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Susan D. Amussen

The Witch of Edmonton: Witchcraft, Inversion, and Social Criticism

The witchcraft plot in The Witch of Edmonton *is decidedly secondary. The historical context helps us understand it: while belief in witchcraft was near universal, uncertainty always hovered over individual cases. The social criticism articulated by the witch in the play, with its attack on the abuse of the poor (especially poor women) by their neighbours is central to the impact of the play. If those in power are held accountable, the responsibilities of the patriarchs who failed Frank Thorney — his father and master — are also in question. The witch calls into question all those given authority in society.*

One of the odd things about *The Witch of Edmonton* is that the title plot is the second of the two main plots of the play, subordinate to the marriage/bigamy plot. The witchcraft plot was, as the title in the 1658 edition noted, a 'known true story', loosely based on a case described by Henry Goodcole, the Ordinary of Newgate, in a pamphlet of 1621, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch, late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and Death.* Viewers in 1621 would not need to have been told of the truth of the story, but by 1658, memories may have faded. However, the title demands that we think about the role of witchcraft in the play.[1] What matters about witchcraft? And what is important about the truth of the story? One clue to the significance of witchcraft is the way the character Elizabeth Sawyer in the play (but not in the pamphlet) articulates a critique of the patriarchal order. While witchcraft was conventionally seen as an inversion of the social order, the character Elizabeth Sawyer argues that it is the legal and moral order of society that is upside down. Sawyer's criticism draws attention to the failures of patriarchy evident in the bigamy plot.

In his preface, 'Apologies to the Christian Readers', Goodcole notes that he 'would have beene content to have concealed it', because of the 'diversitie of

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opinions' on the subject of witchcraft. He writes, he said, to defend truth, and describes the numerous ballads written on the case as 'base and false'. He thus draws attention to the place of witchcraft in the popular imagination: 'I was ashamed to see and hear such ridiculous fictions of her bewitching Corn on the ground, of a Ferret and an Owl daily sporting before her, of the bewitched woman braining herself, of the Spirits attending in the Prison: all which I knew to be fitter for an Ale-bench then for a relation of proceeding in Court of Justice'.[2] Goodcole wanted to set the record straight. While the play uses Goodcole's pamphlet as a source, it — like the lost ballads on the subject — participates in the construction of witchcraft in the popular imagination rather than its explication as a historical phenomenon: witchcraft was early modern clickbait. The title asks viewers and readers to pay attention to the links and parallels between the two plots.

As Goodcole describes her, Elizabeth Sawyer shared many characteristics with the stereotypical witch: she had long been suspected of witchcraft; a local justice of the peace 'was watchfull over her, and her ways, and that not without just cause'. The suspicious events linked to her included the death of 'Nurse-children and cattell'. Her identity as the guilty party was determined by 'an old ridiculous custome', taking thatch from her roof and seeing if it would burn. In addition to the children and cattle, neighbours alleged she did 'witch unto death' Agnes Ratcliffe. Ratcliffe's death was quick — a matter of four days — and she was 'foaming at the mouth, and was extraordinarily distempered'.[3] At the instigation of the local justice, Elizabeth Sawyer was searched by three women, two of whom were 'passing by there by chance'; how to search a witch was understood as common rather than specialized knowledge. Because they found a growth — 'a thing like a teate the bigness of the little finger'—she was convicted, but only for causing the death of Agnes Ratcliffe, consistent with the focus in English law and practice on specific acts of *maleficium* — harm to a person — rather than the satanic pact.[4] After her conviction, she confessed her guilt to Goodcole. The devil had first come to her when she was cursing and swearing. She had been, she admitted, the cause of 'many Christians and beasts death', including the two nursing infants for whose deaths she was acquitted. The devil came to her in the form of a dog, and he sucked on her teat for about fifteen minutes at a time. She said, however, she did not 'procure' the death of Agnes Ratcliffe. Following her confession, she died a good death at Tyburn.[5]

