In this case, however, it is not the anagram *per se* to which the viewer ought to turn but instead to the many narratives of state elsewhere authorized (and similarly undermined), in order that their immediate experience becomes guided. The key is not to identify the print by way of content alone but once deciphered, to also understand how that same content acquires significance though its unique arrangement on the page. As an interest group descended from the reformed religion, "Presbyterian" should describe the kind of political and religious affiliation said to be preferable to outright Catholicism. And until the early 1670s this was often the case. Equally, as non-conformist printer Benjamin Harris made clear, Protestantism asserted an oppositional difference on the condition that it was everything *but* Catholicism. In his primer for schoolchildren of 1679, Harris opens his catechistic address by asking "What Religion do you profess?" to which is answered "The Christian Religion, commonly called the Protestant, in opposition to Popery."[28] Thus, to place the "Papist" next to the "Presbyterian," ostensibly at least, is to cite as oppositional the terms of confessional allegiance that underlined much of the Restoration project.

Yet in reality the weighty precedent of Civil War interests had manufactured significant areas of grey. Both the Presbyterians and the Catholics had stood in opposition to the state, forming through confederacy distinct interest groups whose ultimate goal to undermine institutional monarchy took on the same outward appearance. Although each would maintain as distinct their political and religious aspirations, the relative status of each as it intersected with a changing political reality produced for the onlooker a feeling of confessional indeterminacy. It was on this basis that the

27. Adam Morton, "Popery, Politics, and Play", at 414.

28. Benjamin Harris, *The Protestant Tutor, Instructing Children to Spel and Read English, and Grounding Them in the True Protestant Religio[n], and Discovering the Errors and Deceits of the Papists.* (London : Printed for Benj. Harris under the Piazza of the Royal Exchange in Cornhil, 1679), 114.

anonymous author of *Advice to the Men of Shaftesbury* (1681) was able to assert that "The Papists would destroy our Church and State; so would the Common-Wealthsmen: The Papists would set up Popery and absolute Monarchy; the other an Amsterdam Religion, and Arbitrary Government in the hands of many."[29]

This unresolved preference for perceiving aspects of continuity within an overall model of change must have only been exacerbated by the professed confessional vacillation of Titus Oates himself. As is common knowledge, in the plot's earliest moments Oates had openly offered his own conversion narrative as ready proof of the plot's authority, turning first to Catholicism from his Baptist roots, before reverting once more to the Protestant faith, this time supposedly under Whig sponsorship. As a result, it was readily understood that neither Oates's faith nor his person could be relied upon for consistency or coherence, producing, in effect, an internal self that was divorced from its outward manifestation. As the prosecutor at Oates's trial observed the "Doctor . . . ha[d] been very Liberal to himself, he ha[d] given himself Baptism, and given himself the Doctor's Degree, and now he . . .[has] . . . give[n] himself the Title of the Reforming Protestant," but, the prosecutor continued, ". . . it becomes us and you . . . Mr. *Oates* . . . to assert the Honour of our Religion by disowning any Fellowship with such Villains, or their Actions."[30] Unconvinced that Oates had in fact disowned any of his prior "Fellowships" it is precisely this aspect of Oates's religious and political opportunism that the print now seeks to capture. *Epipapresbyter* aims at taking possession of those disparate aspects of Oates's identity, combining, to paraphrase Ricks, like and unlike "revelatorily."[31]

It is from this sense of duality that we arrive at the third of the key words from within this particular sequence. Understood as commentary on church governance, "Episcopalian" in this context assumes two connotations. Supported by the accompanying epithet, "Ordain'd Doctor of Devility," its presence here invokes once more the false clerical title Oates was to invite upon himself during the plot's earliest moments. Like the religious orders it is paired with, however, the principle of "Episcopacy" is introduced to invite reflection on the allocation and distribution of power in a more general sense, not least as a condition of prelatic rule within the structure of the official church. Understood to be the legitimate leader and appointed guardian of the Christian faith, the power afforded the bishop was increasingly felt to be disproportionate to that of his moral authority. Thus, rather than dualism we might instead understand its presence here to invoke a larger process of societal disunity, one in which the doctrinal standards of church and government were thought compromised by Episcopalian

29. *Advice to the Men of Shaftesbury, or A Letter to a Friend Concerning the Horrid Popish-Plot* (London: Printed for John Smith in Great Queen-Street, 1681), sig. A1^{r}.

