

Magic, *Maleficia*, and Manhood

Masculinities in Late-Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England



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Introduction

On March 10th, 2018, Fox News featured a segment on so-called “alpha” and “beta” males. The media outlet was responding to a recent cover by *The Hollywood Reporter* featuring the headline, “The Triumph of the Beta Male.” The corresponding article in the magazine referred to *Silicon Valley*, an American sit-com about the IT industry, and the phrase “beta male” was intended as a tech-related pun to refer to the awkward, nerdy characters featured in the show. However, Fox News took the headline as an attack on alpha males by the leftist Hollywood elite and the hosts dedicated the segment to puzzling out why the political left is so offended by alpha males. Luckily, the guest on that segment – a white, bearded, cowboy hat-wearing, self-proclaimed alpha male – assured viewers that women are not interested in “soy boys,” and that it is okay for men to be alphas.¹

Try as I might, I could not help but see one detail about the segment which I could appreciate: the affirmation of multiple masculinities. To be sure, some guests on a separate Fox segment also covering the alpha/-beta male debate made the argument that the definition of “alpha males” is simply what men are or are meant to be: aggressive, bold, risk-taking, and active.² The use of the term “soy boys” may also be interpreted as a feminizing descriptor (because *real* men cannot be lactose intolerant, I suppose). However, if all men were truly “alpha,” then there would be no need for the separate category of “alpha male” to begin with. Furthermore, the hosts of the segment did not deny the maleness of betas, nor did they explicitly liken beta males to women, so even men who do not exhibit aggressive alpha qualities are treated as masculine agents – albeit, undesirable ones.

In recent years, the developing culture of political correctness has presented challenges to binary modes of categorization. We seem to be approaching a consensus that all social constructs – from sexual orientation, to gender, to sex – are fluid, movable categories which are not sufficiently defined by binary oppositions. This shift is perhaps most easily observed in the increasingly common use of terms which defy binary constructions, such as omni-, pan-, and asexual, and non-cis- and transgender. Still, in everyday conversation we tend to think and speak of “masculinity” as if there is one, singular type or definition, and we assume that men who fail to meet this standard of masculinity automatically fall toward the feminine side of this

¹ “Comedian Weighs in on ‘beta Male’ Rise” (Fox News, March 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3zRHvc0-bQ>.

² “Hollywood Reporter Touts the ‘Triumph of the Beta Male’” (Fox News, March 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMxFerbWA5s>.

diametrically opposed spectrum. But what we now know, and what the Fox News segment acknowledges, is that there are multiple, concurrent masculinities.

When an alternative form of masculinity comes up, we tend to hear of “toxic masculinity.” Toxic masculinity essentially refers to masculinity gone wrong; it represents an emphasis on control – not only over one’s own life, but the lives of others as well – emotional restraint, and aggression. In the wake of the MeToo movement, many social and political commentators remarked on the culpability of toxic masculine culture for rampant sexual abuse in the entertainment industry. Accounts from the MeToo movement are overwhelmingly characterized by men abusing positions of power in order to make non-consensual sexual advances or to coerce subordinates into providing sexual favors in exchange for career advancement. The power dynamic between abuser and abused generally leads to the silence of the abused; they could not come forward with their allegations for fear of professional repercussions. While the majority of these stories involve a man abusing a woman, some accusations of sexual abuse have come from men. Actor Terry Crews has been credited with leading the male front of the movement, providing his account of sexual assault at the hands of his former (male) agent. Crews’s experience with sexual assault added nuance to the movement, demonstrating how race influences professional power dynamics just as much as sex.³ The issue of toxic masculinity has also been raised with the ongoing coverage of school shootings in the United States. The most recent school shooting (at the time of writing) in Santa Fe, Texas, saw the deaths of eight students and two teachers. The shooter, a member of online “incel”⁴ communities, reportedly targeted people he did not like, including one 16-year old girl who repeatedly rejected his advances.⁵ This detail is symptomatic of a masculine culture which posits men as being entitled to sex and attention, and women as being obligated to accept and reciprocate men’s advances.

