THE MONSTROSITY OF TEXT:
GENDER TENSIONS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH PAMPHLETS, 1550 - 1650

by

Krista Bailie

B.H.K., The University of British Columbia, 2004
B.F.A., Emily Carr University, 2010

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submitted by  Krista Bailie in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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Examininig Committee:

Saygin Salgirli
Supervisor

Joseph Monteyne
Supervisory Committee Member
Abstract

The advent of print and specifically the pamphlet in the sixteenth-century created a new moment for the monster, a time of religious upheaval and gender tensions in which the pamphlet emerged as a way for the literate but no longer only the wealthy and privileged to engage in public discourse. My thesis considers the use of the monster in early modern print in England, arguing that it is the reappropriation of the visual and rhetorical offerings of earlier versions of the monster which makes it a culturally convenient symbol in a time of political instability and revolution. Drawing on an extended history of the symbol of the monster, this work considers the impulse to frame behavior inside the notion of the monstrous, and the ways an imagined monster can appear out of nowhere and disrupt society. As part of a larger concern at the time around women and their conduct, the pamphlet operated as a cultural technology that could sanction, reform or deny the categories of normalcy and deviancy, a tool that simultaneously created and contained the monster.

The prolific publishing of pamphlets by men in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (namely those focusing on monstrous births, controversial fashions, political involvement and sexual deviance) evidences not only the desire to control the behaviour of women but also the ways in which women were resisting this control through retaliatory pamphleteering and publishing, petitioning and self-fashioning. By using these monstrous bodies in print, the stories and the pamphlets become part of a larger narrative of internal and external monstrousness within society. I argue that the content of these pamphlets provides historical evidence of women’s considered political engagement and agency, a disruption that invited the monster in to do the cultural work of embodying religious, political and gender tensions in revolutionary England.
Lay Summary

As print became a more accessible medium in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, fears around how to control opinions and public discussions began to emerge and be framed inside the metaphor of the monster, a technique that is often used to understand moments of social upheaval. As an especially gendered debate, the pamphlets created during this time are often used to critique or control women’s involvement in political society. By looking at writings by women at the time in response to these pamphlets, one sees evidence of the extent of women’s political involvement, but also their methods of engaging in resistance and retaliation.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Krista Bailie.
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For my children, who let me do it all.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Monsters do a great deal of cultural work, but they do not do it nicely. They not only challenge and question; they trouble, they worry, they haunt. They break and tear and rend cultures, all the while constructing them and propping them up. They swallow up our cultural mores and expectations, and then, becoming what they eat, they reflect back to us our own faces, made disgusting or, perhaps, revealed to always have been so.” - Asa Mittman

There she sits, Opinion, crouched in the upper branches of a tree and holding the terrestrial globe in her arm as though it was her pregnant belly. The Tower of Babel sits perched atop her head, blinding her to the scene below while a chameleon, settled on her right arm stares, as though reading one of the many pamphlets which appear to be growing from the tree, whilst the staff from her left hand points to nothing concrete. Standing at the base of the tree are two figures, a fool who waters the tree and opposite him, a traveller, named Viator, who appears to be in the act of speaking. This etching from 1641, entitled The World is Ruled and Governed by Opinion (Fig.1) by Wenceslaus Hollar, serves as evidence of the intense anxieties circling around gender, politics and pamphleteering at the start of the English Civil War. With accompanying text written by Henry Peacham, there is a further articulation of fears around the abundance and uncontrollability of the unregulated pamphlet culture of England at the time, blaming this proliferation on “self conceit and haughtie pride” which causes opinions to


“propagate till infinite they bee”.  A central theme of this etching is that of compromised vision, as seen through the three figures who each are unable to see the whole picture. The fool is anonymous, his face obscured behind the watering jug, though the angle of his head suggests he is oblivious to all except the watering of the tree, busy “nourishing the production of more false news and opinions”.  Viator appears to be engaged with the other two figures, as he gestures to the fool, seemingly trying to draw Opinion’s attention towards him, blinded to the fact that Opinion is physically unable to see either figure. Combined with the chameleon, known to represent “inconstancy and mutability”, these elements reinforce aspects of confusion: “the inability to see what is just and right, the unintelligibility of what is said, and opinions changing according to fashion, not truth”.  

As Dagmar Freist notes, it is no accident that it is a woman who is held responsible for this inversion of order and truth, with the etching resting on “gendered political symbolism which employed the well-known negative connotations of women’s talk” and connecting the gender tensions of the time with the tensions associated with the press. Nor is it an accident that she appears pregnant with an inverted world that suggests something unnatural or monstrous. The pamphlets and broadsheets that hang from the tree like fruit are a “direct reference to concrete social practices associated with print in the urban centre” as the titles are true

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5 Freist, Governed, 3.
publications that circulated after the collapse of the print authority in 1641.\textsuperscript{6} Titles such as “[John Taylor's Reply”, "Mercuries Message", "News from Elyzium", "Hellish Parliament", "A Swarne of Sectaries", "Canterburies Troubles", "Brownists Conventicle", "Taylors Physicke”, and "Lambeth Faire”", all speak to the menacing circulation of opinions in the form of “idle books” coming from the bookseller’s stall or “the movement and fluidity of the street”.\textsuperscript{7} The anti-Laudian verse satire, Mercuries Message was a pamphlet which stirred up controversy in the form of responses so it is a particularly poignant example of the printers aligning themselves with those who express distaste and fear at the market for these pamphlets, all the while contributing to the market through their own flood of texts.\textsuperscript{8} Print turned the world upside down because it allowed an open forum for all people to express their opinions on all subjects, including politics and religion which disrupted commonly held expectations for conduct and challenged previously understood notions of truth. Print, therefore, was monstrous in nature, something that mutates from the ‘natural order’ to something hybridized between truth and lies, high and low, and women and men. This theme was frequently expressed not only in a fear of pamphlets and opinion, but in a fear of changes to monarchy, religion, gender expectation and social norms, often by using images of that which was actually monstrous, such as a monstrous birth or monstrous hybridization. According to Jeffrey Cohen in his text Monster Theory, “the monster is born only at [a] metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment… a construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read… the monster


signifies something other than itself.” 9 A desire to frame strangeness, to sequester it within the boundaries of what can be understood and contained is an impulse that has existed throughout history. Once bounded, this framing can then be applied across other incidents of difference, producing an other that is familiar and therefore manageable. Looking back to the time of the Greeks, one sees evidence of an attempt to understand difference through redefining it in human terms, that which exists on the spectrum of the human, something that has gone wrong or been interfered with – a monster. But, as Aristotle said, these differences are still part of the necessity of nature and therefore conforming to its laws.10

Etymologically, a monster is a warning, “that which warns…that which reveals”.11 The advent of print and specifically the pamphlet in the sixteenth-century created a new moment of revelation for the monster, a time of religious upheaval and gender tensions in which the pamphlet emerged as a way for the literate but no longer only the wealthy and privileged to engage in public discourse. It is widely accepted that in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England “women were economically, legally and educationally subordinated by the conventions of early modern society, and everyone was routinely reminded of female inferiority.”12 Religious orders emphasized original sin as the logic of the subordination of women to men, but even

11 Cohen, 4.
beyond the church door, core values at the time in popular culture were deeply misogynistic.\textsuperscript{13}

As part of a larger concern around women and their conduct, the pamphlet operated as a cultural technology that could sanction, reform or deny the categories of normalcy and deviancy, a tool that simultaneously created and contained the monster. At this time the function of the monster culturally became especially malleable, having already been attributed layers of cultural meaning that were commonly understood. As a symbol that could both oppress and resist, both the monster and the pamphlet share a common threat, that of being unpredictable, uncontrollable and dangerous. By considering the reappropriation of the visual and rhetorical offerings of earlier versions of the monster in early modern English pamphlet literature, I intend to show how both sides of the gender divide used the monster and its manifestation in pamphlet form to mediate their time of political instability and revolution.

\textsuperscript{13} Wheale, 119.
Chapter 2: Pamphlets and Pamphleteering

2.1 The Stationer’s Company

According to George Orwell, “To ask ‘What is a pamphlet?’ is rather like asking ‘What is a dog?’”. It contains within it the possibility of being everything from a lapdog to a wild beast as Alexandra Halasz notes, saying, “Is the pamphlet, like the dog, a domesticated creature, capable of performing directed tasks, or is it, like the wolf, fierce, wild and not susceptible to control?”

Though it had existed since the fourteenth century, the word ‘pamphlet’ experienced a shift in meaning and more common application in the late sixteenth century. Speaking to format, rather than content, the term pamphlet was previously used to define any small book, but in its proliferation, the pamphlet of this time became something far more than its physical properties - it became the medium of the people. In his text, A Critical History of Pamphlets, written in 1716, Myles Davies hints at the potential of the pamphlet to be disruptive as an object of discourse that could be easily produced and cheaply procured.

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 as fit Object and Subject of most People’s Choice, Capacity and Ability.

