

The Devil and the Detail: An Illustration of Otherness in John Nalson's *An Impartial Collection*

Helen Pierce, University of Aberdeen

An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State was published in London, in two volumes, between 1682 and 1683. Its author John Nalson was a fervent believer in the twin pillars of the monarchy and the Anglican Church. In *An Impartial Collection* he holds up the internecine conflict of the 1640s as an example not to be followed during the 1680s, a period of further religious and political upheaval. Nalson's text is anything but neutral, and its perspective is neatly summarised in the engraved frontispiece, which prefaces the first volume. This article will examine how this illustration, depicting a weeping Britannia accosted by a two-faced clergyman and a devil, adapts and revises an established visual vocabulary of 'otherness', implying disruption to English lives and liberties with origins both foreign and domestic. Such polemical imagery relies on shock value and provocation, but also contributes to a sophisticated conversation between a range of pictorial sources, reshaping old material to new concerns, and raising important questions regarding the visual literacy and acuity of its viewers.

Keywords: frontispiece, engraving, otherness, Exclusion Crisis, propaganda

Britannia weeps with downcast eyes, her hands clasped in prayer, as the ritual objects of church and state authority - the Magna Carta, a crown, sceptre, diadem, bishop's mitre and crozier - lie scattered at her feet. The sceptre is broken, and a royal coat of arms is upturned at Britannia's side. Behind her, the façade of Old St Paul's Cathedral is crumbling, framed by scenes of battle and buildings in flames. As the eye of God beams down from the heavens to

highlight Britannia's plight, two malevolent figures draw near. What appears to be a man in clerical dress, Janus-like with his two faces, moves forward with one foot while his other limb ends in a cloven hoof set upon the Bible. Urged on by the devil at his shoulder, this hybrid creature simultaneously looks towards Britannia and back at his companion. The 'otherness' of both the two-faced cleric and the leering devil is immediately highlighted by their physical appearances - one a curious hybrid of feet and faces, the other horned and hirsute - set against Britannia's conventional and vulnerable beauty. This distinction is pressed further upon closer inspection, with otherness implied through religious and geographic, as well as corporeal differences. As the cleric steps forward, he clutches a rosary and crucifix between his fingers whilst pinned to his back is a paper bearing the words 'Solemn League & Covenant'. In a single body with two faces, encouraged by a demonic supporter, a fusion of Roman Catholic and Scottish Presbyterian symbolism approaches the oblivious Britannia with intent.

This is the complex scene encountered by the reader when the first volume of John Nalson's *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State, from the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion in the Year 1639 to the Murther of King Charles I* is opened (Fig. 1). The John Rylands Library owns three copies of this weighty historical account, the first of Nalson's many publications to include specifically commissioned frontispiece illustrations. Constructed through crisp, clean lines, with shaping and shading achieved through detailed cross-hatching, this initial full-page image, signed by the prolific engraver Robert White, is accompanied by an adjacent explanatory poem in which 'The Mind of the Frontispiece' is revealed.

The content of this pictorial paratext can also be understood as an introduction to the mind and motivations of the author. John Nalson, an Anglican clergyman, was one of many late seventeenth-century individuals to take up their pens in the face of growing political and

religious upheaval and to look back to the recent troubles of the Civil Wars and Interregnum to shape their own paper bullets, arming and defending the ideologies of two emerging political parties. In the wake of a fictitious (yet broadly accepted) failed plot to murder King Charles II and install his Catholic brother James Duke of York as ruler, between 1679 and 1681 attempts were made within the House of Commons and House of Lords to pass an Exclusion Bill preventing the Duke's succession as a consequence of his faith. The 'Exclusion Crisis' saw the emergence of waves of oppositional propaganda in print, manuscript and performance, promoting and decrying James' potential exclusion from the succession.¹ Those members of Parliament and their supporters who sought to deny the Duke of York, with deep concerns about Catholic subterfuge and arbitrary power given to the monarchy, came to be known as the Whigs. Defenders of the succession, and the Divine Right of rule, acquired the Tory label. Both terms emerged with insulting intentions to mark out those thus named as disruptive outsiders: 'Whig' is a contraction of 'Whiggamore', a word first used to describe Covenanters from the west of Scotland who had marched on Edinburgh in 1648 to disperse supporters of Charles I.² Their reputation as rebellious anti-Royalists was now easily transferred to English critics of the succession. A similar status was pejoratively applied to the Tories, with their acquired name, an anglicised form of the Irish *tóraidhe*, meaning rebel or outlaw, gesturing to outcast figures existing only on the margins of English society.³

For the Tories, as traditionally-minded supporters of both the Crown and the Anglican Church, the problematic nature of James' own Catholic status was tempered by their strong beliefs in the power and supremacy of Anglicanism, standing in defence of England against threats from both the Church of Rome and the internal dissention of Presbyterianism and Independent sects. Within the developing Tory ethos, the pro-exclusionist Whigs promoted a dangerously liberal approach towards religious non-conformity. It is into this context of

politics and polemic that *An Impartial Collection* must be placed, and the Tory sentiments of its author acknowledged within an increasingly combative environment of divisive printed propaganda, both textual and visual.

