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***IN SULPHUREAM PAPISTARUM
CONSPIRATIONEM EXERCITIA:***

**Retelling the Gunpowder Plot at the King's School,
Canterbury (1665–84)**

TOMMI ALHO*

1. Introduction

At around midnight of 4 November 1605, or so the official story goes, Guy Fawkes was discovered with thirty-six barrels of gunpowder in a cellar beneath the House of Lords. Belonging to a group of Catholic conspirators angered by increased governmental oppression of English Catholics, Fawkes's intent was to blow up King James I and his chief ministers at the State Opening of Parliament on 5 November. However, the authorities got wind of the plot: Fawkes and several other conspirators were either tried and executed or killed while resisting capture. The failure of the plot was attributed to divine intervention, and Parliament was prompt to legislate 5 November as a day of public thanksgiving, accompanied henceforth by religious observances, ringing of church bells, and bonfires.

The Gunpowder Plot or Treason, as the conspiracy has been known ever since, became the subject of a vast literary output, ranging from government accounts, histories and sermons to Latin epic. In this paper, I would like to discuss a hitherto unaddressed example of the Gunpowder genre recorded in the *Orationes et carmina aliaque exercitia* manuscript.¹ A rare collection of gram-

* I wish to thank Anthony W. Johnson and Rajja Sarasti-Wilenius for their helpful comments on a draft of this paper. Moreover, I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions.

¹ Lit. Ms E41, Canterbury Cathedral Archives. Henceforth referred to as *Orationes*.

mar school composition from Early Modern England, the manuscript comprises nearly one thousand folio pages, containing speeches, plays and verses performed – and for the most part composed – by the students of the King’s School, Canterbury, during the headmastership of George Lovejoy (1665–1684). The texts within the *Orationes* – written in Latin, English and Greek – are divided into four subgenres according to the occasion of performance. On Oak Apple Day (29 May), the students celebrated the birthday and restoration of Charles II to power; on Guy Fawkes Day (5 November), they recounted the events of the failed Gunpowder Plot; in December they pleaded with the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral for a Christmas break; and in the week before Lent a select number of boys engaged in rhetorical contests. The texts have been arranged in annual cycles, with seventeen cycles and sixty-eight performances in total.² The recorded performances took place before the Dean and canons of the Canterbury Cathedral, with some other guests present as well.

Under the rubric *In sulphuream Papistarum conspirationem* (or *coniurationem*) *exercitia*, the *Orationes* records seventeen Guy Fawkes Day performances in total, comprising almost one third of the whole manuscript. With some exceptions, all the performances have the same structure, each beginning with a Latin prologue and orations, accompanied by hexameter (or sometimes elegiac) verses in Latin and Greek. These are often followed by one or two dramatic dialogues in both Latin and/or English, bringing onto the stage key figures involved in the conspiracy, from Henry Garnet – a Jesuit superior executed for his complicity in the Plot – to Guy Fawkes himself. All the performances conclude with a brief Latin epilogue.

Given the bulk of material at hand and the fact that the *Orationes* Gunpowder texts – particularly the orations and verses – are rather repetitive in both their wording and content, I shall largely confine my discussion to one representative example of the genre. Recorded for the year 1677, the performance consists of a prologue, an oration, a Latin hexameter poem, a Greek hexameter poem, a declamation, and an epilogue. The focus of this article is on the Latin orations and Latin and Greek verses performed on Guy Fawkes Day. The dialogues – many of them in English – deserve a study in their own right and are beyond the scope of this paper.

² For a fuller discussion on the manuscript and different subgenres, cf. Alho 2020; Mäkilähde et al. 2016; also Johnson 2017.

2. Literary background

The King's School Guy Fawkes Day performances draw on an already well-established tradition of both Neo-Latin and vernacular Gunpowder Plot literature. As for the Latin writings, the most noteworthy genres were the brief epic and epigram, complemented by occasional poems. On the vernacular side, we find, *inter alia*, government accounts, sermons, liturgical texts, poems and histories.³ For the purpose of the present article, we will concern ourselves chiefly with the Latin writings on the Plot.

The tradition of Anglo-Latin brief epic (or *epyllion*) goes at least as far back as the anonymous *Pareus* from 1586.⁴ This epic poem of 460 lines offers an account of a failed catholic assassination attempt against Queen Elizabeth in 1585 (the so-called Parry Plot). Another example falling within the same genre is Thomas Campion's *ad Thamesin* (1595), a congratulatory poem to the river Thames on the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Apart from their Virgilianism and anti-papal emphasis, common to both of these works is their utilisation of a mythologizing narrative pattern, which locates both attempts in Hell and introduces a kind of Pluto-Satan hybrid into Anglo-Latin literature. This pattern is modelled after the infernal council in Canto IV of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, or more precisely, on the Latin translation of the first part of Canto IV, *Plutonis Concilium ex Initio Quarti Libri Solymeidos* by Scipione Gentili, published in London in 1584.⁵

After the Gunpowder Plot, this mythologizing formula was readily adapted to fit yet another catholic threat. Only a year after the event, two brief epics were published: *Pietas Pontificia* by Francis Herring and *In Serenissimi Regis Iacobi Liberationem* by Michael Wallace. More works were soon to follow: Phineas Fletcher published his *Locustae vel Pietas Iesuitica* in 1611; and, sometime between 1613 and 1620, the same Thomas Campion as above penned his epic treatment of the Plot, *De Pulverea Coniuratione*, which was never printed. The most famous specimen of this genre, however, must be John Milton's *In Quintum*

³ For a recent account of the Gunpowder Plot genre, cf. James 2017; for the Neo-Latin writings on the Plot in particular, cf. Haan 1996, xvi–lxxvii.

⁴ The poem was likely written by George Peele (Brooke 1939; Haan 1996, lxi; Sutton 1997, 357).

⁵ Sutton 1997, 358–59. For brief mythological epic as a Neo-Latin genre, cf. Korenjak 2012.

Novembris, composed when he was only seventeen years old in 1626 and published in 1645.

