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The Wonderful Discoveries:
English Witchcraft and Early Stuart Pamphlet Culture

1443356

Supervisor: Professor Sandra Clark

Dissertation Submission for MA History of the Book
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School of Advanced Study
University of London

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Introduction

In 1715, nearly 250 years after Caxton first brought the printing press to England, Myles Davies published what Joad Raymond refers to as the ‘idiosyncratic and boisterous’ *Eikon Mikro-Biblion, Or A Critical History of Pamphlets*.¹ Davies prefaces his *Critical History* by stating that ‘From Pamphlets may be learn’d the Genius of the Age, the Debates of the Learned, the Follies of the Ignorant, [...] the Oversights of Statesmen, the Mistake of Courtiers, the different approaches of Foreigners, and the several encroachments of Rivals.’² Evidently, the cheap and easily disseminated pamphlet form has been of interest to scholars for at least 300 years as a basis of many of our most enduring journalistic and literary traditions. By the final decades of the sixteenth century, the pamphlet form in England, and especially in London, was pervasive. The English book trade had come into its own during the Elizabethan period as Renaissance ideas percolated from continental Europe and carved out new markets for scholarly works and ecclesiastical texts in the vernacular. Fluctuating religious attitudes ensured a lively trade in ephemera – including pamphlets – that were used as a means of both public commentary and debate. Pamphleteers, by catering to a market beyond the elite, moved political, social, and cultural discussions out of familiar learned circles and into a newly evolving public sphere.

The emergence of a public sphere and an increasingly literate middle class, or perhaps less controversially a more ‘middling sort’ including merchants, clerics, and civil servants, increased demand for written content exponentially. In particular, the market for cheap print expanded during this period in order to accommodate the growing demand for literary information and entertainment obtainable by the non-elite. The pamphlet form perfectly met

¹ Joad Raymond, ‘Introduction: networks, communication, practice’, in Joad Raymond ed. *News Networks in Seventeenth Century Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-17 (p. 1).

² Myles Davies, *Eikon Mikro-Bibliom. Sive Icon Libellorum. Or, A Critical History of Pamphlets* (London, 1715). Part I. Preface I. pp. 2-3.

the criteria of cheap and accessible and thus, as Sandra Clark attests, was the ‘first kind of literature to cater on any wide scale for the new and increasing audience of middle-class readers’.³ These popular pamphlets covered remarkably diverse subjects ranging from dramatic accounts of battles, to comprehensive sermons, to tales of monstrous births. Strange or aberrant crimes seem to have been exceptionally popular with a Jacobean audience, much as they are with readers today. Crimes of witchcraft and the subsequent trials – not uncommon in the early modern period but still remarkable – made particularly good pamphlet fodder since the accounts could be at once informative, entertaining, and sensational.

This dissertation will focus on three early seventeenth-century witch-trial pamphlets; *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (1613) by Thomas Potts, the anonymous *The Wonderfull Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (1619), and Henry Goodcole’s *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a witch, late of Edmonton*, (1621). These works, collectively referred to throughout as the *Wonderful Discoveries*, represent a selection of pamphlets on witchcraft published in Jacobean London during the final twelve years of James I’s reign. The texts were not chosen as a random sample, but rather as a case study in the transitional nature of early-seventeenth century print culture.

The first chapter of this dissertation will contextualize witchcraft in historical and literary contexts, and explore how the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts fit within this contemporary landscape of both literature and a popular social belief system. In the second chapter, I will consider the nature of early modern pamphlets more generally – including their readership, price, and contemporary cultural value. This chapter will also investigate the materiality of each *Wonderful Discovery* pamphlet, and consider how the material nature of

³ Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (London: The Athlone Press, 1983), p. 18.

these works affected their contemporary meaning. The final chapter will place the tracts within the greater context of an emerging seventeenth-century news market, and explore the ways in which these works were responding to a growing public desire for reliable and accurate information.

This dissertation aims to explore the ways in which the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts both conform to ideas of early modern pamphlet culture and represent a transition in the popular literary landscape of the period. Though the authors were writing within certain perimeters of the well-established strange news and crime genres, they were also diverging from these norms and moving towards the realm of topical journalism; recounting important contemporary cases of witchcraft in immense detail. Each author, though utilizing the pamphlet form to ensure more widespread circulation, writes in an intelligent and engaging manner, impressing upon the reader both the excitement and gravity of the cases. These three witch-trial pamphlets are each provocative and informative – merging sensational storytelling and avid moralizing with claims of being authoritative news. The *Wonderful Discovery* pamphlets, in their content, form, and claims of authority, embody the early modern transition in the way that popular information was presented, communicated, and disseminated to the classes beyond the elite.

Witchcraft in Context

Before delving into the material nature of these pamphlets and their place in the wider sphere of a developing news market, it is beneficial to consider the historical and literary context of witchcraft in the period more generally. It is easy for people today to disregard the European witch-hunts as testimony to the ignorance and trivial superstition of past societies. James Sharpe draws attention to what he sees as the problematic tendency for modern historians to regard early modern belief in the occult ‘as evidence of the credulity and barbarity of a past age’.⁴ In reality, the social, political, and economic factors behind early modern witchcraft beliefs are much more complex than a simple lack of knowledge or intelligence. Early scholars of witchcraft such as Matilda Joslyn Gage, Margaret Murray, and Montague Summers helped fuel these sensational and hyperbolic conceptions of the European ‘witch-craze’, including the frequently cited figure of 9 million witches executed from 1450-1750 in Gage’s book *Women, Church, and State*.⁵ Today, the accepted number of witchcraft executions throughout Europe and the British Isles during those three centuries is closer to 50,000 – a not insubstantial number but also not one indicative of unbridled witch-hunts.⁶

It is impossible now to reconstruct how the majority of people felt about witchcraft and whether they genuinely considered it a concern in their lives. However, Sharpe argues that belief in witchcraft was pervasive because it provided a means ‘of explaining the inexplicable’ and of ‘understanding human relationships’.⁷ An online search of the term ‘witches’ and ‘witch’ in the British Library’s English Short Title Catalogue indicates that

⁴ James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶ Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 175.; Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 5.

⁷ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 12.

there were over 200 texts on witchcraft printed in English between 1575 and 1750,⁸ which strongly suggests that this was a topic of interest to English citizens throughout the early modern period. As always, there is more information on the popular opinions of the upper classes, but an individual's social standing does not seem to have dictated the degree, or the tenaciousness, of their 'superstitious' beliefs. Witchcraft appears to have been accepted across all levels of the social hierarchy, and as Sharpe attests 'a wide variety of people, ranging from the very intelligent to the fairly stupid were able to hold that belief'.⁹ Conversely, while belief in witchcraft seems to have been prevalent, it was certainly not universal as is evidenced by works like Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

Scot, an English country gentleman, refuted the popular idea that there were witches living in England at the time and argued that all people who were executed for witchcraft were innocent; this impressive 600-page tome was printed in London – without license – in 1584. In the preface to his book, entitled 'The Epistle' Scot writes:

Because they, which are commonlie accused of witchcraft, are the least sufficient of all other persons to speake for themselves; as having the most base and simple education of all others; the extremitie of their age giving them leave to dote, their povertie to beg, their wrongs to chide and threaten (as being void of anie other waie of revenge) their humor melancholicall to be full of imaginations, from whence cheerfelie proceedeth the vanitie of their confessions; as that they can transforme themselves and others into apes, owles, asses, dogs, cats, &c: that they can flie in the aire, kill children with charmes, hinder the coming of butter, &c. [...] For (God knoweth) manie of these poore wretches had more need to be releevd than chastised; and more meete were a preacher to admonish them, than a gailor to keepe them; and a physician more necessarie to helpe them, than an executioner or tormentor to hang or burne them.¹⁰

⁸ British Library English Short Title Catalogue <<http://estc.bl.uk>> [accessed 2 August 2015].

⁹ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), [Biv-Biv_v].

For a modern reader Scot's arguments seem eminently reasonable, but for a contemporary reader his views were wildly progressive and quite controversial. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* was certainly read throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and, as David Wootton points out, is referenced by authors including Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe, and alluded to by William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton.¹¹ However, though Scot's ideas sparked discussion – and literary reaction – from witchcraft authorities such as Henry Holland and John Cotta, Scot's *Discoverie* was not reprinted until 1651 indicating that it was not an entirely popular work. Its subsequent reprints in 1654 and 1655 suggest that by the middle of the seventeenth century, even in the midst of resurgence in witchcraft accusations and trials, scepticism of the occult was becoming more widespread.¹²

In the decades following the first printing of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* many great minds considered and responded – both favourably and critically – to Scot's work; but his most renowned and important detractor was, undoubtedly, King James VI of Scotland.¹³ In order to evaluate the literary and social significance of the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, we must begin with the final decade of the sixteenth century and one of the most prolific witch hunts in Britain. In 1589, a 24-year-old King James VI set sail to Oslo in order to retrieve his new bride, the 15-year-old Anne of Denmark, who had been delayed by a series of storms, in what Donald Tyson suggests was 'perhaps the only romantic and courageous

¹¹ David Wootton, 'Reginald Scot' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/24905> [accessed 9 August 2015].

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Phillip C. Almond, 'King James I and the Burning of Reginald Scot's *The Discovery of Witchcraft*: The Invention of a Tradition', *Notes and Queries*, 56 (2009), pp. 209-13 <DOI:10.1093/notesj/gjp023> [accessed 11 August 2015]. There is a popular anecdote that James detested Scot's *Discoverie* so much that he ordered all copies of the work burned when he ascended the English throne in 1603; however, there is no reliable evidence to support the claim and the relatively high number of surviving first editions further indicates that this was not the case.

action James ever took'.¹⁴ James and Anne spent the winter in Denmark – a notoriously superstitious country where witches were actively hunted.¹⁵ During his time in Scandinavia James interacted with notable philosophers and demonologists including Niels Hemmingsen and Tycho Brahe, whose ideas seemed to have had a significant impact on the Scottish king; when his and Anne's return journey to Scotland was again plagued by violent storms and a ship was lost, James concluded witches were to blame.¹⁶

Early in 1590 before King James and his new wife had returned to Scotland, David Seton, the Deputy Bailiff of Tranent, became suspicious that his maidservant Geillis Duncan was a witch. Under private torture administered by Seton, Duncan confessed to witchcraft and simultaneously implicated several other members of the community including well-respected midwife Agnes Sampson, schoolmaster John Cunningham (Doctor Fian), and Seton's wealthy sister-in-law Euphame MacCalzean.¹⁷ What began as a relatively small and localized case of witchcraft soon, as Louise Yeamon puts it, 'snowballed to involve spectacular accusations of treason'; by November 1590 King James VI was personally involved.¹⁸ The events of the Berwick trials survive today in the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, attributed to James Carmichael and printed in London in 1591. The author of this account claims that several of the accused confessed to conspiring with the devil to murder King James by conjuring storms to sink his ship. Agnes Sampson was personally interrogated

¹⁴ Donald Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), p. 3.

¹⁵ Rune Blix Hagen, 'Witchcraft Criminality and Witchcraft Research in the Nordic Countries', in Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) pp. 375-92 (p. 376).

¹⁶ Tracy Borman, *Witches: James I and the English Witch Hunts* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), p. 31.

¹⁷ Louise A. Yeamon, 'North Berwick Witches', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) < DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/69951 > [accessed 10 August 2015].