As R. C. Richardson has neatly put it: ‘John Nalson was one of the most active of those who lined up in the later part of the reign of Charles II to re-fight the English Revolution.’⁴ Between 1677 and 1685, eighteen titles by Nalson were published; they range from quarto pamphlets to *An Impartial Collection*’s two-volume tome in folio format with complex engraved frontispieces and supplementary portrait illustrations. His polemical writing stressed the natural authority and infallibility of the Stuart monarchy, together with the primacy of the Anglican Church, set against multiple and often reciprocal threats. In Nalson’s view a range of dissenting religious viewpoints had worked hand-in-hand to bring about recent upheavals: ‘It is most manifest, That all our late horrid Civil Wars, Rapines, Blood-shed, and the execrable and Solemn Murther of his late Majesty, and the Banishment of our present Sovereign, were effected according to the fore-contrivance of the Papists, by the assistance which Dissenters gave them....’⁵ Such sentiments are reflected in the iconographic content of *An Impartial Collection*’s sophisticated frontispiece; yet until now the relationship between Nalson’s written work and those pictorial elements included within it has been given minimal attention by scholars, whose focus has fixed primarily upon the author and his oeuvre from an historiographical angle.⁶

In what follows, this article will approach *An Impartial Collection* through the close analysis, not of the author’s words, but of the frontispiece image. It will explore how the idea of otherness - of individuals with beliefs, behaviours and appearances considered disruptive to the Crown, Church and State of Restoration England - was employed by polemicists both seeking to promote, and to challenge, the succession of the Duke of York. Many visual interpretations of otherness were already well-established in English pictorial polemic of the

seventeenth century, but it is argued here that they were adapted during the Exclusion Crisis both to maintain earlier associations with religious and political upheaval and to address new concerns.

An Impartial Collection, published in two volumes between 1682 and 1683, was by far the most ambitious and weighty of Nalson's projects. It sets out a summary of recent English history drawing upon evidence taken from state papers and correspondence as well as printed newsbooks, pamphlets and sermons of the late 1630s and early 1640s, interpreted through the filter of Nalson's political and religious perspectives. Indeed, it was so ambitious that despite its title promising details of the 'great affairs' of state from the 'Scotch Rebellion' of 1639 up to the regicide of 1649, by the time of its publication Nalson had only reached the beginning of 1642, and the narrative of its text, by the end of the second volume, closes on the cusp of Civil War.

An Impartial Collection sought to provide a counter and challenge to similar projects such as John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, the second part of which had been published in 1680. *Historical Collections* provided Nalson with a template for his own venture as a multi-volume chronology based around primary source materials and enhanced by the inclusion of illustrated materials: a detailed map and city view contrasting England and Prague during the 1640s, etched by Wenceslaus Hollar, serves as the frontispiece to the first volume, supplemented by a series of engraved portraits by Robert White interleaved into the subsequent narrative.⁷ Indeed, the same portrait of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, appears in both Rushworth's and Nalson's publications. Here, however, the similarities between these two historical surveys end. In Nalson's opinion, Rushworth's earlier Parliamentary proclivities, such as his employment as personal secretary to Lord Fairfax during the 1640s before returning to the Royalist fold in 1659, were unforgivable and cast a Whiggish gloss over his summary of recent times: 'if Mr Rushworth leans apparently to one

side, I would attribute it to his having grown so long, even from his very first taking root in the world, under the influences of that Whirlwind of Rebellion'.⁸ Yet if Nalson accused other authors of bias, he was certainly no innocent himself: *An Impartial Collection* is anything but impartial in its near-beatification of the Stuart monarchy and promotion of the Anglican Church.

When first published in early 1682, a bound copy of the first volume of *An Impartial Collection* was priced at twenty shillings.⁹ In comparison, the London-based bibliophile Narcissus Luttrell paid sixpence in June 1680 for Nalson's quarto pamphlet *Foxes and Firebrands* as part of his assiduous project to collect printed materials relating to the so-called 'Popish Plot'. Luttrell's purchases also included single-sheet illustrated broadsides incorporating a collage-like level of visual complexity similar to that found in *An Impartial Collection*'s engraved frontispiece. *The Committee, or Popery in Masquerade*, an intricately-constructed image printed with a lengthy explanatory text by the Tory-supporting Licensor of the Press, Sir Roger L'Estrange, was bought by Luttrell in April 1680 for one shilling. 'Writt by L'Estrange, a scurrilous piece in some things', noted the Whig-leaning Luttrell.¹⁰

