RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne
Canadian Art Review

RACAR
Revue d'art canadienne | Canadian Art Review

The "Popish Midwife": Printed Representations of Elizabeth Cellier and Midwifery Practice in Late Seventeenth-Century London

Kirstin Evenden

Volume 20, Number 1-2, 1993

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1072758ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1072758ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (print)
1918-4778 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Evenden, K. (1993). The "Popish Midwife": Printed Representations of Elizabeth Cellier and Midwifery Practice in Late Seventeenth-Century London. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, *20*(1-2), 43–59. https://doi.org/10.7202/1072758ar

Article abstract

Cet article examine le rôle joué par les imprimés dans la redéfinition de la pratique de l'obstétrique dans l'Angleterre du XVIIe siècle et analyse plus précisément trois gravures dans lesquelles on retrouve une sage-femme catholique, Elizabeth Cellier. En tant qu'élément d'un plus important corpus d'images whigs publiées, à Londres, pendant la crise occasionnée par les Bills d'exclusion entre 1678-1681, ces représentations d'Elizabeth Cellier font constamment allusion à sa présumée collaboration à un "complot papiste", ourdi par les Catholiques dans le but de tuer le roi Charles II. Non seulement elles définissent Cellier comme une "criminelle papiste", mais cette manière de la représenter laisserait aussi supposer que sa profession était elle-même l'un des aspects de sa déviance, car les représentations de Cellier en "sage-femme papiste" apparaissent au moment où les pratiques traditionnelles de l'obstétrique furent remises en question. Autorisées par l'Église d'Angleterre depuis 1534, elles relevaient exclusivement de la compétence des femmes. Pendant le dix-septième siècle, les sages-femmes furent de plus en plus les victimes de critiques émanant de groupes non-conformistes réprouvant les rituels anglicans concernant la naissance et du corps médical souhaitant exercer un contrôle sur les accouchements.

Cet essai tentera de montrer comment ces trois gravures de Cellier firent partie de stratégies politiques et sociales complexes destinées à redéfinir l'obstétrique de telle sorte que les femmes en furent écartées au profit exclusif du corps médical masculin.

The "Popish Midwife": Printed Representations of Elizabeth Cellier and Midwifery Practice in Late Seventeenth-Century London*

Kirstin Evenden, Calgary, Freelance Museum Consultant

Résumé

Cet article examine le rôle joué par les imprimés dans la redéfinition de la pratique de l'obstétrique dans l'Angleterre du XVIIe siècle et analyse plus précisément trois gravures dans lesquelles on retrouve une sage-femme catholique, Elizabeth Cellier. En tant qu'élément d'un plus important corpus d'images whigs publiées, à Londres, pendant la crise occasionnée par les Bills d'exclusion entre 1678-1681, ces représentations d'Elizabeth Cellier font constamment allusion à sa présumée collaboration à un "complot papiste", ourdi par les Catholiques dans le but de tuer le roi Charles II. Non seulement elles définissent Cellier comme une "criminelle papiste", mais cette manière de la représenter laisserait aussi supposer que sa profession était elle-même l'un des aspects de sa déviance, car les représentations de Cellier en "sage-femme papiste" apparaissent au moment où les pratiques traditionnelles de l'obstétrique furent remises en question. Autorisées par l'Église d'Angleterre depuis 1534, elles relevaient exclusivement de la compétence des femmes. Pendant le dix-septième siècle, les sages-femmes furent de plus en plus les victimes de critiques émanant de groupes non-conformistes réprouvant les rituels anglicans concernant la naissance et du corps médical souhaitant exercer un contrôle sur les accouchements.

Cet essai tentera de montrer comment ces trois gravures de Cellier firent partie de stratégies politiques et sociales complexes destinées à redéfinir l'obstétrique de telle sorte que les femmes en furent écartées au profit exclusif du corps médical masculin.

It is well established in social and medical histories of English midwifery, that during the seventeenth-century the profession underwent profound changes which still affect the way childbirth is defined, regulated and supervised today.[1] What is rarely considered in such histories, however, is the *process* whereby such legislative and regulatory changes to midwifery became part of a wider public and political re-definition of the profession or—to put it another way—how public perceptions of, and assumptions about midwifery were redefined as a result of these changes.[2]

Seventeenth-century printed popular representations of midwives and midwifery, however, provide evidence that the discursive redefining of midwifery practice was by no means a straightforward process of scientific 'development'—a point often argued in medical histories.[3] Instead, political broadsides and pamphlets, as well as midwifery manuals and medical illustrations, were important sites through which new kinds of knowledge about midwifery sought legitimacy in an attempt to discount older assumptions about childbirth.[4] Within this context of redefinition, this paper will focus specifically on the representation of one seventeenth-century Catholic London midwife—Elizabeth Cellier—with a view to understanding how the process of popular representation functioned to redefine notions of midwifery and childbirth.[5]

My analysis of both the visual and textual representations of Elizabeth Cellier in *The Popish Damnable Plot,* 1680 (Figs. 1A, 1B),[6] *The Solemn Mock Procession...,* 1680 (Fig. 3),[7] and *The Happy Instruments of England's Preservation,* 1681 (Fig. 6)[8] will establish how the different religious, political and medical discourses on 'popery' and midwifery came together, depicting midwifery as a criminal practice and thus operating as an implicit attack on the profession. Elizabeth Cellier's representation as 'popish' was part of a particular anti-Catholic, pro-Whig news production aimed at London Whig and nonconformist audiences during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81; her status as a Catholic became a dominant feature of her public criminal image.[9] However, Cellier was also denigrated by frequent references to her position as a midwife. This is significant, given that her representations appeared at a time when traditional midwifery practice was being called into question by both nonconformist groups and medical practitioners. In fact, because of the repeated allusions to midwifery, she became known locally as the 'popish midwife' or the 'meal tub midwife'.[10] Indeed, although Cellier's representation related to her alleged role in what came to be called the 'Meal Tub Plot', it is my contention that it was Cellier's position as a midwife that became the ultimate target of her representation in the popular press.

Licensed by the Church of England since 1534, midwifery practice until the seventeenth century had exclusively been the province of women. Licensed midwives' duties included emergency baptism according to Anglican rites should the mother or child die during birth, as well as supervision of the Church of England ritual of 'churching' the new mother (ie., escorting her to church to be blessed). Midwives were responsible for the determination of abortion and fertility which, under midwives' jurisdiction, were subject to control by the Church. They also played an important role in civil and ecclesiastical courts as witnesses in illegitimacy cases, as civil authorities needed to know who was to pay for the child's welfare, and ecclesiastical authorities were interested in ensuring that the father of an ille-

Figure 1A-1B. *The Popish Damnable Plot*, London, 1680. Upper portion of the broadside. Engraving, 33.13 x 47.5 cm. #1088. Lower portion of the broadside entitled the "Explanation." Luttrell Collection, iii, 142, (press-mark: C 20f). By permission of the British Library. (Photos: British Library).

THE

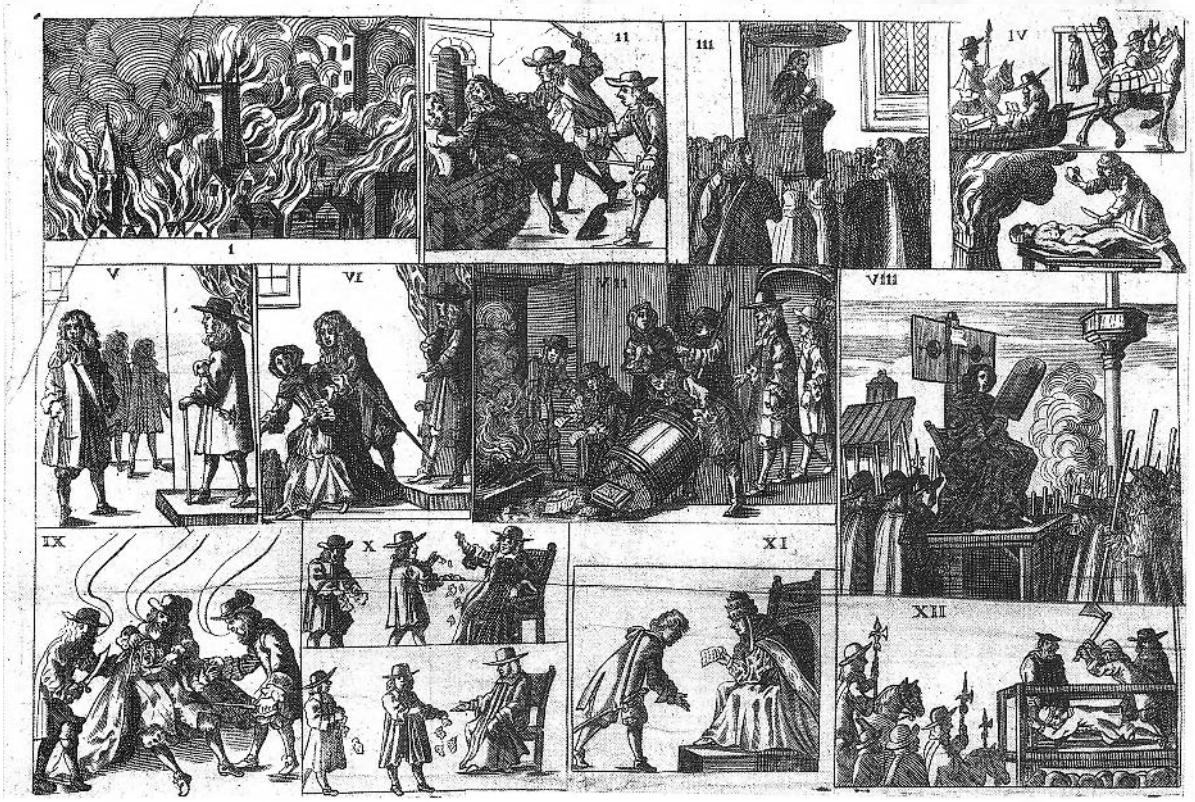
POPISH DAMNABLE PLOT

AGAINST

Our Religion and Liberties, lively Delineated in several of its Branches.