Though the notion of the creation of a public sphere at this time is a contentious idea, many have argued that its emergence was directly correlated with the revolutionary pamphlet culture of the mid-seventeenth-century, moving participatory politics into public realm. The pamphlets

themselves embodied the social and political changes happening at the time – abstractly considered as “ubiquitous and polymorphous, they imply a loss of social distinction and a generalized access to the circulation of printed discourse” opened up in the social space.\textsuperscript{16} This democratic medium created a space for public debate but also opened itself up to criticism and distrust, as the content of many of the publications caused great controversy, eventually leading to the general feeling that the pamphlet was dangerously uncontrollable. Put differently, the pamphlet was a monstrous medium which reflected the interiority of the public in a way that was difficult to contain, despite regulations placed on pamphleteers.\textsuperscript{17}

The history of the pamphlet is intertwined with the history of the Worshipful Company of Stationers, the controlling body for book production in England for nearly two hundred years. The Company was formed under Mary Tudor and Phillip of Spain in 1557 when a Charter was granted to ninety-seven men who had been working in the ‘art of the Stationary’ which gave them exclusive privilege as a ‘corporate group’ to print books throughout the kingdom.\textsuperscript{18} According to Nigel Wheale, this arrangement offered reciprocal benefits to both the Crown and the Stationers, giving exclusive rights to the Stationers in exchange for the literary protection of Queen Mary:

Queen Mary was the monarch who had the most to fear from seditious and libelous publications in sixteenth-century Britain, and firmly locating book production within a closely regulated group in theory gave the Crown absolute control over the printing and distribution of all texts.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Halasz, 4.
\textsuperscript{17} Raymond, Pamphlets, 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Wheale, 57
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 58
Rather than using the term ‘guild’ which was falling out of favour, the group strategically chose the word ‘company’ in line with the preferred name for manufacturing cartels, indicating the degree to which the maximization of income had come to be a central element in these kinds of organizations.²⁰

As an economic as well as a regulating body, the Stationer’s Company was “acting as a pressure group” to maintain its monopoly through systems such as sanctions, geographic restrictions, and most famously, the Register where all publications were to be logged.²¹ While it would seem obvious that Stationers may have been afraid of the costly sanctions involved if they did not register their publications, in fact, it seems that the Stationers were possibly more motivated by their desire to avoid registration fees for books that would only sell for a few pence.²² In England between 1605 and 1625 only forty-one percent of books and pamphlets were entered in the register, an issue that was most certainly based in financial interests but was also possibly an effort to avoid censorship.²³ According to Cyndia Clegg, “the Stationers' Company officials were reluctant to enter without notice of authorization anything political - news, pageants, poems, or literature - or any continental religious writings” noting that nearly sixty percent of the texts that were granted conditional licenses were either political or dealt with international religious issues.²⁴

The twenty years before the beginning of the Civil Wars was a particularly challenging time for the Stationers, when they found themselves struggling to control activities happening

²⁰ Wheale, 59.
²¹ Ibid., 59.
²² Ibid., 62.
²⁴ Ibid., 61
outside of London. After a prolonged enquiry into the Stationer’s Company from 1634 to 1636, Archbishop Laud released a decree in an attempt to control book production. The decree, known as the 1637 Star Chamber Decree Concerning Printing was encouraged by the Company of Stationers as a way to regain control over the monopoly and “served the political needs of the government by limiting production, dissemination and newspapers and the publication of domestic news was a criminal offence”. The decree consisted of a number of clauses, including clauses that “addressed the problem of publications ‘seditious, schismatical, [and] offensive to Church and State”, ones which drew from earlier licensing procedures as well as a clause allowing for members of the Company to enter buildings to look for unlicensed printing.

There were also a series of clauses which “attempted to seal the kingdom against floods of unlicensed publication” from outside of the Port of London. This attempt, despite its large fines, was often ignored by printers, particularly after the abolishment of the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission in February of 1641, resulting in a flood of materials, the majority of them pamphlets, including radical, prophecy and petitioning pamphlets by women published in the 1640s. Many of these pamphlets were pirated or controversial texts which evidenced the breakdown in monopolistic control within the Company and also points to the adoption of the notion of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practices. Though printers, booksellers and publishers contested a definition of good practices, a general definition would connect good practices with ____________________

25 Wheale, 64
26 Ibid., 65
28 Wheale, 65
29 Ibid.
30 Achinstein, 57
anything that mimicked the ‘original’ production conditions that happen within the Company and 
bad practices becoming anything out of the Stationers control.31

2.2 The Marketplace

Thus the early modern marketplace of print makes possible two equally 
important but quite different kinds of claims: that printed texts offer the 
possibility of widened access to discourses that have enduring cultural 
value, and that printed texts offer topical information or ephemeral 
pleasures on a regularly renewed basis....though a market of/for texts 
preexists print, the technology of print was developed in ways that 
precipitated a profound transformation of that market.32

The above quote, taken from Alexandra Halasz’ text The Marketplace of Print, emphasizes one 
of the most important aspects of the explosion of print in early modern England – the effect print 
technology had on the creation of a marketplace for print, driven by a desire to maximize profits 
by producing according to the needs and thresholds of the market. In a compelling argument, 
Halasz challenges Jurgen Habermas’ discussion about the public sphere, suggesting that 
elements of the public sphere, ‘free speech’, press freedom and a capitalist economy, were 
present well before the twentieth-century.

In the ‘true’ tradition of pamphleteering whose disappearance Orwell laments, 
print and the publicity it implied served precisely to negotiate and articulate 
the ideology of (proto)capitalist socioeconomic formations. The notion of a 
public sphere is the possibility of access to both “producing” and 
“consuming” positions in public discourse. Though neither “producing” nor 
“consuming” positions are limited to texts, let alone printed texts, it is the 
convenience of the technology that enables the publicity of a public sphere.33

31 Halasz, 55
32 Ibid., 15
33 Halasz, 18
Halasz further suggests that notions of resistance to print, inclusion and exclusion caused by the commodification of print, and the monopolization of print technologies all suggest a much earlier “fall” into “capitalist corruption” as the marketplace acts on the “disciplines and practices of production and circulation”\textsuperscript{34}. Due to the nature of the pamphlet as a relatively inexpensive object which was easy to produce and distribute, and the market demand for a never-ending supply of content that could be quickly and inexpensively released to the public, the pamphlet became an important format as its “generic and substantive flexibility, and its transportability makes an excellent vehicle for opening up new market niches”\textsuperscript{35}. The transportability was especially significant as it allowed for a range of possible sales sites, everything from markets and fairs to country peddlers and people selling on the street and the range of content, including jokes, songs, stories and news, meant that there was something for everyone – including those that didn’t read at all but could enjoy the visual elements or hear them read aloud. “These productions reached a far wider audience than more sedate volumes of sustained discourse…many who were unable or unwilling to buy or read the texts heard them sung or spoken in taverns, fairs, and streets.”\textsuperscript{36} These other methods of sharing pamphlet content also benefitted those who could not afford the pamphlets, even though they were the cheapest possible option at the time after 1598 when the Stationer’s Company set an ordinance that

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 45
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 54. Ibid., 15.
limited the amount a printer or bookseller could charge. Nonetheless, the pamphlet ranged from about two to four pence, which would have been about a quarter of a tradesperson’s daily wages and would alternately have bought a pound of beef or two tickets to the theatre. The cheap cost of the final pamphlet also made it difficult for authors to receive much compensation for their work as they received either a small sum for their initial manuscript or copies of the printed work to sell themselves, but never any profit from reprints unless they had revisions. Furthermore, there was no legal recourse available to them if the publisher chose to make changes to the manuscripts, thus the authors if they wished to make a living from their writing, needed to prolifically produce content.

Though they wouldn’t have constituted a middle-class as we know it today, nor could the texts have been considered mass media which would not arrive until much later, there was undoubtedly the emergence of a literature which makes obvious the existence of a new set of tastes and values. These works appealed not to the ‘high-brow’ tastes of London, but to the tastes of the “middle group”, a class made up of “tradesmen, merchants, bankers, shipowners, manufacturers, skilled craftsmen, and farmers”. For those intent on elevating their work to appeal to a higher class, many authors would describe their pamphlets as books, as is the case in the epistle to Joseph Swetnam’s *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615) which functions as a means of legitimizing it and distancing it from the stigma of

38 Wiltenburg, 30
39 Clark, 25
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 22
the pamphlet.\textsuperscript{42} However, as Sandra Clark notes, “the distinction between ‘book’ and ‘pamphlet’ was not a clear or consistent one. ‘Pamphlet’ was often an unflattering term; a writer used it of his own productions in a spirit of humility or obsequiousness, of the work of others when he wished to scorn or belittle”.\textsuperscript{43} Another technique to elevate a publication was to elevate the status of the author, by using title pages and prefaces to create the impression that the author was a gentleman, and therefore a man of letters who could speak directly to his readers, whom he also explicitly referred to as “gentlemen and men of education”, even going so far as to mock those from the lower classes.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, those who owned books and pamphlets also often did so only to elevate themselves socially, and there are references in pamphlets to farmers and “ignorant country people” who would purchase publications that they were unable to read.\textsuperscript{45}

Of course this is not to suggest that pamphlets weren’t read and collected by upper class readers. While many did focus on lower classes, but were still found in the collections of the elite, many pamphlets specifically targeted this group and suggest the possibility of readers sophisticated enough to understand classical references, rhetorical figures, or recognize parody.\textsuperscript{46} Type also provided an opportunity to situate one’s publication within the sphere they wished to occupy, with printers clearly aware of the power of typeface to connect to the expectations of the reader. Roman was used to appeal to a “scholarly or cultured reader” in poems, technical works and sophisticated romances, while black-letter type was standard for those things that were designed to appeal to a less sophisticated reader, including pamphlets, ballads and chivalric

\textsuperscript{42} Clark, 24
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 23
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 22
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Wiltenburg, 30. Clark, 21.
romances. Clark suggests in addition to speaking to the intended audience who was interested in a lower price, the black-letter type would have become “old fashioned and familiar” and provided a kind of guarantee that the reader’s expectations would be satisfied.\textsuperscript{47}

Another consideration for pamphleteers and printers was the issue of women’s reading, which, like female writing and public speaking was still a controversial activity during this period when these activities were “circumscribed by legal and culture injunctions for silence”.\textsuperscript{48} In the \textit{1543 Act for the Advancement of True Religion}, Henry VIII criminalized women’s reading aloud, even going so far as to condemn the reading aloud of the Bible inside the home. Though it was repealed by King Edward VI, “the gender distinction it codified persisted throughout the early modern period in both educational practices and conduct manual prescriptions”.\textsuperscript{49} This is a common theme, that while women were taught to read, any output, either written or oral was at best considered inappropriate, and at worst, criminal complicating the ability of producers to target their female audiences. Additionally, this meant that many women who were capable of reading were never captured in the historical record, because unless it could be proved that their writing accompanied reading or that they owned books, which was difficult as married women could not legally make a will, it was impossible to track them.\textsuperscript{50} And yet it is obvious that explicit attempts were made to target a female audience, visible in texts that focused on ‘female exemplars which clearly were intended to speak to a “substantial female audience”’.\textsuperscript{51} For those who didn’t read, the visual elements provided a bridge for many of the intended audience who

