

PAMPHLETS AND
PAMPHLETEERING IN
EARLY MODERN
BRITAIN

JOAD RAYMOND



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1

What is a pamphlet?

NAMING A PAMPHLET

In 1597 Richard Stonley, a teller in Queen Elizabeth's Exchange of Receipt, was found to have embezzled over £12,600. His property was seized, and it soon became apparent that he had spent a moiety of his illicit income in satiating (or probably not satiating) his bibliomania. The inventory of books at his dwelling in Aldersgate Street lists hundreds of titles: over 200 volumes in his bedroom, a similar number in the gallery next to the bedchamber, 34 in his study and a solitary French Bible in the parlour. Stonley owned scriptural commentaries and sermons; fashionably politic and erudite treatises by Justus Lipsius; the classics, ranging from Cicero and Aristotle to Caesar, Herodotus and Ovid; historical tomes; small books on witchcraft, health and medicine; and literary works including More's *Utopia* and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. His tastes were educated and broad, and his reading passionate; the diary he kept in prison details his daily fare of small beer and oysters and devoted reading.¹

Scattered among respectable works, the inventory identifies in the bedchamber five 'Bundells of Pamphlets in quarto' valued at 20*d.*, and eleven 'Bundles in viij^o' valued at 4*s.*; in the Gallery 'xl^{ty} Panphelets' valued at 2*s.* 6*d.*; 'xxxv small Pamphlets', and a further eleven pamphlets each bundle valued at twelve pence. The devout works in the study were jumbled with seven pamphlets valued at sixpence. Books and especially pamphlets, being of little monetary value, are rarely identified individually in early modern inventories. Only the most diligent of accountants would have distinguished the many one- and two-penny books in an attempt to recover the embezzled sum. One of the curiosities of this inventory is that bundles of anonymous pamphlets are listed among the titles of other items of little value: 'A defence of things lately done in the Lowe Countries' appraised at 1*d.*; 'Newes out of

¹ Leslie Hotson, 'The Library of Elizabeth's Embezzling Teller', *Studies in Bibliography*, 2 (1949–50), 49–61; Stonley's diary is in the Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.459–61.

Helvetia' at 1*d.*; 'The Edicte of the kynge of France' at 2*d.*; 'Doctor Watsons twoe Sermons' at 2*d.*; 'Nicholls Recantacion' at 1*d.*; 'Euphues shadowe', 'Treasure for Englishe men' and 'Difference of these *our* dayes', and [Stubbes'] 'Anatomy of Abuses' all at 1*d.* These and many other items we would classify as pamphlets.

This inconsistency might be circumstantial. Whether a pamphlet was named or not might come down to whether it was bound or bundled with other items; it may be that several clerks were performing the task, one of whom thought such details were trifling; perhaps the attractions of a nearby alehouse persuaded a clerk to rush the job. Nevertheless the mishmash of items suggests two things. First, the educated taste of a man like Stonley was eclectic and included printed materials too trifling to name. This serves as a useful corrective to Thomas Bodley's famed interdiction against preserving pamphlets in the University collections, as they were 'not worth the custody in suche a Librarie'.² Secondly it indicates the emerging concept of a *pamphlet* as a small book, and as something over and above that.

What, then, was in these bundles? What was a pamphlet? In the first instance it was a short, quarto book. Some printing terminology will be useful at this point. The format and size of an early modern printed book was determined by the proportions of the paper on which it was printed and the number of times the paper was folded. Size influenced status. A folio was made from sheets folded once, resulting in a large and usually grand book; a quarto was made from sheets folded twice; and an octavo from sheets folded three times, producing a correspondingly small book. These less prestigious formats were used for diverse purposes. A pamphlet typically consisted of between one sheet and a maximum of twelve sheets, or between eight and ninety-six pages in quarto.³

The classification of books in inventories can reveal the mental ordering of books within a series of registers, by size, content and value, in a way that is less charged than the polemical exchanges within print. The 1625 inventory of the books of Sir Roger Townshend, a prominent Norfolk gentleman, includes works in Latin, English and French, most identified by a short title. The format of each book – quarto, octavo or folio – is specified. Clusters of books in the same format suggest that they may have been shelved according to size, or that the compiler of the list recognised that size affected value. While the classics and Latin works, including Plato, Cicero and Quintillian, are for the most part collected into distinct groups, they are listed no more diligently than numerous plays or ephemera, including 'The crying murder in 4^o',

² Thomas Bodley, *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James*, ed. G. W. Wheeler (Oxford, 1926), p. 40.

³ The reasoning behind these figures is given below, pp. 81–3.

‘Proceedings against the late Traytors in 4^o’, John Deacon’s ‘Tobaccoe tortured. in 4^o’, ‘The gowts apologie. in 4^o’, and numerous godly books and sermons, all in quarto.⁴ The list of Townshend’s library is interesting precisely because it records the formats of books and provides similar details for each.

Later in the century, a catalogue of the extensive library of Sir Edward Dering (1598–1644) identifies a diversity of volumes learned and less-learned, arranged according to size and subject. Among the theological treatises and the classics which comprise the majority of the volumes stand a few named pamphlets: ‘Mr Milton: the plott discovered. Lond 1640’ (one of a group of thirteen items costing 7s. in total) and other tracts more securely attributed to John Milton; also ‘The first and second booke of discipline in Scotland. 1560. Lond 1641’; ‘2 Allmanackes’; ‘Depositions and Articles agst Tho: Earle of strafford. 16. febr. 1640’; ‘A copy of a letter of mr Cotton of Boston in New England 1641’; and many ‘playbooks’. Dering’s interest in short, controversial works burgeoned in 1640, a time when pamphlet controversy was closely bound with the political future of the kingdoms. The list also notes the purchase of books in bulk: 2s. 3d. was paid in 1621 ‘For 10 small bookes’, and 2s. paid in January 1627 for ‘pamphletts 6 and 2 MS’.⁵ As in the list of Stonley’s books, some small and perhaps inconsequential pamphlets are listed in detail, while others recede into the shadows of Dering’s shelves. Slightly later still, an inventory of the library of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, made in early 1647, soon after his death, identifies neither format nor value, but lists short titles, including many manuscripts and large volumes of theology, as well as single-sheet pamphlets of news and polemics, many associated with the parliamentary cause for which Essex fought.⁶

After 1640 the distinctive nature of a pamphlet became more evident. In 1640–1 the bookseller George Thomason began collecting pamphlets because he recognised their importance as documents of controversial times; no one had systematically collected English pamphlets before then. At about the same time, Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquarian, and John Rushworth, newly appointed clerk-assistant to the House of Commons, began smaller collections.⁷ Pepys, however, does not mention pamphlets in his accounts of browsing booksellers’ stalls. In the 1727 inventory of Newton’s library, scholarly works in all formats are identified; the ignominious ‘small chymical

⁴ *Private Libraries in Renaissance England*, vol. 1, ed. R. J. Fehrenbach and E. S. Leedham-Green (Binghamton, NY, 1992), pp. 79–135.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–269.

