

Macbeth

Act IV



Conspirators in the Gun Powder Plot, November 5, 1605.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatpicturegalleries/8860105/Gunpowder-treason-and-plot-famous-British-traitors.html?image=12>

Primary Documents

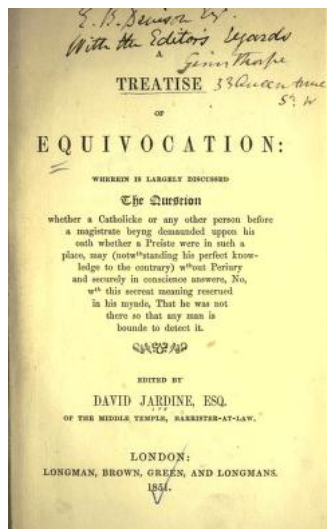
(Equivocation and Ambiguity)

Treatise of Equivocation (1598)

Henry Garnet

I On Different Types of Equivocation

1. First, we may use some equivocal word which hath many significations, and we understand it in one sense, which is true, although the hearer conceive the other, which is false...[as for example,] if one should be asked whether such a stranger lodgeth in my house, and I should answer, "he lieth not in my house," meaning that he doth not tell a lie there, although he lodge there.
2. Secondly, when unto one question may be given many answers, we may yield one and conceal the other...So may it happen that one coming to a place to hear mass may answer them who ask the cause of his coming, that he came to dinner or to visit some person which is there, or with some other alleged cause satisfy the demanders.
3. Thirdly, the whole sentence which we pronounce, or some word thereof, or the manner of pointing or dividing the sentence, may be ambiguous, and we may speak it in one sense true for our own advantage. So it is recorded of St. Francis, that being asked of one who was sought for to death, whether he came not that way, he answered (putting his hand into his sleeve, or as some say into his ear), "he came not this way."...
4. To these three ways of concealing a truth by words if we add the other of which we spoke before, that is, when we utter certain words, which of themselves may engender a false conceit in the mind of the hearers, and yet with somewhat which we understand and reserve in our minds maketh a true proposition, then shall we have four ways how to conceal a truth without making of a lie.



Treatise of Equivocation by Henry Garnet (1598) edited by David Jardine, 1851.
<https://archive.org/details/treatiseofequivo00jarduoft>

A Treatise Tending to Mitigation towards Catholic Subjects in England (1607)

Robert Parsons

III Two Kinds of Equivocation

But now must we further distinguish the same [equivocation] into two different sorts or kinds, the one proper, according to the true nature of equivocation before defined, which though it may seem to have falsity in it, and sometimes also hath in deed, in respect of the words only or understanding of the hearer: yet always hath it truth in respect of the speaker's meaning. The other sort is improperly called equivocation, for that no way it is true, and therefore his proper name indeed is a lie, though after a large and improper manner, it may be called also equivocation for the reason which after we shall declare.

Now then both of those kinds of equivocation are subdivided again...Verbal is that, when any word or speech hath either naturally, or by peculiar custom of particular language, two or more significations...Mental equivocation is, when any speech hath, or may have a double sense...whereby his meaning is made different from that sense which the words that are uttered do bear, or yield...both of these sorts...are lawful, and free from falsity, and may be used without sin in certain cases...

Wherefore all our speech in this place shall be about the second kind of equivocation, which is false and lying, and thereby also ever unlawful...for that the hearer is always wrongfully deceived, or intended to be deceived...which is known to be such by the speaker, and consequently is plain lying...

Henry Garnet, *A Treatise of Equivocation*, 1598 Ed. David Jardine, London, 181, chapter 5, Reprod. in *Texts and Contexts*, Ed. William C. Carroll, Bedford/St. Martin's 1999, p. 266.
Parsons, Robert. *A Treatise Tending to Mitigation towards Catholic Subjects in England*. 1607, page 279, reprod. in *Texts and Contexts*. Ed. William C. Carroll, Bedford/St. Martin's 1999, pp. 269-270.

In the following pamphlet, the author speaks out about the dangers of commemorating Guy Fawkes Day on November 5, complaining that burning people in effigy has gone too far.