The inclusion of illustrations would undoubtedly have increased the production and retail costs of texts such as *An Impartial Collection*. The creative skills of, and materials required by, the designer and engraver (potentially two separate artists) to produce an intaglio plate for printing multiple copies of an image must be taken into account. A separate rolling press was also needed to reproduce the engraved frontispiece, in addition to the common press for printing text, pointing to a decision not taken lightly by either the author or the publisher.¹¹ Was this illustration of the vulnerable Britannia therefore included to encourage the reader into engaging with a relatively dry chronological interpretation of historical documents? As the seventeenth-century clergyman and writer Samuel Clarke asserted, 'a taking [appealing] title-page becomes much more taking, with an engraved frontispiece

before it...'¹² Its composition, with Britannia moments from being accosted by two monstrous figures, appears at an immediate level to be directed towards the reader and viewer for dramatic effect. The accompanying 'Mind of the Frontispiece', set opposite the image, asserts that this feminine cipher '...here sits folorn/Expos'd to Foreign and Domestick scorn;/Britannia who so many Foes withstood,/Her Bowels torn, by her own Viperous Brood....' Pictorially, however, her bowels remain intact and her precarious situation is perpetually frozen, tantalisingly, by the engraver's burin. Britannia's lowered eyes and loose hair reference the visual trope of the Penitent Magdalen, adopted most notably during the Restoration period by Charles II's primary mistress of the 1660s and early 1670s, Barbara Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine. She was initially represented in this manner by the court painter Peter Lely in a portrait of c.1662, which was subsequently adapted and reproduced in studio versions, painted copies in full-size and miniature, and through printed reproductions.¹³ In November 1666, Samuel Pepys visited the shop of engraver and printseller William Faithorne, near London's Temple Bar, where the artist was working upon an engraved version of Lely's portrait of Villiers with her loosened hair and melancholic pose (Fig. 2). Pepys was particularly struck by Faithorne's preparatory drawing: '[I] called at Faythornes... and here did see my Lady Castlemaynes picture, done by him from Lillys, in red chalke and other colours, by which he hath cut it in copper to be printed. The picture in chalke is the finest thing I ever saw in my life I think...'¹⁴ His attempt to buy the drawing was rebuffed, but Pepys returned a month later to purchase three copies of the published engraving.¹⁵

The parallels between Britannia and the 'penitently' posed Villiers are intriguing. Britannia in this guise is presented as an exemplary female figure but is also, through Villiers, associated with ideal beauty, referencing a woman historically given preferment by the monarch to whom *An Impartial Collection* is dedicated.¹⁶ This central focus of its

frontispiece thus encourages the reader to look carefully. With her ambiguous status, Britannia invites careful consideration, discussion and interpretation in a similar way to the layered content of the ephemeral illustrated broadsides that Narcissus Luttrell was purchasing for between sixpence and a shilling. This would be a far greater level of visual engagement than Pepys' initial brief encounter with a drawing in Faithorne's shop.

The wide circulation of what has been described as Villiers' 'signature image' through printed copies of Lely's portrait was key to the Countess' self-fashioning as a public figure during the 1660s; by the time of the publication of *An Impartial Collection* her personal influence over Charles II had long faded.¹⁷ The King's affections had transferred to Louise de K roualle, a French aristocrat who had originally arrived in London in 1670 as an attendant of Charles's sister, the Duchess of Orl ans, and had lingered at the English court on the instructions of Louis XIV. Granted the title of Duchess of Portsmouth, until Charles's death in 1685 Louise de K roualle used her role as chief mistress to develop political strategies and for personal gain.¹⁸ Although her response to the Exclusion Crisis wavered between support for and opposition to the Duke of York, her status as both a Catholic and a French subject was seized upon in a range of disparaging pamphlets and broadsides. Comparative restraint is shown in the fictitious *Articles of High Treason and Other High Crimes and Misdemeanors Against the Dutches of Portsmouth*, published around 1680, in which she is censured for having the 'opportunity, at least to promote a French Popish interest; so that it is not only impossible the Protestant Religion should live; but is not possible, the King can have a due sence of the danger he was, or may be in, from the Romish Conspiracy....'¹⁹ Greater focus is placed, in a contemporary anonymous broadside, upon the Duchess's physical strengths and weaknesses:

Portsmouth, that Pocky-Bitch,

A Damn'd Papistical-Drab,
An ugly deformed Witch,
Eaten up with the Mange and Scab.

This French Hag's Pocky Bumb
So powerful is of late;
Although it's both Blind and Dumb,
It Rules both Church and State.²⁰

Despite Barbara Villiers's status as a divisive and morally-ambiguous figure in her own right, the parallels between Britannia and Villiers explored in *An Impartial Collection's* frontispiece present the viewer with a clear comparison between past and present royal mistresses: one nostalgically promoted in pictorial form as English, penitent, and vulnerable to outside influences (Villiers had herself converted to Catholicism in 1663), the other a dangerous current threat to the King's wellbeing, politically ambitious, foreign, and disfigured by venereal disease.