⁶ Vernon F. Snow, ‘An Inventory of the Lord General’s Library, 1646’, *The Library*, 5th ser., 21 (1966), 115–23.

⁷ On Thomason and Rushworth see Ch. 5, below and Raymond, *Invention*, chs. 2 & 6; Nicholas K. Kiessling, ‘The Library of Anthony Wood from 1681 to 1999’, *Bodleian Library Record*, 16 (1999), 470–91.

books' and various quantities of 'Wast Books & Pamphletts' are not described individually.⁸ By 1700 everyone knew what a pamphlet was and what it did. Early in the century Myles Davies, a Welsh convert to Protestantism, began writing his *Critical History of Pamphlets* (1716), a mercurial and peppery account of theological controversy in print. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'pamphlet' became a useful and meaningful word, but without a firm definition for it held little interest for the antiquarian or etymologist. In his 1617 lexicon John Minsheu merely described the pamphlet as 'opusculum stolidorum', a fool's diminutive performance.⁹ No one defined the pamphlet, or tried to explain the phenomenon of its rise to prominence. This book tells the story of something that through the seventeenth century was too immediate, too mundane to receive critical interrogation: so what then made a pamphlet?

Though already venerable the word 'pamphlet' prospered in the 1580s, as its meanings shifted and it entered into common use. In 1716 Myles Davies claimed it as 'a true-born *English* Denison', a native idiom, 'of no longer a Date than that of the last Century, since 'tis almost certain its Pedigree can scarce be trac'd higher than the latter end of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign.'¹⁰ Davies offered a range of meanings for the term, at the root of which was the small 'stitch'd' (not bound) book, tending to calumny or scandal. It was perhaps, he noted, etymologically related to Pan = *all* and *I love*: 'signifying a thing belov'd by all: For a Pamphlet being of a small portable Bulk, and of no great Price, and of no great Difficulty, seems adapted for every one's Understanding, for every one's Reading, for every one's Buying, and consequently becomes a fit Object and Subject of most People's Choice, Capacity and Ability.'

The term first appeared in Anglo-Latin writing in the fourteenth century, and in English in the fifteenth. It derived from *Pamphilus seu de Amore*, a popular twelfth-century Latin amatory poem. Thence, with the diminutive ending *-et*, it became a familiar appellation for any small book. Following the spread of printing, the term began to specify a 'separate', a small item issued on its own, usually unbound, not substantial enough to constitute a volume by itself. In a minor usage the word described a collection of literary items, in poetry or prose, which were produced to be disposable rather than enduring. These were produced for the market of gentleman readers who sought entertainment or titillation. The printer's prefatory epistle in George Gascoigne's poetic anthology *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1579),

⁸ John Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 32–3.

⁹ See under 'pamphlet' in John Minsheu, *Hegemon eis tas glossas* (1617), p. 345; and Stephano Skinner, *Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ* (1671), sig. lll4v.

¹⁰ Davies, *Athenæ*, vol. 1, section 2: *A Critical History of Pamphlets*, p. 1.

referred to ‘the publication of these pleasant Pamphlets’. Here pamphlets refers not to the poems themselves (Gascoigne writes: ‘I may not compare Pamphlets unto Poems’), but metonymically describes separates collected into a volume.¹¹ This usage continued into the next century: Robert Anton, in *Vices Anotimie Scourged and Corrected in New Satirs* (1617) complained of ‘obsceane and shallow Poetry’ produced by and for the university graduate who ‘murders the Presse with felonious Pamphlets stolne from the imperfections of their dearest friends’.¹²

During the 1580s the meaning of the word ‘pamphlet’ coalesced with frequent use: it came to refer to a short, vernacular work, generally printed in quarto format, costing no more than a few pennies, of topical interest or engaged with social, political or ecclesiastical issues.¹³ By the 1590s it had found a range of uses: the noun ‘pamphleter’ (and later pamphleteer), the verb ‘to pamphlet’, and the adjective ‘pamphletary’ meaning pertaining to pamphlets. Some attributive uses were subsequently coined, including ‘pamphlet Treaties’, ‘Pamphlet-Forms . . . Pamphlet-Subjects’, and ‘pamphlet war’.¹⁴ These frequently carried pejorative overtones. Pamphlets were unreliable. A character in Henry Holland’s dialogue *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (1590) complains that ‘many fabulous pamphletes are published, which give little light and lesse prooffe’.¹⁵

Pamphlets were closely associated with slander or scurrility. This meaning has a discernible trajectory in the second half of the sixteenth century, and can be found in legal contexts. In 1559 Queen Elizabeth issued to the Court of High Commission, the supreme ecclesiastical court of the country, a set of recommendations and instructions regarding their duties. The fifty-first article of these Injunctions charged the archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London with responsibility for supervising the press: ‘And bycause many pamphletes, playes and balletes, be often times printed, wherein regard wold be had, that nothinge therin should be either heretical, sedicious, or unsemely for Christian eares: Her majestie likewise commaundeth, that no manner of person, shall enterprise to print any such, except the same be to him lycensed.’¹⁶ John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, was interrogated by

¹¹ *Flowres*, sig.A2v, p. 50; Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London, 1995), pp. 227–8, 302n.26; on the licensing history of this text and its censored sequel, see Clegg, *Press Censorship*, pp. 103–22.

¹² Robert Anton, *Vices Anotimie Scourged and Corrected in New Satirs* (1617), sig. B1r.

¹³ *OED*: *vide* ‘pamphlet’, noun 2.

¹⁴ These examples, between 1571 and 1730, come from the very useful entry in *OED*; some of the examples given below predate those in *OED* for the sense of ‘pamphlet’, noun 2.

¹⁵ Henry Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (1590), sig. E3v. Theophilus refers to debates over the devil’s delusory empowerment of witches.