30. *The Tryals, Convictions & Sentence of Titus Otes*, 87. For an example that tracks a parallel argument see Robert Willman's article "The Origins of 'Whig' and 'Tory' in English Political Language," *The Historical Journal*, 17.2 (1974), 247–64.

31. Ricks, 111.

influence. Little wonder, then, that it should be utilized to shape critical thinking concerning Titus Oates. Just as the bishop had potentially overreached in his capacity, so too had Oates assumed the authority of divine intercessor, professing an exalted status that he could no longer maintain.

Oates, then, *is* Epipapresbyter: unstable in both meaning and action but sufficiently embedded within society to claim a relevance for the era's political culture. But to whose authority the viewer ought to defer is a matter that only the print itself can resolve. Sandwiched between the print's two core slogans, the intermediate staging of the epithet "Grand-Child" holds the key to unlocking much of what follows. In one sense, the placement of this term before "Smectymnuus" merely continues the work "Epipapresbyter" had begun. An acronym in the truest sense, *Smectymnuus* refers to a group of Puritan controversialists who formed through the combination of their initials an opposition group to Episcopal governance in the early 1640s.[32] A collective of five individuals—Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and William Spurstow—the disputants in this cause were themselves men of religious office. Four of the five were Scottish Presbyterian ministers and together stood in opposition to Charles I's attempt to impose episcopal rule on the Scottish Kirk. Thus, in a roundabout way, the supposedly deleterious effects of episcopacy are again presented as that force of self-interest from which Oates's actions might also be said to derive.

Yet as a forty-year-old controversy, to associate Oates with the *Smectymnuans*' cause is to itself place the concept of benefaction under scrutiny. In keeping with the nuance of political expression, the print draws on the complexity of the *Smectymnuus*' identity to deliver for the viewer a chain of readings that correspond to the plot's own chaotic public dissemination. At this juncture it is important to state that the *Smectymnuans*' cause is not cast here in a favorable light, nor had posterity chosen to remember it with much affection either. As a collective, the group's origins were rooted in the anti-Laudian sentiment of the 1630s, helping to cement over time the historic association between religious dissent and national disunity. Skeptical of their intentions, a ballad of 1666 had chosen to remember the group oxymoronically as "Loyal Non-Conformist[s]," and this kind of condemnation would only persist throughout the century.[33] Their recognition here, then, is one of subverted legitimacy condemning by association the legacy of dissent as it might now be found within the activities of Titus Oates.

32. Thomas Blount in his *Glossographia* containing 'hard words' provided a definition for the group as 'five Ministers [who] wrote a book against Episcopacy and the Common Prayer, in behalf of the Presbyterian Government, to which they all subscribed their names . . . the first letters whereof make this word, Smectymnuus; and from thence they and their Followers were called Smectymnuans.' Thomas Blount, *Glossographia* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcombe for George Sawbridge, 1661), O01r.

33. *The Scotch Riddle Unfolded: Or, Reflections upon R.V.V. His Most Lamentable Ballad, Called The Loyal Non-Conformist* (London, 1666).

Fittingly, the *Smectymnuan* debate was to morph and mutate just as the group's perceived identity was thought volatile and incongruent. What began life as a dispute concerning the episcopal powers of intercession, particularly as mediated through the liturgy and sacrament, transformed into a pamphlet war of words, about words themselves. Of course, from the beginning the *Smectymnuans* had invoked linguistic corruption as the very foundation of prelatic impropriety. In their first tract they railed against the invention of "phrases" and the "novelties of words . . . busi[ly] invented by The Church of God's adversaries."[34] It was this, they asserted, that provided the legacy for much of what was currently in jeopardy, not least as it bore on the principle of mass. Over time, however, it was the *Smectymnuans'* own corruption of words that would attract the greater amount of attention. This "descent into propaganda," as Thomas Kranidas described it, became famously associated with John Milton's early success in print, and owed much to the inherent self-righteousness of the debate's key participants.[35] Crucial to this was an understanding of the self as it became constructed in print. Against rhetoric, the concept of the self instead became the vehicle for substantiating one's claims, with proofs asserted not on the reliability of one's evidence but instead, through the reliability and the personal credit that was afforded the speaker. It was on this basis that both Joseph Hall and John Milton could each in turn describe one another as "false prophets." Over time the purely ideological content of the debate became minimized, transformed instead into a conflict concerning how the individual ought to appropriately conduct themselves in dialogue with others, and as a function of printed discourse more generally.