Since the work of Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas in the 1970s, historians have connected witchcraft to social polarization and the growth of poverty in early modern society. In the classic case, an old woman requested some kind of help and had been refused; she went away cursing or mumbling, and when

some misfortune occurred she was blamed for the misfortune. The accusation was thus a projection of the victim's guilt for refusing charity.[6] The catalogue of complaints brought against Katherine Brand of Ketteringham, Norfolk, in the 1590s is typical. Not long after Margaret Pell refused to give Brand eggs, Pell was tempted (temptations she resisted) to throw her child into a well and to kill her mother. When Brand and another suspected witch were brought before Sergeant Flowerdew by Francis Kett, Kett was seized with pain, and could not bring the charge against them; Margaret Chambers's final illness began after 'earnest speeches' with Brand, and she always blamed Brand for her illness; Philip Bese 'could not in conscience' do something Brand requested, and within a week he had hanged himself, to which Brand reportedly said 'she cared not & though there were twenty more of them hanged'.[7] In this case, witchcraft is understood as a response to conflict centred primarily on access to resources.

This social tension interpretation of witchcraft offers an understanding of some cases, but pays attention to a relatively narrow range of conflicts. Local communities experienced a wide range of tensions, and witchcraft could be a response to many of them. As most accused witches were women, these conflicts centred on the position of women. In recent years, therefore, historians and literary critics have paid attention to the gendered nature of witchcraft accusations. How could and should women carry out their roles in the family and community, as mothers, wives, and neighbours? What kind of power did they have? What were the expectations of age? Who in a household had authority over servants? Tensions around gender, service, motherhood, and religion were as salient as those about class.[8] In many recorded cases, as with Elizabeth Sawyer, a history of suspicion that an individual was a witch accumulated long before she was formally accused.

The exclusive focus on the social tensions underlying witchcraft cases, furthermore, obscures the ways in which what we might consider to be supernatural powers were a common part of life. The line between medicine and magic, for instance, was porous. Both cunning men and women and some healers used the ability to manipulate the natural world for beneficent purposes. Those with reputations as healers could, however, easily be suspected of witchcraft. While such accusations were generally met with denials, at least occasionally people found a reputation as a witch to be useful. In casual conversation, Mary Midgeley of Heptenstall, Yorkshire, boasted that 'she did a little witching', though she claimed that Elizabeth Crosley did more. The people of the Pendle Forest in Lancashire paid bribes to suspected witches and resorted to counter-witching to avoid harm.[9]

As Stuart Clark has noted, 'Witchcraft is pure inversion'. It was a manifestation of the world upside down, a metaphor for disorder that was widely used in

the early modern period. While the idea of the world turned upside down can be one of revolutionary liberation, it was more often a source of fear and anxiety, focused in the early seventeenth century on both unruly women and their male counterparts, failed patriarchs. In the changing social world of the early seventeenth century often nothing seemed certain. Thus the way a witch was thought to use demonic power to take power she did not legitimately have was one way she could defy the social order. In this context, the popular stereotype of the witch as a poor elderly woman like Elizabeth Sawyer is critical: she was deprived of power by class, age, and gender. The practice of witchcraft — and even the reputation of being a witch — was almost the only way she could (as imagined) exercise some power and independence.[10] In this way, witchcraft could be seen as a form of social criticism which challenged the inequities of early modern society. In the context of an upside down world, witches were understood to be rebelling not only against God, but also against their social subordination. They tried to control their own or their neighbours' lives, revenging themselves for the deprivations and oppressions that were normally women's lot. Equally, any woman who was thought to be 'maliciously disposed' towards her neighbours could be accused of witchcraft to bolster complaints against her or her husband.[11] The typical witch had all the features of the scolding woman, so often consigned to the cucking-stool by exasperated local magistrates, but with a much more sinister character. The 'chief fault' of witches 'is that they are scolds', suggested the skeptical Elizabethan writer, Reginald Scot.[12]

This historical context provides a framework for understanding the role of the witch in *The Witch of Edmonton.* The play is both a tragicomedy (as it is described on the title page of the 1658 edition) and a domestic tragedy, presenting two parallel upside down worlds.[13] Yet the tragedy of the play is primarily that of Frank Thorney, not Elizabeth Sawyer. This raises several questions: why put the witch in the title? What does the story of Elizabeth Sawyer add to the play? Why do they want not just a witch, but a 'true' witch? Why do Dekker, Ford, and Rowley think they need her, or witchcraft?