\textsuperscript{47} Clark, 24
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 198
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.,199. Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{51} Wiltenburg, 27
may not have been able to read. The images on the pamphlets were important as a way to allow women to connect the stories shared orally with the images used and when that image or symbol appeared again in later pamphlets, it gave women the opportunity to draw from their existing experiences.\(^{52}\) One way that historians, such as David Cressy, have attempted to capture levels of literacy is through court depositions and loyalty oaths, estimating that in London in 1640 over twenty percent of women could sign their name on court documents. Cressy acknowledges that those selected for these tasks were likely those considered to be especially ‘respectable’ and therefore probably more literate than the general population, however, he suggests that this could be offset by considering that women were taught to read before writing as reading was considered more “spiritually valuable” than writing and therefore “many may have acquired the limited reading skills needed for perusal of simple popular literature without learning to sign their names”.\(^{53}\)

Though it was proportionately low, reaching only a little over one percent in 1640, women were also involved in publishing.\(^{54}\) There is a record of over 300 female authors in the seventeenth-century and more than 80 ‘radical’ pamphlets by women were created between 1640 and 1680, so though it is impossible to truly pin down women’s literacy, it is obvious that women were involved in the creation of content.\(^{55}\) Additionally, as the widow of a Stationer’s Company member was able to take over her husband’s business after his death, there is evidence

\(^{53}\) Wiltenburg, 33
\(^{54}\) Wheale, 112
\(^{55}\) Wheale, 111. Hobby, 163.
of nearly 300 women working as stationers between 1580 and 1720.\textsuperscript{56} Not to overstate their involvement, the creation of print culture, as opposed to oral where women’s contributions were formidable, was primarily the domain of men and considered women only insofar as it affected their desire to maximize profits.

Authors who hoped for commercial success in a missed audience, as many seem to have done, had to appeal to women’s tastes as well as men’s. The authors’ conceptions of women’s preferences may or may not have matched women’s real attitudes but the attempt to reach them had important effects on popular literature. This was true even when the technique employed was to rouse women’s irritation in order to provoke mirth, and thus increase sales, among the male audience. Though their influence was indirect and difficult to assess, real women and their reactions found a dark reflection in the mirror of street literature.\textsuperscript{57}

Thus, once again we return to the “battery of assumptions regarding what was proper and improper to women’s conduct” when considering the role of women as both readers and authors in this new world of print in relation to the developing capitalist market in mid seventeenth-century London.\textsuperscript{58}

### 2.3 Unrestrained Opinion

In considering the wide range of producers and readers in the explosion of pamphlets in England it is advantageous to return to the earlier Hollar and Peacham etching, \textit{The World is Ruled and Governed by Opinion} (1641) to reconsider the implications of Opinion’s response to

\textsuperscript{56} Wheale, 59  
\textsuperscript{57} Wiltenburg, 40  
\textsuperscript{58} Wheale, 111
Viator’s inquiry about the ‘fruit’ on the tree as “idle books and libels bee, In everie street, on everie stall you find”.\textsuperscript{59} Uncontrolled pamphlets were not, critics at the time would argue, harmless, but rather they believed the content of certain pamphlets was legitimately dangerous. If, as Thomas Hobbes suggests in \textit{Leviathan} (1651), humans can be considered to be sheets of paper to be written upon, then the content of unsavory pamphlets could impress upon the reader a taste for rebellion, violence or even sexual debauchery.\textsuperscript{60} According to Joseph Monteyne, Hobbes believed opinion was the opposite of science, instead it was “a form of excess speech” in which distinctions and order are lost, noting that opinion is hermaphroditic in nature “partly right and comely, partly brutal and wilde, the causes of all contentions and blood-sheds” including the English civil wars.\textsuperscript{61}

For Hobbes, the danger was that the opinions were too divided and therefore could not be governed, instead they needed to be united through a shared fear. Hobbes believed that the state had to cultivate a state where “the people had to be taught to fear the heresies that incited civil discord and war.”\textsuperscript{62}

A site where this dangerous uncontrolled opinion flourished during the mid-seventeenth-century was in the coffee-houses of London, spaces where there was an “unrestrained circulation and consumption of print” which linked the space to “excesses of speech, to a Babel-like confusion, and to opinion as an erroneous form of doxa that threatened to destroy monarchy”.\textsuperscript{63} The allure of the coffee-house at this time seems predicated on the value of the cacophony of voices present

\textsuperscript{59} Monteyne, 13
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 18
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 16
\textsuperscript{63} Monteyne, 52
in the earlier explosion of pamphlets and resulted in a similar kind of push-back and transformed the coffee-house “into the monstrous yet mesmerizing land of darkness”. 64 In The Women’s Petition against Coffee from 1674, the discourse around the production and materialization of opinion makes use of a connection with an ‘exotic other’, being likened to “the Springs of Africa” in which the patrons become the animals of Africa who produce “a thousand Monster Opinions and Absurdities”. 65

It is no accident that the rhetoric around the dangers of opinion makes use of the monster or the ‘hermaphroditic other’ at the time when the collapse of regulations created the possibility of everyone’s opinions being heard and considered as equivalent to those that previously would have commanded significant authority, such as the monarch or the church. One of the central anxieties of the time was that there was a finite amount of space for printing text and that space would either be taken up by “good” print or “bad” and that it was an inevitability that the bad would spread like a virus not only throughout publishing, but throughout the social space, a sentiment that was present as early as 1580 in a text by lawyer and justice of the peace, William Lambarde:

Only to let in a mayne Sea of wickednesse, and to set up an arte of making lascivious ungodly love, to the high displeasure of GOD, whose guiftes and graces bee pitifully misused thereby to manifest injury and offence of the godly learned, whose prayse woorthie endeavours and wrytinges are thearfore the lesse read. 66

64 Ibid., 37
65 Ibid.
66 Halasz, 52
It is this zero-sum approach to the subject of opinions that created greater fears as the expectation was that the public could only hold onto one of two possible polarized opinions – either one that kept them in line with the maintenance of the existing rules and hierarchies in society or the other, which aligned them with the values that turned society “upside down”. As is made clear in the Hollar and Peacham broadside, Opinion draws on “a gendered political symbolism which employed the well known negative connotations of women’s speaking” or in other words, she parodies the traditional virtues ascribed to women and thus as she sits blindly in her tree with popular opinion falling all around her - she is both responsible for and helpless to control the proliferation of discourse that threatens to destroy her world.\textsuperscript{67}

Chapter 3: Monstrous Feminine

3.1 Monstrous Births

Pamphlets featuring the births of monstrous children were a common theme in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. Used as entertainment, education and warnings, these pamphlets were designed to be highly readable by a generalized audience. For example, a pamphlet from 1609 with a headless and misshapen child born in Olde Sandwich in Strange Newes Out of Kent (Fig.2) or a pamphlet from 1617 titled A Wonder Worth Reading (Fig.3) which featured a female monster child said to have repelled all those that saw her with her “hideous and fearful form”\textsuperscript{68}. Pamphlets that announced monstrous births contained elements that signified meaning to a general audience, such as an image of a monster child with half a head and horns, identifiable as the ‘horns of cuckoldry’. Inherited from medieval and classical literature, the use of the body politic as metaphor was so prevalent at this time in early modern political discourse that the assigned referent for each body part would have been easily accessible to the viewing audience who would have understood the large, grotesque belly on the child as an attack on greed, and the deformed hands an attack on idleness.\textsuperscript{69} In the child from Olde Sandwich, the crude woodcut shows a child who was understood to be product of a “seemingly husbandless wandering young woman” who had clearly failed to “heed the


appropriate authorities”. The bodies here and in earlier pamphlets are very much concerned with the body politic imprinted on the body of the monster and as a sign of “a world turned upside down”, much like the uncontrollable proliferation of the pamphlets themselves.

It is the clarity of the symbolism to a wider audience that makes monstrous birth pamphlets like these an effective warning to England. A common way to depict the monster, present in earlier imagery and carried forward into pamphlet illustrations, was to represent a figure as headless, as is the case in the above images, in order to emphasize their ‘otherness’ or position outside of society. Headlessness relates to an old trope of gender relations, indicating a woman who “either lacks or refuses the guidance of her husband”. One of the reasons headlessness is such an important element at this moment is that it was a time of beheadings due to treason, a concept that could be understood as resistance not only to husbands, but also king, parliament and religious systems. According to Julie Crawford, headless monsters are “outward signs of monstrously disordered interiority” but also at this time, these children reflect their mother’s participation as religious dissenters in both public and private spheres. They therefore not only address the insufficiency of women and their overactive imaginations, but “they also invoke a range of female desires, beliefs, public avowals, and activism specific to the religious and political turmoil of 1640’s England”.}

