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## Blasphemy, Swearing, and Bad Behaviour in *The Witch of Edmonton*

*This essay considers the key moment in Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's The Witch of Edmonton when Elizabeth Sawyer's cursing encourages a liaison with the devil taking the form of a black dog, a scenario taken from a real-life account of her trial and confession. By situating the episode in the larger context of contemporary discussions about swearing and blasphemy, through an examination of local histories, literature, parliamentary debates, and statutes, it offers a nuanced assessment of the play in light of what historians have called 'the reformation of manners' in early Stuart society.*

When the devil fled Elizabeth Sawyer, 'leaving her to shift and answer for herself', minister Henry Goodcole noted three bodily manifestations of her abandonment. First, the blood drained from her face leaving her 'most pale & ghoast-like'. Second, her stoop worsened; now her body was 'crooked and deformed, even bending together'. The last embodiment was the worst: her tongue, which had been well exercised in 'cursing, swearing, blaspheming, and imprecating' others was turned upon herself. Faced by her accusers 'she was not able to speak a sensible or ready word for her defense' and could only rail 'for destruction against her selfe'.<sup>1</sup> Cursing, as Goodcole makes clear in his 1621 pamphlet, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer*, was the very reason why the devil came to Elizabeth in the first place. The story's popularity inspired Thomas Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford to write *The Witch of Edmonton*. There too the devil, taking the form of a black dog, appears to Elizabeth because of her cursing: 'Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own' (2.1.136–7).

Swearing was one of a cluster of bad behaviours (others included sexual immorality, slander, gambling, scolding, and drunkenness) that had once been considered private sins, matters of individual conscience. By the 1620s, however, spurred on by new understandings of providence and magistracy associated with

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Calvinism, they were just as likely to be seen as social and political problems requiring regulation by authorities. Swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, adulterers, scolds, and the like were assumed to be reprobates whose actions deserved the attention of godly magistrates because they were transgressions against the community. This 'reformation of manners' meant for an enhanced role for (largely) male authorities.<sup>2</sup>

If everyday regulation happened within the family and the household, and remedies were often in the form of communal chastisement or shaming, the strongest articulation of the reformation of manners came through legal cases and trials in the secular courts, civic ordinances, royal proclamations, and parliamentary statutes. In the case of blasphemy and swearing, attempts to secure a legal framework for punishment through an act of parliament were finally successful in the year of Elizabeth Sawyer's trial and execution (though enacted three years later in 1624). The first part of this essay draws on the writings of divines, legislative proposals, and parliamentary debates to trace changing attitudes towards swearing and blasphemy from the 1560s to the 1620s that led to this coincidence of trial, pamphlet, play, and law-making. It then offers a closer reading of the differences between the play and Goodcole's pamphlet, demonstrating how this context informs our understanding of the staging of Sawyer's transgressive behaviour and the ways in which it was addressed by the fictional villagers of Edmonton.

The two homilies against swearing in the 1562 book of homilies would have been very familiar to Goodcole's readers and the play's audiences in 1621. Generations of parishioners had been warned that God will be a 'swift witness and a sharp judge upon sorcerers, adulterers, and perjured persons' (Mal 3:5) and that his curse would fall on falsehood, false swearing, and perjury (Zech 5:3–5).<sup>3</sup> By the early seventeenth century, however, lay magistrates and clergy sought stronger controls over personal conduct such as swearing and drunkenness to which it was often linked. A typical view was that expressed by the Calvinist writer Richard Younger who argued that the person who drinks too much proceeds from wicked talking to cursing and from there on to impious swearing of 'prodigious and fearful' oaths 'of Wounds and Blood, the damned language of ruffians, and monsters of the earth, together with God damne me'.<sup>4</sup>