¹⁶ Quoted in Edward Arber, ed., *An Introductory Sketch to the Martin Marprelate Controversy, 1588–1590* (1879), pp. 49–50.

the Queen's ministers in 1570; he had written a book, defending the honour and legitimacy of Mary Queen of Scots, entitled *A Defence of the Honour of the Right Highe, Mightye and Noble Princesse* (1569). Leslie justified himself by declaring that 'nothing was intended but a defence of her honour against so many blasphemous "treateis" and "pamflettis" as have been set abroad both in England and Scotland, which are printed at London.'¹⁷ In 1579 John Aylmer, who as Bishop of London bore responsibility for supervising the output of presses, wrote to Secretary of State William Cecil, Lord Burghley: 'I have founde out a presse of pryntyng with one [William] CARTER, a very Lewd fellowe, who hath byne Dyvers tymes before in prison for printinge of Lewde pamphelletes.'¹⁸ In 1580, drafting an act to control 'the licentious printing selling and uttering of unprofitable and hurtfull Inglish bokes', the lawyer William Lambarde spread his net wide to include 'sundrie bookes, pamfletes, Poesies, ditties, songes, and other woorkes, and wrytinges, of many sortes and names serving . . . to let in a mayne Sea of wickednesse . . . and to no small or sufferable wast[e] of the treasure of this Realme which is thearby consumed and spent in paper, being of it selfe a forein and chargeable comoditie'.¹⁹ In 1583 a group of stationers complained to the Privy Council that the lack of codified rights to ownership of texts (or 'copy') was undermining their profitability. A commission appointed to investigate the privilege warned the Council that, unless some remedial action was taken, 'onelic pamflettis, trifles and vaine small toies shall be printed, and the great bokes of value and good for the Chirch and Realme shold not be done at all'.²⁰ A 1588 royal proclamation, concerned with the import of Catholic propaganda into England, requested that all officers should 'inquire and search for all such bulls, transcripts, libels, books and pamphlets, and for all such persons whatsoever as shall bring in, publish, disperse, or utter any of the same'.²¹ By 1588 pamphlets were disreputable, potentially dangerous works that needed to be monitored.

An obsolete, early sixteenth-century usage of 'pamphlet' meant a prostitute. This may have coloured the name for a cheap book, available to any in return for a small payment. John Taylor drew the analogy bluntly in a comic poem:

For like a *Whore* by day-light or by candle,
 'Tis even free for every knave to handle:
 And as a new *whore* is belov'd and sought,
 So is a new *Booke* in request and bought.

¹⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland*, 3 (1903), p. 160.

¹⁸ Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 2, pp. 749–50. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 751.

²⁰ Greg, *Companion*, p. 127.

²¹ Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. (New Haven & London, 1964–69), vol. 3, pp. 13–17.

When *whores* wax old and stale, they're out of date,
 Old Pamphlets are most subject to such fate.
 As *whores* have Panders to emblazen their worth,
 So these have Stationers to set them forth.
 And as an old *whore* may be painted new
 With borrowed beauty, faire unto the view,
 Whereby shee for a fine fresh *whore* may passe,
 Yet is shee but the rotten *whore* shee was.
 So Stationers, their old cast Bookes can grace,
 And by new Titles paint a-fresh their face.
 Whereby for currant they are past away,
 As if they had come forth but yesterday.²²

Even in its late sixteenth-century usage, the word pamphlet was deprecatory. Pamphlets were small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time. As the form of the pamphlet emerged, the name given to it was, like 'Puritan', an insult. In his preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), Thomas Nashe dismissed the uninventive offerings of unashamedly commercial 'Pamphleters, and Poets, that make a patrimonie of *Inspeech*'.²³ In *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Nashe railed against Gabriel Harvey: 'thou *Pigmie Braggart*, thou Pamphleter of nothing but *Peans*'.²⁴ Harvey responded in *Four Letters* (1592) with a complaint against 'those, whose owne Pamflets are readier to condemne them, then my letters forward to accuse them'.²⁵ *Other people* write pamphlets. Thus Barnaby Rich in 1606: 'What a number of Pamphlets haue wee by our new writers of this age, whereof the greatest part are nothing else but vanitie.'²⁶ As if to say: pamphlets insult the readers' intelligence, but *this*, dear reader...²⁷ In 1608 the lawyer Sir Edward Coke denounced the unauthorised publication of an inaccurate paraphrase of one of his speeches: 'little doe I esteeme an uncharitable and malitious practise in publishing of an erroneious and ill spelled Pamphet [sic]'.²⁸ In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century a stereotypical pamphleteer was an idle exploiter of

²² *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse 1509–1659*, selected by David Norbrook, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (1982), p. 740.

²³ [Greene], *Menaphon* (1589), sig. A3r.

²⁴ Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (1904–10), vol. 1, p. 196.

²⁵ *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 3 vols. (1884–5), 1:155.

²⁶ Barnaby Rich, *Faultes, Fault And Nothing Else but Faultes* (1606), reprinted ed. Melvin H. Wolf (Gainesville, FL, 1965), sig. 39v.

²⁷ Cf. A. R., *True and Wonderfull. A discourse* (1614), sig. A3r; Thomas Bedwell, *Kalendarium viatorum generale* (1614), sig. A4v; Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615), sig. A4v.

²⁸ Quoted Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of King Lear and their Origins*, vol. 1: *Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 64; I am grateful to Peter Blayney for this reference.

the credulous vulgar; by the mid-seventeenth century he would cease to be merely frivolous and become greedy and malicious.

The term 'pamphlet' was not always used pejoratively, nor always to refer to someone else's writing. Nashe refers to his *Strange Newes* (1592) as 'my Pamphlet', but only after describing Harvey 'giving mony to have this his illiterat Pamphlet of Letters printed (whereas others have monie given them to suffer them selves to come in Print)'. Nashe is defiantly answering a fool after his own folly, and thus is prepared to denigrate the status of his own two-sheet quarto.²⁹ Harvey dances a symmetrical caper in *Foure Letters*, when, after haranguing Nashe, he refers to his own work as 'this impertinent Pamflet . . . this slender Pamflet', before beseeching writers 'not to trouble the Presse, but in case of urgent occasion, or important use'.³⁰ Nashe, conscious of his dependence on his readers, modestly admits: 'I must not place a volume in the precincts of a pamphlet', meaning to let it grow beyond its proper stature.³¹ A similar feint of humility appears in John Taylor's *Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* (1614) where he admits, 'I have at idle times some Pamphlets writ', and refers to his quarto volume of poetry as 'This little pamphlet'.³² Taylor, a waterman and popular writer, uses the term both negatively and neutrally as part of a deliberate attempt to represent himself as a modest, self-educated, and honest author. A 1591 news pamphlet regretted that 'this Pamphlet' had been held up by other 'apish Pamphleters'.³³ In all these uses the term pamphlet hints at ambivalence; a commercial or pragmatic compromise has been made, a small bark floats on a sea of scurrility. In the hands of Elizabethan pamphleteers, 'pamphlet' is a complex term, but is essentially an insult.