Further elements of the frontispiece are similarly loaded with layers of meaning. They continue, adapt and challenge established visual tropes in order to emphasise Nalson's perspectives upon the mutual dangers to England of both foreign and domestic religious dissention imagined in monstrous form. The two-headed figure approaching Britannia encapsulates the basis for Nalson's explanation of English crises of the 1640s and his related fears for his country in terms of contemporary religious and political upheaval. According to the 'Mind of the Frontispiece', this hybrid creature represents 'Rome and Geneva in Epitome,/They Squint two ways, in the main Point agree....' Rome, brandishing a rosary and crucifix, extends a hand towards Britannia, a cloak sleeve falling back to reveal a pattern of

swarming, winged and horned creatures. The visual language of the popish swarm can be traced back, through English printed materials, to the late sixteenth century with the publication of texts such as *The Bee Hive of the Romishe Church*, a translation of an earlier Dutch work. The 1579 and 1580 editions of this text feature a striking fold-out woodcut picturing hybrid monk-bees, cardinal-bees and priest-bees gathering riches for the pope-bee, which commands this action from its papal-tiara hive.²¹ During the 1620s, a particular period of anti-Catholic tension in England, Jesuits and priests were frequently likened in text and image to parasitic clouds of locusts plotting to overwhelm the Anglican Church.²² These fears were raised again in the late 1670s and early 1680s by both Whig and Tory polemicists, with the former citing the imagined consequences of a Catholic king, the latter highlighting the dangers of the promotion of religious toleration. In Nalson's own mind and writings the activities of the Church of Rome had, since the Reformation, been bolstered in England by the close co-operation of a range of dissenting groups, whose description recalls the creatures lining the sleeve of Rome's cloak:

whole swarms of Sects, or rather Insects in Religion, with gilded Wings, but Scorpions Tayls, painted Bodies, but still poisonous Stings... nothing was heard but the confused buzzing of these differing Opinions, who all pretended to gather Honey for the Hive, but were in truth Sacrilegious Robbers; agreeing in nothing but their mutual hatred, and common design against the Church of England....²³

Such a 'common design' appears dramatically at hand in the frontispiece to the first volume of *An Impartial Collection*.

Geneva, looking backwards to lock eyes with the devil, represents the origins, through John Calvin and John Knox, of Presbyterianism, a form of Protestant church government without bishops, at odds with the Anglican Church's promotion of structure and hierarchy.

The paper pinned to Geneva's back, inscribed 'Solemn League & Covenant', references the agreement for Presbyterian uniformity of worship across England and Scotland, which was drawn up by the Scottish Covenanters during the early 1640s in exchange for military support for the English Parliament against the Royalist forces of Charles I. By the late 1670s Presbyterians formed a significant proportion of the English dissenting population and the association between Whig exclusionists and Presbyterians was one easily made by their detractors.²⁴ Connections were cemented by Tory polemicists in the wake of the 'Popish Plot' of 1678, with the well-established dangers of the Church of Rome brought together with the Covenanters' implied betrayal of their king during the 1640s. As one anonymous pamphlet of 1679 stated, 'it appears, that the *Popish Presbyterians*, and *Presbyterian Papists* are perfectly united, and have set up their Centre in one Principle; and that although they seem different in outward Forms and Appearances, they differ nothing in Reality and Essence...'²⁵ This sentiment neatly anticipates the hybrid clergyman of Nalson's frontispiece.

A devil, described in the adjacent verses as 'That Brummingham Uniter of Mankind', completes the sinister triumvirate. The term 'Brummingham' links to connected, multi-layered meanings. During the late-seventeenth century the then-town of Birmingham became associated with forgery and duplicitous behaviour with its name, and close variations, emerging as slang for a counterfeit coin.²⁶ This term also developed in parallel as a descriptor used by Tory propagandists to denounce the pro-exclusion Whigs. 'Let 'em boast of loyal Birminghams and true,/And with these make up their Kirk of Separation' announced Matthew Taubman in *An Heroick Poem to his Royal Highness the Duke of York*, published in 1682, while the words of the 1681 ballad *The Riddle of the Roundhead* assert that 'Whigs and Brumighams with Shams and Stories/Are true Protestants/And Protestants are masquerades....'²⁷ Written polemic of this nature plays with the Tory suggestion that the Whigs' purportedly more liberal approach towards matters of religion meant opening a

dangerous door to both dissenting sects and the Church of Rome, under the counterfeit disguise of 'true' Protestants. In pictorial form, therefore, the bringing together of the Janus-faced clergyman and the 'Brummingham' devil unites Catholic, Presbyterian and, further, Independent dissenters in monstrous form to threaten Britannia, and, by extension, the structure and hierarchy of the Anglican Church.

The hybrid Papist-Presbyter of Nalson's frontispiece was the latest visual incarnation of a variety of double-faced enemies imagined working within and against the Anglican Church in seventeenth-century England. During the early 1640s, the purported leanings of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, towards the reintroduction of Catholic ceremonial practices to Anglican worship saw the emergence of a range of pictorial satires critiquing the Archbishop's appearance, character, and 'Papist' proclivities. In an engraved broadside of 1642, Laud's apparent sentiments are encapsulated in the depiction of the bisected figure of the 'Rattle-Head' - half English prelate, half Jesuit - who pushes away the Bible offered to him by a Puritan preacher and accepts the crucifix held out by a friar.²⁸ Following the collapse of the Laudian regime and the rise of both Presbyterianism and Independent sects during the mid-1640s the two-headed 'Profane Libertin' appears in illustrations to several anti-sectarian broadsides; yet unlike the earlier Rattle-head, who turns from the book to the cross, this creature acknowledges both the attraction of the Pope and of the Bishop.²⁹