The increasing use of the term “toxic masculinity” in public discourse has not been without controversy. The pairing of one word with a negative descriptor may give it an unfavorable connotation, such as the turn of phrase “radical Islam.” However, specifying “toxic masculinity” carries with it the implication that it is separate from benevolent or ambivalent

³ Crews’s first posted his account to Twitter, writing that he decided not to take any action at the time of the assault knowing that the headlines the next day would read “240 lbs. Black Man stomps out Hollywood Honcho.” A. N’Duka, “Terry Crews Reveals He Was Sexually Assaulted By Hollywood Exec,” *Deadline* (blog), October 2017, <https://deadline.com/2017/10/terry-crews-sexual-assaulted-hollywood-executive-twitter-1202185994/>.

⁴ A portmanteau referring to “involuntarily celibate” individuals.

⁵ “Santa Fe School Shooting: Suspect ‘was Rejected’ by Victim Shana Fisher,” BBC News (May 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44194074>.

forms of masculinity; it is an affirmation that toxic masculinity is not the normative form but rather an extreme, alternative form. This is not to say that toxic masculinity arises in isolation from other forms of masculinity. In her 1993 book, *Masculinities*, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell proposed her theory of multiple masculinities. She outlined the ways in which patriarchal societies – which includes all of the western world – produce dominant or hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity determines the ways in which all genders are socialized. This gendered socialization produces power inequalities, which in turn results in social, economic, and health inequalities. Within these inequalities of power and access to resources, subordinate and alternative masculinities are produced.

These masculinities should not be regarded only as a timely consideration within the social context of 2018. Connell demonstrated that the cyclical relationship between constructions of masculinities and reproductions of patriarchy has been a feature of western societies throughout history. She observed, for example, a shift in western hegemonic masculinity during the long sixteenth century, noting the cultural changes which resulted in new dominant conceptions of personhood, sexuality, and manhood. Connell linked these changes to the diminishing power of the Catholic Church in the face of the Protestant Reformation and “Renaissance secular culture.” Monastic celibacy, long held as the ideal masculine sexuality, was replaced with marital heterosexuality and the “conjugal household.” Connell also characterized the Empire-building of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a gendered enterprise, based around the masculine pursuits of soldiering and overseas trade. Cities such as London, Antwerp, and Amsterdam grew exponentially and saw the emergence of highly commercial, capitalist societies. In these examples, we see a developing hegemonic masculinity that was increasingly defined and demonstrated by economic and state institutions.⁶

The present research seeks to explore Connell’s theory within a specific historical context: magic in early modern England. Magic has always been a fiercely contested field and those who practiced it have always been controversial. The gender of magical practitioners during the early modern period diverges when broken down into specific arenas: practitioners of textual, learned magic – astrologers, necromancers, and alchemists – were overwhelmingly male. By contrast, witches throughout Europe accused between 1570 and 1630 were predominantly female with four in five witches representing women.⁷ In early modern England, this ratio leans even heavier towards women with roughly nine out of every ten witches having

⁶ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 186-9.

⁷ D. Hoak, “The Great European Witch-Hunts: A Historical Perspective,” *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 6 (1983), 1271.

been female.⁸ Considering the general patterns of gender associated with these forms of magic, how did contemporaries' descriptions of astrologers compare to descriptions of witches and how did these men present themselves to the public? Which qualities or characteristics were emphasized, why, and how successful were men of different social milieus in their quest for hegemony?

Historical studies of magic are plentiful and diverse in their approaches and analyses. However, the histories of different magical traditions are unique in their considerations of sex and gender; specific attention to the gender of the witches began around the time of the women's movement of the mid-twentieth century. The gender of learned magicians and astrologers, meanwhile, has only been seriously considered within the last two decades.

Historiographical Overview

Witchcraft and Gender

Prior to the 1960s, historians of early modern witchcraft seldom considered sex or gender as major components of the European witch persecutions. Perhaps it seemed obvious that most witches were women that it did not merit any meaningful analysis. As Elspeth Whitney noted, historians tended to use the generic male pronoun *he* to refer to everyone – accusers, accused, and the reader – except witches, “for whom the generic female pronoun [was] used.”⁹ Historians might have noted the preponderance of female witches in most regions, but often fell short of providing satisfactory explanations as to why this was the case.