*The manner of the burning the Pope
in Effigies in London, on the
5th of November, 1678.*

IT is a singular Prerogative attributed particularly to our Nation, and seems undissolvably intail'd on our Clime, that our Children, even whilst so young that they can hardly ask for the necessaries of Life, do yet in their sports and deportments divulge as particular a liking to Generosity and Virtue, as they demonstrate an irreconcilable Odium to Treachery and Deceit, which are their Contraries.

This is most apparent by their earnest Celebration of this *5th day of November*; a day, which the oldest of us all indeed ought not to remember without sending up Volleys of Congratulations to Heaven, from whence we undeservedly receiv'd so extraordinary, and miraculous a deliverance, from that *Hellish Gunpowder-Plot* contriv'd in the year 1605 and levelled not only at the dissolution of our *King and Peers*, but at the total subversion of *Religion*, and the ruine and destruction of the whole *Land*.

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But that danger being over, who could expect the unwelcome repetition of any thing of the same nature by the same Party: But alas, it is little wonder to see such bad Practices from those, who by principle reckon upon't as meritorious to undertake them.

Why should not even our Youth then espouse a noble Indignation at the injustice, and by their resentments on the Effigy, divulge a deserved contempt of the Original.

Which to effect, on this present Fifth Day of *November*, they caused several of the said Effigies, or Resemblances of the *Pope*, to be made; some of them displaying

him in one posture, and some in another; but all of them were followed with loud and numerous acclamations to their several places of Execution.

In fine after this feigned *Pope* had been sufficiently exposed to the Vulgar Reflections, he was hurl'd, Canopy, Triple Crown, Beads, Crucifix and all into the Bonfire near *Chancery-Lane* end, in *Fleet-Street*, where a world of People celebrated his fall with a general *Utinam*, that all his Majesties Enemies, or the perverters of the Protestant Religion, or *English* Government, may ere long be reduced to some such Fate.

The last of their Inhumanities we shall at present insert, shall be that never to be forgot Murder of *Henry* the Third and *Henry* the Fourth. The first whereof because he would not give his consent to Murder all the *Hugonots* or *Protestants* in his Kingdom, though himself was a *Papist*, yet for the Reason aforesaid they cruelly murdered him; And the latter because inclining to the like lenity, though their Convert, they serv'd in the same kind.

Anon. *The Matter of the Burning Pope in Effigies in London on the 5th of November.* 1678. EEBO. Wing, M463A, copy in Harvard University Library, 16 July 2016.

F I N I S.

“Remember, Remember, the 5th of November”¹

The following summarizes the Gunpowder Plot, which is detailed in Shapiro’s chapter “Remember, Remember.”

John Johnson, aka Guido [Guy] Fawkes has been credited as the main conspirator in the plot to blow up Parliament and all its inhabitants on November 5, 1605. Fawkes, however, did not work alone; indeed, he and Thomas Percy joined the original conspirators, Thomas Wright, Thomas Winter, and Gatesby, in 1604. Needing more manpower, they enlisted eight more men to help dig a tunnel under a building next to the old Westminster Palace, which had been rented by Percy. As luck would have it, especially for these “gentleman” who were unaccustomed to such hard labor, the storage room below the House of Lords became available for lease, which allowed a ton of gunpowder to be hidden. The explosive uprising was quashed before it began when Guy Fawkes was arrested.

Why were these men, who had made it their mission to include as many supporters as possible, intent on destroying their sovereign? First and foremost, they were rebelling against the constant, and inscrutable treatment of Catholics in England. Knowing that James had been on the throne now for three years, they were fairly certain that the situation would not change.

Once Guy Fawkes was arrested, the alleged, thousand supporters began to change their minds, realizing the brutal, horrific punishments for treason. The conspirators fled north, but their own disaster imploded. The gunpowder they were carrying accidentally exploded, burning and disfiguring many in the core group. Some of the plotters were stabbed or shot, but the rest were brought to trial.

James did not treat this uprising lightly. When he addressed Parliament a week later when the remaining conspirators had been returned, the King wrote about how the men were “met with a huge confluence of people of all sorts, desirous to see them, as the rarest sort of monsters,”² words used by Macduff when he finally challenges Macbeth in Act V: “We’ll have thee, as our rarer monsters are, / Painted upon a pole” (5.8.29-30).

