

5th November 2020

Plots

**“Remember, remember the Fifth of November,
Gunpowder, Treason and Plot.**

**We know no reason why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot.”**

Traditional Rhyme, on the Gunpowder Plot, 1605

It's strange that one of the “fun-based” events of our social calendar in the UK marks a plot by Guy Fawkes and other conspirators to blow up King James VI & I and members of Houses of Parliament in 1605. Such was the importance of the discovery of the plot that on November 5th 1605 Londoners were encouraged to celebrate the King's escape from assassination by lighting bonfires. And so “Guy Fawkes Night” or “Bonfire Night” was born. The foiling of a murderous plot was deemed worth celebrating. “Remember, remember” the effects of subversive plotting.

But, as a writer, I think of “plotting” in a different way. When I write a story, it has to begin with a plot, a storyline. It's not always possible to know the whole story from the start. Writing is a living thing, and sometimes a story takes on a life of its own! But there must be a thread that runs through it, a plot that makes sense. No matter how short a story might be, it has to have a decent plot to make it worth reading.

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, said of her own writing in the 17th century in *To the Readers*.

*Greek, Latin poets, I could never read
Not their historians, but our English Speed;
I could not steal their wit, nor plots out take;
All my plays' plots my own poor brain did make.*

Plots can be dangerous and subversive. And, OK, maybe the foiling of them *is* worth celebrating as we do on Bonfire Night. But let's take time also to celebrate the plots that tell a *good* story in people's lives. After all, as Margaret Cavendish knew, your story is your *own* story, not stolen or taken from anyone else. The plot of your life is playing itself out right now. Make sure it's a decent plot that other people would like to get to know.

A prayer for today

*Lord, you have given me a good plot to follow.
Help me to write a good story with it. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon
Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>*