In parliament bills against drink and swearing were often debated together.<sup>5</sup> The preamble of the 1601 bill against 'blasphemous swearing' noted that the offence of 'ordinary swearing' had 'growne very Comon, in all places and persons, to the Dishonor of his holie name, the Contempe of his Lawe forbidding such blaspheming, and to the iust provocation of his wrath and indignation to be powred upon us, and the whole lande'. God had promised 'that his plague shall

never depart from the house of the swearer' and to turn away divine wrath the bill ordered that two or more justices of the peace in consultation with a minister could punish blasphemers. After a warning for the first offence, they could impose a fine of ten shillings for a second and a month in prison and twenty shillings for a third.<sup>6</sup> Committed and rewritten, the bill lost some of its piety. 'Blasphemous swearing' became 'usual and common swearing', and the preamble's rhetoric was toned down.<sup>7</sup> Possibly one reason for the failure of the bill was that some MPs still believed that swearing was a sin of the individual, better, as one of their number Edward Glascock put it during the debate, to be 'spoken in a Pulpit than in a Parliament'. Even he, though, acknowledged that swearing was a 'Vice which brings a Plague, which breeds Mortality, that breeds Destruction, Desolation, and the utter ruin of the Commonwealth'.<sup>8</sup>

Many MPs identified a direct link between what the lawyer and judge Sir Edward Coke called 'the grievances of the Commonwealth' and human frailty, notably what he saw as the increasingly prevalent habit of putting private gain above public interest. For Coke, who was very active in seeking remedies in the parliaments of 1621 and 1624, one of the notable causes for what he saw as a declining commonwealth was 'want of labour and employment for the meaner people'.<sup>9</sup> Years earlier, when he was attorney-general, Coke was present when the parliament of 1597–8 linked the need to reform bad behaviour and the state of the commonwealth in the preamble to an act on depopulation seeking to remedy the effects of enclosures. The plough, it declared, was the 'principall meane that People are sett on worke, and thereby withdrawn from Ydlennesse, Drunkenesse, unlawfull Games and all other lewde Practises and Condictions of Life'.<sup>10</sup> Further discussions took place in the next parliament held in 1601 which instituted a system of poor relief with houses of correction to put the poor to work, as well as legislating severe punishments for rogues and vagabonds. As this change clearly acknowledges the old charitable world in which the laity piously gave alms to the poor and the clergy chastised sinners back to good behaviour was no longer sufficient and sustainable.<sup>11</sup> This was the world Frank Thorney, fearing loss of inheritance, concedes at the start of the play: 'beggary and want' are 'Two devils that are occasions to enforce / A shameful end' (1.1.18–19).

According to a series of royal proclamations issued in this period, one of the principal causes of the misery caused by beggary and want was the actions of the 'covetous' few who created shortages by engrossing, forestalling, and regrating grain and corn, or used excessive amounts to make starch, beer, and ale. A proclamation of 1596 blamed 'covetous and uncharitable persons being void of all natural compassion towards their neighbours' and another two years later, 'greedy

cormorants' who put 'their own private gain above the public good', and the litany continued into the 1620s.<sup>12</sup> These caterpillars of the commonwealth and cankers on the body politic had to be discouraged, persistent offenders punished, and the wealthy reminded of their obligations to help the poor and be charitable.<sup>13</sup>

Regulation of bad behaviour for the good of the commonwealth was happening also in local communities. In 1606 George Coldwell, mayor of Northampton, proposed to the aldermen that ale houses should be off-limits to the inhabitants, on pain of 3s 4d and prison. Moreover, no swearer, curser, drunkard, or idle person was to be eligible for public relief. With the aldermen's approval of his proposal, 'all prophanesse, drinking, dicing and carding etc. fled cleane away out of the freedome of the Towne'. This zeal for the town's good paid off, reported Richard Rawlidge, because 'whereas the plague had continued in the said Towne above two yeres together, upon this reformation of the Magistrates the Lord stayed the judgement of the Pestilence'. The ban was so beneficial that the same authorities petitioned for and received from the king the right to extend it two miles beyond the town.<sup>14</sup> A similar logic moved the minister and magistrates of Dorchester to move against drinking, swearing, and sabbath breaking after much of the town, chastised by God's hand for its sins, burned in 1613.<sup>15</sup>