The two people who are executed at the end of the play, Frank Thorney and Elizabeth Sawyer, both present themselves (with different degrees of credibility) as trapped by a lack of choices. The play begins with Frank's secret marriage to Winifred, made with the assistance and encouragement of their master, Sir Arthur. Sir Arthur, it emerges, had a coercive sexual relationship with Winifred. Apparently having envisioned the marriage as a cover for his behaviour, he is chagrined when, after her wedding, Winifred refuses to have anything more to do with him. Frank and Winifred do not enjoy their marriage for long. In order to

rescue the family fortunes Old Thorney has arranged a marriage between Frank and Old Carter's daughter Susan. Both of Frank Thorney's marriages reflect the upside down world of failed patriarchs, first his master and then his father, men who had responsibility for him; Sir Arthur's sexual abuse of Winifred is also a failure in his conduct as patriarch and head of household. As in Jacobean revenge tragedies, the secret marriage is a sign that things will not turn out well. Frank murders his second wife to run off with the first, but his guilt is eventually discovered; at the same time, he acknowledges his prior marriage to Winifred. After his trial, Frank is led off to his execution.

Frank Thorney is both responsible for his plight — he is responsible for the secrecy of his marriage — and caught up in a situation he cannot control. He positions himself as a victim, although he could have told his father of his marriage to Winifred. Instead, when his father refers to reports of the marriage, he lies, asserting 'I must outface it' (1.2.179). Frank's wives, far more than he, are trapped by his decisions. After his second marriage, he attempts to flee the country with Winifred disguised as a page. In their conversation, Winifred reminds him that his actions have ripples that reach out to others:

> WINIFRED thus singled with yourself,
> It calls a thousand sorrows round about,
> Some going before, and some on either side,
> But infinite behind: all chained together.
> Your second adulterous marriage leads;
> That's the sad eclipse. The effects must follow.
> As plagues of shame, spite, scorn, and obloquy. (3.2.6–12)

Frank's response emphasizes his interpretation of his situation as an individual one, with him as the victim:

> FRANK Let my father then make the restitution,
> Who forced me take the bribe. It is his gift
> And patrimony to me; so I receive it.
> He would not bless nor look a father on me,
> Until I satisfied his angry will.
> When I was sold, I sold my self again —
> Some knaves have done't in lands, and I in body —
> For money, and I have the hire. (3.2.22–9)

As befits a man who sees his situation as individual and personal, his solution is equally individual: he kills Susan, his second wife, and tries to pin the blame on others. Even before his guilt is discovered, he is consumed with remorse.

While Frank Thorney feels sorry for himself, he places both Winifred and Susan in situations where they have no choice. He asks Winifred to carry the burden of his problem, having her dress as a page to leave the country with him. When Susan follows him, he presents Winifred (dressed as a boy) as his servant, and Susan interviews her. Since the audience, like Winifred, knows the truth, they hear her words as laced with irony. If you know that Frank and Winifred are married, you know that Winifred has told the truth; yet she has done so in a way that does not openly admit her marriage.

> WINIFRED Mistress, believe my vow. Your severe eye,
> Were it present to command, your bounteous hand,
> Were it then by to buy or bribe my service,
> Shall not make me more dear or near unto him,
> Than I shall voluntary. I'll be all your charge,
> Servant, friend, wife to him. (3.2.80–4)

Of course, as Winifred is Frank's wife, she will indeed be a wife to him. Winifred even asks Susan if she fears that Frank will be unfaithful. When Susan admits she does, Winifred responds,

> WINIFRED Believe it, mistress,
> I'll be no pander to him; and if I find
> Any loose lubric scapes in him I'll watch him,
> And at my return, protest I'll shew you all.
> He shall hardly offend without my knowledge. (3.2.94–8)

And of course this observation is true: Frank will only be unfaithful to Susan with Winifred. Winifred, having told Frank that his action involved not just him, tells a series of partial truths, caught between her love for Frank and her sense of his misconduct.