As Robert Appelbaum has observed: “the [Gunpowder] genre in Britain had even adopted a characteristic story: a story of violence plotted, expressed, and thwarted, with victory redounding to the side of true religion, which begins with a conspiracy against the cause of true religion instigated by Satan.”⁶ Accordingly, all these works share more or less the same structure: Pluto-Satan, embittered by the fact that the Catholic cause has failed in England, summons an infernal council, which puts in motion a conspiracy to destroy Protestant England. Carried out with the aid of Satan’s human collaborators – the Pope, the Jesuits and the English conspirators – the plot is usually thwarted by divine intervention. In addition to Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, the genre draws on Marco Girolamo Vida’s *Christiados* (1535), an epic poem in six books on the Passion of Christ. Naturally, both of these works and the Gunpowder epics themselves go back to *Aeneid*, employing such episodes as Juno’s summoning of Alecto from the underworld to wreak havoc on the Trojans in book 7, and to the infernal councils in Claudian’s *In Rufinum* and *De Raptu Proserpinae*.⁷

Apart from brief epic, several occasional poems on the Plot were produced of which I will mention only a few representative examples. The earliest of these was Thomas Goad’s *Cithara Octochorda Pectine Pulsata*, a collection of eight Horatian odes from 1605, followed the next year by a much expanded (if not re-written) version under the title *Proditoris Proditor*. The year 1606 also saw the publication of a lengthy hexameter poem, *In Homines Nefarios*, by an anonymous author. Again, the writer descends to Hell, where the plotters are addressed in invective language, but otherwise the work does not closely follow the conventions of Gunpowder epic. In this regard, a somewhat similar example is William Forbes’s hexameter poem, *Apophoreta Papae*, published in his *Poemata Miscellanea* (1642), celebrating the Dutch victory over the Spanish fleet at the Battle of the Downs (1639) during the Eighty Years’ War. Although the poem employs the formula of an infernal council, it does not strictly speaking fall within the Gunpowder genre but presents us with a heavily mythologized description of the naval battle. However, the work links the Battle of the Downs to the Gunpowder

⁶ Appelbaum 2007, 471.

⁷ *Aen.* 7,323 ff.; *Claud. Ruf.*, 1,50 ff.; *Rapt.* 1,32 ff. For the genre’s literary indebtedness in general, cf. Haan 1996, xxix–xxxiv.

Plot and the victory over the Spanish Armada, offering us a prime example of how a contemporary event was readily incorporated into a series of providential deliverances from the perennial Catholic threat.⁸

Occasional poems on the Plot are also recorded in several collections of commemorative verses from Cambridge and Oxford. These include, among others, two collections produced on the death of Prince Henry on 6 November 1612: *Iusta Oxoniensium* (1612) and *Epicedium Cantabrigiense in Obitum immaturum semperque deflendum Henrici Illustrissimi Principis Walliae* (1612). As for the Gunpowder epigrams, the most famous examples of the genre must be the five brief epigrams composed again by Milton probably at the same time as his *In Quintum Novembris*. In addition, examples of Gunpowder epigrams can be found in such works as Thomas Cooper's Latin treatise on the event, *Nonae Novembris Aeternitati Consecratae* (1607), where the prose text is preceded by a series of epigrams.⁹

However, it is not only from their poetical precedents that the King's School Gunpowder compositions take their inspiration but also from the religious services, that is the Morning Prayer and Liturgy, the students would have attended before they mounted the pulpit in the evening of 5 November. Following the Restoration of the monarchy, a revised version of the *Book of Common Prayer* was issued in 1662.¹⁰ Three new services were annexed at the end of the book, commemorating the Gunpowder Plot, the execution of Charles I, and the restoration of Charles II. The services follow more or less the same pattern, with proper psalms, collects, litanies, epistles and gospels prescribed for each commemoration. However, the Gunpowder compositions do not only echo the ideas and sentiments expressed in these services but the King's School boys – as will

⁸ Cf. Forbes 1642, sigs. C2r–C3v. For example, cf. Vulcan at sig. C3v, ll. 3–16: *Hanc quoque sulphureo tentavi pulvere gentem / Perdere, et invisum diro cum Rege Senatum ...* ("I too attempted to destroy with gunpowder this nation and its hateful Parliament together with its detestable King ..."). See also the online edition of Forbes's *Poemata* by D. F. Sutton (2014). For the incorporation of Catholic threats into an account of a series of providential deliverances, cf. James 2017, 188; Cressy 1989, 171–89.

⁹ Although it is often claimed that composing Gunpowder epigrams was a common exercise in early-modern grammar schools (cf. e.g. Haan 1996, xx, quoting Bradner 1940, 69), I have yet to come across any such specimen.

¹⁰ Cf. Hefling 2006. The 1665 "Rules and Orders for governing the Freeschoole at Canterbury" specify that the boys should furnish themselves with Books of Common Prayer (Edwards 1957, 213).

be discussed in detail below – even took it upon themselves to model their Greek verses after psalm texts prescribed for the day.

3. Orations

Conventionally, the 1677 performance begins with a brief prologue, this time of only ten lines, which I quote in full:

Salvete millies, Auditores reverendi, quos hodie tam laetos huc confluisse cernimus, fremat quanquam, fredeatque Jesuitarum malignitas. Tam horrendum, tamque atrox erat hodierni facinoris periculum quod evasimus; ut etiam ipse, quanquam infans, non solum eloquendi, sed loquendi admodum imperitus, silere nequeam. Quantum hodie nefas moliti sint perfidiosi istiusmodi carnifices, quamque miraculosa salus nobis contigerit, vobis elegantius enarrabunt mei Condiscipuli, qui mox pace vestra suggestum ascendant oratorium. Quorum gratia supplex oro in horam ut benevoli sedeatis; ut cognoscendo pernoscatis prodigiosum hodierni facinoris et principium, et exitium. (fol. 311v)¹¹

A thousand greetings, reverend auditors, whom we see happily gathered here today, although the malignity of the Jesuits roars and gnashes its teeth. Although I am only a child, inexperienced in both eloquence and speaking, the peril of today's offence, which we have escaped, was so dreadful and savage that even I cannot remain silent. My fellow students, who, with your permission, shall soon mount the oratorical pulpit, will tell you more elegantly about how such treacherous murderers set in motion so great a wickedness and how a miraculous salvation was granted to us. For their sake, I humbly beg you to sit benevolently for an hour so that

¹¹ The manuscript is written in a perhaps surprisingly readable italic hand. I have silently expanded the scarce abbreviations (mainly for the diphthongs and “que”) and omitted the usual Neo-Latin accent marks. Only in two places have I been forced to add a minor emendation (cf. below, pp. 20, 25).

you may thoroughly learn the prodigious beginning and end of today's crime.

The prologue begins with a greeting to the audience, which usually included the Dean and canons of the Canterbury Cathedral, with some other guests probably present as well.¹² The concessive notion of their presence despite the Jesuits' undertakings (*fremat quanquam, frendeatque Jesuitarum malignitas*) seems to be somewhat a commonplace in the Guy Fawkes prologues.¹³ This is followed by a paromology (*quanquam infans ... silere nequeam*) – hardly a surprising figure in school orations – which states the wicked nature of the crime to be addressed. Before handing over to his fellow students, the speaker briefly pleads for the goodwill of the audience.¹⁴ With some variation, nearly all the Guy Fawkes prologues follow the same structure.