The only successful bill limiting blasphemous swearing during the first two decades of the seventeenth century came in 1606 and it dealt not with swearing in society at large but on stage. 'An Acte to restraine Abuses of Players', it provided a fine of ten pounds to be levied against anyone in a theatrical who jestingly or profanely used 'the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghoste or of the Trinitie, which are not to be spoken but with feare and reverence'.<sup>16</sup> Several other initiatives concerning swearing and blasphemy can be traced through the parliamentary archives, and almost all failed in the house in which they originated.<sup>17</sup> At least in 1621, both the House of Lords and the House of Commons got as far as approving a bill 'to prevent and reform profane swearing and cursing'. It was moved in the Commons by John Strode who argued that swearing, 'prohibited by Law of God, upon which our Laws depend' and that the bill needed to be passed because 'our laws come short in this'. The debate on the bill showed disagreement over the size and kind of penalty to be inflicted, with some demanding less arbitrary punishment and others supporting whipping, for the poor 'care not for the stocks'. A subtler concern was raised by an MP who worried that, because the bill did not define what an oath was, a passionate word would be counted as such and the speaker liable for prosecution.<sup>18</sup>

Had he read the theologian Francis Rous, this individual would have realized that all oaths are sinful, no matter why they are uttered. Rous divided swearing

into two parts. The first was ‘voluntarie, rash and unnecessarie swearing’ issuing from a profane heart and careless of God; the second was judicial swearing, such as compurgation, which was equally wrong because men so often break oaths or swear things they cannot know: ‘For Conscience not grounded upon sure Knowledge, is either an ignorant Fantasie, or an arrogant Vanitie’.<sup>19</sup> Rous, writing in 1623, wanted swearing outlawed by parliament because it endangered the state: ‘the wrath of God issues out against a Land for swearing’ (citing Hos: 4) risking pestilence, decay of trade, shortage of money, dearth, and bad weather.<sup>20</sup> The aim of such laws, as Robert Pricke had put it earlier in the reign, was to assist magistrates to ensure ‘The good order and behaviour of the subjects one towards another; that so they may live together sweetlie and honestlie, to the mutuallie helpe and benefit one of another’.<sup>21</sup> To Rous’s pleasure the 1621 bill became an act of parliament in 1624, with an additional proviso ordering that the text of the statute was to read out by every church minister twice a year after Sunday prayers.<sup>22</sup>

The parishioners of All Saints, Edmonton, would have listened to those words only a few short years after their community was disturbed by their neighbour Elizabeth Sawyer and if they thought of her at all perhaps they understood that they shared some responsibility for the devil coming into their midst. Certainly, they knew reprobates among them whose actions put everyone in peril, behaviours which godly magistrates were duty-bound to control and reform through teaching, regulation, chastisement, and punishment. They also knew that putting personal gain above public good, and acting uncharitably or unkindly towards neighbours, put their little commonwealth of Edmonton at risk. The devil, in other words, was both within themselves and without, just waiting for an invitation.

In Elizabeth Sawyer’s first encounter with the devil, the playwrights made a significant choice as to when to stage the introduction of the devil in the form of ‘Dog, a familiar’. It is not the moment where Elizabeth actually curses Old Banks (after he has beaten her); indeed, his response, ‘Cursing, thou hag?’ (2.1.31), virtually cues Dog’s entrance. Instead we find the stage direction ‘Enter DOG’ only much later, following her expression of despair, anger, and desire for revenge against her wealthy tormentor:

SAWYER Still vexed? Still tortured? That curmudgeon Banks  
 Is ground of all my scandal. I am shunned  
 And hated like a sickness, made a scorn  
 To all degrees and sexes. I have heard old beldams  
 Talk of familiars in the shape of mice,  
 Rats, ferrets, weasels and I wot not what,  
 That have appeared and sucked, some say, their blood.  
 But by what means they came acquainted with them  
 I'm now ignorant. Would some power, good or bad,  
 Instruct me which way I might be revenged  
 Upon this churl, I'd go out of myself  
 And give this Fury leave to dwell within  
 This ruined cottage ready to fall with age,  
 Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer,  
 And study curses, imprecations,  
 Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths,  
 Or anything that's ill, so I might work  
 Revenge upon this miser, this black cur  
 That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood  
 Of me and my credit. 'Tis all one  
 To be a witch as to be counted one.  
 Vengeance, shame, ruin light upon that canker!