Should there be any doubt as to what might have connected Oates to the Smectymnuan controversy, we can turn to the writings of Joseph Hall, the bishop and polemicist whose tract *An Humble Remonstrance* (1641) instigated the affair. Defending his position against his *Smectymnuan* adversaries, Hall had written that "my *single* Remonstrance is encountered with a *plurall* Adversary that talkes in the style of We and Us" (my emphasis). Hall continues "Their names, persons, qualities, numbers, I care not to know; But, could they say, My name is Legion, for we are many; or were they as many Legions as men [?]"[36] In essence, the condition of *Smectymnuan* affiliation was to conceal and to obscure through confederacy the role of the individual, yet

34. *An Answer to a Booke Entituled, An Humble Remonstrance. In Which, the Originall of Liturgy Episcopacy Is Discussed. And Quaeres Propounded Concerning Both. The Parity of Bishops and Presbyters in Scripture Demonstrated. . . . Written by Smectymnuus* (London: Printed for I. Rothwell, and are to be sold by T.N. at the Bible in Popes-Head-Alley, 1641), sig. $M3^{V}$.

35. Thomas Kranidas, "Style and Rectitude in Seventeenth-Century Prose: Hall, Smectymnuus, and Milton," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46.3 (1983), 237–69 at 238; *A Milton Encyclopedia*., ed. by William B. Jr. Hunter and others (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 11.

36. Joseph Hall, *A Defence of the Humble Remonstrance, against the Frivolous and False Exceptions of Smectymnvvs Wherein the Right of Leiturgie and Episcopacie Is Clearly Vindicated from the Vaine Cavils, and Challenges of the Answerers / by the Author of the Said Humble Remonstrance. . .* (London: Printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1641), sig. $A1^{V}$.

to simultaneously champion as desirable a personal, individual relationship with god. What is more, this was a change of state which, by the *Smectymnuans'* own admission, could only be brought about through a committed fraternity. The Smectymnuans were essentially benefitting from the very same practices they sought to denounce, making them not only contemptible to the onlooker but liable also to the same charge of dissimulation that would become the hallmark of Oates's own failed character.

What, then, was the solution to the perceived state of Oates's incongruence? Arguably it is the print itself, which contains much of the answer, aping through its visual organization a strategy of exposure modeled on the very practices it is seeking to discredit. In short, the print makes of itself a cryptographic puzzle comparable to Oates's own patchwork of deceit, and this it most readily demonstrates through the manner of its composition.

To better understand this, we can briefly survey that scholarship which has attended to the practice of encoding as a general condition of seventeenth-century cultural activity. Key works across a range of related themes (including espionage, epistolary culture, and seventeenth-century systems of writing), all point to the era's deep fascination with aspects of codicology, especially as a product of militarized statecraft and scientific experiment.[37] Alan Marshall, for example, has documented the openly free use of intelligence networks during Charles II's reign, arguing that the control and flow of covert information was understood in this era as being "vital to the art of government."[38] Although recognized as distasteful, Marshall shows how the practice called for a kind of visible concealment, with Charles openly spying on his subjects, as his own actions were also the subject of intense outside observation.

Lois Potter has investigated the problem created by the concept of secrecy as it dictated the general flow of personal and political relations throughout the 1640s and 1650s. With an explicit focus on royalist literature, Potter concludes that the act of mystification paradoxically condemned, as well as furthered, a perceptive need for deceptive practices. In particular, she highlights the ambivalence of a printed literature which aspired to ever-greater modes of openness through an advertised hostility, with subversion and illegality ironically being interpreted as better "guarant[ors] of [a publication's] truth" status.[39]

In Katherine Ellison's work we see how these quirks of literature soon went on to become a cultural norm. Much of Ellison's research has sought to document

37. See for example *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); *A Material History of Medieval and Early Modern Ciphers : Cryptography and the History of Literacy*, ed. by Katherine E. Ellison and Susan M. Kim (New York ; London: Routledge, 2017); Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing : Royalist Literature, 1641- 1660* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

38. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, 2.

39. Potter, 13 & 36.

how the methods of early modern statecraft achieved a "recreational popularity" in which the technological and experimental facets of intelligence sharing were disseminated through a popular "how to" movement. Ellison foregrounds the role of instructional manuals, textbooks, and letter samplers, all of which helped to legitimize the concept that demonstrating one's cryptographic skills was an exercise in sociability as much as one of practical necessity.[40] We see then how a convention of concealment, whether informal or otherwise, had become crucial to the reading habits of many throughout seventeenth-century society.