The oration that follows covers around two pages (fols. 311v–12v), corresponding, in the main, to the typical structure of a Gunpowder oration. First, the terrible consequences of the Plot, had it succeeded, are put forward:

Ecce nimirum hoc ipso die, Auditores venerandi, execranda barbarorum turba sub specie scilicet religionis non solum in Regis, sed etiam totius regni, simul et Ecclesiae perniciem nequissime conjurabat. Cujus coeptis si fortuna faeliciter aspirasset, irrevocabile fatum nobis incubuerat inopinato, funditusque pereundi. Summa nimirum regni autoritas duram serviisset sub Papa servitutum: Judices, et magistratus ficto Christi vicario fasces

¹² The Dean, or in his absence the vice-dean, and the canons are often addressed in the prologues. Consequently, the Dean seems to have been absent this year.

¹³ Similarly, e.g., in 1673 and 1674: *Fremat igitur per nos licet, frendeatque Iesuitica malignitas* (fol. 191r); ... *tametsi fremat, frendeatque perfidiosa Jesuitarum malignitas* (fol. 219r). For classical precedents, cf. e.g. *Aen.* 9,341; 12,8; *Liv.* 30,20,1.

¹⁴ In regard to the age of the students, they usually entered the grammar school at the age of seven or eight and stayed there for six or seven years (Vincent 1969, 58). The Guy Fawkes performances seem to specify the age of the students on only one occasion. In the 1665 prologue (fol. 1r), the student about to deliver the oration is addressed as “Shrawleie”, which in all probability refers to John Shrawley, admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, on 5 May 1666, aged seventeen (Venn – Venn 1927, 71, s.v. “Shrawley, John”). This would make him sixteen or seventeen years old when he was speaking in 1665.

suos ignominiose submisissent: et cives Anglicani, nisi veram, et catholicam abjurassent veritatem, ad metalla, vel molam, vel ignem damnati essent ad Papae arbitrium. (fol. 311v)

Truly, on this very day, Venerable auditors, a detestable mob of barbarians on the pretext of religion most worthlessly plotted not only the destruction of the King but also of the whole realm together with the Church. If fortune had favored their undertakings, the irrevocable fate of perdition would have fallen unexpectedly and totally upon us. Truly, the highest authority of the Kingdom would have served a hard servitude under the Pope: judges and the magistracy would have shamefully lowered their fasces to the false Vicar of Christ. And the English people, had they not renounced the true and catholic truth, would have been condemned to the mines, millstone or fire at Pope's bidding.

Next, the speaker moves on to emphasise the infernal origins of the Plot:

Hujus rei gratia cum Plutone Furiisque consilium cepit. A quo responsum erat nullam aliam Angliae subjugandae rationem iniri posse, quàm more talparum cuniculos agendo, et aedibus Parliamentariis fasces, et ferramenta supponendo; quibus igne sulphureo sursum elevatis, tota concilii domus membratim discerperetur. Unde Rex, Principes, Episcopi, Proceres, quasi tot sanguinei cometae, huc et illuc in aere volverentur. (fols. 311v–12r)

For this cause [that is to bring down the Church and the Commonwealth], he [Fawkes] took counsel with Pluto and the Furies. The advice was that no other method could be devised in order to subjugate England than to make underground passages in the way of moles and to set faggots and iron tools under the Houses of Parliament, which, having been lifted up from below by sulphurous fire, would have torn to pieces the entire House of Council member by member. Whence the king, princes, bishops and no-

bles would have rolled here and there in the air as though a great number of bloody comets.

Following the conventions of the Gunpowder genre, there is not a single Gunpowder oration in the *Orationes* without some reference to the demonic origins of the conspiracy.¹⁵ As above, this is usually accompanied by a rather vivid description of the casualties that would have been suffered in case of a successful explosion beneath the Parliament (... *quasi tot sanguinei cometae, huc et illuc in aere volverentur*).¹⁶

The *Orationes* Gunpowder texts highlight the tendency to link the Plot to a later deliverance, the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. As David Cressy has observed: “Royalist apologists linked 5 November to 29 May, celebrating both occasions as deliverances of the Stuart dynasty. Patriotic preachers invoked the litany of divine interventions as endorsements of the established regime. Anglican conservatives recalled the deliverance of a king and his progeny from this danger, and emphasized the safeguarding of Protestant episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer.”¹⁷ Accordingly, the Gunpowder speeches commonly equate Catholics with Protestant Dissenters (or Fanatics). In 1677 we are told that

Non itaque mirum vobis videatur, Auditores, quod inter duos latrones Ecclesia Christi crucifigatur, Fanaticum scilicet, et Romano-catholicum quorum alter animum illius petit, alter corpus, et animum. Quod abunde testantur hujusce Novembris nonae. (fol. 312r)

Thus, it comes as no surprise to you, Auditors, that the Church of Christ is crucified between two thieves, that is the Fanatic and the Roman Catholic, of which the one pursues her soul and the other

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. ... *Plutonis archipresbyter iste Garnettus* ... (fol. 2v); ... *qui cum Plutone commercium habent* ... (fol. 191r); *Sed qualia parat hic Plutonis architectus instrumenta ad facinus peragendum?* (fol. 424r).

¹⁶ Cf. *Aen.* 10, 272–73: *non secus ac liquida si quando nocte cometae / sanguinei lugubre rubent, aut Sirius ardor*. The (school)boys seem to have a certain liking for the trope of people flying around in the air after an explosion. Likewise, for example, in 1682: *Tu, tu sperasti Jacobum Angliae monarcham, regiamque sobolem, sacrae religionis mystas, et imperii proceres, quasi tot volucres in aere volitantes videre* (fol. 424v).

¹⁷ Cressy 1989, 173.

both the body and soul. The fifth of this November bears ample witness to it.

Moreover, in keeping with the providential account of England's Protestant history, it is always stressed that the Plot was thwarted only by God's direct intervention.¹⁸

Nam bene notum est sine Dei clementia, et misericordia nullum imperium, nullamque Ecclesiam diu permansuram. Hodierna itaque lucis salute soli Illius misericordiae debendum fateamur. Absit enim ut homines ingenio, vel Marte suo salute, qualem hodie sentimus, se adeptos esse gloriantur. Deus, Deus, ille solus rex optimus maximus qui nutu suo regit omnia, impia perditorum consilia perspexit, expugnavitque.

For it is well known that without God's clemency and mercy no empire or church is likely to survive for long. Thus we acknowledge that today's splendor of salvation is only due to His mercy. For far be it that men should pride themselves in attaining the salvation we hear about today by their intellect or own effort. God, God, the only *rex optimus maximus* who reigns all at his will: he looked through the wicked plans of destroyers and overcame them.