Winifred's master and husband both failed to behave as good patriarchs in relation to her. While Frank defines his position as one without choices, after her marriage Winifred has only one real choice, and that choice is to end her relationship with Sir Arthur. Every other choice she makes — to go in disguise, to tell Susan partial truths — is constrained by the choices that Frank has made. Because Susan is ignorant of the situation, she has no chance to make choices. After Susan's murder, when Susan's sister Katherine discovers Frank's guilt and reports it, Winifred tells Susan's father,

> WINIFRED The wrongs which singly fell on your daughter,
> On me are multiplied: she lost a life,
> But I an husband and myself must lose,
> If you call him to a bar for what he has done. (4.2.184–7)

Yet if anyone has a happy ending in the play it is Winifred. While she mourns her husband, even before his execution she notes that,

> WINIFRED My fault was lust; my punishment was shame.
> Yet I am happy that my soul is free
> Both from consent, foreknowledge and intent
> Of any murder but of mine own honour.
> Restored again by a fair satisfaction
> And since not to be wounded. (5.2.26–31)

The two fathers treat her with respect, and the judge orders that her former master, Sir Arthur, provide her with 1000 marks. At the end of the play, she is taken into Old Carter's house as a surrogate daughter: 'I do not think but she's a good wench, and hath had wrong as well as we' (187–8). The outcome for Winifred, abused by her master, betrayed by her husband, and widowed before she could live as a wife, is perhaps the best possible outcome. Susan, Frank's other wife, with fewer choices, is dead.

Elizabeth Sawyer, like Frank Thorney, defines her position as one forced on her. Sawyer's response to her situation, which offers a searing criticism of the social order and her judges, by analogy questions the patriarchal order of the marriage plot. As the only points of connection between the two plots are trivial, the criticism of patriarchy is indirect. The two plots travel on largely separate tracks until the final procession to the gallows. But their ongoing juxtaposition forces comparison.

Elizabeth Sawyer's position in the world is defined by her lack of control. She is old, poor, and at odds with her neighbours. Her only power is that of her tongue: she curses them, and harms the crops and animals of Old Banks. The shape-shifting talking Dog that serves as her familiar notes that he cannot kill, but can harm; many of his actions suggest mischief more than hurt. Sawyer makes her first appearance in act 2, when the viewer already knows that Frank feels trapped, and has entered into a bigamous marriage. Sawyer's first speech positions her as a critic:

> SAWYER Why should the envious world
> Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
> 'Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant,
> And like a bow buckled and bent together
> By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
> Must I for that be made a common sink
> For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
> To fall and run into? Some call me 'witch',
> And being ignorant of myself they go
> About to teach me how to be one: urging
> That my bad tongue — by their bad usage made so –
> Forspeakes their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
> Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse.
> This they enforce upon me. And in part
> Make me to credit it. (2.1.1–15)

This initial speech does several important things. Sawyer insists not that she is a witch, but that she is 'made to credit' the accusation by its ubiquity. She both questions the existence of witchcraft and affirms it. But witchcraft, insofar as it exists, comes from the outside; Sawyer is not a witch, but has been taught to be one by her local enemies. She enumerates all the offences of which she is accused, but does not see herself responsible for them: instead, her neighbours have projected blame on her. Just as Goodcole's pamphlet account of Sawyer draws attention to debates about the existence of witchcraft, from the introduction of the subject, the play makes visible debates about witchcraft's reality.

Because Sawyer speaks before her neighbours do, her speech frames her position. Her subsequent interactions are thus seen through her eyes. While in the marriage plot Frank casts his dilemma largely as a personal one, Sawyer's speech defines the challenges she — and by analogy Frank — faces as rooted in the abuse of power. At the same time, she also sees her challenge as a personal one. She wishes harm on Old Banks, who ends up kissing his cow's behind, and on Ann Ratcliffe, who goes mad and beats out her own brains; but Sawyer is accused of *all* the harms that happen to anyone in the village. The neighbours (including Old Banks) accuse her of witchcraft and prove it with the folk divining method of setting fire to some of the thatch from her house. When the neighbours present this evidence to the justice, he is visibly skeptical: 'Unless your proofs come better armed, instead of turning her into a witch you'll prove yourselves stark fools' (4.1.51–3). The death of Ann Ratcliffe ultimately convinces the judge of Sawyer's guilt.