¹⁸ Louise A. Yeamon, 'Hunting the Rich Witch in Scotland: high status witchcraft suspects and their persecutors, 1590-1660', in Julian Goodare ed., *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) pp. 106-21 (p. 107).

by James and his councilors and confessed – under torture – that the devil himself wanted James dead. According to the pamphlet author, the ‘witches demanded of the Diuel why he did beare such hatred to the king, who answered, by reason the king is the greatest enemy he hath in the worlde’.¹⁹ This response must have struck a chord with James, whose strong belief in the divine right of kings would have – at least in his mind – made him a natural enemy of the devil.²⁰ The Berwick trials continued until 1592 and over sixty people were implicated for crimes of witchcraft.²¹

Less than five years later another prodigious witch-hunt, which Goodare attributes to a combination of political and religious breakdowns in government, famine, and plague outbreaks, was taking place throughout Scotland.²² From the beginning of 1596 to the end of 1597, it is estimated that 400 Scots were tried for crimes of witchcraft and about 200 of the accused were subsequently executed.²³ It was also in 1597 that James’ *Daemonologie* – the king’s scathing response to Reginald Scot – was printed in Edinburgh. James begins his work with a preface to the reader in which he attests that he did not write the tract to demonstrate his own intelligence but rather:

to resolve the doubting hearts of manie; both that such assaults of Sathan are most certainly practised, and that the instruments thereof, merits most severely to be punished: against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, whereof the one called Scot, an Englishman, is not ashamed in publicke print to denie, that there can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so maintaines the old error of the Sadduces in denying of spirits.²⁴

¹⁹ Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland* (London, 1591), Bi_v.

²⁰ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 50.

²¹ Yeamon, ‘North Berwick Witches’.

²² Julian Goodare, ‘Scottish Witchcraft Panic of 1597’, in Julian Goodare, ed., *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 52-53.

²³ Liv Helene Willumsen, ‘Exporting the Devil Across the North Sea: John Cunningham and the Finnmark Witch-Hunt’, in Julian Goodare ed., *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 55.

²⁴ King James VI of Scotland, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), A2-A2_v.

The 80-pages of *Daemonologie*, which is divided into three books, takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between Philomathes, who doubts the existence of witchcraft, and Epistemon, who argues with much scriptural evidence of its reality. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its exceedingly influential author, *Daemonologie* would become one of *the* eminent witch-hunting manuals of the following century.

This chapter thus far has focused largely on the environment of witchcraft beliefs in Scotland in the decade leading up to James' ascension to the throne of England in 1603 in order to provide some context – and contrast – to James' reign of England. Based on the fervour with which King James approached the Scottish witch-hunts in the 1590s, it is tempting to assume that the landscape of occult beliefs in England throughout the first decades of the seventeenth century were the same, but this does not appear to be the case. Despite James commissioning a London reprint of *Daemonologie* in 1603, and passing 'An Act against Conjurat[i]on, Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked spirits' in 1604, Marion Gibson notes that the king's passion for witch-hunting had moderated and evolved into an interest in 'investigating fraudulent claims of bewitchment'.²⁵ The reasons that James' opinions mellowed during his reign in England are not explicitly evidenced, and he did not write about witchcraft in a public platform again. However, the beliefs and traditions of witchcraft were very different in England and Scotland, and James may have changed his ways in order – at least in part – to align himself more closely with English customs.

Alan Macfarlane suggests that cases of English witchcraft accusations and trials were generally more localized, and were more likely to result from 'particular pressures within the village rather than an external event, such as [...] a general economic recession, or political

²⁵ Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America 1550-1750* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 5.

uncertainty'.²⁶ Sharpe also points to the 'personal and local' nature of witchcraft in England and suggests that while in parts of Continental Europe and Scotland witches were more frequently accused of wreaking 'cosmic havoc' including creating storms or spreading the plague, English witches were much more concerned with local hostilities or revenge.²⁷ Furthermore, though James had passed the more severe Witchcraft Act of 1604, which allowed much harsher punishment for witches (including death sentences even when the accused did not cause death), the legal system in England was more restrained than in much of Europe and Scotland. Sharpe draws attention to an important example of this by demonstrating that 'cases of malefic witchcraft [in England] were tried at the assizes'.²⁸ That witchcraft cases were tried at assize courts, which occurred twice a year and were generally presided over by experienced court judges rather than local courts meant – at least in theory – that the accused got a fairer trial. In addition to this, the use of torture was not common as part of the English criminal trial process, though Sharpe argues that individuals accused of witchcraft could still be subjected to 'very heavy psychological or physical pressures'.²⁹ Certainly the lines of questioning that accused witches were put through were often aggressive and misleading, as can be seen in many accounts of witch-trials including the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts.

The differences in witchcraft and its legal treatment in England and Scotland would have been clear to James, and it is possible that certain changes in his beliefs and actions

²⁶ Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 95.

²⁷ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 65. The localized nature of witchcraft in England, often dealing with a single family or a particular place, may also help explain why contemporary accounts of the trials were so popular. As communication between London and more provincial areas increased, so too did the interest in local affairs since – as will be seen in the final chapter – the majority of news came from Europe, sensational cases from elsewhere in England must have seemed especially relevant and exciting.

²⁸ James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 24.

²⁹ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 218.

were in response to his relocation. However, James was, at least early on in his reign of England, committed to his new role of sceptic. Sharpe recounts several events in which James intervened in witch-trials resulting in the acquittal of the accused – including two cases in Cambridge in 1605 and 1606, and a case in Caernarvon in 1611. The most well known incident occurred at Leicester in 1616 when a boy allegedly suffering fits caused by witchcraft (for which nine people had already been executed) was examined both at Lambeth Palace and personally by James who labeled the evidence fraudulent and demanded the release of all of the surviving accused.³⁰ Though these events indicate that James' scepticism was growing, and that he was wary of the number of false accusations circulating, it appears that he was still concerned about his personal safety; there is evidence that as late as 1620 a schoolmaster called Mr. Peacock was tortured in the Tower of London for plotting to harm the king using witchcraft.³¹ Still, the landscape of occult beliefs in early seventeenth century England was much less fraught than the final decades of the sixteenth century in both England and Scotland, and Sharpe points out that the from 1600 charges of witchcraft 'fell away precipitously' into the 1630s.³² The decline of persecutions for witchcraft during this period makes the cases covered in the three *Wonderful Discoveries* – and their written accounts – all the more interesting and unique.

Now that some historical context of witchcraft in the reign of King James IV and I has been explored, it is pertinent to consider the ways in which witchcraft was treated in contemporary culture, and especially in creative representations. Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and James' own *Daemonologie* were briefly analyzed earlier in the chapter, but witchcraft was not discussed exclusively in learned volumes such as those. Cases and concepts of witchcraft inspired not only erudite men writing serious tomes, but also satirists,

³⁰ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 49.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sharpe, *Witchcraft*, p. 25.

playwrights, and of course pamphleteers, whose works both established and expanded what Diane Purkiss refers to as the ‘Jacobean witch-vogue’.³³ In particular Purkiss draws attention to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Queens*, and Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* – all of which were written within the same period as the three *Wonderful Discoveries*. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* provides one of the most enduring depictions of witches in popular culture as Banquo famously remarks that the Weird Sisters are ‘so withered, and so wild in their attire’ with their, ‘skinny lips’, and ‘beards’ that he cannot tell if they are women or men.³⁴ The witches of *Macbeth* are sensationalized and theatrical representations of what contemporary readers or viewers would have perceived of as a witch. Today, the image of the witch as a shriveled, ugly old woman muttering incantations over a cauldron is still a vastly familiar trope, which is reinforced every year around the time of Halloween. However, it is interesting to note how Shakespeare’s treatment of witches differs between an early play like *Henry VI Part II* and the later *Macbeth*. Though Purkiss argues that the witches of *Macbeth* are ‘a low-budget, frankly exploitative collage of randomly chosen bits of witch-lore, selected not for thematic significance but for its sensation value’, this is not necessarily indicative of the Bard’s understanding of witchcraft in society more generally.³⁵ The witches and conjurers represented in *Henry VI Part II*, for example, include Margery Jourdain, two priests (Hume and Southwell), and the Duchess of Gloucester’s clerk Bolingbroke. These characters, though all sentenced to death – ‘the witch in Smithfield [...] burnt to ashes’ and the other three ‘strangled on the gallows’ – are not depicted as old hags and do not operate as sensational or comic relief. Rather, they are powerful purveyors of

³³ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 199.

³⁴ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Washington: Folger Digital Texts, 2010), I. iii. 41-48 <<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=p7>> [accessed 10 August 2015].

³⁵ Purkiss, *The Witch*, p. 207.

prophecies and instruments of the overly ambitious Duchess of Gloucester.³⁶ Differing portrayals of witches and acts of witchcraft in dramatic works of the early modern period reflect evolving beliefs and expectations of the occult in the consciousness of contemporary authors.

However, Shakespeare's witches, along with those in Jonson and Middleton's works, did not come solely from the imaginations of their authors. As Sharpe argues, what *Macbeth* and other contemporary dramatic works demonstrate 'is that Shakespeare, like any playwright in his period, had a range of sources from which to construct his stage versions of witches, and drew on them as the mood took him'.³⁷ As was the case with all his plays, Shakespeare drew inspiration for *Macbeth* from a number of sources including Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, and likely Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, King James' *Daemonologie*, and the 1591 pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*. Sharpe goes so far as to propose that when *Macbeth's* First Witch states that she will exact revenge on an uncharitable neighbour by wreaking havoc on the woman's sailor husband at Aleppo Port, Shakespeare is referencing Agnes Sampson's confessions of conjuring storms and other maritime mayhem.³⁸ However, Purkiss suggests that Shakespeare's treatment of the Weird Sisters indicates that the Bard was privileging James' newer preoccupation of empirical evidence of witchcraft, rather than the fervent paranoia he demonstrated in Scotland in the 1590s. Purkiss expands on this to argue that 'the Weird Sisters raise the questions of meaning and truth which James had begun to understand as central to witchcraft.'³⁹ The concept of truth in the early modern period will be explored further in the final chapter, but for now we

³⁶ William Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part II* (Washington: Folger Digital Texts, 2010), II. iii. 8-9 <<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=2H6&loc=p7>> [accessed 25 August 2015].

³⁷ James Sharpe, 'In Search of the English Sabbat: Popular Conceptions of Witches' Meetings in Early Modern England' *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2 (2013), pp. 161-83 (p. 176) <<http://www.fupress.com/bsfm-jems>> [accessed 11 August 2015].

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.; Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, iii, 4-10.

³⁹ Purkiss, *The Witch*, p. 207.

turn to the *Wonderful Discovery* texts and their role within the literary and cultural sphere of the ‘Jacobean witch-vogue’.

The materiality of the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts will be examined in some detail in the next chapter, but first the nature of the cases covered in the pamphlets – and their literary treatment – will be considered. Just like the playwrights of the early modern period, pamphlet writers were influenced by a number of sources beyond the cases or events that they were recounting. All authors, whether they were writing guidebooks, jestbooks, or textbooks, would have been conscious not only of their audiences, but also of the capricious nature of censorship practices during the period.⁴⁰ As was demonstrated in the Martin Marprelate controversy of the late 1580s, angering a monarch or church official with printed pamphlets could spur consequences as serious as torture and charges of treason.⁴¹ The authors of works on witchcraft would likely have been especially cautious of accounts and sympathies in their works with King James I being such a known authority on the subject. However, as will be discussed in more depth in the final chapter, the authors of each of the *Wonderful Discoveries* did venture to achieve a degree of authority within their own works.

The first of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts to appear was Thomas Potts’ *The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* printed in 1613. Potts was a court clerk, clerk of the peace for the East Riding in 1610-11 and associate clerk on northern

⁴⁰ Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 3-6. Clegg points to the changeable nature of censorship during the early modern period. She further argues that whether or not a publication was censored or targeted by officials largely depended on the political or social climate at any given moment rather than a standardized set of regulations.