Finally, the speech is brought to an end with a few select lines in praise of the House of Stuart:

Floreat illustrissima Carolina domus, et gloriose sic triumphat, ut sicut hodie, sic semper Io triumphet! canant tam Oratores, quam Poetae: utque omnes cum tubae, tum campanae gaudium sic expriment, ut ipsi etiam Antipodes triumphum hunc nostrum nunc, et in posterum mirentur, & stupeant. (fol 312v)

¹⁸ For the Gunpowder genre as providential account of English history, cf. James 2017, 28–70; for providence in early modern England, cf. Walsham 2001.

May the illustrious house of Charles flourish and gloriously triumph so that in the same way as today both the orators and poets may forever sing *Io triumphe!* So that all the trumpets and bells may announce the joy, and that even those dwelling on the other side of the globe may admire and be amazed at our triumph.

4. *Epyllion*

The hexameter poems recorded in the *Orationes* for the 5 November are rather brief compared to the Gunpowder epics discussed above, the longest running to scarcely over one hundred lines. The compositions are clearly modelled after the earlier works in the tradition: they are heavily mythologized and make use of the figures of the infernal council and the furies, in places even quoting their predecessors line for line (or, at least, with very little modification).¹⁹ In addition, the poems are dense with classical references, namely to Virgil, Claudian and Ovid, all of them standard reading material in early-modern grammar schools.²⁰ The 1677 poem of eighty-four lines opens with a fitting transition from prose to poetry, followed by a few conventional lines, before moving down to the underworld:

Sat nimis est dictum Prosis. Quid carmina possunt
Iam nunc tentemus. Linguis, animisque favete.²¹
Vestra etenim venia, quanquam sum viribus impar,
Incipiam. Daemon furiis accensus, et ira,
Consilium ipsius quod tot labentibus annis
Frustratum bello, fatis fuit atque repulsum,
Nos elemento alio statuit tentare, petensque
Ut posset melius tacita nos perdere fraude

¹⁹ In this way, for example, the 1678 poem first borrows three lines (fol. 339r, ll. 9–11) from *In homines nefarios* (p. 7, ll. 19–21) and almost right below (ll. 16–18) three lines from Forbes (1642, sig. Er, ll. 14–16). Another example, from 1682, quotes seven lines (fol. 427r, ll. 15–21) with only minor modifications from *Oxoniensis Academiae Funebre* (1603, p. 19, ll. 17–23).

²⁰ For the classical curriculum in seventeenth-century grammar schools, cf. Clarke 1959, 41–42.

²¹ Cf. Ov. *Fast.* 1,71–72: *prospera lux oritur: linguīs animisque favete / nunc dicenda bona sunt bona verba die*; also *Am.* 3,2,43. The Ovidian lines are quoted in full in 1669 (fol. 104r) when the epic form was made to give way to a page of elegiac distich.

Igniferos fratres subito sibi iussit adesse
 Spirantes ignem Jesuitas. Ocijus omnes
 Imperio laeti parent, ac iussa facessunt.
 Praesentes sua quos recte commenta docebat.
 Quorum unus scelere ante alios immanior omnes
 Textor atque dolis, Garnettus, nomine, torvo
 Plutoni incurvans sese, genua atque volutans,
 Sic fatur. Placeat si sic, dignissime Princeps,
 Omnia perficiam ipse tibi haec promptissimus actor.
 Et Pluto ridens tum talia voce profatur.
 I fortunato nunquam non alite<r>, Fili,
 Nil metuens adero tecum auxiliator in igne. (fols. 312v, ll. 1–20)

Enough has been said in prose. We shall now try what verses can do. Hold your tongues and attend! Although I am unequal in strength, by your leave, I shall begin. The Demon ablaze with fury and rage that his plan was rendered vain by war and foiled by the faiths, as so many years were passing by, decided to try us with another element; and attacking through the concealment of fraud in order to better destroy us, he immediately ordered the fire-bearing brothers, fire-breathing Jesuits to be present. At once they all happily obeyed his commands and carried out his orders. He duly taught his devices to those present. One of them, monstrous in crime above all others, a weaver of deceits, called Garnett, bowed down to fierce Pluto, and with bended knee spoke thus: “If it pleases you, most worthy ruler, I myself shall readily be at your disposal in carrying out all this.” And Pluto, smiling, spoke such words: “Go with good fortune, my son, certainly not otherwise, fearing nothing, I shall be your helper in fire.”

Plunging *in medias res*, the description of the infernal council takes up lines 4–19. The brief episode begins with a fitting Virgilian reference merging Aeneas’s wrath before slaughtering Turnus with the deception of the Greeks at the gates of Troy (ll. 4–6).²² In order to carry out his hidden deceit, the frustrated Pluto

²² Verg. *Aen.* 12,946: ... *furiis accensus et ira*; 2,13–14: *incipiam. Fracti bello fatisque repulsi / ductores*

summons the Jesuits (*igniferos fratres ... spirantes ignem Jesuitas*, ll. 9–10), who readily obey his commands.²³ The most monstrous villain among their ranks (... *scelere ante alios immanior omnes*) is the Jesuit superior Henry Garnett, who enthusiastically offers himself for Pluto's service (ll. 12–20).²⁴ Next, Garnett calls Fawkes and Catesby to his aid,²⁵ and the scene quickly shifts from Hell beneath the Parliament:

Garnettus tunc surrexit cito coepit opusque
 Susceptum, sibi in auxilium Fauxumque vocavit:
 Et simul astabat Catesbeius utrique paratus
 Seu versare dolos, seu certae occumbere morti.
 Incipit hinc facinus saevum, plenumque cruoris.
 Pulveris inde parat pyrii insuperabile monstrum
 Abstrusisque locat tenebrosa nocte cavernis
 Curia quas supra regni suprema sedebat.
 Hoc opus in tenebris peracuta mente revisit
 Quotidie Fauxus, caperata fronte minister,
 Crastina venturae praesumens gaudia praedae.
 Saeviit inde: pio regi, sobolique minatus
 Regali exitium, nobis unam omnibus urnam. (fol. 313r, ll. 21–33)

Then Garnett rose up and quickly began the work received, calling Fawkes to his help; and Catesby stood up at once, ready for either event, either to engage in deceit or to meet certain death. Hence began the cruel deed filled with bloodshed. Then he prepared the invincible monster of fiery powder and under a gloomy night placed it in hidden vaults upon which the Supreme Court of the Kingdom sat. Keen-minded Fawkes, accomplice with a scowling brow, came back to see this work every night, anticipating tomor-

Danaum, tot iam labentibus annis

²³ Cf. Verg. *G.* 2,140: *tauri spirantes ... ignem*; *Aen.* 4,294–95: *ocius omnes / imperio laeti parent et iussa facessunt*.