72 Ibid., 46.
73 Crawford, 116.
74 Ibid.
These images drew their power, then, not only from their link with the body politic, but also from their connection to much older monstrous bodies. In the text, *Natural History*, from the first century AD, Pliny the Elder offered descriptions of the tribes of Africa that made clear their exaggerated difference: “Nigroe, whose King hath but one eye, and that in the midst of his forehead… the Anthropophagi, that Feed on Man’s Flesh; the Cynamolgi, who have Heads like Dogs… the Artabatitai, who wander about like four-footed savage beasts.”\(^75\) The *Psalter Map*, (Fig.4) created by an anonymous cartographer, is a miniature one-page map, believed to have originated in London/Westminster around 1265. Along the right side of the map are fourteen figures, each representing an African tribe. These figures each show something unnatural, such as enlarged feet, a single eye or a headless figure with a face on its chest and signal the legacy of a monstrous other that dates back to descriptions from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* from the 1\(^{st}\) century AD in which descriptions of tribes of Africa are offered which make clear their ‘remarkable strangeness’.\(^76\) Printed nearly three hundred years after the *Psalter Map*, in Sebastian Munster’s *Cosmographiae Universalis*, many of these figures are echoed. The advent of print offered an opportunity to extend the reach of ways of understanding the world and there is evidence of the wide reach of this text, with twenty-four editions published over a one hundred year period, making it one of the most successful books of the sixteenth century. As the first text in German to describe the world, it was considered seminal in the revival of an interest in geography in the sixteenth century.\(^77\) One woodcut from this text, titled *Fantastic Creatures in Africa* (Fig.5) shows four figures who look remarkably like those in the *Psalter Map*, particularly

\(^76\) Ibid.
the headless figure, with its face located in its torso. These pictures work in ways that a travel narrative alone cannot, giving these images a kind of scientific authority that doesn’t allow the same room for doubt that a narrative does. This particular image shows one figure with a single eye, one with an enlarged foot, a child with two heads, a figure with the head of a dog and a headless figure, known as the headless blemmyae “whose eyes and mouths were in their chests and the one footed sciapods of India who hold their single giant foot umbrella-fashion above their heads when the sun is hot.” The descriptions of the monsters differ in Munster’s account from Pliny’s original text, but visually these monstrous other races maintain certain elements. For example, the foot used in the map to represent eating of human flesh is now repurposed to provide shelter. These monsters are not static, rather their function can morph and still be at once fearsome and exciting – providing wonder and awe around the exotic. The sensational, which comes to be useful in Locke’s theories centuries later, is present in these earlier depictions, where the body is distinct from the mind with the body representing the lower, or more animalistic senses. As these monsters become hybrids of man and beast, the emphasis on their physical deformities reinforces their association with the animal, creating a monster which cannot be trusted to employ reason.

Much like Albrecht Dürer’s Rhinoceros (1515) (Fig.6), a likeness created without ever seeing the animal that then went on to be the often replicated standard for depicting it, monstrous races shown on maps further evidence an appetite for the exotic that seems to sidestep the need

78 Smith, 268.
80 Smith, 268.
for criticality and verification. These images are imbued with a truthfulness despite the fact that they are primarily based on stories from a thousand years prior that are then combined with imagery and more recent travel narratives. It is useful, as well, that in these maps, monsters exist at the margins, producing a kind of “imagined geography” in far off places “demarcated by domestic boundaries”, functioning as an othering agent. Serina Patterson describes monsters as “fragmented, transgressive material hybrids that are continually mirroring political, social, and sexual hegemonic perspectives in the present moment they are created”, meaning that they are always culturally central but subject to different notions of what the monstrous is, allowing them to exist as a ‘pluralistic discourse’. One of the ways this discourse manifests, she suggests, is in a shifting of spatial emphasis, “moving from the geographically marginal spaces to urban domestic centres – and thus locating an alterity both temporally and geographically.” The presence of monsters on maps creates a kind of factuality that comes to be useful to pamphleteers hundreds of years later, the authority of the map making it easier to consume the monster once she moves closer to home.

Symbolism is never static, and this allowed for layers of meaning as the monster was asked to conform to the public concerns of the time. The image on the pamphlet, A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster (Fig.7), is a more sophisticated but strikingly similar version of the headless monster from the Psalter Map and the Munster text but this time it is placed in front of a scene depicting a mother giving birth in her bed next to a rosary, surrounded

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84 Ibid.
by women, including one holding a cross. This image represented a monstrous child that was a
curse to the parliament as the mother had wished the child have no head rather than a roundhead
- a clear reference to supporters of the parliament of England during the English Civil War.\(^\text{85}\) The
scene is a narrative meant to highlight the most important elements of the pamphlet, the central
figure of the monster is placed in the foreground of the domestic setting while in behind sit a
series of smaller images. It is filled with superstitious, political and reproductive symbolism; a
woman cuts a cat’s ears which references an act of demi-martyrdom committed by a number of
Puritan radicals who chose to cut their ears off, a conversation between a priest with a rosary
and one with a bible and the domestic setting which is filled with popish elements.\(^\text{86}\) All of these
elements combined with the central figure of the headless monster-child suggests that it is the
proximity of these symbols and their ability to imprint on the maternal imagination which is
responsible for “the mother’s monstrous desires on the body of her child”.\(^\text{87}\) A later pamphlet
reused this image, removing the religious elements to form a visual accompaniment to an attack
on sectarian Mary Adams in 1652, suggesting how intentional the symbolism was in the original
pamphlet and how necessary it was to remove it in order to distance the later pamphlet from the
original message.\(^\text{88}\) Conversely, an element from this woodcut, that of the midwife throwing her
arms in the air in surprise had appeared in an earlier pamphlet entitled, \textit{A Strange and
Lamentable Accident} (1642) (Fig 8), in which a child is born completely headless. This woodcut
features a series of women standing around the bed of another named Mary Whitmore, who has
just given birth to a child without a head, which lies lifelessly on top of the cover. There is a line

\(^{85}\) Cressy, 44.
\(^{86}\) Crawford, 139
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 138
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 165
through the middle of the entire woodcut, right at the place where the child’s neck is, the variation in colour at this break point suggests this woodcut may have been scraped down and repurposed for this pamphlet. Though the text clearly says the child was born headless, this line also gives the feeling that the head was not just missing, but rather severed and invokes the notion of the beheading of traitors at the time, effectively suggesting that in producing the monstrous child, Whitmore is a traitor.89

These images are unique, in that they draw on ancient “deep-rooted concerns with God’s vengeance and a perennial fascination with monstrous births” but also “engage with questions of orthodoxy, discipline…and the moral and religious confusions of the English revolution”.90 Monstrosity then is a glue which binds the many cultural and political questions of the time together with a history of being fascinated by the monstrous other. Michel Foucault discusses this as a ‘gradation among discourses’, or “discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again.”91 This is an occurrence that Foucault believes happens because there is a societal recognition of a truth status to these narratives, a “secret or a treasure”.92 Though Protestants wrote most of the monstrous birth pamphlets, an act that was seen as an extension of their reforming mission, their religious message was usually understated, a strategy which allowed these pamphlets to be seen as a continuation of an earlier tradition of “marvels and providences”.93 This technique made visible a warning, but reduced scrutiny, relying on the same techniques in the 1640’s as had been used a century before of

89 Crawford, 126
90 Ibid.
92 Ibid, 56
93 Crawford, 4
referencing witnesses or using declarations of truthfulness and authority. Julie Crawford, in her book, *Marvelous Protestantism*, observes that protestant literature used monsters to stand in for instability in the social, economic and political realms, allowing them to be considered divine providence. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the broadsides and pamphlets of monstrous births which appeared in the mid-sixteenth century in England and continued for over 100 years.

Reproduction provided an easy way to judge and contain the behavior of women as it was understood that the mother’s sins, beliefs and thoughts were to blame if the child did not come out in God’s image. As Crawford says,

> Reproduction was understood as an intermediary passage between divine intention and human flesh, and mothers’ sins, beliefs, and even their thoughts were understood to have the ability to mar God’s image. Each birth, then, testified to its mother’s conscience or her imagination; it revealed either the perfection of God’s image in human form or the presence of human error.

Thus the site of reproduction is also the site of fear, namely of adultery or men’s helplessness in the face of women’s ability to make false claims. Therefore the monstrous birth functions not only as a trope for adultery, or the fear of interference in patrilineage but exhibits a deeper fear of women’s “shaping of power”, or, in other words, “the fear expressed is of maternity itself and its power to disorganize masculine identity.” The birth of a monster represented a ‘morbid symptom’ as it related to the reproduction of control systems and institutions at the time.

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94 Cressy, 47.
95 Patterson, 288.
96 Crawford, 148.
Monstrous births, which were usually dead at birth or died shortly thereafter, were morbid symptoms in that they registered both disorder and death, but they also attested to a larger problem: the illnesses of which they were symptomatic. The monster, moreover, represents a particular kind of crisis, intimately involved with bodies and their (re)productivity.98

With this deep-seeded fear in mind, the pamphlets can be read as their own kind of warning or revelation, a way to “attempt to reassert control over women’s bodies, speech and offspring”, by making explicit the crimes of the mother.99 As with the monster from other lands, bound within Western understandings as a means of control, the pamphlets also frame the strange and unknowable inside both the confines of the medium and the logics of the monstrous.

3.2 Materializing the Monster

What exists as an unspoken truth in the monstrous birth pamphlets, that women are inherently tied to the monster, is made explicit in several demonstrably misogynistic texts in which there is a slippage from using the monster as a simile to something more concrete – what began in text as similar or like, becomes is.100 For example, the last two verses of the poem, The Dispraise of Women by C. Pyrrye from 1551 describes women as their own monstrous race:

Those and sundry more we find,
Teaching us to beware:
In trusting of this monstrous kind,
Whose mischief is not rare.

98 Crawford, 13
99 Luttfring, 169.
In time therefore take heed and learn,  
This monster to eschew,  
And eke with wisdom to discern,  
Her wicked witless hue.  

This kind of misogynistic writing continues throughout the seventeenth century, famously appearing in a pamphlet by Joseph Swetnam in 1615 titled, *The Arraignment of Women*, (Fig. 9) in which Swetnam warns men about the dangers of women, and advises against marriage due to women’s ‘unconstant’ natures. This pamphlet, as respondents at the time noted, was not concerned with individual women, but rather took women as an other, a different and inherently flawed race. Again, here there are references to women as monsters, unnatural animals and dangerous creatures from abroad. Swetnam announces early on in the text that he will be accusing some women of being monstrous, likening their anticipated responses to the text to the barking of Cerebus, a two-headed dog:

Thus women are subtle and dangerous for men to deal with, for their faces are lures, their beauties are baits, their looks are nets, and their words are charms, and all to bring men to ruin…If thou wilt avoid these evils thou must with Ulysses bind thyself to the mast of the ship as he did, or else it would have cost him his life, for otherwise the Syrenian women would have enticed him onto the Sea if he had not so done.