⁴¹ The Marprelate controversy of 1588-89 involved a group of anonymous Puritans printing works attacking the episcopacy of the English church, which resulted in an officially sanctioned pamphlet war between the state and the so-called Martinists. Queen Elizabeth I and Archbishop John Whitgift ensured that those involved were hunted and charged with treason; some men were caught and tortured and, while no one was executed for their involvement, censorship laws did heighten following the controversy.

assize circuit in the summer of 1612 when the Lancaster witches were tried.⁴² This *Wonderful Discovery* was written at the instigation of the presiding assize judges Sir James Altham and Sir Edward Bromley, the later of whom also corrected and revised the text. Potts' work is an extensive account of the proceedings surrounding the trials of nineteen people accused of witchcraft in Lancaster and Salmesbury and it includes lists of the accused, details of their charges, accounts of each individual interrogation or 'examination', and the subsequent sentencing. Sharpe attests that the most famous of the witchcraft cases tried at this assize, known as the Pendle witches, was 'England's most severe witch trial to date' since while there had been numerous incidents of witchcraft in England throughout the late sixteenth century, most of those cases did not involve more than a few people.⁴³

As is the case of the First Witch in *Macbeth*, and so many other accused witches of the period, the Pendle trial began when a woman, Alizon Device, felt slighted by the lack of charity from petty-chapman John Law. Upon meeting Law on the street Alizon requested some pins, which he denied her, and after she walked away he suffered a fit and was subsequently 'deformed by her Witch-craft, and transformed beyond the course of nature'.⁴⁴ Once Alizon had been accused, her entire family was implicated including her grandmother, mother, and brother; the testimony of Alizon's youngest sister, age 9, against each family member helped ensure their executions. Deborah Willis argues that this notion of the 'witch-family' was becoming increasingly popular during this period, and the idea that knowledge of the craft could be passed down to relatives was gaining traction.⁴⁵ In the case of the Lancaster

⁴² Laura Gowing, 'Pendle witches', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), < doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/67763 > [accessed 25 June 2015].

⁴³ Sharpe, 'English Sabbat', p. 171.

⁴⁴ Thomas Potts, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (London, 1613), R3. Modern evaluations of Law's symptoms make it quite clear that he suffered a debilitating stroke.

⁴⁵ Debroah Willis, 'The Witch-Family in Elizabethan and Jacobean Print Culture' *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 13 (2013), pp. 4-31 < <https://muse.jhu.edu/> [accessed 13 August 2015].

witch-trials; there were also ally and rival witch-families who, throughout the trial, substantiated claims of witchcraft against members of other families – and not infrequently against their own relatives. The reason for this system of interrogation is explicitly stated when Potts asks his reader ‘who but Witches can be proofes, and so witnesses of the doings of Witches?’⁴⁶

Potts’ account was an official report that had been sanctioned, and edited, by the presiding assize judges; however, it is far from being an unbiased account of events. Indeed, Potts acknowledges Bromley and Altham’s motives for commissioning the work stating that the judges ‘upon great consideration thought it necessary & *profitable*, to publish to the whole world [the witches] most barbarous and damnable practices’.⁴⁷ The language used throughout the text is overwhelmingly didactic and moralistic and the accused, though their names are repetitively given in an official manner each time they are examined or interrogated, are referred to as ‘a barbarous and inhumane monster’ and ‘this wicked and miserable wretch’.⁴⁸ Still, it is likely that publishing the account was a profitable venture for those involved since the case – with almost twenty accused witches on trial – would have been big news all across the country.

Five years after Potts’ report was printed another witch-family – Joan, Margaret, and Phillipa Flower – gained notoriety after allegedly using witchcraft to murder the Earl of Rutland’s two young sons and heirs. The trial was high profile given the rank and influence of those affected, and was the source of much gossip and news around the court and country during 1619. An anonymously written pamphlet on the case entitled *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* appeared in print in 1619. Though Sir Edward Bromley – the assize judge who commissioned Potts’ *Lancaster* report

⁴⁶ Potts, *Lancaster*, P3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., B3-B3_v, italics my own.

⁴⁸ Ibid., F2, HI.

also presided over the Flower case, there is no indication that he authorized the text or was involved in its production in any way despite the fact that his name appears prominently on the title page. This tract is written as more of a narrative than the *Lancaster* pamphlet, but it does include formulaic treatment of interrogations and elements of moralizing similar to that found in Potts' text. As was seen in the Lancaster case, Margaret and Phillipa (Joan died before trial) were interrogated until they implicated each other along with three other women from the community. The treatment of the accused is similar to that in the *Lancaster* tract; Joan Flower is referred to as a 'monstrous malicious woman, full of oathes, curses, and imprecations irreligious' and her daughters are noted for their lewd behavior with men.⁴⁹ It is because of this behavior, the author asserts, that the devil realized that the Flower women 'might easily bee made instruments to enlarge his Kingdome, and bee as it were the executioners of his Vengeance'.⁵⁰

Though the author expresses opinions as to why certain people are compromised by the devil, he begins his tract by stating that his 'meaning is not to make any contentious Arguments about the discourses, distinction or definition of Witchcraft, the power of Divells, the nature of Spirits, the force of Charmes, the secrets of Incantation, and such like; because the Scriptures are full of prohibitions to this purpose'.⁵¹ This tentativeness to comment on the subtleties of witchcraft is interesting. The author passes the authority on the subject of witchcraft – though not on the case itself – to other experts' tracts including Thomas Potts' *Lancaster* work and *Daemonologie* by 'the High and mighty Prince, *JAMES* by the grace of God, King of *England, Scotland, France and Ireland, &c.*'.⁵² By disclaiming his authority on

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *The Wonderful Discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (London, 1619), C3, C3v.

⁵⁰ Ibid., [C4v].

⁵¹ Ibid., B.

⁵² Ibid., [B4].

the general nature of witchcraft, the *Flower* author is further claiming that he is only presenting facts on the case.

The latest of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts is Henry Goodcole's *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch*, which was printed in 1621. Goodcole was an ordinary and visitor of Newgate prison as well as a pamphleteer focusing on what Christopher Chapman calls 'a series of criminal biographies'.⁵³ His access to criminals at Newgate allowed Goodcole to position himself as both a concerned cleric and as an authority with insider knowledge. Like the Pendle witches and Flower women, Elizabeth Sawyer, a broom maker, was accused of using witchcraft to harm a member of the community – in this case causing the death of her neighbour Agnes Ratcleife after she struck one of Sawyer's pigs on the head. However, unlike the cases covered in the earlier *Wonderful Discoveries*, Sawyer was believed to have acted alone, though her family was involved in that her husband gave evidence against her that led to her conviction.⁵⁴ Though Sawyer's case was not as high profile as the earlier trials, it did gain a high level of notoriety because it took place in London where accusations of witchcraft were less common.

The *Elizabeth Sawyer* tract is written as a conversation between Goodcole and Sawyer before her execution where she confesses all her sins to him, and thus is perhaps the best example of the kind of leading language and aggressive questions that were used to exact confessions from the accused. Like in the anonymous *Flower* tract, Goodcole begins his work by stating that he does not wish to comment on the nature of witchcraft but only wishes to recount the facts of the case. Marion Gibson suggests that this introduction indicates that 'he feels witchcraft to be a dangerous subject to discuss publicly, because of 'the diversitie of

⁵³ Christopher Chapman, 'Henry Goodcole' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/10959> [accessed 7 August 2015].

⁵⁴ Marion Gibson, 'Elizabeth Sawyer' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/66792> [accessed 8 August 2015].

opinions concerning things of this nature, and that not among the ignorant, but among some of the learned”⁵⁵ Still, Goodcole uses the same moralistic and didactic language found in the earlier tracts, and suggests that Sawyer was compromised by the devil because of her ‘cursing, swearing, and blaspheming’.⁵⁶ Goodcole, evidently, also realized that sex sells and many of his questions border on the pornographic; ‘*In what place of your body did the Diuell sucke of your bloud, and whether did hee himselfe chuse the place*’, ‘*Whether did you pull up your coates or no when the Diuell came to sucke you?*’.⁵⁷ These phrases also demonstrate how Goodcole used leading questions in order to achieve an answer that confirmed Sawyer’s guilt. Even though this account includes a first person dialogue from the witch, rather than ‘the accused said’, which appears frequently in the earlier *Wonderful Discoveries*, her voice is still being strictly directed and controlled by the author.

It is interesting to briefly consider this notion of the voice of the witch and how it was rendered in early modern representations of witchcraft. In each of these pamphlets, the accused gives their own account of their *malefic* crimes, how they came to be in league with the devil, and who – if anyone – were their associates. This is another way that the authors are distancing themselves from commenting directly on the nature of witchcraft; they do not have to be experts on this controversial topic because all of their information is coming from the testimonies of confirmed practitioners. Allowing the witches to tell their own stories also provides dramatic effect, ensuring that while these pamphlets maintain an air of factuality they are also engaging and entertaining to read.

This chapter has covered some of the key historical and literary contexts of witchcraft in the period leading up to and including the decade in which all of the *Wonderful Discovery*

⁵⁵ Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 301.

⁵⁶ Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer A Witch* (London, 1621), C.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, C3-C3v.

tracts were printed. These contexts are important to understanding the place of witchcraft pamphlets within the greater early modern world of commerce and superstition. Cases of witchcraft, like the ones covered in the three *Wonderful Discoveries*, had a real impact on the cultural and social climates of communities throughout England. Without a general understanding of the feelings on, and traditions of, witchcraft it is impossible to unravel how these popular accounts would have been read and understood by contemporary readers. The next chapter, devoted to the materiality of the texts, will explore what exactly the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts are; how they were produced and circulated, who they were written for, how these factors affected their meaning contemporaneously, and how they continue to affect their meaning today.

Materiality of Text

In his seminal *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, D.F. McKenzie frankly suggests that all bibliographers, a term which I would expand to connote scholars of book history, ‘should be concerned to show that forms affect meaning’.⁵⁸ Within the concept of the sociology of texts, McKenzie urges students of the book to consider not only technical – but also social – processes of the transmission and reception of texts; ‘their physical forms, textual versions, technical transmission, institutional control, their perceived meanings, and social effects’.⁵⁹ McKenzie also highlights the importance of non-book texts and attests that ‘textual ephemera [are] a record of cultural change’.⁶⁰ Each of the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts embodies a cultural record of early Jacobean England not only in their content but also in their form. The witch trial pamphlets under consideration here are all, to varying degrees, ephemeral texts, and their physical forms contributed both to their contemporary meaning and to the meaning that they are ascribed today. This chapter will consider the materiality of the three pamphlets, and explore the ways in which specific technical and textual attributes influenced the production, dissemination, readership, and survival of these works.