With an Account of the Manner of the Execution of

WILLIAM Viſcount STAFFORD on Tovver-Hill.



The Explanation.

SO exceeding great is the Deteſtation that Engliſh-men bear to the unheard-of Tyranny and matchleſs Superſtition of Popery, that they have ever ſince the Reformation, but more eſpecially ſince the Diſcovery of the late Damnable and Helliſh Popiſh Plot *againſt* their Religion and Liberties, laid hold of all Opportunities to expreſs their juſt Abhorrence of it. Among other ways, this of expoſing their Helliſh Contrivances by Picture was not thought the moſt contemptible.

The PLATE hath Twelve DIVISIONS.

I. The Firſt deſcribes the *Burning of LONDON*, which hath been proved undeniably by Dr. *Oates*, Mr. *Bedlo*e, and others, to be contrived and carried on by the *Papiſts*. *A bleſſed Religion, that muſt be introduced by the Ruine of ſo many thouſand Families!* But *Deſtruction* alone would not content, without *Blood*: For, in the next place,

II. We deſcribe *The Manner of their murthering Sir Edmondbury Godfrey, who took Dr. Oates's Depoſitions of the Plot*; which was no more than every Gentleman in the Commiſſion of the Peace was bound to do: yet for this neceſſary diſcharge of his Duty, the Conſpirators were ſo enraged, that they reſolved to cut him off, the rather, as may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, to deter all other Magiſtrates from intermedling with any Affairs relating to the Plot. The Perſons actually preſent at this Murther were, *Gerald* and *Kelly*, two Prieſts, *Green*, *Bury*, and *Hill*, who were ſince executed for it. The whole diſcovered by *Mr. Miles Prance*, who was to have acted in it.

III. We come to deſcribe *The General Days of Humiliation* appointed by His Majeſties Proclamations, on the Thirteenth of *November*, 1678. and on the Eleventh of *April*, 1679. to implore the Mercies of Almighty God, in the Protection of His Majeſties Sacred Perſon, and that he would infatuate and defeat the Councels of the Papiſts, our

IV. The next thing in order of Time was *The Execution of ſeveral of the Plotters, viz. Coleman, Ireland, Grove, Pickering, Whitebread, Harcourt, Fenwick, Gavan, Turner, and Langhorn, &c.*

V. We come now to the *Sham-Plot*. Their next great Deſign was to take off one of our great *Bulwarks*, viz. the Right Honourable *Anthony Earl of Shaftsbury*. In this Fifth Diviſion we give you the manner of Mr. *Dangerfield*'s coming to attempt him; and,

VI. In the Sixth, The Manner of Mrs. *Cellier*'s (one of the Pope's *Amazons*) going to do that Great Work her ſelf, (Mr. *Dangerfield* having fail'd in the Attempt) and of her turning down Stairs. *Although ſo frequently attempted, yet it hath pleaſed God hitherto (for the good of this Nation by his gracious Providence to preſerve this Honourable Perſon, and it is the Prayers of all good Proteſtants, That he may never fall into the hands of his Popiſh Adverſaries, whoſe tender Mercies are Cruelty.*

VII. To ſhew the Papiſts would leave no Stone unturn'd to blow off this Helliſh Plot, their next Stratagem was to forge *a Plot upon the Preſbyterians*, by Name; but in Truth to involve the moſt zealous and active Proteſtant Nobility, Gentry, *&c.* throughout the Nation: which being fortified with bold Perjuries, and ſpecious Pretences, might gain Credit; and thereby they being deſtroy'd as a Sacrifice to Juſtice, it might ſeem probable, *That the laſt Years Plot was only their malicious Contrivance againſt the Catholicks*, who would then appear the King's beſt Subjects. *The Model of this deſigned Plot againſt the* Presbyterians *was found by* Sir William Waller, *in the Houſe of Mrs.* Cellier, *hid in a* MEAL-TUB, *in a Paper Book, tied with Red Ribbons: It purported to be only Remark, or Conſ He &c of Things and Perſons to be charged*, as, *amongſt the reſt, there were named, the Lord* Halifax, Shaftsbury, Radnor, Eſſex, Wharton, *the Duke of* Buckingham, *and others, to be of Counſel in this pretended Conſpiracy; the Duke of* Monmouth *General; the Lord* Grey, *Lord* Gerard, *and his Son, and Sir* Thomas Armſtrong, *Lieutenant-Generalls in this Rebellious Army; Sir* William Waller, *and others, Major Generals; Colonel* Manſel, *Quarter-maſter-General. By this whole Contrivance it moſt evidently appears, that their aim was to ruine all that were true Proteſtants, or honeſt Aſſerters of the Liberties and Property of the Subject: for indeed there cannot be aſ-*

ſigned above two or three, in all their long forged Liſt, that can with any Colour of Reaſon, or uſual acceptation of the Word, be called Presbyterians.

VIII. Next we come to deſcribe the manner of *Mrs. Cellier's ſitting in State on the Pillory*, near the *Maypole* in the *Strand*, with her famous Wooden Shield, to defend her from the Fury of the People. *She was moſt juſtly ſentenced to this ignominious Puniſhment, for publiſhing an abominable lying Pamphlet, entituled*, Malice Defeated: *A Book ſtuffed with ſo many Lies, and notorious Equivocations, and with ſo much Malice and Envy to all Proteſtants in general, that the like was never publickly ſold.*

IX. We deſcribe the manner of *Aſſaulting Juſtice Arnold*, by Three notorious Ruffians; *one of whom*, viz. Giles, *hath been ſince Tryed, and found Guilty, and accordingly deſervedly puniſhed for it.*

X. We next deſcribe *The manner of their tearing their Treaſonable Papers*, for fear of a Diſcovery.

XI. In the next place, we deſcribe *their Holy Fathers receiving comfortable Letters from England*, (with Tears of Joy) of the likely Succeſs of their *Plot*.

XII. Laſtly, We deſcribe *The manner of the Execution of William Viſcount Stafford, on Tower hill*, who was impeached by the Houſe of Commons in 167⅞ of High Treaſon, in Conſpiring the Death of the King, and was accordingly brought to Tryal before the *Houſe of Lords*, in *Parliament*, on *Tueſday* the laſt day of *November*, and by them found Guilty, and ſentenced to Death, on *Tueſday* following, *viz.* the Seventh of *December*, 1680. and accordingly executed on *Tower hill* the of *December*.

LONDON,

Printed for Richard Baldwin *in* Ball-Court, *near the* Black Bull *in the* Old Bailey. MDCLXXX.

Figure 2. *The Popish Damnable Plot.* Detail showing Elizabeth Cellier, with her meal tub, being arrested for her supposed role in the Meal Tub Plot.