The punishments would be harsh and a spectacle no citizen would forget. To obtain visual reminders of the conspiracy, first the bodies of those already dead would be exhumed, the heads placed on poles for all to see. The eight remaining – Fawkes, Thomas and Robert Winter, Keyes, Grant, Bates, Rookwood, and Digby – were put on trial, but this was not an ordinary trial. The men had neither counsel nor defense, for obvious reasons. The punishment would not be new: each traitor would be hanged but not until death; then each would be cut down and watch his own “privy parts cut off and burned before his face” before burning his bowels;³ finally, after cutting off their heads, their bodies would be quartered and sent to various parts of the land.

¹ Qtd. in Shapiro 132

² Reprinted in his collected works, 1616

³ Qtd. in Shapiro 128

London was the stage for the horrific show, and all the players were ready. Last, but not least, Guy Fawkes, who barely could walk because of his tortured body, dragged himself up the ladder to his doom, but luckily his neck broke when he was hanged.

Certainly this event had been indelibly scripted in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote his next play, *Macbeth*, one that focuses on regicide. What is interesting is whether historical events become a permanent part of a society's culture or if the events are forgotten over time. Guy Fawkes Day each November 5 is still commemorated 400 years later. Some days are remembered and celebrated for what they represent, and the fact that British "remember, remember the 5th of November" is probably not surprising. Fireworks, bonfires, and effigy-burning is all part of how the British now show allegiance to their present monarch.



A contemporary engraving of eight of the thirteen conspirators, by Crispijn van de Passe, copy in National Portrait Gallery, 2005. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_de_Passe_family#/media/File:Gunpowder_Plot_conspirators.jpg



Print showing the execution of Guy Fawkes, 1606 (engraving) by German School. Copy in Bridgeman Art Library Ltd. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/guy_fawkes

Shapiro, James. *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. Simon & Schuster, 2015.

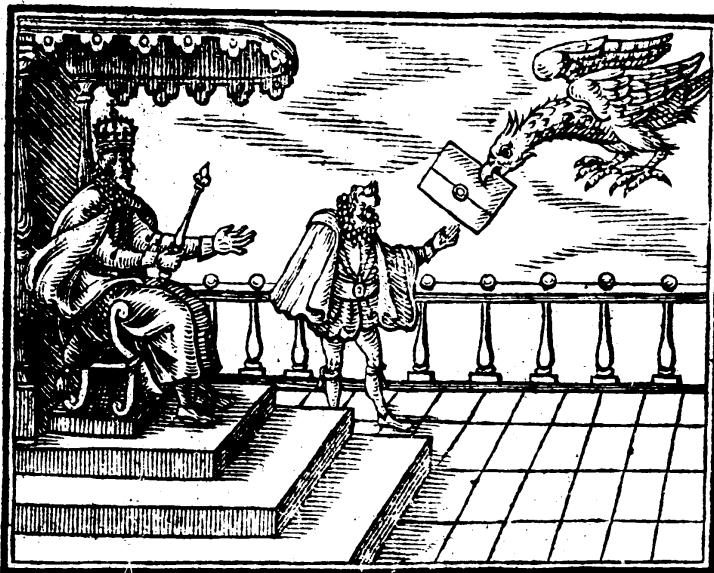
MISCHEEFES MYSTERIE:

OR,
Treasons Master-peece,
The Powder-plot.

Inuented by hellish Malice, preuented by heauenly
Mercy : truly related.

And from the Latine of the learned and reuerend Doctour
HERRING translated, and very much dilated.

By I O H N V I C A R S.



The gallant *Eagle*, soaring vp on high :
Beares in his beake, *Treasons* diicouery.
MOUNT, noble *EAGLE*, with thy happy prey,
And thy rich *Prize* toth' *King* with speed conuay.

LONDON,

Printed by E. GRIFFIN, dwelling in the Little Olde
Bayly neere the signe of the Kings-head. 1617.

"The image shows the miraculous delivery of the Monteaagle letter (hence the eagle bearing it) to Cecil, who then warned James (already presciently reaching for it) of the Gunpowder Plot. (Texts and Contexts 250).

Herring, Francis. *Mischeefes Mysterie: OR, Treasons Master-peece, The Powder-plot.* Frontispiece. 1617.

EEBO. STC / 962:01, copy in Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. 14 July 2016.