Before examining the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts in more depth, it is beneficial to first explore the concept of the pamphlet more generally. The term ‘pamphlet’ can be somewhat problematic from a book history perspective because the form and genre it applies to has evolved quite significantly over time. Today, the term pamphlet might bring to mind a brightly coloured folded sheet on a single subject of the variety commonly found in a medical waiting rooms or tourism agencies. In contrast, the pamphlets of the early seventeenth-century most often looked like small, unbound books with relatively simple title pages, sometimes with crude woodcuts. Joad Raymond defines ‘pamphlet’ as ‘a short vernacular

⁵⁸ Donald F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

work, generally printed in quarto format, costing no more than a few pennies, of topical interest or engaged with social, political or ecclesiastical issues'.⁶¹ Tessa Watt helpfully clarifies that prior to 1640 the term was in a state of flux, as indeed was much of the English language, and was used 'loosely by authors and printers, sometimes referring to works over sixty pages', as is the case with the earliest of the *Wonderful Discoveries* about the witches of Lancaster.⁶²

The pamphlet form first became prevalent when it was recognized as an effective means of discourse during early Reformation and Counter-Reformation debates, which David J. Shaw attests were 'characterized by floods of pamphlets from all sides of the dispute'.⁶³ Accordingly, by the first decades of the seventeenth century the pamphlet form was well established and relatively common. However, despite their success as a book form and a means of communication, pamphlets were not universally trusted or respected and were, Raymond suggests, viewed as 'insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time.'⁶⁴ Raymond further argues that by as early as 1588, likely in response to the Martin Marprelate controversy, 'pamphlets were [regarded as] disreputable, potentially dangerous works that needed to be monitored.'⁶⁵ Although they were written on a number of subjects, and Myles Davies suggests that 'in a word, pamphlets literally unite contradictions, and are occasional conformists in all manner of acceptations and capacities, as well as in vicissitudes of matter and style', they were

⁶¹ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8.

⁶² Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 264, footnote 36.

⁶³ David J. Shaw, 'The Book Trade Comes of Age: The Sixteenth Century', in Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, ed., *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp. 220-31 (p. 225).

⁶⁴ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

generally not esteemed works of scholarship or literature.⁶⁶ In many ways, this contemporary scepticism mirrors our modern disregard for ephemera – including pamphlets, posters, flyers, newspapers, brochures, and other temporary literature. Certain items may strike us as worthy of saving due to personal or regional interest, but such material is usually discarded after it has been read and – even if originally saved – is rarely kept beyond one generation.

Still, in Raymond's definition, the importance of pamphlets to the dissemination of information in the early modern period is clear. The small and unbound format meant that they could be transported easily – so even though the Jacobean book trade was still centered firmly in London, pamphlet material printed in the city could be easily distributed to more rural areas. Furthermore, pamphlets in the early seventeenth century were not prohibitively expensive in the way that books were, and their lower prices – facilitated by what Alexandra Halasz considers the 'relatively quick production and wide circulation' – helped to some extent to democratize written information: a central reason that they were criticized and mistrusted by the elite.⁶⁷ Perhaps the most famous seventeenth-century opinion on 'pamphlettes' was Thomas Bodley's assertion in a letter to Thomas James, the first librarian of Oxford's Bodleian Library, dated 19 May 1602 that they were 'not worth the custody in suche a Librarie'.⁶⁸ Still, the survival of these relatively insubstantial pamphlets for four centuries does point to some degree of contemporary acknowledgement of cultural relevance or curiosity.

None of the *Wonderful Discovery* pamphlets is priced, but it is likely that they ranged in cost from 2 to 9d. In his 'Notes on English Retail Book Prices, 1550-1640', Francis R.

⁶⁶ Davies, *A Critical History*, Part I. Preface I. p. 4.

⁶⁷ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the public sphere in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Thomas Bodley. *The Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James, First Keeper of the Bodleian Library*. Ed. by G.W. Wheeler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 40.

Johnson suggests that *6d* was standard for pamphlets around 1600.⁶⁹ Raymond's review of a 1597 inventory of Richard Stonley's books hints at average prices of ephemera as in his collection 'five 'Bundells of Pamphlets in quarto' [were] valued at *20d*, and eleven 'Bundles in viij' [were] valued at *4s*.'⁷⁰ The fact that pamphlets were only occasionally identified individually in early modern inventories insinuates both that they were of little monetary value, and that they were recognized as ephemeral from the beginning. Having said that, since pamphlets were frequently found alongside traditional bound books in the inventories of learned men, it is also likely the case that they held cultural or social value and were of interest even to erudite collectors. In her *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, Elizabeth Leedham-Green suggests that inventory statements such as "'item all his other bookes'" likely obscures 'a quantity of current vernacular literature not deemed worth the binding'.⁷¹ It was not uncommon for collectors to have groups of pamphlets bound together in a single volume as a means of preserving these texts on the shelf alongside their more esteemed books. This was almost certainly the case with the various *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, as will be explored later in this chapter.

Tessa Watt notes that book prices were quite stable between the years 1560 and 1635 when other commodities and average wages were steadily increasing, indicating that the relative affordability of pamphlets would have also increased during this time.⁷² For example, Watt suggests that the wage of a building craftsman in 1560 was between *8-10d* per day so a twopenny book was between a fifth and a quarter of his daily wage; but by 1640 when the craftsman made *16d* per day, a few pennies for a pamphlet was much more affordable. Though the level of disposable income for the middling sort seemed to be increasing during

⁶⁹ Francis R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book Prices, 1550-1640' *The Library*, 5 (1950), pp. 83-112 (p. 91).

⁷⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 4.

⁷¹ Elizabeth S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. xiii.

⁷² Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 261.

this time, books of any kind – being nonessential items – were almost certainly considered a luxury that remained beyond the means of the majority of people. However, the reality is that the bulk of evidence relating to the readership and ownership of pamphlets – and in fact of all books – comes from probate inventories, wills, and library catalogues, which generally only exist (or at least only survive) from members of the upper classes. Still, we cannot take the lack of evidence of a lower class pamphlet culture or participation to mean that this demographic did not own or read ephemeral texts. There is evidence, as Halasz points out, from a number of ‘random’ sources including comments in letters and inventories, that:

booksellers or their agents traveled to regional and town fairs, that London booksellers shipped books to individuals, that residents or travelers to London brought or sent books to acquaintances in the provinces, that Drapers, Mercers and Grocers stocked books, especially outside of London, that the London Stationers trained an increasing number of apprentices who, whether or not they finished their terms of apprenticeship, eventually set up bookselling or bookbinding shops in provincial towns, and that peddlers included small books among the merchandise they offered on their circuits.⁷³

In essence, the book trade was expanding beyond London and access to literary works of all sorts would have subsequently increased as well. Based on the number of pamphlets produced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, there seems to have been enough demand to generate an active and competitive pamphlet market. That these ephemeral works were smaller, shorter, and generally less expensive than traditional books likely indicated that their target audience was not entirely made up of the gentry.

Watt points out that the two main factors in the accessibility of pamphlets, and books more generally, were price and literacy. However, the literacy rates and reading practices of this non-elite audience, and thus the distribution patterns of these texts, are vague and

⁷³ Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, p. 11.

difficult to trace.⁷⁴ The early Stuart middling sort was different than the professional middle class of today. It was made up of groups including merchants, manufacturers, farmers, and skilled craftsmen – people who Clark points out ‘would have not been [literate] in the first half of the sixteenth century’.⁷⁵ It is impossible to entirely reconstruct the literary world of this middling class, but the emergence of more practical rather than purely aesthetic kinds of literature towards the end of the sixteenth century strongly implies that there was a new kind of reader. Clark argues that this new reader was more likely to turn to works including chivalric romances, works of piety and moralizing, chapbooks, sermons, and of course, pamphlets.⁷⁶ Unlike the works of great literature or scholarship that were often handsomely bound and shelved in the libraries of the elite, this new type of literature was made to be read and – based on relatively low survival rates of such texts – was frequently read to death, or otherwise expired as privy paper or pastry wrappers.

Though most surviving early modern pamphlets do not actually have evidence of middling class ownership or readership, it is almost certain that they were read – and sometimes owned – by this group. Texts like the *Wonderful Discoveries* were likely distributed throughout provincial areas by petty chapmen who went town to town selling their wares, though since detailed inventories were not often made of peddlers’ stock we cannot know for sure which titles were commonly circulated in this way. Margaret Spufford suggests that while the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century transmission of cultural knowledge was still predominantly oral for the working poor, the written word was appearing more and more as a presence if not actually a necessity.⁷⁷ Still, though these new forms of lowbrow or cheap literature were disseminated in print in order to cater to an increasingly literate

⁷⁴ Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 264.

⁷⁵ Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (London: The Athlone Press, 1983), p. 22.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1982), pp. 1-2.

middling sort, this is not the only way they would have been experienced. It is also likely that these works were frequently read aloud or retold from memory, which would have propagated their entertaining or moralistic messages even to the lower and non-literate classes. In this regard, it is possible that – at least in content – texts like the *Wonderful Discoveries* could have been familiar to people from all tiers of society, from the lowest classes to the nobility. The degree to which classes beyond the elite were interested and invested in the significant events of their society should not be underestimated. As was discussed in the first chapter, incidents of witchcraft were exceptionally newsworthy, and these cases seem to have been followed closely across all classes within an increasingly engaged public sphere. James Sharpe points out that ‘people in this period inhabited a culture which was hungry for news, where gossip was an integral part of life; this was in many respects a story-telling culture. When witchcraft occurred or was suspected in early modern England, it was talked about; it was something which people knew about, something they had opinions about’.⁷⁸ The ways in which the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts were responding to this increasing demand for entertaining, topical, and reliable news will be discussed further in the final chapter.

Citizens of early modern England were certainly invested in the remarkable events and popular opinions of their country, but corantos and newsbooks did not appear until the final years of James’ reign in the 1620s. Thus, pamphlets – along with other ephemera including broadsides and ballads – filled this void for both local and international news. However, as Halasz notes, the role of pamphlets was complicated because their ‘ephemerality [associated] them with the orality of gossip, their printedness with the authoritative texts that they materially [resembled]’.⁷⁹ In this way, pamphlets, and in particular pamphlets recounting actual events like the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, operated in a sort of grey area

⁷⁸ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 60.

⁷⁹ Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, p. 3.

between truth and gossip; essentially, their form affected their meaning. Because these pamphlets were not impressive tomes like Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, or innately authoritative like James' *Daemonologie*, it appears that they were not taken as seriously or considered as valuable as were more traditional works on the subject. This is likely why, as will be discussed in the final chapter, the authors of these witchcraft pamphlets took pains to demonstrate or claim authority in other ways. The remainder of this chapter will consider the physicality and materiality of the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, and how these aspects of the texts contribute to their unique position within the literary landscape of seventeenth-century England.

Physically, the three *Wonderful Discovery* texts are quite similar – all in quarto format and approximately 18cm x 13cm, they adhere to Raymond's previously outlined definition of the pamphlet. The British Library copies of these texts, the versions that were consulted for this study, have been marginally cropped but appear to remain relatively true to their original size. Though each text is now bound individually, there is some indication, including evidence of stabbing in the gutters, that the works had, at some point, been part of larger volumes. The *Wonderful Discoveries* are all printed in Roman type rather than blackletter. While it is true that Roman typefaces were becoming increasingly prevalent during the final decades of the sixteenth century, Charles C. Mish suggests that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, type choice was still frequently dictated by the intended audience. According to Mish works such as chivalric romances, which were largely produced for the middling sort, tended to be in blackletter, whereas the 'sentimental or heroic romances' favoured by the upper classes tended to be in Roman.⁸⁰ Earlier witch trial pamphlets such as *The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches* (1589), *Newes From Scotland*

⁸⁰ Charles C. Mish, 'Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century', *PMLA*, 68 (1953), pp. 627-30 (p. 628) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/459873>> [accessed 4 August 2015].

(1591), and *A Strange report of sixe most notorious witches* (1601), were printed in blackletter. Interestingly, several contemporary witchcraft pamphlets including *The Witches of Northhamptonshire* (1612), *The Life and Death of Lewis Gaufredy* (1612), and *Witches Apprehended* (1613) utilized blackletter type as well. The fact that Roman type was largely used for more learned texts may be an indication as to the kind of meaning the authors, and indeed the booksellers that commissioned the printers, were trying to impart. Though these works were relatively ephemeral and unsophisticated, printing them in Roman type aligned them, at least to some degree, to higher forms of literature. The powers behind the production of these texts were – deliberately or not – using the idea that form affects meaning to achieve a certain level of authority for their texts.