This association of the monstrous and the sexual weaves its way throughout the history of monsters, as their animal natures, free from the logic of the mind make them more driven by the pleasures of the body. A connection to the libidinous natures of women is a tool that has been

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103 McManus, 199.
used to explain a host of types of monstrous women, such as the siren, the cannibal and the witch. The [uncontainability] of female sexuality is thus a kind of power as it is unpredictable and dangerous, representing not only the power relationship between the sexes, but also to the potential for escape. Thus it makes sense that aspects of female sexuality proliferate the pamphlets at the time and connect the mind and speech of women with the possibility of usurping men. According to Wiltenburg, “such sexual emphasis often places women in a separate category of being, even when their activities have clear parallels with those of men”.  

In emphasizing sexuality, an impulse that can be masked, the sexuality of all women comes into question, creating an environment where all women have the potential to be monsters. This was a technique employed by pamphleteers working in satire, resulting in satirical petitions, purportedly written by women, ridiculing them for their participation in political spheres which relied heavily on double entendre and false, highly sexualized names. In this way, connections were reinforced between women who sought to involve themselves in politics and prostitutes, known at the time as “common women”, thus a simple semantic shift turns the common woman into the woman of the commons and therefore “commonality itself was effeminate and sexually dissident”.  

Modeled after Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*, Henry Neville’s *The Parliament of Women* (Fig. 10) from 1646 is an extended satire, an example of a misogynistic text taking aim at women

104 Wiltenburg, 141
and their involvement in politics.\textsuperscript{107} Often appearing in what was known as political pornographic satires, “parliament of women” forms of satirical pamphlets proliferated during the late 1640’s, featuring vicious caricatures of republican and dissenting women.\textsuperscript{108} The subtitle, “with the merry laws by them newly enacted; to live in more ease, pomp, pride, and wantonness: but especially that they might have superiority, and domineer over their husbands” suggests a monstrous hybrid of half-man, half-woman or rather, a woman who is attempting to turn herself into this monster by usurping the political authority of men to serve her own physical desires. The woodcut on the frontispiece is an image of a formal gathering with a woman in the center who appears to be swearing in a document while a woman across from her seems to be engaged in some sort of legal discussion. Three women flank either side of the room and appear to be in a state of chaos, talking to each other and directing their attention in various places. The image is meant to be satire, showing how ludicrous it would be to have women in these kinds of positions, but, like any satire, relies on a truth, in this case, that women were fighting their way into these kinds of environments. These women represented disorderliness within masculine realms through their association with all that was emotional and physically driven.

In the realm of cultural conceptions women still embodied disorder, for they represented the unruly drives that disturbed male self-control, the private world that persistently impinged on the public and the natural world that resisted human attempts to impose its rational will.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Suzuki, 155.
\textsuperscript{108} Mowry, 212.
\textsuperscript{109} Wiltenburg, 255
These texts charged women with “organizing to legislate their own sexual privileges”, which according to Melissa Mowry, illustrates royalists fears about sharing political power, corroding stable social political and economic relations by “inverting the sexual hierarchy between men and women.”110 The degree to which satire represents truth created additional difficulties for the reader, as the lines between the spectacular, the satirical and the ‘truth’ became tangled together, asking the reader to tease out the intentions of the authors.

110 Mowry, 212.
Chapter 4: Embodying Resistance

4.1 Fashion Monsters

In a broadsheet from 1566 called *The true discription of a Childe with Ruffes* (Fig. 11) it is women’s clothing which is held responsible for the birth of a child whose deformities resembled the flowing cloth of women’s clothes. It suggests that clothing can be “transnaturing” and that “gender identity is not a ground of absolute difference but something constructed through the accretion of material and behavioral details”\(^{111}\). The author of this pamphlet, Richard Jones would produce another publication in 1583 for Phillip Stubbes called *The Anatomie of Abuses* which would once again return to this notion of fashion as an active agent in the downfall of women, suggesting that it is more powerful than words because its presence is like that of an idol, “imprint[ing] itself both on the eye of the beholder and on the body of the wearer”\(^{112}\). Stubbes’ work used violent imagery to describe the fashions of the day, describing doublets as “slashed, jagged, cut, carved, pincked and laced” and the “monstrous ruffes”\(^{113}\). Furthermore, Jones clearly believed in the “transnaturing power of fashion”, describing how “new fangled fashions rather deforme us then adorne us […] making us rather to resemble savadge Beastes and stearne Monsters, then continent, sober, and chaste Christians”\(^{114}\). As Julie Crawford notes, Stubbes clearly targets those fashions which are the most favored at the time, and repurposes woodcuts that were used in earlier pamphlets to draw a connection between women and deformity which relies on the public’s ability to connect the imagery of earlier woodcuts with his

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\(^{111}\) Crawford, 49
\(^{112}\) Ibid., 51
\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{114}\) Ibid.
words to establish authority. Warnings about women’s fashion, much like the monster, reappears at regular intervals when it is useful as a means of controlling an unruly present. This is not to say that women were accepting these warnings however, as plenty of women responded in their own writings. An example of this is in Esther Sowernam’s response to Swetnam’s pamphlet where she inverts the fashion argument to place the blame on men. “When men complain of beauty and say that ‘women’s dressings and attire are provocations to wantonness and baits to allure men’, it is a direct means to know of what disposition they are. It is a shame for men in censuring of women to condemn themselves.” Just as Sowernam rejects the idea that women are responsible for the reaction men have to their attire, many women rejected the responsibility to dress according to their gender, another act which resisted the rules of appropriate women’s fashions.

The tensions between sexuality, fear and resistance are also evident in the pamphlets which point to the fashion monster or the fashioning of false bodies. This was a version of the monster that was in-between forms, using dress to either evidence their dangerous hypersexuality, or cross-dressing to affect or change the wearer into something more masculine, as in the example of the pamphlet Hic Mulier (Fig. 12), a scathing criticism of cross-dressing published in 1620 by John Trundle, a time when there was a surge of interest in the question of whether women could exist independent of men. Part of a larger attack on transvestitism as an affront to nature, the bible, and society, this pamphlet, and many others like it, sought to stop the

115 Crawford, 51
popularity of what this pamphlet calls the “masculine-feminines” of the time which was women dressing and behaving like men, wearing men’s clothes, cutting their hair and carrying stilettos. The crude woodcut on the *Hic Mulier* pamphlet shows a woman wearing a man’s cloak and shoes, sitting waiting for a haircut from a male barber who stands next to him. On the other side of the room stands a woman who stares at her own reflection in a hand-held mirror while a child holds on to her dress. These figures provide a counter-point to the ‘man-woman’ engaged in the controversial act of hair cutting, the child shows fear at the monstrous act happening in front of him and the woman remains fixed on her own reflection, focusing on the man’s hat she is wearing, rather than her frightened child. The pamphlet congratulates those women who have not been drawn into this practice, and attacks those who make their bodies either decorated or grotesque as being responsible for creating a monstrous hybridity – as the pamphlet says, “halfe man, halfe woman; halfe fish, halfe flesh, halfe beast, halfe Monster” – all devil. Even King James responded to the act of women dressing like men, objecting to the ‘insolencie of our women, and theyr wearing of brode brimmed hats, pointed doublets, theyr hayre cut short or shorne, and some of them stilettos or poniards, and such other trinkets of the moment’. As this was not a new concern, rather one that can be tied back to the Old Testament, the resurgence of interest in this hybridized woman at this time once again suggests the relationship of the female body to political control at that moment. Though, as Susan


[119] Clark, Sandra, *Hic Mulier*, 183
O’Malley notes, the women look “mannish” not because their dress is overtly male, as they are still wearing skirts, but in their gestures and wide stance, we are meant to see the ways they are adopting a masculine identity. This particular pamphlet reveals the paradoxes of pamphlet culture. It tells us not only that the female body was a ready source of humour and available for appropriation and ridicule but it also suggests that “middle class women were expected to make up a significant portion of pamphlet readership”.  

A week after Hic Mulier’s release, a companion pamphlet appeared entitled Haec-Vir (Fig.13) this time targeting the “womanish-man”. In this woodcut, the figures are outside, the figure on the left wearing an outfit which is very similar to the woman’s in Hic Mulier including a hat with a large feather. The front of the cloak is open to reveal the skirts inside and the figure holds a pistol in their hand and spurs on their shoes. Opposite this figure stands another, this one appearing to be more masculine but holding leaves and a spoon, obviously intended to confuse the audience and further blur the boundaries between men and women. However, unlike Hic Mulier, which described women as “mens shee Apes” and described their desire to wear men’s clothing as “an infection that emulates the plague”, Haec-Vir offers a more generous reading of cross-dressing, seeing it as a way of asserting oneself and offering an “eloquent plea for liberalism towards women.”

You condemne me of Vnnaturalnesse, in forsaking my creation, and contemning custome. How doe I forsake my creation, that doe all the rights and offices due to my Creation? I was created free, born free, and liue free: what lets me then so to spinne out my time, that I may dye free?