²⁴ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1,347: *scelere ante alios immanior omnis*.

²⁵ Robert Catesby was the leader of the Plot.

row's joy of the upcoming booty. Then he raged: he threatened the pious King and the royal offspring with death and all of us with one urn.

Like his Virgilian counterpart in treason, Sinon, Catesby is ready for both to succeed in his deceit or to face death (... *utrique paratus. Seu versare dolos, seu certae occumbere morti*, ll. 23–24).²⁶ The gunpowder is transported beneath the Parliament and guarded by Fawkes, Catesby's "accomplice with a scowling brow" (*caperata fronte minister*, l. 30), who looks forward to the joy of the future booty (*crastina venturae praesumens gaudia praedae*, l. 31).²⁷ Next, Fawkes is addressed in rhetorical questions, followed by an account of the terrible consequences for the nation had the Plot succeeded:

Siccine, Guido ferox, audes tu spernere sacrae
 Vincula naturae, et divinae vincula legis?
 Nil hominesve, Deumve times? Quis tristia fando
 Funera, quis caedes possit numerare nefandas,
 Nobis si exitium necis instrumenta tulissent!
 Rex heu! Jacobus nulli pietate secundus,
 Regina, atque omnes Britonum veneranda propago
 Infaelix rapida flammarum strage perisset
 Funditus, igniferoque volasset ad aethera curru:
 Sic tamen ut rueret lapsu graviore sub Orcum. (fol. 313r, ll. 34–43)

Do you truly dare, savage Guido, to sever the bonds of sacred nature and divine law? Are you not afraid of men or God? Who could count the mournful deaths in words, who the impious murders, if the instruments of murder had brought us death. Alas, King James, second to none in piety, the Queen, and all, the venerable race of Britons would have miserably perished entirely in a rapid slaughter of flames, flown to heaven in a fiery chariot: only to tumble down to Hell with a heavier fall.

²⁶ Cf. *Aen.* 2,61–62.

²⁷ Cf. Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1,288: *crastina venturae spectantes gaudia praedae*.

Appropriately, the passage takes its inspiration from Claudian's mythologizing invective against Rufinus (*Quis tristia fando Funera, quis caedes possit numerare nefandas*, ll. 36–37),²⁸ before again making use of the trope of people being blown up to the air (*Sic tamen ut rueret lapsu graviore sub Orcum*, ll. 42–43).²⁹ The next thirty-five tautological lines consist of little more than a series of rhetorical questions of rather abusive nature to Garnett and Fawkes:

Quis, Garnette, parens tibi? quis generis fuit author
 Fauxe, tui? Non orti humana stirpe fuistis
 Certe? sed duris genuit vos cautibus horrens
 Caucasus; hircanaeque admorunt ubera tygres.³⁰
 Anne parum hoc Proceres cum tali Principe, vobis
 Tollere de medio visum est? sustollere in auras
 Pulvere nitrato sublimes? Dicite Daemon
 Quis malus hoc suasit? Stygiis Radamanthus ab undis?
 An Pluto ipse magis? Stupeo. Non tale feruntur
 Vel Phalaris tauro tentasse, aut carcere Sulla³¹
 Nec tantum peperisse nefas Medea Creonti,
 In cineres flammis cum vertere vellet Athenas.
 Sancte pater triplici fulgens diademate Papa,³²
 Hoccine Romanos docuisti? (fols. 313r–13v, ll. 50–63)

Who was your progenitor, Garnett? Who was the maker of your race, Fawkes? Certainly, you were not of the human stock; but harsh Caucasus begot you on the rough rocks, and Hyrcanian tigers suckled you. Did it seem too little to you to kill the nobles and the prince, to lift them up to the highest heavens with gunpowder? Do you name the demon who urged this evil? Rhadamanthus

²⁸ Cf. Claud. *Ruf.* 1,249–50: *quis prodere tanta relatu funera, quis caedes possit deflere nefandas?*; also *Aen.* 2,361–62: *quis funera fando explicet aut possit lacrimis aequare labores.*

²⁹ Cf. Claud. *Ruf.* 1,22–23: *tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant.*

³⁰ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4,366–67.

³¹ Cf. Claud. *Ruf.* 1,253: *... vel Phalaris tauro vel carcere Sulla?*

³² The reference is to the triple tiara of the Pope, a recurring attribute in Gunpowder epic. For attestations, cf. Haan 1992, 283 n. 46.

from the waves of Styx? Or rather Pluto himself? I am aghast. It is said that not Phalaris with his bull nor Sulla with his prison attempted such a thing, nor did Medea procure such monstrosities to Creon when she wanted to turn Athens into ashes with flames. Holy father, the Pope, gleaming with the triple diadem, did you teach this to the Romans?

The poem ends with a few hortatory lines, assuring the audience of the unfortunate fate that will face those who wish harm to King Charles:

O sic sic pereat Regi quicumque malignus
 Pronus et ad Stygias, et praeceps transeat undas
 Qui tibi non bene vult, tibi nostro, Carole, regi
 Talem habeat finem, vel finibus exulet hisce,
 Finibus hisce tuis nullo rediturus in aevo. (fol. 313v, ll. 79–83)

Thus, let anyone inclined to harm the King perish and pass headlong to the Stygian waters. Whoever does not wish you well, our King Charles, let him have such an end or let him be banished from these borders, from these borders of yours, never to return.

5. Psalms

On four occasions, there are Greek hexameter poems accompanying the Latin Gunpowder compositions.³³ These poems are, in essence, psalms cast in hexameter lines, giving thanks to the God for the liberation of the Kingdom from the Popish threat. All of these poems are modelled after, or rather quoted from, James Duport's Δαβίδης ἔμμετρος, a rendering of the psalms into Homeric hexameter with an accompanying Latin prose translation.³⁴ The work was printed

³³ That is, in 1675 (fols. 348v–49v), 1676 (274v–75v), 1677 (313v–14v) and 1683 (457v–58r). There are also three Greek poems, two in hexameter and one in elegiac distich, recorded for the Oak Apple Day performances. In terms of content and sources, they differ little from the Gunpowder poems. The Greek passages within the *Orationes* are dense with ligatures, which I have here silently expanded. However, the original accentuation, which in places deviates from the norm, has been retained.