FORMS OF PRINT 1500–1588

The 1580s were a watershed for the pamphlet, a moment determined by increasing literacy, commercial capacity within the book trade, tensions in the Elizabethan church, and a fermentation of the English language, itself a consequence of the Reformation and the Protestant emphasis on vernacular scripture and of the loosening of classical rhetoric.³⁴ Several factors conspired

²⁹ *Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1, pp. 258–9.

³⁰ *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, vol. 1, pp. 220–1, 231.

³¹ Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 224.

³² Taylor, *The Nipping or Snipping of Abuses* (1614), sigs. B3v, L4r.

³³ G. B., *Newes out of France* (?1591), sig. A4r–v.

³⁴ On prose style see Ian Robinson, *The Establishment of Modern English Prose in the Reformation and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1998); John Carey, 'Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Prose' in Christopher Ricks, ed., *English Poetry and Prose, 1550–1674* (1970; 1986), 329–411; Paula Blank, *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance*

to shape the pamphlet and create the circumstances for its future prosperity, though the changes in this decade were a stage in a longer-term expansion of print that had been in evidence for much of the sixteenth century. The decade witnessed a Catholic propaganda campaign against the crown, serviced by printing presses in London and overseas. Subsequently these ingredients spawned a controversy in the form of the pseudonymous pamphleteer Martin Marprelate, whose writings publicly challenged conventions and figures of authority. The encounter between Marprelate and his antagonists recognised the potential of cheap print as a vehicle for controversy. From the 1580s pamphlets were a regular feature of booksellers' stalls, and an increasingly important element in the economy of the book trade.

Popular forms of print in Britain had been used to disseminate news and propaganda since the early sixteenth century. Richard Atkyns' history of printing in England, written in 1663–4, applauded the royal patronage of Henry VIII, and lamented the loosening of controls which followed the grant of a royal charter to the Company of Stationers in 1557. This had given printers power to debase their craft and to subvert authority:

the Body forgot the Head, and by degrees (breaking the Reines of Government) they kickt against the Power that gave them Life: And whereas before they Printed nothing but by the Kings especiall Leave and Command, they now (being free) set up for themselves to print what they could get most Money by; and taking the Advantage of those Vertiginous Times, of the latter end of *Henry* the 8. *Edward* the 6. And *Queen Mary*, they fill'd the Kingdom with so many Books, and the Brains of the People with so many contrary Opinions, that these Paper-pellets became as dangerous as Bullets. . . . Thus was this excellent and desireable ART, within less than one hundred years, so totally vitiated, that whereas they were before the King's Printers and Servants, they now grew so poor, so numerous, and contemptible, by being Concorporated, that they turn'd this famous ART into a Mechanick Trade for a Livelyhood.³⁵

Atkyns exaggerated the potency of books in the mid-sixteenth century, but he was probably right to identify a devolution of authority, a move from carefully controlled royal propaganda to a commercial trade beyond absolute regulation, and from thence to pellets of paper. Reformation and Counter-Reformation propaganda, news publications, wonder pamphlets and ballads, cony-catching literature and political libels were all woven together in the fabric of the Marprelate controversy and the culture of pamphleteering that followed it.

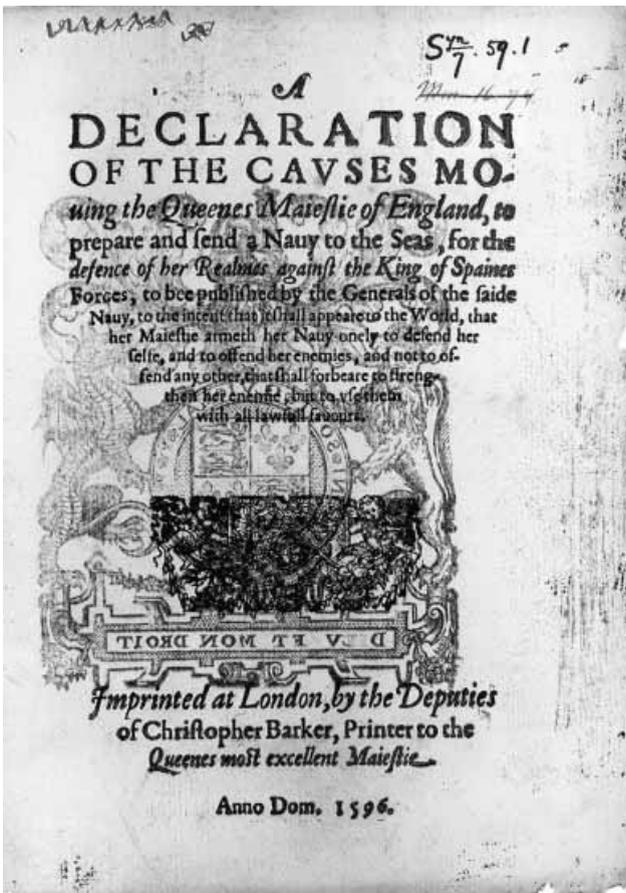
Writings (1996), ch. 2; Elizabeth Skerpan, *The Rhetoric of Politics in the English Revolution 1642–1660* (Columbia and London, 1992); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992); for a more detailed account of these factors see Ch. 2, below.

³⁵ Richard Atkyns, *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), sigs. C3v–C4r.

The growth of vernacular printed literature in England began with imports of Reformist works from Germany and the Netherlands in the 1520s. It was in response to these, rather than to domestic printing, that Henry VIII introduced legislation to control the production and distribution of books, notably his 1529 proclamation against heretical books (with an index of prohibited works), and his 1538 proclamation against the importation of English books. Nevertheless, the break with Rome hailed a fresh attitude towards English scripture and, for a while, a more relaxed attitude towards domestic and imported printed works. A shift in emphasis in worship away from images and towards words had begun, a shift that would have a deep and enduring impact on English culture. First, a handful of works published by the royal printer Robert Pynson before the royal divorce; then, during the 1530s, official and semi-official propaganda began to appear under the guidance of Thomas Cromwell. This included a debate between Thomas More and Christopher St German; a series of pro-Reformation prose dialogue tracts; several tracts against civil disobedience; and works attacking the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. Henry also encouraged the rewriting of English history in order to promote the independence of the crown from Rome, and to present clerical interventions in the English polity as manifestations of tyranny. John Bale's morality play *King John* welded an imaginative rewriting of history with pro-Tudor didacticism to forge a new, distinctively English literature. However, with the exception of Bale, and Robert Crowley in the 1550s, it is difficult to see in these patterns a move towards a popular literature.³⁶