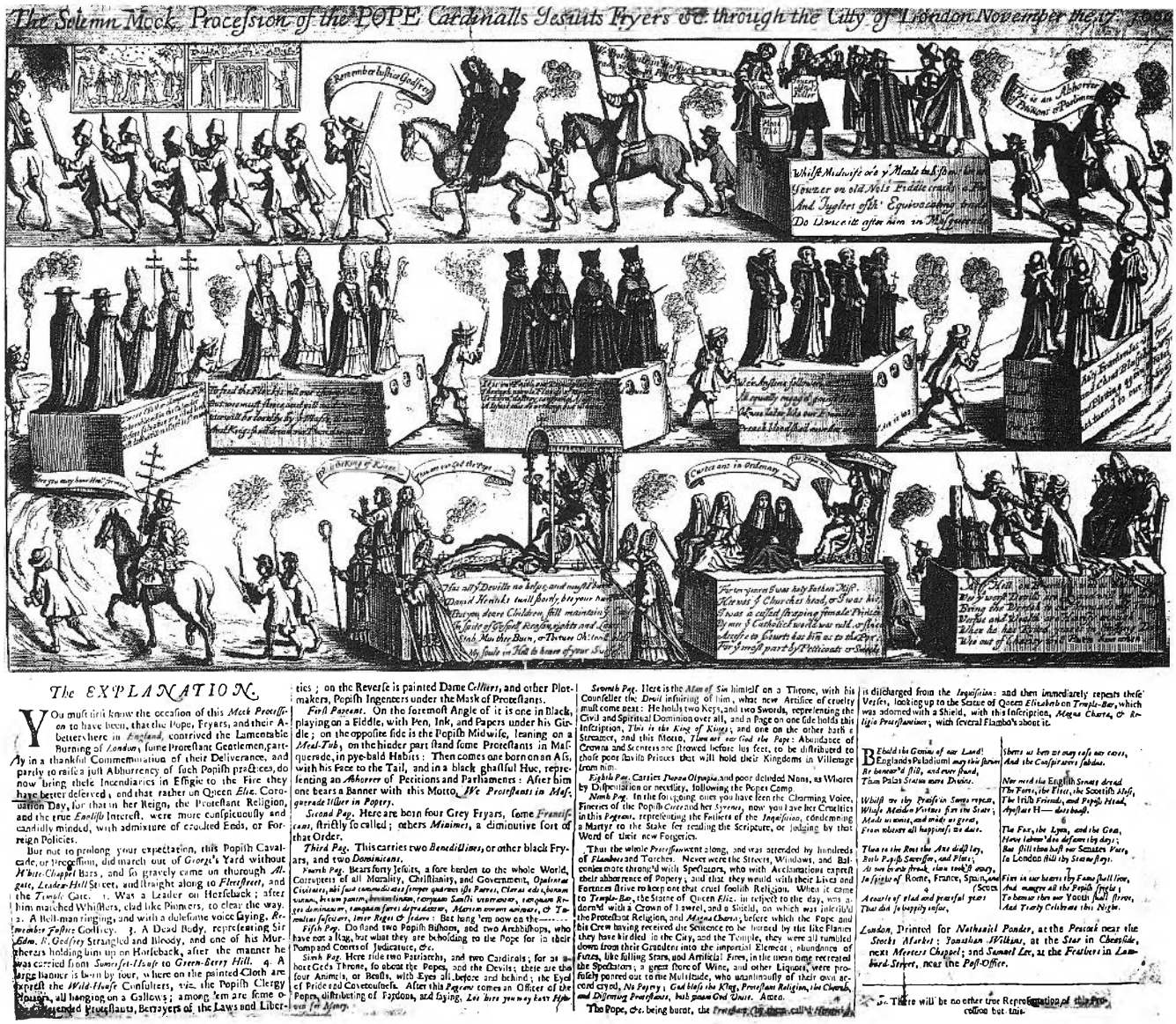
gitimate child do penance.[11] Increasingly during the seventeenth-century, nonconformists denounced as 'popish' the Church of England birth rituals and the midwives who practised them, for midwives were instruments through which the Church attempted to exert its authority over matters of private morality.[12] Indeed, only Anglican women could be licensed by the Church of England to practise legally as midwives. Many different ethnic and religious communities had their own midwives, however, and it was not uncommon for them to practise illegally.[13] Cellier was known as a midwife, even though she had converted to Roman Catholicism from Anglicanism some years before the Crisis, and therefore would not have been able to practise legally. It is unclear from her trial testimony if she did indeed still practise midwifery.[14] My argument will show, however, that rather than serve as a critique of Cellier as an individual midwife, her representation was part of a larger societal critique of traditional midwifery. Indeed, in visual political satire of the period, figures such as Cellier were represented not for their individual importance, but rather for their typical significance. What was important in such representation was "...the belief that the individual life or single sensational event could always be seen as typical exemplifications of some 'truth'."[15]

During this same period, physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries began to criticize the ability of midwives to supervise the birth process; this medical intervention in childbirth was linked to professional competition.[16] Surgeons and apothecaries challenged physicians, their professional betters, who dealt with the more theoretical aspects of medicine, and who had, through the College of Physicians, held the authority to dictate the professional mandates of all medical practitioners. Surgeons and apothecaries began to define their own professions as different from, yet equal to that of physicians, by claiming they had a more valid, 'scientific' knowledge of birth. Physicians, who assisted at births only if the mother or baby were dying, had previously held little authority over the birthing process itself, and therefore could not easily control the movements of surgeons and apothecaries, who began to practise as so-called 'men-midwives'.[17]

Given this context, there are two parts to my analysis of Cellier's representation. Firstly, I will explore how these prints used particular contemporary conventions of visual political satire to represent Cellier on the one hand as a 'popish' criminal and on the other as a deviant midwife. In order to understand what the characterization and condemnation of Cellier as a 'popish' criminal would have meant to seventeenth-century viewers, my analysis will include a discussion of the political and religious context of the time of the Exclusion Crisis—the complex period when these prints were produced. Secondly, I will investigate how this specific political and religious representation of Cellier as 'popish midwife' coincided with the new medical discourse on midwifery—one which questioned the older forms of midwifery practice.

The prints representing Cellier, like many broadsides of the period, were composed of a basic title-image-text format. All three of the prints representing Cellier are introduced by a title which acts as a short synopsis of the engraving. In each case, the image is located below the title and above the description, which dictates to the viewer the intended meaning of the print. *The Popish...Plot* is a large broadside engraving (33.13x47.5 cm), the upper portion of which is composed of twelve numbered images; originally a text appeared directly below the images.[18] This engraving represents a series of different events expressing a common theme—that of 'popish criminality'—depicting particular crimes committed by Catholics against various Protestant officials of the local London government. Cellier's supposed participation in a plot disclosed in 1679 to kill Charles II is depicted in the sequence of images numbered V-VIII (Fig. 2). Similar in format but larger is *The Solemn Mock Procession...,* (47.5x50 cm), a broadside representing a particular event in London, the pope-burning procession of November 17, 1680, and sold not only as a form of news

Figure 3. *The Solemn Mock Procession of the Pope, Cardinalls, Jesuits, Fryers, etc. through the City of London, November the 17th, 1680*, London, 1680. Engraving, 47.5 x 50 cm. BM #1085. By permission of the British Museum. (Photo: British Museum).



information but also as a programme for the actual event.[19] These processions were put on by local Whig and nonconformist elites in an attempt to rally support for exclusion of the Catholic Duke of York, brother of Charles II, from succession to the throne.[20] Cellier is represented on the first pageant float of the parade. *The Happy Instruments...*, (26.25x47.2 cm), with its single image, is reminiscent of the broadside format and is a mocking representation of a 'popish plot' to reinstate Catholicism in England. Cellier is shown in the lower left of the image as an accomplice to the plot to recover England from Protestantism.

In all three prints, Cellier is represented in a similar fashion, which would have made her a well-known figure in the popular press. Seventeenth-century English visual satire often identified an individual with a specific object which would serve as a means of recognition of the person and of the act for which they were well known.[21] Cellier can be identified in each of the images in two ways: firstly by the fact that she is always represented with her meal tub (Figs. 3, 4, 7), and secondly by her actions (plotting against the King).[22] Because of this visual identification, the Cellier images and their accompanying descriptive texts were not inaccessible to those who could not read; political information was often communicated orally during this period. For literate Londoners, however, immediate access to these descriptive texts in political imagery was possible.[23] The fact that the images representing Cellier were more expensive to produce than pamphlets (because of the high cost of

Figure 4. *The Solemn Mock Procession....* Detail showing Elizabeth Cellier pulling plot papers out of her meal tub.

engraving) did not mean that they were seen only by those who could afford them. Broadsides were often posted in coffee houses, which were a constant source of political news. Prints were also sold in marketplaces and bookshops, as well as posted on the outsides of buildings, thrown into coaches of passers-by, or, if the political message was important, simply given away.[24] Such wide and varied distribution would have functioned to construct consensus amongst nonconformist and Whig audiences on the issue of Cellier's 'popish' criminality and her midwifery.

The three Cellier prints were only a few of the many pamphlets and broadsides produced in London during 1680-82 which claimed that Cellier was involved in a failed 'popish' plot, the 'Meal Tub Plot', to kill King Charles II.[25] The standard press account of the plot stated that Cellier, while providing relief to convicts in Newgate prison, met Thomas Dangerfield, who, upon his release from prison, requested that she store some documents in her meal tub until he came to trial. Through an anonymous tip, however, Sir William Waller is reputed to have searched Cellier's meal tub to discover that what Dangerfield had claimed were his trial papers were in fact documents, allegedly produced by Catholic plotters, which falsely accused local Whigs of a conspiracy to kill the King.[26] Cellier, who contested this account of the Meal Tub Plot, was arrested in June, 1680 for her supposed criminal role in the event. She was acquitted, but was re-arrested for libel in September 1680, found guilty, and convicted when she attempted to publish her side of the Meal Tub Plot story.[27] Such press reports of the time cannot be relied upon as accurate representations of 'historical fact'. There is no evidence—outside of the press documentation—that Cellier ever met with Dangerfield; nor is there anything to suggest that Cellier was ever involved in a conspiracy to kill the King.[28]

The subsequent representation of Cellier and the Meal Tub Plot in the London press was part of a larger output of Country Party (or Whig party) street literature and propaganda on 'popish plots' produced during the Exclusion Crisis.[29] The Country Party was supported by London nonconformists, Broad Church (or 'Low Church') advocates, and the old Puritan interest of the Civil War, and had held a majority of the local London government seats since the early 1670s.[30] By 1679, however, Whigs in London had grown increasingly uneasy because of the gradual increase of Anglican Court Party members in the London City Government, which was seen as an attempt to retrieve local government control from the Country Party. The Court Party represented the interests of High Anglican churchmen and Anglican Cavaliers (opponents of the Country Party). In contrast to Broad Church supporters, the High Anglican elite argued that the Church of England should not comprise dissenting Protestants.