A further variation on this iconography can be found in *A Prospect of a Popish Successor* (Fig. 3). Published in March 1681 to coincide with the opening of the short-lived Oxford Parliament, in which the emerging Whig faction hoped to achieve the Duke of York's exclusion from the succession, this broadside depicts, in images of imaginative discord, the fearful consequences of a Catholic ruler in England. The Duke of York is presented centrally as the hybrid 'Mack', half-devil, half-man. The former lights a bonfire in which bound Protestants, designated by the creature as 'Hereticks', burn; the latter blows flames through a

crucifix, which ignites a cityscape of London, and, separately, the ‘Provost House’. Popular beliefs that the Great Fire of London of 1666 had been started by foreign agents, most likely Catholic arsonists, long retained a measure of authenticity. In 1681 a prominent plaque was set up on the site of the Fire’s origins in Pudding Lane, its inscription blaming ‘the malicious hearts of barbarous Papists....’³⁰ However, the destruction in January 1681 of Priestfield, the home of the then-Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Sir James Dick, was caused conversely not by Catholic plotters but by a group of students angry at the Episcopalian Dick’s apparent support of the Duke of York and implied papist subterfuge. In *A Prospect of a Popish Successor*, the bisected figure once more is suggestive of duplicity and literal ‘two-faced’ loyalties. A second, smaller, figure made up of Pope and bishop and labelled ‘A Church Papist’, draws upon similar visual language to Nalson’s Papist-Presbyter to highlight religious upheaval and discord. This creature simultaneously offers a pardon to ‘Plotters, Traytors, Murderers’ and more while driving three Protestant ministers from a building. Perhaps these ministers should be thankful; the building is made up of a stack of three churches, top-heavy and unstable, with a Jesuit, bishop, and four High Church Anglican clergymen straddling the roof as they aim to ‘ride’ towards Rome, hunting cries spilling from their mouths. Designed and likely engraved by Stephen College, a staunchly anti-Catholic activist, this broadside was circulated around Oxford by College himself in his attempts to whip up public concerns over the Duke of York, together with broader suspicions relating to the Catholic ‘leanings’ of the royal court, and to influence the passing of the Exclusion Bill. Yet with the dissolution by the King of the brief Parliament, the Bill was avoided; College was arrested and placed on trial in London on treasonable charges of imagining and promoting the death of the king through his authorship of a range of critical texts and images. *A Prospect of a Popish Successor* was one of several engraved broadsides produced as evidence against College during his trial, which

helped to secure his conviction and execution in August 1681.³¹ The imagery contained within this print carried forwards a certain level of celebrity and of notoriety.

College's use of a series of monstrous figures to emphasise Catholic usurpation, High Church collusion, and the chaos that would ensue with James' succession both anticipates, and contrasts with, the frontispiece to *An Impartial Collection*. Nalson's hybrid is part Papist, part Presbyterian, the rosary of Rome coming together with the Scots-authored solemn League and Covenant, with its deeper roots in the practices of the Genevan reformers. Meanwhile, the devil prompting the action alludes to the counterfeit nature of the Whigs, as bogus rather than true Protestants, with their broader acceptance of sectarian dissenters, bringing together fears of foreign and native threats to the Anglican Church.

Only scant consolation can be found in the eye of God, which beams down upon the scene in an acceptable representation for Protestant audiences. The providential eye was first popularised in visual form in England during the 1620s, representing God overseeing and approving a national Protestant defence against Catholic usurpation.³² This eye, together with the flaming sword slicing down from the clouds, the battle scene, and the central, allegorical female figure, acknowledge a further pictorial source: the engraved frontispiece to Ephraim Pagitt's encyclopaedic summary of English sects and their activities, *Heresiography*, first published in 1645. Several subsequent editions of this text are accompanied by a complex frontispiece (Fig. 4) in which six examples of heretical sects are pictured, each safely confined to a small roundel. Above these clearly labelled 'portraits' of dissenting types, the figure of repentance prays, reverently, to the female personification of the true Church. The eye of God emerges from the sky on the left, mirrored on the right by a hand brandishing a sword, while 'destruction', the visual counter to the figure of repentance, is imagined as a scene of battle. The viewer is directed to consider a Biblical passage from the Gospel of Matthew, central to the frontispiece, in which the monstrous, duplicitous nature of those who

worship outside the established Church is emphasised: ‘Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheepes clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.’