To help bring these observations closer to home we can turn to Roger L'Estrange's voluminous writings on the Popish Plot. In an edition of his *Observator*, dated July 7, 1683, L'Estrange extends his commentary into the meaningful role played by intelligence gathering during the Popish Plot's exposure. Presented as a discourse on the need to safeguard privately communicated information, ultimately, we must understand the conversation as a pointed commentary concerning the perceived danger of rhetoric. L'Estrange is dismissive of the profusion of misinformation thought to be in circulation during the Popish Plot years offering, through the voice of "Obs," "Certain *Generall Rules*" which anticipate Jonathan Swift's *Anagrammatic Method* by some forty years. According to L'Estrange one must:

> never . . . Write *Treason* in words at length, to any man when the thing may be done in *Mystery*, and *Cypher*, as well as in *Plain English*. As for Example; [Stock] shall stand for [Men,] A [Perishable Commodity] shall signify the [Affections of the People.] [Trade] shall go for [Conspiracy] [Better bring our Goods to a Bad Market, then let 'em Rot upon our hands.] Now this is as much as to say; [We must put it to a *PUSH*; [*SPEAK* to him,] That is to say; [Whisper him in the Ear with a *BLUNDERBUSS*.] [Cotton-stuff] may Pass for *Charles Stuart* [Barley-Broth] for the *House of Commons,* [Mum *and* Chocolate] for the *Protestant Peers* : [Order of Magpies] for the *Bishops* : and a thousand Other Disguises, under which the Wise Men of This Generation have maintain'd an *Intelligence*.[41]

That the use of cipher might be a source of disquiet among L'Estrange's audience is not under dispute. But, like the subject L'Estrange seeks to diminish, the

40. Katherine Ellison, "'1144000727777607680000 Wayes': Early Modern Cryptography as Fashionable Reading," *The Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 6, (2014).

41. Roger L'Estrange, *The Observator*, Saturday 7 July, no. 371 (London: Printed for Joanna Brome, at the Gun in S. Pauls' Church-yard, 1683); For a comparable, non-satirical example see Thomas Sprat, *A True Account and Declaration of the Horrid Conspiracy against the Late King, His Present Majesty, and the Government: As It Was Order'd to Be Published by His Late Majesty* (London: In the Savoy: printed by Thomas Newcomb, one of His Majesties printers; and are to be sold by Sam. Lowndes over-against Exeter-Change in the Strand, 1685), especially 39.

significance of cipher in this passage owes more to rhetoric than function. L'Estrange writes as though putting into practice the established patterns of a concealed messaging system, but closer inspection reveals the passage to be little more than nonsense. The orthography, however, would have us believe otherwise. Through typographic manipulation, L'Estrange apes the supposedly sophisticated symbols of encrypted correspondence, emphasizing through punctuation, spacing, and typeface the exclusivity of the content without actually delivering any meaning. T. A. Birrell has written of L'Estrange that he "did not speak as he thought. He thought as he spoke, he wrote as he spoke, he printed and published as he spoke."[42] For Birrell the effect of L'Estrange's unique "orthographic style" was intimately connected to his keen sense of oratory. What L'Estrange was able to deliver on the printed page was itself the captured essence of words as spoken, thoughts as imagined, either his own or the coffeehouse characters he used as mouthpieces. Somewhat uniquely, L'Estrange seemed to describe the concepts to which he was referring through the technique of their delivery. The result was that content became expressed as form making the text act as though a specimen of the concealed activities it sought to discredit.

That this strategy should again resurface in 1685 as a visually imagined response to Oates is entirely fitting with a culture sensitive to the dangers of linguistic concealment. L'Estrange's example makes it patently clear that the visual representation of words had the power to influence or manipulate as much as their assumed substantive content. And just like L'Estrange's encrypted message, the print issued two years later under the name *Epipapresbyter* makes of itself a visual puzzle which the viewer is called upon to decipher. Aesthetically, the publication looks and sounds unlike any other of its day. By this fact alone we might consider it an exercise in cryptographic distortion. Certainly, the typographic arrangement of the title takes on the visual appearance of a message covertly communicated. Upper- and lower-case letters combine with letters enlarged and then reduced**,** with italicization and a considered use of space also contributing to the sense of visual overload**.** It might be suggested that rather than revealing content the formatting of the broadside aims closer to its concealment. At a minimum, the print's many typographic features can be seen to compete for viewer attention, enforcing the perception that the material under discussion is that of a crucially sensitive nature.