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121 Clark, Hic Mulier, 158
122 Clark, Hic Mulier, 182
To alter creation, were to walke on my hands with a face erected, with a body cloathed, with a mind busied, & with a heartfull of reasonable and devout cogitations; onely offensiue in attire, in as much as it is a Stranger to the curiositie of the present times and an enemie to costume.\textsuperscript{123}

This text evidences the emergence of a gender war, one where women were challenging the idea that they were inferior in every way to men, instead suggesting that this kind of dress is a way that women were actively trying to find balance in the sexes.\textsuperscript{124}

Fashion appears at other times in images in order to signal the inappropriateness of women’s behaviours. One particular woodcut appears multiple times around 1640 (Fig.14), and this image shows a group of women who appear to be publicly stripping and flogging a woman sitting in the centre of the image, her shirt ripped open and her skirts visible. Unfortunately the top of this woodcut has been cut off, so it is difficult to see everything being yelled at the woman, but “hang her” is visible, and the obviously dishonoured woman is asking for help as two of the women prepare to beat her with short brooms. In the bottom left is a boy who appears to have returned with a bowl and a razor, presumably to shave the woman’s head, as we see her flowing hair in contrast to the contained hair of the other women. There are several compelling aspects to this image; the first is that the artist was savvy enough to emphasize a kind of female panopticon, reminding women that they are not only accountable to men, but being watched by all of those around them and would do best to follow the rules of decency. And this was true to some extent, as there are many stories of women joining forces and accusing other women of


\textsuperscript{124} Clarke, Hic Mulier, 182
sexual evils, most often adultery resulting in some kind of punishment for the accused.

However, it is the clothing in this image that provides the most insight into the role of dress for women, as this woman has clearly dressed the part of an immoral woman. Her dress is a petticoat with separate skirts, where the body can be easily detached, unlike the other woman shown who wear either petticoats with bodies joined to the skirts or waistcoasts over top. 125 This image reemerges twice in 1641. Once in a pamphlet titled *A Discovery of Six Women Preachers* (Fig.15), this time the text has been scrubbed and adapted to now refer to a number of different women who were publicly engaged in preaching. 126 In this image the original text showing the women uttering commands has been replaced with the words, “A company of women preachers” in letterpress text and the threatening items used for flogging have been removed. Here the women appear to be assisting the woman, rather than harming her, suggesting that it is a whole group of women who have “trespassed onto the male sphere of intellectual activity…and threaten to annex these territories” suggesting that these women would be better suited for the “gaol or the madhouse”. 127 In the same year, the woodcut is used once more to show a group of prostitutes bemoaning how costly the civil war had been to their profession in *The Sisters of Scabard’s Holiday* (Fig.16), but this time the woodcut has been completely wiped of all written material. The accompanying text was revolutionary in nature, suggesting that women could


127 Achinstein, 148
abandon their husbands if they refused to obey them. This woodcut needed only minor alterations in order to say many different things about the state of society and women’s role within it, relying primarily on fashion and nudity to make clear the position of the author to the reader. As David Cressy, says, it is not the truth of these images and their use in the pamphlets which matters, whether they were imagined or satirical, rather is it is that “the world was turned upside down in the imagination of cheap print before armies took to the field and civil war and regicide shattered patterns of governance.”

4.2 Resistance in Print

Despite the obvious attacks on women, these petitions, drawn from true demands, also function as historical documents, evidencing women’s participation in public and political life. By the 1640’s women’s involvement was unprecedented, their efforts so forceful that some consider this time as a foundation for the later Suffragette movement. Women were active as rioters, writers and vigorous petitioners, often gathering in groups as large as five thousand at parliament to contest issues such as trade, debt laws and the state of the kingdom, despite knowing that they were not welcome there. At times they resorted to violence and were trampled on by horses or shot at in return.” Perhaps due to the threat of retaliation, women

131 Hunt.
132 Ibid.
pamphleteers, though still marginal, were savvy in their use of the techniques of public writing, “turning conventions to their own advantage, finding in the rhetorical transactions, models of authority and authorship, and the idea of public speech common to pamphlets” as a vehicle to challenge the limits on their public voices. Generally employing a pen name, there were several responses in pamphlet form to Swetnam’s writing, the most famous of which is Ester Sowernam’s from 1617 in which she cited the Swetnam’s ‘misshapen’ pamphlet as proof of his monstrosity. In addition to Sowernam’s pamphlet, Rachel Speght, the only respondent to use her own name, A Muzzle for Melastomus alleges Swetnam’s pamphlet to be “the very emblem of a monster”. A third response, written by Constantia Munda, a pen name meaning Moral Constancy, continues the strategy employed by Sowernam and Speght of inverting Swetnam’s original assertions: “Woman, in the second edition of the epitome of the whole world, the second tome of that goodly volume compiled by the great God of heaven and earth, is most shamefully blurred and derogatively razed by scribbling pens of savage and uncaught monsters.”

These rebuttals and the reversal of language complicate the narrative of female inequality and subordination, and point to “the resistance, compromises and ambiguities with which women actually negotiated relations between the sexes”. Revolutionary pamphlet culture shows how ordinary citizens were able to participate in political life and suggests that early modern women had a clear sense of their own agency, troubling ideas about the public sphere of opinion as a site

133 Raymond, 277.
134 McManus, 16.
135 Shepherd, 130
136 Wheale, 120.
of confusion and diffused power.\textsuperscript{137} The environment was one in which women’s roles were being reconsidered, in part due to the appearance of a female monarch in the sixteenth century and the surrounding controversy about the unnaturalness of a female leader, making the environment a tense one for women pamphleteers. This connection is made visible in Swetnam the Woman-Hater, an anonymous satirical play rebutting Swetnam’s original text, performed by the Queen Anne’s Men at the Red Bull Theatre, which effectively concluded this pamphlet war in 1620.\textsuperscript{138} In 1637, Swetnam’s pamphlet was reprinted, an occurrence which possibly was responsible for a second gendered pamphlet war that would break out a few years later.\textsuperscript{139} In Simon Shepherd’s introduction to this second ‘war’, he suggests that the production of these controversial pamphlets was a financial decision and that John Taylor and John Okes, created a “custom-made gender controversy, with a view to making money”, in order to capitalize on the interest in gender norms and roles at the time.\textsuperscript{140}

This exploitation effectively trivializes what can otherwise be a serious discussion. Women are thus reduced simply to objects for entertainment. The fabricated gender controversy contributes to a tradition that sees women as jokes or monsters or fairground curios. It is worth recalling that in these months Okes joined in a rush of ballads to cash in on some new grotesque.\textsuperscript{141}

These ballads, “The Woman Monster”, “A Maiden Monster”, “A Strange Relation of a Female

\textsuperscript{138} Logan, Terence P., and Denzell S. Smith, eds. The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists: A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama. Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1978, 211.
\textsuperscript{139} Shepherd, 160
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Shepherd, 160
“Monster” and “The Hog-faced Gentlewoman” used the monstrous in ways that suggest a connection to the attacks by Swetnam on ‘scolds’ two decades earlier. According to Shepard, the scold did not have to be pig-faced to be monstrous, rather they had to be grotesque, “She will be melancholy, malicious, and her most study shall be to be ill-conditioned…her delight is chiefly to make debate abroad and to be unquiet at home”, connecting the monstrous with the disruptive – that which turns the logic of the home on its head.142

Of all of these responses, The Women’s Sharpe Revenge ‘written’ by fictional spinsters Mary Tattle-well and Joan Hit-him-home, is by far the most astute. Written in 1640, this pamphlet came in response to John Taylor’s 1639 pamphlet entitled Juniper Lecture, an attack on ‘sharp-tongued women’.143 The Women’s Sharp Revenge considered issues of the day in order to strengthen a vindication of women, reminding readers in regards to fears about women becoming violent that never “since the beginning of that world [has] such a devilish and damned stratagem [been] devised by women”, a strategy which both introduces the idea of female violence and defends it in the same text.144 While clearly satire, this pamphlet is nonetheless one of the most important as it not only speaks to the audience of women that Taylor imagined to be interested in the topic, but attacks issues such as the moral double-standards of men and the inequality of education in a particularly considered and insightful way, suggesting an awareness of the thoughts of its audience.145

Though certainly in the minority, there were other texts published that were both written by women and seemingly were unafraid to unabashedly criticize gender roles. One such author

142 Ibid., 161
143 Ibid., 160
144 Dolan, 47.
145 Shepherd, 161
was Lady Anne Southwell who produced poetry which criticized the way that men manipulate women in order to keep them restricted to traditional gender norms.

All.maried.men.desire.to.haue good wifes:
but.few.giue good example. by thir liues
They are owr head they wodd haue vs thir heles.
this makes the good wife kick the good man reles.
When god brought Eue to Adam for a bride
the text says she was taene from out mans side
A simbole of that side, whose sacred bloud.
flowed for his spowse, the Churches sauinge good.
This is a misterie, perhaps too deepe.
for blockish Adam that was fallen a sleepe[.] 146

Southwell’s true accomplishment is that she critiques gender expectations within Christian marriage by frequently insulting Adam, using him “as a symbol of all that is obstinate and foolish about men who crave power over women but do not understand the responsibility that comes with it”. 147 Beneath these critiques is the concept of ‘mystical marriage’, or the metaphor of the marriage of husband and wife as being akin to the connection of self to Christ and the Church. This metaphor created an opportunity for gender fluidity that many women, like Southwell, capitalized on, connecting to “a moral standard that was beyond gender, a Christ in whom there truly was no male or female” (Galatians 3:28). 148

Because it encompasses both human marriage and divine love, mediating between the gendered and the universal, mystical marriage provides the ideal lens through which to view women writers’ religious agency. It allowed them to construct authority and negotiate competing constructs of gender; it gave them the ability to walk and the liberty to speak. 149

147 Ibid., 1.
148 Longfellow, 3.
149 Ibid., 13.
In an environment where many of the female characters who were fighting back were actually men, women like Southwell were engaging in a world that was dangerous for them because of the possibility of others manipulating their words, dismissing them as a joke or a scold and therefore, even to resist, a woman had to protect herself from slander by operating from inside the gender norms of the time. What is perhaps most compelling about publications by women is most of them are devoid of imagery. While this is likely the product of both a lack of resources and the inability to procure or commission woodcuts, it nonetheless sidesteps the technique used by male authors of anchoring the text with an image that rested on well-known iconography. This further suggests that women’s writing was not about using the conventional imagery to reproduce the monstrous on a situation, rather it was their offerings of new and challenging opinions that were meant to proliferate with the pamphlet becoming the very thing men were afraid of - the material manifestation of the monster.