At 94 leaves – 188 pages – Thomas Potts’ *Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*, printed by W. Stansby for John Barner near Holborne Conduit in 1613, is a substantial work – certainly more of a small book than a pamphlet. It appeared in two editions, the first in 1612 and the second in 1613; it is the second edition complete with an errata sheet that is examined here (Figure 1). As was discussed in the first chapter, Potts was a court clerk during the assize trials of the Lancaster witches, writing at the request of the two presiding judges. That court and government officials were involved in the production of the text lends it a certain degree of innate authority, and the formality of the document is emphasized by its physical quality. For example, both British Library editions of the text use higher quality paper and richer ink than do the later *Wonderful Discovery* pamphlets. Though a woodcut does not appear on the title page, numerous decorative devises are used liberally throughout the text usually denoting the beginning of the examination of a new suspect or a progression in the proceedings. Additionally, simplistic yet attractive decorated initials frequently appear at the beginning of new sections of text, and numerous sizes and styles of typeface that Gibson describes as ‘gigantic lettering reminiscent of modern tabloid headlines’ are also used

throughout the text for titles and subheadings (Figure 2).⁸¹

The level of detail and high physical quality of *Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*, along with the fact that it survives very well – with at least thirteen extant copies in British and North American collections – suggests that this tract was likely for a more educated or elite audience. It is not entirely surprising that the quality of Potts’ account points to a higher class target audience since Potts’ agenda was quite different than that of the later *Wonderful Discovery* authors. Gibson argues that this work is a ‘unique recreation of the process of a witch-trial, and an instructive glimpse of the anxiety of the legal authorities to publish and justify their actions against these particular witches’.⁸² As was discussed in the first chapter, popular and elite opinions of the occult were in flux, and King James I was keen that all cases of witchcraft were backed up by extensive substantiated evidence. It is likely that Bromley and Altham commissioned Potts to write this account, and produce these high quality pamphlets, not only as a commercial venture but also in order to demonstrate that they had completed their due diligence on the case.⁸³

The *Flowers* tract was printed six years after the *Witches of Lancaster*, and at 24 leaves is a more typical pamphlet than Potts’ text, and includes a crude woodcut on the title page depicting three witches and their familiars (Figure 3). The anonymous author of this *Wonderful Discovery* was almost certainly looking to capitalize on the controversy surrounding the high profile case, and was targeting a broader and more general audience than Potts was. As was discussed in the first chapter, the text is largely a formulaic narrative recounting the accusations and examinations of the Belvoir trial, though since the trial records of Margaret and Phillipa Flower do not survive, we cannot know how close the

⁸¹ Gibson, *The Witch*, p. 174.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Gibson also notes that particular attention would have been paid to this case since the Pendle witches had allegedly plotted to blow up Lancaster Castle, which was ‘seen as a close parallel to the Catholic Gunpowder Plot of 1605’.

information is to actual events. Surprisingly, based on the survival rates of other pamphlets from the period, the *Flower* tract survives almost as well as the lengthier and more official *Witches of Lancaster*, with ten extant copies in the UK and North America, including what appears to be a single second edition from 1621 in Trinity College, Cambridge. That a second edition was printed only a few years after the first likely points to the pamphlet's popularity and commercial success. Since the *Flowers* tract does not appear to be an official account, the agenda of the author seems to have been more profit-oriented rather than bureaucratic.

Before discussing the *Elizabeth Sawyer* tract, it is interesting to consider reasons that the first two *Wonderful Discoveries* survive so well. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the ephemeral nature of short books like these often mean that they exist today in very small numbers or in poor or incomplete condition. That ten plus copies of the *Lancaster* and *Flower* tracts exist in collections today is somewhat remarkable. The clearest reason for this is that they appear to have been housed in important collections since shortly after their publication, and some telling provenance indications can be found in library catalogues. The copies of the *Witches in Lancaster* tract came to Oxford University from the collections of Anthony à Wood (1632-95) and Richard Gough (1735-1809). The Bodleian copy of the *Flower* pamphlet was in the collection of Francis Douce (1757-1834), while the British Library copy of the same text bears a cropped accession number of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753).⁸⁴ Though these men would have been collecting several decades – or in some cases more than a century – after the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts were first printed, their appearance in these eminent collections is significant. First, it seems probable that the surviving copies were bought for interesting, though perhaps now unknown, collections shortly after their publications, which were eventually bought up by late seventeenth- and earlier eighteenth-century antiquaries and

⁸⁴ I owe a debt of thanks to Giles Mandelbrote for bringing my attention to Sloane's shelf mark on the BL *Flower* pamphlet.

collectors.⁸⁵ Furthermore, that these texts appear in such important collections indicates that, despite their largely ephemeral nature, some learned men deemed them worth keeping even from their first appearance in print.

Another noteworthy commonality between the *Lancaster* and *Flower* texts is that they were printed for the same man, John Barnes of London. Barnes was the son of prolific Oxford bookseller and printer Joseph Barnes who, throughout the course of his career, produced more than 260 imprints.⁸⁶ John Barnes was apprenticed to a London bookseller from 1594-1601 and upon gaining his freedom set up a shop in Fleet Street at the sign of the Great Turk's Head – though he would move many times throughout his career.⁸⁷ According to ESTC records, the majority of works commissioned or sold by Barnes in London were printed by his father in Oxford. While some of these works were scholarly in nature, such as tracts by Sir Dudley Digges and Robert Mason, the vast majority of texts commissioned or sold by Barnes were religious, including numerous sermons by Richard Hooker, William Sclater, and Robert Wakeman.⁸⁸ Interestingly, both *Witches of Lancaster* and the *Flower* text were commissioned by Barnes and printed in London – the former by W. Stansby and the latter by G. Eld.

Though all of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts are strongly moralistic, these works stand out amongst Barnes' other imprints, as they are not distinctly religious texts. Furthermore, Barnes also commissioned G. Eld to print a single sheet broadside ballad entitled *Damnable practices of three Lincoln-shire witches, Joane Flower, and her two*

⁸⁵ Though without clear evidence in the accession records it may be that they were collected unknowingly as part of a larger volume of ephemera.

⁸⁶ Ian Gadd, 'Joseph Barnes' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) <DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/69136> [accessed 4 August 2015].

⁸⁷ Ronald B. McKerrow, ed., 'Joseph Barnes' in *A Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Foreign Printers of English Books 1557-1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1910), p. 21.

⁸⁸ Paul G. Morrison, 'Index of Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers' in Pollard and Redgrave ed. *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1923).

daughters, Margaret and Phillip Flower (Figure 4). This ballad, of which a single copy survives in the Pepys Collection at Magdalene College, Cambridge, is printed in blackletter type and contains an advertisement (in Roman type) for the pamphlet account (Figure 5). The advertisement at the end of the sheet reads ‘There is a booke printed of these Witches, wherein you shall know all their examinations and confessions at large: As also the wicked practices of three other Most Notorious Witches in Leister-shire with all their examinations and confessions’.⁸⁹ It is interesting that Barnes specifically commissioned printers to produce works that were significantly different from what he usually sold. This decision – as well as his choice to advertise the *Flower* text in a broadside – points both to his own interest in the subject, as well as to the commercial viability of these texts. Printing was expensive, so for Barnes to invest in commissioning London printers rather than partnering with his father for more traditional texts suggests that he saw an active market for the *Wonderful Discoveries*. That both the *Lancaster* tract and the *Flower* text appear in second editions indicates that these *Wonderful Discoveries* were worthwhile investments.

The final pamphlet, Goodcole’s *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch* from 1621 is, at 14 leaves, the shortest of the *Wonderful Discoveries*. The title page of this tract, with its crude woodcut of Sawyer, looks like a simplified version of the *Flower* title (Figure 6). There is nothing physically remarkable about this text; it essentially looks like a very low quality emulation of the earlier witchcraft pamphlets. The *Sawyer* tract is the scarcest of the *Wonderful Discoveries* and survives in only two copies – one at the British Library and the other at the Newberry. The scarcity of this tract may indicate that it was more ephemeral than the other witchcraft pamphlets. Further evidence, including the nature of Goodcole’s other works, the overtly sexual and sensational nature of the text, and the fact that

⁸⁹ Anonymous, *Damnable practices of three Lincoln-shire witches* (London: John Barnes, 1612), Early English Broadside Ballad Archive Facsimile < <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu> > [accessed 7 August 2015].

William Butler who, based on ESTC records, dealt largely in strange news commissioned it, also points to a lower class audience. However, the physical, and to some degree literary, similarities between this tract and the earlier *Wonderful Discoveries* is a feature which will be explored further in the final chapter.

Pamphlets, and printed ephemera more generally, played a vastly important role in the democratization of information in the early modern period. The popularization of cheap print and the establishment of new genres of literature catering to the middling sort ensured that the written word thrived not only in elite studies, but also in pubs and on the street. To almost the same extent as the printed content, the physicality and materiality of these texts affected the ways in which they were distributed, judged, and understood by their increasingly diverse audiences. Each of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, different to the typical pamphlets of the period in some ways and similar in others, appeared at a key transitional moment in early modern information dissemination; in the decade before textual standardization and periodicity arrived in England. The final chapter, building on the context of witchcraft in the period and the material nature of each text, will explore the implications that the pamphlet form in general, and the synthesis of gossip and authority in the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts more specifically, had on the development of a seventeenth-century news market and the evolution of brand marketing.

The *Wonderful Discoveries* and the News

It is impossible today to imagine a world without news. Televisions, radio announcements, website banners, front pages, overheard chitchat, and mobile phone alerts constantly bombard us with the headlines of international, national, and local events. We are updated minute by minute as stories progress and details emerge, as tragedies or triumphs unfold; at the click of a button we can know what events took place last month or last night – or what is happening right now – almost anywhere in the world. C. John Somerville attests that ‘periodical news reports are such a large element in our thinking’ that we do not often consider how they affect our understandings of politics, science, history, and social affairs.⁹⁰ However, the modern climate of immersive news, though remarkable in its prodigious range and scope, is simply a commercial response to an insatiable appetite for new or noteworthy information that is not unique to this time period or to this society. As Sandra Clark points out, ‘an interest in news is probably a feature of all societies since it constitutes a basic element in communication between individuals and groups and a footing for social intercourse’.⁹¹ People in early modern England were not an exception, and the high number of surviving news pamphlets from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries evidences a keen interest in current events. However, printed news as we know it today – published by a specific group at regular intervals under a standard title – did not exist in England until the 1620s, and was not common until the 1640s.

John Feather suggests that ‘at the turn of the seventeenth century the world’ – especially in regards to the book trade – ‘was paradoxically both narrow and wide’.⁹² Though peddlers and petty chapmen were distributing books throughout provincial areas, the book

⁹⁰ C. John Somerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁹¹ Clark, *Women and Crime*, p. 1.