Many of the members of the Court Party supported the Catholic Duke of York, Charles II's brother and first heir to the throne, even though he had converted to Catholicism in 1668. In 1673 the Duke made his conversion public, and resigned all of his offices (he had been Lord High Admiral) rather than take the anti-Catholic oath of the Test Act which was designed to exclude Catholics from office. In addition to this overt support of the Catholic religion on behalf of the heir to the throne, Charles II was also known to be sympathetic towards Catholicism. He had been exiled in France during the Civil War, had married a Catholic Queen (Catherine of Braganza), and was overtly supportive of the Catholic regime in France—a regime known for its intolerance of Protestant minorities. In England, the King was at once the head of state and the head of the Church of England; his Catholic sympathies and his relationship with France were seen to be in conflict with his allegiance to his own state religion. As a result, the Catholic sympathies of both Charles II and the Duke of York were thought a direct threat to English nationhood and sovereignty and implied an intolerance of Protestant minorities. The threat of Catholicism that the 'popish plots' represented was to be taken seriously, then, for it had implications at both international and local levels.[31]

Indeed, to preserve both the nonconformist majority in London government and English Protestant sovereignty,

Country Party supporters tried on a number of occasions to pass an Exclusion bill through the House of Commons, such a bill would have excluded the Catholic Duke from succession and stopped the High Anglican threat to local Whig and nonconformist government. Nonconformists and Whigs feared that the Duke, because of his allegiance to Catholicism, would not only introduce a more authoritarian form of government similar to that of France, but would also support a complete Anglican takeover of London government. For nonconformists, therefore, the issue of exclusion had both a religious and a political focus, and was considered essential because it would preserve intact the "civil supremacy over the church....The popery of the Anglican prelacy...had to be guarded against as much as that of Rome."[32]

Because of the insistence of the Whigs on reintroducing the Exclusion bill, King Charles II prorogued parliament in 1679; however, he did so at the very moment when the Licensing Act was due for renewal by the House. As a result, a temporary lifting of press censorship coincided with the highly emotive and complex political situation brought about by the Exclusion Crisis.[33] Many London printers during this period were Whig supporters, and those who favoured Exclusion took full advantage of the relative freedom of the press in order to disseminate their political opinions to larger audiences. Producers of nonconformist street literature could exploit fears of the Meal Tub Plot in an attempt to convince audiences of the need to exclude a Roman Catholic from the throne. Certainly, this would explain why Cellier was continually referred to in anti-Catholic terms. In the commentary of *The Popish...Plot*, for example, Cellier is called "one of the Pope's Amazons," and a "Popish Adversary" whose "Mercies are Cruelty."

The idea that Cellier was a threat to the well being of England was representative of the general Protestant notion that Catholicism constituted both a political and religious tyranny with the potential to affect all of English society. Indeed *The Happy Instruments...* describes the alleged intentions of Cellier and other 'popish' criminals to conquer the English nation:

> Assasinate the King, Subvert his Laws,
> They cry'd, and on their Ruin build our Cause...
> And this secure, their Plotts went briskly on,
> Against our fixed Laws, and settl'd Throne

Such anti-Catholicism fear was "to be found in every section and class of English society" and Catholicism was characterized in the English popular press as a foreign menace whose success within England could be facilitated by local English sympathizers to the Catholic cause.[34] In accordance with this belief, Cellier is represented in these prints as one of a number of local English participants in a Catholic conspiracy. In *The Happy Instruments...* the focus of the viewer is drawn to the "Infernall Conclave." Here the Pope is represented delegating orders to English plotters. Cellier holds a papal bull with the instructions to "turn the Plot upon the Protestants" (Fig. 7). Her complicity is also made evident in *The Popish...Plot* where she is represented (in image VI, Fig. 2) attempting to kill the Earl of Shaftesbury, unofficial leader of the Whigs, and (in image VII, Fig. 2) being arrested for her role in the Meal Tub Plot. Her actions as a plotter are also referred to in *The Solemn Mock Procession...* where she is depicted pulling the treasonous plot papers out of her meal tub (Fig. 4). The representation of Cellier in these prints would have signified her as a key facilitator for the Pope's attempts to re-establish Catholicism in England. Because it was argued that Catholicism could only be reinstated in England through the agency of local sympathizers, Cellier's characterization as facilitator would have deemed her extremely dangerous to English society. Indeed one Whig M.P. warned Parliament:

> You have not yet made any steps towards the safety of the kingdom. It is not removing popish lords out of the House (that will do it), nor banishing priests and Jesuits, nor removing the Duke from the King; but it must be removing papists from the nation. As long as such a body of men are here you must never expect that the Pope, with his congregation *de propaganda fide*, will let you be at rest...when that is done you need not trouble yourself with the succession.[35]

It is largely because of the perception that 'popery' was an extreme local danger that fear of 'popish' crimes against the nation could be exploited in the accusation of a particular person or group for religious or political sedition.[36] Increasingly during the reign of Charles II, the Church of England faced accusations of 'popery' from dissenting groups and Broad Church advocates. This was because High Anglicanism, which was conflated with Catholicism in the eyes of many Broad Church supporters, was thought to be a more specific threat to the political life (in London especially) and religious freedom of English dissenters and Whig supporters. Thus "Anglican ceremonies...could be condemned with the cry of 'no popery'."[37] Thus, while the Exclusion Crisis had first arisen from fears of a Catholic monarch, anxiety over 'popish' tyranny was exploited by Whig and nonconformist elites in order to criticize the local political activities of the Church of England.

Within the context of the Exclusion Crisis, the representation of 'popery' in the Cellier prints was a powerful and well-established means by which to address Whig and

nonconformist audiences over the issue of Cellier's criminality, and the Church of England's political authority. Since the sixteenth century, popular imagery had been one of the main public forums which represented political events in terms relating to the danger of 'popery'. Indeed, "in the public mind recent history was largely a succession of plots" which had, at politically contentious moments during the early modern period, received much attention in the London popular press.[38] Nor was the nonconformist characterization of the Church of England as 'popish' a new phenomenon in 1680. The established Church had often been accused of 'popish' tendencies in Civil War prints. This tradition of representation would have provided London viewers with a 'previous knowledge' of the issue of 'popery', thus informing viewers' perceptions of both Cellier's alleged crimes and her midwifery practice.[39]

The Cellier prints, as part of this tradition of 'popish plot' imagery, represented 'popery' as both a national and individual threat to the English state. In addition, however, they shared a number of characteristics common to prints of the Exclusion Crisis period: they represented several familiar 'popish' crimes, and did so in forms which would have signalled their Whig message of exclusion to nonconformist audiences, thus providing a familiar context through which Cellier was characterized as 'popish'.[40] One well-known 'popish' crime often represented in exclusion prints was the London Fire of 1666 (allegedly caused by Catholics).[41] The first image in *The Popish...Plot* is the London Fire. The Fire's representation in the press was not new; indeed it had been discussed in a series of anti-Catholic 'Fire Libels' since 1667, which claimed that it was the Duke of York who had plotted to bring destruction to London.[42]

The fire is described in the caption below the print:

> The First describes the *Burning of LONDON*, which hath been proved undeniably ...to be contrived and carried on by the *Papists. A blessed Religion, that must be introduced by the ruin of so many thousand families!*

This caption is designed to dictate to the reader that the representation of the Fire is not only an image of a past event, but, more importantly, a statement representative of the potentional devastation which could be brought on by the Catholic religion. Informed viewers of 'popish plot' prints during the Exclusion Crisis would therefore have been aware of the Fire's status as the so-called beginning of recent 'popish plot' history. In *The Popish...Plot*, multiple images of Cellier, positioned in the middle row (following the image of the Fire) constructed her not only within the broader context of Catholic crimes, but also imbued her alleged crime and status as a midwife with some of the danger felt by those Londoners who had experienced the Fire.

The Fire is also alluded to in *The Solemn Mock Procession....* November 17th, the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession, had long been regarded as a time of Protestant celebration. During the Exclusion Crisis it became a focus for pope-burning processions in 1678, 1680, and 1681, each of which was designed to create popular sentiment for the Duke of York's exclusion. The pope-burning processions were considered a symbolic act of retaliation for the alleged burning of London by Catholics.[43] These parades took place at night and circulated through many of London's nonconformist neighbourhoods in front of audiences of up to ten thousand, and ended with the burning, in a huge bonfire, of effigies of the Pope, Cellier, and other Catholic figures. *The Solemn Mock Procession...* would therefore serve as a reminder not only of the event, but also of what it represented for many Protestant Londoners: the symbolic destruction of those Catholics who had (it was commonly thought) burned London to the ground just fourteen years earlier. The text introducing this engraving refers to the Fire:

> You must first know the occasion of this *Mock Procession* to have been, that the Pope, Fryars, and their Abettors here in *England*, contrived the Lamentable Burning of *London*; some Protestant Gentlemen, partly in a thankful Commemoration of their Deliverance, and partly to raise a just Abhorrency of such Popish practices, do now bring these Incendiaries in Effigie to the Fire they have better deserved.

The repeated representation of such 'popish' crimes provided a familiar framework through which Whig and nonconformist audiences could perceive Cellier and midwifery as 'popish', and as dangerous to the well-being of Londoners as the London Fire itself.

The Whiggish bias of the Cellier prints is also evident in the very formats of the prints. *The Popish...Plot* is a chronological narrative representing several 'popish' crimes, and this format was increasingly used by Whigs during the Exclusion Crisis. By only glancing at the structure of such prints, then, contemporary viewers would have known that this image was a Whiggish representation of 'popery' and that Cellier was a 'popish' criminal. In order to construct a convincing argument for exclusion, the alleged 'popish' crimes had to appear linked, as if parts of an overall Catholic scheme to take England. This narrative structure was therefore a useful form through which to represent unrelated events (such as the London Fire and Cellier's 'crimes') as if they were causally interdependent.