Sawyer's most compelling criticism comes in act 4, as she is brought before the justice and Sir Arthur. In a series of speeches, she questions the existence of witchcraft, and then suggests those who are really guilty of witchcraft are not poor women like her, but members of the elite. She begins by denying to the justice that she is a witch:

> SAWYER I am none. Or would I were. If every poor old woman be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten, as I am daily, she to be revenged had need turn witch. (4.1.93–5)

But she goes further, identifying witchcraft at the highest levels of society. The true witches, she asserts, are the unruly women at court and in the city, 'painted things in princes' courts/ Upon whose eyelids lust sits blowing fires / To burn men's souls in sensual hot desires' (122–4); Sir Arthur's response that these women do not use Satan does not stop her. She continues insisting that these city women do far more damage than any poor woman has done:

> SAWYER These by enchantments can whole lordships change
> To trunks of rich attire, turn ploughs and teams
> To *Flanders* mares and coaches; and huge trains
> Of servitors, to a *French* butterfly.
> Have you not City-witches who can turn
> Their husbands' wares, whole standing shops of wares,
> To sumptuous tables, gardens of stolen sin? (128–34)

She attacks lawyers 'whose honeyed hopes the credulous client draws' (148). The catalogue of offences — sexual and moral corruption, worship of money, and dishonest lawyers — Sawyer enumerates is by no means unique. Concerns about moral rot in London, and particularly at the court, were not new, but the scandals of the previous ten years had increased their resonance. And it was not just preachers; libels critical of the court circulated widely in London and the countryside. Sawyer's reference to women, 'Upon whose naked paps, a lecher's thought / Acts sin in fouler shapes then can be wrought?' (125–6) may be a veiled reference to Frances Howard and the Overbury scandal, by the time of the first performance only six years in the past. Howard was herself suspected of witchcraft.[14] When the justice responds that 'The law / Casts not an eye on these' (136–7), her response is acerbic:

> SAWYER Why then on me,
> Or any lean old beldam? Reverence once
> Had wont to wait on age. Now an old woman
> Ill favoured grown with years, if she be poor,
> Must be called bawd or witch. (137–41)

Through this whole scene, Sawyer calls society to account for its mistreatment of women like her. She argues that the law is upside down: just as witchcraft turns the world upside down, the moral universe is upside down when poor elderly women are the targets of prosecution rather than their wealthier neighbors. She posits a moral universe where the witches are not beleaguered poor women like herself, but those whose sins involve the exploitation of others. The play's use of a 'true' story ensures that listeners could not dismiss these criticisms.[15]

Through her criticism, Sawyer makes clear why we must understand broader sets of social tensions that underlie witchcraft accusations. She frames the issue as her identity as a poor old woman that leads to accusations against her, not just her behavior. Equally, the multiple levels of the upside down world draw attention to the importance of inversion: in Sawyer's view, law and morality are upside down, just as witchcraft is assumed to turn the world upside down. The play's self-presentation as a 'true story' gives credibility to the implications of her attack on the social order.

The criticism of the London society and the court that Sawyer articulates is neither new nor unique. Yet in the context of the play — a 'true' story — it implicitly raises questions about patriarchy. Although an old woman and a young man are executed, the responsible men — especially in the case of Frank Thorney — were the mature men, the governors of the community. Sawyer's questions — echoing Frank Thorney's sense of being trapped — ask us to consider where responsibility really lies. As they proceed to the gallows, Old Carter suggests that Sawyer is responsible for Frank's killing Susan. While she denies her responsibility there, and for Ann Ratcliff's death, she is determined to die repentant. Her last words as she is led to execution are, 'I repent all former evil; / There is no damned conjuror like the devil' (5.2.70–1). Frank is equally repentant, without the anger that Sawyer exhibits about her treatment. In asking forgiveness — from Winifred, his father, Old Carter (Susan's father), and several others — Frank enacts the righting of the personal wrongs he has done: for the first time, he takes responsibility for his actions. He has defined his situation as personal, and he understands his offence as individual.

The contrast between Frank's personal understanding of his situation and Elizabeth Sawyer's broader social reading of hers complicates the reading of the

play. While the final scene enacts the good death so desired by Jacobean moralists, it is not entirely unproblematic. While Frank Thorney has taken responsibility for his actions, Elizabeth Sawyer has called into question the social world in which marriage for money drives action. While no one asks, the viewer inevitably wonders, what is his father's responsibility here? What about Sir Arthur, who abetted a secret marriage? The contentious nature of witchcraft — skepticism was not rare — meant that a critique of witchcraft accusation was easier to build than was a critique of the patriarchal authority that ensnares Frank Thorney. Frank's father and master both abuse their power, but that power is legitimate. Sawyer's criticism suggests a parallel between the multiple failed patriarchs in the marriage/bigamy plot and the villagers who abuse her. Sawyer's argument with the justice articulates an alternative moral universe, suggesting that the current society is upside down. The failure of good government, in family and community, traps people into evil that they cannot escape.