Pagitt’s frontispiece emphasises the otherness of religious dissenters, and in its composition stresses the importance of organising and labelling a range of heretical sects through a firm, structured taxonomy, identifying and controlling, which is carried through into the catalogue-style nature of Pagitt’s text. In contrast, the collage-like nature of the frontispiece to the first volume of *An Impartial Collection* presents the viewer with a range of complementary images with origins in multiple sources which, when assembled, invite engagement and interpretation as a precursor to Nalson’s text. Although to the modern viewer, this arrangement of pictorial elements may appear complex and, perhaps, impenetrable, this exercise in ‘reading’ images was a familiar one for politically informed individuals in 1680s England. The Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis coincided with the temporary expiry of the Licencing of the Press Act in England, which between 1662 and 1679 had effectively controlled and supervised the output of London’s printing presses, its aim being the prevention of ‘the frequent Abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed Books and Pamphlets’.³³ Its regular renewal lapsed in 1679 and the Act did not re-emerge until 1685. Within this newly liberated space, both textual and visual material began to play out an intriguing exchange of propagandist polemic and satire between Whig and Tory perspectives. Differing viewpoints jostled for space in a crowded market for printed ‘information’. As Roger L’Estrange, previously Licenser for the Press, remarked, the purveyors of this information could hold significant influence over their audiences: ‘’Tis the press has made ‘em mad and the press must set ‘em right again.’³⁴

Yet the consumers of this material were far from passive in their engagement with a range of viewpoints. Adam Morton has recently highlighted the ‘playful’ nature of graphic satire of the late 1670s and early 1680s, focusing on Tory retorts to Whig visual polemic

through parody, and the reworking and recycling of existing imagery to counter and compromise their original meaning and intention.³⁵ To the viewer, and indeed reader, of single-sheet satirical broadsides constructed through a sophisticated combination of visual and textual elements, part of the exercise of engagement, and part of its appeal, was to acknowledge this fast-moving, call-and-response action. Responsibility was placed upon the viewer to unpack a complex piece of printed polemic, while demonstrating their familiarity with an existing corpus of material, in terms of both words and images. As Morton notes, this suggests that ‘those who commissioned graphic satires expected highly literate *knowing* reader/viewers’.³⁶ By extension, the publication in 1682 of the first volume of Nalson’s text and its frontispiece would anticipate similar readers and viewers already highly familiar with this process of decoding and interpreting a series of existing pictorial elements. For a weighty volume like Nalson’s dealing with recent history this use and reuse of established imagery, brought together to emphasise a particular reading of that history, appears especially apt.

The process of interpreting and reworking existing images was not only focused upon iconographic elements. The viewers and readers of Nalson’s *An Impartial Collection* might have considered this frontispiece in relation to a notably sophisticated anti-Whig broadside of 1680, *The Committee; or Popery in Masquerade*, the textual component (‘The Explanation’) of which was written by Roger L’Estrange (Fig. 5). *The Committee* shares with *An Impartial Collection*’s frontispiece a full and busy composition with objects including a Bible, a copy of the Magna Carta, an orb and sceptre, scattered in the foreground. To the right, an Anglican minister is being forced to vomit his living, as to the left, key supporters of Charles I (and victims of the Parliamentary regime) are led in chains by a mob who promote ‘A thorough Reformation’. Behind them, a committee made up of representatives from a range of Protestant dissenters is chaired by a Presbyterian. The committee listens to the petitions of two unusual pairings: a woman and a dog, a man and a horse. In the background above a

copy of the Solemn League and Covenant pinned to the wall, Isaac Pennington, Parliamentarian Lord Mayor of London during the 1640s, and the Pope listen intently. The busy nature of the composition with its broad cast of characters, both human and animal, is countered by a firm underlying theme; this is a dangerous collection of dissenting individuals who, with the Bible cast down to the floor, worked together during the 1640s to the detriment of Crown, Church and State. The possibility of such upheaval returning to England during the 1680s was foremost in Tory minds: 'Think on't, my masters; and if e're ye see,/This Game play'd o're again, then think of me', proclaim the accompanying verses.

Such warnings of the events of the 1640s repeating themselves through the rise of religious dissenters and their rejection of both the Anglican Church and the Crown, aided by Catholic collusion, thread boldly through *An Impartial Collection's* frontispiece. But there are also stylistic links between this illustration, and L'Estrange's broadside. Both engravings present figures who are rounded in their shapes, built up through steady, regular lines, in contrast, for example, to the more angular and elongated bodies, constructed through light, dynamic strokes by Stephen College. Scrolling captions are placed above the heads of both Britannia and the dissenting committee's members and in both images papers are fixed and pinned to bodies to further the narrative. The engraver of *An Impartial Collection's* frontispiece was Robert White, identified through his name and the term 'sculp' (i.e. *sculpsit*, engraved by) in the lower right of the composition. The act of adding this term to his name, rather than *invenit* (designed by) or *fecit* (made by), strongly points to White's role in producing the engraved plate from which the image could be printed, but also implies that the design of the image itself was not his. Active in London between 1666 and 1702, White worked primarily as a portrait engraver but also produced frontispieces and ephemeral, topical prints. It is plausible that White also engraved the plate that provided the pictorial element of *The Committee*; several plates inscribed with his name were incorporated into

works published by Henry Brome, whose name also appears on the imprint of *The Committee*. Roger L'Estrange's *The History of the Plot*, also published in 1680 by Brome, includes a frontispiece portrait of the author signed by White.³⁷ The identity of the designers, or, most plausibly, the designer of both compositions, from which an engraver would work, presently remains unresolved. Yet to the contemporary viewer, the parallels between these complementary examples of pro-Tory, anti-sectarian visual polemic, in terms of both their content and their style, would have contributed significantly towards their subsequent engagement with the contents of Nalson's book.