The works by Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane during the 1970s provided a point of departure for many later historians of witchcraft. Witch-hunts, according to them, had been local responses to religious and economic upheaval. Their analyses posited the poorest members of a community as likely targets of witch-hunts, and since women were among early modern England's most impoverished and dependent on charity, their identification as witches was logical. Scholars noted contemporary feminine stereotypes of weakness and lust, and yet denied sex as a major contributing factor in the witch-hunts;¹⁰ Thomas outright rejected the witch-hunts as a “war between sexes” on the basis that, in some cases, the majority of the

⁸ F. Timbers, *Magic and Masculinity: Ritual Magic and Gender in the Early Modern Era* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 59.

⁹ E. Whitney, “The Witch ‘She’/ The Historian ‘He’: Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts,” *Journal of Women's History* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 82.

¹⁰ A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Harper & Row, 1970); K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).

accusers and witnesses against a witch had been women themselves.¹¹ This issue of women as both accusers and accused continued to plague gendered interpretations of the witch-hunts for the next three decades.

Despite some scholars' skepticism, second-wave feminism catalyzed a flood of research throughout the academic world in which sex and gender functioned as methods of analysis, and early modern witchcraft history became a hub of feminist interpretations. This comes as no surprise given the fact that women represented roughly eighty percent of all accused witches.¹² This estimation accounts for all targets of witch-hunts throughout Christian Europe from the middle of the fifteenth century to the second half of the eighteenth, and thus obscures areas such as Iceland, Estonia, Moscow, and Normandy where most accused witches had been men. Still, with women overrepresented as accused witches, most gender witchcraft historiography thus far has emphasized the plight of the victimized female and early modern concepts of womanhood and femininity.

The earliest feminist interpretations of late medieval and early modern witchcraft reached maturation in the mid-1970s. Radical feminists Andrea Dworkin and Mary Daly insisted that the witch-hunts represented a "gynocide" and "Woman's Holocaust."¹³ These assertions seemed to take aim at recent work by Hugh Trevor-Roper, who theorized that the witch-hunts had been driven by elites who feared ideological or social "others."¹⁴ Like the works by Thomas and MacFarlane, Trevor-Roper's interpretation ignored the sex of all participants – accusers, accused, and prosecutors – and therefore posited the witch-hunts as a sex-neutral power struggle that was mostly influenced by socio-economic tensions.

The first major shift in gender-witchcraft historiography came in the early 1980's. Rather than engaging with gender as a starting point for the "gynocide," scholars such as Christina Larner sought to explain why women were more likely to be accused as witches, beyond the general contemporary sexist stereotypes and reliance on charity. Larner famously wrote that witchcraft was not "sex-specific," but rather "sex-related."¹⁵ This assertion simultaneously quelled and inflamed the debate as subsequent scholars of witchcraft history used this quote to bridge the divided scholarship regarding misogyny's role in witch persecutions. However, scholars often failed to note Larner's later assertion that "witch-hunting

¹¹ Thomas, 679.

¹² W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 3.

¹³ M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 183; A. Dworkin, "Gynocide: The Witches," in *Woman Hating: A Radical Look at Sexuality* (New York: Plume, 1974), 118–50.

¹⁴ H. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Pelican, 1969).

¹⁵ C. Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1981), 92.

[was] woman-hunting or at least it [was] the hunting of women who [did] not fulfill the male view of how women ought to conduct themselves.”¹⁶ That is, women accused of witchcraft were often those who challenged patriarchal ideals of womanhood by living independently and rejecting the institutions of matrimony and motherhood; they were seen as serving themselves rather than men and children. Larner further theorized that women’s participation in accusing witches was something akin to a defense mechanism: women who conformed to the patriarchal standards of femininity “felt threatened by any identification with those who did not.”¹⁷ Perhaps subconsciously, women who participated in the accusations sought to reaffirm their compliance to the patriarchal view of femininity and womanhood by leading accusations against women who rejected it. Larner’s posthumously published collection of essays and lectures maintained her theory of witchcraft as a “sex-related” crime, and suggested that misogyny did not *drive* the witch-hunts, but was one of many specific conditions which allowed the witch-hunts to thrive and spread.¹⁸