³⁴ James Duport (1606–1679) was Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge from 1639 to 1654.

with a Royal recommendation that it should be used in grammar schools in order to “better imbue the boys’ minds in piety as well as in Greek letters.”³⁵ At least in King’s School, the recommendation seems to have been duly observed. The 1677 poem of fifty lines (fols. 313v–14v) begins with an exhortation to the Britons to give thanks to the God for their miraculous salvation:

Κλείετε νῦν ἱερὸν Βρετανοὶ κράτος Ἀθανάτοιο.
 Αὐτὸν ἀρίζηλη Βρετανοὶ νῦν κλείετε φωνῆ,
 Καὶ ἀνὰ λαὸν ἅπαντ’ ἀγγέλλετε οἶά τ’ ἔρεξεν.³⁶ (fol. 313v, ll. 1–3)

Praise now, Britons, the divine might of the Immortal. Glorify him now, Britons, with a clear voice, and declare among the people all the Lord has done.

What follows is a collection of loosely interconnected verses of thanksgiving and imprecatory psalms, taken for the most part from Duport’s translation, often with only slightest modification. I quote the first eleven lines:

Οὗτος τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐφθειρε νοήματα φαυλῶν:
 Ἡμέας οὐδ’ αὐτοῖσιν ἄθυρμα τε, <χ>άρμα³⁷ τ’ ἔθηκεν.
 Ἡμῖν μασιδίως φάυλοι λίνον ἐξεπέτασαν.³⁸
 Ὡς λύκος εἰς ἀρνοῦς, ἴρηξτε περιστεραν ἄρπαξ,
 Ἡμᾶς ἐνήδρεοσαν, φᾶντες, Τίς δὲρκεται ἡμᾶς.³⁹
 Πάντα δ’ ἰδῶν Θεοῦ ὀφθαλμὸς, καὶ πάντα νοήσας
 Τοῦς κακὰ ρέσοντας φθινυθει, δολερῶς τε νοουντας.
 Λωβητοὶ δ’ εἰσίν, καὶ ἐλεγχέες, οἳ μὴν ὄλεθρον

³⁵ *ad puerorum animos Pietate pariter & Graecis literis melius imbuendos* (Duport 1666, n.p., preceding the dedicatory epistle). Cf., however, Clarke (1959, 42–43) who for some reason assumes that the work was never used in grammar schools.

³⁶ Cf. Hes. *Theog.*105: κλείετε δ’ ἀθανάτων ἱερὸν γένος; Hom. *Il.* 18,219 ἀρίζηλη ... φωνῆ; Duport 1666, Ps. 138, p. 403, v. 5: Ὑμνήουσι δ’ ὁμοῦ ἱερὸν μενός Ἀθανατοιο, Κλείοντες τὰ ἄ ἔργ’, ὅθι τ’ ἦϊεν, οἶά τ’ ἔρεξεν.

³⁷ κάρμα *ante corr.*

³⁸ Cf. Duport 1666, Ps. 37, p. 91, v. 7: Μασιδίως γὰρ ἐμοὶ σφέτερον λίνον ἐξεπέτασαν.

³⁹ Cf. Duport 1666, Ps. 64, p. 169, v. 5: καὶ εἶπον, Τίς κεν ἴδοιτο;

Ῥαψαν ἀεικελίως, μέμασάν δ' ἀπὸ θυμον ἐλέσθαι·
Ἐσχίσθησαν ὁμοῦ μετὰ τε στρεφθεσαν ὀπίσω
Αὐτως, ἀκλειῶς, οἳ μὴν κακὰ μηχανάωσαν. (fols. 313v–14r, ll. 4–14)

He destroyed the designs of paltry enemies: he made us no play-thing nor a delight for them. The wicked have recklessly spread a net for us. As the wolf for a sheep and the rapacious hawk for a dove, they lay in wait for us, saying: “Who sees us?” The all-seeing and all-knowing eye of God lays waste the evildoers, deceivers of treacheries. They are disgraceful and despicable, they shamefully contrive his destruction, eager to tear out his soul: let those who ignominiously plotted his hurt be divided altogether and turned back in vain.

The all-seeing and all-knowing eye of God (ll. 5–7) who destroys the evildoers was an image the King’s School boys would have immediately associated with their Books of Common Prayer. Inserted within octavo editions of the Prayer book was an image of the all-seeing eye of God looking down on Guy Fawkes entering the cellar with a lantern in his hand.⁴⁰ This providential image is followed by a quote from Duport’s adaptation of Psalm 35, one of the proper psalms prescribed in the Prayer Book for the thanksgiving service on 5 November (ll. 11–14).⁴¹

The next thirty-two lines only repeat in several psalm extracts what has already been said. I only quote the four concluding lines:

Ἦϋτε καπνὸς ὄλωλε διασκιδάντος αἰήτου,
ᾠς ἄρα τοῦσδε διασκεδάσης, ἵνα τ' εἶεν ἄφαντοι·
Κηρὸς δ' ὡς κατατήκετ' ἐπειγόμενος πυρὸς ὄρμη,
ᾠς Καρολου προπάρουθεν ὀλοίατο πάμπαν ἀλιτροί. (ll. 47–50)

⁴⁰ Cf. e.g. *The Book of Common-Prayer* 1678, between sigs. K3v–K4r. The image is entitled as “The Powder Plot November the V” and furnished with the following psalm quotations: “Psal: 9.16. The wicked is snared in the worke of his own hands. Psal: 10: 14. Thou hast seene it, for thou beholdest mischief and spight to require it etc.”

⁴¹ These lines are an almost exact quote of Duport, 1666, Ps. 35, p. 89, v. 4.

Like smoke that perished in scattering wind, you scatter them so that they would be unseen: as pressed wax melts in the onrush of the fire, so the wicked shall perish altogether before Charles.

This is an almost exact quote of Duport, with the exception that the last line has been appropriately changed from Ὡς τε Θεοῦ to Ὡς Καρολου.⁴²

6. Declamation

Engaging in declamations was standard practice in seventeenth-century English grammar schools. In this context, the word declamation refers to an oratorical exercise on a predefined controversial topic where one student took the affirmative part and the other the negative while a third was usually appointed to moderate.⁴³ In line with the usual practice, the moderator opens the 1677 declamation, taking over the next seven pages, by posing the controversy:

Quaeritur a nobis hodie utrum excogitatum parricidium Papistae factionis Quinto Novembris magis sit abominandum; quam barbara Regis detruncatio deflenda sit, ac detestanda die Trigesimo Januarii. Quo die Fanatici barbaramente regnabant ad excidium Regis, et totius Ecclesiae Christianae. (fol. 314v)

We are asked today whether the contrived parricide by the Popish faction on the fifth of November is to be more abhorred than the barbarous decapitation of the King on the thirtieth of January, from which day forward the Fanatics barbarously ruled for the destruction of the King and the Christian church, is to be deplored and cursed.