The Solemn Mock Procession... is another print whose form would have expressed to viewers its Whiggish political

mandate. The structure of *The Solemn Mock Procession...* is similar to other Whiggish procession prints as it represented the procession in three separate rows in the upper portion of the image with a descriptive text below.[44] As in *The Popish ... Plot*, this form created a structure in which different 'popish' figures could be represented together in one cohesive, chronological 'history'. However, its form was also reminiscent of previous official procession prints depicting the annual Lord Mayor's Parade.[45] Indeed, according to Peter Burke, the representation of these pope-burning pageants was "a kind of inverse Lord Mayor's Show, designed to criticise rather than to justify the authorities."[46] By mimicking this previously 'official' form of representation, the Whigs could bring authority to their political and religious claims concerning both Cellier's criminality and the established Church. In comparison, the format of *The Happy Instruments...* was not so overtly Whiggish as the other two prints. It was produced in April of 1681, at a time not only when belief in the Meal Tub Plot was on the wane, but a well-known Whig engraver, Stephen Colledge, had recently been found guilty and executed for libel in an Anglican Church clampdown on censorship.[47] Shortly after this coup the King, with the help of the Anglican gentry, took control of the London corporation from local Whigs.[48] This image was intentionally cryptic in its criticism of the established Church because of the recent execution of Colledge, and the resulting takeover of the London civil government. The whole engraving, which contained only metaphorical references to Catholicism, could nonetheless be interpreted as either a direct criticism of the Catholic Church, or as a parody of the institutional hierarchies that the Anglican Church represented for nonconformists. Cellier's representation within this context associated her at once with 'popish' crimes and the hierarchical institution of the Anglican Church.

Such indicators of the political bias of the Cellier prints acted as a frame of reference wherein Cellier herself was represented as part of a larger threat to Whig political unity. As part of a genre of exclusionist 'popish plot' representation these prints, with their overtly anti-Catholic images, also contained an implicit critique of the established Church—a critique in which Cellier was construed as part of the Anglican interest so feared by nonconformists. The criticism of the Church of England in these prints functioned to implicate Cellier in the actions of High Anglicans, thus characterizing her as a High Church supporter (when she was in fact a Catholic), intolerant of dissenting Protestants and the Broad Church. Whereas in *The Popish...Plot* Cellier is referred to as "one of the Pope's amazons," the print's "explanation" describes at length the Earl of Shaftesbury's virtues, claiming that all good Protestants had prayed that he would not fall into the hands of his "Popish adversaries" and thus suggesting that Cellier was part of a larger group aiming to destroy Shaftesbury. As leader of the Whig Party, Shaftesbury's religious and political opponents would generally have been Court Party Anglicans, who continued to stop passage of the Exclusion Bill in the House of Lords. Further to this, if one reads the description 'popish adversaries' as referring to Shaftesbury's political enemies, Cellier in fact could be interpreted as a facilitator for the Court Party destruction of Shaftesbury (he was in fact defeated by Court Party supporters when the Exclusion Bill was thrown out in 1681). The representation of Cellier as a Catholic criminal who had acted on behalf of the High Anglican interest could thus function to unite Whiggish Broad Church and nonconformist audiences over the issue of exclusion.

The image of Cellier was also used to blur distinctions between the institutional threats of Catholicism and Anglicanism in *The Solemn Mock Procession....* In this print, Cellier is represented on a pageant float with Anglican parsons (in 'piebald'—two-coloured—habits, representing their 'two-faced' characters) who follow the Cavalier press censor, Roger L'Estrange, depicted here as a fiddler. These figures are described as 'Juglers in Masquerade' and represent an Anglican élite who, although Protestant by denomination, nonetheless supported the Catholic Duke of York in his claim to succession. This image associated Cellier's Catholic criminal status with the Court Party views of L'Estrange and the alleged sympathy of Anglicans towards Catholics. The placement of this float in the front of the procession is also important for implying that the actions of Cellier would lead to Catholic crimes or treacheries. After this representation of Cellier, the recent political conflicts between the Country and Court Parties are referred to in the representation of a man, his face painted black, shown riding an ass backwards (Fig. 5). This was an old tradition of public ridicule which would have been known to local audiences.[49] This satirical image is introduced by the title: "an Abhorrer of Parliament and Petitions." Such a statement associated this figure with the Court and High Anglican factions, who occupied the House of Lords and who had not supported the many Whig petitions to pass the Exclusion Bill. Cellier's image, placed as an introduction to this notion of Anglican rejection of Whig petitions to Parliament, again constructed a link between her actions (here shown taking the plot papers out of her meal tub) with the political views of the Anglican Court Party.

The association of Cellier with the Anglican élite was not arbitrary, precisely because of her status as a midwife: licensed midwives could serve the interests of the established

Figure 5. *The Solemn Mock Procession....* Detail showing figure riding an ass backwards with the description "This is an Abhorrer of Petitions in Parliament."

Church as legally recognized witnesses to illegitimacy and abortion. Regardless of the fact that Cellier herself was Catholic (and as such she could not practise midwifery legally), the two issues of licensed midwifery and the political actions of the Anglican élite were conflated together in the one image of Cellier. Cellier's representation was part of a larger critique of the Anglican Church, this representation further establishing her connection with the hierarchy of that institution. Midwives were perceived by dissenting Protestant factions as part of a system Keith Thomas has described in the following terms:

> The Church's tentacles stretched out through the ecclesiastical courts, [and] exercised a wide jurisdiction over marriage and divorce, defamation, the probate of wills and every conceivable aspect of private morality.[50]

Indeed Cellier was often represented as playing an important role in affairs of the Anglican Church or Court Party élite. In *The Popish...Plot* (image VI) she is shown attempting to kill the Earl of Shaftesbury. The representation of Cellier 'interfering' in the local political affairs of the Whigs is also evident in the next picture of this engraving (image VII), where Cellier is caught attempting to burn the Meal Tub Plot papers. The 'explanation' of this image is specific in its description of these papers (supposedly written by Catholics): they are details of a 'sham' plot by Whigs to kill the King. Those accused of participating in this Whig conspiracy are some of the most important Whiggish politicians of the day: the Duke of Monmouth (the illegitimate Protestant son of Charles II—whom many Whigs regarded as the one suitable successor to the throne), the Earl of Shaftesbury, and other local Whig politicians. In image VIII Cellier is depicted on the pillory. She was convicted for libel when she published *Malice Undefeated*, a vindication of herself from the Meal Tub Plot, and was sentenced to three days on the pillory. This representation of Cellier as a midwife who interfered (dangerously) in the public issues of the Exclusion Crisis did more than just condemn her actions; it questioned the previously assumed authority of midwives under the Anglican licensing system over issues concerning the well-being of local communities. Such previous authority through

> the licensing system had respectability and reliability as its ideals....Bastardy and infanticide were the concern of the civil authorities as well as the ecclesiastical ones, so the midwife's respectability was of considerable importance to a well-organized parish....[51]

Given that the Church promoted and regulated particular codes of moral behaviour in English society, the representation of Cellier as a midwife who acted on behalf of the Anglican élite would have confirmed nonconformist fears of the institutional threat that licensed midwifery posed for those outside the established Church.

In *The Happy Instruments...* Cellier is represented with another local English plotter, Sir George Wakeman, the royal physician to the Catholic Queen Catherine Braganza. Here Wakeman holds a paper which reads: "A Bill for 15000 pounds to Poyson the King." This image of Wakeman referred to the controversy of his having been accused of attempting to plot with the Queen to poison the King and reinstate Catholicism in England. Wakeman came under suspicion in the Whig press because he supported the Court Party point of view. The fact that Wakeman was so readily accused of high treason attests to a deeply felt mistrust of the traditional profession of 'physic' which, to the general population, consisted of "jugling and knavery."[52] This mistrust reflected a societal suspicion that physicians were costly

Figure 6. *The Happy Instruments of England's Preservation*, London, 1681. Engraving, 26.25 x 47.2 cm. BM #1114. By permission of the British Museum. (Photo: British Museum).

theoreticians of medicine, whose almost 'secret knowledge' on the subject (much of their work was conducted in Latin and as such could be read only by the educated élites) offered little in the way of real practical medical advice or assistance.[53] Cellier's representation alongside that of Wakeman would clearly have associated midwifery with the traditional profession of 'physic', and thus represented midwifery practice as part of a hierarchical and outmoded social system which relied on the 'jugling and knavery' of physicians and the High Anglican Church for the maintenance of social control.

Cellier was depicted in these prints in metaphorical terms which acted as double referents combining the two features of Cellier's persona: her 'popish' criminality and her midwifery profession. The characterization of a person through references to their profession was a conventional means of depicting well-known individuals in the press during this period.[54] Such representations, while obviously critical of the actions of a given historical person, could also operate to raise a framework of issues regarding the societal 'validity' of that person's profession, or of the involvement of that individual in the political events of the period. The representation of Cellier as a midwife, while critical of her alleged criminal actions, also associated her profession (through metaphorical references) with her 'popish' or Anglican crimes and as such served to criticize the authority of midwifery and its role in maintaining High Anglican control over the secular affairs of dissenting Protestants (even though they were outside of the established Church).