⁹² John Feather, ‘The British Book Market 1600-1800’ in Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, ed., *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp. 232-58 (p. 232).

world remained narrow in the sense that the English trade was centered within a small community of booksellers and printers in London. The trade was wide because there was still substantial movement, especially of Latin books, from Continental Europe. Joad Raymond sets the scene of browsing a bookstall at St. Paul's in the year 1588:

Pinned on boards are title-pages from a handful of small books offered for a penny or two. Some tender *News from France* or *News out of Spain*, and you feel the call of remote and unseen places, as well as anxiety for the fate of true religion. Others extend stern advice in sermons or guides to upright living; or rail against the dicing, dancing and vain interludes; or anatomise the abuses of the times, costly apparel, face-painting, masculine dress in women, superfluity of appetite, covetousness, adultery, the violation of the Sabbath.⁹³

Three decades later and the scene would be much the same. Bawdy broadsides lying next to moralistic sermons and not-quite-current news from the Continent, some prayer books, a playbill for something new by Middleton; and perhaps in the mix there is a pamphlet detailing the shocking case of the wicked Margaret and Phillipa Flower, witches – executed for the murder of a nobleman's sons and heirs by *maleficium*.

The three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, printed in the first decades of the seventeenth-century, appeared at a transitional time in the English book world. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the middling class was expanding and subsequently so was the market for cheap print and novel kinds of reading material including chivalric romances, chapbooks, sermons, and pamphlets. It seems clear that at least the later two *Wonderful Discoveries*, the *Flower* and *Sawyer* tracts, were written for this middling sort of audience, but it is difficult to know which genre to place them in. All three of the pamphlets are sensational and moralistic, authoritative in some ways and tentative in others; in short, they do not adhere to the form of one single pamphlet type. This chapter will explore the ways in which the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts challenge the framework of common pamphlet genres of the period and how,

⁹³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 1.

in many ways, they were foreshadowing the news revolution that was to begin in the early 1620s.

Before discussing the *Wonderful Discoveries* and their place in the seventeenth century news world, it is beneficial to consider the early modern concept of news, and the so called ‘news revolution’ more generally. According to Richard Strefkuss, the first English news pamphlet, which he characterizes as a publication ‘about current events, which [contain] facts or observations or [shows] evidence of information gathering’ was printed in London in 1513 and was an account of the English/Scottish Battle of Flodden Field.⁹⁴ Following the Flodden Field publication, news pamphlets increased steadily in popularity and according to Strefkuss’ study of the ESTC and Stationers’ Company Registers, 761 news pamphlets were published in England between 1581 and 1620.⁹⁵ However, the crown and Stationers’ Company maintained regulations on news publications based on what Sabrina A. Baron suggests was the ‘concern about [news’] content and the social discontent it might inspire’.⁹⁶ Though in recent years scholars such as McKenzie and Cyndia Clegg have questioned the actual efficiency and effectiveness of censorship in Jacobean England, Paul J. Voss argues that the fact that ‘the majority of printed news pamphlets deal with matters foreign in content and location’ indicates a general practice of printers evading controversial local news in favour of international accounts.⁹⁷

However, not all genres of local news were elusive during this period, and Raymond notes that ‘in addition to pamphlets of continental wars and politics, the sixteenth- and

⁹⁴ Richard Strefkuss, ‘News Before Newspapers’, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75 (1996), pp. 84-97 (p. 84-5) < <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1290616454?accountid=14771> > [accessed 18 August 2015].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹⁶ Sabrina A. Baron, ‘The Guises of Dissemination in Early Seventeenth-Century England: News in Manuscript and Print’, in Brendan Mourice Dooley and Sabrina Alcorn Baron, ed., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 41-56 (p. 42).

⁹⁷ Paul J. Voss, ‘Print Culture, Ephemera, and the Elizabethan News Pamphlet’ *Literature Compass*, 5 (2006), pp. 1053-64 (p. 1055).

seventeenth-century bookseller's stall catered for sensation'.⁹⁸ In particular entertaining 'strange news' pamphlets, which Clark defines as 'stories of monstrous, prodigious or disastrous occurrences' were extremely popular and were produced in large numbers.⁹⁹ As one can imagine, 'strange news' covers an extensive scope of material ranging from possession and demon births, to giant fish and strange animals; typical examples of strange news titles include *True and Wonderful. A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous Serpent (or dragon) lately discovered* (1614) and *A most certaine report of a monster borne at Oteringham in Holderness, the 9. of Aprill last past. 1595. Also of a most strange and huge fish* (1595). Strange news pamphlets often claimed to be true accounts, but ultimately they were written as cheap entertainment – much like tabloid magazines of today – and little evidence was provided to support their claims of truth. Crime news pamphlets, sometimes called 'gallows literature' were also popular during the early modern period. Accounts of sensational crimes committed by women, including husband-murder and child-murder, with titles like *The Most Cruell and Bloody Murther committed by an Inkeepers Wife, called Annis Dell* (1606), appear to have been especially marketable. Clark points out that the popularity of these cases is evidenced by the 'disproportionately high' number of female crime accounts 'in relation to statistical evidence about the balance between the criminal activity of the sexes'.¹⁰⁰ As remains the case today, because women committed fewer violent crimes than men, such cases tended to be bigger news and to generate heightened media attention, which made these instances especially appealing pamphlet fodder. Keeping in mind the market demand for strange news and female crime accounts, it is not surprising that after husband

⁹⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 108.

⁹⁹ Clark, *Women and Crime*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and child-murder, the most significant woman's crime to be recounted in pamphlets was witchcraft.¹⁰¹

Our modern views on witchcraft would likely place it firmly in the category of strange news; however, many witch trial pamphlets – including the *Wonderful Discoveries* – do not quite fit within that subgenre, or within the genre of crime accounts more generally. Clark suggests that because the evidence of witchcraft ‘relates to beliefs rather than activities; [it] all depends on interpretation’.¹⁰² In this regard, the narratives of the witch-trials covered in these pamphlets are constructed in a different way than more generic strange or crime news cases. Furthermore, as was discussed in the previous chapter, witchcraft pamphlets were not exclusively read by – or marketed to – either the middling sort or the elite. Witchcraft, as both a phenomenon and a crime, seems to have been topical and newsworthy across the class boundaries, which may indicate that publications discussing the subject were widely known and therefore more susceptible to censorship. The intangible nature of witchcraft as a crime, as well as evolving beliefs and growing scepticism in the occult, meant that particular care had to be taken when recounting witch trials and the events surrounding the cases. Indeed, as Malcolm Gaskill attests, by the time James ascended the English throne ‘it became difficult to say anything about witchcraft in public that was uncontroversial’.¹⁰³

Clark argues that witchcraft pamphlets are ‘distinctively hybrid texts combining several different modes of writing within a single production, possibly deliberately aimed at a socially heterogeneous readership’, but these accounts are unique in other ways as well.¹⁰⁴

The most striking way that witchcraft pamphlets differ from crime and strange news tracts is

¹⁰¹ Clark, *Women and Crime*, p. 35. In England, women were much more likely to be accused of witchcraft than men though this was not necessarily the case in other parts of Europe.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁰³ Malcolm Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft Trials in England’ in Brian P. Levack ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 283-305 (p. 294) <DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199578160.013.0017> [accessed 18 August 2015].

¹⁰⁴ Clark, *Women and Crime*, p. 171.

the amount of evidence – be it witness testimonies, suspect confessions, or secondary documentation – that is used in the print accounts. Marion Gibson argues that ‘other crime pamphlets seldom use the amount of documentation found in many witchcraft pamphlets’ and further suggests that ‘in the Jacobean period [...] writing about witchcraft seems to demand higher levels of proof than writing about other crimes’.¹⁰⁵ This preoccupation with providing proof in witchcraft accounts is interesting considering that the early modern concept of truth was not as tangible as it is today.¹⁰⁶ As Diane Purkiss points out, there were ‘gaps and fissures in the seventeenth-century understanding of what truth was and how it could be procured’ and beyond that there was a ‘clash between providential ideas of the discovery of truth by the agency of providential revelation, humanist notions of truth as the product of forensic rhetoric, and new empirical notions of the recovering of truth by diligent scientific enquiry’.¹⁰⁷ In short, people wanted to know the truth about conflict, conspiracies, and criminal events, but there were many different ideas about the best way to arrive at these truths. Towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, it seems, pamphlet audiences wanted not only to be entertained, but also to be informed – hence the increase in demand for both local and international news.

It is beneficial to pause here and consider the ways in which the news world was revolutionized in the 1620s since, as we have seen, there had been a burgeoning news market in England – or at least in London – since the early sixteenth-century. Nicholas Brownlees suggests that the defining factor of the ‘seventeenth century news revolution’ was

¹⁰⁵ Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 301.

¹⁰⁶ The concept of truth was more flexible in the early modern period as is evidenced by titles of strange news pamphlets including *A most strange and true report of a monstrous fish, who appeared in the form of a woman, from her waste upwards* (1604), and *A true report and exact description of a mighty sea-monster* (1617).

¹⁰⁷ Purkiss, *The Witch*, p. 231.

a shift from what he refers to as ‘occasional news pamphlets’ to ‘periodical news’.¹⁰⁸ Though news pamphlets had existed in England for a century before the ‘news revolution’, the early publishers of news never intended to produce ‘anything other than a one-off account of a particular event’.¹⁰⁹ Raymond argues that the occasional news pamphlet was ‘a room in which several demands or needs could coincide: in the first place it was a (probably modestly) lucrative commercial product; it fed public demand; it could excite and stimulate prurient tastes; it provided a forum for exploring soteriological concerns and for sober moralising’.¹¹⁰ However, throughout the early-seventeenth century as news serials began to supplement occasional publications in Europe, demand for periodical news in England grew. By 1620, corantos – usually single sheet current-news publications – were being imported to England from the Netherlands. Despite failed efforts of James I to have Dutch officials ban the export of these newssheets to England, by 1622 English production of serial corantos had begun in London.¹¹¹ These English corantos would pave the way for the newsbooks that dominated the press in England during the turbulent Civil War years, and subsequently for modern periodical newspapers.

Though periodicity and the publication of news at regular intervals was certainly the defining feature of the seventeenth-century news revolution, other key changes were taking place as well. In particular, Raymond points to stationer Nathaniel Butter’s decision to use continuous titles in order to ‘assist in the marketing of his publications’.¹¹² Today, standard titles or names of products, brands, and organizations, are a significant way that consumers determine the level of authority or trustworthiness of various goods and services, but this was

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Brownlees, *The Language of Periodical News in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), p. xv <DOI:10.1111/j.1741-4113.2006.00371.x> [accessed 19 August 2015].

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 121.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

not a common practice until the late eighteenth century. In the early modern period, titles of cheap publications such as pamphlets – though formulaic in their use of attention grabbing epithets – rarely reused titles verbatim. Though Raymond credits Butter with first implementing a standardized title marketing strategy, the repetitive use of ‘The Wonderful Discoverie’ in the three witchcraft pamphlets studied here indicates that perhaps the idea had been conceived of slightly earlier and for somewhat different reasons.

In order to better understand the possible significance of the repetitious title in the three *Wonderful Discoveries*, we must return now to the earlier discussion of the preoccupation with truth and proof demonstrated in these pamphlets and in witchcraft pamphlets more generally. It was common in this period, it seems, for writers and audiences to be more concerned with producing or reading entertaining accounts of events – even if the truth was embellished, sensationalized, or glossed over in order to manufacture a good story. Raymond attests that ‘what these pamphlets speak to us is not only, and often not primarily, the raw facts of history, or the cooked falsehoods of the imagination, but the generic and formal conventions of pamphlet reportage and of storytelling’.¹¹³ However, as was discussed above, witchcraft pamphlets seem to have operated under a greater degree of scrutiny, even though they were also responding to the growing demand of what Purkiss refers to as the ‘novelty-hungry news culture of Jacobean London’.¹¹⁴ This commitment to providing proof and demonstrating truth is one of the ways in which the three *Wonderful Discovery* tracts are aligned more closely to news publications of the mid seventeenth-century than to other pamphlet genres popular earlier in the period, and also a reason that the repetition of the title is significant.