Across sixteenth-century Europe religious wars brought about inventive and innovative uses of the press. The vernacular literature of the German Reformation spread far; Luther's books were burnt at Paul's Cross in 1521 and condemned in a sermon by John Fisher, which itself was printed as *The Sermon of Johan the Bysshop of Rochester Made Agayn ye Pernicyous*

³⁶ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, nos. 122, 186. Also the Canons of Convocation; see Gerald Bray, *The Anglican Canons 1529–1947* (1998), pp. 24–39. D. M. Loades, 'The Press Under the Early Tudors: A Study in Censorship and Sedition', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 4 (1964), 29–50; Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1993), chs. 1 and 4; Alistair Fox and John Guy, *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500–1550* (Oxford, 1986), which includes Guy's 'Thomas More and Christopher St. German: The Battle of the Books', pp. 95–120; Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford, 1989); Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 1996); Carole Levin, *Propaganda in the English Reformation: Heroic and Villainous Images of King John* (Lewiston, 1988); Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988); John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, 1982); J. Christopher Warner, *Henry VIII's Divorce: Literature and the Politics of the Printing Press* (Woodbridge, 1998).



1. *A Declaration of the Causes Moving the Queenes Majesty of England* (1596), Cambridge University Library, Syn. 7. 59. 1. Early royal propaganda: the English version of an official declaration published in several languages. The royal arms on the verso of the title-page can be seen shining through.

Doctryn of M. Luuther (1521), one of the earliest examples of Tudor propaganda. Lutheran and anti-Lutheran writings appeared in pamphlet form and as satirical broadsides, anticipating in their scurrilous and anti-authoritarian styles the rise of the popular press elsewhere in Europe. A propaganda war between the emperor Charles V and King Francis I of France during the 1520s suggests that the press was perceived as a potential tool for manipulating readers. A genre of small, anonymous printed prophecies, in prose and verse, flourished in Italy between 1480 and 1530. While these prophecies had their roots in folk culture, the printed reports appropriated them as propaganda for the Italian wars and for the early campaign against Lutheranism.

The French Wars of Religion, beginning in the 1560s, and the Dutch Revolt of 1568 sparked revolutions in print. The effects of these printed texts are debatable, and anxious contemporaries may have exaggerated both the number of readers and their susceptibility, but a clear pattern emerges of the introduction of printed propaganda across Europe between 1500 and 1700: religious controversy brought printed propaganda which helped to create readerships, who subsequently turned to secular media.³⁷

During the early years of Edward's reign, under Somerset's regency, and during the reign of Mary, something resembling a propaganda war broke out in England, though one aimed mainly at an educated readership. This included anti-Catholic writing, surreptitious, anti-government polemic.³⁸ From about 1550 the beginnings of a self-consciously Protestant literary tradition are evident, with the publication of a series of tracts which hail Langland as an avant-garde Protestant and Piers Plowman as a Reformation hero.³⁹ Some diversification in the backgrounds of authors is apparent at this time: Langland's sixteenth-century editor, Robert Crowley, was a printer as well as a clergyman, and apparently proud of the capacity of his mother tongue; the lay Catholic propagandist Miles Hogarde was a hosier.⁴⁰

From the 1560s printed media supplied the appetite for news among the reading public in England. In 1562 a gaggle of pamphlets reported on English

³⁷ R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981); Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1990); Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1990); Robert O. Lindsay and John Neu, *French Political Pamphlets, 1547-1648: A Catalogue of Major Collections in American Libraries* (Madison, Milwaukee, London, 1969); Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), esp. ch. 6; Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987); Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555-1590* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 288-90; and Peter Burke and Asa Briggs, *A Social History of the Media* (Cambridge, 2002), ch. 2.

³⁸ Jennifer Loach, 'Pamphlets and Politics, 1553-8', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 48 (1975), 31-44; Loades, 'Press Under the Early Tudors'; Edward J. Baskerville, *A Chronological Bibliography of Propaganda and Polemic Published in English Between 1553 and 1558* (Philadelphia, 1979) and 'Some Lost Works of Propaganda and Polemic from the Marian Period', *The Library*, 6th ser., 8 (1986), 47-52.

³⁹ *A Godly Dyalogue & Dysputacion Betwene Piers Plowman and a Popysh Preest* (c. 1550); *I Playne Piers Which can not Flatter* (1550?); *Pierce the Ploughmans Crede* (1553); *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* (1550); *The Vision of Pierce Plowman* (1550, three editions). See also *Temporis filia veritas* (1598), a dialogue pamphlet involving 'a playne Plowman'. Also Andrew N. Wawn, 'Chaucer, *The Plowman's Tale* and Reformation Propaganda: The Testimonies of Thomas Godfray and *I Playne Piers*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 56 (1973-4), 174-92; and 'The Genesis of *The Plowman's Tale*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 2 (1972), 21-40.

⁴⁰ Crowley's editing of Langland's poem is discussed in King, *Tudor Reformation Literature*, ch. 7; on Hogarde see J. W. Martin, 'Miles Hogarde: Artisan and Aspiring Author in Sixteenth-Century England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 34 (1981), 359-83; on the marginalisation of Catholic literary traditions, see Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge, 1999).

forces sent to assist the Huguenots in France. The revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 provoked a handful of publications, reporting topical domestic news. Some subsequent publications adopted a more polemical approach, defending the legitimacy of the government against the Catholic conspirators. The 1569 rebellion generated both tracts and ballads. Thomas Norton wrote several accounts that combined news and politics, including *To the Quenes Majesties Poor Deceived Subjects in the North* (1569) and *A Bull Graunted by the Pope to Doctor Harding* (1570). While Norton wrote in prose, others wrote verse tracts intended for a similarly educated market. Meanwhile, the ballads, such as William Elderton's *A Ballat Intituled Northumberland Newes* (1570) and *Prepare Ye to the Plow* (1570), addressed the less educated. Just as topical, the ballads combined news with propaganda, counselling obedience.⁴¹ The clear distinction between tracts and ballads suggests that a market for the popular news pamphlet had not yet matured. Sixteenth-century governments were nervous about the circulation of news, especially when it concerned domestic events, and at this stage print was used to shape public opinion from the top down. There is also some evidence of public opinion being animated and mobilised from above during the Anjou Match in 1579.⁴²

Another mode of cheap news publication was guided more by commercial interests, and perhaps by popular belief, than by political ends. These were accounts of monstrous births, which flourished in England in the late 1560s. On the Continent, the tradition had originated around 1500, and the images, though often based on real progeny, were often deployed to express anxiety about social disorder and spiritual trauma.⁴³ The increasing incidence of printed reports of deformities during the first decade of Elizabeth's rule may reflect Protestant anxieties about religious stability, succession, and the threat of Catholic invasion. In France monsters were reported in prose canards, whereas the preferred format in England was the illustrated broadside ballad,⁴⁴ though in time this shifted to the quarto pamphlet.⁴⁵ From

⁴¹ A useful account of the propaganda appears in James K. Lowers, *Mirrors for Rebels: A Study of Polemical Literature Relating to the Northern Rebellion 1569* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953).