*Enter DOG*

DOG Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own.

(2.1.114–36)

In the play, then, Elizabeth's words 'Vengeance, shame, ruin light upon that canker!' serve as the cue for Dog's entrance; her invocation comes not out of cursing *per se*, but when her inner emotions burst out into the open as she expresses her desire for devilish tools to defeat her enemies. The playwrights are suggesting then that common swearing and ordinary cursing provoked by a desire for revenge against uncharitable and cruel neighbours were easily turned by the devil into blasphemy as had happened in the recent witchcraft case of Joan Flower.<sup>23</sup> By failing to turn to godly prayer to resolve her problems Elizabeth opens herself to a compact with the devil, her newly gained power manifested in a blasphemous parody of the Lord's prayer: Dog's teaches her to speak 'If thou to death or shame pursue 'em / *Sanctibecatur nomen tuum*' (193–4).<sup>24</sup>

Arguably, then, Elizabeth's outward emotions rather than inner torments open her up to the devil, less a matter of her individual soul than of her anger and resentment at her place in the world and specifically in the community that is Edmonton. Her tormentor, Old Banks, has viciously beaten her and prevented her from gathering 'a few rotten sticks to warm me' (21), a 'black cur / That barks and bites', she says, figuratively and literally taking the form the devil is shortly to assume. He is a bloodsucker, draining her of any credit within the community just as Dog will soon firm up her contract with the devil by scratching her arm and sucking her blood. As many scholars of both the play and of witchcraft more generally have noted, her tongue gets her into trouble, and certainly her misspeaking was what Goodcole has her confess:

The first time that the Divell came unto me was, when I was cursing, swearing and blaspheming; he then rushed in upon me, and never before that time did I see him or he me: and when he, namely the Divel, came to me, the first words that hee spake unto me were these: *Oh! Have I now found you cursing, swearing, and blaspheming? now you are mine.*<sup>25</sup>

The playwrights not only chose a more complicated moment to have their dog/devil rush in upon her, but make her tongue speak words that resonate with the ideas behind and even the language used by those seeking a reformation of manners.

Other deviations from Goodcole's narrative are instructive. As he knew well, Elizabeth Sawyer was not a spinster nor elderly; she was a married woman with children, aged forty-nine at the time of her execution.<sup>26</sup> According to Goodcole, Elizabeth made and sold brooms and her neighbours' reluctance to buy them caused her to seek revenge through witchcraft.<sup>27</sup> He asks her at one point why she failed to reveal her relationship with the devil to her husband 'or to some other friend', to which she replied that she had been warned not to do so saying that 'if I did tell it to any body at his next comming to me, he then would teare me in pieces'.<sup>28</sup> Her phrasing — or rather his phrasing of her response — implies that she had at one point been close to revealing her secret to someone, perhaps her husband. The playwrights clearly ignored this complication, although they borrowed almost verbatim the threat:

DOG To confirm't, command me  
 Do any mischief unto man or beast,  
 And I'll effect it, on condition  
 That uncompeled thou make a deed of gift  
 Of soul and body to me.

SAWYER Out, alas!  
 My soul and body?

DOG And that instantly,  
 And seal it with thy blood: If thou deniest,  
 I'll tear thy body in a thousand pieces. (2.1.149–55)

It seems clear then that Dekker, if indeed he wrote these scenes in the play as many suspect, chose deliberately to portray Elizabeth as a lonely, elderly woman to heighten the violence and injustice done to her, to emphasize the humanity of the intimate emotional and physical relationship she temporarily enjoys with Dog and of course to demonstrate her isolation from the community.<sup>29</sup> For audiences (1621, 1634) and readers (1658) of the play her character captured what they knew, or thought they knew, about witches as described by writers from Reginald Scot and George Gifford through to John Gaule.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps for these reasons also the playwrights chose to deviate from Goodcole's narrative with regard to the crimes Elizabeth is accused of committing and certainly those to which she confessed. The historical record shows that she was, in real life, a strong-willed woman whose actions landed her in court on at least one occasion.<sup>31</sup> Charged with murdering Agnes Ratcliffe (Anne in the play), as well as causing the deaths of nursing children and cattle, according to Goodcole's account, the jury was unsure of what to do with the evidence put before them, which primarily consisted of Agnes's deathbed accusations against Elizabeth. Seeking advice from the presiding magistrate, Heneage Finch, and told to do as their hearts dictated, they finally brought in a guilty verdict after the intervention of a 'worshipfull' magistrate in nearby Tottenham, Sir Arthur Robinson, who called for the physical examination that uncovered the unusual growth near Elizabeth's anus that was identified as a witch's teat.<sup>32</sup>