Here the manipulation of space on the printed page plays an important role. Overall, the print is sympathetically arranged in a manner which apes the visual organization of printed anagrammatic verse, especially those examples particular to the mid-century verse miscellany. If we remember Mary Fage's publication of 1637 in this scenario, as before, the eye is required to track content both horizontally and vertically, connecting the discrete units of text before recombining them to arrive at a complete visual meaning. Although built on a desire for integrity, the typographic

42. T. A. Birrell, "Sir Roger L'Estrange: The Journalism of Orality," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume IV 1557-1695*, ed. by John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 657–61, at. 659.

patterning in Fage's volume made it clear that the individual components of each device were just as important as the whole, perhaps even more so. Such a strategy was not unique to Fage and has been remarked upon elsewhere. For example, W. H. Winnick has described a similar method in the anagrammatic couplets of George Herbert. Winnick writes that in the work of Herbert and others like him "onomastic anagrams . . . were often openly built into poems and poems openly built around them."[43] When one realizes that proportionally the title of this print alone occupies a full half page, after which it dissolves into three columns of heroic verse, the visual strategy described by Winnick supports much of what *Epipapresbyter* is itself setting out to do. In this example, words continually expand into ever more typographical strategies, helping to visually recreate the notion that Oates's integrity is itself infinitely substitutable.

As early as 1589, George Puttenham had pointed to the playful significance of his own anagramming activities, stating that "when I wrote of these devices, I smiled with myself, thinking that readers would too."[44] Importantly, Puttenham finds in his own motivations a preview of the enjoyment his anagrammatic creations might provide to his own readers. Arguably much of what Puttenham described is a quality present here too, with the broadside meeting this challenge through a necessary enlisting of the viewer's participation. If one takes as precedent the historic relationship between play and conflict, not least in the early works of Donne and Herbert, Puttenham's statement is in fact redoubled. In a world where censorship was a publishing norm, only the playful inversion of the social order could deliver the kind of political statement necessary to incite an active viewer response. In this case it is not just that the world has been figuratively turned upside down, but the material presence of Oates is also made the subject of a physical disruption. Thus, an examination of *Epipapresbyter*'s functional coding of play reveals that the uncertainty of Oates's meaning was both identified and quashed through the broadside's delivery of a visual trick, the source for much of which derived, I believe, from the verse compositions of the early seventeenth-century.

In 2005 Adele Davidson claimed to have discovered a great textual oversight within George Herbert scholarship. Long known for his experimental deployment of form, Herbert not only produced examples of patterned verse but, according to Davidson, had also embedded within his poems' theological motifs an additional structural feature. "Hidden in plain sight," writes Davidson, Herbert had in fact incorporated numerous examples of acrostic verse within the extreme left-hand column of many of his verse compositions. What is more, these secreted acrostics went beyond a purely decorative or ornamental purpose, designed instead to illuminate further the verse's

43. R. H. Winnick, '"Loe, Here in One Line Is His Name Twice Writ': Anagrams, Shakespeare's Sonnets, and the Identity of the Fair Friend," *Literary Imagination*, 11.3 (2009), 254–77, at 264.

44. Puttenham, 198.

core motifs. "Herbert figuratively puts the cross in acrostic, using the vertical dimension of verse lines to comment on the horizontal."[45]

A review of *Epipapresbyter's* titular arrangement confirms that this broadside, too, enlists acrostic verse to deliver commentary in a manner consistent with the overall development of its theme. Dedicated directly to Oates, this feature can be seen on the second to last line of the broadside's title. It spells out in characteristic fashion the initials of Oates's name, attaching to each capital letter a purported quality or attribute. Such a strategy was not without precedent. During the height of his popularity Oates, together with his co-informers, had been the ready subjects of similar acts of alphabetic rearrangement.[46] Now, however, little of that high praise is preserved. Instead, we are viewing what playwright William Clark referred to in his Restoration Comedy *Marciano; or, The Discovery* (1663) as an 'accurstick'.[47] A search of Oates's name produces not ready proofs of his authoritative status but instead a filtered insight into his true nature. Thus, from the "I" of Titus proceeds "Incubus." Similarly, in the "A" of Oates we are encouraged to see "arrogan[ce]."