There is nothing especially unique about the individual titles of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts and they generally follow the well-established formula of sensational

¹¹³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 114.

¹¹⁴ Purkiss, *The Witch*, p. 207.

epithets favoured by other early modern pamphlet genres. To modern readers, the word ‘wonderful’ may seem an odd choice for describing crimes of *maleficium*; however, the medieval meanings of the word, including extraordinary, miraculous, unnatural, astonishing, incomprehensible, noteworthy, and dreadful, are well aligned with the subject of witchcraft.¹¹⁵ The choice of the word ‘discovery’ is perhaps more compelling. Purkiss says of the term, ‘a discovery, is of course, a dis-covery, an unmasking or dis-closing, a bringing of the interior working into the light of the public gaze’ and further points out that ‘discovery was a term used by both sceptics like Reginald Scot and believers like Henry Goodcole to define the rhetorical protocols of their figuration of witches’.¹¹⁶ In this line of thinking, the phrasing of the title of the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts is already indicating to their audiences that these accounts are going to painstakingly reveal motives and nuances behind the sensational events being recounted.

While the wording of titles is certainly significant, it is the repetition of the title ‘The Wonderful Discoverie’ in three separate witchcraft pamphlets, covering completely different cases, over the course of almost a decade that is of particular interest here. Again, the reason that this repetitive title is so intriguing relates back to the idea that witchcraft pamphlets needed more proof than crime or strange news publications of the same period. As was discussed in the previous chapters, Potts’ *Lancaster* account was endowed with a certain degree of authority, and was less ephemeral than the later *Wonderful Discovery* tracts, because it was written and authorized by the official judges and clerk assigned to the case. Gibson notes that Potts’ account ‘blends traditional use of legal documents with a wholly modern desire to comment on the material presented, and to put a continual spin on it by interjections’ and that the pamphlet is ‘carefully ordered so that readers can follow the trial of

¹¹⁵ Robert E. Lewis, ed., ‘Wonderful’, *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013) < <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED53378> > [accessed 23 August 2015].

¹¹⁶ Purkiss, *The Witch*, p. 190.

each witch as if they had been present, adding suspense and building up the reader's sense of each witch's character and performance at the trial'.¹¹⁷ This is in line with Peter Rushton's notion that what distinguishes witchcraft narratives is 'the use of structures of plots which, by selecting significant elements for emphasis, also construct a model of causation leading to a convincing conclusion'.¹¹⁸ Potts' impressively detailed, lengthy, and authoritative account of the Lancaster trials set an extremely high bar for the reportage of witchcraft in the seventeenth century.

The second of the *Wonderful Discoveries*, the anonymous *Flower* tract cannot claim the same degree of authority as Potts' account because it is not an officially sanctioned document; although it is possible that it was commissioned, or at least approved, by the Earl of Rutland – the noble victim of the Flower witches.¹¹⁹ Perhaps due to a lack of an official sanction, the author of the *Flower* tract seems to borrow elements of authority from many other sources including, notably, James' *Daemonologie* and Potts' *Witches in Lancaster*, and both works are commended in the prefatory material of the text.¹²⁰ However, this strategy of borrowed authority is present not only in explicit references or the emulation of a narrative structure – though the *Flower* author certainly adopts narrative techniques utilized by Potts – but also in the reuse of Potts' original title. Gibson argues that the 1613 *Lancaster* tract is 'probably the most famous account of English witches ever written', and while its position in the modern witchcraft canon could not have been anticipated in the early modern period, the pamphlet was obviously an important and influential tract even for its contemporaries.¹²¹ The *Flower* author, looking to capitalize on the high-profile case, would have recognized the

¹¹⁷ Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 173.

¹¹⁸ Peter Rushton, 'Texts of Authority: Witchcraft Accusations and the Demonstration of Truth in Early Modern England' in Stuart Clark ed., *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (London: MacMillan Press, 2001), pp. 21-40 (p. 26).

¹¹⁹ Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 276.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, *Margaret and Phillip Flower*, B4-C.

¹²¹ Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 173.

importance of proof and authority in witchcraft accounts and, without an official sponsor, generated that sense of authority through subtle imitation of the earlier work. It is also possible that John Barnes, the publisher of both the *Lancaster* and *Flower* tracts, encouraged the *Flower* author to emulate Potts' text in hopes of achieving the same degree of commercial and critical success.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Henry Goodcole, the author of the final pamphlet considered here, appears to have believed that witchcraft was a dangerous subject.¹²² It was perhaps this fear of writing about such a controversial topic that inspired him to align his conversational account of Elizabeth Sawyer with the earlier *Wonderful Discoveries* – two well known and respected accounts of witchcraft – rather than with his own earlier crime pamphlets.¹²³ Furthermore, Gibson points out that Goodcole's 'concern for recording question and answer and printing them as a *recreation* of events is striking', and is not dissimilar from the minute attention to detail exhibited in the *Lancaster* and *Flower* texts.¹²⁴ Though the narrative structure of the *Sawyer* account differs substantially from those of the two earlier *Wonderful Discoveries*, it is almost certain that Goodcole was familiar with the works of both Potts and the *Flower* author. And even though Goodcole himself was somewhat of an authority on crime based on his position in Newgate, the greater onus of proof expected of witchcraft accounts may have motivated him to supplement his own specialization with other more well established subject authorities.

It is impossible to know for sure why the authors of the two later *Wonderful Discoveries* chose to emulate Potts' account in both title and narrative strategy, but it does

¹²² Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 300.

¹²³ His two confirmed earlier pamphlets are titled *A True Declaration of the Happy Conversion, Contrition, and Christian Preparation of Francis Robinson* (1618) and *London's Cry, Ascended to God* (1619). Though the *Sawyer* tract claims to be 'published by authority' (A2), it remains unclear who or what this authority was, or how much influence they had over Goodcole's account; perhaps Goodcole himself was the authority given his position at Newgate.

¹²⁴ Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, p. 301.

appear to be a deliberate alignment. We know for certain, based on literary references within the *Flower* text, that the author of the work was familiar with Potts' *Lancaster* account. Though Goodcole does not directly mention the works of either the *Flower* author or Potts, it is unlikely that as a pamphleteer working from at least 1618, he would have been unfamiliar with either text. Furthermore, the repetition of titles in this period is relatively uncommon, so to have three texts dealing with the same controversial and topical subject matter seems unlikely to be a coincidence. The authors then, in order to provide the requisite amount of proof for witchcraft pamphlets, are borrowing authority and a sense of truth from a comprehensive work that possessed innate authority through its official sanction. This marketing strategy is pervasive today in the imitation of brand names and logos, but would have been truly novel in this emerging capitalist society.

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, the public demands for reliable and entertaining news were increasing throughout the early seventeenth-century, which spurred the early modern news revolution of the 1620s. Along with periodicity, this revolution brought standardization of titles and layouts that worked as early marketing tools in an increasingly competitive news market. The three *Wonderful Discoveries* do not fit within this genre of periodical news – just as they do not fit within the occasional pamphlet genres of crime or strange news – rather they embody a transitional state of information presentation and dissemination unique to this period. A requirement for witchcraft accounts to present more evidence than other pamphlet genres points not only to the liminal state of witchcraft beliefs during the first decades of the seventeenth-century, but also to the evolution of the concept of truth and the desire of the public to be accurately informed. The borrowing of authority evident in the later *Wonderful Discovery* tracts foreshadows the effectiveness of standardized marketing in both contemporary and modern news publications.

Conclusion

The trials and sentencing of the Lancaster witches, Margaret and Phillipa Flower, and Elizabeth Sawyer were important events in early seventeenth-century England and would have been of serious interest to contemporary citizens. Cases of witchcraft and crimes of *maleficium*, though not uncommon during this period, were considered remarkable and appear to have been followed closely by members of society ranging from the lowest classes to the elite. In essence, witchcraft was big news across the social strata, and as Sharpe points out ‘when witchcraft occurred or was suspected in early modern England, it was talked about; it was something which people knew about, something they had opinions about’.¹²⁵ Popular pamphlet accounts of these witch-trials – like contemporary chapbooks, sermons, and romances – catered in particular to a new kind of reader; the increasingly literate middling sort. This emergence of a new reading class, and the subsequent demand for cheap and accessible literature, had a significant impact on the literary landscape of early modern England. Popular genres such as crime accounts and international and strange news remained prevalent while hybrid forms of literature, including the three *Wonderful Discoveries*, began to emerge in the first decades of the seventeenth century.

Depictions of witches and witchcraft were common in popular culture and appeared frequently in the works of some of the most esteemed dramatists of the day including Shakespeare, Jonson, and Middleton, though the differing portrayals of witch characters reflected evolving beliefs in the occult during this time. Factual, or at least non-fictional, accounts of witchcraft such as those recounted in the *Wonderful Discoveries* were treated with more care and required a higher degree of proof than did other contemporary crime or international news accounts. This is representative not only of the precarious nature of writing about witchcraft during the reign of enthusiastic demonologist King James I, but also

¹²⁵ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 60.

of the public's growing expectation for current and accurate information on significant events. As the public sphere continued to expand and literacy rates increased, so too did the demand for reliable and entertaining cheap print.

Though pamphlets may have been regarded as 'insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, [and] untrustworthy', they were also one of the most important modes of popular communication in the early modern period.¹²⁶ The form of these texts – inexpensively produced, often small and relatively ephemeral – affected their contemporary meaning and contributed to their unfavourable reputation. However, the materiality of pamphlets also rendered them affordable for audiences beyond the elite, thereby facilitating the democratization of information. The inexpensive and ephemeral nature of pamphlets meant that they were ideally suited to communicate topical information and current events, and the form was widely emulated in the corantos of the 1620s and the newsbooks that appeared later in the century. The *Wonderful Discovery* tracts embody this transition from traditional pamphlet genres such as strange news and crime accounts to the kind of standardized, periodical print news that we are familiar with today. Though the latter two works were essentially occasional news pamphlets, the anonymous *Flower* author and Henry Goodcole were utilizing standardized marketing techniques – such as reusing an existing authoritative title – that would become common with the development of periodical news publications.

The authors of these texts were working within the well-established genres of crime and strange news, but they were also responding to a growing demand for reliable and authoritative journalism. Each of these trial pamphlets presents immense detail of witchcraft cases that would have been of substantial interest to the news-hungry citizens of Jacobean England; and while the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts are sensational and moralistic, they also each claim a degree of authority that is either innate – as in Potts' case – or borrowed.

¹²⁶ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 10.

Though the *Wonderful Discovery* tracts do conform to many commonalities of pamphlets of the early modern period; in their claims of authority, form, and content, they also foreshadow an impending transition in the way that topical information was communicated and disseminated to the public beyond the elite.

Figures

1.