In her interview with, perhaps better described as an interrogation by, Goodcole, Elizabeth denied any responsibility for the crime of which she was convicted, Agnes's death. In both pamphlet and play Agnes/Anne had struck and lamed Elizabeth's sow for licking up some of her soap. On the other hand, Elizabeth confessed to those indictments for which she had been acquitted (the deaths of two nurse-children and several cattle). For Rowley, Dekker, and Ford the story

of Anne Ratcliffe was too good to miss, and they show Elizabeth revelling in Dog's tales of hurting a nursing child, preventing butter from being churned, and disrupting the Morris dance. Together they enjoy seeing and conversing with the mad Anne, and on Elizabeth's instruction Dog's touch causes excruciating pain that drives Anne to suicide (4.1.191–212).<sup>33</sup>

The staging of each and every crime that Elizabeth was accused of, including the one she vehemently denied to the end — and still does in the play (5.2.50–4)—complicates our understanding of the monologues (2.1.1–15 and 114–35) that seem intended, as they have always been realized in performances, to generate sympathy for Elizabeth and her situation. Readers and audiences are unsure of the playwrights' stance on whether witchcraft really exists: is Elizabeth a witch, who actively sought first Anne's madness and then her death, or did the devil/dog take her desire for revenge (injury/madness) a step further (suicide/death) in the same fashion as he turns Frank's desire to be rid of Susan (by running off with Winifred and abandoning her) to the ultimate riddance that is murder? Heightening this complication is the playwrights' decision to assign to Elizabeth the most trenchant and hard-hitting social criticism in a scene that reminds us not of the formal trial she would have faced but the informal and unofficial interrogation by Goodcole.

Act 4 begins with villagers sharing accusations against Elizabeth. Old Banks accuses her of sickening his horse, one countryman of bewitching his wife to commit adultery with a servant, a second countryman fears for his wife's virtue and a third the well-being of cattle as well as wives, daughters, and maidservants in general. This sexual dimension to the accusations against Elizabeth is absent from Goodcole's account and seems drawn from the larger witchcraft literature.<sup>34</sup> Within the play itself such fears are given credit — if ambiguously because of the dark comedy of the scene — with Elizabeth's enabling of Cuddy's desire to have Katherine (3.1.80–110) even if of course it is turned upon him as he nearly drowns trying to grab the spirit Dog has conjured up of her. Yet the playwrights chose not to include the passages of the confession which reveal Goodcole's prurient interest in the location of the teat, how the devil was given access to it, for how long, and whether it was painful to her or not.<sup>35</sup>

While this aspect of Goodcole's narrative was ignored, his rejection of another common proof (that burning some thatch taken from an alleged witches' house would force her to appear), dismissed by him as 'an old ridiculous custom', was adopted by them.<sup>36</sup> Hamluc interrupts the catalogue of complaints entering with thatch from Elizabeth's 'hovel'. Old Banks urges him to set it on fire and once done, Elizabeth immediately appears cursing them all (4.1.19–28), proving to all

and sundry ('as good as a jury', 32–3) that she is a witch. If the playwrights knew the work of the period's most prolific and arguably most influential Calvinist author, William Perkins, they would have known that he considered thatch burning to be 'weake and insufficient' proof, although at least not as blasphemous as trying to protect oneself by making the sign of the cross performed by one of Cuddy's Morris dancing friends (2.1.108).<sup>37</sup>