So far, so clear? Perhaps not. Against the relative stability of the title's horizontal sequencing, one cannot fail to notice the atypicality of the acrostic's presentational mode. Ordinarily, one would expect to see the letters of the subject's name arranged, not in horizontal, but in vertical fashion, the accompanying verse commentary only complementing this arrangement by unfolding in a manner perpendicular to the original phrase. Overall, the relationship between the two lines is intended to produce a sense of cohesion, with the acrostic's *cross*-like shape delivering through intersection the relative meeting point between the subject as outwardly "signaled," and the subject as internally "divined." Yet in this instance, convention is overturned. Contrary to expectation, the initial arrangement of Oates's name is in fact presented horizontally, with the effect that Oates as person becomes subsumed within the general order of the print's staged unfolding. Furthermore, the "revelatory" attributes of Oates's character are not in "plain sight" but instead placed at an uncomfortable forty-five-degree angle: the suggestion being perhaps that the viewer ought to twist their head in order to meet Oates with the same idiosyncrasy he had himself delivered to the public.[48]

45. Adele Davidson, "The Temple's Left Column: George Herbert in 'Acrostick Land'," *The Times Literary Supplement*, Issue 5357, 9 December 2005, 12–13, at 12.

46. For an example see the series issued by printer Thomas Dawks concerning Stephen Dugdale and William Bedloe respectively: *Londons Acknowledgment to Mr. Stephen Dugdale, the Eminent Discoverer of this Most Horrid Plot*, Letterpress and engraving (London, Printed by Thomas Dawks, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty in the British Language, at the Blew Anchor at the West-End of St. Pauls, 1679); *Englands Obligations To Captain William Bedloe, The Grand Discoverer Of This Most Horrid Plot*, Letterpress and engraving (imprint as before)

47. William Clark, *Marciano; or, The Discovery, A Tragi-Comedy, Acted . . .By a Company of Gentlemen* (Edinburgh, 1663), 39.

48. The only other example I have found which adopts the same unconventional formatting is an acrostic composed on a similarly loathed figure, William Laud. See *The*

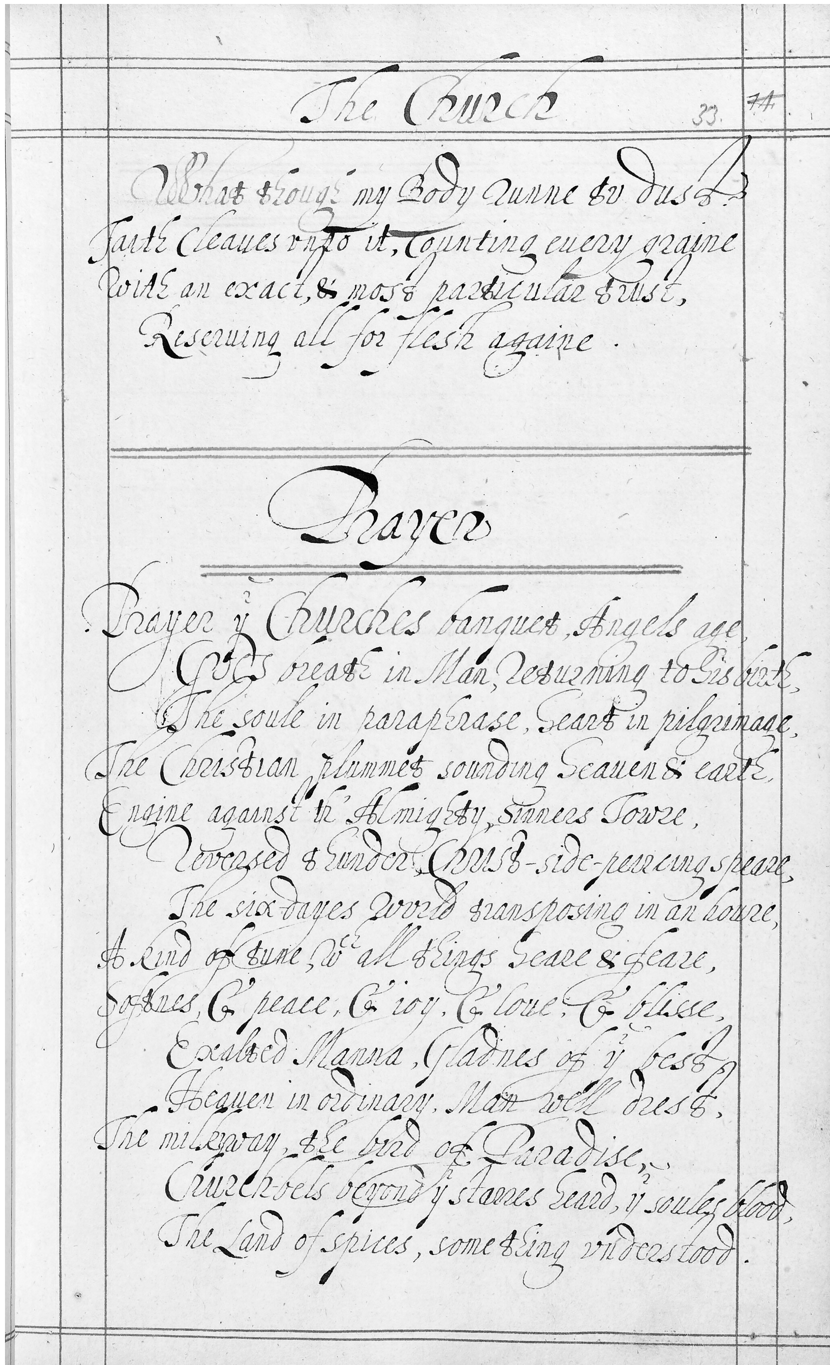
Seemingly, then, even in revelation Oates's character is such that only a barely concealed deception may substantiate his person. It is not just that Oates had broken certain fundamental rules, and thus the print now sympathetically undermines the standard conventions of acrostic patterning to deliver a message in kind. Rather, like Oates's deception itself, there is more here to be uncovered and much of that derives from the broadside's preoccupation with form. Having already induced one physical response in the viewer—the twisting of the head—might it be possible that further manipulations are also being solicited? I believe so. And this is a prospect affirmed through the imperative provided by the acrostic itself. "*Turn*-coat," it reads, on the very first vertical line, just as one must "turn" the head, or better still, the sheet of paper, to reveal what has been purposefully concealed. This "trick," at once visual and kinetic, is that feature of embedded meaning consistent with the poetry of Herbert, and that device, too, which unites the print's failing 'fixity' with its unstable manuscript heritage. As with much of the overall arrangement, the broadside calls for our direct attention by assuming the character of the object it seeks to undermine. As we reach the denouement, we realize that the printed page is as unstable as its advertised subject.