The visual content of *An Impartial Collection*'s frontispiece relies knowingly on existing visual material; it would also have an impact on subsequent works. In 1685, a new and expanded English edition of *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia*, subtitled *A Short Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Late Troubles in England*, was published in London. Its author George Bate had served as physician to King Charles I during the 1630s and had remained of a firmly Royalist mindset until his own death in 1668, despite having also acted as Oliver Cromwell's chief physician during the Interregnum. With the first part originally printed in Latin in 1649, English translations of *Elenchus Motuum* followed during the 1650s and 1660s. A further addition to the 1685 edition, however, was a frontispiece engraved and signed by John Sturt (Fig. 6). In 1674, Sturt had commenced his career as an engraver and book illustrator through his apprenticeship to Robert White. Although he may have completed his training with White before 1682, and the publication of the first volume of Nalson's *An Impartial Collection*, Sturt's subsequent work (here again designated as *sculp.* rather than *fecit* or *invenit*), and its connections to *An Impartial Collection*, suggests a close circle of designers and engravers working on book illustration in late-seventeenth-century London.

Divided horizontally into three sections, the frontispiece to *Elenchus Motuum* focuses upon Charles I's involvement in the Civil Wars of the 1640s. The first section depicts the refusal of the Governor of Hull, Sir John Hotham, to open the town's gates to the King in April 1642, denying Charles access to the arsenal of munitions stored within. Centrally, the Battle of Edgehill ensues and beneath the King's motivation and justification for military warfare is made clear: the protection of the Anglican Church. The female figure of Ecclesia, like Britannia, is identified by a scrolling banner over her head; her hair tumbles down her shoulders, at her feet lie the familiar, disrupted symbols of rule, while her dress, down to the smallest detail of her sandaled foot, further reinforces interpretive overlaps between Nalson's and Bates' texts.

However, there is a clear difference in this later illustration: the hand outstretched to Ecclesia is that of Charles I, rather than that of a sinister, rosary-bearing hybrid of religious dissent. Furthermore, Ecclesia is active rather than passive, taking the King's reassuring hand in a gesture of reverential gratitude. The monsters have vanished, and it is the intervention of the divinely appointed King, as warrior-leader, which preserves and comforts Ecclesia. In the background, Charles reappears, set kneeling within the doorway of a church, as he looks upwards towards a beam of light. This section of the composition references the famous image of the King by William Marshall published as the frontispiece to the mid-seventeenth-century bestseller, the *Eikon Basilike*, which depicts Charles, post-execution, as an honourable martyr-king swapping the earthly crown at his feet for a heavenly one.

In its visual introduction to the reader, this edition of *Elenchus Motuum* reflects a shift towards new political viewpoints; at the time of its publication in 1685, with the Exclusion Bill long-avoided, Whig and Tory printed polemic over matters of the succession simmered, rather than shouted. Warnings as displayed in the 1682 frontispiece to Nalson's text, bringing foreign and native dissenters together as destructive hybrids, were now no longer necessary

within the political conditions of the day, with open calls for exclusion curtailed. The scare-tactic approaches of visual and verbal expression were tempered, with dangerous creatures replaced by patriotic leaders and martyred heroes supplanting disturbing monstrous bodies. The Divine Right of the Duke of York to succeed his brother was accepted and respected, at least temporarily, upon the death of Charles II in February 1685. In this fast-moving political environment, the process of reiteration and re-appropriation of printed polemical imagery continued, with new priorities and perspectives.

¹ On the range of textual, visual and dramatic propaganda emerging in the late 1670s and early 1680s, see T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); H. Pierce, “‘The Devil’s Bloodhound’: Roger L’Estrange Caricatured”, in M. Hunter (ed.), *Printed Images in Early Modern England: Essays in Interpretation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 237-54; A. Morton, ‘Popery, Politics and Play: Visual Culture in Succession Crisis England’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 31:4 (2016), 411-49; J. Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London: Urban Space, Visual Representation and Social Exchange* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 155-214.

² ‘Whiggamore, n.’, *Oxford English Dictionary* online. www.oed.com/view/Entry/228328 (accessed 10 December 2018).

³ ‘Tory, n. and adj.’, *Oxford English Dictionary* online. www.oed.com/view/Entry/203716 (accessed 10 December 2018).

⁴ R. C. Richardson, ‘Re-fighting the English Revolution: John Nalson and the Frustrations of Late Seventeenth-Century English Historiography’, *Review of European History*, 14:1 (2007), 1-20, at 2.

⁵ J. Nalson, *Foxes and Firebrands, or, a Specimen of the Danger and Harmony of Popery and Separation* (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1680), p. 32.

⁶ In addition to Richardson, ‘Re-fighting the English Revolution’, see also M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013); and R. MacGillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), for further information on Nalson’s writings.

⁷ On Hollar’s etching of England and Prague see R. Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 85.