4.3 Performing Resistance

While there are some examples of women who were able to share their criticisms and do so using their own names, many writings by women, in order to be consumed, involved some degree of the erasure of self, the washing off of the monstrous other through either the use of anonymity. This is a technique in which the female autobiographer engages in a representational strategy designed to be self-authorizing, a “dissolution of the self” in order to “claim a certain
truth-status for their writing”. Such is the case with *Report and Plea*, Anna Trapnel’s account of her arrest and subsequent release after twelve days spent in a prophetic trance. During the trance, in which she was never alone, she was heard uttering “explicitly subversive political commentary” which ultimately she could not be held accountable for as it was determined that she was not in control of herself during these trances, but rather had dissolved the self into whatever had possessed her. This is a point which scholars have called into question, suggesting that Trapnel was, in fact, engaged in resistant performance, most likely precipitated by an extended refusal of food. The notion of the mystical marriage also functioned as a legitimizer in the case of Anna Trapnel, who used her “metaphorical identity as the bride of Christ to justify [her] politically and socially subversive speech” and strengthened to claim to authority. The weight her work had is clear by looking at its response as her contemporaries in the Fifth Monarchist sectarians received Trapnels’ folio with reverence, almost as though it were scripture.

Trapnel was a member of the sectarian group, the Fifth Monarchists who positioned themselves in opposition to the patriarchal authority of the Independents’ Protestantism, defining themselves through “antirationalist practices of prophecy and embodied communicative performance that functioned in opposition to a ratiocinating, masculine Protestantism”.

152 Longfellow, 4.
153 Longfellow, 8
154 Magro, 405
Trapnel, like many of her Ranter contemporaries, shared a narrative of internal turmoil inside her trances and her writing, claiming that she must fight to stay close to God’s plan for her rather than allowing her sinful nature to pull her away.\textsuperscript{155} Though she relies heavily on her inherent womanly weakness, there is evidence of a strong and self-aware politically charged version of her through her writing which “demonstrates a sophisticated ability to tell the story of her life in terms that give it a specific and radical political force”.\textsuperscript{156} Much of this comes from Trapnel’s own history, having dabbled with several radical groups before her time with the Fifth Monarchists, suggesting a politically motivated streak.\textsuperscript{157} As well, in accounts of her travels she is described as “a witty and politically adept prophet, one able to retort to the court’s implicit reproof”, and when she responds to an inquiry about her travelling as an unmarried woman she replies, “Then having no hindrance, why may not I go where I please if the Lord so will?”\textsuperscript{158} Trapnel was not the first prophetess, others had come before her but were denied the right to speak, such as the midwife Jane Hawkins. Hawkins achieved notoriety for her public utterances; mainly reflections on the state offered over several days but she was eventually accused of witchcraft and held responsible for a monstrous birth in England, the transcripts of her words destroyed before they could be printed.\textsuperscript{159} The primary difference between Hawkins and Trapnel was the issue of the public sphere. To many, women’s involvement publicly in politics represented a trespass on the realm of the public political and intellectual - a male sphere. It was suggested in misogynistic pamphlets such as \textit{A Discoverie of Six Women Preachers} that these

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{155}{Ibid., 411}
\footnote{156}{Hobby, 170}
\footnote{157}{Ibid., 171}
\footnote{158}{Ibid., 170}
\footnote{159}{Levin, Carole, Anna Riehl Bertolet and Jo Eldridge Carney. \textit{A Biographical Encyclopedia of Early Modern Englishwomen, 1500-1650}. 1st. Boston: Routledge, 2016, 400.}
\end{footnotes}
women, in lacking reason and clearly being motivated by “their bodily needs for sex, ale and food”, were displaying their mental deficiencies and therefore should be contained within a madhouse.\footnote{Achinstein, Sharon. "Women on Top in the Pamphlet Literature of the English Revolution." \textit{Women's Studies} (Taylor & Francis) 24, no. 1-2 (1994): 131-163, 148.} Madness then, was a direct counter to women’s political involvement, and could be used either to discredit or occasionally, it could be brushed aside to hold a woman accountable for her actions. This discussion was made possible through the rise of a medicalized discourse around madness that was beginning to form at this time in England. Though the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem had existed as a mental hospital since 1330 and was the only facility of its kind in England, until the seventeenth-century it was only home to a handful of patients. During this century however, it grew rapidly from an average of nine patients to twenty-seven in 1632 and forty-four by 1642, providing a space for those who otherwise would have ended up in a general hospital or, if they proved too violent, a local jail.\footnote{Scull, Andrew. \textit{The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900}. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 11.} As Andrew Scull notes, this was a time of differentiating insanity from the “previously inchoate mass of deviant behaviours, so that it was seen as a distinct problem requiring specialized treatment in an institution of its own”, an occurrence he suggests was intertwined with the burgeoning market economy.\footnote{Scull, 35.} Insanity was often determined after some familial violence had resulted in a crime, often when a spouse murdered their partner or a mother murdered their child.\footnote{MacDonald, Michael. \textit{Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-century England}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 128} Private madhouses were founded by entrepreneurs around 1660 to take care of those deemed to be insane, relying on the use of
medical theories of the time. The use of the madhouse as a holder for those who ‘misbehaved’ would, by the following century become so prevalent that the practice would draw scathing criticism. In 1728, Robinson Crusoe author, Daniel Defoe would write just such a protest piece to highlight how devastating and underhanded the madhouse system had become.

Sending their wives to madhouses at every whim and dislike, that they may be more secure and undisturbed in their debaucheries ... This is the height of barbarity and injustice in a Christian country. ...If they are not mad when they go into these cursed houses, they are soon made so by the barbarous usage they there suffer ... Is it not enough to make anyone mad, to be suddenly clapped up, stripped, whipped, ill-fed, and worse use? To have no reason assigned for such treatment, no crime alleged or accusers to confront, and what is worse, no soul to appeal to but merciless creatures who answer but in laughter, surliness, contradictions, and, too often, stripes [lashes with the whip]?  

Defoe’s accusation that placing a wife inside a madhouse to allow for the husband’s debauchery provides an interesting inversion of the seventeenth-century claim that women had to be removed from the public due to their ‘bodily needs’ and suggests the same tension between control and lack thereof that plagued the debate around a woman’s place in politics a century before. In May 1652 at Whitehall chapel, a woman appeared, bare breasted, disturbing the sermon. While the minister felt the woman’s actions could only be caused by madness, others saw her actions as protest, demanding that she be held accountable for her religious politics. One such constituent, David Brown, demanded that the woman be seen as both dangerous and “capable of rational political action”. Therefore rather than considering her naturally deficient, he

164 Ibid., 11.
166 Achinstein, Women, 150
demanded she must be treated as “a fully autonomous, rational creature”, further showing how
careful women had to be at the time about their political involvement and their use of performed
madness in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{167} Foucault has argued that it is this moment, when those who are
considered to be mad or irrational are removed from the public sphere, that people felt a need to
distance themselves from this madness by clearly delineating spaces for the rational and the
irrational.\textsuperscript{168} However, according to Sharon Achinstein, the private sphere could also double as
the holding space for feminine madness with the polemicists insisting that “what was madness in
one sphere, however might be proper behavior in another: the women would be acting properly
as long as they stayed at home”.\textsuperscript{169}

Unlike Hawkins, who used the public stage, Trapnel’s performances were technically
private, making them trustworthy and less open to scrutiny, a trick that eventually allowed for
the widespread release of her words in printed form as her behavior was ultimately deemed
appropriate for the sphere she inhabited.

As a ‘Riminge precheresse’, ‘singing’ quietly in a trance, Trapnel participates in a form of prophecy that she can construct as private
devotion, the praying in her chamber that was acceptable for a woman
where preaching in public was not. In doing so she is able to answer both
the charges levied against Jane Hawkins, and which she herself feared:
‘They will say the spirit of madness and distraction is upon her, and that
it is immodesty[.]\textsuperscript{170}

Thus Trapnel manages something quite extraordinary, she creates anonymity through her
detachment from that which speaks through her, engaging a public discourse in the private

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{168} Foucault, Michel. \textit{Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason.}
\textsuperscript{169} Achinstein, Women, 149.
\textsuperscript{170} Longfellow, 158.
sphere, troubling the divide between the public and private and ultimately erasing her personhood from her contributions while operating within the system she was opposing. Subverting Foucault’s notion of subjugation, in her prophetic trances, Trapnel is freed from the responsibility to see and narrativise herself through the eyes of the religious institution of which she is a part. As Geoffroy de Lagasnerie explains in his text *The Art of Revolt*, anonymity can provide just such a wormhole out of the grip of institutional control.

> It is also possible to describe the destabilizing force of anonymity in another way: by trading the institutional viewpoint for the subject’s perspective… Anonymity enables the subject to belong to an institution while entertaining a form of exteriority with regard to it. It makes it possible to cultivate forms of duplicity.  

Although Trapnel, as the body present during the trances was known, was not anonymous, the use of a disembodied other fulfills similar requirements, allowing her to technically remain interior while acting outside of the religious institution. Thus, before her arrest and subsequent publication, she achieves political subjectivity from within her domestic space, troubling Lagasnerie’s requirement that one must enter a public space, or become visible in order to bring forth a political issue.