⁴² Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London, 1996), pp. 110–11.

⁴³ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750* (New York, 1998), ch. 5; see also Park and Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England', *P&P* 92 (1981), 20–54; Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, ch. 2.

⁴⁴ *The True Reporte of a Monstrous Childe, Borne at Muche Morkeslye* [1562]; John Barker, *The True Description of a Monsterous Chylde* [1564]; William Elderton, *The True Fourme and Shape of a Monsterous Chylde* [1565].

⁴⁵ David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), chs. 1–2; on monstrosities see also Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from*

the 1580s onwards the prose pamphlet began to displace the ballad as the most common medium for conveying news. The expansion in the market for domestic news, caused in part by the war with Spain, coincided with a shift in the form in which that news was conveyed. During the 1580s and 1590s occasional news pamphlets became an everyday facet of the London book trade.⁴⁶

Rogue literature, a genre of print that spans most of the sixteenth century, also bears upon the history and origins of the pamphlet. The tradition commenced by Robert Copland *c.* 1535 and Thomas Harman in 1561 flourished during 1591–2 with a series of pamphlets by Robert Greene which influenced Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker and many other writers of the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ The premise of these moralising fictions is the penetration of the criminal underworld by an honest man, who subsequently exposes their deceitful practices, explaining their confidence tricks, social structure, mores and language. The boundary between fact and fiction in cony-catching tracts is knowingly distorted. Though – with the benefit of hindsight – they belong to the realm of imaginative literature, their first-person narrators emphasise that they are documenting reality; indeed some of Harman's colourful anecdotes from Middlesex can in part be verified.⁴⁸ Cony-catching pamphlets establish verisimilitude by offering apparatus, including glossaries and the purported names of actual thieves. Harman glosses his pamphlet with a flavour of news by describing events from 1566–7.

the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment (1993), ch. 2; Kathryn M. Brammall, 'Monstrous Metamorphosis: Nature, Morality, and the Rhetoric of Monstrosity in Tudor England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27 (1996), 3–21; Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, tr. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago, 1982). On earlier English prophecies see Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979); Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge, 1991).

⁴⁶ For the 1580s and 1590s see Matthias A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476–1622* (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 177–9; Denis B. Woodfield, *Surreptitious Printing in England, 1550–1640* (New York, 1973); Fritz Levy, 'The Decorum of News', in Raymond, ed., *News*, pp. 12–38. For the story of news, see Ch. 4 below.

⁴⁷ Robert Copland, *The Highway to the Spital-House* (1535–6); [Gilbert Walker?], *A Manifest Detection of the Most Vyle and Detestable Use of Diceplay* (*c.* 1552); [John Awdeley?], *The Fraternitie of Vagabondes* (1561); Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warening, for Commen Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones* (1567; repr. in 1592 as *The Groundwork of Cony-Catching*); Robert Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* (1591), *The Second and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (1592), *Thirde and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (1592), *A Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-Catcher, and a Shee Conny-Catcher* (1592) and *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* (1592); and 'Cuthbert Cunny-catcher', *The Defence of Conny Catching* (1592). These texts are available in modern editions: Arthur F. Kinney, ed. *Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst, MA, 1990); Gamini Salgado, ed., *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (Harmondsworth, 1972); A. V. Judges, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (1930; 1965).

⁴⁸ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, pp. 107, 297–9.

The significance of these cony-catching tracts to the history of the pamphlet is threefold. First, they are commercially produced works of quasi-fiction that speak to a broad audience in lively prose. Though there is a touch of Elizabethan prodigality or Euphuism in Harman's alliteration and internal rhyme, his prose is marked by a bold plainness. He explains that he must innovate to reflect upon and explain the secretive and previously unprinted language spoken by his subjects: 'the lewd lousy language of these lewtering Lusks, and lazy Lorels'.⁴⁹ Nonetheless he emphasises his simplicity: 'I write in plain terms . . . Eloquence have I none; I never was acquainted with the Muses; I never tasted of Helicon. But according to my plain order, I have set forth this work, simply and truly, with such usual words and terms as is among us well known and frequented.'⁵⁰ Despite its redundancy and copious alliteration, this plain-style, improvisatory approach to language, and commitment to an everyday decorum, anticipates the path that pamphleteers will tread when they wish to address a wide, unlearned audience.

Secondly, the cony-catching tracts provide entertainment. Averring a serious purpose, they offer insight into an imaginary reconstruction of an alternative, inaccessible world. Their narrators are wandering heroes who by discovering and exposing the secrets of criminal society have performed the greatest trick of all. Harman lies to his victims in order to expose the truth and thereby to undermine the illicit underworld itself. 'Now, methinketh, I see how these peevish, perverse, and pestilent people begin to fret, fume, swear, and stare at this my book, their life being laid open and apparently painted out, that their confusion and end draweth on apace.'⁵¹ The texts offer to empower the reader with secret knowledge, and an illicit vocabulary of 'thieves cant' or 'peddler's French'; they titillate with tales of sexual transgression. The veneer of morality wears thin. These fictions are certainly precursors of the novel, but their influence was extended through, and mediated by, later generations of pamphlets.

Thirdly, cony-catching tracts express through fiction, narrative and other literary devices, prevalent concerns about morality and social transformation. They repeatedly distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. They articulate concerns over increased vagrancy and geographic mobility, signalled in the Welsh and Irish population of the underworld; over 'masterless men'; over the decline in hospitality that is breaking up traditional communities.⁵² The elimination of theft, Harman writes, will 'encourage a

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 113. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 110–11.

⁵² A. L. Beier, *The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Stuart England* (1983) and *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560–1640* (1983); Spufford, *Small Books*, pp. 56, 182–4; Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1990), ch. 3; Paul Slack, *Poverty & Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (1988); Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of*

great number of gentlemen and others, seeing this security, to set up houses and keep hospitality in the country, to the comfort of their neighbors, relief of the poor, and to the amendment of the commonwealth; then shall not sin and wickedness so much abound among us'.⁵³ Thus, these tracts find a means of moralizing that is quite distinct from Puritan tracts and sermons railing against social abuses.