The controversy once again rehearses the tendency (discussed above) to link the Gunpowder Plot to yet another deliverance, the Restoration of the monarchy on 29 May in 1660, while the regicide of Charles I on 30 January 1649 is figured as

⁴² Cf. Duport 1666, Ps. 68, p. 177, v. 2.

⁴³ For declamations in seventeenth-century English grammar schools, cf. Grafton 1972; Mack 2007.

a successful version of the Gunpowder Plot perpetuated by the Protestant Dissenters.⁴⁴ This line of thinking is once more underlined in the 1677 declamation. First, the floor is handed over to the speaker who defends the view that the crime of the Gunpowder plotters was the worst of the two. His argument goes as follows:

Minorem tamen quam Fauxius culpam commeruit ob has causas. Quod palam, consentiente etiam Parlamento, et publico justitiae auctoramento jussit Regem vita simul, et regno penitus exterminari. At Fauxius sane cum laterna sua in tam tetra scelerum nocte conatus est aspectum hominum prorsus evadere. Noctis enim, et tenebrarum velamen induit; quasi Solis lumen non ausus esset intueri. Quare, ut fanaticis videtur nostris Angliganis, Fauxius pejor, quam Cromwellus, conjurator est existimandus. Quod aiunt, Occulti inimici sunt pessimi. Quippe ab apertis hostibus facile nosmetipsos possumus defendere. At hostes quorum penitus ignari sumus, quosque amicos putamus, nullo modo possumus devitare; multo minus nosmetipsos ab eorum insidiis tueri. Obganniant igitur licet Fanatici, vel Romanistae: Deus tamen optimus maximus nos ab illis omnibus et Jesuiticis, et Fanaticis miraculose liberavit. Ad locum nempe suum demisit tam execrandi nominis Oliverum; et patrem patriae Carolum (quo nihil augustius terrarium orbis unquam aspexerat) necnon augustissimum Britanniae genium faelicissime restituit. Et Papistarum etiam diabolicam conjurationem e tenebris in lucem produxit. Quod facinus si mira Dei providentia e tenebris non erupisset, actum esset de nobis omnibus. (fol. 315r)

Nevertheless, for these reasons he [Cromwell] was less guilty than Fawkes. In that openly, with the approval of the Parliament and public warranty for justice, he ordered both the king and kingdom to be entirely extirpated. But Fawkes, truly, with his lantern in the horrid night of crime, tried to escape from people's gaze altogether. For at nights he put on the robe of shadows as if he would not have

⁴⁴ Cf. above, pp. 13 and 18.

dared to look at the sunlight. Therefore, as our English Fanatics think, Fawkes should be considered a worse criminal than Cromwell. As they say, hidden enemies are the worst ones. Of course, it is easier to defend ourselves against an open enemy. But we cannot anyway avoid enemies of whom we are completely unaware, and whom we regard as our friends. Even less can we protect ourselves from their snares. Therefore, let the Fanatics and Romanists snarl: the best and greatest God has nonetheless miraculously liberated us from all the Jesuits and Fanatics. As everybody knows, he lowered the cursed name of Oliver to its own place, and restored Charles, the father of the fatherland – never has the world looked upon anyone more august! – and likewise the most august genius of Britain. And he also brought to light from the shadows the diabolical conspiracy of the Papists. If God's marvelous providence had not broken out from the shadows, that misdeed would have put an end to all of us.

Strangely enough the speaker decides to side with the Fanatics (*Quare, ut fanaticis videtur nostris Angliganis, Fauxius pejor, quam Cromwellus, conjurator est existimandus*) – not perhaps the best choice given the circumstances – arguing that the Gunpowder plotters are the worst ones because they carried out their crime in secret (*Quod aiunt, Occulti inimici sunt pessimi*). Nevertheless, the salvation from both of these threats – as it is underlined once more – was only due to the divine providence. The second declaimer, taking the opposite view, opens his argument with the following words:

Audivistis, Auditores reverendi, ab Oratoribus hisce nostris, praesertim vero ab Antagonista hoc meo, qui Cromwelli scelus minuit, magnum illud facinus quod hodie a Fauxio, et sociis suis intendebatur. At vero hujus sceleris sulphureus odor naribus sane meis parvum, aut nullum mali odoris foetum reddere videtur; si illius sceleris (quod trigesimo Januarii die a Cromwello non modo cogitatum, sed peractum erat) commemoro. Illius inquam sceleris oblivisci nequeo; neque nunc temporis, tametsi inopportune, linguam a loquendo cohibere possum. Diversa est nostrorum

omnium opinio. Hic nempe Fanaticus papisticum Fauxium; ego fanaticum Cromwellum pejorem judico. (fols. 315v–16r)

You have heard, reverend auditors, from these orators of ours, especially from my antagonist who downplays Cromwell's wickedness, that a great crime was intended today by Fawkes and his accomplices. But truly the sulphureous stink of this crime seems to deliver little or no foul-smelling offspring to my nostrils if I call to mind the crime that Cromwell not only planned but also executed on the thirtieth of January. I say, I cannot forget: not even this time, although inappropriately, can I refrain from speaking. We all have different opinions. Hence, this Fanatic thinks the papist Fawkes is worse, while I think that Cromwell is.

Having rather vividly described the matter at hand and duly labeled his adversary as a Fanatic, the second speaker moves on to present his argument:

Primum itaque hoc fateor; nempe quod horridum fuit hujus diei scelus; et crudelissimi erant Fauxii, caeterorumque Papisticorum conspiratorum conatus. Qui si vel minime valuissent totus certo certius Senatus una cum rege Jacobo beatae memoriae sulphure, et pulvere bombardico ad caelos usque sublatis fuissent. Horridum, inquam, fuit hoc scelus. Neque nego quin Fauxius ipse una cum sociis suis poenis jure merito dignus extiterit. Si verò Cromwelli scelus inspiciamus, neque Tarpeae rupis dejectionem, neque scyllas Gemonias, neque Perilli taurum, neque molestam tunicam, nec damnationem ad metalla illi digne satis congruisse judicemus. Fauxius enim senatus, totiusque regni Anglicani exitium tantum machinatus est. Cromwellus vero Rei-publicae, Regi, totique Ecclesiae malum crudeliter actutum intulit. Nempe Caroli regis caput sine causa crudeliter detruncavit; et pacem in bellum, concordiam in commotiones et factiones, tempus faustum in infaustum convertibat. Fauxius vero, ut Deo optimo maximo visum est, nemini nocuit, et quasi Rei-publicae bonum intulit.