⁸ J. Nalson, *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State, From the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion in the Year MDCXXXIX to the Murther of King Charles I*, volume 1 (London: S. Mearne, T. Dring, B. Tooke, T. Sawbridge, and C. Mearne, 1682), p. iv.

⁹ E. Arber, *The Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 AD* (London: privately printed, 1903-06), volume 1, p. 471; F. C. Francis (ed.), *Luttrell’s Popish Plot Catalogues* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹ On the use of different presses for relief and intaglio printing see H. Pierce, ‘Images, Representation and Counter-Representation’, in J. Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 263-79.

¹² J. Granger, *A Biographical History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution*, volume 2, part 1 (London: T. Davies, 1769), p. 227.

¹³ C. MacLeod and J. Marciari Alexander (eds) *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II* (London, National Portrait Gallery, 2001), pp. 118-24. Lely’s prime version of Villiers in this pose is in the National Trust collections at Knole, Kent.

¹⁴ R. Latham and W. Matthews (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols (London, G. Bell & Sons Ltd, 1970-1983), vol. 7, p. 359.

-
- ¹⁵ Latham and Matthews (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, vol.7, p. 393.
- ¹⁶ For further on Villiers' self-fashioning through visual culture see J. Marciari Alexander, 'Painting a Life: the Case of Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland (1640-1709)', in K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker (eds), *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 161-84.
- ¹⁷ MacLeod and Marciari Alexander (eds), *Painted Ladies*, p. 118.
- ¹⁸ S. M. Wynne, 'Kéroualle, Louise Renée de Penancoët', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online. <http://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15460> (accessed 10 December 2018).
- ¹⁹ *Articles of High Treason and Other High Crimes and Misdemeanors Against the Dutches of Portsmouth* (London?: s. n., 1680?).
- ²⁰ *A Satyr* (London?, s. n., 1680?).
- ²¹ H. Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures: Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 60.
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60.
- ²³ J. Nalson, *The Project of Peace, or, Unity of Faith and Government* (London: Jonathan Edwin, 1678), pp. 119-20.
- ²⁴ Harris, *London Crowds*, p.134.
- ²⁵ *Simeon and Levi, Brethren in Iniquity, a Comparison Between a Papist and a Scotch Presbyter* (London: s.n., 1679), p. 4.
- ²⁶ 'Birmingham, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary* online. www.oed.com/view/Entry/19378 (accessed 10 December 2018).
- ²⁷ M. Taubman, *An Heroick Poem to his Royal Highness the Duke of York on his Return from Scotland* (London: John Smith, 1682), p. 2; *The Riddle of the Roundhead, to the Tune of Now at Last the Riddle is Expounded* (London: N. Thompson, 1681).

²⁸ See, Heer, *Malignants Foolerie Retorted on Them Properly the Sound-Head, Round-Head, Rattle-Head Well Plac'd, Where Best is Merited* (London: s.n., 1642).

²⁹ For example, *A Reply to Dictated Thoughtes by a More Proper Emblem* (London: s.n., 1646).

³⁰ The plaque is preserved today in the Museum of London.

³¹ B. J. Rahn, 'A Ra-Ree Show – a Rare Cartoon: Revolutionary Propaganda in the Treason Trial of Stephen College', in P. J. Korshin (ed.), *Studies in Change and Revolution: Aspects of English Intellectual History, 1640-1800* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1972), pp. 77-98; Pierce, "The Devil's Bloodhound", pp. 248-50.

³² A. Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain, 1603-1689* (London: British Museum, 1998), pp. 152-4.

³³ 'Charles II, 1662: An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious Treasonable and Unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses', in John Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80* (London: Records Commission, 1819), pp. 428-435.

³⁴ Roger L'Estrange, *The Observator. In Question and Answer*, number 1, 13 April 1681.

³⁵ Morton, 'Popery, Politics and Play'.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 413.

³⁷ See also J. Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London: T. Bassett, H. Brome and R. Chiswell, 1678); *A Poem Upon Mr. Tytus Oates, the First Discoverer of the Late Popish Plot* (London: Hen. Brome and Ric. Chiswell, 1679).

Fig. 1 Robert White (engraver), frontispiece to volume 1 of John Nalson, *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State, from the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion in the Year 1639 to the Murther of King Charles, 1682*. The John Rylands Library. © The University of Manchester.



Fig. 2 William Faithorne after Peter Lely, *The Right Honourable Lady Barbara, Countess of Castlemaine, etc.*, 1666. © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Available under the Creative Commons Licence [CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Fig. 3 Stephen College, *A Prospect of a Popish Successor*, 1681. ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.



Available under the Creative Commons Licence [CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Fig. 4 Frontispiece to Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography or a Description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these Latter Times*, 1662. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



Fig. 5 *The Committee; or Popery in Masquerade*, 1680. ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.



Fig. 6 John Sturt (engraver), frontispiece to George Bate, *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia: or A Short Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Late Troubles in England*, 1685. The John Rylands Library. © The University of Manchester.

ILLUSTRATION NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE