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ABSTRACT

Tempests, lighting and thunder churn up visions of murderous black dogs, daggers of fire, armies clashing and flocks of dragons in early seventeenth century English pamphlets. These visions take the form of woodcut images that whittle them away to the most straightforward effect, while the written accounts are often just as plain. Yet, it is in this seemingly crude and ephemeral form of the pamphlet that problems and issues rise to the surface, breaking up time and history. Within the pamphlet, the sky is a site of particular turmoil. This is the void that accommodates haunting tales of extra-terrestrial beasts as well as prodigious comets. It is the void which is filled with the possibility of the imagination as well as the anxieties of the undefined, and allows different forms of experiences to intermix. I will expose this site as being a particular aspect of the English pamphlet. This site has presented unusual problems and even current interest in print culture has not found ways to engage with this material, perhaps, because it forces a reconsideration of modern categories, structures of meaning, and familiar dichotomies.

The challenge that is to be found occurs at a particular converging point where sky and ground meet, namely the reader. It is the position of the reader that is at stake within the dynamics of this site. It is the position of the reader that is made more complex and dangerous when one considers the pamphlet in relation to early seventeenth century applications of prophecy. This is a practice which brings into focus the boundaries around the sky and reveals hidden meanings. I will consider how the dynamics of the sky within the form of the pamphlet intervened in the social and political pre-Revolutionary period of England when diverse forms of authority and constructions of knowledge were drawn together in the pamphlet. Authorities found in reason, faith, superstition and magic were placed in potential dialogue and conflict regarding human experiences relating to the sky and what these meant in relation to a larger construction of a social political reality. The sky within the pamphlet can thus be considered as a frontier space of multiple contacts where something new is nurtured and threatens to emerge.
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If our reach does not exceed our grasp....then what is heaven for.
Robert Browning

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INTRODUCTION

"Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns?"¹
Shakespeare, Henry VI

Events that take place in the sky have long aroused intense responses. These events, whether it be the striking appearance of three suns, a flying dragon, a comet or the clashing of armies and disks in battle, have attracted as many as they have repelled. Their circulation in society through representations and dialogue seems to persist even after they are seemingly subdued and normalised through systems of thought such as science, religion or simply "rational reasoning". Yet, how does the circulation of these events through words and images alter how viewers see the sky and themselves? What do representations of the sky mean and what can they tell us about the past as well as the present? The very impossibility of supplying a single or definitive answer to these questions has lent preternatural and paranormal events in the sky much of their continued controversy.² Their adaptability and elusiveness are not simply a problem; these are what make the sky and its representation worth studying.³

The period and place in which I will anchor this investigation is 1578 to 1642 England, and the representational locus is the printed pamphlet. This period, place and locus offer particular problems and rewards. The period prior to the English Civil War of 1642 is a time of festering wounds and growing pains both politically and socially. The political and social

¹ After this exclamation from Edward in “Henry VI”, Richard describes the event; “Three glorious suns, each one perfect sun; Not separated with the racking clouds, But sever’d in a pole clear-shining sky.” Edward and Richard continue a dialogue on the meaning of the “wondrous strange” event. Refer to “3 Henry VI” in William Shakespeare, The History Plays. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1989. p.314
² In the twentieth century paranormal events in the sky are controversial and have struck a chord in modern north American society. The twentieth century material on the subject of the paranormal and unusual phenomena in the sky is immense ranging from television shows such as the X-files and debates over the internet to Ph.D. dissertations and scientific experiments. In contemporary society Jacque Vallee and Allen J. Hynek were instrumental in bringing an interest in the “unknown” of the sky to a broad audience. They were leading researcher scientists for the United States government in the 1960’s and 70’s expanded the topic of U. F. O. ’s by exploring the larger questions on how this phenomena challenges prevailing notions of reality and addresses audiences in a moment in contemporary history. Refer to Hynek and Vallee, The Edge of Reality. Chicago: Henry Regency Co., 1975.
³ I acknowledge that these introductory thoughts were influenced and partially expressed by Patrick Curry in his study of astrology. According to Curry, astrology is characterised by its adaptability and elusiveness, as well as its ability to both attract and repel different viewers. Refer to Patrick Curry, Prophecy and Power Astrology in Early Modern England. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
uncertainty is reflected in the attention given to the sky. Studying the sky was condemned by followers of Luther and Calvin because it often confused the fine lines between religion, demonic magic and superstition. Many Puritans who wrote pamphlets held the sky at a distance, explaining that it is enough “for us to see, and feare; to hear, and not meddle; to apprehend what our weaknesse can, and to admire the depth which we cannot read.” These preachers placed the sky within God’s exclusive domain and encouraged the opinion that events in the sky should not be questioned or understood, but simply worshipped as God’s handiwork.

At the same time, revolutionary advances in science, such as the invention of a primitive form of the telescope and the published speculations of the astronomers Copernicus, Galileo, Brahe, Harriot and Bainbridge, turned the eyes of an educated English audience skyward with new questions about the place of humanity in the cosmos and the nature of the planets and stars. Comets, the earth and moon were observed with greater attention and more technically defined ways of seeing. Those seeking to explore new waterways sought and encouraged increasingly more accurate celestial cartography in order to navigate these terrestrial places. Thus the sky potentially offered a source of guidance for navigation and hope for

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4 Refer to Jean Calvin, “An Admonition against Astrology Judicial.” (tr. in English by G. G. in 1561). In this publication Calvin admonishes his readers and says that we “must not set our minds upon the starres!”

5 “Looke up and see Wonders” 1628, also refer to “A Blazing Starre or Burnying Beacon” (1580), and “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings.” (1622)


Tycho Brahe’s speculations of the universe were published in the English pamphlet, “Learned Tico Brahe his astronomical conjecture of the new stare.” (1638). Two detailed images open the pamphlet. One places the new star in a constellation the other presents Brahe with his instruments, looking up at the stars.

John Bainbridge’s observations of the 1618 comet refer to “An astronomical description of the late comet.” (1619)

future terrestrial conquest as well as advancements in knowledge.

Simultaneously, religious changes, continual fluxes in politics, and devastating natural events such as plagues, food shortages, floods, and the unusually cold winter of 1618, encouraged superstition about the sky.\(^8\) For some, celestial wonders eased the tensions surrounding the unknown and seemingly grim future by offering insight into the upheavals in politics, society and the natural environment. By the time the English revolution had started, events in the sky already had a wide and attentive audience which could be used by different political and religious communities through the broadly distributed pamphlet.\(^9\) It is because there were audiences already in place that astrological material had unprecedented circulation during the English Revolution, with patrons for this material including diverse sectors of the population.\(^10\)

However, what interests me in the context of this present study, is not the climax of astrology’s popularity or the final social upheaval and political revolution, but the pre-Revolutionary images of the sky that were circulating in the pamphlet form. I want to explore what audiences and constructions of the sky were being nurtured and valued prior to the crisis of 1642 and to what effect. How did people engage with the representations of the sky in the pamphlet form? Keith Thomas’s book *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is still an indispensable resource for studying the shifts in values and the role of wonders and prodigies in general. Yet, his study raises more questions than it answers such as how the specific form of the pamphlet could have altered or transformed how events in the sky were interpreted. What subtle shifts were taking place via the pamphlet before the dramatic historical moment of the civil war? One purpose of this thesis is to try to suggest some answers to these questions by anchoring this investigation of the sky in specific case studies of individual pamphlets that

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\(^8\) Refer to G. B. Harrison, *Jacobean Journal*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, for documentation of floods, plagues and cold winters

\(^9\) The historian Chris Durston has studied the publication of miracles and wonders during the Civil War. He links these events to their function as propaganda to win or support political and religious factions goals for the Civil War. Refer to "Signs and Wonders and the English Civil War," *History Today*, 1987, 37(Oct.): 22-28.

were published prior to 1642.

The English pamphlet is an appropriate space in which to situate these questions because at the turn of the sixteenth century this form functions as a new space that allows for new expressions and experiences. This space nurtures new ways of writing, reading, visualising and thinking about human experiences and events. At this time, the English pamphlet is not unlike our confused and unstructured space of the internet, full of possibilities, but also full of fears.\(^1\) The pamphlet’s social and cultural implications remained unresolved during the mid sixteenth century up until the out break of the 1642 Civil War. In contrast to this period of political upheaval when the pamphlet’s format becomes standardised, earlier production is characterised by its diversity and irregularities.\(^2\)

The unstable and shifting character of the pamphlet’s form and content pose obvious problems for the modern researcher. Sandra Clark in her study of *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers* points out that the popular pamphlet is like a “literary chameleon”. She argues that as a form of literature it can display the colours of sociology, history or fade into the background of certain distinguishable authors. According to Clark it is a literary shape shifter, elusive and difficult to define.\(^3\) Tessa Watt in her study of *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* defines the English pamphlet as any unbound book which dealt with issues of a topical and ephemeral nature and which were relatively inexpensive to purchase.\(^4\) Yet, this definition is extremely broad including works ranging from 6 to over 100 pages. Watt and Clark note that in the end, the pamphlet is a form that is defined more by its negative connotations than any

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\(^1\) One of the most obvious examples of both the possibilities and fears that the pamphlet form harbors are the Martin Marprelate pamphlets of the 1580’s. These pamphlets were aimed against the bishops of the established Church of England and stirred up public support as well as the fears of religious and political authorities. They allowed the anonymity of the author and publishing house because their production remained continually in motion, floating from one author to another and from one publishing house to another. Refer to Paul Christianson, *Reformers in Babylon* for a discussion on the impact and effect of these pamphlets. *Reformers in Babylon*, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978. Also refer to J. B. Black’s *The Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994. pp. 201-202.

\(^2\) Refer to Shaaber’s *Forerunners of The Newspaper*, and also the STC# 1876 for the proclamation prohibiting publication of certain material.

\(^3\) Refer to Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640*, Rutterford: Fairleigh Rickinson Univ. Press, 1983. p. 18. Clark’s study of the pamphlet takes a literary focus exploring how the pamphlet can be viewed as a new literary form and should be valued as such.

definitive characteristics. In Section One of this thesis I will examine the dynamics of the sky within the pamphlet form, various printing strategies, and the issues both of these raise for viewers. In the following sections, I will explore how this form addressed and responded to historically specific and differentiated audiences.

In the struggle to find a productive way of approaching this study, I realised that any insights are lost if the presence of the pamphlet prior to the Civil War is defined by its negative or common characteristics in relation to some set of teleological positives or extraordinary events and objects. This is a particular problem in studying a topic that falls more easily into contemporary notions of the occult, magic, folklore and pseudo-science, and more so if it surfaces in forms that emphasise the sensational and are marketed for a wide audience. As both Watt and Clark have already acknowledged, the representations in the pamphlets are often dismissed and their power deflated. However, these representations need to be considered on their own terms for the claims they make and their potential to shed light on human experiences, the social and political environment and structures of vocabulary about the sky.

Questions and issues can be raised by taking the pamphlet and content of the sky seriously. By investigating specific case studies of pamphlets that deal with the sky and exploring some explanations and implications of the circulation of these representations, perhaps some insight can be gained into the relationships between social classes and communities of viewers especially with regards to the dynamics of power and hegemony. In these representations new languages are encouraged while older languages rejected or reformulated. In the process of considering representations of events in the sky in their historical and social context, perhaps our own thinking about the sky may be addressed. By bringing forward the dynamics, problems and possibilities that the space of the sky offers within the early modern pamphlet form I hope to place the pamphlet within its own time without preventing it from speaking to us in our time.

English pamphlets that present the sky to a viewer, bring to the forefront the viewer's role in the act of reading and interpretation. In relation to the sky, this role often had prophetic overtones, the prediction of the future and by implication the interpretation of the present and fixing of the past. The sky lures acts of prophecy into its space which range from divine
revelations to the cosmic speculations of natural philosophers. Obviously, these acts of prophecy do not take place in a vacuum. Tied to a socially and historically specific viewer and interpreter, they are intimately connected to other considerations of knowledge, claims of truth, authority and power. In Section Two I will focus on the particular issue of prophecy as one element of the sky within the pamphlet form. It is an element which brings into focus the boundaries around the sky and reveals hidden meanings when linked to various forms of authority found in faith, superstition and magic.

The sky is the void which is filled with the possibility of the imagination as well as the anxieties of the undefined, and allows different forms of experiences to intermix. This is the void where potential intervention into the current tensions between different ways of thinking about human experiences in relation to the sky could be realised. This intervention extended into and affected the unstable and volatile social and political dynamics of seventeenth century England. This possibility existed because both the representations of the sky and the experiences of these unavoidably embodied ambiguity and contingency, and thus they provided a space for reinterpretation and re-articulation by others, for different ends. The characteristics of the sky invited various viewers to participate in the pamphlet through practices of prophecy which seize the opportunity to intervene and reveal the hidden meaning within the void. In this way, the sky within the English pamphlet presented a possibility to some audiences but, also a threat. It became the site of hybrid conflicts and interactions where different forms of authority and practices of prophecy potentially collided over the floating and unstable meaning that the ambiguity in this space encouraged. Yet, in the process of this conflict and interaction this site opened the door for something new to emerge. In Section Three, I deal with the possibilities and identity that threaten to emerge from this space.

Perhaps because of the hybridisation of the sky, modern scholars have also had some difficulty stabilising its meaning or place in the English pamphlet. As a result, the sky’s dynamic characteristics have often slipped through the cracks of some of the most seminal research on print culture. Events and spaces that have been considered are more conducive to modern subject boundaries and literary themes such as monsters, religious apparitions or specific social spaces. However, as part of the pamphlet genre, the sky is particularly vexing.
Although most of the pamphlets that restage wondrous events in the sky include some religious aspects, their relationship to strictly religious or godly material is uncertain. Even Watt in her study on religion and pamphlets in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* omits them. On the other hand, though this site relates events of nature and the cosmos, its relationship to the history of science is just as uncertain.¹⁵ Studies on the history of the sky in relation to science focus on scientific discovery and exclude pamphlet material that suggests other ways of experiencing this space.¹⁶ The sky is most easily categorised and analysed under the history of newspapers since, as it has often been noted of the pamphlet form as a whole, their most modern counterpart is journalism. However, even this category is much too neat and too extreme. The pamphlet’s representations of the sky exhibit characteristics that draw on traditions and practices that can not be enveloped by the early history of the newspaper.

This study began with a general question situated in twentieth century concerns about the meaning and definition of the paranormal or those events that are situated on the border and frontier of science and society. This question was united with a particular archive, *The Short Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640* (STC). Studying this archive and struggling to order the events that I found there opened up questions. Modern divisions and categories began to collapse within the hybrid spaces of English pamphlets, books and printed images. What makes the representation of the sky particular interesting as a focus for historical research is its hybridity, uncertainty, and potentially conflicting interactions that break apart modern boundaries of religion, science or journalism and allow new ways to think around these topics. Interpretations of events in the sky were not and are still not fixed. I see this kind of uncertainty as a space for opportunity and possibilities.

¹⁵ A number of studies have opened up the study of pamphlets to be valuable windows into cultural formation. These have been written in relation to distinct subject matter or literary themes such as the witch trials, monsters, astrology, early newspapers, piety and murders. The sky hovers over various subject matter pamphlets including prodigies and astrology.

THE DYNAMICS OF THE SPACE

In 1583 Henry Howard, the Earl of Northampton, takes the time to write a rather lengthy book titled *A defensative against the poyson of supposed Prophesies*. ¹ This book, dedicated to denouncing popular prophecies and their various forms of circulation was published more than once and as late as 1622. These multiple editions signal a continued interest in Howard’s arguments. On page 118, Howard addresses the specific form of the pamphlet and criticises it because “so great is their boldness and so strong their illusion” that these pamphlets are able to strike fear in the “common people”.² The implication is that there is something about the dynamics within this particular kind of pamphlet that attracts, but also disturbs a viewer. Thus, the form itself becomes an issue and raises questions as to its particular construction of the sky and its potential to engage viewers. What does the pamphlet’s form, format and production open up for viewers that is regarded as threatening for the author?

“The truth is out there”

A straunge and terrible wunder wrought very late in the parish church of Bongay, a Town of no great distance from the citie of Norwich, namely the fourth of this August, in the year of our Lord 1577. in a great tempest of violent rain, lightning, and thunder, the like whereof hath been seldom seene. With the appearance of an horrible shaped thing, sensibly perceived of the people then and there assembled.³

The 1577 English printed pamphlet that restages this extraordinary experience continues with a narrative that reveals the event at Bongay over the course of 16 pages. The author describes a thunderbolt that took the shape of a horrible shaped thing which descends down from the sky onto the congregation of Bongay, “a town of no great distance form Norwich”

² Refer to Henry Howard’s *A defensative against the poyson of supposed Prophesies*, (1622) P. 118.
³ Abraham Fleming, “A Straunge and terrible Wunder.” (1577) originally undated but presumably published in 1577 according to the Short-Title Catalogue #11050.
near the west coast of England in the county of Norwich. The author describes how the horrible beast from the sky strangles two persons dead, breaks the back of another, and leaves its claw marks in the stone of the church’s walls as a physical witness of its existence. This text is not left to its own devices. A translation back into visual form reasserts both the text and the event’s authenticity (figure 1). The text describes this visualisation as drawn in “a plain method according to the written copye. by Abraham Fleming.” Indeed, it is a simple profile of a black beast that confronts the viewer. What the viewer encounters in the frontispiece of this pamphlet is a woodblock print that whittles away the details of the beast for the most straightforward visual effect. A thin black line marks off a 3.5 by 3 inch space and firmly contains the black beast of Bongay. This bounded space is a size characteristic of the printed images used in these pamphlets.

The printed images in pamphlets are small windows into a visual performance. They are woodblock prints that encourage a viewer to look closely into this window before turning to read the text. In other words, the size calls attention to the importance of the visualisation. By understating its presence it forces the eye of a viewer to enter this space and move through the lines that are printed there. In the process a viewer is encouraged to consider what takes

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4 The “A Straunge and terrible Wunder.” notes that Bongay is a town “of no great distance form the citie of Norwich.” According to John Speed’s Atlas Norwich is a city near the west coast of England in the county of Norfolke. Bongay was thus located in a fertile and rich county. Speed lists several mansions and noblemen’s houses and claims that “the country and all its population had no need of industry”. For maps of the English counties and information on each refer John Speed’s An Atlas of Tudor England and Wales, intro. E. G. R. Taylor, London: Penguin Books, 1951. pp. 24-25 and plate 24. First edition, 1627.

5 I have found two other texts that directly refer to this incident in the Bongay church. In The Chronicles by John Stow (1580) Stow refers to this event on page 1191; “on August 4, 1577 the visitation devastated the churches of Blythburgh, Suffolk and Bungay.” The description of the havoc rests on the words of “doctor Rogers”. Stow claims that Rogers was a bishop who preached in the church that same afternoon. The event is also referred to in Thomas Churchyard’s pamphlet, “The Wonders of the Air the trembling of the Earth and the warning of the World before the judgment day.” printed somewhat after the event in 1602. Churchyard claims that this horrible beast was sent down from the sky from God as a spectacle to our sight. He also mentions a “doctor Roger” who was preaching at Bongie when the “terrible wonder happened there.” Interestingly this event also co-insides with an unusually impressive comet of 1577 that inspired over 160 pamphlets on comets. Refer to C. Doris Hellman, “Comet of 1577: Its Place in The History of Astronomy” I Columbia Studies in History and Economics, and Public Law. Columbia Univ. press, 1944. p.318-430. And , Hellman’s “Additional Tracts on the Comet of 1577 in Isis XXXIX 1948. p. 172-174. The English pamphlets on this particular comet include: “A treatise on Blazing Stars in General occasioned by the blazing star of 1577.” (1618) Abraham Fleming. “An Astronomical description of the late Comet.” (1619) John Bainbridge. “A View of Certain Wonderful Effects.” (1578) Thomas Twyne.

6 By performance I am referring to a self-conscious act of exhibition which may be found in objects that play with a concept or event in front of a perceived audience.
place in this image and what possibly took place in the implied original event. Through this visual performance, the woodblock print not only translates, but transforms the original event in the sky. This woodblock imprints an abstracted contour which transforms the event of Bongay by fixing the extraterrestrial black beast in stasis and containing the entire event within a simple outline of a figure. The beast is presented to the viewer in static profile, with three feet on the ground, claws extended and one paw raised. This profile exhibits the contour of the beast and assumes the viewer’s ability to recognise it. The beast’s profile is an example of an abstracted contour that is one type of strategy used in the pamphlets representing the sky. This strategy isolates a form and makes it stand for an entire textual narrative. These pamphlets that display an image of a single blazing star or comet use this same strategy (figure 2).

In the pamphlet “A Straunge and terrible Wunder” (1578) the abstract contour of a beast is enclosed in a format that seems haphazard and unsystematic. It is displayed on the front cover of a small inexpensive piece of paper that is folded and holds together several interior printed pages. These printed pages of the pamphlets range in number from 6 to over 100 and the words and letters printed on them are not normalised. The words fluctuate in their spelling, font and spacing and are a performance of variation and play. The spelling may change from sentence to sentence. The font shifts from section to section. Capital letters punctuate sentences. Even on a single page, words in bold black letter print are followed by words in italic and then roman. These various styles of typography evoke different associations and meanings that in relation to each other form different relationships on the page.

The words use visual vocabularies that can potentially direct readers who encounter this space. The black letter type carries associations with an older more familiar font and common writing style because less exclusive publications such as ballads, plays, proclamations and broadsides most often used it. It thus evokes association with those publications considered to be more accessible and public. In contrast, the roman font was most often used in books and scholarly materials and had a more exclusive viewership. It thus evokes associations with refinement, and limited access both in the audience and material. These visual codes are evident in “Straunge Newes out of Calabria” (1586) (figure 3). In this pamphlet, roman font
presents the voices of the prodigious children while the main body of the text uses the black letter. This may direct readers to associate the voices of the children with an enunciation that had restricted access or a limited audience. Interestingly enough, the roman font presents the phrase “as in the Picture is to bee seene”. Perhaps the visual code of the roman font implies that the “Picture” located on the frontispiece also carries the same associations of restricted access and authority that the voices of the prodigious children seem to possess.\footnote{Clark also recognizes the variations in font as signaling different audiences. She however, does not consider words as a visual performance. Refer to \textit{The Elizabethan Pamphleteers}, p. 25.} This visual code may have alerted viewers to the status of the image in relation to the prodigious voices.

Italic is yet another font used in these pamphlets. It is often used to quote another text or person, imprint a language other than English, and indicate a geographic site or a new section in the pamphlet. Together these visual languages, activated in the typography itself, may have encouraged readers to see the words and read their visual codes as well as their syntax. Thus the textual space is as much a visual performance as the image that opens the text. This visual performance transforms the original event in the sky into a parade of words, letters and spaces.

However, the movement of words across the page is not regular and is in many ways disruptive. Not only does the font vary which disturbs an even flow across the page but, spacing and spelling is irregular. A reader’s eye moves through a space that to modern eyes appears unsettled and almost schizophrenic in its layout, not knowing what spelling, spacing or font on which to focus. In some ways the text seems to toy with visual vocabularies and a reader’s ability to decode them while reading the syntax. Yet, in other ways this play with spacing, word repetitions and gaps imprint the movements of a speaker’s body; its breathing, pausing and anticipation. However, what is perhaps most obvious is that through this visual drama the text draws attention to itself and promotes the textual space as a place for seeing as well as reading. In this way the text directs readers and makes them aware that it is by seeing a display of words that an implied original event becomes present.

The textual performance incorporates a linguistic exhibition that keeps readers attentive
to this space through change and fluctuations. Phrases and words in Latin punctuate the English language (figure 4). This introduction of Latin within the pamphlet may indicate the attempt to address a learned audience. Yet, a syntax that is rather informal surrounds the flourish of Latin. Properly structured sentences do not contain the English language. In the pamphlets the English language breaks out from the boundaries of grammar and digresses over several pages with repetitious uses of the comma, colon and semicolon. In the end, the textual space perhaps maps a form that is in the process of becoming. It is not yet fixed within boundaries that normalise and remove the presence of a body by flattening out the variations and patterns of letters, words and sentences presented to a viewer.\(^8\) The text parades a range of colours and variations, and attempts to visually draw attention to itself. It almost seems to be trying to establish its identity and place as a visual spectacle.

Sections divide the space of many of the pamphlets and bring a sense of formal order and regulation to this otherwise lively and varied space. These sections consist of a title page, which may include a printed image. Characteristically a section that directly addresses the reader simply titled, “To the Reader” follows the title page. Then, depending on the author or producer, the remaining portions may contain only one section or several. Exceptional pamphlets divide the retelling of an event or topic into several sections. The pamphlet “Wonders of the Ayre” (1602) is an unpaginated small quarto written by Thomas Churchyard, an English puritan preacher and author of several pamphlets (figure 5). This small pamphlet is divided up into a title page, a dedication, verses to a reader, prose text, and verses of the Lord’s prayer. Each section of a pamphlet may perform in a different way. In “Looke Up and See Wonders” (1628) the first thirteen pages perform as if it was an oral sermon delivered by someone emotionally invested in the event. The following six pages shift in tone in order to describe the event through the voice of a distanced and objective reporter.

Perhaps, a printed image acts as a formal anchor in relation to a textual performance that on many levels is in a state of continual play and variation. In relation to the emerging traditions

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\(^8\) When quoting from the pamphlets or giving titles I have retained the original spelling and punctuation of the words. However, I have normalized the spacing, font, and the long “s” of sixteenth century English.
of print and the pamphlet form, an image is embedded in older and more stable traditions. The pamphlets that offer images do so through the technology of woodblock printing. These woodblocks carry associations to an implied viewer. Within this type of printed image, the texture of the wood bleeds through the image, haunting it with the physical presence of the engraver’s movements as well as the former tree’s texture and surface. It thus imprints the process of its production and the physical nature of its origin. The woodblock of “A Straunge and Terrible Wunder” (1578) offers a visualisation of an extraterrestrial beast. However, the printing technique gives this beast a familiarity of a past life on earth, not in the sky. The beast resonates with the ordinary and everyday. The abstracted contour confirms this because it outlines the familiar shape of a dog, lion, or possibly a bear. This shape and technique of the woodblock reassured viewers that the original beast of the sky presented through the text was not completely unknown or alien. Thus the woodblock drew in its audience through a general acquaintance and immediacy. In this way, the visualisation of the beast could pacify the anxiety of some viewers who might be encountering a new wonder in the sky as well as a strange and unfamiliar practice of reading print. Thus the woodblock print participates in the dynamics of the pamphlet and alters how viewers encounter this space.

The woodblock print perhaps plays a mediating role in this formal space. The very ordinariness of the woodblock interconnects with and encounters the extraordinary character of the emerging technology of print and the pamphlet form. The text of “A Straunge and terrible Wunder” (1577) proclaims the “Wunder” of a “Straunge” event in the sky. This element of wonder also applies to the printed media and form of the pamphlet itself. The printed words, and the activity of reading may have been a “Wunder” to emerging reading audiences whereas, the pamphlet was a “Straunge” new form in the market of published material, situated between a broadside and a book. A woodblock print that resonates with familiarity and older traditions may have made the extraordinary character of the emerging technological wonder of print and

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9 Medal plates were first used for printing words in Germany with the printed edition of the (Mazarin) Bible in 1453. Book publishing as a profession only emerged in 1492. There were three pursuits in the profession type founder, printer, and bookseller. By 1501 there were nearly 1,000 printing offices in Europe. The printed materials largely consisted of books. Only toward the end of the sixteenth century did prose pamphlets appear in significant numbers in England, whereas the woodblock image has a much longer history and tradition.
the pamphlet more palatable for some viewers. The woodblock could bring the wonder of print, form and content back to a place of comfort. Thus, it mediated between emerging and older traditions and practices. In this way, it stabilised the pamphlet for viewers who were encountering a strange wonder in the sky within an unknown and shifting formal space. A closer look at the text reveals that it also tries to mediate between older and emerging traditions and practices through its performance.

Even while the printed words are associated with a new technology and practice, they attempt to mimic older traditions and thus function in a similar way to the printed image. Through the printed words, familiar oral practices meet with the emerging practice of reading. Printed words and documented syntax resonate with the vocalised practices and traditions of storytelling and preaching. These older traditions consist of listening to a voice enunciate words that quickly fade and disappear in time. They are practices of inflection and sound that force listeners to seize a moment in time in order to possess a spoken word and retain that word in their mind. However, in the pamphlet this temporal practice of oral enunciation meets with the silence and solidarity of black ink pressed onto a white page. The printed syntax of language on a page beckons reader’s eyes with their perpetual presence. The letters hold an illusion of being fixed through time and space outside of listeners who must possess them. Thus the printed words effectively alter oral practices by making them adhere to the printed page.

These two ways of encountering words through reading and listening, interconnect and are in a process of formal negotiation within the text of the pamphlet. Both practices operate in relation to each other and potentially exchange characteristics. The oral traditions effect the text. This is evident in the way it moves away from literary flourishes or an emphasis on linguistic structures. It seems unaware of the subtleties of the written language and the refinement of words that can transform a narrative into a literary event. Rather, the text sets

10 Practice is distinguished from a performance in that a practice is an act that is characterized by the limits of habit or convention.
11 Clark’s study of the pamphlet examines the pamphlet as a new literary form. She also argues that the text relies on oral structures. However, she does not consider the implications of imprinting an oral tradition and how they produced meaning when circulated. Refer to Elizabethan Pamphleteers, esp. pp. 224-279.
itself apart as oral and uses language that is common and seemly straightforward. The sentences tend to run on and meander. They also digress and bracket verbal asides. This gives the sense that the text is being spoken; “And (which I should have told you in the beginning of this report, if I had regarded the observing of order at this time that this tempest lasted, and while these storms endured, the whole church was so dark, yea with such a palpable darkness...”12 The text parades as an oral performance that inscribes a voice’s fluctuations. Thus it gives readers a sense of listening to a voice which happens to be embedded in printed sentences and confined within the folds of paper.

Reading the pamphlet then, positions readers in relation to a hybrid voice of oral enunciation and written text. The reading practice is transformed and is like listening to a story being slowly unravelled or a sermon being emphatically delivered. Thus readers are more willing to forgive and trust the speaker who wanders, and seems to use a familiar and plain language. The length of the sentences and the irregularities of the format are forgotten in the midst of a compelling speaker. This imprinted voice is perhaps an intentional construction of a producer interested in attracting and persuading readers accustomed to listening to a sermon being preached within a church or hearing a proclamation delivered on the street corner. The text plays the role of a speaker and assumes that readers are positioned as part of an audience or congregation. It encourages readers who enter the pamphlet to take their place in the pew or in the crowd that gathers around a speaker on the street. Yet, readers who hold the pamphlet in their hand and enunciate the text simultaneously subverts this strategy of authority. Readers who perform the text as speakers may assume the speaker’s role as they move through the textual exhibition. In this way they stand in the place of the author and not the listener. Yet, another role for participation with the pamphlet is to become actual listeners who hear the pamphlet performed. Both readers and listeners position themselves in relation to the text because becoming either a willing or reluctant members of the congregation. Thus the text could address and respond to different audiences attracted to the oral performance, but position themselves in different ways in relation to it.

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In the process of attracting its audiences the text could potentially act as a mediator between various viewers and readers. Its oral performance diminished the potential anxieties that some readers may have had when faced with the formal inconsistencies of spelling, spacing, language and grammar by incorporating these into an oral performance. Yet, at the same time structures and forms associated with education and cultivation embody this oral voice. Letters and linguistic syntax give form to sounds and verbal enunciation. The voice in the pamphlet can not escape from the physical presence of a typography that attracts audiences familiar with reading and literature. The printed words summoned privileged readers who in the past were the exclusive owners of books and readers of printed material. As a result, the performance within the pamphlet functions somewhat like a bridge between practices of reading and listening, performances of literary and oral, and different socially located audiences. The pamphlet's hybrid voice nurtures a text that is neither literary nor oral delivery, but shares in each. In this way, it pushes these practices and their audiences beyond what each considered to be familiar. The pamphlet nudges historically situated viewers accustomed to the practice of oral delivery and hearing into a formal space of reading and print. In this way, the text is similar to the woodblock print. It nurtures an emerging class of readers into the space of the text by drawing on the familiar. Simultaneously, it pushes a literary readership into a space of storytelling and listening. Both the text and the woodblock mediate between the established audiences of books and the emergent reading audiences. More importantly the pamphlet’s performance raises questions as to the boundaries around these different audiences and practices. Perhaps the practices of reading, listening and viewing were not as clearly defined and limited as some modern research may suggest.

To focus once again on the printed image, it is worth considering the particular role of the image in relation to the textual performances that I have explored at length. How does the image interrupt this performance or how is it altered when placed up against and next to these verbal and textual displays? How does it interact with the text in order to present an experience of the sky to viewers? Again, I will return to Bongay and the abstracted contour of the beast to explore this issue (figure 1). As I discussed earlier, in the case of the abstracted contour brings
to the sky a tangible immediacy of a recognisable profile. This is a dog. This is a bear. Through this strategy the represented experience of the sky is reduced and contained within an identifiable and defined contour. Yet, perhaps in this visual immediacy there is a false assurance that this image is fixed and positions different viewers in the same location. Although a sense of tradition and familiarity haunts this woodblock, the image is in no way stable in its particular identity and meaning. It may be that the printing technique and the familiarity of the profile do not sufficiently limit the potential within this space. The potential that lies within the printed image becomes a particularly important issue in relation to the text because the image could both authorise and transform it.

The image could authorise the text because it is a visualisation of what was originally understood as a visual event in the sky. Where the text translates the event into a display of words the image seems to directly imprint the event using the same visual language. Thus, like the original event, the printed image carries an authority of sight which supersedes the visual posturing of the text. It is this visual authority at the site of the image in the English pamphlet that potentially authorises a textual account of the same event. The image is the visual anchor for the words and grounds the claims they make. However, the image not only confirms the textual account it could also carry the latent power to transform it. This site could slip out from under the weight of the words and push them in new directions because its localised meaning and identity were ambiguous. Although its meaning is in part located in the textual story, the image that faces viewers had interconnecting references. It could simultaneously be located in various forms of knowledge that were outside those that the text puts forward. This variability is one of the dominant characteristics of the forms that seventeenth century authors claim to have appeared in the sky.

The tendency for a form in the sky to be ambiguous and for it to require an authority to confirm its identity and meaning was a real concern in the early seventeenth century. A dog, person, spear, or horse seem to be metamorphosed when they rise up into the space of the sky. They change and their identity becomes questionable, their meaning unstable. This is evident in the debates that the English learned community carried over the significance of forms in the
sky. The particular debate over a dragon is only one example of how this community tried to stabilise an occurrence located in the sky. There were other debates over phenomenon in the sky, such as multiple suns or moons, blazing stars, spears and daggers, circular rainbows, floating canons, and falling star jelly and thunderstones. In this community of educated individuals, a dragon in the sky shifts between identities and meanings. This is evident in such printed books as Thomas Hill’s *A Contemplation of Mysteries* (1571) or William Fulke’s *A Goodly Gallerye with a Most plesaunt prospect, into the Garden of naturall Contemplation* (1563). In the pages of these publications, a dragon shifts from solid form to vaporous clouds. It is always in the process of becoming or never fully present or contained within fixed boundaries of meaning and identity.

In Thomas Hill’s *A Contemplation of Mysteries* (1571) the shape of a flying dragon in the clouds is said to be “ingendred of a vapour, not vehemently hote, drewne up, mightely coagulated, and pressed together, and placed betweene a colde & hote clowde.” This was the common meteorological explanation of this event. Similarly, William Fulke in *A Goodly Gallerye* (1563) argues that dragons in the sky are simply vapours beaten back from the region of cold air, set on fire, and given a serpentine shape. Yet according to Fulke, some people may see it with horror and call it the Devil, but “Thus do ignorant men judge of these thynges that they know not.” Fulke dismisses dragon forms in the sky as only the product of terrified

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13 Thomas Hill and William Fulke are representative of a privileged community of a rising social class in London England. Hill authored calendars and prognostications as well as elementary handbooks for physiognomy, gardening, and astronomy. *A Contemplation of Mysteries* by Hill was intended to be a manual of wonders explaining and describing comets, fiery impressions, thunder and lightening, winds, multiple rainbows suns and moons. It gave meteorological explanations and claims to be a source for educating “both the Saylor and Husbandman” on celestial phenomena. Fulke also authored several works including his *Anti-prognostication*. He was a Puritan clergyman-don and eventually became vise-chancellor of Cambridge University. For history on William Fulke refer to Paul Kocher, *Science and Religion in Elizabethan England*, California: The Huntington Library, 1953. p. 163. For a history of Hill’s literary career and bibliography of his works refer to F. R. Johnson, “Thomas Hill: An Elizabethan Huxley,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, VII (1943-1944), 329-351. Hill’s book draws to a large extent on *Goodly Gallerye* by Fulke. Hill also includes similar legends and historical events that followed the events in the sky.

14 Refer to *A Contemplation of Mysteries* (1571) fol. 25.v

15 “More then sixtene yeares ago, on May daye, when many younge folke went abroade early in the mornynge, I remember, by sixe of the clocke in the forenoon, there was newes come to London, that the Devill the same mornyng, was scene flyinge over the Temmes: afterward came worde, that he lyghted at Stratforde, and ther was taken and sett in the stockes, and that though he would fayne have dissembled the matter, by turning hym selfe into the likenes of a man, yet was he knowen welinough by heis cloven feet. I knowe some yet alyve, that went to see hym, & returning affirmed, that he was in deed seen flying in the ayre, but was not taken
imaginations. Hill, however, leaves open the possibility that real dragons may exist in the sky and be a result of, “the pollicie of Devils, and enchantments of the wicked, as sundrie examples, doe make manifest at this day.”\textsuperscript{16} He acknowledges that several hundred of these beasts “having Swines snowtes” have been seen flying together.\textsuperscript{17} Hill’s awe of them as “secret and divine” is testimony to the divine causes and miraculous character of this event. A dragon in the sky could be a sign of God’s judgement, the appearance of the devil or enchantments of the wicked. At the same time, he considered that these phenomena could be the result of natural events that had physical causes; apparitions from the coming together of hot and cold air. In other words, according to these writers, a dragon could have the identity of a devil or simply be hot and cold vapours coming together. The form of a dragon toys with viewers because when it enters into the sky the viewing position in relation to it becomes unhinged and unstable. Thus, forms like the dragon attract strategies to limit this potential play and fix it into place.

The dragon form was stabilised through various strategies that limit its movement in relation to viewers. The visual vocabularies that are used to present it, in some ways direct viewers and confine this form. In celestial charts, a dragon marks a constellation of stars. The stars and language of a map define it as a figure formed in relation to a star grouping (figure 6). The charts locate the meaning and identity of a dragon for viewers through a visual vocabulary that defines the dragon as a star constellation. In Hill’s book, the dragon moves away from this type of visual vocabulary and the form is let loose from the restricting lines and measurements to fly freely in the skies. This visualisation becomes more ambiguous because it slips between what seems to be solid and vaporous (figure 7). In this image the visual vocabularies are not as clear in directing the position of the viewer or where to situate the dragon. This dragon moves to accommodate different viewers who could situate it in meteorology or in other beliefs.

\textsuperscript{16} Refer to A Contemplation of Mysteries. (1571) fol. 26v.
\textsuperscript{17} Refer to A Contemplation of Mysteries. (1571) fol. 42v-43r.
The publications of Hill and Fulke reveal that the sky allowed for the possibility of debate because a lack of ownership characterised the events in this space. It seems that in these publications no single system of thought had conquered the sky or homogenised the position available to viewers. Thus it becomes a site for active dialogue on how to speak about a range of events that occur in the sky, besides that of a dragon. This space allowed for the possibility of discovering assorted ways to characterise the sky and the viewer’s experiences.

The characteristic of uncertainty and play within the sky is another element of these pamphlets. For example, the visualisation of the dragon in “Straunge Newes out of Calabria” (1586) is presented as solid form in the sky (figure 8). However, the image simultaneously introduces the vocabularies of the star constellations and zodiac to the lower left of the dragon. This image leaves open various potential interpretations as to the dragon. However, this variability that is characteristic of the sky is more potent when it enters the pamphlet space. Within this space both the text and image self-consciously evoke an authority to give credence to their versions of the original event. In other words, they make authorisation an issue by drawing attention to it. By itself the text is a narrative of persuasion. Its authority rests on who is retelling the event or what system of thought the teller is claiming for authority. In the pamphlet “A Straunge and terrible Wunder” (1577) the text’s authority rests on “the written copy by Abraham Fleming”. Thus Abraham Fleming, is called up as the authority for the written text. In the pamphlet “A Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) “honourable persons” approve the event. In the pamphlet “A Most Straunge and wounderfull accidental” (1600) a Governor Weersburch is likewise called on to authorise the event. In part, the printed image locates its authorisation in the voices of the text. The voices of Governor Weersburch and Abraham Fleming potentially endorse the image on the cover of the pamphlet. However, the image also acts as an anchor for the textual performance because, as I have argued previously, it carries the authority of sight. Thus, the image is not only endorsed by the voices within the text but, by the voices of viewers outside of the text. Yet, the question is what strategies were used to define and control meaning when various viewers faced a form that could be ambiguous?
In part, the visual vocabularies within the image direct the position of viewers and how they could locate the meaning of the image. This is evident in the dragon image of the celestial chart discussed earlier. The vocabulary of a celestial map locates the meaning of the dragon and defines it. Yet, what is a significant character of the images in the pamphlets is that the visual vocabularies often potentially summon various limited positions and locations simultaneously, like the image of the dragon that shifts from a solid to a vaporous form. Thus, the visual vocabularies both constrain the position of viewers in relation to the image but, also open up possibilities for shifting positions. It is worth considering how this unstable ground in front of the image potentially effects and transforms the text. What voices could arise from the different viewer positions in front of the image and how could these voices effect the text and the claims it was making?

It may have been possible that the beast on the cover of “A Straunge and terrible Wunder” could have altered the text depending on how different viewers could situate it. A profile language of a beast directs the possible positions available to viewers. The vocabulary of a beast’s profile could have limited the movements of viewers because this type of abstracted contour constrains the meaning and identity of the beast by using the language of heraldry. Profile images of beasts were used in heraldry to symbolise an individual, family, city or country. Coats of arms fix these beasts to become symbols of a person or family. For example Henry VI used the lion as his heraldic insignia.\(^{18}\)

Yet, the modern historian Howard Dobin draws attention to the fact that these animal symbols in coats of arms posed a problem for interpretation because they did not represent people metaphorically.\(^ {19}\) These symbols muddled questions of interpretation because there

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\(^{19}\) Howard Dobin in *Merlin’s Disciples*, claims that the practice of prophecy had become more difficult owing to the advent of heraldry. He draws attention to the fact that animal symbols in coats of arms do not represent people metaphorically. Thus, these symbols muddle questions of prophetic interpretation because prophetic metaphors operate by natural correspondence whereas, heraldic symbols are arbitrary. Refer to *Merlin’s Disciples*, California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990. pp. 23, 68.
seemed to be no natural correspondence between the symbol and the meaning. Heraldic symbols confused interpretation because they were arbitrary. Thus when the image of the beast is located in heraldry, it provided a range of positions for the viewer. The effect on the text is that it is transformed into a narrative of persons or various countries instead of a story of an unknown horrible beast. The textual event is altered into a symbolic and prophetic one that describes the destructive activities of a person for certain viewers. What is at issue in situating the profile of a beast within these heraldic boundaries is a particular person or family’s reputation and identity.

For other viewer’s the abstracted contour of a black beast could be located within the Merlin tradition. This tradition was most familiar to a reading audience through Geoffrey Mammouth’s “History” which in the seventh book conflates in the figure of Merlin, the Welsh bard of Myrddin and Ambrosius.20 Merlin is documented as having visions of various events in the sky. These include a battle between a red and white dragon, an appearance of a star with seven streamers, trumpets, unusual beasts and events of general destruction such as terrible rain and thunder storms. The tradition of Merlin and the images of beasts and storms that were part of his prophecies were not limited just to a reading audience. They filtered through society in various versions and forms including lingering oral traditions that can not be easily measured as to the breadth of audiences they would have attracted. The Merlin prophecies had their roots in a Welsh oral tradition infused with legends and myths predicting armies battling in the sky, unusual beasts, and violent storms.21 However, the Myrddin prophecies were particularly nationalistic. They concerned struggles of the Saxons against the Normans and repetitively conjure up a theme of driving out an alien conqueror. Situating the image in this rather

20 Refer to Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.467
21 Most of the historical studies that I referenced previously on Merlin’s prophecies explore the ways in which these prophecies were used for propaganda by different groups. Keith Thomas offers a two page version of how the prophecies were used by both Catholics and Puritans. Refer to Religion and Decline of Magic, pp. 484-485.
complex tradition would potentially transform the narrative into evidence of the fulfilment of Merlin’s fantastical prophecies.

Simultaneously, a printed profile of a black beast with claws extended could also invite associations with older beliefs and myths. Widely held superstitions of mad dogs, that run through the countryside devouring people, circulated through rural areas where real wild and mad dogs seem to have been a threat. Books acknowledge these beliefs by instructing readers on the many different charms to ward off or act as remedies for mad dogs. Given that the dog of Bongay wrought his devastation in a church, it is curious that one of the charms is the key of a church. View ing the image through these superstitions transforms the textual narrative once again. This time the narrative validates a widely held fear. Still other viewers may see this beast as a visualisation of what the author describes as a horrible shaped thing that descends down upon the congregation of Bongay. In this context, the visual evidence confronts viewers with the “horrible shaped thing” that the text evokes, transforming it into a shape and form of a dog. It thereby limits the potential imaginative and threatening possibilities that the textual performance by itself leaves open.

The pamphlet “A Straunge and terrible Wunder” (1578) offers a case study of how a image within the pamphlet contained latent potential that could surface when different viewers engaged with this space. It raises the issue of the viewer’s place in relation to the image and text. From what place is the image’s meaning located? The image was shown to be a space that has the possibility of play because the boundaries around its meaning shift between different viewers. The abstracted contour of other forms in the sky such as a blazing star or three suns perform in a similar way. The ambiguity in these contour forms could draw in audiences that could locate them in various systems of thought such as astronomy, astrology, religion, weather lore or widely held superstitions of blazing stars. These ways of thinking bring to the image the authority of a particular way of constructing knowledge that fixes the image and in the process alters the narrative that supports it. However, this potential of the

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22 For documentation of different charms against mad dogs refer to Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 36, 213, 216.
image to transform the text could only become active if the image had presidency over the
textual performance that could hold it in place. What is an issue is why and how does the latent
potential become active or, do images have presidency over the narrative for viewers in the
early seventeenth century. Again, the question is, how did different viewers position
themselves in relation to the image and text. These are significant questions and the answers
difficult to find. However, perhaps by the end of this study some implications and possible
answers to them may become clearer.

The early English pamphlet adopts other strategies besides that of visualising the text by
reducing it to an abstracted contour. Some of them utilise a visual narrative while others draw
upon the visual vocabularies of a diagram to display the original event and text. Still others
visualise events in the sky in a way that I shall refer to as a specimen layout. Each of these
strategies visualise the text using a different visual performance. And, each of them alters a
viewer’s place in relation to the pamphlet and in turn to the represented experience of the sky.
The beast of Bongay offered an example of how the abstracted contour of a beast brought the
represented experience of the sky and pamphlet to a place of familiarity and immediacy.
However, each strategy that these pamphlets adopt has in common the latent potential at the site
of the image, to authorise the text by confirming it with the visual authority and to transform it
as in the many readings suggested for the beast of Bongay.

The pamphlet, "Looke Up and See Wonders" (1628) offers a case study of how a visual
narrative positions viewers and represents an event in the sky. This pamphlet is a twenty-two
page small quarto that is divided into four sections including the cover page. These sections
convey the details of a battle in the skies over the Bawlkin Greene which is near the town of
Hatford. Hatford was a town in Barkeshire a rural county west of London.23 The written text
reports this event as follows;

The name of the Towne is Hatford (in Barkeshire) soem eight miles from
Oxford. Over this Towne, upon Wensday being the ninth of this instant Moneth
of April 1628. about five of the clocke in the afternoone. This miraculous,

23 This disturbing occurrence takes place in Berkshire, a rural county west of London. This county was made
up of sandy parts in the east which were quite barren, and fertile parts in the west where wheat, barley and
lumber were harvested and shipped to London via the Thames. Refer to Speed’s An Atlas of Tudor England and
Wales, pp. 14 and plate 4.
prodigious, and fearefull handy-worke of God was presented, to the astonishable amazement of all the beholders, Men, Women, and children, being many in number.

...A gentle gale of wind then blowing from betweene the West and Northwest; in an instant was heard, first a hideous rumbling in the Ayre, and presently after followed a strange and fearefull peale of Thunder, running up and down these parts of the Countrey...

The textual performance that presents this thunderstorm to a viewer continues with a detailed description of a battle being waged in the sky and thunderbolts falling to the ground to the fear of many witnesses. According to the text, the visual narrative is a “naked Description” of “a terrible Fight” (figure 9). Yet, the place of the image in relation to different viewers is perhaps not as simple and clear as the text seems to claims.

This pamphlet contains several of the characteristics that have already been discussed in the previous case study. Printed at the top of the frontispiece in bold type is the word “Wonder”. A woodblock print accompanies this textual enticement and visually gives form to the “Wonder” on the bottom half of the page, anchoring this bold textual presentation. The pamphlet entitled “A Straunge and Terrible Wunder” (1578) adopted this same layout.

However, here, as in other pamphlets such as “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) or “Strange News from Antwerpe” (1612), the image describes the entire occurrence that takes place by using a visual narrative instead of an abstracted contour. The language of a narrative encourages viewers to enter into this space and move through the dramatic unfolding of events. This movement stands in contrast to the strategy in the pamphlets that uses an abstracted contour. The contour of a star, rainbow or beast gives the illusion of a tangible immediacy and seem to be in a state of perpetual present. Thus, both the represented event in the sky and the position of the viewer appear to be defined and beyond question. Though, as I explored this appearance only masked the various limited positions available for negotiation and movement.

In contrast to the perceived immediacy of the abstracted contour the visual narrative, encourages viewers to move through time and enter this space in order to unravel the story

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24 “Looke up and see wonders. A miraculous apparition in the ayre, seen in Barkeshire.” London: (M. Flesher) for R. Michell, 1628. No author is documented on the pamphlet. Modern researchers attribute it to Thomas Dekker, an English dramatist and author of several pamphlets. Refer to A. F. Allison’s Dekker Bibliographical Catalogue (London, 1972), p.27
visually described there. With this introduction of time the entire dynamics become more complex.

In “Looke Up and See Wonders” (1628) a viewer’s eye enters the scene at the point of the two foreground figures (figure 9). These figures split apart to let the eye travel back into the scene along a path until it reaches a group of people on the left. In the centre of this image a viewer encounters two figures, one lies on the ground with his arm over his head as if having just fainted or in a dream state. A shovel lies next to him. The second figure digs at the ground with a shovel where three triangular shapes lie. Located on the right are two small trees. These are balanced by a rock and vegetation on the left. The majority of the people to the left have their hands and faces raised to the heavens. The few who look back to the viewer stop the eye for a moment from wandering further. The viewer’s eye then follows the upraised faces and moves to the space of the sky which presents a visual spectacle. In the centre of the sky, two armies collide in battle and above them three suns shine. The middle sun’s beam shines slightly toward the army in the west. To the left and right of the three suns, large floating canons or tubes spit out clusters of globes. Above and behind the right cannon a drummer beats a drum. Blowing on each canon are the conventional faces of the East and West winds. Waves of thin lines cut into the clouds and landscape, filling the entire print with movement and detail.

As in the case of Bongay, this pamphlet draws on the authority of sight to endorse the image and text. However, in the case of a visual narrative the act of seeing is perhaps more defined. The visual narrative positions viewers in such a way their sight becomes linked to the role of an eyewitness that both sees the event and confirms it. Where the abstracted contour transforms the event and text by reducing it to a singular and immediate form, the narrative plays out the original event as if taking an imprint of it. The visual narrative displays the entire occurrence to an implied eye. The text in “Looke Up and See Wonders” describes this printed image as, “but a Picture of a Battaile fought in the Aire: A naked Description of a terrible Fight; feareful no doubt to the Standers by.” The image reinforces this performance of description by using a narrative that does not add balloons of description and explanation that would give
direction for interpretation of the image nor does it seem to present an abstraction of the event. One position for viewers who witnessed this type of visual performance was to adhere to the text’s account and view the image from this position.

However, the language of the visual narrative potentially summons viewers to account for the image from the site of their own visual experience. Perhaps more than the abstracted contour, the visual narrative pushes viewers into a position to witness this event and read it against and in relation to the text. The narrative vocabulary that seems to imprint the original event and perform as a description summons viewers to account for what they see outside of the textual performance. It calls viewers to bear testimony to it as eye witnesses. It is important to note that this visual experience is held in check through visual vocabularies such as the Biblical reference to the apocalypse. However, what is significant is that in the process of viewers becoming eyewitnesses, the textual version becomes just that, a version. The image is in a sense freed from the weight of the text. Thus, the text is potentially read in relation to the power of the eyewitness account of the image, whether or not that account is held in check through visual vocabularies or not.

The visual narrative that calls on a viewer’s eyewitness verification could have attracted and addressed a specific audience interested in experiencing and witnessing an event in the sky for themselves. The possibility and illusion of directly observing a battle in the sky and multiple suns might have attracted individuals such as the seventeenth century natural philosophers. A case in point is Francis Bacon who argued that meaning is produced through particular experience and observation. Bacon was concerned with new ways of understanding the physical world that moved outside of the traditions found in either religion or classical knowledge. He advocated an inductive method of reasoning rather than knowledge gained through a scholastic method of revelation, faith or superstition. These views were central to an emerging professional community who studied the sky.

Bacon’s claim for the superiority of knowledge gained through experience and direct observation is put forward in his books “The Advancement of Learning” (1605) and “The Essays” (1597). These publications argue that it is through experiencing an event individually
that observations can be made and meaning authorised. These claims directly challenged the claims of other community’s constructions of knowledge. They were in particular opposition to the religious communities of Catholics and Protestants because they brought into question divine revelation and supernatural possibilities. This construction of knowledge also confronted the generalisations and assumptions about the physical world perpetuated through publications and translations of Pliny and Aristotle. Bacon proposed reform in knowledge but, in the process expanded human experiences including experiences of the sky. The visual narrative of the battle over Hatford evoke these concerns. The printing strategy summons viewers to look for themselves at the event that is being restaged in front of their eyes. This strategy addresses Francis Bacon and those who had vested interest in the particularities of experiencing wonders.

Bacon was part of a community of educated viewers who were engaged in exploring the human experience of the sky and were particularly attentive to the specifics of wonders. According to historian Lorrain Daston’s study of wonders and signs, in the early modern period wonders were a specific focus for contemporary natural philosophers. Natural philosophers prized the new and extraordinary as a way to demonstrate the empirical foundations of nature.\textsuperscript{25} She argues that emerging natural philosophers such as Francis Bacon advocated that wonders must be combined with particular experiences. Thus, events that take place outside of the known and established philosophies of nature, such as the appearance of three suns or an army in the sky, must be addressed through direct observation and individual experience. Further, Bacon argued that natural philosophy must take on the task of explaining uncommon experiences through inductive reasoning and can no longer use conventional generalisations like those of Pliny and Aristotle. They must look to the particular experiences of a wonder or deviation of nature because according to Bacon, it is at the site of the “Deviating instances, that is, errors vagaries, and prodigies of nature, wherein nature deviates and turns aside from her ordinary course” that knowledge can be gained about the world and human

experience.26

However, the claim to gain knowledge and explore the human experience by looking at particulars of “Deviating instances” and “prodigies of nature” was tainted with negative associations. According to Daston, in early seventeenth century England, curiosity in wonders carried with it a certain association with “vain curiosity” of trying to know the unknowable realm of God omnipotent.27 The notion of vain curiosity against which the natural philosophers constructed a “valid” curiosity was also linked to divination. Henry Howard, for instance, claims that “the most pestilent and bitter roote, from whence the Prophesies have drawn their head, and received, as it were, their life and soule: is curiositie to searche and hunt for deeper knowledge, of the future causes and affaires of the Common wealth.”28 Lorrain Daston argues, that by studying wonders the natural philosophers tried to validate a “true curiosity” that attempted to know the whole ”machina mundi” or earth and heaven. In effect, these individuals opened up the realm of curiosity and imagination as being valid through hypotheses that combined particulars of experience with possibilities.29 Constructing knowledge in this way transformed prophecy and curiosity so that a new star, a battle of birds, a comet or flying dragon in the sky could potentially be events that revealed nature’s secrets. The pamphlet’s visual narrative that calls viewers to be eyewitnesses and its emphasis on “wonders”, potentially responded to and addressed audiences who adhered to this construction of knowledge. This potential was reinforced through the pamphlet’s display of particulars.

The particulars of time and location situate the pamphlet and define the place of a wonder and the wonder itself. The time and location are announced on the front cover and the title page; “Somewhat: written on occasion of three sunnes seene at Tregnie in Cornewall, the 22 of December last. 1622”(1622), “Wonderful straunge sights seene in the element, over the Citie of London and other places, on Monday being the second day of September: beginnning

26 Refer to Daston’s “Baconian Facts” p.344 who quotes from Bacon, originally located in Bacon’s *Novum organum* ii. p. 29.
27 Refer to Daston, “Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence” pp.113-120.
28 H. H. A defensative against the povson of supposed Prophesies, (1622)
betweene eight and nine of the clock at night, increasing and continuing till after midnight: most strange and fearefill to the beholders" (1583). These pamphlets thus reflect a concern with defining place through specifics of time and geographical location. This definition of place could have been an attempt to respond to readers interested in moving away from generalisations in relation to wonders. These pamphlets stand in contrast to natural histories such as Nature’s Secrets and History of Wonders which use stock explanations from Pliny and Aristotle to explain contemporary strange events. This emphasis on particulars in some ways limits the ambiguity within the events in the sky by bringing them to a localised place. These specifics of time and place perform like a contemporary newspaper that documents an event so that it is fixed to a specific moment, location and set of persons experiencing the event. This positioning of the pamphlet and event may have addressed and responded to a seventeenth century professional community who practised the same strategy of regulation. This strategy positioned viewers in relation to a localised and specific wonder which potentially had a specific and contained experience, meaning, and identity. This is in contrast to a generalised wonder that had a sense of ambiguity and was not defined within the specifics of time and place. Thus, within this strategy the sky is transformed into a place for potential discovery. In fact, this definition of place in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings”(1622) spurred one viewer to seize the opportunity for discovery.

What is intriguing about “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) is that the truthfulness of its claims are questioned in a letter which is quoted in another pamphlet, “A relation of a most lamentable burning” (1622). The quoted letter is written by a certain M. Meade at Christ College in Cambridge and is addressed to Sir Martin Hateville on April 6, 1622. It documents M. Meade’s inquiry into the truth of the event that occurred over Corke and Gravesend. M. Meade claims to have searched out a witness of the event of the battle of starlings and tries to find evidence as to its truth. The pamphlet seems to stir M. Meade into active pursuit of the truth. He, as part of the learned class, tries to seek out and verify the truth

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30 Refer to the attached note on the second page of “A relation of a most lamentable Burning..” (1622), STC #1133.

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of the event and particularities of meaning. In the letter, M. Meade states that he sent the starling pamphlet which cost him 3d to Sir Martin Hatevill and claims that he had heard of this event before. He goes on to add that he talked to a knight out of Ireland “concerning the truth of it”. The knight said that “as for any wonder or miracle it was a mere tale.” However, the knight also admits that there is some truth in the event because, “in the suburbes of Cork there is an old house or abbey where starlings in time of year used to build, and whither they flocked (as their wont is) at the time mentioned; and being many together fell to fighting, so that some were taken up upon the ground either hurt or maimed.” After this investigation and examination of the evidence, M. Meade concludes that this is the only truth of the report. This consideration of the battle of starlings over Corke indicates that readers debated over both the event and the pamphlet through pamphlets and letters. Viewers such as M. Meade claim to actively search out the truth and authority of the occurrence, and question where the truth lies in the event. Is the event a miracle where faith and God authorise meaning or, is it a natural occurrence authored by education into habitual events in nature? This is a rare glimpse into how an episode in the sky potentially circulated through society and how it enacted on and positioned different viewers in relation to the original event and the pamphlet.

It is significant then, that the visual narrative is confirmed in relation to the particulars of place defined by the text. In relation to each other, the image and text alter the sky to be a place for potential discovery. However the visual narrative also offered viewers an experience of the sky that turned it into a site for stories and visions. This is possible because the narrative uses interconnecting visual vocabularies and references which encourage different sets of experiences simultaneously. This is evident in the comparison between the knight’s story documented by M. Meade and the story presented in the pamphlet. Both claim to be familiar with the battling birds in Cork yet, from the same event the stories differ. The knight experiences the battle as a natural event whereas, the pamphlet claims it is a miracle. This potential for different stories was also evident in the first case study of Bongay, where different potential interpretations locate the image in various ways. However, what is interesting is that in the visualisation, in “Looke Up and See Wonders” (1628) the variation and number of
potential stories multiplies. This occurs because the visual narrative juxtaposes a number potentially conflicting visual events and languages. Triple suns, canons, armies and winds are placed in relation to each other while a story weaves them into a cohesive whole. Yet, each of these events, like the single form of the black beast or star, uses a visual vocabulary that could situate them in multiple systems of thought simultaneously. So that in the end these represented events make available a series of viewing positions. The visual narrative in “Looke Up and See Wonders” (1628) becomes quite complex because of the potential combinations for locations for meaning. The visual vocabulary of three suns simultaneously can be situated in meteorology and weatherlore. This image is placed beside and in relation to armies in the sky. These armies concurrently use the visual vocabulary of biblical apocalypse, myth and legend. Thus, this visual narrative places events that could be located in various systems of thought such as religion, science and folklore, to collide and interpenetrate at the site of the sky. Simultaneously, the visual narrative suggests that they are to be fused together into one story.

What becomes uncertain is defining how the visual vocabularies are fused. Through different viewers the three suns could potentially be incorporated into a vocabulary of religious apocalypse that the armies suggest or, both of armies and suns could be combined into a reading of superstition and myth. To the community of astrologers all these events could be interpreted as an omen of political strife. This image also speaks to the community of viewers who might have been excluded from meteorological and astrological vocabularies, but are not excluded from other meanings. An image of three suns is commonly found in the

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31 For visual references on meteorology refer to Certain Secretes Wonders in Nature (1569) and The Dialogues. Also refer to the modern study by S. K. Jr. Heninger. A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology. Durham, North Carolina: Duke Univ. Press, 1960. Armies in the air were also referenced in myths and superstitions about battling armies of the dead. This myth is referred to as the furious horde and according to Ottavia Niccoli existed in many parts of Europe. Niccoli claims it originated in the Germanic world of myth. In these myths armies appear in the air as the armies of the dead that terrorize the living. Niccoli argues that the myth found a reception in learned circles as well as among lower classes. Refer to Ottavia Niccoli, Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy, tr. Lydia G. Cochrane. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990. pp. 66-71. The image of armies in the sky is referenced as a religious portent of divine warning in various pamphlets and books such as Warning of Germany (1560). Also refer to John Brand, Observations on the Popular Antiquite of Great Britain. London: George Bell and Sons, 1988. and W. C. Hazlitt, Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore Beliefs, Superstitions and Popular Customs. London: Reeves and Turner, 1905.

32 As William Fulke notes in his book Godly Gallery, three suns “have often tymes been noted to have pretended the contention of princes for kingdomes.” fol. 42.
widely distributed and accessible almanacs, prognostications, and broadsides. These events speak to diverse viewers in different ways and within the visual narrative the site of the sky shifts in meaning and identity in relation to a viewer’s place in society, geography and time. In other words, the event represented in the pamphlet is not firmly fixed within the boundaries of the particulars it sets out or visual vocabularies but, slips outside of these places where different sets of experiences move it beyond these defined perimeters. For example, the community of astrologers could move these events outside the boundaries of geography, time and specific witnesses so that it engages with the larger political and social environment. What becomes an issue is the set of relationships that are defined by a viewer’s own place, not only in relation to the image and text as discussed earlier, but in relation to time, different social relationships and geographic place.

Another strategy that these pamphlets use to situate the representation of the sky and the viewer it the specimen layout. The specimen layout is in some ways similar to the visual narrative in that it offers a range of potential viewer positions and supports various constructions of knowledge concurrently. In “Strange News” (1605) various specimens of wonder overlap and interconnect in the image (figure 10). The text directs the meaning of the image by explaining the various specimens presented to viewers. At the same time the viewer can locate each of these specimens in various circulating materials such as books on meteorology or astrology. Thus, constructions of knowledge and forms of authority found in other publications are brought to the pamphlet and endorse as well as limit what these specimens mean. This is similar to the visual narrative that also offers multiple events that can be located in and authorised by various circulating materials outside of the pamphlet.

However, the specimen layout is different from the visual narrative in the way it directs viewers and their experience. Viewers in front of this type of image are positioned in other ways than that of being eyewitnesses. Thus, this type of image encourages a different experience of both the representation of the sky and the pamphlet. It places different forms in juxtaposition. In “A Lamentable List of certain Hidious, Fightful, and Prodigious Signs” (1638) armies are placed beside and in relation to triple suns and rainbows (figure 11). These
images are laid out on the page like specimens separated from each other by white spaces. In “Strange News” (1605) these specimens overlap and interconnect (figure 10). Yet, in both cases the specimens are not linked by a visual narrative. By laying out different events of the sky on the white surface of the page, this display invites viewers to turn them over in their mind and consider them in relation to the text or a perceived original set of events. No narrative unfolds within the image or draws viewers through a story. Viewers are encouraged to make sense of the forms, categorising them by similarities and differences, or fuse them together without the aid of a visual narrative. Unlike the narrative, different temporal and geographic events are pulled from their original surroundings and juxtaposed. Perhaps, this performance is more dependent on the text or has stronger ties to it than the previous case studies. Often this printing strategy is enclosed in books of Wonder or Secrets of Nature such as A Goodly Gallyere (1563), Certaine Secrete wonderes of Nature, containing a description of sundry strange things (1569) and A Contemplation of Mysteries (1571). These publications lay out the different wonders in the sky as specimens on the page for the viewer to analyse and turn over in their minds in relation to the text (figure 12).

The visualisations in Edward Fenton’s publication Certain Secrete wonders of Nature (1569) offer specimens of wonder and portents of revelation up viewers but, are enclosed within the covers of a book. This publication is a compilation of a visual and textual history of “sightings” and “secret wonders” that occur in the sky. Fenton, who was a navigator and soldier of fortune, takes the time to document sightings which include “Divers figures, Comets, Dragons, and flames which appeared in heaven to the terour of the people.” Besides descriptions of Comets and Dragons, Fenton includes chapters on “sundry sortes of lightning, with wonderful thunders and tempests happening in our time “ and “thre Sunnes

33 Certain Secrete Wonders in Nature, containing a description of sundry strange things, by Edward Fenton London: 1563 other editions 1571,1601,1602. Similar books of wonder include Stephan Batman’s Doome Warning All Men to Judgemente (1581) which chronologically lists “all the straunge prodigies hapened in the Worlde.” This book has the same woodcuts as Certain Secrete Wonders. These woodcuts previously appeared in the French edition of Pierre Boaistuau’s Histoires Prodigieuses Paris: Annet briere for Vincent Sertenas et al., 1560.

34 For biographical information on Fenton refer to S. K. Jr. Heniniger, A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology, p. 29.
This study mixes the sensational element of horror and wonder with generalised explanations that have a basis in the theories of nature by Aristotle and Pliny. Informative woodblock images accompany the text and illustrate each chapter. These woodblocks fill the site of the sky with multiple suns, blazing stars, sharp daggers and human faces that are contained within a printed border of rolling clouds (figure 13). Fenton interprets these wonders as forerunners of public disasters such as crop failures, pestilence, bloody battles, the fall of monarchies, and the death of kings. He weights these visualisations with historical examples of disaster that expose the potential disaster in the present. Fenton claims that these, “fantastical figures, as dragons, flames, Comets, and other like of divers forms which are seene so often in the Element according to the opinion of many wise men, do give to understand, fortel or shew many things that shal and do happen.”

Thus, according to the text, the visualisation of these wonders in the sky documents types of events that could foretell the future and reveal the present.

This type of performance contained in a book presented a particular set of relationships in relation to the viewer. The various specimens of wonder transform the sky and the visual space into places for contemplation by and revelation for a specific viewer who could afford or had access to the book. The book form limits the range of possible relationships because it limits the range of viewers and their social place. The pamphlets use the same visual strategy of specimens which are laid out on a page, but the specimens are displayed on the front cover of a form that had a viewership that was unpredictable as to their class and geographical location. The pamphlet’s circulation and mobility open up this type of experience to a range of viewers. Thus the sets of relationships become much more varied as the specimens of wonder move outside of the form of the book and a specific social location. This is also true of the previous case studies of the visual narrative and abstracted contour. Within the pamphlet the various printing strategies move outside a geographically and socially defined audience.

The circulation and potential diversity in readership are a particular problem when studying the pamphlet. Though the form used in this study presents the pamphlet as flattened

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35 Refer to Certain Secrete Wonders, fol. 99, 145.
and fixed to a microfilm screen and where its flight seems impossible, in the early seventeenth century this form was characterised by its ability to break free from the confines of a library or particular place. It is a form that is characterised by its erasure of these boundaries around a contained place because through its circulation it perpetually moved outside these, to meet new audiences and form new sets of relationships. The pamphlet’s size and relative affordability encouraged its circulation. The pamphlet’s small size, usually 6 by 5 inches, could be easily held in the hand, folded, or put into a travelling bag. The circulation of the pamphlet was then encouraged because it was a form that was adaptable and its formal boundaries could be altered.

The adaptability of the pamphlet is acknowledged by Henry Howard, the sixteenth century writer that was quoted at the beginning of this section. This characteristic was particularly disturbing to Howard because it meant that different viewers could alter it to meet their needs. According to Howard it could be defaced and its pages sliced and separated, "or though the worst should chance, and dash or slubber with a pensill, may deface or amend what is not suteable. For Painters and Poets, have a warrand dormant, to chop and change, to close and faine, to flourish and adventure upon anything". It was also adaptable because its pages could easily be separated or the entire object could be transported and bought and sold over a range of distances. In other words, this object was not confined by the binding of a book or awkward hard covers and large sizes. Thus, even though most of the pamphlets were printed and their pages folded together in London, viewers pushed them outside of their original boundaries and booksellers moved them to various other locations and towns. This circulation and disruption of the pamphlet encouraged an extremely broad readership to engage with the pamphlet.

Further, the pamphlet’s relative affordably allowed a variety of different social classes to become active viewers of this form. The pamphlet was a form that was discarded and not held in a precious state of ownership like a book may have been. This is evident in the

36 Refer to Certaine Secrete Wonders, fol. 58
37 Henry Howard, A defensative against the poyson of supposed prophesies, (1622) p. 118.
quotation from Howard that reveals how this form was not beyond being defaced, chopped and changed. It is also evident in that it did not contain time consuming printed etchings, images pulled from engravings in costly metal plates, nor was it made with refined quality paper. The woodblock and black letter print on the cover announced the pamphlet’s worth as common and affordable. One can thus presume that readership was diverse and unpredictable with anyone becoming a potential viewer of a pamphlet displayed in a publishing house window or a piece of it discarded in the street. The pamphlet made its way through society picking up diverse readers and users along the way. It circulated and moved across geography as well as through social class structures. In this way the visual specimens, narratives and abstracted contours that represent the sky are made visible to a potentially diverse viewership which could have had access to the pamphlet.

The pamphlet circulated across different social classes and locations because of the nature of its form but, the pamphlet also facilitated movement through its content. Locations documented inside the pamphlet often bring rural areas and foreign countries into the urban centre of London. The pamphlet “Strange News” (1605) though printed in London, speaks of Carlstade in Croatia. The pamphlet “Strange Signes seene in the Aire” (1594) also moves across the waterways to “Rosenberge” and brings this town outside of London into London (figure 14). The “Somewhat: written on occasion of three suns” brings the English rural place of “Trengie” into the urban centre. Through text and image the pamphlets drew what was exterior, and beyond the boundaries of the city of London, into a perceived urban interior. Simultaneously, the geographical circulation of the pamphlet moved it from London to places outside this centre such as Trengie and Rosenberge.

These pamphlets exposed the inside of London to what was outside through content and circulation. By not being fixed in a geographical and temporal place the pamphlet opens up the issue of differences because definitions and constructions that defined a place were re-

39 “Strange fearful and true newes which happened at Carlstadt in Croatia.” Tr. R. B(arker) for G. Vincent and W. Blackwell, 1606.
emphasised. The pamphlet reasserted what is inside and outside a place because it continually changed places, shifting between sets of relationships. Constructions of rural and foreign places formulated inside London moved outside to meet with other constructions. A London viewer’s experience of an event in Calabria which is printed in London, moves out to meet the experiences of viewers located in Calabria. It becomes extremely difficult to trace the movements of specific pamphlets such as “Strange Signes seene in the Aire” (1594) through geography and fix the specific audiences or communities of readers outside of London. Thus, the pamphlet calls attention to seventeen and twentieth century constructions and limits around objects and how they are contained, and more importantly, why. The pamphlet escapes being fixed in place through a set of defined relationships because the pamphlet’s travels and contacts outside of London remain illusive.

The potential circulation of the pamphlet raises interesting questions and problems. The mediating role of the pamphlets within and outside of London becomes on possible issue. For instance, “How did the pamphlet “Strange News” (1605), if it travelled to Croatia, which is the site of the original event, alter or effect that location’s perceptions of the event or of themselves?”. “How did this pamphlet’s version of three suns affect an audience who was familiar with a different version?” Although these are important questions that need to be asked, they fall outside the scope of this study as the archive to which I have access does not permit detailed research into this subject. Yet, the pamphlet’s circulation raises awareness of the boundaries around what is inside and outside, or high and low. The authors and producers of the pamphlet address this issue.

Authors and producers of the pamphlets were almost as varied as the potential readers. The pamphlets were written by established writers and professionals as well as unknown authors who remain in historical anonymity. In the pamphlets, university professionals such as John Bainbridge rub shoulders with the English dramatist Thomas Dekker who sought visibility, a name, and an audience through the pamphlet form. However, many pamphlets were written and sold by anonymous authors, hack writers or preachers. For example the Puritan preacher Abraham Fleming published several sermons warning against the danger of
explaining God's wonders in the sky. Some pamphlets are not linked to an author but, to someone who had them commissioned. On the bottom of the title page can be found, "Printed by R. B. for G. Vincent and W. Blackwall", or "Imprinted at London for Roger Michell". In the formal space of the pamphlet persons that commissioned a pamphlet, such as Roger Michell, meet with the more prolific writers, such as Thomas Dekker, Francis Bacon, and John Bainbridge. In other words, not simply writers but, all sorts of people were involved in actively producing pamphlets. It was thus, a form that could address a range of interests and situations. In other words, in the pamphlet various sorts of participation become as equally important as the author.

To return to the various ways these pamphlets present experiences of the sky and direct the viewer's position, another strategy becomes evident. Besides the abstract contour, narrative or specimen layout, the pamphlets also use the visual vocabulary of diagrams to construct the space of the sky and viewer's position. More than any of the other strategies the use of a diagram directs viewers through visual vocabularies that limit the possible movements and interpretations within this space. The visual vocabularies in these diagrams limit the potential viewer positions that are otherwise available to viewers of the narrative, abstracted contour or layout. In doing so, this strategy combats the lack of place that the circulation of the pamphlet encourages by restricting the relationships that can occur at this site. The viewer positions are limited because diagrams could be quite complex and exclusionary in their use of vocabularies so that only a select viewership could engage with what is displayed there. Diagrams that introduce prognostications or calendars often contain complex maps and spheres of the sky that chart its movements (figure 15 and 16). In these representations the vocabulary of astrology and celestial cartography could confront a viewer with intimidating force. Other diagrams in the pamphlet confine these vocabularies to an unobtrusive border (figure 17). The pamphlet "A Treaties of Blazing Starres in Generall" (1618) uses only the printed words east, west, north and south in the border that surrounds the star in order to indicate that this star is fixed within the vocabulary of cartography. The abstracted contour of a comet is contained by

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40 Refer to Abraham Fleming, "Burning Beacon."(1580), "A Straunge and terrible Wunder" (1577).
the familiar black border however, the poles of direction are noted. These visual vocabularies 
of cartography, astrology and astronomy limit the accessibility of engaging the representation 
of the sky and summon a particular viewership that can decode them. They fix this site into 
place. Yet, how did this expression of place potentially alter the sky and how it was 
experienced?

These diagrams and maps of the sky circulated through English society outside of the 
pamphlet form. Diagrams of the sky accompanied books of instruction that tried to teach a 
reader particular systems of thought such as numerology or astrology. These diagrams and 
maps altered the sky, transforming it into a site that could be known and controlled in order for 
it to become a tool for humanity. Zodiac diagrams charted the sky and encoded its movements 
so that they could be of significance to the viewer on the ground (figure 18). A celestial map 
fixes the space of the sky so that it can be used as a guide for navigation and exploration (figure 
19). These forms however, required a distancing of the viewer from the original space of the 
sky in order that it could become a useful tool in daily life.

In part, the diagrams and maps construct the sky through mechanical precision that 
forces the viewer into a state of alienation from subjectively experiencing the sky. Viewing the 
diagram the viewer floats over the charted and altered space of the sky commanding its 
autonomous materiality. Significantly, the viewer is not encouraged to enter into this space or 
become an eyewitness as in the case study of the visual narrative assessed earlier. This 
perspective situated above or rather outside the object of contemplation is what Hannah Arendt 
has called “The Archimedian point,” a point which is outside of the world-- indeed, outside of 
the universe-- or, as she puts it more paradoxically and precisely, ”the point inside a viewer 
who is outside the world.”41 This is the point of view of a dis-embodied, dis-placed, solitary 
mind, which has no reference other than itself and everything that it can think. This type of 
representation of the sky transformed this site to be a place that can be marked out, decoded, 
and exploited, by a viewer who has access to the visual language. The sky is then removed 
from any interaction with a viewer’s emotion and body and allows a different visual and

intellectual experience of this space. In this way, in the early seventeenth century, the sky becomes a controlled place which was of fundamental importance, serving as a crucial tool for England’s drive to explore and map new lands, waterways, and England’s cities and counties. Simultaneously, this printed strategy also brings order to different viewer’s experiences of the pamphlet form by charting and limiting the movements within it.

Interestingly, the dominant printing strategy within these pamphlets is not the diagram or map that seem to bring order to this space but, it is a strategy that eliminates the image all together. Many pamphlets that relate occurrences in the sky exclude the woodblock image or insert it at the end of the pamphlet rather than the beginning. Pamphlets such as, “Strange News out of diverse countries” (1622), “Ireland’s Amazement in the Heavens... being a true relation of two strange and prodigious wonders or apparitions which was seen over the City of Dublin The one Dec 24 and the other Dec. 30 1641”, “Strange Signs Seene in the Aire”(1594), “Wonderful Straunge sights seene in the Element , over the Citie of London’(1583) and many others, do not use an image as part of the pamphlet’s performance. This becomes an interesting observation and issue when it is compared to other pamphlets that document news or unusual occurrences. Pamphlets on murder, deformity, or amazing discoveries such as miracle wells are rarely printed without an accompanying visualisation of the event in a printed image (figures 20 and 21). Yet, when these pamphlets present the sky to an implied viewer, an image is the exception. Perhaps this reflects back to the late sixteenth century critic of the pamphlet cited at the beginning of this section. It returns one to Henry Howard’s anxiety that there was potential danger at this site.

The authors of this particular genre of pamphlet seem to expect that their relations of an event which takes place in the sky will be somewhat contentious to their readership. The text conveys an awareness of the dangerous uncertainty involved in dealing with this type of topic in this particular form. It is almost as if the authors are perplexed with a perceived breakdown

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42 News events were often printed in pamphlet form even after the first news books called coranto in 1620. The extant of the pamphlets of news and wonders is astounding. Douglas C. Collins’ A Handlist of News Pamphlets (London, 1943), lists 271 titles for just the years 1590-1610, and Marie-Helene Davis, Reflections of Renaissance England separates out some of the choicer illustrated pamphlets from the Short title Catalogue of Pollard and Redgrave.
of a fixed or stable author and reader relationship when writing about these occurrences where meaning floats between different readers. When the author of the pamphlet “Looke Up and See Wonders” (1628) relates his description of the battle over Hatford and the thunderstone that fall to the ground, he rhetorically decries the fact that reports “in such distractions as these hath a thousand eyes, and sees more than it can understand; and as many tonguess, which being once set a going they speake anything.”

He suggests that the possibilities and dangers are unpredictable once the pamphlet publishes a narrative of this type. They can be seen by a “thousand eyes” which “see more” than they “can understand”, and from the report, they can “speak anything”.

Another author, who reports on an unusual battle of birds in the sky, picks up this same concern over the uncertainty of the author-reader relationship. In “The Wonderous Battell of Starelings” (1622) the author acknowledges the tenuous nature of establishing the author’s control over the reader’s position in relation to an event in the sky. His dilemma in conveying and fixing his ideas with the reader is evident in the opening lines; “To report strange and admirable accidents, is subject both to danger and disgrace: to danger, in that they may bee held as prodigious, or ominous: to disgrace, in that they may bee reputed fabulous.”

An event which originally occurs in the sky and then is restaged and circulated through the form of the pamphlet seems to be beyond an author’s control. The author’s version of an event can be interpreted as fabulous sensationalism or can be viewed as an ominous foretelling of events. The written account is no longer possessed by an author’s illusions of fixing meaning, so the author confronts the reader directly in an attempt to fix their position.

Some authors chose to use satire to comment on the unusual nature of reporting an experience of the sky. The author of “Somewhat: written on occasion of three suns” draws attention to himself while simultaneously withdrawing into anonymity. In the preface he says

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43 “Looke Up and See Wonders.” fol. 16.
45 “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” A3
that it is better that readers not know who he is because of the nature of what he is writing about. He addresses the reader; “you are saluted, by (I thinke) you know not whom: I would be sorrie you should; for a beggerly generation of mercenarie liers have drawen an inevitable suspition upon the reporters of all truths in this kinde... so let your charitie excuse me from being of the number of ordinary writers.” Even while this author chooses anonymity when reporting this event, he does not want to be “ordinary” or counted among the “beggerly generation” that contributed to making these events suspicious.

The anxieties that are evident in the author-reader relationship, the possible variations in the position of viewers, and the play within formal structures of these pamphlet are perhaps partially a reflection of the insecurities of the producer who is uncertain as to their potential audience. Thus, these instabilities may map a producer’s search for a way to speak about the sky and to establish who is being addressed. However, the ambiguity and variability that is characteristic of the sky within the pamphlet may also conjure up the uncertainties of an historical moment. Anxieties were nurtured in a wide audience in the early seventeenth century through the physical immediacy of natural disasters as well as political and social upheaval. The temporal circumstances surrounding the production of these pamphlets created an environment in which ambiguity and lack of a fixed place could address and respond to a range of viewers and their experiences of reality. Several pamphlets restage the range of seventeenth century natural disasters that potentially addressed and nurtured anxieties for different viewers.

The pamphlet “The Cold Yeare” (1614) is a report on a “A deepe Snow: In which, men and Cattell have perished, To the generall losse of Farmers, Grasiers, husbandmen, and all sorts of people in the Countrie, and no lesse hurtfull to Citizens.” This pamphlet is “written Dialougue-wise, in a plaine familiar talke betweene a London Shop-keeper, and a North-Country-man”. In the text, both men relate their misfortunes over the cold year of 1614. The woodblock on the title page of the pamphlet presents an experience of this winter to a viewer (figure 22). In this visualisation, a man attempts to free animals which are trapped and perishing in the snow. Men on horseback and a woman struggle through the snow while the

46 “The cold yeare, 1614: a deep snow” W. W(hite) for T. Langley, 1615.
sky spreads a white cloud over the scene. The woodblock provides a detailed scene of the struggles against the weather. The theme of weather and the encounters against it were a feature of other pamphlets and printed images which depict the severity of terrible tempests, floods, earthquakes, plagues and fires (figures 23 and 24).47

The woodblock images used in these pamphlets confronted viewers with visual performances that asserted the fragility of human life in England and drew attention to nature's destructive capabilities. These catastrophes affected all of England. The text in, “The last terrible tempestuous windes and weather” (1613) claims that winds sank merchandise such as wines, oils and pewter.48 The visual performance in this pamphlet presents merchandise sinking and buildings being destroyed (figure 25). The author relates how the loss of cattle devastated the lives of those in the country and how towns and regions were cut off because the waterways were too dangerous. Natural disasters such as these, that circulated through English audiences, may have contributed to the anxieties of the times.

Yet, these natural disasters were made more potent in the face of social and political uncertainty. Specifically, the tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism permeated seventeenth century English society. The Spanish fleets circling the coast of England in 1588 were a threatening Catholic presence that fed anxieties within Protestant communities.49 The tensions between the relatively new Protestant religion in England and older traditions of Catholicism where made more complex by various sects such as the Puritans and Brownists,


who were debating against one another over scriptural interpretation, England’s place in relation to the scriptures, and the church’s role in society. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and a series of wars that drew England’s armies to the continent were two events that increased social, religious and political anxiety across a broad audience. The plot to blow up James I and parliament on Nov. 5, 1605, led almost immediately to the execution of Guy Fawkes. This event was published in print and fed the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.

A series of wars on the continent also heightened anxieties. In the early seventeenth century, a series of political and religious wars ravished Germany and drew England as well as other countries into battle on the continent. Involvement in these wars drained England’s economy, adding financial stress to an already tense historical moment. These wars were caused mainly by political rivalry between Catholic and Protestant princes in Germany and the interest in foreign powers in German affairs. The German countryside, society and political landscape were devastated in the process. Land and crops were destroyed causing famine among the larger population. The desolation of Germany provided English audiences with a point of reference for apocalyptic images and portents. The publications, “The Lamentations of Germany” (1638) and the “Warnings of Germany” (1638) represented Germany to an English audience as an example of the potential horror that could come from religious tensions.

These same tensions that brought ruin to Germany were held in a delicate state of control within England. Under Elizabeth and James I rule, between 1558-1625, England remained tolerant of practising Catholics even while supporting Protestantism as the official religion. Yet, the printed images of Germany revealed the disorder and devastation that could

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50 Refer to Samuel R. Gardiner’s *What the Gunpowder Plot was*. London and NY: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897.
result from tipping this delicate balance. In printed images, Germany was presented as in a state of apocalypse (figure 26).\textsuperscript{53} The disruption of order within the country was represented in the form of battles in the sky, fireballs descending down on people, and suns and rainbows multiplying. These events in the sky were placed beside images of earthly disorder such as widespread rape, cannibalism, torture, and plagues (figures 27). These images of Germany heightened anxieties among English audiences, over the disaster that could potentially overtake England if the precarious order between Protestantism and Catholicism was disrupted.

The various natural, social and political upheavals on the ground are perhaps projected into the sky within the pamphlet which seem equally uncertain. It may potentially have been intent of the producer to seize these anxieties in order to market a product. Printed images that use a narrative or specimen layout could access viewers but also consumers. Yet, producing or being a writer for a pamphlet was not a very lucrative endeavour. Authors and producers made little money from publishing a pamphlet and many of them rhetorically complain of the lack of monetary gain from their efforts. According to literary historian Sandra Clark, even the most prolific authors found few patrons that would finance “pamphleteering”.\textsuperscript{54} Since the economic reward was minimal, an author or producer may have been motivated by other factors besides selling a product. Its incentives were mostly political. This raises the question as to what would have been at stake in marketing images of the sky for a producer. As I have argued, this site could attract a large number of different viewers. Thus it may have been the intent of the producer to use this form in order to speak to a broad audience on issues of moral or political significance. The pamphlet and visualisations of the sky provided a platform on which a producer could stand and preach their message to a large congregation.

Yet, once the pamphlet was produced, it brought different circumstances together and had implications that went beyond the author or producer’s intentions. The sky within the pamphlet becomes a sort of frontier space of diverse encounters with difference. As I have established, different practices, performances and locations of meaning interconnected and were placed in a precarious position of contact within the form of the pamphlet. These

\textsuperscript{53} Refer to Christianson’s Reformers and Babylon p. 94
encounters were encouraged because the site of the sky and the pamphlet form itself do not seem to belong to any one position or form of authority. In other words, the truth is still out there as a possibility and threat.

A Frontier Space

The frontier is a space of possibilities and encounter. According to Michel de Certeau, a frontier space is a legitimate space for contact with what is alien or beyond the boundary of what is the “proper place” or limits. These limits are established by appropriation and displacement of what is exterior to the story. In other words, the frontier exists beyond a fixed place and thus privileges a “logic of ambiguity” because “it is a middle place composed of interactions and inter-views”. These contacts draw boundaries into question and allow differences to collide and interconnect.

This notion of a frontier space could be considered in relation to the English pamphlet and its visualisations of the sky. This space is located beyond the boundaries of a “proper place”. Within this space boundaries around a multiple of differences are altered and potentially redefined. Boundaries that are regulated and fixed in other forms are in a precarious position of potential dialogue in the pamphlet. Practices of reading meet with practices of seeing. Textual performances interconnect with oral and visual performances. What is familiar meets with the new and wondrous. Different viewer positions are confront each other and overlap. Various forms of authority and constructions of knowledge are drawn together through visual vocabularies that allow play. Reason and empirical evidence are placed in relation to faith and divine revelation.

In the end, the pamphlet continually slips out of dichotomies at the same time as it draws attention to any fixed location because it is always circulating, changing, and accommodating both. Representation of the sky draw attention to the location of meaning and to the boundaries that hold it in place. Where is the meaning of a dragon in the sky located in

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54 Refer to Clark, The Elizabethan Pamphleteers, pp. 25-26.
the visual narrative? How and where is order and regularity defined and located? Where are the meanings of normal and preternormal located, how are they defined and by whom? When placed in relation to each other, multiple practices, locations, and ways of thinking are confronted with what stands in opposition to them. Thus, this frontier space allows what is exterior and unfamiliar to be placed up against the interior forcing any perceived set limits to become an issue.

Ultimately, the encounters and questions that the pamphlet encourages lead to the potential freeing of enclosed thoughts. According to de Certeau, a frontier space also has a relationship with a bridge which frees enclosed thoughts and practices and opens them up to activities of inversion and alterity. The twentieth century constructions of the sky emphasise the possibility for inversion at this site. The "close encounter" trend in movies, discovery type television shows that feature a range of experiences in relation to the sky and recent scientific studies into the nature of paranormal experiences, exhibit the sky as a site for displacements and inversions of the norm. Within twentieth century society the sky is not just a last frontier in relation to a shrinking earth as some scholarship suggests. Rather, the analysis of the pamphlet form itself reveals that the sky is a perpetual frontier for opening up enclosures of thought and understanding. It is a space for potential dialogue and exchange. Although in a different way, the sky in the seventeenth century was also a space for new thoughts and experiences as these pamphlet brings to light. These pamphlets expose different viewers to performances of alterity and inversion in relation to their own places. In this way, prints of the sky within the pamphlet could play a mediating role between changes in understanding. They mark out a space of negotiation and a gap for the possibility of new thoughts.

A Place of Power and Danger.

A space of possibility and encounter is also a place for potential conflict, power and danger. As De Certeau argues, the possibilities and exchanges within the frontier are always under threat of transformation which changed the frontier into an appropriated place; a space
that has been fixed into place.\textsuperscript{56} A place is a fixed space where the perpetual possibilities that nurture anxieties are homogenised into one truth and one authority. In the early seventeenth century, different audiences try to fill the sky in, build it up, stabilise it, or move the bridge further upstream away from any immediate access. However, de Certeau does not develop the specific historical dynamics that seize a frontier space and try to fix it. The encounters between differences and the battle over boundaries takes place in the dynamic site of the sky and pamphlet that is intimately linked to early seventeenth century England as the place of its enunciation and to the movement of a historically situated viewer through this space.

In early seventeenth century England, the sky was characterised by a range of viewers as having an inherent authority and power. Different viewers' constructions of the sky held the possibility for their author to be put in prison, exiled or executed. This is a time when constructions of the entire universe were being challenged by diverse ways of thinking. This is evident in the reception of Copernicus's heliocentric theories which were still highly contested in England and elsewhere. They were particularly contested because his authorised constructions of the sky challenged the very foundations of faith, religion and the contemporary notions of humanity and reality. Thus the sky was potentially a potent site that could challenge contemporary human experiences of reality. It was a site in which various systems of thought, constructions of knowledge, and human experiences of the sky, could be nurtured while others could be threatened. It was a site of power and potential danger.

The title page of George Hartgill's \textit{Generall Calendar}, printed in London in 1594 offers an example of the inherent authority within the site of the sky (figure 28).\textsuperscript{57} The title page of Hartgill's Calendar represents the sky as a space for moral and religious lessons.\textsuperscript{58} On the title page, Hartgill the astronomer and "minister of God's word" stands in a setting like the Garden of Eden with a city in the background and holds the \textit{verbum dei} in one hand and an armillary

\textsuperscript{56} de Certeau \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, p.128  
\textsuperscript{57} George Hartgill. \textit{Generall Calendars}, London, 1594.  
\textsuperscript{58} The image of a figure looking up to read the sky is common in books and pamphlets on astronomy and astrology such as "Difference of Astronomy" (1535), "Book of Knowledge," (1530) and "Learned Tico Brahae his Astronomicall Conjecture." (1632) each contain images presenting a man in relation to the sky as a site of knowledge.
sphere in the other. Beneath his feet a plaque identifies him as a “Christian philosopher”. Above the scene, in a starry sky, shine the sun and the moon, adding their contemporary suggestion of both time and eternity. Hartgill gazes up at the space and a balloon from his mouth announces “I shall contemplate the world and the works of Jehovah.” This same type of image of a person gazing up at the sky introduced many pamphlets on astrology and astronomy.

This frontispiece claims that the study of the sky and the interpretation of the events that are understood to take place there provides a means for gaining insight into divine will. The sky here is visualised as a space of instruction and knowledge that lends a certain moral authority to those who study it. Situated above and away from the earth, it is interpreted as a more perfect space. This bestows a kind of moral authority on those who study and read this realm and its signs. In “An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie” the seventeenth century poet, Edmund Spenser provides a poetic representation of this idea that is found in Hartgill’s visual image:

...As every thing doth upward tend,
And further is from earth, so still more cleare
And faire it growes, till to his perfect end
Of purest beautie, it at last ascend:
Ayre more then water, fire much more then ayre,
And heaven then fire appeares more pure and fayre.
"An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" (ll. 44-49)

The sky then, could serve as the space of higher knowledge and the abode of God.

The inherent power of this particular site was used to justify and elevate a range of different systems of thought and constructions of knowledge as morally superior to others. For example, seventeenth century practitioners of astronomy used this logic to raise their status in relation to geography. The astronomer John Dee, writing in the last half of the sixteenth century, quotes scripture in his “Mathematicall praeface” to justify this empiricism:

Astornomie, was to us, from the beginning commended, and in

59 Hartgill, billed himself as a “minister of the word of God”. However, his “Generall Calendar” is filled with astronomical tables.
60 Refer to Heiko A. Oberman “Reformation and Revolution” pg. 141 for a discussion on the study of the sky in Religion and Science. He especially focuses on Calvin’s views that the sky is a site to access the wisdom of God. “nam astrologia non modo iucundo est cognita, sed apprime quoque utilis: negari non potest quin admirabilem Dei sapientiam explicet ars illa.”
maner commaunded by God him selfe. In as much as he made the Sonne, mone, and Starres, to be to us, for Signes, and knowledge of Seasons, and for Distinctions of Dayes, and yeares.\textsuperscript{61}

Through this conceptualisation, the sky is transformed into a morally higher space. The events that occur there, whether normal or beyond normal, have divine authority. This authority directly effects and facilitates the construction of a reputation and identity of those who view and study this space. Thus, different viewers potentially had investments in this space to justify and elevate their status in seventeenth century England. Finally, the sky not only exhibits the characteristics of de Certeau’s frontier space that facilitates movements of possibility and negotiation, it also invites possession and ownership that meet with specific historical investments in the sky, knowledge, and identity.

Encounters become more intense and the possibilities more threatening when they take place at a site which is characterised by an inherent authority, power and influence within a historical moment. Further, the sky becomes a particularly potent and anxious site when it circulates through the form of the pamphlet that also can be characterised as a frontier space. The sky within the pamphlet is a frontier space where something can be gained or lost depending on who controls it and is able to regulate its uncertain boundaries. Thus, the pamphlet encourages vested audiences to seize the possibilities that it offers while simultaneously taking control over it by fixing the ambiguity and uncertainty through various strategies and emerging forms of authority. The dynamics and movements within this frontier space are partially a projection from a historical moment on the ground. The pamphlet absorbs these projections and potentially rips open a moment in time when the possibilities and fears of the encounters and instabilities that characterise this space are used and absorbed in a temporal moment by specific viewers. The pamphlet and the particular site of the sky inherently raise questions as to where boundaries and meaning lie, but perhaps more importantly they draw attention to what is at stake for different viewers in regulating these.

The dynamics of the sky in the English pamphlet must be situated within the historical moment of the early seventeenth century and its emergent forms of authority in order to locate why and how these dynamic could be realised by different potential viewers. These forms of authority were found in humanism, reason, faith or superstition and were drawn together in the pamphlet through practices of prophecy which calls up a voice of authority to intervene in a perceived disorder and lack of definition. The site of the sky within the pamphlet was an ideal space for the intervention of prophecy because of this site’s characteristic of uncertainty. Various viewers seized the possibility to practice prophecy at this site and made use of the power that both prophecy and this site convey and evoke.

The Puritan community in particular seemed to recognise the opportunities in the convergence of prophecy with the pamphlet. The textual performance in many of the pamphlets contain a Puritan prophetic message of moral reform. By drawing on the authority of the bible, this community justified their revelations of moral instruction. The pamphlet, as a form, was a vehicle for the transmission of this message because of its characteristic of circulation and potential to distribute this particular authorised message to a broad audience through a text that imprints an oral tradition. Thus, in the process the pamphlet itself became part of the message and became a representative for the Puritan community. Through the textual performances that put forward a Puritan application of prophecy the pamphlet became a regulative voice that moved across social and political spaces. It became a form of authority. This Puritan strand of prophecy is one of the most prominent controlling movements that are interwoven within the pamphlet.

The Puritan regulation of the pamphlet was possible through prophecy because this is a practice that sought to make visible an absolute truth and order that was previously hidden or clouded by chaos. In other words, prophecy is not simply an act that predicts the future or a concern with placing current events in relation to the future. Neither is it only an instrument for political propaganda as the historian Sharon Jansen seems to claim in her study of prophecy in
Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII. Rather, prophecy is a practice that brings into focus boundaries around events and spaces that are unstable, and makes plain what was once dark and hidden. It brings clarity and definition to what is considered to be undefined and clouded. Thus, prophecy is an act of regulating the limits of a space and revealing its truth. In contrast to the frontier space, it is not a practice in which the “truth is out there” as a perpetual possibility, but is a practice in which “the truth is”. Thus, it strives for a homogeneity that effaces the possibilities and instabilities that coexisting differences nurture. The practice of prophecy claims that there can be only one hidden meaning which when revealed, brings clarity and stability to contemporary events and locations. This practice contains meaning and makes its location clear because it denies any potential deferral of shift. What is significant, however, is that although this practice claims one truth, it is in no way a homogeneous practice. In the early seventeenth century, it was extremely diverse and adapted to meet the needs and vested interests of different audiences and forms of power.

Since prophecy focuses boundaries around events and spaces that are unstable in their definition and meaning, many other audiences, besides the Puritan community, drew on various existing and emerging traditions of prophecy to interpret experiences of the sky. More importantly, different audiences also had vested interest in the intersection specifically of prophecy and the pamphlet to make visible a hidden order and truth, to a potentially wide audience. Thus the Puritan community grasped the pamphlet and prophecy in relation to other communities of readers and producers. As I explored in the first Section of this paper, the professional community in particular had an interest in the pamphlet and they realised the possible power in the sky to transform how reality was experienced. They may also have realised the potential of prophecy. If this was the case, their practice of prophecy, which would have been tied to an emerging construction of knowledge, would have been in direct

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2 As Dobin argues, the peculiarity with the act of prophecy is that more “than any other text, prophecy makes the explicit claim of absolute truth and authority; however, the peculiarities of prophetic style cancel the possibility of locating definitive meaning. Prophetic content presumes transcendent meaning; prophetic form frustrates every effort to achieve even momentary meaning.” Refer to Howard Dobin’s Merlin’s Disciples. California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990.
opposition to the Puritan practice. How these various communities were practising prophecy in relation to each other needs to be unravelled. Perhaps, the pamphlet reveals some of the interactions and interventions between these communities.

Simultaneously, the intersection of prophecy and the pamphlet encouraged other exchanges and sets of relationships, in addition to those located in Puritanism and the professional community. Various audiences of the pamphlet could draw on the traditions of prophecy found in circulating social forms. Some audiences concerned with traditions of weatherlore and reading the sky could move through the pamphlet and define meaning. Simultaneously, viewers with an interest in social and political reform could access the pamphlet through traditions of prophecy found in the Merlin prophesies. These diverse audiences could potentially seize the circulating pamphlet and nurture their interest in making visible hidden truths found in the sky and thus order experiences on earth. This becomes a possibility particularly at the site of the printed image where the potential play in the viewer’s position could facilitate applications of prophecy. It is worth speculating on how both Puritanism and the professional community may have been positioning themselves and directing the viewer’s experiences of the sky and pamphlet in relation to a set of ghost audiences that may not have been as explicit in their appearances, but non the less may have haunted these spaces.

There are a large number of studies that have been made on the function and role of prophecy in seventeenth century England. For example G. R. Elton, Katherine Firth, and B. S. Capp are three historians that have done significant research in this field. As with Jansen’s study, they reveal prophecy’s ability to function as political propaganda through various forms including the pamphlet. This emphasis, however, effaces seeing how prophecy could function through and across multiple exchanges as opposed to just propagandistic ones. How and why does prophecy address and respond to different viewers? What are the particularities of the

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practice and how is it altered through different viewers or affected by the dynamic form of the pamphlet. I agree with the historian Ottavia Niccoli who, in her study of Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy, argues that “too exclusive an emphasis on propaganda is in some measure insufficient” and that “a purely political approach to these problems, analysing them in terms of instruments for and symptoms of the conflicts between church and state, is deceiving and reductive.”\[^4\] Niccoli pursues a historical study of prophecy that explores its diversity and potential for exchange.

I will try to expand Niccoli’s argument by examining how the frontier space of the sky within the pamphlet form was a contentious location because different forms of authority made contact and attempted to contain the various possibilities at this site through practices of prophecy. By marking this site as a place for prophecy various forms of power collided in battle over control of the its dynamics. Paradoxically, the void breaks any stranglehold which these practices attempt to secure.

In early seventeenth century England, prophecy attracted a wide and diverse audience because of the political, social and natural instabilities that have been outlined in Section One. In the midst of these instabilities and the anxieties that accompanied constant upheavals, the transcendent voice of prophecy sought to bring meaning and order. In the pamphlet, acts of prophecy link the social upheavals on the ground to the movements in the sky. In the process, the pamphlet brought prophecy to the attention of a wide audience in the pre-revolution period of England. Katherine R. Firth supports this view in her book The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain. She argues that the pamphlets and specifically the publications of John Bale and John Foxe played a major role in encouraging an interest in prophecy among a wide audience.\[^5\] In particular, Firth claims that Bale’s pamphlet “the Image of bothe churches” of 1545 and Foxe’s “Acts and Monuments” of 1563, both of which were published in several later editions, were key factors for the spread of an interest in prophecy. These works

developed the chronology of history and explained changes in it within the unfolding patterns of scriptural events. Firth's concerns in studying prophecy are anchored in the history of theology so she does not consider the impact of the printed material that strays outside of this field. Yet, the influence of prophecy and its circulation cut across existing social structures, fields of knowledge and engaged the attention and interest of various communities by taking on different meanings and forms. Thus religious prophecy needs to be considered as being practised and formulated in relation to various other applications of prophecy in circulation.

It is important to draw attention to the danger that was associated with this practice. Various statues of law proclaimed that prophecy was to be monitored and controlled, while other documents reported the punishments for acts of prophecy. Shakespeare gives poetic expression of the sky's link to prophecy and danger.

My lord, they say five moons were seen to-night; Four fixed, and the fifth did whirl about The other four in wondrous motion. ...Old men and beldams in the streets Do prophesy upon it dangerously;

Dangerous things could be conveyed through practices of prophecy that claim to access the hidden meanings of events of the sky. What is interesting is that Shakespeare's representation also hints at the participation of a set of ghost audiences which I mentioned earlier. The participation of these audiences may not have as well defined a representation and it is perhaps unclear as to the extent of their impact on and interconnection with other audiences. These are the audiences in the street; the "old men" and "beldams" clothed in historical anonymity.

Interestingly, the characteristic of danger within prophecy seems to subside as the range of applications narrowed in the course of the seventeenth century. Prophecy became in one sense more nationalistic and in some ways was not as contentious. In an age that encouraged the voices of the astrologer and political prophet William Lilly, Mother Shipton and other authors of prophecies, the appeal of prophecy increased. In other words, publishing a

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5 Both of Foxe and Bale were ministers who were exiled from England during the reign of Mary and returned to England in the late sixteenth century.
6 Refer to Gardiner's History. On Jan. 1622 a document claims that, "a servant of one Mr. Byng, a lawyer: was stretched upon the rack for prophesying that there would be rebellion." v. 4. pp. 295-96.
prophecy no longer seemed threatening or contentious to either the author, who readily staked
claims on their interpretations, or to the audiences which included the king who patronised the
publications and practitioners. However, even while prophecy became more acceptable it also
became more homogenous in its practice. During the Civil War, prophecy was more often and
directly applied to the national crisis of the Civil War and England's role as a refuge for foreign
Protestants. It is significant that the pre-Revolutionary period marked a period of variety and
contestation in this practice.

In England's pre-Revolution period, prophecy was a diverse and tangled web of
practices that surfaced in English society through different social forms. These various strands
of prophecy potentially knotted together at the site of the sky within the pamphlet. Events,
such as the case study of "The Wonderful Battell of Starelings" (1622) invited practices of
prophecy that could reveal the hidden truth in the event, regulate the site of the sky and
pamphlet form, and in the process limit boundaries around the location of place and identity.
This was possible because practices of prophecy restricted the set of relationships that could
occur in these spaces. They marked out an area or place that is defined and contained in
relation to other areas. In the process, the sky within the pamphlet became a restricted place
that gained a distinctiveness or singularity that could be used by audiences to promote and
regulate a specific experience of reality.

"make haste to repent"

The Wonderful Battell of Starelings Fought at the Citie of Corke Ireland, the
12 and 14 of October last past. 1621. As it hath been credibly enformed by
divers Noble men, and others of the said kingdome
...there gathered together by degrees, an unusual multitude of birds called
Stares, in some Countries knowne by the name of Starlings:
...they met to fight together in the most bitterest and sharpest battell amongst
themselves
..they forthwith at one instant tooke wing, and so mounting up into the skyes,
encountered one another, with such a terrible shocke, as the
sound amazed the whole city and all the beholders.9

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7 Refer to Shakespeare, "King John." IV, ii. 182-185. in The History Plays.
8 Refer to Firth's The Apocalyptic Tradition, p.25
9 "The Wonderful Battell of Starelings." (1622) fol. 1,2,5.
This restaging of an event in the skies over Corke in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) provides an opportunity to study the practices of prophecy that utilise the pamphlet (figure 29). It is worth considering how specific acts of prophecy limit and contain a perceived event and experience of the sky. However, what could make this pamphlet and event particularly interesting, is if it can provide a stepping stone to relationships with other social forms and issues.

The apocalyptic event in the skies over Corke is restaged in the textual and visual performances of a pamphlet which was published in London in 1622. The text claims that this unusual battle of starlings was fought in the sky, on the 12th and 14th of October 1621, over the city of Corke which was a port town in the southern part of Ireland. Yet, to the amazement of the author, witnesses claim to have seen this same battle in the skies over England between Gravesend and Wolwigge on the 13th of October 1621. Thus the pamphlet brings the exterior country of Ireland as well as rural England to the interior urban city of London and its audiences. This transition of exterior to interior is only one of the various dynamics of the pamphlet.

The “Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) displays other characteristics of the form besides circulation and movement. Section One of this study explores these characteristics in detail. For example, no indication is given as to the author of the pamphlet. Yet, print on the cover indicates that N. Bourne financed the printing of this pamphlet in 1622 in London. At the top of the cover page, large bold letters present the words “The Wonderful” which introduce the subject of a news event. This opening is followed by black letter type and characteristic section breaks. This pamphlet uses the printing strategy that combines a textual performance with a visual narrative. In a manner that is almost standard to this particular printing strategy, a printed image of the event is located in the bottom half of the title page and offers a visual anchor to the bold type. The battle of starlings is visualised in the characteristically small 3.5 by 3.5 inch space that is marked off with a thick black line. The time and geographic location of the wonder are printed on the cover as well as a claim that this
report is credible because, “it hath been credibly enformed by divers Noble men, and others of the said Kingdom, etc.” Nine pages of text follow the title page and restage the battle in a performance of words.

The visual performance in the printed image of “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings”(1622) reasserts the textual description through the use of a visual narrative, a printing strategy discussed earlier. The visual narrative transforms and reasserts the textual event in a visual experience for an implied eye. A city divides the image into upper and lower regions. The city’s wall forms a line that separates the sky from the ground. As the eye of the viewer travels into this town it encounters a cross that marks a church, houses that line the city wall, and black birds that form ranks of opposition on the roofs of houses to the west and to the east. Rolling hills and a few sparse trees hug the city from behind, pushing it forward against the wall and out towards the viewer. In the foreground, a river curves slightly upward to meet the city as if to offer it to the implied eye. Thus hills and river clamp the city firmly in place in the middle of the print. By referring to the text above this image a reader connects the words, “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings Fought at the city of Corke in Ireland” with the image of the city below. Thus, through the textual performance the visual narrative is directed and ordered to become a representation of the city of Corke.

The visualisation of Corke presents the country of Ireland to the viewer as a place that is in order. Within the representation, a well kept wall marks off the city as it is fixed in place by rolling hills behind it and a river in front of it. However, in this scene disorder threatens from above and below. In front of the river the earth is presented as an ordered place that circles around a pool of starlings that lie in disarray. The starelings are in disorder, some of their wings are folded, others extended, some legs are in the air, some heads turned up, others down. In the sky above the city, a cluster of black starlings push against the edges of the black lined border of the image. At the same time, they turn inward and clash together at the centre of the image. The birds in flight meet in a black knot directly above the city. A pillar of starlings link the starelings in the sky with the stagnant, disordered pool of bodies on the ground; the movement of battle in the sky is juxtaposed with the stillness of death on the earth.
Thus the image maps a visual narrative of apocalypse and change onto the otherwise fixed location of Corke.

The English Puritan community was one audience that brought to this event to a place of meaning. What I mean by a Puritan community is an audience that can be drawn together because of the mutual way in which they interpreted the role of the established church of England and the nation. Puritanism was only one of the various sects of Protestantism operating in England during the early seventeenth century. This community’s voice surfaced in a wide range of material, from published sermons in pamphlets to documented statements made in parliament. These different social forms and voices can be drawn together in the common way that they interpreted both church and nation to be part of God’s elect group of Christians. In other words, in this community the church and English nation took on a significant and a unique identity in relation to the rest of Europe who were considered to be located outside of this special elected role. According to this community, England and its church were a “chosen” nation selected and authorised by God to be a central fortress for Christians in England and elsewhere.

Even though this community considered England to be “chosen”, the dominant refrain in this collective of Puritan voices is a call for purification and reform. In a number of pamphlets, the Puritan community calls for a purging of the church and nation. Specifically, it advocated that Catholic ritual practices be removed. These practices were intimately linked to a range of other issues dealing with the structures of authority, particularly the role of bishops. However, this call for reform extended into moral and social concerns as well, such as usury or money lending as well as hoarding wealth and taking advantage of the less fortunate. It is important to keep in mind that this Puritan religious reform coincided with interests which were rooted in this community’s social position which dominantly consisted of middle class merchants. Perhaps, this sect of Protestantism favoured moral reform in order to facilitate their social position, while drawing together a national and religious identity that was ordained by God.10

The textual performance in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings”(1622) seems to be directly evoking and responding to the Puritan community. The battle of birds in the sky had potential significance for regulating location and identity. This was possible because the text constructs this event as chaotic or beyond the ordinary. It was only by constructing this event as being out of the ordinary course of the sky that this community could intervene in its meaning. They could reveal the hidden meaning of an extraordinary event. Thus a chaotic event becomes a site to exhibit the power of revelation and regulation. In order to construct this event as beyond the normal course of the sky, the text draws on a perceived common knowledge. It proclaims that “it is, and hath been an old proverbe, that Birds of a feather hold and keep together.” However, as the text makes clear, the places of Corke and England between Gravesend and Wolwigge are the locations where this “old proverb is changed, and their custom is altered cleane contrarey.” Thus, by referencing the text, the image becomes a visualisation of nature turned upside down and is portrayed as going against what is natural or ordinary according to common or general knowledge. The clustering birds become preternatural. Through the same construction of knowledge, other pamphlets proclaim that circular rainbows, multiple suns and moons are events that go against the order of nature.

Images that exhibit upside down events in nature are supported and referenced in other sources besides what the text refers to as an “old proverbe”. Similar events are paralleled in the Bible which documents nature going against what is expected of it. The scripture documents the miraculous events of the sun where it stands still for Joshua, on Isaiah’s command it moves backward, and it darkens at the moment of Christ’s death. The text of “The Wonderfull Battell of Starelings”(1622) calls up these Biblical references which were interpreted as miraculous signs and places them in relation to the battle over Corke. In this way, the violent battle and disruption in the sky becomes a potential visualisation of similar miraculous signs issued from God. It could thus be constructed as extraordinary through both a perceived “common knowledge” and faith in the Bible. Similarly, other events such as multiple suns and

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rainbows could also be defined as being out of the order of things and thus become potential utterances from God in the space of his authority and abode. In the end, what is important is that, in this case rural England and the city of Corke in Ireland are marked out and defined because a perceived chaotic event, that has hidden meaning and order, takes place above these cities.

The textual performance limits the uncertainty of the meaning of this perceived event and its visualisation because it simultaneously calls on the authority of the scripture and common knowledge. The text of “The Wonderful Battle of Starelings” (1622) claims that this is a miraculous sign to England from God. According to the text, England is being warned as well as revealed as in a position of God’s mercy. Though morally backsliding and offered this miraculous sign of warning, God had not devastated the land as he had done in other countries. The text thus warns readers to “make haste and repent”. According to the text England is held in a state of grace that threatens to change into a state of judgement dependent on the readers who repent or not. Through this textual revelation, the visual event of birds fighting in the sky could be interpreted as the visualisation of a sign from God. The text encourages readers to locate themselves as part of an English nation, witness the event, and be drawn to repentance before God’s anger bestows judgement.

It is interesting that another pamphlet “A relation of a most devastating fire...” (1622) relates how a fire follows the battle of birds over Corke (figure 24). According to the author of this second pamphlet, England remains, as yet, untouched from disaster, but should heed the warning that is contained in the original battle of birds over Gravesend. For if they don’t perhaps the same fire will overtake their town. The subtext in this second pamphlet is that England and readers who positions themselves in this place, still are in a special position of repentance and mercy. This prophetic meaning of the battling starlings over England could

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12 Refer to the book of “Psalms” 18: 11 and “Jeremiah” 51:9 for references to the sky as God’s abode
13 Many of the pamphlets that narrate events in the sky are not referenced in other sources such as books or other pamphlets. However, the author of “A relation of a most lamentable burning” (1622) refers to the “the battell of Birds” in Corke. He claims that he does not need to repeat this event because it was already extant in print; “this battell of Birds was performed, is needdles in this place to be repeated, because the relation is extant in Print.” The author assumes that a reader is familiar with this event and will understand his narrative because of this familiarity.
come from the position of the emerging Puritans who hold to the idea that England is part of an
elect nation that holds a special role in history. It is in a special position of mercy.

Viewers within the Puritan community could thus participate in the pamphlet’s
performances, adhere to the textual claims and mark out location of meaning in the image. The
battle over the city of Corke is presented to viewers as an example of a miraculous sign from
God. This example is made more potent because the text reveals that this battle also is said to
have occurred in England. The mutual performance of text and image confirms that the
locations of Gravesend and Corke, are being warned because they are in need of repentance
and a reform. This need for reform is presented as a local concern for both cities. However,
through the Puritan participation this local concern extends out to embrace the entire nation.
Various viewers and geographical locations take the position of England as a whole. These
occurrences draw the rural and urban areas, and various viewers into a construct of nation.
The local rural places were not limited as outside and separated from other locations in
England. Thus the rural becomes significant and identified as a place that represents the entire
nation’s need for repentance and change. Other events such as battles in the sky over Hatford
or unusual thunderbolts, spears, and comets over Norfolke potentially reveal this same
message of warning in the sky and similarly identify England through different geographical
places while drawing in various viewers and defining their position. The text of these
pamphlets encourage various readers to heed the warning and take action through repentance in
order to recover England’s special position and role in history.

This particular practice of prophecy revealed the sky and a clash of birds to be a place
for warning and divine instruction. This was possible because the text first constructs the
event as chaotic and then reveals the order in this chaos through the hidden Puritan message.
In the process the sky and pamphlet become locations for defining the identity and place of the
viewer, England and rural locations. This particular construction of sky is confirmed by the
circulation of this message in other social forms such as public sermons and oral practices of
Puritanism. The text thus calls up these other references and brings them to bear on the
visualisation in order to limit the experiences of this space and circulate a particular message of
prophecy and the sky. However, this type of prophecy is practised in relation to other experiences of the sky. The Puritan community grabbed this wonder in the sky away from other communities that were interested in this space.

Honourable Persons and Idle Impositions

The textual performances in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) reveals and conjures up a Puritan practice of prophecy which regulates the visualised narrative of the battle in the sky and controls the perceived original event. Yet, the text simultaneously addresses other audiences and different types of prophetic practices. The text plays on different audiences and draws them to a visualisation that encourages their participation. In particular the pamphlet’s textual and visual performances evoke the community of natural philosophers and educated individuals who participated in the intellectual debates on events and wonders in the sky. As I clarified in Section One, individuals can be drawn together as being part of a professional community whose different voices surface in the various published material in London. These voices speak to issues in fields of natural philosophy, celestial cartography, numerology, chronology, cosmology, astrology, and astronomy. Most of the individuals who participated in these fields are situated in a rising economic social class who are educated and may or may not also be a part of the growing Puritan and Protestant community. They had a keen interest in interpreting everyday events in the sky such as the movement of planets and stars as well as unusual events such as circular rainbows, flying dragons, and battling birds. Section One introduced individuals, such as the intellectuals Francis Bacon, Henry Howard, or M. Meade, who were drawn to these pamphlets and participated in their performance through their letters and books.

What is significant is that the professional community may also have had particular interests in the practice of prophecy that could be brought to these events. Their investment in the practice of prophecy, as it converged with the sky, and pamphlet is evident in their reactions against prophecy when it circulated through the possibilities of the pamphlet. The “Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) evokes this community, and in the process becomes
regulated and ordered in ways not entirely in harmony with the Puritan practice of prophecy. In this way the frontier space becomes a place of tension and possibly exposes contradictions within this community.

For natural philosophers and astronomers the pamphlet offered the interest of empirical evidence. Both the text and visual image summon these viewers because they call up an empirical eye and a perceived reputation of trustworthiness. In the pamphlet “A Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622), witnesses who are “reputable persons” and part of an educated class of viewers authorise the original event described in the text. In order to verify the truth of the original event and the report, the text aligns with a cultured and educated class by calling on “Honourable persons at Court and divers in London...” and “the testimony of Right Honourable and Worshipfull persons and others of good reputation now in London, who were eye-witnesses.” Thus the text’s claims to truth and accuracy rest on the eyewitness testimony of “Honourable persons” which exercise reason and doubt when examining and certifying the event. Other textual performances in the pamphlet, such as name calling, supported this direct evocation to the professional community.

Volleying colourful and biting phrases at their opponents was a common strategy of the professional community. They exhibited their superior command of the English language they simultaneously implied the inferiority of those under attack. This is particularly evident in the reactions against the practice of prophecy. John Harvey in his 1588 publication of the “Discourse of Probleme Concerning Prophesies” calls the prophecies in these pamphlets “vain fables, or idle rumors, or fond toyes”. Francis Bacon, a natural philosopher and leading intellectual in England, turns on those that practice prophecy and calls them “idle and crafty brains”. However, in the same paragraph he does not dismiss the real danger posed by such

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14 Refer to Francis Bacon, “Of Prophecies” (1625) 6: 465. “My judgment is that (prophecies) ought all to be despised, and ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside. For they have done much mischief, and I see many severe laws made to suppress them...almost all of them, being infinit in number, have been impostures, and idle and crafty brains merely contrived and feigned after the event past.” For biographical information on Francis Bacon refer to Gardiner’s History of England v.1 p. 164-165 for his role in the house in Parliament v.1 pp. 194-195 v.4 56-107, for his ideas on reform in the state and toleration in the Church v.1 pp. 297-300. Also refer to George Boas’ Philosophies of Science in Florentine Platonism Art, Science and History in the Renaissance, ed. Charles Singleton. Baltimore, 1967. p.241. For the works of Bacon refer to The works of Francis Bacon, ed. J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath (1857-9). III, 264-68. For Bacon’s influence in
prophecies and notes the “severe laws made to suppress them.” Henry Howard chooses to turn on the producers of them and calls them “busy-bodies in the commonwealth, who with limned papers, painted books and figures of wild beasts and birds, carry men from present duties into future hopes.” Howard concludes that “wonders in the sky” are the product of simple men’s imaginations following their fancy, “it fareth in this point with Prophet, as it doth with other simple men, who fixing their eyes upon flitting and removing clouds, which pass over twith the rack; sometimes imagine them to be Great Mountains, sometimes Dragons, sometimes Cattle, sometimes Bears, according to the figures of their fancy.”

He disregards prophecy as “worthless trifles” that “strike feare in common people.” He condemns astrology and the tradition of Merlin’s prophecies, yet interestingly admits that “Merlin’s prophecies were cheyned to the deskes of many Libraries in Englande wyth great reverence and estimation.”

Perhaps, Howard’s views in particular are not surprising since his family had been accused of prophecy. Howard’s brother Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, was accused of being a traitor and his father, Henry Howard Earl of Surrey, was beheaded for treason in 1547.

During the trial of his brother, the court introduced some copies of the Merlin prophecies which were found in the Duke’s possession in order to “Establish the defendants treasonous intent.”

Perhaps this is one reason why the Earl of Northampton decries “the poyson of our glosing prophecies, whose leaves are lies, whose fruites are fruitlesse, whose groundes are false, and whose events are mischevous.” However, Howard’s voice can not be dismissed when it is joined with other educated individual such as Francis Bacon, Thomas Harriot, John Harvey, as well as the English laws against the practice.

This name calling by the professional community trivialises and defers the potential power and danger of both the prophecies and pamphlets in which they circulated. Thus in this instance, the space of the pamphlet is monitored through dismissal. Interestingly enough

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15 H. H.” Defensive...” ch. 4 p.13

16 This incident is related in Howard Dobin’s Merlin’s Disciples, p. 21,26. For biographical information on Henry Howard and his role in the Council of James I refer to Gardiner’s History of England vol. 1 pp. 93-94, 283-285.
according to Sandra Clark the same strategy of dismissal has operated in more recent times. Clark notes that within literary studies the pamphlet form has “pejorative connotations” and defined more by its negative connotations in relation to literature than by any definitive characteristics. As for the visual components, few contemporary scholars take this up as a serious and potentially powerful site. They are reduced to illustrations for a textual performance: Such a strategy of dismissal and devaluation is one outward manifestation of muscle flexing by different communities serving to control the practices and performances within the frontier space of the sky and pamphlet. Perhaps, it is an attempt to justify their own performances and practices within this space by constructing a category that is inferior.

It is worth considering that this name calling perhaps exposes the seventeenth century professional community’s vested interest in the pamphlet and prophecy as well as reveals their constructions of human experiences. It could be one strategy for establishing order and hierarchy in the space by calling up the literary and cultured authority of reason and education. A similar strategy for regulating the boundaries within the frontier space that the professional community used was to highlight the criminal element of dramatic prophecy. Bacon draws attention to the laws that are made to suppress them, "I see many severe laws made to suppress them." Further, his addition of the term “crafty” to his description of the producers almost suggests a characteristic of magic if not witchcraft to those who “contrive” the prophecies. Questioning the status of the content of the pamphlets attempts to bring order to the frontier space by limiting the movements and practices that take place there. They are attempts at setting limits of how these events can be defined and experienced while simultaneously advocating a containment specifically through reason and education.

17 Refer to Sandra Clark. The Elizabethan Pamphleteers, pp.17-18. She says of the seventeen century that “Almost every writer who mentions pamphlets and pamphleteers does so only to carp and denigrate” and she adds that “indeed it was at this time that the terms received the pejorative connotations they still possess” and further, that “the popular pamphlet as such has escaped attention...” It “defines a category of writing largely by negatives” p. 38.
18 Marie-Helene Davis’s study of pamphlets images is valuable in that she does take the image as her focus and point of departure. However, this study does not develop the image’s potential power for intervention in society. Her study focuses on images as reflections of society and the period. Refer to Reflections of Renaissance England Life, Thought and Religion Mirrored in Illustrated Pamphlets 1535-1640, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986.
19 Refer to Francis Bacon, “Of Prophecies” (1625)
What is interesting is that the pamphlet’s text use this same strategy of name calling as a form of justification for their performance. Although pamphlets parade practices of Puritan prophecy that call on faith and sense of common knowledge, they simultaneously call up, through empirical knowledge, a community that advocated reason and doubt. The author of “Look up and See Wonders” (1628) sets his report apart from the prophetic practices of the Allmancke makers, Prognosticators, weather interpreters who, in the author’s opinion, are “giddy bryn’d Medlers” who “shoote their arrows beyond the Moone.” The author of "Somewhat: written by occasion of three sunnes seene in Tregnie in Cornewall” (1622) salutes the reader and calls on their virtue and honour. Other authors use reason and doubt when reporting the event which confirms this alignment with a professional community that may be suspicious of them as well. The promotion of empirical knowledge summoned the different viewers that made up the learned community to move through the frontier space of the pamphlet. The issue that needs to be examined is how this frontier space highlights the various gaps and discrepancies within the professional community. How does it bring forward the differences within the boundaries of the community?

The evocation to “Honourable persons” in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) is supported by a strategy that define location through time and place, while using a visual narrative. This combination constructs the sky as a place for discovery, calls on the eyewitness of a viewer for authorisation and visually imprints the original event. Even though Section One discussed this strategy, I will summarise these ideas here. The definition of geographic location, time and set of witness offers a combination of particularities that can locate particular meaning. It is exactly within these specifics that astronomers and natural philosophers could use the frontier space. By defining place through these particulars and offering viewers a visual narrative this potential for discovery could be realised. This was evident in the case study of M. Meade introduced earlier. What the case study of M. Meade exposed is that the educated individual had an interest not only in the sky and wonders, but in the actual locations that marked out as the place for discovery in the pamphlet.

20 Refer to “Looke up and See Wonders” (1628) p. 18.
A wonder in the sky observed and located in England could validate the professional community's reputation at a time when both this community's identity and power were under question. At this time, the professional community was striving to give England a reputation of progress. This idea of progress was linked to the refinement of technical skills found in mathematics and numerology and was combined with emerging technologies such as visual apparatuses and eye glasses. Together, technical skill and technology refined the calculation of distance and define what could be seen. It was important to the professional community that a construction of an English reputation could compete with these type of advancements that were being made on the continent. Their identity in part was constructed against other professional communities in France, Italy and Poland.

Learned individuals were looking to the continent where development in technology, learning, astronomy, natural philosophy and technical skills were being made under scholars such as Kepler, Brahe and Copernicus. New ways of thinking and new forms to think with circulated to England via the pamphlet as well as through various personal contacts with foreign astronomers such as Kepler and Tycho Brahe. Thomas Harriot, discussed earlier, was a collaborator with Kepler and Thomas Digges author of prognostications and calendars was in contact with Brahe. Simultaneously, this community had to fight against the reputation of England constructed out of a backlash by Catholic countries. In France, England was likened to a herd of raving wolves. Publications such as “De Persecitione of Anglicana” published in Rome in 1582 was illustrated with disturbing images of arrests and torture that created an image of barbarity and lack of progress in England. Thus the English learned community had a particular interest in locating wonders in the sky at home: a wonder in the sky could serve as a site for hypothesis and for revealing a hidden meaning that had not yet been discovered on the continent.

The frontier space not only draws an educated group that includes M. Meade to participate in the dialogue nurtured within these pamphlets, it may also comment on and expose

21 Refer to “Somewhat: written by occasion of Three Sunnes” (1622) p. A3.
22 Refer to J. B. Black, Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603, p 307.
23 Refer to J. B. Black, Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603, p. 188.
their oppositional stance on prophecy and their vested interest in this practice. This community’s reputation rested on its claims to provide a correct interpretation of contemporary events and an accurate prediction of the future in relation to these events. An experience of witnessing birds battling in the sky over England or three suns over Hatford could confirm the professional community’s belief that these events are part of a natural habit that could be mapped through time. Thus the authority of reason and empirical evidence could potentially ground the hidden meaning within these occurrences. This construction of knowledge was formed in relation to the Puritan community who viewed contemporary wonders as having hidden meaning which was grounded in the authority of faith in scripture which revealed a divine order beyond the ordinary. Their interpretation rested on the assumption that the events be viewed as chaotic disruptions in the sky authorised by God. The reputations of both the professional and Puritan communities and their construction of knowledge and experience of the sky were to be confirmed by the unfolding of the future. Thus the professional community had vested interests in the location of the sky, pamphlet and prophecy directly in relation to Protestantism. The publications of John Bainbridge and Francis Bacon in England offer only a brief example of the stakes the professional community had in the convergence of prophecy, the pamphlet and sky.

The English astronomer John Bainbridge published two pamphlets that interpret his experience of the sky through a display of technical skill. This pamphlet displays reform in the way the sky could be seen and how knowledge could be formed. His pamphlet, “An Astronomicall description of the late comet . . .” (1619) put forward the idea that comets were not threatening or supernatural atmospheric phenomena, but natural wonders that could be mapped and predicted (figure 30). It was a publication of Bainbridge’s observations of a

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24 In 1619 Bainbridge was appointed the first Savilian professor at Oxford University partially, perhaps because of his hypothesis on the comet of 1618.

25 Specifically, Brahe’s hypothesis and evidence that comets were distinct objects versus the widely accepted notion that they were unpredictable gases or various atmospheric reactions domesticated these events. Further, Brahe’s discovery of a new star in 1572 and the appearance of a comet in 1577 shattered some beliefs in an unchanging sky and crystalline spheres. Brahe lived from 1546 to 1601 was a Danish astronomer and was also noted for building the best observatory of his time and collecting extensive data on the location of the stars and planets.
comet of 1618. Using a telescope in the second week of December, Bainbridge observed a comet in relation to two neighbouring stars. By comparing their relative positions near the horizon and at the point directly above the himself, he determined that the comet’s distance from the earth was more than the distance between the earth and moon. He concluded that a comet, seen through his telescope, could not be made up of terrestrial vapours as was promoted by the writings of Aristotle and Pliny. Thus a member of the professional community revealed the hidden meaning of the comet and sky through the authority of a technically refined eye. The particulars of his own experience were fixed to a specific location and time, and given expression through the skill of mathematical measurement. In the process the sky became defined, the position of the viewer monitored and the variability of its forms were brought into focus.

The images in Bainbridge’s pamphlet not only support this hidden meaning but give it power and authority through the visual strategy of a map and diagram which delimits the interpretative positions available for the viewer. The form of visualisation becomes harmonious with the message, giving this strategy the perception of a truth. The text is aligned with the visual and in the process both gain definition. This visual performance is in contrast to the one in the “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” which uses a visual narrative. The visual narrative allows a greater variety in the positions available to the viewer, which were discussed in Section One. Thus the authority of the Puritan message must then combat this potential play and attempt to gather viewers together into a similar experience.

Instead, a diagram introduces and marks off Bainbridge’s pamphlet. The title page presents an unusual woodcut of a diagram (figure 31). This image positions viewers by distancing them from the sky so that it can present the certainty that a comet is located in celestial space, not in the previously held idea of that they were terrestrial. Several modern books that document the history of science reproduce this woodcut. It is referred to as an illustration of scientific discovery and a breakthrough in thought. According to the authors of these books this image documents a shift in thinking as well as reveals the true nature of a
comet. On the next page of the pamphlet the same comet is represented within a fixed celestial chart which confirms the message that this event is within the order of nature (figure 32). A chart anticipates and predicts the lines of its future movements. These visualisations of the sky focus and define a viewer's experience of this space and restrict a viewer's interpretative movements and position.

Simultaneously, this strategy confirms this community's practice of prophecy to be the truth. It marks out a regulated space that allows a certain form of interpretation and knowledge to gain a sense of transcendental definition. By fixing and mapping the event of the December 26, 1618, when a comet was seen over London, Bainbridge was able to reveal a hidden meaning that attracted astronomers and natural philosophers in his own time as it still attracts modern historians of science. This visualisation of a comet locates it outside of terrestrial space and is supported by a vocabulary and technical skill that forces the conclusion that comets are not terrestrial atmospheric phenomena nor a product of human activities. Moreover, the map exposes that the future movements of the comet could be not only be predicted but, be known. The printed image thus authorises the professional community's application of prophecy by visualising the predictability of a natural and reassuring order in nature through technical skill and education. Effectively, in this pamphlet the frontier space of the sky is tamed and its slipping boundaries around readership positions regulated through strategies that call up the authority of learning and skill that the professional community puts forward.

However, this community's application of prophecy is introduced within a form that challenges the authority that it calls up. The pamphlet space that uses traditional and oral performances and practices draws into question the boundaries that the technical and learned vocabularies put forward. In particular the technique of a woodcut alters Bainbridge's highly technical vision displayed in his diagram. The woodcut brings to this vision of the sky ordinary experiences and a general familiarity. Thus it brings the extraordinary nature of Bainbridge's experience to the language of wood and the tradition of carving. The sight that is


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technically refined is imprinted in a form that is associated with what is common. In this way, Bainbridge’s skill of locating a comet, using a telescope and measuring distance confronts older experiences of the sky. Further, Bainbridge’s presented truths and representation of the sky are not only transformed by, but alter the pamphlet which had associations with other messages such as Puritanism or sensational news items such as murder or apparitions. His way of seeing the sky and his practice of prophecy brought to the pamphlet an element of professional knowledge and a show of skill that was acquired through studying classical texts and adhering to constructions of knowledge found in reason and empirical experience. It thus placed certain boundaries on the pamphlet and marks out a particular location for viewers. Yet, the pamphlet form itself continually slipped out of these boundaries and locations.

Other pamphlets and printed material supported Bainbridge’s application of prophecy in their displays of learned skills that limit an experience of the sky and disclose the present hidden meaning of events and fix the future movements. Numerology, which is the study of the significance of numbers such as dates in relation to contemporary events, transformed the frontier space of the sky into a contained footnote and an ordered reference for displays of mathematical skill and calculation. Numerology nurtured a limited and learned audience through “dials of destiny” and “calendars” that mapped out timelines of events in complex and detailed charts. Cosmology, Astrology and Astronomy each studied meaning in relation to the larger cosmos that combined earthly events with cosmic events through increasingly more technically refined observation. Within this frame, Astrology and Astronomy found wisdom and meaning in reading contemporary events and experiences of the sky through detailed maps and readings of the stars and planetary movements. These highly skilled expressions of the sky and practices of prophecy fixed the boundaries around this space and through visual strategies that limited the viewer’s movements, as in the case study of Bainbridge.

The emerging professional attention to technical skill to define events in the present and future overlapped with and altered other types of locations and practices. Their community’s interest in numerology, mathematics, philology, cosmology, chronology, cartography and
astrology effected secular and sacred prophetic practices by adding a particularly technical and precise aspect to these practices. The Bible could be re-manipulated by these systems of thought. For example, by focusing on numerology and philology the professional community could take hold of the numbers and words in Revelation such as the seven churches, seven seals, four horseman. The book of Revelations with its parade of numbers and unusual images was a book made for numerologist’s interest in deciphering the significance of numbers or the philologists interest in the meaning of words. Simultaneously, older traditions of prophecy which were practised through religion and superstition at points embraced and were transformed by the emerging new skills of the professional community. When these skills merged with older traditions rooted in folklore, theology or mythology, they effectively changed the older traditions of reading the sky giving them a renewed association with education and learning. Thus, through this new form of prophecy, located in the authority of the advancements in learning and technical skills, different communities could take over and invade various older traditions and practices. Bainbridge’s represented experiences are presented in relation to these other experiences and he realises the potential for expressing and promoting an empirical eyesight through the pamphlet.

Bainbridge’s regulations of the frontier space and practice of prophecy are evidence of particular stakes that the professional community had in the formation of knowledge, the sky, pamphlet and prophecy. The visual performance in the pamphlet flattens the sky and contains it in two diagrams rather than one visual narrative. This repetition of the visual almost reasserts the importance of staking a claim on this space. It is a visual exclamation that this space could be observed, documented, and its natural causes extracted through a human vision rather than spiritual vision. The claims Bainbridge’s pamphlet made concerning the comet of 1618 were linked to and made more powerful with the circulation of new approaches to knowledge. Francis Bacon’s publication on “Advancement of Learning” (1605) was influential in advocating experimental approaches to knowledge, formalised empiricism and inductive reasoning, as discussed earlier. These approaches to knowledge challenged the most fundamental Biblical knowledge of Divine hierarchy, faith and miraculous causes in events.
Through experiences such the one Bainbridge puts forward, the sky is presented as authorised by knowledge through inductive reasoning not by faith or superstition. What was at issue in Bainbridge’s regulation of the frontier space and his practice of prophecy was the emerging ideas of the power of human vision and optics that could make clear the perceived notions that superstitions clouded boundaries around the frontier space of the sky and prophecy. This is displayed in the visual vocabularies he chooses to express his experience. He exhibits the sky in a way that makes a viewer’s interpretative position clearer in relation to other visual strategies that cloud the direction of experience and interpretation.

Individuals within the learned and privilege class of astronomers and meteorologists contributed to establishing the technical power of human vision that Bainbridge’s pamphlet advocates. According to William Fulke, the skilled vision or optics of the learned could explain the weird and wonderful events in the sky because they “teache howe by diverse refractions and reflections of beames, such visions are caused.”

Thus by using this method a dragon could be potentially fixed and explained in the same way as a comet. Optics is also a topic of discussion in printed works by the English astronomers Jon Dee and Leonard Digges. Dee had a whole section on optics in his “Preface to Euclid” and applies optics to the study of meteorology or atmospheric phenomena. In Dee’s, “Preface to Euclid” Dee declares it an insult to man’s sovereignty over nature to be deceived by appearances in the sky. According to Dee, individuals should know the science of Perspective “which demonstrateth the maner, and properties of all Radiations, Direct, Broken, and Refleted.” In other words, in Dee’s opinion knowledge of perspective will clear away the appearances in the sky. The seventeenth century publication of the experiments with perspective glasses by the late medieval philosopher Roger Bacon gives the skilled vision of the learned added authority. These experiments gave human vision a power to effect things from a distance. Bacon used lenses to ignite gunpowder at a distance, and scan the minute details of objects several miles

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27 Fulke, Goodly Gallerye. fol. 45.
28 Fulke, Goodly Gallerye fol. blr.
29 Refer to Roger Bacon “Stratioticos” (1597).
The English astronomer Thomas Harriot, made lenses that formed one of the earliest telescopes. Fulke and a few others within the educated circle supported this claim on vision by considering the implications of a technically skilled optics to pierce the superstitions in the sky and reveal the hidden “true” meaning of this space. In other words, they were considering how the technically skilled vision of an educated class could regulate and fix the perpetual play in visions and experiences that the frontier space of the sky encouraged.

Yet, what did it mean for the professional community to participate in the practice of vision and prophecy at the frontier space of the printed pamphlet? Although readers and producers of the professional community firmly take hold of the pamphlet form, this was still a frontier space that was characterised by a lack of fixed boundaries around readership, performance and meaning. By reacting against this frontier space through outcries of name calling and dismissal, the professional community exposed its own fears and anxieties once it participated in this space. The pamphlets in effect expose this community to the alterity of its own practices. Pamphlets such as “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” address and respond to the various communities which included the Puritan and professional communities. However, the regulating forces of Puritanism and education within the pamphlets were potentially not the only powers that could utilise the possibilities of the pamphlet and sky to circulate their prophetic messages. What is worth considering is how these forces operated in relation to other traditions and practices of prophecy that could potentially move through the pamphlet. What are the ghosts that haunt these spaces?

The Haunting Practices

Significantly, even while the textual and visual performances regulate the sky within the pamphlet the printed image leaves other possible movements and acts of prophecy open. Visual strategies that use a narrative, abstract contour or specimen layout invited the viewers of the pamphlet to realise the potential of the sense of sight. Where some texts dramatise the event into a prophetic performance of Puritan warning and English identity, the images invited other

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30 Refer to “The Pathway to Knowledge” which describes similar glasses in the “preface” fol. iiiiv.
prophetic performances to move through the visual space. In other words, the event in the sky
over Corke and Gravesend in "The Wonderful Battell of Starelings" (1622) references other
forms of authority besides those explicitly put forward and evoked in the text. This is worth
speculation since I have argued the printed image can authorise and transform the text.
Further, perhaps the Puritan and professional community’s practices were operating in relation
to hauntings by other traditions of prophecy that visited this site.

Older traditions of prophecy, rooted in superstition and folklore, could potentially move
through images of battles and beasts in the sky that were presented to viewers through a visual
narrative, profile or specimen layout. Viewers could locate an image narrating a disruption of
birds in traditions of weatherlore. This tradition reveals the hidden meaning of the sky in
relation to a set of folklore truths that could foretell the weather. They could find no
images of fighting birds that pre-date this particular pamphlet an oral tradition could well have
been brought to the image. The English late sixteenth century author Leonard Digges in his
“Prognostication“ (1556) claims that evil weather will follow “the crying of fowles about
waters, making a great noyse with their wynges.” Disruptions among the various species of
birds are taken as weather omens, “Ducks and drakes shaking and fluttering their wings when
they rise...” are weather omens for rain. The image of battling starlings perhaps draws in a
community of viewers for which knowledge and experiences of the sky are constructed and
authorised through traditions associated with a perceived common wisdom. This perceived
common wisdom may have not been as easily subdued by the Puritan application of it in the
text of “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings” (1622) discussed earlier.

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31 For references on weather lore refer to S. K. Jr. Heninger. A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology, pp. 217-
224. Heninger ten sources including Pliny’s History of a World, Leonard Digges’ Prognostication, and Thomas
Hill’s The Profitable Arte of Gardening. Heninger separates different weather signs in these publications
according to what they portend. Refer also to Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, esp. pp. 103-
4. Hazlitt, W. C. Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore and Folklore Beliefs, Superstitions and Popular Customs.
London: Reeves and Turner, 1905. pp. 622-626. For weather omens on particular days of the year refer to,
John Brand MA Observations on The Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, 3v. London: George Bell and Sons,
32 An image of bird’s clashing in the sky accompanies a book that post dates the pamphlet by 16 years. In the
“Warnings of Germany”(1638) ( fol. 24)giving this image a ominous association with a country that was in
political and social turmoil. The battle of Crows were a portent for a bloody physical battle on earth
33 Refer to “Husbandman’s practice or Prognostication for Ever” (1664) p. 136.
Digges suggests how this idea of common knowledge and wisdom could authorise experiences of the sky in other ways than just constructing events as chaotic or out of the order of things. In his “Prognostication” he informs his readers of the potential of thunder to foretell death, pestilence or plenty;

Thunders in the morning signifie wynde: about noone, rayne; in the evening, great tempest. Somme wyte (their ground I see not) that Sondayes thundre should brynye the death of learned men, judges, and other; Mondayes thondre, the death of women; Tuesdays thundre, plentie of graine; Wednesdays thundre, the death of harlottes, and other blodshede; Thursdays thundre, plentie of shpe and corne; Fridaies thundre, the slaughter of a great man, and horrible murder; Saturdayes thundre, a general pestilent plague and great deathe....

Digges goes on to add how events on the ground such as the movement of animals could foretell weather;

...if beasts eate gredely; if they lycke their hooves; if they sodaynlye move here and there makyning a noyse, brethyng up to the ayre with open nostrels; rayn foloweth...

This type of common knowledge thus authorises weatherlore which was supported by its circulation through society in various types of printed material in the early seventeenth century from Prognostications such as Leonard Digges to Shepheardes Kalenders and Books of Wonder. It not only took hold of images of battling birds, but also, multiple suns, circles around the moon, comets, blazing swords, thunder and rainbows. Different viewers may have been invited by the visualisations in the pamphlets to confirm experiences other than chaos or warning. This type of participation with the pamphlet engaged the visualisations of the sky through an authorial voice that directed a different set of experiences from the Puritan or professional community.

Weatherlore is an act of prophecy that controls the sky by constructing it to be a space whose movements address and respond to humanity. Through this construction, the earth becomes the reflexive point of reference for the activities in the sky. Viewers can understand the events in the frontier space if they know the rules. If viewers know the rules, than the meaning of the cycles and events in the sky could be revealed. This construction is very

34 Refer to Digges, A prognostication of Right Good Effect, fol. 6.
similar in theory to constructions in Zodiac charts, where the human body and the sky are placed in a reflexive relationship that can be predicted and revealed (figure 18). In the process of revealing the meaning of the events in the sky, a viewer can gain a certain magic or power over the actual space as well as the everyday movements and diseases that take place on earth. A series of rules and omens that direct this space also control the experience of it.

Printed images of weatherlore signs circulated in such books as Shepheardes Kalender (1579). Different authors, including J. Wally and Edmund Spencer, take up this genre and publish several editions. The most prolific author that is retained in the archive is Edmund Spencer who published a Kalender in the years 1579, 1581, 1586, 1591, 1597, 1604, and in 1618. The editions vary only slightly in content even between different authors. Within these pages the diverse events in the sky are linked with the sight of shepherds who; “lyeth by night in the filds seeth many and divers impression in the ayre and on the earth which they that lyeth in their beddes do not.” The printed image represents a shepherd who witnesses the events in the sky (figure 33 and 34). He is presented looking to the sky or pointing to representations of a flying dragon and stars in the sky while looking at the viewer. He is a figure reminiscent of George Hartgill discussed earlier. However, in this Kalender, the management and wisdom of the sky were associated with the shepherd or the rural person who inhabited a location that was removed from people and thus, somehow closer to the natural environment and the sky. In this visualisation, the shepherd gives form to a perceived common knowledge and is the authorial voice that fixes the meaning of the sky.

Thus weatherlore also carried the authority of an oral tradition where wisdom about the sky is perceived to be passed down from generation to generation. The Shepheardes Kalendar claims to open this tradition up to viewers who could gain instructions from the figure of the shepherd who points to the sky and authorises the objects seen there (figure 34). In the images in the Kalendars diverse blazing objects are presented to viewers like specimens laid out on the white table of the page; collections of what the shepherd sees at night. Yet, the link between these objects of the sky and the ground was the shepherd. Printed material such as the

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35 Refer to Digges, A prognosticate of Right Good Effect, fol. 6.

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Shepheardes Kalendar organised the different prophecies of weather lore into books and made them available to those that could buy them. Yet, the practice of weatherlore could bring these concerns, that are located in the authorisation of the sky through rural and oral traditions, to a range of pamphlets. The potential for viewers to engage the practice weatherlore within the pamphlet could have directly confronted the emerging interests of the professional community which emphasised the acquisition of knowledge through books and educational guides. This type of participation within the pamphlet would also have confronted the Puritan community with an experience that dissipated their message of warning and repentance. It could have frustrated both the Puritan and professional community’s attempt to utilise these types of events to construct and contain a certain experience and identity.

There were other practices of prophecy that circulated in seventeenth century England which had investments in the sky and the pamphlet. The Merlin prophecies were particularly adaptable and could support the practices of various groups. The history of these prophecies was discussed in Section One. Within the Merlin tradition, the sky is a space for upheaval and change which reflected onto the movements on the earth. Contemporary movements of the sky potentially paralleled the predicted movements within the Merlin prophecies. Thus, the Merlin prophecies could be a key to reading and giving meaning to contemporary events in the sky and on the earth. Viewers could read the movements in the sky through the prophecies that reveal the contemporary or future political moments on earth. The prophecies mediated between the sky and the earth, linking their events and authorising their meaning.

These prophecies were heavily laded with associations and references that could potentially be interpreted in different ways to meet the needs of a specific viewer or time. The authority of this tradition could be called on when a viewer is confronted with a printed image that draws on the ambiguity of battles or beasts in the sky. The symbolism in the prophecies

37 Many of the pamphlets are pro-educational reform. They are instructional in content, teaching everything from writing and mathematics to gardening and bee keeping.
made them adaptable as well as difficult to read and deceiver. Perhaps for this reason alone they may have attracted the educated class. To recall Henry Howard’s perplexity that the, “Merlin’s prophecies were cheyned to the deskes of many Libraries in Englane wyth great reverence and estimation.” It is worth speculating that perhaps, they were puzzles for the educated, for which the solution was particularly difficult to locate. However, these prophecies were not just confined to the professional community or the printed page. Like weatherlore, the Merlin prophecies had associations with oral traditions that filtered through society outside of printed images or text.

Thus the Merlin prophecies were particularly unstable and thus threatening. As I have already mentioned in the previous section, they had their roots in a Welsh oral tradition that was taken up by different groups who printed the prophecies in order to promote their cause in relation to national reform. The Merlin prophecies could authorise Welsh national independence through its references to legendary and historical figures. Thus this tradition tied prophecy to rebellion and revolt by predicting and drawing on legendary figures that rose up against different oppressions. Practising this type of prophecy haunted England’s past and several laws and statues were ordered to suppress them. The monarchy and parliament in particular feared the potential power of this type of practice. Modern research also claims that prophecies such as these played a major role in revolts in England’s past.

The figure of Merlin gives power to this practice, but could oscillate between different systems of thought such as religion or superstition. Merlin could play the role of both divine prophet and magician which was a precarious position at a time when witch hunting was still an active pursuit presented in various pamphlets (figure 35). The figure of Merlin as magician drew on prophecy and divination that was on the edge of acceptability. The

39 Most of the historical studies that I referenced previously on Merlin’s prophecies explore the ways in which the prophecies were used for propaganda by different groups. Keith Thomas offers a two page version of how the prophecies were used by both Catholics and Puritans. pp. 484-485. in Religion and Decline of Magic.
40 Refer to Merlin’s Disciples p. 38.
41 The parliaments of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth all enacted laws that outlawed prophecy. Statues 4 part 1: 445
42 Refer to Merlin’s Disciples p. 43.
suspicions of all forms of divination converged in this figure of Merlin. Oddly enough, even while hovering on the edge of acceptability, this authorial figure was embraced by some Catholics and Protestants who gave him the status of a divine prophet and drew on his prophecies to support their causes in relation to reformation. The issue in relation to the Merlin prophecies is in what they could authorise for the different audiences that drew on this tradition as a confirmation of their own expressions and experiences.

Perhaps, the interest in the Merlin tradition for various groups was linked to an interest in social and political reform. This reform stands in contrast to the Puritan notion of reform that intended to draw the nation and church together. The Merlin tradition could support a radical revolution that separated these and could tare apart the very fabric of order and hierarchy that held the nation together. These prophecies constructed the space of the sky as a space of change and disruption that is mapped onto the ground. The hidden meaning in the sky’s events is made clear through the authority of Merlin who reveals them to foretell change and revolution on earth. This element of reform is reinforced by the prophecies lingering association with a Welsh oral origin which calls on national reform from oppression. These roots and potential for social change had resonance in England through communities of Radical Protestant reformers and Catholic counter reformers who co-opted them for their own purposes. Thus a range of other sects of the Protestant religious community could also seize the printed images of the sky. More radical religious divisions of Protestantism could utilise an apocalyptic event such as the battle of birds over Corke. These religious divisions included such Protestant sects as the Separatists, Brownists, Quakers and Arminians. These groups did not give to the nation of England the special role of being elect. In other words, the more radical Protestant sects were not nationalistic in their reform and viewed order to be restored through change; change that is brought about through rebellion and revolution. It is exactly this view of reform that could potentially take hold of apocalyptic events in the sky confirmed,

43 Refer to the woodblock print in “Witches apprehended, examined and executed, etc.” (1613) this print presents a narrative of two witches being found and tried. They are presented as being lowered into a running stream perhaps, to judge their innocence.

44 Refer to Thomas Religion and the Decline of Magic, pp. 483-484.
by the authority of Merlin.

For other audiences calling up the Merlin tradition and its authority perhaps nurtured a
different concern for change, not political or social revolution but, physical alterations to
nature. This practice could potentially reveal the hidden words and phrases that could alter and
tame the sky. The visual performances of a great storm, disruptions in nature, celestial battles
and multiple suns conjure up the potential of human intervention into the sky. They could
encourage superstitions of magic and divination by offering examples of violent upheavals in
the sky. A diverse audience could move through the text and image through the Merlin
associations brought to the sky. Images that constructed the sky as if in turmoil could attract an
audience interested in expressing revolutionary change and the power of human intervention, in
events both in nature and the social and political environment.

The potential meanings and practices of prophecy within an image of a battle or beast in
the sky then could fuel interpretations for rebellion and renewal in some audiences. These
interpretations were perhaps indirectly supported by practices of weatherlore and magic that
conjure up a potential for human agency to intervene in and affect the events in the sky. These
viewers could have been interested in a site that could confirm experiences of change and
apocalypse. When these practices of prophecy moved through the pamphlets it brought to this
space the threatening potential of justifying experiences of change and acting out a rebellion
against the larger political order and established authority. This may have been particularly
threatening when these types of experiences are confirmed through the pamphlet form that had
an unpredictable audience and was performed in a language of that was plain and familiar.
This was possible because the pamphlets located a set of specific places in England such as
Cornwall, Gravesend or Bongay, where the Merlin prophecies were seemingly being fulfilled
and confirmed. Thus this type of potential participation with the pamphlet may have been
threatening to some audiences.

45 Proclamations under James I STC# 1876 on March 1624 proclamation against seditious and puritanical books
and pamphlets forbidding printing importation or sale until the text has been allowed.

46 Refer to Joseph Wittreich, Image of that Horror" History, prophecy, and Apocalypse in King Lear, footnote
9, p. 133.
This potential for viewers to confirm experiences of radical change and rebellion through their engagement with the pamphlet was supported by the temporal period. The early seventeenth century was a temporal period that promoted apocalyptic interpretations of renewal. This was a complex period that was marked by change because of the expectations from various groups that were frustrated through multiple conflicts. The general anxieties of the period over religious, political, social and natural instabilities opened up a space for hope and order that could be fulfilled through any combination of convergence of prophetic practices located in myth, folklore, magic, religion, technical skill or learning. The pamphlets rip open this temporal space to be a time when experiences of change could be favoured. For some viewers this change perhaps meant a turning back to older traditions and times. This is evident in the imprinting of oral traditions, the evocation of older practices such as weatherlore and superstition, and the use of the technique of a woodblock. For others perhaps this change meant looking ahead to future traditions which are called up in practices and visualisations of technical skill and reading. Thus the pamphlet exposed a space where change could be realised by a range of different viewers.

The potential for viewers to locate change in the pamphlets becomes particularly important and potent for various communities such as the Puritan and learned audiences. At this point in time, the professional and Protestant communities were in an unstable position. They were vying for power and control in the social and political space as well as in the visual spaces within the pamphlet and sky. In fact, in 1621, Francis Bacon was charged with corruption, fined and put in a position of disgrace. Simultaneously, Kepler’s printed work on Copernicus was banned by the Catholic Church and its circulation minimised in England. The quotes from the professional community protesting divers practices of prophecy in the pamphlet attest to the fact that this form had in some respects become a threatening site. Perhaps, it was threatening because of the various uncontrolled and undefined ways it could engage viewers and nurture experiences and identities that were in opposition to theirs.

In the early seventeenth century, an event of three suns in the skies over Cornwall, a battle of birds over Gravesend, apparitions in the skies over Hatford and various wonders in
the skies over London provided a large and diverse viewership with visualisations and expressed experiences of the sky.\textsuperscript{47} Even a wonder outside of England in the city of Corke or Cambria had more potency when there was sense of uncertainty at home and a need for renewed hope. These natural events, images of warning, or visualisations of apocalypse could be seized by a range of audiences who specifically wanted to nurture change, whether that change was a radical purifying of the established church or whether that change meant the new ideas and learning promoted by the professional community. As this section brought forward, the printed images of the sky encouraged a potentially dangerous and diverse viewership to move through the printed lines and forms and participation with the pamphlets performance. It is exactly in this insecure space of contact that something new could potentially emerge.\textsuperscript{48} The threatening potential of the pamphlets seems to lie in the uncertainty of what could emerge from within this space of play.

\textsuperscript{47} Refer to “Somewhat: written on occasion of three suuns seene at Tregnie in Cornwall”.
NURTURING DELINQUENCY

In the hands of its reader who seized the pamphlet and its potential for prophecy this form could indeed become threatening. Even while printing strategies within the pamphlet position readers and various communities attempt to limit meanings and experiences through diverse forms of authority, there was a potential play particularly at the site of the printed images that use a visual narrative, profile and specimen layout. A space emerges at the site of the image and draws in a range of readers who could engage it through different types of traditions and practices of prophecy. Thus readers could potentially participate in the drama of the image through interconnecting and conflicting applications of prophecy. The possible tensions and conflicts between communities of readers were discussed in Section Two. Yet, the motion and dynamics of these pamphlets do not just create spaces of conflict and encounter, they also allow something new to emerge. This possibility has been articulated by Homi Bhabha in The Location of Culture.¹

According to Bhabha a space that moves outside of a fixed boundary is also a space of potential birth and intervention.² The pamphlet, in its circulation and intermixing of practices, performances and readers continually, moves beyond boundaries and thus is a space of becoming. Within the dynamics and perpetual and play of reader positions something new begins its presencing. Perhaps, the outcries that arise from the professional community, which are given form in books and statues of law issued against prophecy and the pamphlets, are evidence of anxiety over the potential of what could possibly grow and emerge from this space. Particularly, the woodblock prints allow play in the positions of the reader that can nurture, as de Certeau has argued, a sort of delinquency that is in reserve or movements and practices that are not firmly regulated. In part, these movements and practices were introduced earlier when discussing the prophecy. However, it is worth while to develop the implications of a notion of delinquent practices. Delinquency in reserve is part of De Certeau’s construction of the frontier

² Refer to Bhabha, the location of culture, esp. p. 7-9.
space. He claims that there is always a “sort of delinquency in reserve” in the frontier space where boundaries are only ambivalently limited.

In de Certeau’s argument, the frontier space holds “a sort of delinquency in reserve, maintained, but itself displaced and consistent, in traditional societies (ancient, medieval, etc.) with an order that is firmly established but flexible enough to allow the proliferation of this challenging mobility that does not respect places, is alternately playful and threatening, and extends from the microbe-like forms of everyday narration to the carnivalesque celebrations of earlier days.”

The frontier space allows the proliferation of a “challenging movibility that does not respect places”. This “movibility” is both playful and threatening. So that, de Certeau is claiming that delinquent movements are “in reserve” or held in readiness within the frontier. They are not completely out of reach or regulated by a firmly established order and place, and therefore, threaten to emerge. Even while de Certeau opens up the notion of boundaries and delinquency in reserve, he does not develop the potentially radical social and political implications of these. There are real social implications to claiming that the frontier space is a space that harbours delinquency. What form does this delinquency take when it engages the pamphlet? And, what are its social and political effects?

What I think threatens to emerge particularly from within the images of the sky within the pamphlet is a new identity for a viewer. This is a space for a potentially radical transformation of a viewer’s consciousness. The sky within the pamphlet is a space where a traditionally regulated viewer, a viewer who is accustomed to boundaries around interpretation and space, is encouraged to take hold of a seemingly limited space and become an active participant in the performance of prophecy and the practice of regulating the frontier. These delinquent practices of participation begin to take shape and emerge in the frontier space that introduces the figure of the witness.

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2 Refer to Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, esp. p. 7-9.
3 Refer to de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 130
The Call to be Witness.

Within the space of the pamphlet, viewers are introduced as eyewitnesses of the events that take place in the sky. For example, in “A Strange and terrible Wunder” (1577) “These things are reported to be true, yea by the mouths of them that were eye witnesses of the same, and therefore bare with so much the more boldness verify whatsoever is reported.” In the images, a figure of the eyewitness is presented to readers as a locus of truth and verifiability of the event. George Hartgill is presented standing in the landscape as a witness to the events in the sky above him (figure 28). “Divers Honourable persons” are introduced as witnesses in “The Wonderful Battell of Starelings”. “Many people” and Mistres Greene” are introduced in “Look up and see Wonders” and the image presents them to viewers (figure 9). In “A most Straunge and wounderfull accident”(1600) the Governour of Weersburch is represented witnessing the strange person in the sky above his wagon (figure 36).

The representation of a witness brings forward the need to call on the localised authority of some specific person who saw the event. The eyewitness regulates the frontier space of the sky by fixing boundaries around the events. Their account fixes what was seen, authorises, and gives order to a perceived undefined visual event. Yet, the eyewitness figure does not regulate the events without bringing to the events a localised place in the present as well as a place in the past. The figure of the witness is localised in the present to a specific time and place just as the event is localised. Simultaneously, the eyewitness of wondrous events in the sky is located in the past and associated with a historical and mythical place. This figure calls up the ghost of the St. John, Daniel, the old testament prophets, and Merlin each of whom witnessed horrors in the sky. It is this figure that is haunted by a past location and imbedded in a localised present that promotes delinquent practices and movements.

The figure of the eyewitness promotes delinquent practices and movements because it is a location of entry and participation for viewers of the pamphlet. It is the location of the natural philosopher Francis Bacon the intellectual M. Meade, the producer N. B., and the preacher Abraham Fleming. The witness accommodates a range of participants and is not fixed to one social class or individual. It is the location of “many eyes” in the street, just as the pamphlet is
the place of “many eyes” and prophecy is a practice that could be grabbed by “old men and beldams in the streets”. The witness is the location of the common person; the person who passes unnoticed on the street or works in the field, the “many people”. The figure of the witness is a potential location of emergence out of the social void for the person of the everyday. Once a witness to an event a person clothed in absence is made present. Mistris Green is identified and brought forward as well as the “people”. Thus, the witness is the site of potential participation for a range of viewers who see the original event. This location is offered to viewers who could become eye witnesses of this perceived original event through the performance of the image.

The written text encourages viewers to identify with the location of the witness and become an active participant in witnessing the event. The author of “Looke Up and See Wonders”(1628) aligns himself with the viewer with a repetitious “we”, encouraging readers to stand beside him as he retells and re experiences the event. In this way the text pushes readers to associate and identify with the other eyewitnesses who have seen the event. Through the text, the figure of a witness is altered to become a mirror or place of identification for different readers who see the event performed. Readers are prompted to witness the printed translation of the event in the same way that the original witness and the author engaged with the event, namely with seeing, fearing and hearing. “Enough shall be for us to see, and feare; to hear, and not meddle.” In “Fearful News” (1606) the author retells his astonishment at seeing and hearing the event, “I was both an ear and eye witness with great astonishment, seeing and hearing the terrible lighting and thunder.” Witnessing the event thus brings forward the sense of sight.

The introduction of the witness emphasises the role of vision and engages readers in the dramatic performance of sight. Sight, within the text of the pamphlet, is often associated with direct emotion and truth, but not necessarily tied to understanding. It seems enough to see but, not “meddle” and understand. It is through the emotion and truth of sight that the event could be engaged by viewers and it is this type of experience that the Puritan authors promote in order to push readers toward potential actions of repentance. In other words, this is type of
participation could support their message. The author of "The Wonderful Battell of Starelings" (1622) uses the engaged vision for instruction and warning. The Puritan participants of the pamphlet assume that once readers see with emotion, repentance will follow. In other words, it is the sense of sight that makes an event visible, transforms it into an experience of significance, and leads readers to actions of repentance. The pamphlets draw the wondrous events in the skies over Berkshire, Corke or London into the present through the structures of the engaged sight of the witness, the figure of identification for viewers.

This emphasis on engaged sight is made more potent when combined with a visual translation of the event and the historical context of the 1620's. Dwelling on the sense of sight opens up a complex web of meanings and implications. The early 17th century was a period preoccupied with the sense of sight. During the period, the various religious communities increasingly exiled the sense of sight whereas, the different learned communities embraced it and made it mechanical and technically refined, which was discussed in Section Two. Vision and seeing were being reinterpreted and contested within the religious community. Some Protestants sects were down playing the sense of sight, dwelling instead on the sense of hearing as a way to salvation. According to Calvin, sight had associations with deception of appearances, whereas hearing was the way to salvation. At the same time, the professional community was discovering apparatuses to control and stabilise the eye in order gain more accurate readings of the sky as was discussed earlier. The skilled and technical sight of the professional community is valued as the sense through which the superstitions of the sky can be dissipated. Several treatises support this particular view on sight by instructing a wider "unskilled" audience how to study and see the sky through the use of celestial globes. Thus there is evident tensions between communities over sight, its role and the value it should be given.

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6 Refer to "A perfect and easie treatise of the use of the coelestial globe." (1597).
Vision could simultaneously be deceptive or revealing, false or true. Yet, the various performances in these pamphlets emphasise this sense and call viewers to engage in the act of seeing. The words “look” and “see” are the most repetitive words in the pamphlets; “Look up and see Wonders”, “Look up therefore now”, “A strange sight was seen”. The typography, syntax, image and format of the pamphlet leads viewers to realise their own sense of sight. The emphasis on sight and shifting values associated with it could have been a product of the social environment which was preoccupied with sight. It could also be responding to and addressing different viewer’s desires to intervene and disrupt in this environment. The emphasis on sight could have been a sort of backlash against the confining of sight within the professional community and devaluing of it within some religious communities. It could address a historically situated viewer’s desire to specifically “see” and be stirred up by marvellous and strange events. The figure of a witness and the pamphlet’s strategies that encourage viewers to take hold of an engaged vision, holds several implications for the potential participation of viewers, particularly in relation to the image.

Viewers are offered a powerful role of giving verbal form to the events in the sky offered to them in the image. The pamphlet takes hold of different viewer’s hands and encourages them to become engaged with the event they see in the image. However, the potential role offered to viewers in relation to the image does not stop at seeing and discovering, or even becoming emotionally involved to perform acts of repentance. The implicit role of eyewitness is to retell the event or to describe a visual experience through the use of language. The author in the pamphlet “Wonderful strange sights seen in the element, over the city of London”(1583) relates how he first saw the event and then reported it, “I therefore as one that beheld the same, although of all others, the most ---- to report it, have here in writing, published the very trueth and sight as it then appeared and was manifestly seen (over our horizon at London).” When Governor Weersburch claims to see a strange and wondrous event of a dead man in the skies over Weerburch he immediately swears to make it public. He promises to publish it so that “all other nations can hear it.” The English pamphlet that retells this event, professes to be a copy of Governor Weersburch’s account which was
sent to all the major cities. The same concern with making an event public or printing the event occupies many of the other eyewitnesses in the pamphlets, including the “many people” who speak about the event and discuss it as well as Bainbridge who publishes his experiences. This drive to retell the event has the effect of limiting and fixing the event in time and meaning. In the end, to witness and retell the event is an act of regulation and intervention. It is an act that pulls events out from the void and gives them a place within the witness’s own words.

The performance of the pamphlet transforms viewers into active interlocutors of the image. In the end, the image localises the event in the sky to a particular place of a specific viewer who witnesses the image and retells it through their own experience. In the process, viewers become both agents and products of a dialogue with the original event. Thus, viewers of the image become producers. Yet, in the 1620’s, what could viewers gain by retelling this event through their own experience of the printed image? What other strategies would nudge them into this new role besides the pamphlet’s emphasis on sight and place of identification offered through the figure of the eyewitness? The answer to this question lies in the practice of prophecy and the past locations that haunt the figure of this eyewitness.

The Power of Speech

The act of regulation and role of interlocutor is encouraged and given particular value through the practice of prophecy. It is only through witnesses who are situated as prophets that the “meaning” of such uncertain events in the sky can be fixed. The author of the texts fulfils the role of prophets who limits and regulates the description of the dramatic performance and calls on various forms of authorisation discussed earlier. Yet, viewers can assume the location of this particular type of witness because of the play and uncertainty in viewer positions within the visual vocabularies. Viewers have the choice to position themselves in the place of the text or take up a variety of positions in relation to the image. The potential for viewers to seize the play that exists at the site of the image and become active participants in the performance is always present; it is in reserve. The inadequacy of the textual performance in relation to the viewer’s experiences, the potential stakes in prophecy, and the dynamics within
the image may have encouraged what is in reserve to become present. The engaged viewer may have potentially utilised the visual site as a place of their own, a place of power, a place that allows them to tell their own stories with the authority of a prophet.

The expressions of prophetic storytelling are validated because of the character of the events as wondrous and because they are located in the sky. In other words, this particular type of storytelling potentially liberates the expressions of a viewer by giving these expressions power or a sense of validity. It potentially gives viewers agency to act against or in relation to the other circulating practices and justify their choice of position. The visualisations of the sky is a site to stir different viewer’s imaginations and emotions while simultaneously authorising the product of that imagination through acts of prophecy. In other words, liberty and equality are held in readiness within the pamphlet particularly at the site of the image, and threaten to emerge when viewers take hold of this site. The images become a potential site for viewers to gain a voice.

The potential freeing of the voice of viewers was the delinquency in reserve within the frontier space. The sky within the pamphlet held this delinquency in reserve to be brought forward and in front of a range of viewers who could potentially move it out of reserve. It is this delinquency that could potentially intervene in the instabilities within the frontier spaces, and also make waves in the ideological tensions between traditional and emerging notions of order and authority. The pamphlet thus, contains a volatile space that could effect the explosive social and political situation of the early seventeenth century. The circulation of the pamphlet across a range of geographical locations allowed various communities of readers to enter this space.

The characteristic of these pamphlets, that push viewers toward an engaged vision and retelling of the event in an act of prophecy, may also have encouraged a potentially wide range of viewers to establish their own sense of order and control in these spaces. Simultaneously, the element of prophecy brought to this order a certain power and authority. In other words, the printed image allows for or “holds in reserve” the power within “freedom of speech”. This possibility obviously effected viewers differently. It could be both liberating and threatening
and could intervene in the ideological tensions between different notions of order and authority. In the early seventeenth century, a site that harbours a potential for “freedom of speech” could potentially pacify and defuse a wide audience’s need for freedom of expression, but it could also nurture actions of rebellion and mutiny. These delinquent possibilities were exactly at the heart of much of the social and political unrest in the pre-Revolutionary period.

At this time, the idea of freedom and the possibility of equal access to order was contentious ground. One of the most basic revolutions that Protestantism promoted was spiritual equality manifested within the church structure. The hierarchy in the church between pope, bishops and parishioners was broken down on the grounds of spiritual equality between all men. According to Protestantism, everyone had equal access to the will of God. This religious hierarchy was broken down to the extent that in some Protestant sects such as the Quakers individual parishioners were encouraged to speak up in church services and voice their opinions. The common man was promoted as spiritually equal to the religious elite, such as the bishop. Thus the Protestant movement and message that it circulated encouraged a certain awareness of spiritual equality. However, different social groups pushed these thoughts to mean social and political equality. These thoughts caused problems particularly in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

It is worth considering that the Protestant movement in England may have nurtured thoughts of spiritual as well as social equality in an English audience. On the other hand, the threat of Civil War in England and the image of horror in the Netherlands that was filtered through the pamphlets, may have caused a certain set of anxieties over notions of equality. There may have been anxieties over the implied chaos that a lack of order and hierarchy would bring. In some viewers there may have been a desire for a more established and defined order and hierarchy to balance the Protestant notion of equality that England had adopted. Thus the distinctions between spiritual equality and social equality, causing both anxiety and fear, needed to be carefully checked by the monarchy and social elite.7 Unstable visualisations which do not always have sure or fixed limits and encouraged a viewer to become a participant

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7 For statute against interpretation refer G. B. Harrison, Jacobean Journal Vol. 2 p. 88.
in the regulation of meaning, become more potent in this historical situation in which they circulated when order and hierarchy were being questioned in the social and political world. They potentially threatened the security and comfort of the stability of tradition and authority by allowing a new possibility to emerge; the possibility for individual expression and freedom of speech to take root.

The tenuous presence of images of wondrous events in the sky within the pamphlet form, may suggest that, these printed images failed to mediate the rising social and political conditions and tensions but rather, played on the problem. They may have offered viewers a voice at a time when the act of individual speech was a considered delinquent. Voicing opinions and choosing a position was often rewarded with torture, excommunication and exile. This delinquent act could potentially effect and intervene in the social and political circumstances that were particularly sensitive to it. The notion of “freedom of speech” was a sensitive issue within some discourses and communities who were struggling to establish order and authority. The tenuous presence of the image in the pamphlet may respond to this situation in which different viewers demanded the more fixed and limiting order that the text offered. Yet, it may also indicate that the void within this site opened up liberating delinquent tactics to a range of viewers.

Beyond the Boundaries

I, like Kafka’s “man from the country,” asked them to let me enter. At first, the doorkeeper would answer, “It is possible, but not at the moment.” After twenty years of waiting “near the door,” I have come to know, “by examining him,” the appointed keeper of the threshold down to the least details, “even the fleas in his fur collar.”

Michel de Certeau, The Mystic Fable.

The frontier space of the sky and pamphlet have meaning in relation to what exists outside of these bounded spaces or beyond Kafka’s “door”. Unfortunately, we can never

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fully enter that door or go beyond the boundaries of the representations that lie within the archive. The pamphlet form perhaps makes this more apparent then other forms. They remain illusive and seemingly wrapped in a silence. However, the movements within the visual and textual performance of the pamphlet participated in the social and political changes of early seventeenth century England because they met with viewers who were partially products and producers of their time. These viewers were active performers in these performances.

The printed images of various wonders in the sky reveal how different places and locations in thought and space are potentially negotiated within the particularities of localised experience. The localisation of experience is ultimately reflected in viewers who are encouraged, through the pamphlet’s performance, to re present in speech and conversation their own particular experience and story of the image. At the same time, the English pamphlet is a disturbing witness of the lack of control and conflict over events that take place in the sky within the pamphlet. It also brings forward the diversity in the act of prophecy available among viewers and is a witness of the rising social and political tensions, and anxieties. The pamphlet bears testimony to the potential for change and the delinquent tactic, held in readiness for viewers who faced the void.
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E. PROPHECY


F. THEORY AND CRITICISM


G. SCIENCE AND RELIGION


Figure 1. Title page of “A Straunge and terrible wonder...” (1577) an example of a profile which is a type of abstracted contour that is used present an event in the sky to an implied viewer. (original size)
A VIEW
Of certain wonderful effects, of late days come to pass: and now newly conferred with the presignifications of the Comete, or blazing Star, which appeared in the Southwest vpo the x.day of Nouem. the yere last past. 1577.

Written by T. T. this, 28. of November, 1578.

Figure 2. Title page of “A View of certain wonderfull effects,” (1578) an example of abstracted contour that is used to present an event in the sky to an implied viewer. (original size)
Newes from Carliade.

Then a strange thing was seen in the Ayre, for she was declared of them Sonnes, as in the Picture is to bee scene.

The first or prodigious Children had four heads, which spake and uttered strange things. The second Child was black like a Pope, and the third Child like unto Death.

The Child with four heads, began to cry a loud, and many women ran to heare it. One of the heads said with high voice: There shall shortly many Hungarians be slayne by the Turkes.

The second head said: All the wonders of the Turkes which you have scene in the Ayre; Shall all come to passe.

The Turk with many Tartars, shall overcome all Hungarics, even to Austria, and Moravia.

The third head said: The Emperour, Kings Earles and Lords, shall then arise, and shall put the Turke to flight. The fourth head said, before that come to passe, strange wonders shall appeare.

The black Child began to cry a loud, a time of death is at hand, both here and in other places, which shall not escape you, men shall perish for hunger, and great want shall be of corn and graine.

The third Child began to cry, repent and amend your lives, before death do catch hold on you, this Child was like unto Death to see to, and said for certain great death and mortality shall come out poor and Rich.

Come hither both young and olde, saith the black child, remember these words here spoken and conceale them not, many great wonders shall be scene, before

Figure 3. Page B3 of “Straunge Newes out of Calabria” (1586) an example of the use of black letter and roman font. (original size)
the persuasion, that, *Nobil est in illis septem bile nisipse timor* (as Seneca speaks). There
is nothing seemful in these things, but the
scare it selfe: yet the wife will bee admoni-
ished by every occasion, *Et quod aquam effe
serare, ad id quod iniquissimum est se com-
parari*; both (as wee say in honest English)
to hope the best, and to provide for the
worst; which how to doe, as becommeth
Christians, no man hath better taught us,
nor in fewer words, than our Soueraigne;
himselfe in the end of his *Meditation vpon*
1 Chron. 15. vers. 15, 26, 27, 28, 29. First,
by constant remaining in the pursuice of the
truth, which is our most certaine couenant of
salvation, in the only merit of our Saviours:
And next, by reforming our defiled lines; as
becomes regenerate Christians, to the great
glory of our God, the utter defacing of our ad-
versaries, the wicked, and our unspak-
able comfort, both here and
also hereafter.

Amen.

FINIS.
THE WONDES OF THE AYRE.

THE TREMBLING OF THE EARTH,

And the warnings of the world before the judgement day.

Written by Thomas Churchyard Esquire, servant to the Queenes Maiestie.

Imprinted at London by Thomas Dawson 1602.

Figure 5. Title page of "The Wonders of The Ayre." (1602). (original size)
Figure 6. South celestial planisphere by Thomas Hood, drawn by Augustin Ryther. (1590) an example of how the dragon form is fixed to mark a star constellation.
Figure 7. Page 28 of *A Contemplations of Mysteries* (1571) an example how the dragon form is let loose in the sky and shifts between solid form and vapours. (original size)
Figure 8. Title page of "Straunge Newes out of Calabria." (1586) an example in a pamphlet how a dragon is let loose in the sky. (original size)
Figure 9. Title page of "Looke Up and See Wonders." (1628) an example of a visual narrative that used to present events in the sky to an implied viewer. (original size)
Figure 10. Title page of “STRANGE NEWES.” (1605) presenting a combination of overlapping events that are visualised in the sky. These include the circular rainbow, clashing armies, double moons, spear, dagger, a rod and hand. A variation of the specimen layout strategy. (original size)
A Lamentable List, of certaine Hidious, Frightfull, and Prodigious Signes, which have bin seen in the Aire, Earth, and Waters, at severall times for these 18. yeares last past, to this present: that is to say, Anno. 1618. untill this instant. Anno. 1638. In Germany, and other Kingdomes and Provinces adjacent; which ought to be so many severall warnings to our Kingdom, as to the said Empire.

To the tune of Aime not to high.

Figure 11. Title page of “A Lamentable List of Hidious, Frightfull, and prodigious Signs.” (1638) an example of the specimen layout strategy used to present a range of events to an implied viewer.
...times so much disfigured by blazing starres, toches, firetoches, pillours, Lances, bucklers, Dragons, tow Pones & tow Sunnes at one instant, with other like things, that who so ever woulde recompte by order, those which onely hauie appeared (isten the natuurtie of Jesus Christe,) to gether, searching the causes of their beginning & birthes, the life of a man woulde not perfourme the same; albeit the

Figure 12. Page 56 of Certain Secrete Wonders in Nature. (1569) an example of specimen layout in a book. (original size)
Histories of wonderfull

the space of an house and a quarter, and in the ende began
to bring his selfe to the line of the sunne, after drawing
towards the Medy, the Occident, and the Septentrion, ap-
pearing to be of an excesse length, and of the colour of
blood, there was seene in the height of the Comet the Chara-
cter and figure of the stump of an arme, holding a greate
swozde in his hande, as he would have striken: about the
pointe of the said swozde, were three starrs, but that which
was right upon the pointe, was more cleare and brighte

Figure 13. Page 58 of Certain Secrete Wonders in Nature, (1569) an example of specimen
layout strategy in a book. (original size)
Figure 14. Title page of “Strange Signes seen in the Aire,” (1594) an example of the movement of the pamphlet. This pamphlet presents the strange signs seen in the air over the city of Rosenberge in high Germany to a London audience. (original size)
Figure 15. Title page of “The School of Skil” (1599) an example of mapping the sky. This is an armillary sphere of the sky which contains it in a globe like sphere in order to map its movements. The armillary sphere became the distinctive instrument used against Copernicans. At the centre is a the earth, and an axis extends vertically through it. in the system the sun travel around the earth and is marked by the zodiac which is divided into the conventional twelve signs. (original size)
That the Water and Earth are round Bodies, and by a mutual embracing do make one upper face.

That the earth is round, is thus proved, whereas in every upper face, the length and breadth is considered. The length of the upper face of the earth is from the West, into the East, as contrariwise. The breadth is from the South, into the North, as contrariwise. That the earth also to be round, appeareth after length: in that the Sun, Moon, and Stars, doe neither arise, nor set at one instant time alike, to all persons dwelling in any part of the earth. But one much sooner appears and shines to them dwelling in the East, and within a while after they change to them dwelling in the West.

By the second appeareth, that one and the like Eclipse of.

Figure 16. Page 31 of “The School of Skill” (1599) an example of measuring and mapping the movements of the sky. Interestingly, a small person with a measuring staff is represented on the earth in relation the planets above. (original size)
Figure 17. Title page of "A Treatise of Blazing Starres in Generall." (1618) an example of a visual vocabulary of a map giving direction to what otherwise would be just be an abstract contour. (original size)
A Prognostication everlastrictge of right good effect, truly augmented by the author, containing plains brief rules, chosen rules to judge the weather by the Sunne, Moone, Starres, Comet, Rainbow, Thunder, Cloudes, with other extraordinary tokens, not omitting the Aspects of Planets, with a briefe judgment for ever, of Plenty, Lack, Sicknes, Death, Varres &c, opening also many naturall causes worthy to be known.

In this & other now at the left, are joined divers General pleasant Tables, with many compendious Rules, easy to be had in memory, manifeele very profitable to all men of understanding. Published by Leonard Digges Gentleman, Lately conceited and augmented by Thomas Digges his sonne.

Figure 18. Title page of “A Prognostication everlasting of right good effect, “ an example of a zodiac diagram of the sky onto the human body. (original size)
Figure 19. North celestial planisphere of Thomas Hood, drawn by Augustin Ryther. (1590)
Figure 20. Title page of "The crying Murder" (1624) (original size)
Figure 21. Title page of "Newes Out of Cheshire of the new found Well." (1600) (original size)
I:

OLIVER E R. E.

SffcW ; In wvhicfi

To the generall losle of Farmers, Graziers, Huf-
bandmen, and all sorts of people in the Coun-
trie; and no lesse hurtful to Citizens.

Written Dialogue-wise, in a plaine familiar talke betwccne a
London Shop-keeper, and a North-Country-man,
In which, the Reader shall finde many
thinks for his profyce.

Imprinted at London by W. H. for Thomas Langley
in his house wherethay are to be sold. 1615.

Figure 22. Title page of “The Cold Yeare” (1615) (original size)
The Wonders of this windie winter.

By terrible stormes and tempestis, to the losse of lives and goods of many thousands of men, women and children.

The like by Sea and Land, hath not beene seene, nor heard of in this age of the World.

Figure 23. Title page of “The Wonders of this windie winter.” (1613) (original size)
Figure 24. Title page of "A Relation Of A Most lamentable Burning." (1622)
The last terrible Tempestuous windes and weather.
Truely Relating many Lamentable Ship-wracks, with drowning of many people, on the Coasts of England, Scotland, France and Ireland: with the Iles of Wight, Guernsey & Jersey.
Shewing also, many great misfortunes, that lately happened on Land, reason of the windes and rayne, in divers places of this Kingdom.
Figure 26. Page 8 of *The Warnings of Germany by Wonderfull Signs*. (1638) Presented on top is the great blazing star and two armies that the publication claims were seen in the sky over Groningen in the Dukedom of Brunswick on December, 1619. On the bottom portion of the page is a representation of three rainbows and three suns in the sky over Austria on April 1619. (original size)
Figure 27. Events of disorder on earth are reflected into the visualisation of events in the sky. The sky is constructed to be full of events that are chaotic and out of order because they are placed in relation to the disorder on the earth. From The Surprizing Miracles of Nature and Art.
And also a Calendar or Table of the Cosmical and Astronomicall rising and setting of all the fixed Stars, agreeing to this Age and Climate: Studiously and diligently suppuned and dispos'd,

By George Hartgill Minister of the word of God:

Figure 28. Title page of "Generall Calendar" (1594) a presentation of Hartgill’s experience of the sky. (original size)
Figure 29. Title page of "The Wonderful Battell of Starelings." (1622) an example of narrative strategy. (original size)
AN ASTRONOMICALL DESCRIPTION OF
the late Comet from the 18. of
Novemb. 1618. to the 16. of
December following.

With certaine Morall Prognosticks or
Applications drawne from the Comets motion
and irradiation amongst the celestall
Hieroglyphicks.

BY VIGILANT AND DILIGENT
observations of JOHN BAINBRIDGE
Doctor of Phyficke, and lover of
the Mathematicks.

LONDON,
Printed by Edward Griffin for Henry Etherstone.
1618.

Figure 30. Title page of "An Astronomicall Description of the late Comet" (1618) presenting Bainbridge's experience of the sky and his measurement of a comet's location. (original size)
Figure 31. Detail of woodblock in "An Astronomicall Description..." (1618)
Figure 32. Detail of page 2 of “An Astronomicall Description...” (1618) presenting Bainbridge mapping of a comet, presenting the sky’s predictability and order.
Figure 33. Title page of "The Shepheards Kalender." (1618) presenting a shepherd in relation to the movements of the sky. (original size)
Of divers impressions that Shepheards see in the night in the ayre. Chap.xxxiii.

Shepheards that lieeth by night in the fields, see many a divers impressions in the aere, and on the earth, which they which are in their beds see not. Sometime they have seen in the aere a manner of Comet, in toine and fashion of a Dragon, burning fire by the throst. Another time they have seen the leaping in manner of Goats, that leaeth to much longing, and other time is a white impression, the which appeareth also by night and at all hours, which they call the high-way to S. James in Calico.

The flying Dragon, Goats of the fire leaping, the high-way to S. James in Calico.

Moreover Shepheards see Comets in other manner, that is to wit, in manner of a pillar flaming, and burneth long. Another in manner of a flying star that paleth lightless. But the third is a comet, a star that burneth longest of all. They see other flest stars errant, that goeth as the other, and are chaste that they call planets, but they have erone of the planers, 6 bat Saturne, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercurie, and they see stars, of which one is called the bearded star, and the other a tailed star.

Stars errant, Comet rayled, flying star, Pillar ardent, Star rayled, Star bearded, Star haired.

Figure 34. Two woodblock prints from “The Shepheards Kalender” (1618) an example of the shepherd as instructor. The second page presents a specimen layout strategy of events in the sky which the text claims that the shepherd sees. (original sizes)
Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed, for notable villanies by them committed both by Land and Water.

With a strange and most true triall bow to know whether a woman be a Witch or not.

Printed at London for Edward Marchant, and are to be sold at his shop over against the Crosse in Paul's Church-yard. 1613.

Figure 35. Title page of “Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed,” (1613) (original size)
Figure 36. The last page of "A Most Straunge and Wounderfull accident" (1600) presents Governor Weersburg's experience of the sky to an implied viewer. (original size)