How midwifery constituted a major element of Cellier's 'popish' criminality is most evident in *The Solemn Mock Procession....* Cellier is shown in this print bending over her meal tub, extracting the plot papers from inside. In the actual procession represented in this image, the person playing Cellier would have performed the act of taking the papers from the meal tub during the whole parade, reinforcing continually her treasonous behaviour for the crowds. In the print, the satirical verse below the float refers to Cellier's movements: "Whilst midwife ore ye Meal Tub shows her art." This implied that Cellier is not only facilitating the creation of the plot, but that such actions are similar to those of a midwife assisting with childbirth. That Cellier 'midwifed' the birth of the plot is established by the presence of the open meal tub which here fulfills a 'birthing' function reminiscent of that performed by a woman's womb.

This birth metaphor, given the changes occurring within midwifery practice and to childbirth itself, was by no means an arbitrary reference. As Elizabeth Harvey states, the use of the birth metaphor "signals the beginnings of a cultural change, both in the management of childbirth itself and in the epistemological and medical discourses surrounding the understanding of gestation and birth."[55] Within the context of changing perceptions about midwifery and birth, this image of Cellier as facilitator of the birth of the plot from the meal tub associated her 'popish' criminality directly with traditional midwifery.

The idea that Cellier 'midwifed' the birth of the plot is also evident in the other two prints. In *The Popish...Plot*, for example, Cellier is apprehended by Sir William Waller (on her left), who has found her pulling plot papers from

Figure 7. *The Happy Instruments of England's Preservation.* Detail showing Elizabeth Cellier and her meal tub.

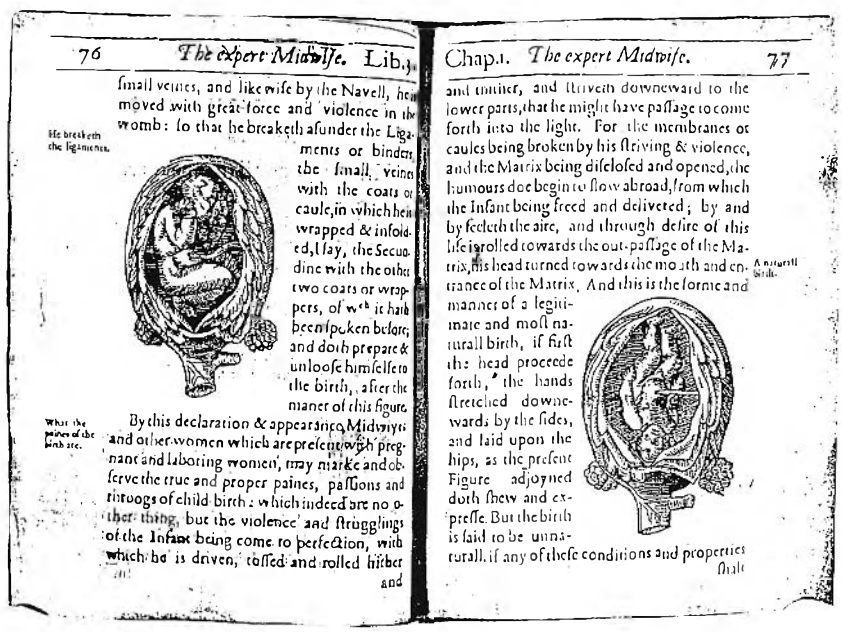
her meal tub in an attempt to burn them. The idea that Cellier's criminal actions are related to the meal tub is also referred to in *The Happy Instruments...*, where Cellier is represented holding papers, the function of which is designated by the commentary: "To turn the plot against the Presbyterians" (Fig. 7). These papers were those claimed to have been found in the meal tub by Waller. In these images Cellier's relationship with the meal tub is one of facilitator; she is aware of the secrets held within the meal tub, and assists in attempting to bring them either to fruition (as she is represented in *The Happy Instruments...)*, or to destruction (so they remain secret) in *The Popish...Plot* print. This facilitating role is similar to that of a midwife. In fact, in a print published in 1681, Cellier is depicted actually assisting the birth of the Pope from the meal tub while the devil oversees the proceedings.[56]

This representation of midwifery was by necessity complex. Cellier could not have been depicted at work assisting in actual childbirth in the popular press, because of the societal taboos surrounding the public representation of birth and the naked human body during this period. The representation of the human body for other than religious purposes was considered immoral at this time.[57] Until the end of the seventeenth century, the process of childbirth itself was thought of as a private affair which took place in the presence of only the midwife and the new mother's 'gossips'. Men rarely witnessed birth—apparently for reasons of propriety—and as a result the knowledge surrounding the process of childbirth was shared primarily among women. Indeed, in a midwifery manual of 1635, *Childbirth or the Happy Deliveries of Women*, the translator stated that he "doubted this matter [birth] could be expressed in such modest terms as are fit for the virginitie of pen and paper, and the white sheets of...Child-bed."[58] Given the fact that representations of birth were still considered 'improper', the representation of Cellier as a midwife at work would have had to be indirect.

The question remains, then: could it have been possible for contemporary viewers to perceive the metaphorical significance of Cellier with her meal tub? The representation of Cellier and the meal tub in *The Solemn Mock Procession...* made the metaphorical allusion that the meal tub was representative of a woman's womb and the plot papers of a newborn. While such an analogy may seem far-fetched to late twentieth-century viewers, this reference would nonetheless have been fathomable to seventeenth-century audiences. Popular perception of childbirth recalled the Aristotelian notion that women's biological role in the reproduction of children was passive.[59] The woman's womb received the active seed of the man which then grew into a child. In this sense, women were not thought to contribute biologically to the formation of children, but instead were considered 'vessels' for reproduction. The idea of woman as 'vessel' was represented in midwifery manuals of the day. In *The Expert Midwife* of 1637 (Figs. 8, 9), the womb was depicted as a round form with an opening at the top. Neither was such a representation of the womb uncommon during this period; and given this perception of the womb, the metaphorical link with the meal tub as 'birthing' vessel was therefore possible to make.

Of course, it cannot be assumed that viewers would have seen the meal tub as directly referential of a woman's womb. In any case, the image of the meal tub functioned as a visual reminder of Cellier's identity as a midwife, which further represented her ability to facilitate the birth of a dangerous plot. The meal tub could thus create a conceptual link between the practice of midwifery and the national

Figure 8. Anatomical illustration of a woman's womb at full term in Jakob Rueff's *The Expert Midwife*, London, 1637, 76-77.



threat of 'popery'. As a representation, it functioned to link the dangerous threat of 'popery' (represented by the plot papers) with the actions of an allegedly criminal midwife (Cellier). This association, then, would have argued at once that her 'popishness'—her link with the threat of High Anglicanism—provided the motive for her crimes, while her status as a midwife provided the means to bring to birth the 'popish plot'.

The notion that Cellier's status as midwife was the means behind her 'popish' criminality was further reinforced in Whig satirical pamphlets. Such inexpensive pamphlets were widely circulated, and were used to inform readers of political issues or criminals. *The Tryal of Elizabeth Cellier...* (1680) is one such satirical text describing Cellier's second trial (in which she was found guilty for libel); it describes how local booksellers had purchased copies of her 'libelous' pamphlets:

> [S]o did she very suitably midwife it [her pamphlet] into the world with cheats and lies, sending several booksellers to buy the worshipful copy and to everyone of them protesting on the faith of a Catholick woman, and the honour of her calling, that he had the maidenhead on it and was the first man she ever offered to.[60]

Such satire produced a dual basis for Cellier's criminality, asserting that her midwife status, combined with her 'popish' religion, was the reason why she committed treasonous actions. *Maddam Celliers Answer to the Popes Letter* (1680) was printed in the form of a (false) letter from Cellier addressed to the Pope. In this pamphlet, Cellier's actions are described in terms referring to childbirth. Says Cellier's persona: "[W]hat birth I have laboured with, of which if they helped to deliver me, it would be meritorious (to everyone)."[61] This satire claimed that Cellier was responsible for the conception of the plot herself, while her Catholic cohorts were the ones placed in the role of 'midwife' in order to help her with the birth of the plot.

This conventional form of satirical representation (the reference to a criminal's profession) functioned to make Cellier's status as a midwife central to her criminalization, and further underlined the connection between 'popish' criminality and midwifery that the image of Cellier with her meal tub represented. Not only did the representation of these two seemingly separate issues of 'popishness' and midwifery together in the image of Cellier and her meal tub reveal a certain social anxiety with the role of midwife who, "as custodian to reproduction and the cultural codes governing it made her a potentially dangerous figure," it also condemned the practice as criminal, thus functioning as a critique of the profession.[62]

Nonconformists had long questioned the imposed authority of the Church over a variety of domestic and private matters through licensed midwifery.[63] This Church licensing system required that midwives be members of the Anglican Church and have the testimonials of a combination of clergymen, patients and medical practitioners. The Church required that midwives have some form of instruction in baptism, usually taught by the local clergyman, and midwives usually underwent an informal apprenticeship under the supervision of another midwife. The role of midwives not only included emergency baptism and supervision of the churching ritual, but also the 'laying out' of the dead in the required Anglican fashion. Midwives therefore had a Church-backed authority on a number of matters which could touch the lives of many within a given community. The nonconformist critique of the Church's maintenance of social control through licensed midwifery is probably most explicit in *The Solemn Mock Procession....* Here Cellier is not only represented committing a crime in terms related to midwifery practice, but her image is associated with other (critical) representations of the Church's secular and temporal authority. For example, the Anglican bishops on the second float in the middle row of this image are described as saying:

Figure 9. Anatomical illustration of a woman's womb at full term. Detail.