The parallels between Sawyer's situation and Frank's demonstrate that while the witchcraft plot is decidedly secondary, it is central to the play's impact. As a title, the *Witch of Edmonton* may have been a commercial choice. While those who expected to see more about the witch may have been disappointed, the title itself was, it turns out, perfectly appropriate. The historical context of witchcraft — its place in the popular imagination — allows the play to raise these questions. The use of a 'true' story insists that viewers not distance themselves from the events of the play. Everything they knew about witchcraft — from the propensity of old women to be accused, to doubts about particular accusations, to accusations of witchcraft close to the court — was brought into the theatre. The play casts doubt on the reality of witchcraft and on the nature of accountability. If witchcraft turned the world upside down, the play suggests, the abuse of power by those in authority does so as well.

Notes

1 For an overview of the relationship between witchcraft and bigamy, see Lucy Munro, 'Introduction', in Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton,* ed. Lucy Munro (London, 2017), 34–40, Todd Butler, 'Swearing Justice in Henry Goodcole and *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 50:1 (2010), 127–45, https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.0.0084, sees the episodic relationship between the plots as problematic, and locates the link in legal ideas about words.

2 Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderfull Discouerie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch Late of Edmonton* (1621: stc 12014), A3v.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid*,* B3. For a summary of the legal context, see Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560–1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London, 2017), 134–5, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350020702: in spite of legal changes in 1604, English prosecutions continue to focus almost exclusively on acts that harm others.

5 Goodcole, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer,* C2–2v; for the good death see J.A. Sharpe, '"Last Dying Speeches": Religion, Ideology, and Public Execution in Seventeenth- Century England', *Past and Present* 107 (1985) 144–67; Katherine Royer, *The English Execution Narrative 1200–1700* (London, 2014), chapters 4 and 5, esp. 65–6, 83, 87–8, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315654676.

6 The two works that provide the basis for this view are Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: a Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970) and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971).

7 Norfolk RO AYL/180, Articles Against Katherine Brand of Ketteringham, n.d. 1590s.

8 For other sources of tension, see Susan D. Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline, and Power: The Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies* 34.1 (1995), 1–34, esp. 27–31, http://doi.org/10.1086/386065; Anabel Gregory, 'Witchcraft, Politics and "good neighbourhood" in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye'. *Past and Present* 133 (1991) 31–66, https://doi.org/10.1093/past/133.1.31; Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London, 1996); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994); Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1995).

9 NA ASSI 45, 1/5, 38–9 (1646); Clive Holmes, 'Women: Witnesses and Witches', *Past and Present* 140 (1993) 45–78, esp. p. 52, http://doi.org/10.1093/past/140.1.45; Amussen & Underdown, *Gender, Culture, and Politics,* 132–3.

10 Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe,* (Oxford, 1997), 13; for a more general discussion of the world upside down, see Amussen and Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics:* unruly women and failed patriarchs are discussed in chapters 1 and 2, and witchcraft in chapter 5.

11 For example, the wife of Richard Martyn of Bletchingley, whose husband was unpopular locally: NA, STAC 8/ 17/6, Attorney-General Hobart v. Turner (1607).

12 Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* (1584, STC 21864), 34; for scolds, see Amussen and Underdown, *Gender, Culture, and Politics,* 27–9; for a recent overview of the debates on the implications of scolds can be found in Rachel J. Weil, 'Politics and Gender in Crisis in David Underdown's "The Taming of the Scold"', *History Compass* 11.5 (2013), 381–8, https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12054 and Susan D. Amussen, "'Turning the World Upside Down": Gender and Inversion in the Work of David Underdown', *History Compass* 11.5 (2013), 394–404, https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12036.

13 For genre, see Munro, 'Introduction', 41–52.

14 For the links between Francis Howard and witchcraft, see Amussen and Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics,* 32–3, 34, 132, 150–1, and for libels, see 33–4, 42; Alastair Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge, 2002), 148–53, https://doi.org/10.2307/20061572.

15 Frances E. Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature and Evidence in Seventeenth Century England* (Philadelphia, 2013), chapter 2, https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207798 draws attention to the contentious nature of 'truth' in witchcraft narratives.