> In discussing the opposition between reason and madness, Foucault, in his lecture, “The Order of Discourse”, describes how the voice of the madman could be brushed aside as worthless, in that it contained “neither truth or importance”. However, Foucault also notes moments where the madman’s voice is elevated, even beyond that of the reasonable person, as

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172 Lagasnerie, 58.
173 Foucault, Discourse, 53.
being capable of a pure truth, saying:

On the other hand, strange powers not held by any other may be attributed to the madman’s speech: the power of uttering a hidden truth, of telling the future, of seeing in all naivety what the others wisdom cannot perceive.\textsuperscript{174}

Foucault goes on to identify the theatre as a place where the madman was allowed to speak, playing the role of “truth in a mask”, not unlike Trapnel’s cloaked prophetic and performative offerings.\textsuperscript{175} Her prophecies contained a strong corporeal element, which ultimately made her a target for claims that these trances had a sexual component. This served the dual function of providing truth-value while detaching Trapnel herself from the experience.

Her ecstasies, which are fashioned by Trapnel as moments during which she has no control over her physical person, provide the mark of authenticity of the visionary prophet. Put simply, people pay attention to Trapnel, they give heed to her utterance, precisely because she makes a spectacle of her body.\textsuperscript{176}

Thus the physical fits legitimate her words through the transcendence of her body, but also “eludes any essential, stable signification” because it produces so many contradictory meanings.\textsuperscript{177} It is this combination that makes the later publication of her work possible, as the narrative of being overtaken by the prophecies offer a lesson about religious constancy, all the while underpinned by a resistance to the patriarchal religious institutions. As Longfellow notes, Trapnel both opens herself up to be at once both manipulators and signs, combining the passive and the active in her attempt to be heard and legitimated.\textsuperscript{178} This is just one example where the ‘monster’ subverts the interior rules, extracting herself from her writing and transferring the

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} Magro, 414
\textsuperscript{177} Magro, 415
\textsuperscript{178} Longfellow, 150
monstrous to some ethereal other manifested in the printed matter itself.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The crisis created by the birth of a monster is one which is regenerative, one that can reproduce as long as the body that created it remains strong and therefore “it is women whose acts and behaviours produce monsters”.\textsuperscript{179} This is true in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England not only in the production of monstrous children but in the creation of social change in the form of religious, political and gender instabilities made material through the use of print media. It was not just the images of monsters, tied into a visual history of the other which made explicit the danger to society, but the ability of women to hybridize themselves that was the true threat. Monstrosity could be a choice, a place on a continuum in which the monstrous other could pretend to be a woman whilst harbouring inside of her the seeds of tremendous social upheaval. Manifesting in a perceived rush to political power, unrestrained sexual impulses, dangerous fashion choices or challenges to the religious structures, women were capable of not only producing the monstrous, but of deforming all of society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the pamphlet culture of this time in which both men and women were reproducing opinions at an unprecedented rate, producing as the Hollar and Peacham pamphlet demonstrates, opinions so prevalent it was as though they were fruit hanging from tree. It is in the attacks by men and the counterattacks by women that we most clearly see the perceived threat of both women and their voices in print. Whether intended as satire or attack, the pamphlets written by male authors around the conduct of women evidences fear of a real threat. The savvy use of imagery from

\textsuperscript{179} Crawford, 14.
other lands or other times only serves to strengthen the argument that men needed to lead the public to the conclusion that women were monstrous.

If we return to Jeffrey Cohen’s assertion that the monster only exists to be read as a marker of a moment of upheaval, then its arrival in pamphlets from sixteenth and seventeenth-century England reinforces the dramatic changes that were happening in women’s social and political lives aided by their access to print. With its free-flowing creation and distribution, seemingly, print offers a new way for women to explore their own agency within their culture. These contradictions are found in much of the writing by early modern women, and speak to a complication of agency in which, as Judith Butler says, “the subject might yet be deriving its agency from precisely the power it opposes”, the evidence of which is visible in the ‘concealed agencies’ of revolutionary pamphlet culture.\(^{180}\) Such is the case with the ‘rantings’ of Anna Trapnel in which Trapnel manages to circumvent the usual systems of selection and control that would typically contain the “regular formation of discourse” or the easy dismissal of her words as part of the noise of opinion.\(^{181}\) For Foucault, the division of madness is one of the three “great systems of exclusion which forge discourse” but when madness is cloaked in both self-awareness and the erasure of self, the perceived quality of discourse can be elevated.\(^{182}\) According to the New Testament, women were not allowed to have a public voice, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at

\(^{180}\) Nevitt, 6.
\(^{181}\) Foucault, Discourse, 72
\(^{182}\) Ibid., 55
home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church".¹⁸³ Therefore in an environment where women were fenced in by expectations around their conduct and experienced intense prejudice and the threat of retaliation, some three hundred female authors in the seventeenth-century had to find techniques to cloak their opinions in ways that allowed them to circumvent the system they were in, appearing to be also fighting against the monstrous. Whether that was by offering some sort of apology for speaking within their texts and an acknowledgement that it was not “becoming to a woman” or fully abdicating their own experiences, women’s agency was made obvious by their willingness to cloak their opinions in order to contribute to the discourse.¹⁸⁴ Many of these women saw the potential for their own emancipation in the ideas that came forth in the revolutionary years which allowed men who were also excluded from having a public voice, namely that if the ‘weak things of the world” could “confound the things which are mighty” then woman as the weaker of the two could be the greatest strength.¹⁸⁵

In using these monstrous bodies in print in a time of representation of the body politic, the stories and the pamphlets become part of a narrative of internal and external monstrousness within society.¹⁸⁶ In that it exists because it reproduces earlier text and images that sought to control that which was strange, different and a way to define the ‘goodness’ of self, this monster is a powerful one, knowable and yet constantly morphing in order to do its cultural work, at once constructive and destructive, of embodying religious, political and gender tensions in revolutionary England. However, the story could not have permeated the social body in the way

¹⁸³ I Cor. 14:34-5
¹⁸⁴ Wheale, 111
¹⁸⁵ Hobby, 162
it did were it not for the open access to the creation of distribution of print, especially in the years preceding the Civil Wars. As the Stationers’, and by extension the government’s, control over print fell away, it was text and images printed on paper, representing monstrous views and reducing the mighty to the common that created the real threat. Voices of truth and authority were replaced with a cacophony of voices in print, a hybridized monster who contained both truth and lies, high and low, male and female, growing so powerful that even the monarch did not sit higher than Opinion, blindly overseeing her harvest. Unassuming in form, with just a few sheets of paper bound together, it was the pamphlet and the range of opinions it contained that was powerful enough to turn the world upside down and set the stage for centuries of monstrous public discourse.
Figure 1. Wenceslaus Hollar and Henry Peacham, *The World is Ruled and Governed by Opinion* (1641), etching, British Museum.
Figure 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. W. Barley, *Strange Nevves out of Kent of a monstrous and misshapen child, borne in Olde Sandwitch, vpon the 10. of Iulie, last, the like (for strangenes) hath neuer beeene seene* (1609), Imprinted at London by T. Creede, British Library.

Figure 3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *A wonder vvorth the reading, or, A true and faithfull relation of a woman, now dwelling in Kent street who, vpon Thursday, being the 21 of August last, was deliuered of a prodigious and monstrous child, in the presence of diuers honest, and religious women to their wonderfull feare and astonishment* (1617), Imprinted at London by William Iones, British Library.
Figure 4: Detail from Psalter, with additional hymns and prayers and a medieval world map (‘The Map Psalter’) (1260s), British Library.

Figure 5: Sebastian Munster, *Fantastic Creatures in Africa*, Cosmographiae Universalis (1550), woodcut, Basel, 1151. Science Photo Library.
Figure 6 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Albrecht Dürer, *Rhinoceros* (1515), woodcut, National Gallery of Art.

Figure 7 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *A declaration of a strange and wonderfull monster: born in Kirkham parish in Lancashire (the childe of Mrs. Haughton, a Popish gentlewoman) the face of it upon the breast, and without a head (after the mother had wished rather to bear a childe without a head then a Roundhead) and had curst the Parliament [sic]. Attested by Mr. Fleetwood, minister of the same parish, under his own hand; and Mrs. Gattaker the mid-wife, and divers other eye-witnesses: whose testimony was brought up by a member of the House of Commons. Appointed to be printed according to order: and desired to be published in all the counties, cities, townes, and parishes in England: being the same copies that were presented to the Parliament (1646)*, Printed in London by Jane Coe, woodcut, British Library.
Figure 8 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. A strange and lamentable accident that happened lately at Mead-Ashby in Northamptonshire. Of one mary Wilmore, wife to John Wilmore rough mason, who was delivered of a childe without a head, and credibly reported to have a forme crosse on the brest, as this ensuing story shall relate. (1642) Printed at London for Harper and Thomas Wine, woodcut, British Library.
Figure 10 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *With the merrie laws by them newly enacted to live in more ease, pomp, pride and wantonnesse* (1646) Printed in London, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

Figure 11 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *The true discripion of a Childe with Ruffes borne in the parish of Micheham in the Countie of Surrey in the yeere of our Lord. MDLXVI* (1566) Imprinted at London by John Allde and Richard Johnes, British Library.
Figure 12 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers in the Masculine-Feminine, of our Times. Exprest in a briefe Declamation. Non omnes possumus omnes. Mistris, will you be trim’d or truss’d?* (1620) Printed in London for John Trundle, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

Figure 13 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *Haec-Vir: Or The Womanish-Man: Being an Answere to a late Booke intituled Hic-Mulier. Exprest in a briefe Dialogue between Haec-Vir the Womanish-Man, and Hic Mulier the Man-Woman.* (1620) Printed in London for John Trundle, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
Figure 14 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *Stripping, Whipping and Pumping; or The Five Mad Shavers of Drury-Lane* (1638), Printed in London for John Taylor by J.O. British Library.

Figure 16 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. *The Sisters of the Scabard's Holiday: Or A Dialogue between two reverent and very virtuous Matrons, Mrs. Bloomesbury, and Mrs. Long-Acre her neare Neighbour. Wherein is Discovered how terrible, and costly the Civill Law was to their Profession; and how they congratulate the welcome Alteration.* (1641) Early English Books Online.
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