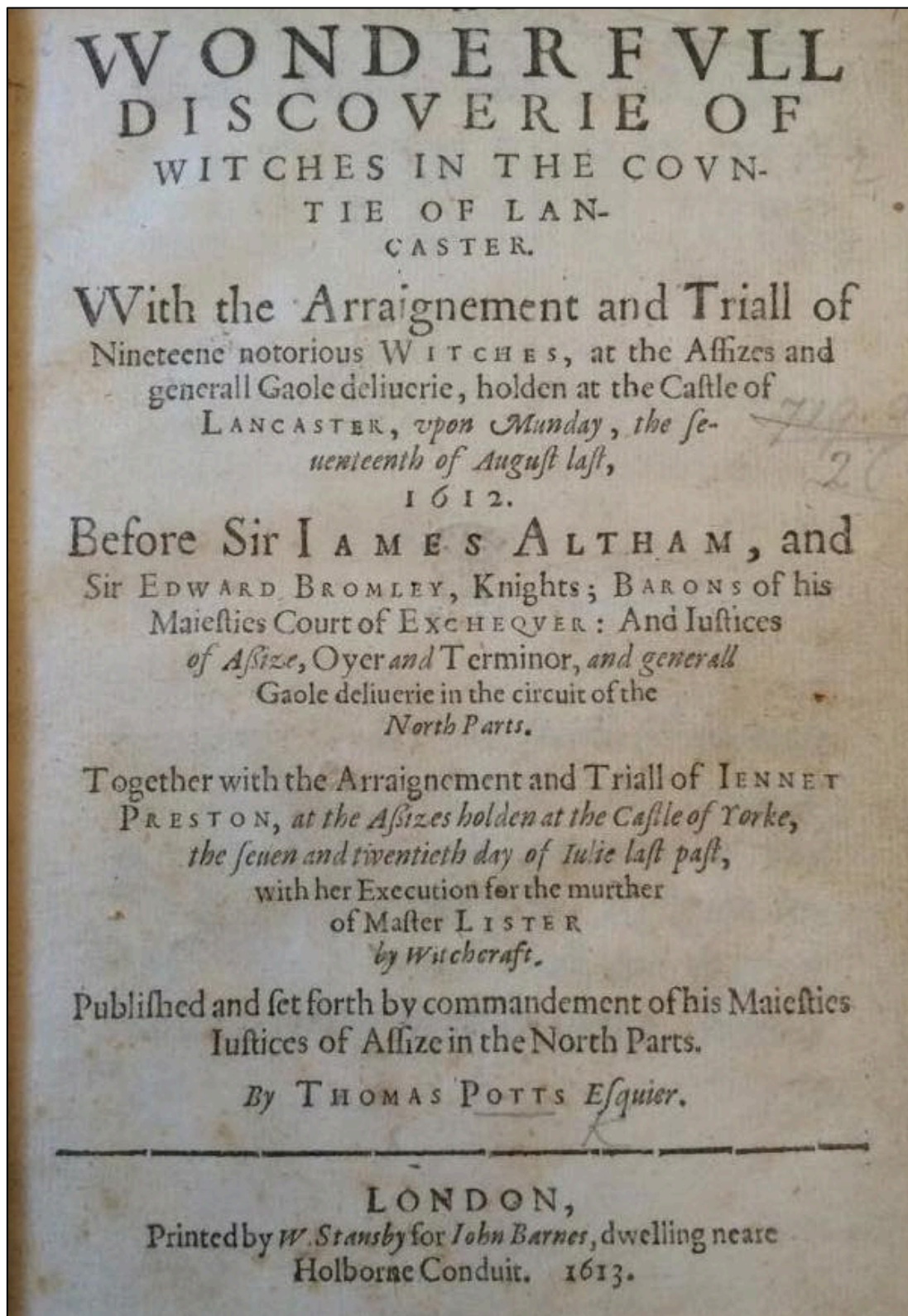


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2.

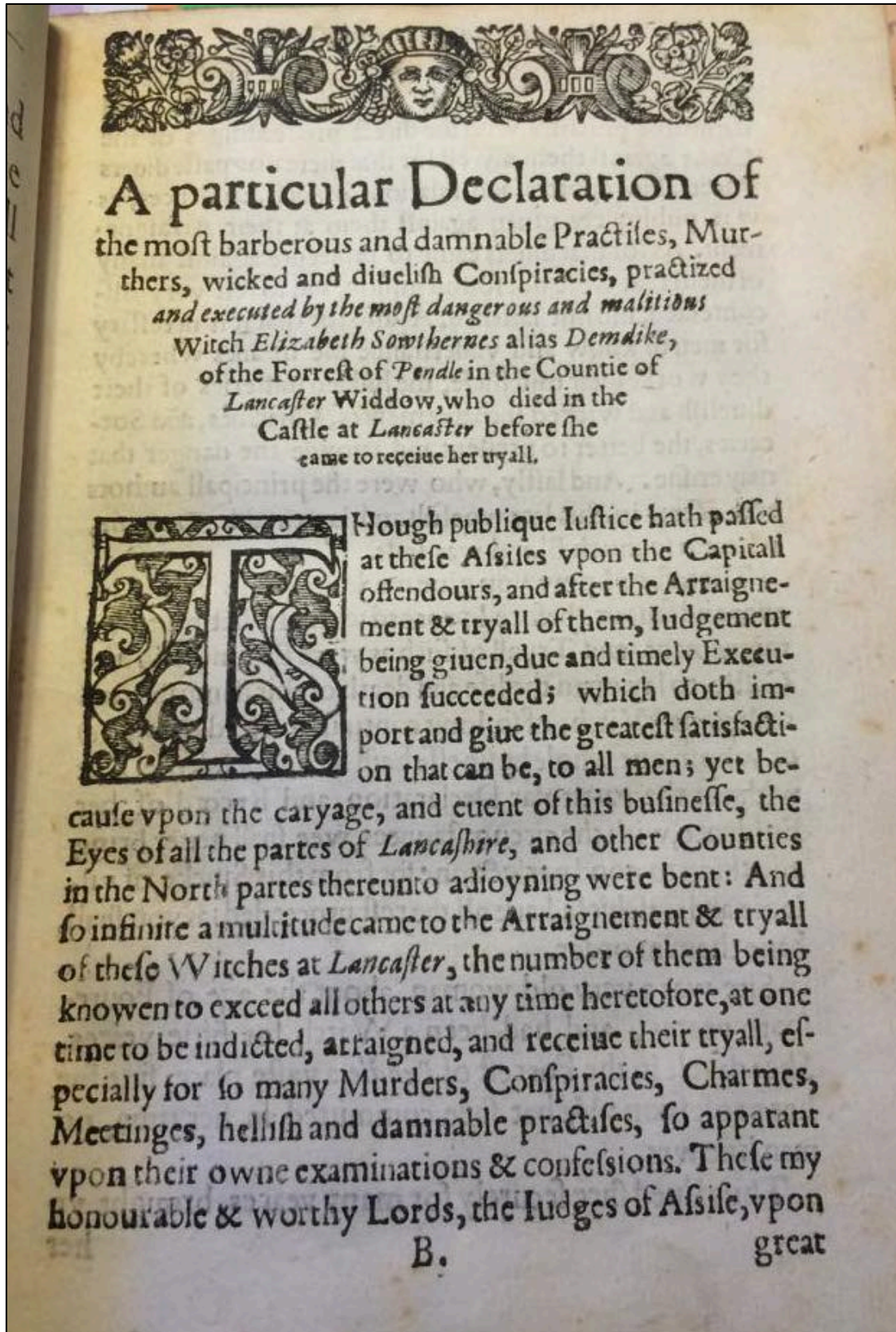



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3.

THE
WONDERFVL
DISCOVERIE OF THE
 Witchcrafts of *Margaret and Phillip*
Flower, daughters of *Ioan Flower* neere *Beuer*
Castle: Executed at *Lincolne*, *March 11. 1618.*

Who were specially arraigned and condemned before *Sir*
Henry Hobart, and *Sir Edward Bromley*, Iudges of *As-*
sise, for confessing themselues actors in the destruction
 of *Henry Lord Rosse*, with their damnable practises against
 others the Children of the Right Honourable
FRANCIS Earle of Rutland.

Together with the severall Examinations and Confessions of *Anna*
Baker, *Ioan Willmot*, and *Ellen Greene*, Witches in *Leicestershire*.



Printed at London by *G. Eld* for *J. Barnes*, dwelling in the long Walk
 neere *Christ-Church*. 1619.

Image my own from British Library copy.

6.

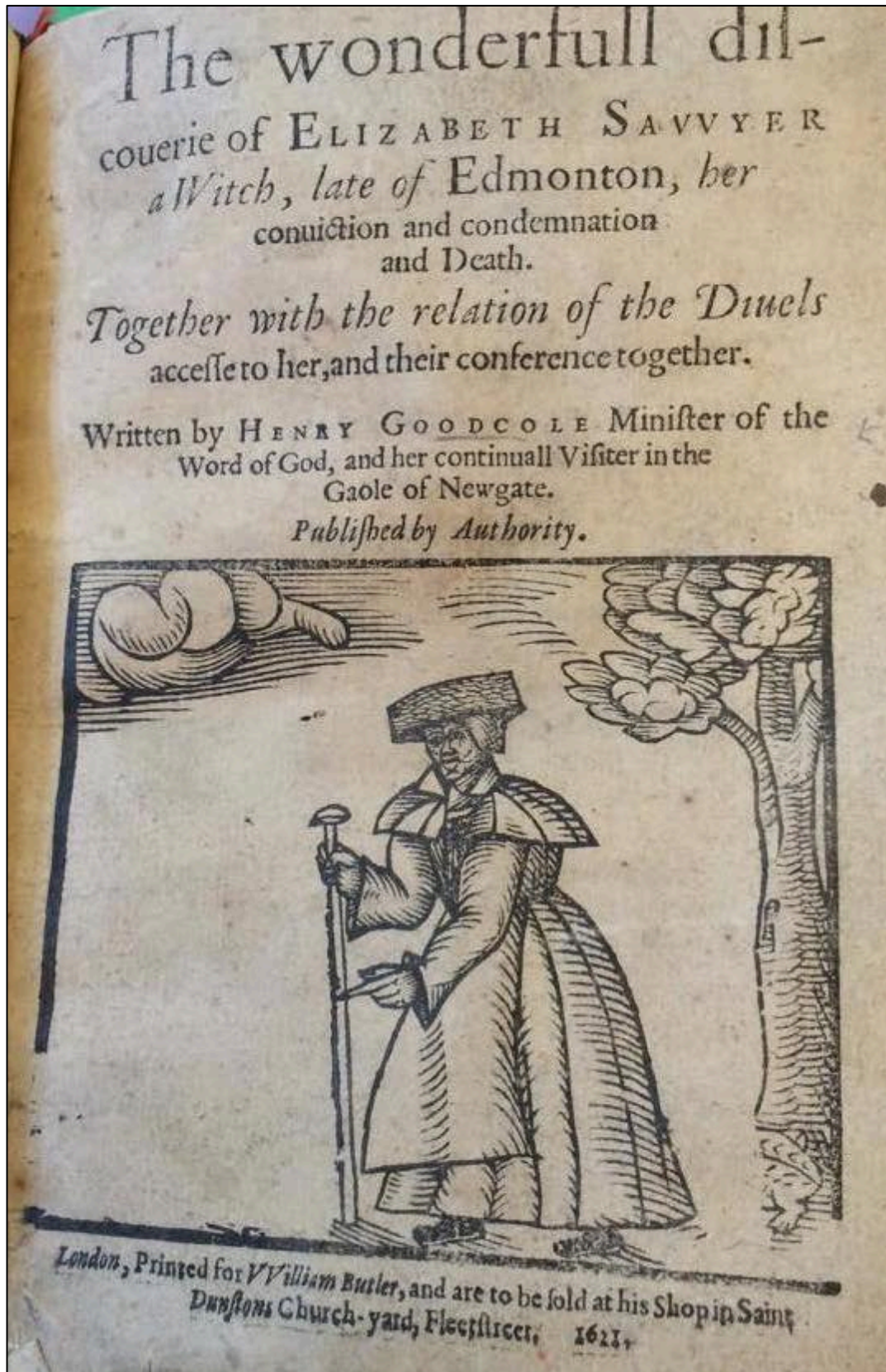


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