At this point the justice appears and he is given Goodcole's and Perkins's perspective: 'Come, come. Firing her thatch? Ridiculous! Take heed, sirs, what you do. Unless your proofs come better armed, instead of turning her into a witch, you'll prove yourselves stark fools' (4.1.50–3). Eventually the crowd disperses and Elizabeth is left alone with the skeptical justice and the more certain Sir Arthur Clarington. The interrogation that follows must have reminded Goodcole's readers of the confession he extracted from her, but here the playwrights offer arguably the strongest condemnation of witchcraft beliefs in the play. Embodying the words of writers skeptical of witchcraft she asks them if it is really poor old women who are the true witches (137–41). What of women 'in princes' courts' who seduce men and can change 'whole lordships' (120–31)? City women who 'In one year' waste 'what scarce twenty win' (132–6)? Scolds (144–7)? Lawyers (147–51)? And when Sir Arthur insists that only those like her kill children and cattle, she adds 'Men witches' who seduce maidens to the list (157–63). This last accusation, of course, confirms her guilt in his mind, for Sir Arthur hears it not as another generalization but as a personal attack upon himself: only by being a witch could she know of his forced seduction of Winifred just as James I, then James VI of Scotland, had once become convinced of the guilt of witches who knew things privately said between himself and his wife.<sup>38</sup> She began with an assertion: that men like Sir Arthur 'in gay clothes, whose backs are laden with titles and honours, are within far more crooked than I am, and if I be a witch, more witch-like' (104–7).

The justice's parting words to Elizabeth — 'Old woman, mend thy life, get home and pray' (166)—can be read as a misogynistic dismissal of her, allying himself with her accusers' virulent verbal attacks on her during the scene — 'hot-whore', 'she-hellcat', 'base hell-hound' (30, 44, 108)—or as an acknowledgement of her age and a conventional godly magistrate's insistence on women's place being to create a godly household. Yet, he has indeed 'let her tongue gallop on' (119) and the truths she has spoken are troubling because Sir Arthur's king-like reaction, if shared offstage with the justice, may have helped seal her fate.<sup>39</sup> We witness no trial, but only her journey to execution having been found guilty of witchcraft. Perhaps her guilt is no longer in question: if not a witch, she has been turned into

one and now, betrayed by the devil/dog (no longer black but white), her fate is sealed. Yet there is no rehearsal of the indictments noted in Goodcole's account, unnecessary since we have witnessed her celebrating those very crimes with Dog, but what we do learn is that Sir Arthur has accepted the punishment of a hefty fine presumably for aiding and abetting Frank Thorney's bigamy.

Frank's road to execution parallels Elizabeth's, but, whereas he dies a good death forgiven by his loved ones, those whom he has harmed, and the community at large, she exits the play and the world still angry and frustrated with her lot. Indeed, she is not left alone, as she points out bitterly, to 'die in my repentance' (5.3.62). Old Carter, the murdered Susan's father, demands to know 'Did you not bewitch Frank to kill his wife? He could never have done't without the devil' (44–5). We know, of course, that one is true and the other not: Elizabeth did not bewitch Frank, but Frank would not have killed Susan without Dog's touch (3.3.14–15) and Dog was brought into this world by Elizabeth's cursing. Indeed, as Meg Pearson has observed 'The play's turn away from the witch leaves Dog as the play's centre, resulting in a theatrical experience that savours confusion and shifting morality'.<sup>40</sup> We come back then to a world where the devil's work is enabled by human frailty and emotion, whose misbehaviour if left unbridled and unregulated puts everything in danger.

If there are moments in the play where Elizabeth's actions seem justified, in the context of the legislation against swearing and other misdemeanors associated with the reformation of manners, she is not the only one guilty of harming the commonwealth. Old Banks and Sir Arthur are also guilty of bad behaviour. If the play is ambivalent about whether Old Banks's failure to act kindly and charitably to Elizabeth pushes her into the devil's arms, it leaves no doubt about Sir Arthur's transgressions. He has failed to meet his obligations as a wealthy landowner and prosperous neighbour as urged by contemporary writers and law-makers. Worse, he has abused his female servant and colluded in bigamy. It is the honest yeoman Old Carter whom the playwrights chose to confront Sir Arthur in the final scene of the play, telling him that he deserves death more than either the murderer Frank Thorney or the witch Elizabeth Sawyer (5.3.6–10). His words have substance because of Elizabeth's earlier discourse on who the real witches were in this society. If, as Goodcole claimed, Elizabeth's tongue failed her during her trial in real life, she found her voice again in the staged world of early modern Edmonton.