The criminal underworld is an inversion of the world of the godly, and offers a more or less prescriptive perspective on correct social values and hierarchies.⁵⁴ Cony-catching became a powerful metaphor for the world of commerce. In *A Caveat or Warening, for Commen Cursetors* (1567), a 'Doxy' (or female cony-catcher, who is sexually available to all males in the fraternity) challenges Harman's predilection for moralising on the evil of their trade, stating with rude common sense: 'Alas, good gentleman, everyone must have a living.'⁵⁵ 'Cuthbert Cunny-catcher', the pseudonymous author of *Defence of Conny Catching* (1592), complains that the success of Greene's tracts has ruined his trade; one of his potential victims warns him: 'I have for three pence bought a little pamphlet, that hath taught me to smoke such a couple of knaves as you be.' The perverse compliment suggests that Greene himself may have been the author, in which case the pamphlet plays an elaborate catch upon the reader. Cuthbert claims that cony-catching is only a form of sharp practice, and that all tradesmen and especially lawyers are themselves guilty of it on a much greater scale: 'Are not these vipers of the commonwealth, and to be exclaimed against, not in small pamphlets, but in great volumes?' He who cannot dissemble, cannot live by trade. Cuthbert concludes: 'there is no estate, trade, occupation, nor mystery, but lives by cony-catching'.⁵⁶ Cony-catching became a commonplace metaphor for business. In 1614 a news pamphlet entitled *True and Wonderfull. A Discourse Relating a Strange and Monstrous Serpent, or Dragon, Lately Discovered . . . in Sussex Two Miles from Horsam*, interpreted this prodigy as a metaphor for exploitation:

Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 6; J. McMullan, *The Canting Crew: London's Criminal Underworld, 1550-1700* (New Jersey, 1984).

⁵³ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ See Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *P&P* 87 (1980), 98-127.

⁵⁵ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, p. 143.

⁵⁶ Salgado, ed., *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets*, pp. 342, 347, 376; on the authorship of the *Defence*, see David Margolies, *Novel and Society in Elizabethan England* (London & Sydney, 1985), pp. 109-10; and I. A. Shapiro, 'An Unexpected Earlier Edition of *The Defence of Conny-Catching*', *The Library*, 3rd ser., 18 (1963), 88-112. Jean-Cristophe Agnew discusses cony-catching pamphlets as evidence of a crisis of representation surrounding commerce: *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 61-73.

The Serpent devours poore mens cattell, so doth the covetous wretch, both cattell, and chattell, goods, houses and all, his scales of defence are said to be blacke and reddish, and doth it not resemble the Inke & Ware, wherein gentlemens lands are morgagde, which afterwards turnes offensive to themselves? his necke is long to overlooke much, and doth not the Miser so? Tis said likewise, to prey upon Conies, and doe wee not in this age of ours call those sillie men that fall into their snares, Connies?⁵⁷

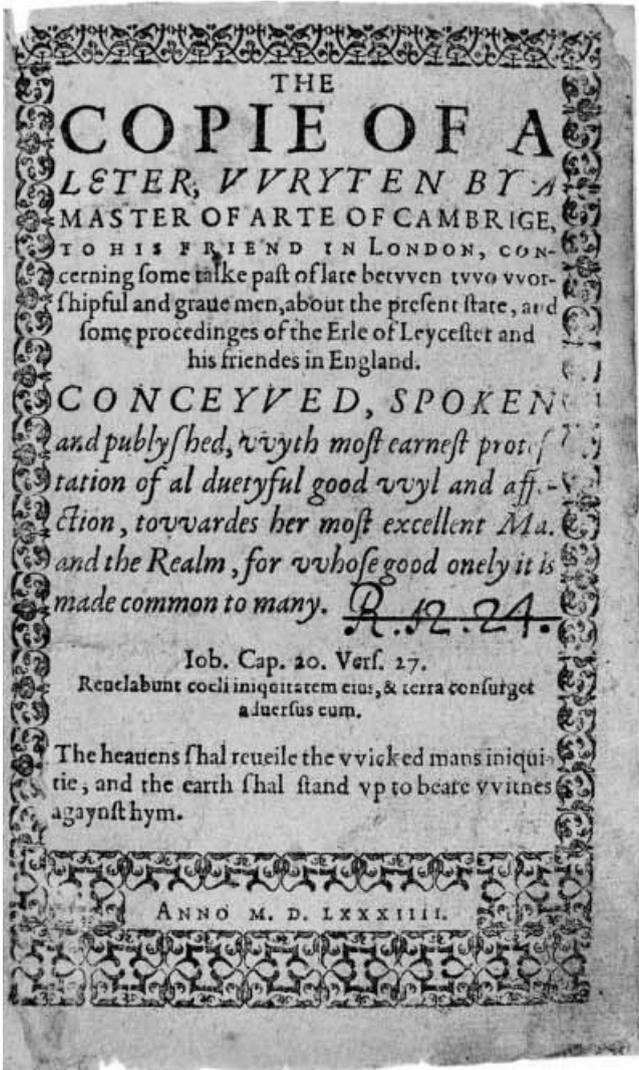
One contemporary bound a copy of this pamphlet in a volume together with *A Caveat*.⁵⁸ Cony-catching tracts anticipated later pamphlets by combining entertainment, moralising and fiction, exploiting them for profit; they themselves stole pennies from the vulgar by the misuse of ink. They offered a parable of the commodification of print.

Propaganda, news and moralistic fictions all fashioned the idea of the pamphlet and its possibilities, and shaped the practice of the many pamphleteers who were to find new business in the 1580s and beyond. A final thread in this cloth is drawn from a cognate term for pamphlet, the libel. The term, derived from the Latin *libellus*, a diminutive of *liber*, meant a small book, but it already carried connotations of defamation, stronger than those associated with pamphlet. The French *libelles* which developed in the later sixteenth century, and were particularly plentiful during the insurrection of the Catholic League in 1589–94, had a similar status: they were distinguished from *canards*, *occasionnels*, and *feuilles volantes* that supplied less seditious news, and from the diverting *bibliothèque bleue*.⁵⁹ This lexical range is more nuanced than the less numerous English equivalents, and *libelle* described broadsides or quarto pamphlets that offered popular commentary on politics, often using literary genres, such as the dialogue or dream narrative. They were the equivalent of the political pamphlet satire on the other side of the channel, and became the predominant means of influencing public opinion. During subsequent political crises they reached new peaks of production, notably the Fronde in 1648–52, when the burlesque form of the *mazarinade* developed. A similar genealogy can be traced in Britain: an initial flourishing of libellous pamphlets during the 1580s was exceeded during the 1640s.