Should there be any doubt as to whether the print's creator intended it to be manipulated in this manner, we need only look again to the works of Herbert for confirmation. On Davidson's recommendation, sonnets such as *Prayer (I)* (figure 4) help to illustrate more than just the purposeful concealment of the acrostic within the poem's compositional scheme. They also furnish the viewer with a directive, signaling through scrambled letters how the reader ought to engage with the material. Thus, the extreme indentation of *Prayer* delivers in its acrostic "PTEAST." Or, without abbreviation, "POINT EAST," a gesture that records a mental direction as much as a physical one consistent with the poem's devotional theme. Davidson writes, "*Prayer* (*I),* a series of appositives, contains no verb, but the acrostic, with its abbreviated imperative, puts prayer in motion. . . . a directive on direction in prayer" [49] Of course, the verb within *Epipapresbyter's* acrostic feature is not lacking. Instead, it is both verb and noun, with "turning" (verb) the page being the action required to unmask the identity of Oates as "Turn-Coat" (noun).

What, then, of the accompanying verse? In some ways, it presents the viewer with little novelty, merely elaborating themes already signaled within the broadside's title. In this sense it serves as a recapitulation, perhaps helping to reinforce the perception that Oates was a character of a similarly "backward" persuasion. It does, however, offer the viewer-cum-reader further inducements to "turn", with much of the effect being created through the verse's mode of expression. Most notably, the rhyming scheme creates a feeling of instability, of a shifting landscape in which propositions are

Deputies Ghost, or, An Apparition to the Lord of Canterbury in the Tower . . . Being an Acrostick Anagramme of His Name (London, 1641).

49. Davidson, "The Temple's Left Column", 12.



The Church 33.

What though my Body runne to dust?
Faith cleaves unto it, counting every graine
With an exact, & most particular trust,
Reserving all for flesh againe.

Prayer

Prayer ye Churches banquet, Angels age,
Gods breath in Man, returning to his birth,
The soule in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heaven & earth,
Engine against th' Almighty, sinners Towre,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-peircing speare,
The six-dayes world transposing in an houre,
A kind of tune, wch all things heare & feare,
Softnes, & peace, & ioy, & love, & blisse,
Exalted Manna, Gladnes of ye best,
Heaven in ordinary, Man well drest,
The milkyway, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bels beyond ye starres heard, ye soules blood,
The Land of spices, something understood.