## Notes

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The first part of this article draws on an unpublished paper, 'New Models of Magistracy', written with Norman Jones. I am grateful for his permission to publish and for his helpful comments.

- 1 Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch, late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and death: Together with the relation of the Divels accesse to her, and their conference together: Written by Henry Goodcole Minister of the Word of God, and her continuall visitor in the Gaole of Newgate: Published by Authority* (London, 1621; STC: 12014), *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, A4r–B1v.
- 2 Martin Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), 47–88; Steven Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550–1640* (Houndmills, 2000), 176–203, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230288461>. A contemporary minister, Cornelius Burges, used the term in his *A Chaine of Graces Drawne out at Length for Reformation of Manners. Or, a briefe treatise of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godlinesse, brotherly-kindnesse, charitie. So farre forth as they are urged by the Apostle in 2 Pet. 1 verse 5,6,7. By C. Burges P. of Watford.* (London, 1622).
- 3 *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory* (London, 1846), 71–80.
- 4 Richard Younge, *The Drunkard's Character, or, A True Drunkard with such Sinnes as Raigne in Him viz. pride. Ignorance. Enmity. Atheisme. Idlenesse. Adultery. Murther. With many the like. Lively set forth in their colours. Together with Compleat armour against evill society. The which may serve also for a common-place-booke of the most usuall sinnes. By R. Iunius.* (London, 1638; STC: 26111), *EEBO*, 89.
- 5 David Dean, *Law-Making and Society in Late-Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1996), 177–81.
- 6 NA SP 12/282, f. 118. There is also a breviat, SP 12/282, f. 120 which notes the intriguing proposition that offenders could confess themselves on the testimony of two witnesses, and thus earn just six hours in the stocks.
- 7 NA SP 12/283, f. 48.
- 8 Sir Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journals of All the Parliaments of Queen Elizabeth Both of the House of Lords and the House of Commons* (London, 1682), 660–1.
- 9 Stephen. D. White, *Sir Edward Coke and 'The Grievances of the Commonwealth', 1621–1628* (Chapel Hill, 1977), 90–91, 94.
- 10 39 Eliz. I, c. 2, *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. IV 1549–1624 (London, 1810–1828), 893.

- 11 Dean, *Law Making and Society*, 168–77.
- 12 Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3 *The Later Tudors 1588–1603* (New Haven and London, 1969), 165, 194; James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. 1. *Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603–1625* (Oxford, 1973), 188, 189, 286. Engrossing was the stockpiling of produce in order to later sell it at a higher profit; regrating was buying up produce at one market and selling it at a much higher profit at another market.
- 13 Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamation*, 3:171–2; Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 1:561–2, 572–3.
- 14 Richard Rawlidge, *A Monster Late Found out and Discovered. Or The scourging of Tiplers, the Ruine of Bacchus, and the Bane of Tapsters Wherein is plainly set forth all the lawes of the kingdome, that be now in force against ale-house keepers, drunkards, and haunters of ale-houses, with all the paines and penalties in the same lawes. With sundry of their cunning inventions, hatched out of the Divells store-house, and daily practised by ale-house-keepers, tapsters, &c. With an easie way to reforme all such disorders* (Amsterdam, 1628; STC: 20766), *EEBO*, F1r–v.
- 15 David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven. Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 1992), 71–9.
- 16 3 Jac. I, c. 21, *Statutes of the Realm*, 1097.
- 17 The full proceedings of these bills can be found in the journals of the two houses and surviving drafts: *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. I 1547–1629 (London, 1802), 247, 250, 251, 426, 434, 435, 441, 442; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. II 1578–1614 (London, 1767–1834), 338, 340, 364, 365, 368, 369, 379, 400, 412, 414, 621, 629, 637; Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1/7. I would like to thank Ms Katie Widdowson of the Parliamentary Archives for her assistance.
- 18 Wallace Notestein, Frances Helen Relf, Hartley Simpson (eds), *Commons Debates, 1621* (New Haven, 1935), 2.162; 3.333, 354; 5.23, 270.
- 19 Francis Rous, *Oile of Scorpions. The Miseries of these times turned into medicines and curing themselves* (London, 1623; STC: 21344), *EEBO*, 56–66 at 56, 66. On oaths more generally in the play see Todd Butler, ‘Swearing Justice in Henry Goodcole and *The Witch of Edmonton*’, *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 50.1 (2010), 127–45, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.0.0084>.
- 20 Rous, *Oile*, 22–8, 55, 57.
- 21 Robert Pricke, *The Doctrine of Superioritie, and of Subiection, contained in the fift commandement of the holy law of Almightye God* (London, 1609; STC: 20337), *EEBO*, D, D2.
- 22 Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/50/10/1/22; 21 Jac. I, c. 20, *Statutes of the Realm*, 1229–30.