Wee are ye Father-champions and pfer
To be red-leter'd in the Calender
Before salvation or a second birth
We'l dam with Devils, to be Sts on earth.

Many viewers would have been familiar with this reference to calendars because of the insistence of the Church during this period of printing specific Church holidays and saints' feast days in red letters in agrarian calendars. For nonconformists and Broad Church supporters, this represented the unwanted expansion of the Church's temporal authority and attempts to control the daily secular affairs of all Protestants.[64] In addition, the term 'second birth' in this verse referred to the more radical nonconformist critique of the necessity for holy baptism. Indeed, many dissenters rejected the notion that one had to be 'born again'; and Anabaptists believed baptism should only be performed on those who had chosen, at an adult age, to commit their lives to their faith. Dissenters and Broad Church supporters were critical of the Church of England assumption that while nonconformists were not allowed into the fold of the established Church, it nonetheless was to dictate how their denominations were to practise. References such as that to "red-leter'd" calendar days would have had an impact on dissenting communities wary that the rituals of the established Church (such as emergency baptism by midwives) were representative of its asserted authority over all English subjects.

When it came to criticizing the authority of the Church's hold on midwifery, the nonconformist critique manifested itself in a criticism of the various religious roles and actions of the midwives themselves. The rituals of churching and lay baptism, for example, were considered 'popish' by dissenters for they were remindful of the rituals of the medieval Catholic Church.[65] In the churching ritual, a midwife escorted the new mother (dressed in a white veil) to church, where the minister blessed her and welcomed her back into the holy community. Many nonconformists viewed this as "one of the most obnoxious Popish survivals of the Anglican Church."[66] It was even claimed that it "breedeth and nourisheth many superstitious opinions in the simple people's hearts; as that the woman which hath born a child is unclean and unholy."[67] The 'popish' rituals of the Church were therefore denigrated by dissenters who deemed such rituals to be part of popular 'superstition'.[68]

Given the critical stance of many dissenting groups towards the religious functions of midwifery, Cellier's representation in a larger Whig and nonconformist critique of the Church worked not only to associate her 'popish' criminality with her midwifery profession; it also questioned the professional legitimacy and necessity of that practice. At the same time, however, her representation as a 'popish midwife', because of her association with the rituals and authority of the Anglican Church, also condemned the religious function of the practice itself. The coupling of the term 'popish' with the profession of midwifery, then, was not only a critique of the established church over secular matters through midwifery licensing, but also questioned the necessity of midwives, dismissing them for their 'superstitious' religious functions.

This criticism, that traditional midwifery was a 'superstitious' practice, was also used by surgeons and apothecaries interested in promoting their 'scientific' ability to supervise childbirth. Jealous rivalries existed amongst physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, and many surgeons and apothecaries became interested in having their practices recognized as professions of equal standing with those of physicians.[69] Still a private contract between practitioner and patient, childbirth supervision could be quite lucrative. For practitioners eager to enter general practice, attending a successful birth was also a method by which one could become the regular doctor of a particular family. Birth was therefore one way in which one could promote one's skills

as a man-midwife and family practitioner.[70] These new men-midwives characterized the previous practices of midwives as 'ignorant' and representative—so it was argued—of the women who performed them. In the words of one doctor, in a midwifery manual of 1698, it was his intention to:

> [C]orrect the frequent mistakes of most midwives, who resting too boldly upon the common way of delivering women, neglect all the wholesome and profitable rules of the art...which concern the anatomical parts of the body.[71]

Such midwifery manuals defined midwifery as a medical practice, the knowledge of which, it was argued, was to be obtained through reading and the analysis of anatomy. In these manuals women were considered ignorant, not because they did not know how to assist in deliveries, but because they lacked the kind of knowledge these manuals (and their doctor authors) promoted—i.e., a knowledge based on reading which was combined with the visual analysis of anatomical illustrations. Thus, in the words of Ann Dally:

> The power of the doctors as experts...was the power to give the appearance of knowing, therefore to judge. The doctors gained in stature not because of what they could do but because they could name, describe and explain.[72]

Medical knowledge, therefore, became linked to sight, literacy, and intellectual cognition.[73] What the format of these anatomical images did not represent was the older form of midwifery knowledge which had previously been learned orally between women midwives on an apprenticeship basis.

But the claims to medical knowledge of these various practitioners by no means led directly to new 'scientific' developments in the practice. As Audrey Eccles points out with regard to the midwifery books produced by medical practitioners during this period:

> [O]n the subjects of conception, sexuality, pregnancy and menstruation...it is often impossible to tell whether a scientific 'fact' has passed into common knowledge and become a generally received opinion, or an existing popular belief or practice has been rationalised and authenticated by giving it a 'scientific' explanation.[74]

Indeed, from a twentieth-century point of view, neither the oral knowledge of midwives nor the written knowledge of medical practitioners seems to have been particularly 'better' than the other. Rather the one form of knowledge (based on the study of anatomy and texts) would transform and eventually replace the other.

The fact that Cellier was condemned as a 'popish midwife' through her representation would have reinforced (because the term 'popish' could be used to denigrate ritualistic practices as 'superstitious') the medical argument that midwives were in need of re-education. When, in *The Popish...Plot*, the actions of Cellier and the other criminals represented are considered the result of the "matchless Superstition of Popery," this accusation carries the traces of three separate but related condemnations—political, religious, and medical. Cellier's representation, then, although exclusionist in origin, became an integral part of these larger discourses on midwifery and their criticisms of the traditional practice.

Attempts by men practitioners to take over the supervision of childbirth from their women midwife counterparts did not go unnoticed by midwives themselves. Indeed in 1688, Cellier herself wrote, in an open letter to an anonymous doctor:

> I hope, Doctor...[you] will deter...from pretending to teach us Midwifery, especially such as confess *they have never delivered Women in their Lives*, and being asked *What they would do in such a Case?* reply *they have not yet studied it*, but will when occasion serves; *This is something to the purpose I must confess, Doctor*: But I doubt it will not satisfy the Women of this Age, who are so sensible and impatient of their Pain, that few of them will be prevailed with to bear it, in Complement to the Doctor, *while he fetches his Book, studies the Case, and teaches the Midwife to perform her work*, which she hopes may be done before he comes.[75]

This process of re-education of women midwives would have grave repercussions for the older practice, for not only would midwifery qualifications change, but the assumed primary care-givers of childbirth would no longer necessarily be women. The transformation of midwifery knowledge would eventually result in marginalization of women from the practice.[76]

As I have attempted to demonstrate, the seventeenth-century term 'popish' was a specific yet complex criticism of what traditional midwifery practice had come to represent in the eyes of both nonconformist groups and the medical élite. Cellier's representation as 'popish midwife' demonstrated the dangers of a midwifery licensed by the Anglican Church, while it simultaneously served to associate her criminality with the 'popish' ignorance of the previous midwifery practice. Cellier's representation as 'popish midwife' was therefore one part of an ongoing process whereby midwifery was redefined during the seventeenth-century. This process would involve the re- evaluation of previous societal perceptions of childbirth and the assumed role of midwives themselves. This criticism of the older prac-

tice would manifest itself through a variety of discourses—political, religious and medical—and was thus not merely the result of 'scientific development' in medicine as has been previously claimed in medical histories. Indeed, Cellier's representation attests to the complex and contradictory nature of the process whereby such changes to previous perceptions of childbirth and its supervision took place.

Within the nonconformist critique of the Anglican establishment, the criticism of Cellier as 'popish' functioned to question the hierarchical authority of the Church over the secular affairs of all Protestants, including dissenting and Broad Church supporters. Cellier represented a kind of midwifery which had been part of an earlier religion-based authority that "had laid its emphasis upon the regular performance of ritual duties." After the Reformation, however, it was assumed "that...[such]...popular ignorance was merely a hangover from Popery."[77] Her 'popish' criminality, associated with the metaphor between the meal tub and the womb, deemed midwifery not only part of an outmoded hierarchy of the Anglican Church, but also a profession which promoted 'superstitious' practices. This characterization was used by medical pracititioners interested in promoting their own, more 'scientific' skills in the supervision of childbirth. Indeed, perhaps the most potent form of condemnation of midwifery during this period was the inference that midwifery in its traditional form was 'popish'. Such a term encapsulated not only the nonconformist and Whig religious (and political) critique of midwifery, but also the professional condemnation of midwifery as a practice that promoted superstition and ignorance.

* This article stems from my M.A. thesis "The 'Popish Midwife': Printed Representations of Elizabeth Cellier and Midwifery Practice in Late Seventeenth-Century England," University of British Columbia, 1992. I would like to thank my thesis supervisors Dr. Rose Marie San Juan and Dr. Maureen Ryan, for their encouragement and support.

1 Caroline Flint, "On the Brink: Midwifery in Britain," *The Midwife Challenge*, Sheila Kitzinger ed. (London, 1988), 22-39.