FIGURE 4. George Herbert, *The Temple* (1641), 6th edition, BT1.135.23(1), New College Library, Oxford. Courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford.

raised only to be overturned: "He's all Religions, yet non True/He *Jack of All Trades* doth outdoe." "'He needs must be a Tinker's Brother/Who mends one hole, and makes another." Much of the verse unfolds in this topsy-turvy manner, with Oates assuming an almost Proteus-like character, shape-shifting and morphing line by line. Likewise, further allusions to Greek mythology repeatedly place Oates at the center of a world of his own making crafting—forging—an identity for himself which is understood as being both malevolent and awe-inspiring in equal measure.

> This *Tymist Turncoat* of our Age,
> Would be a Show, if put in Cage;
> For he is elevate (preserve us)
> Above the Sphere of *Hirco-cervu*s:
> And all the World desire to see
> What Human Monster can he be

Much like the prints issued during the early years of the plot which sought to cast doubt on Oates's sexual preferences, the effect here is to create a world in disarray where Oates's identity can be neither satisfactorily identified, nor the reader's place within that world easily sustained. Almost unnecessarily, then, the closing lines of the verse only confirm the broadside's overall premise.

> Under Titus Oates
> . . . *Justice* seem'd to die,
> And Order turn to *Anarchy*.

When writers such as Donne and Herbert composed their verse, writes Todd Butler, they "evidence[d] a . . . deep concern with the mind and its deliberative processes as marking boundaries for political citizenship and royal power."[50] In *Epipapresbyter*, it is not just that boundaries appear transgressed or troubled, but also that they are in some way possessed. Territorially, boundaries between words are reduced, while at other times the print appears as though "boundary-less," the abbreviated formatting of *Epipapresbyter* and *Smectymnuus* only appearing ridiculous when lost in a sea of blank space. Yet, as this article has argued, it is precisely this act of linguistic contraction which so effectively communicates to the viewer the inherent caprice in Oates's character, as it aligned with the speciousness of his allegations. By practicing

50. Todd Wayne Butler, *Literature and Political Intellection in Early Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 20.

this linguistic strategy, the print effectively invokes, through the deployment of false titles, the false grandeur of its chosen subject: an aim which becomes ever more intensified when one considers the historical role afforded the anagram and the system of word play to which it belonged. As we have seen throughout this discussion, it was well recognized that the technical characteristics of the anagram were wholly ambivalent. On the one hand, their divinatory properties nudged audiences towards some immanent good or universal truth consistent with the perceived, outward character of the person to whom the anagram had been applied. On the other hand, however, to demonstrate this prophetic act was to put words and letters into motion and thus to disrupt that same sense of authority such activities had helped to secure. It is entirely fitting, then, that Oates was to become a victim of the anagram's inherent caprice. While commentators frequently implored Oates to "Tell-Troth"—seeing in London's Tower the ability to negate that model first cultivated at Babel—in reality Oates was afforded little opportunity to make good on his failed utterances. Indeed, as one commentator so aptly put it, as he "saw the world o're from the Tower", Oates was not enlightened but instead "confounded." [51]

The effects of language, then, considered in this article as a mode of operation as much as the conveyor of meaning, become an important opportunity to reflect on the combined literary and visual heritage of a much-scrutinized political event. Indeed, as writers intuitively vacillated in their interpretative strategies, admonishing—demolishing, even—Oates for his literary invention, they too invented a type of political work which was purposefully deceptive in outlook. For today's reader, these modes of creativity might suffer a loss of impact, dependent as they were on technical sophistries which were firmly rooted in another moment. Likewise, in continually seeking to locate the motivations of Oates in the recent past, one might see in these same strategies an unforgivable act of anachronism. But in making their critique perform graphically, commentators could, in curious fashion, complete the process of linguistic entrapment Oates himself was thought to have begun. Like was used against like, and by this process could produce a novel take on a historical problem. What is more, through this same process of negation, critics were paradoxically afforded the ability to restore to language the values they cherished most: its ability to communicate freely, clearly, and in terms moderate and proportional. It is in this regard that the graphic aspect to Oates's demise is lent a potency otherwise unachievable through written critique alone. Indeed, as Roger North had so acerbically observed, why "tedious[ly] describe in words . . . the Workings of false Men" when one can instead "shew" them in Pictures? [52]

51. *Titus Tell-Troth: Or, The Plot-Founder Confounded. A Pleasant New Song. To the Tune of, Hail to the Myrtle Shades* (London: Printed for Allen Banks, 1682), no pagination.

52. Roger North, *Examen: Or an Enquiry into the Credit and the Veracity of a Pretended Complete History* (London, 1740), 101.

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