- 23 *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower, Daughters of Ioan Flower Neere Bever Castle: executed at Lincolne, March 11. 1618* (London, 1619; STC: 11107.3), *EEBO*, C3r–v.
- 24 Mt 6:9: ‘Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed by thy name’ [*Sanctificetur nomen tuum*]. As Corbin and Sedge note, Dog, being the devil, cannot say the Latin correctly, and Elizabeth herself, now contracted to the devil, variously attempts to say it properly; Peter Corbin & Douglas Sedge (eds), *The Witch of Edmonton* (Manchester, 1997), 59, note to line 184. The efficacy of prayer and invoking God’s name saved Elizabeth Bennett in 1582, Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London, 2017), 37
- 25 *The Wonderful Discoverie*, C1r–v. On language see Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996); David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford, 2010; and the texts assembled by Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin (ed.), *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises* (Madison, 2012).
- 26 David Pam, *Winchmore Hill. A Woodland Hamlet* (London, 2004), 4.
- 27 Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, Bv.
- 28 *Ibid*, C4r and v.
- 29 Lower and Upper Edmonton in the early seventeenth century consisted of less than two-hundred houses, with smaller hamlets at Southgate and Winchmore Hill between them, VCH *A History of the County of Middlesex* (London, 1976), 5.130–3; David Pam, *Edmonton. Ancient Village to Working-Class Suburb* (London, 2006), 3.
- 30 Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Wherein the lewde dealing of witches and witchmongers is notable detected* (London, 1584; STC: 21864), *EEBO*; George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtil Practices of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London, 1587; STC: 11852), *EEBO*; John Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646; Wing: G379), *EEBO*. On the influence of Scot and Gifford on the play see David Nicol, ‘Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*’, *Comparative Drama* 38.4 (2004–5), 433–7, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2004.0047>; David Stymeist, “‘Must I be ... made a common sink?’: Witchcraft and the Theatre in *The Witch of Edmonton*”, *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.2 (2001) 38–40.
- 31 VCH, Middlesex, 5.132.
- 32 Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B2r–B3.
- 33 On witch-driven suicide and the role of Dog see Katherine O’Mahoney, ‘The Witch Figure: *The Witch of Edmonton*’, *The Seventeenth Century* 24.2 (2009), 248–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2009.10555629>.
- 34 Millar, *Witchcraft, The Devil, and Emotions*, 116–46.

- 35 Goodcole, *A Wonderful Discoverie*, C3r–v.
- 36 Ibid, A4r–v.
- 37 William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (London, 1608; STC: 19697), *EEBO*, 206, 244–5; Corbin & Sedge, 55, 101n.
- 38 James Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of Doctor Fian a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Ianuary last. 1591* (London, 1592; STC: 10841a), *EEBO*, B4.
- 39 See Sarah Johnson, 'Female Bodies, Speech, and Silence in *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Early Theatre* 21.1 (2009), 69–91, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.12.1>.
- 40 Meg F. Pearson, 'A Dog, a Witch, a Play: *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Early Theatre* 11.2 (2008), 97, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.11.2>.