So first I say this: today's crime was certainly a horrid one, and the undertakings of Fawkes and other Popish conspirators were most cruel. Had they had any success, most certainly the whole Senate together with King James of blessed memory would have been lifted up to the heavens by sulphur and gunpowder. Horrid, I say, this crime was. And I do not deny that Fawkes himself together with his associates were justly and deservedly worthy of their punishment. If we were to truly consider Cromwell's crime, we should conclude that neither casting down from the Tarpeian Rock, nor the Gemonian Stairs, nor the brazen bull, nor the flaming shirt, nor condemnation to the mines had suited him appropriately enough. To be sure, Fawkes merely plotted the destruction of the Senate and the whole Kingdom of England. Cromwell truly caused cruel damage to the Commonwealth, the King and the Church at once. Certainly, he did cruelly cut off King Charles' head without a reason; and turned peace into war, concord into commotions and factions, times of happiness into unhappiness. Fawkes truly, as it pleased the Almighty God, did not injure anyone as almost bringing good to the Commonwealth.

Having assured his audience that the wickedness of the Gunpowder Plot is not to be undermined, and having employed, unsurprisingly enough, the trope of people being blown up to the air, the speaker swiftly proceeds to his argument, which, of course, leans on the fact that the crime of 30 January, unlike the Gunpowder Plot, actually succeeded in bringing down the King and the established Church. Even more, the Gunpowder Plot with its known anti-Catholic consequences turned out to be beneficial for the Commonwealth. In order to hammer in his argument, the speaker further compares the actions of the Parliamentarians to parricide, placing Cromwell among the infernal stock:

Nonne nimirum ille minime naturalis videtur filius, qui contra patrem, et matrem contendit? Tu contra regem patrem tuum observandissimum rebellis extitisti, adeo ut eum occideres. Tu etiam Ecclesiam matrem tuam jure merito colendissimam sprevisi. Adeo ut religionem catholicam aboleveris; et novam, hypocriti-

cam, fanaticamque edideris. His itaque rebus ita se habentibus, te non humana, sed infernali aliqua stirpe natum fuisse arbitrator. (fols. 316r–16v)

Is not a son who contends against his father and mother the least natural? You raised revolts against your most attentive father the King with the purpose of killing him. You scorned your justly and deservedly venerable mother the Church. This in order to abolish the true and catholic faith, and to set up a new, hypocritical and fanatical one. In this state of affairs, I think you were not born of the human but infernal race.

The whole declamation ends with a brief moderatorial part, summarizing the controversy but refraining from judgement:

Expectatis igitur, ut puto, quaenam crudelior esset factio Jesuitarum, an Cromwellianorum. Liceat igitur bona vestra cum venia animi mei sententiam libere proferre, quid et de Jesuitis, et de Cromwellianis sentiendum sit. Jesuitae, uti nostis, insolens sunt hominum genus, vafrum, fraudulentum, pestilens, et natum malo publico. Nec minus perniciosum Regibus, Regno, et Ecclesiae se praestitit Cromwellus. Pacem semper perturbant Anglicanam Jesuitae. Nec minus eam perturbavit Cromwellus. (fol. 317r)

You wait to hear, I suppose, which faction, the Jesuits or the Cromwellians, was crueler. Therefore, with your kind permission let me freely express my own opinion with regard to what to think about the Jesuits and Cromwellians. The Jesuits, as you know, are an insolent human race, sly, fraudulent, pestilent and born for public misfortune. Cromwell did not prove himself less ruinous for the Kings, Kingdom and Church. The Jesuits are always disturbing the peace of England. Cromwell did not disturb it less.

7. Concluding remarks

As usual, the 1677 performance is put to rest with a brief epilogue, summing up the ideals expressed and bidding good-bye to the audience. I quote the last seven lines, which very much encapsulate the ideas and sentiments conveyed during the annual King's School Guy Fawkes Day performances:

Regis igitur, et Populi semper intererit vigilare, ac ardentius Deum implorare, ut hanc in noctem, et semper, a laribus nostris ignem avertat sulphuream: Et ab igne Fanatico, molliore forsitan, sed tamen magis noxio, et regnum, et Ecclesiam nostram in perpetuum tueri dignaretur. Cujus fiducia freti faelicem vobis omnibus noctem precamur, tutam ab insidiis, tutam ab incendiis. (fol. 318r)

It is important for the King and the People to be always vigilant and to beseech God ardently that he would avert the sulphureous fire from our hearths tonight and always. And that he would hold worthy to protect our Kingdom and the Church forever from the Fanatical fire, which is perhaps more gentle but yet more harmful. Confidently trusting in him, we pray that you all may have a good night, safe from snares and flames.

In praying God to deliver the King and his people not only from the sulphureous fire (*a laribus nostris ignem avertat sulphuream*) but also from the Fanatical fire (*ab igne Fanatico*), the epilogue once more bears witness to the central development of the providential account of English Protestant history: the failure of the Gunpowder Plot was incorporated into a series of providential deliverances, from the victory over the Spanish Armada to the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Moreover, these were readily linked to the more topical “threats” of Protestant Nonconformity and finally to the completely fabricated Popish Plot, which, between 1678 and 1681 drove England to anti-Catholic hysteria.⁴⁵ As such, the Guy Fawkes Day performances are an interesting example of annual celebrations of England's Protestant history, marked perhaps by their expressions of extreme fidelity to the King and Church.

⁴⁵ One of the Guy Fawkes Day prologues (fol. 423v), likely spoken in 1679, refers to the Popish Plot.

On the other hand, the Gunpowder compositions – as well as all the *Orationes* texts – present us with a rare example of extant school composition from Early-Modern England. In essence, the Guy Fawkes Day speeches and poems are elaborated school exercises, corresponding with grammar school boys' daily routine of writing themes and verses in Latin and Greek.⁴⁶ The King's School Gunpowder performances, especially the Latin Gunpowder poems, offer us a prime example of how a near-contemporary literary tradition could be imported into another context – a late seventeenth-century grammar school – and applied to current needs and circumstances. This goes somewhat against the traditional, but understandable, view that the grammar school boys occupied themselves with nothing else than a stagnated curriculum of Latin and Greek classics.⁴⁷ With regard to the Greek Gunpowder verses, I have yet to come across any other example. The same holds for any Gunpowder speeches and declamations from early-modern grammar schools. The purpose of this paper has been to give an overview of a literary tradition that has thus far escaped scholarly attention. More research is certainly needed in the archives in the hope that it could bring to light more grammar school examples of these literary witnesses to the nuances of thought available to Restoration schoolboys negotiating their place in the developing Protestant nation.

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⁴⁶ For the *Orationes* texts as a specimen of school exercises, cf. Alho 2020.

⁴⁷ Exemplified, e.g., in Clarke 1959, 34–45.

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