2 Irving S. Cutter and Henry R. Viets, *A Short History of Midwifery* (Philadelphia and London, 1964), and Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1982). Two recent studies have attempted to investigate this process of redefinition: Elizabeth Harvey's *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London, 1992), 140-285, examines how metaphorical references to childbirth and midwifery in English Renaissance poetry were linked to the creation of a new medical discourse on childbirth; and L.J. Jordanova's, "Gender, Generation and Science: William Hunter's Obstetrical Atlas," in *William Hunter and the Eighteenth Century Medical World*, W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter eds. (Cambridge and New York, 1985), 385-412, analyzes how the institutionalization and distribution of the anatomical atlas contributed to changes in the societal perception of childbirth.

3 Cutter and Viets, in *A Short History of Midwifery*, are quick to assume that the changes to midwifery were caused by the ignorance of midwives and by scientific 'advancement' in the field. However, during the seventeenth century, the very period when men were entering the birth chamber for the first time, the bills of mortality document that death at childbirth actually rose. See Elizabeth Cellier, (written Celleor), *To Dr.— An Answer to his Queries, Concerning the Colledg of Midwives* (London, 1688), 6.

4 See Nicholas Culpeper, *The Directory for Midwives* (London, 1660); Sir Theodore Mayerne, Dr. Chamberlain, Mr. Nicholas Culpeper, etc., *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged* (London, 1698); *The English Midwife Enlarged* (London, 1682).

5 Not a lot is known about Elizabeth Cellier. She was a noted midwife in London in the 1670s and 1680s. Originally she had been Protestant, but she became a Catholic. During the late 1670s she provided relief for prisoners in Newgate through the charity of Lady Powis and others of rank. It was in Newgate where she met Thomas Dangerfield, a well-known criminal, who later accused her of plotting with other Catholics to kill the King. "Elizabeth Cellier," *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1937-38 ed.

6 BM 1088, December 20, 1680. M.D. George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, Political and Personal Satires* (London, 1870), 641. The top and lower portions of the print are located in the British Library. For the lower portion see the British Library, Luttrell Collection, iii, 142 (press-mark: C 20f).

7 BM 1085, November, 1680. George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings*, 632.

8 BM 1114, George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings*, 682.

9 Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), 98.

10 See *The Tryal of Elizabeth Cellier, the Popish Midwife...* (London, 1680); and *A True Copy of a Letter of Consolation Sent to Nat. the Printer...from the Meal-Tub Midwife...* (London, 1681).

11 David Harley, "Ignorant Midwives—A Persistent Stereotype," *Society for the Social History of Medicine Bulletin*, 28 (1981), 8.

12 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1978), 180.

13 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 180-181.

14 *The Triall of Elizabeth Cellier, at the Kings Bench Barr, on Friday June the 11th, 1680* (London, 1680).

15 Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers. Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580-1640* (East Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983), 89.

16 Ornella Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929* (Cambridge, 1990), 6.

17 Irvine Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1986), 24.

18 The lower portion, entitled the "Explanation," was separated from the upper portion at an unknown date. For the purposes of this article, Figures 1A and 1B are shown together.

19 Sheila Williams, "The Pope-Burning Processions of 1679, 80, and 81," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 21 (1958), 105.

20 Peter Burke, "Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century London," *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, Barry Reay ed. (London, 1985), 31-58.

21 George, *English Political Caricature to 1792: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda* (Oxford, 1959), 12.

22 For other Cellier images see George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings*, 135, for designs drawn by Francis Barlow for a set of playing cards now lost representing the Meal Tub Plot.

23 It has been estimated that in late seventeenth-century London 76% of shopkeepers and craftsmen could sign their names (given that most learned to read before they could write, the percentage of those capable of reading was probably higher), while women's literacy is estimated to have risen from 10% in mid-century to 48% at the end. See Burke, "Popular Culture in Late Seventeenth-Century London," 49.

24 Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, 98.

25 See *The New Popish Sham-Plot Discovered, or, The Cursed Contrivance of the Earl of Danby, Mris. Celier...* (London, 1682); and *The Midwife Unmask'd, or The Popish Design of Mrs. Cellier's Meal-Tub Plainly Made Known...* (London, 1680).

26 *The Triall of Elizabeth Cellier, at the Kings Bench Barr, on Friday June the 11th, 1680.*

27 Elizabeth Cellier, *Malice Undefeated: Or a Brief Relation of the Accusation and Deliverance of Elizabeth Cellier* (London, 1680).

28 Many modern accounts of the Meal Tub Plot imply that Cellier had a role in the plot. See John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London, 1972), 190; and Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 371. In "Cellier, Elizabeth," *The Dictionary of National Biography*, however, it was claimed that the plot had been the creation of Dangerfield, who alleged he had been employed to concoct the 'sham plot'.

29 For contemporary accounts of the 'popish plots' see, for example, *Narcissus Luttrell's Popish Plot Catalogues*, introd. F.C. Francis, (Oxford, 1956).

30 Broad Church supporters were Anglicans who wanted the Church of England to allow the inclusion of some nonconformists (such as Presbyterians) into their congregations. Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers supported the Whig Party. N.H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), 60.

31 'Popish plots ' (including the Meal Tub Plot) were important political events of this period before the Revolution of 1688, and were crucial in the formation of public opinion about English nationhood and the role of Protestantism and the Church of England in the formation of English sovereignty. Much has been written on the role of the 'popish plots' in the politics of the period. See, for example, Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689* (Stanford, California, 1992); and Sir John Pollock, *The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II*, 1st edn 1903, (Cambridge, 1944).

32 Gary S. De Krey, "London Radicals and Revolutionary Politics," *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie, eds. (Oxford, 1990), 89.

33 Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (New York, 1980), 213; see also Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, 100.

34 Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 213; see also Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, 100.

35 Quoted in Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 92.

36 For a discussion of the concept of 'popery' within the political climate of this period, see John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1973).

37 Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, 73.

38 George, *English Political Caricature to 1792*, 16.

39 Many of the Whigs involved in campaigning for exclusion came from Puritan families who had been politically active during Interregnum. Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 199.

40 Another characteristic of these exclusionist prints which would have further established their Whig message was the fact that they were printed by Whig supporters. For example, *The Popish...Plot* was produced by an established Whig printer, Richard Baldwin, whose name appears in the bottom right of the broadside. Baldwin's advertisements for political pamphlets and broadsides appeared frequently in London newspapers during the 1680s, and his name on this broadside would have informed viewers that this was a Whiggish representation of the 'popish plots'. Only by knowing the printer's name, then, viewers could have understood that the image represented at once both an argument for the Duke's exclusion and a criticism of the established Church.

41 George, *English Political Caricature to 1792*, 52.

42 Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 199.

43 George, *English Political Caricature to 1792*, 52.

44 See BM 1072 and BM 1074 in George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings.*

45 David M. Bergeron, "The Lord Mayor's Shows," *English Civic Pageantry* (London, 1971), 123-217.

46 Burke, "Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century London," 31.

47 James Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development* (Cambridge, 1986), 112.

48 Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 199.

49 Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), 188.

50 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 181.

51 David Harley, "Ignorant Midwives—A Persistent Stereotype," 7.

52 "The Popish Priests serve their Laity, so do our Physitians serve the commonality of this Nation; namely Hide al from them they can, for they know...that should the vulgar but be a little acquainted with their Mysteries al their jugling and knavery would be seen." Culpeper, *The Directory for Midwives*. (Culpeper was a nonconformist man-midwife.)

53 Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850*, 19-20.

54 George, *English Political Caricature to 1792*, 12.

55 Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices*, 149.

56 See BM 1071, 1680, George, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings*.

57 Tamsyn Williams, "'Magnetic Figures': Polemical Prints of the English Revolution," *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, 1540-1660*, Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, eds. (London, 1990), 86-110.

58 Jaques Guillemeau, *Childbirth or the Happy Deliveries of Women* (London, 1635), quoted in Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England*, 381.

59 Maryanne Cline Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," *Journal of the History of Biology*, IX (1976), 183-213.

60 *The Tryal of Elizabeth Cellier, the Popish Midwife...* (London, 1680), 1-2.

61 *Maddam Celliers Answer to the Popes Letter* (London, 1680), 2.

62 Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices*, 149.

63 The Anglican theologian Richard Hooker wrote extensively in the late sixteenth century on the necessity of lay baptism, especially by women. See Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, Georges Edelen, ed. (Cambridge, 1977).

64 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 738-739.

65 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 42.

66 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 42.

67 J. Canne, *A Necessitie of Separation* (1634), quoted in Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 65.

68 The use of birth girdles (which imitated the Virgin Mary, believed to have worn a girdle during the birth of Christ), as well as the chanting of charms and prayers which were "all common features of the country midwife's repetoire," were rejected by nonconformist groups. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 222.

69 For a contemporary discussion of this phenomenon, see Christopher Merrett, *A Short History of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by the Apothecaries* (London, 1670).

70 Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and Women's Rights* (New York, 1977), 37.

71 *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged* (London, 1698), A3.

72 Dr. Ann Dally, *Women Under the Knife, A History of Surgery* (London, 1991), 67.

73 Jordanova, "Gender, Generation and Science: William Hunter's Obstetrical Atlas," 401.

74 Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England*, 33.

75 Cellier (written Celleor), *To Dr.— An Anwser to His Queries, Concerning the Colledg of Midwives*, 6-7.

76 Harley, "Ignorant Midwives—A Persistent Stereotype," 9.

77 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 196.