One of the most scandalous printed books of Elizabeth's reign was *The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge to his Friend in London* (1584), a sprightly epigone of the genre, and precursor of the style of many later pamphlet-libels. Probably written by exiled English Catholics in Paris, published in Rouen and imported into Britain in considerable numbers, this fairly substantial tract was popularly referred to as *Leicester's Commonwealth*. It combined an attack on the person of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, exposing his shady personal history with a plea for religious

⁵⁷ A.R., *True and Wonderfull* (1614), sigs. Cv-C2r. ⁵⁸ Bod: 4° R 21(5) Art.Seld.

⁵⁹ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1996), ch. 8.



2. *The Copie of a Leter, Wryten by a Master of Arte of Cambrige* (1584), Cambridge University Library, Syn. 8. 58. 165. Also known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*. The first printed edition of the Elizabethan libel against Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

toleration, and a discussion of the succession to the throne which defended the honour of Mary Queen of Scots, and thus favoured her son James VI of Scotland as a future king of England and Wales. Most sensational to contemporaries was the poisonous assault on Leicester. The Privy Council

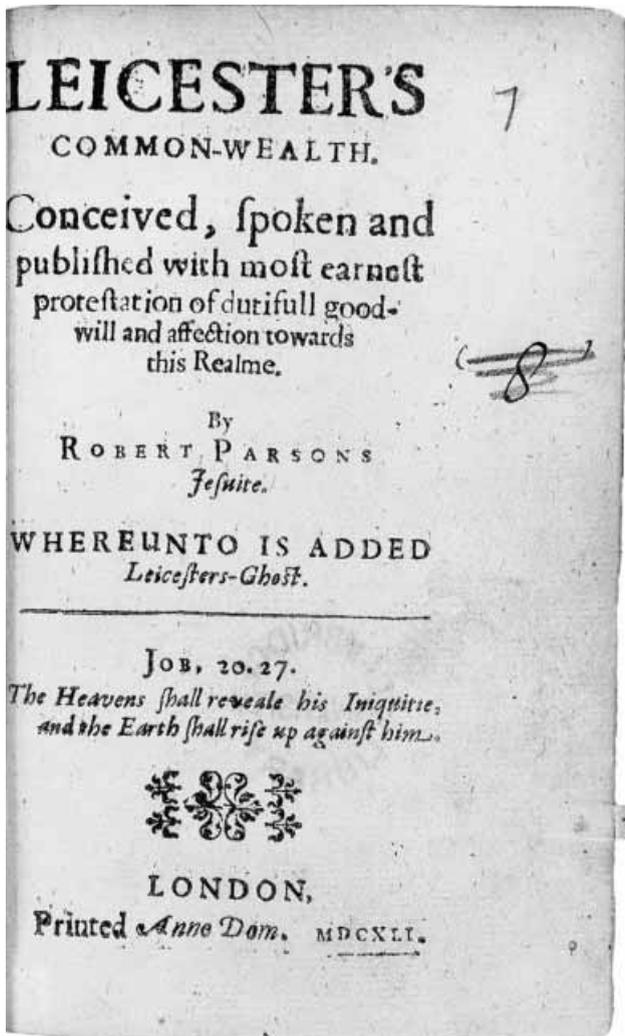
recognised that its circulation both at home and abroad was likely to tarnish the reputations not just of Dudley but of the government and even Elizabeth herself, and they moved to suppress it and to deny the rumours that it promoted.

Leicester's Commonwealth is rich with literary devices. It is framed by a letter written by a Cambridge scholar, who presents the text as a true account of a conversation in which he recently participated; there follows a dialogue between the scholar, a (Protestant) Gentleman and a (moderate) Catholic lawyer, which mixes comic vilification of Leicester with earnest political and legal analysis. Leicester, it is averred, is driven only by lust and ambition; he is denounced as a Machiavellian (an Elizabethan scare-word). Having failed to secure the throne by marriage, he now has the motives and means to rebel against the Queen. The reader is reminded that both branches of his family tree are marred by treason and the executioner's block. Dudley is sexually voracious: 'No man's wife can be free from him, whom his fiery lust he liketh to abuse. . . . The keeping of the mother with two or three of her daughters at once or successively is no more with him than the eating of an hen and her chicken[s].' Suspicions are aroused concerning the death of his first wife.⁶⁰

Numerous manuscript copies made from the printed text suggest that it was popular with readers. Nevertheless it failed to provoke printed responses. Sir Philip Sidney hurriedly wrote a 'Defence' of his uncle, though it was not published. Another manuscript response was a burlesque comedy written shortly after Dudley's death in 1588, reporting on the arrival of his ghost in Hell. The narrative offers a dramatic and more obscene rehashing of the material from the original satire. After a debate about the most suitable punishment for the Earl, Pluto resolves that he is to be tormented by a 'naked feind in the forme of a lady', who is 'so directly placed against him that the gate of her porticke conjunctcion should be full oposit to the gase of his retoricke speculation, so that he could not chose but have a perfite aspect of the gull point of her bettelbroude urchin in the triumphant pride and gaping glory thereof'. This will so entice Leicester that he will continually assay her, and thereby 'drown the member of his virillitye in the bottomeless barrell of her virginnitye, through which runeth a felde of unquenchable fier'.⁶¹ Less pornographic, though equally damning, was a narrative poem composed *c.* 1605 by Thomas Rogers, entitled 'Leicester's Ghost'. In the form of a confession by the ghost, it summarised many of the accusations in the

⁶⁰ *Leicester's Commonwealth*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens, Ohio, 1985), pp. 88–9. On the circumstances of composition and publication, and of the government's reaction, see Peck's introduction; Clegg, *Press Censorship*, pp. 91–3; Peter Holmes, 'The Authorship of "Leicester's Commonwealth"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33 (1982), 424–30.

⁶¹ The MS is BL: MS Sloane 1926, ff. 35–43v; it is printed in D. C. Peck, "'Newes from Heaven and Hell': A Defamatory Narrative of the Earl of Leicester', *ELR* 8 (1978), 141–58, quote on p. 157.



3. *Leicester's Common-Wealth* (1641), Cambridge University Library, Bb*. 15. 26. 7/8. The 1641 octavo reprint of the Elizabethan libel, here attributed to Robert Parsons. Note the simple typography of the title-page.

Commonwealth and earnestly reflected on the nature of political corruption. The ghost, portrayed as a religious hypocrite, denies the accusations made against him. The imputation of concupiscence is again foregrounded:

Also yee said that when I waxed old,
When Age and mispent time had made mee drie
For ancient held in carnall lust if cold,