The second major development in witchcraft historiography came in the 1990s with the introduction of psychoanalytical methods of analysis and a shift in emphasis towards depositions recorded during trial and pre-trial proceedings. In her study of the German witchcraft trials, Lyndal Roper noted that women accused other women as witches by citing their belief that these witches had inflicted them with infertility or had otherwise killed or harmed their children. In this sense, witchcraft was seen not only as a conspiracy against Christianity, but as an attack on Godly procreation, fertility, and motherhood. Because so many of the accusers were women, she claimed that witch-hunts had been “so far from being a simple expression of misogyny,” but rather represented a moment in which a community took mothers’ fears seriously and mobilized to eliminate the supposed threat.¹⁹ Diane Purkiss arrived at a similar conclusion in her study of witches in early modern England. She found that women who participated in with-hunts as accusers or witnesses felt threatened by witches because witches disrupted not only fertility and motherhood, but all of domestic life. This included the maintenance of livestock and household goods – a chore which fell to women and which featured prominently in witch trials on both sides of the English Channel.²⁰ While such

¹⁶ Larner, *Enemies of God*, 100-1.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 102.

¹⁸ C. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, ed. A. Macfarlane (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 84.

¹⁹ L. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 212.

²⁰ D. Purkiss, “Women’s Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child,” in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology: Volume IV, Gendering and Witchcraft*, ed. B. P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2001).

positions upheld Larner's earlier contention that witch-hunts targeted *witches* and had not been a war consciously engineered against women,²¹ Roper's assessment of female accusers hearkens back to Thomas and MacFarlane's work from the 1970s. The problem with their conclusions is that they theorize misogyny as an exclusively male expression. While the witch-hunts had been undoubtedly more than a war against the female sex, scholars ought to be cautioned against downplaying the crucial role of misogyny simply because women also acted as accusers; as Larner asserted, women, too, may express misogyny in their efforts to demonstrate their conformity to patriarchal ideals.

While Larner's distinction between "sex-specific" and "sex-related" has most often been interpreted as a distinction between *biological sex* and *performed sex* (or *gender*),²² recent approaches to witch-hunts with an emphasis on theological sources have proposed a different take. In his work, Walter Stephens offers a close reading analysis of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, an aggressively misogynistic witch-hunting manual first published in 1496. It is perhaps best known for its so-called "women's-evil chapter," in which the author, Heinrich Kramer, justified the female witch stereotype by citing women's inherent weaknesses (both mental and physical) and their insatiable sexual appetites. The rest of the *Malleus* describes how women obtain their diabolic powers through sexual encounters with demons and how the righteous witch-hunter can identify and destroy witches. Stephens noted textual evidence which hinted at how the *Malleus* had been edited: Part II Question I Chapter IV ends with a promise to address the "qualities of the feminine sex" *later* in the text.²³ However, in its published version, the so-called "women's-evil chapter" appears in Part I of the text. Stephens asserted that Kramer had realized the necessity of discussing the nature of women *before* detailing the mechanics of demonic copulation; the readers must first be convinced that women were "chiefly addicted to [e]vil superstitions"²⁴ before they would believe that women had sex with demons in exchange for diabolic powers. Stephens continued:

The issue is not misogyny per se but rather its ideological usefulness... The issue was not keeping women in their place or controlling their sexuality. Heinrich Kramer did not fear that women were associating with demons: he hoped that

²¹ L. Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 10.

²² Katharine Hodgkin described this distinction as "the difference between an act which can only be performed by one sex, and an act which is predominantly but not exclusively associated with one sex." Here I interpret "sex-specific/ sex-related" not within the strict confines of actions, but more broadly, as related to an individual's nature or demeanor. K. Hodgkin, "Gender, Mind and Body: Feminism and Psychoanalysis," in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies, Palgrave Advances (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 186.

²³ H. Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. M. Summers (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 114.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 41

they were. His whole theology depended on women's sexual transgression, and it would have collapsed if he had ever had to admit that women's behavior conformed to the patriarchal ideal of chastity and submissiveness.²⁵

Women were the most plausible candidates because they were seen as the more passive sex – that is, sex happens *to* women – and it therefore made more sense to posit women as easily seduced, controlled, or overpowered by demons. Witchcraft, therefore, was “sex-related” in that it began with and revolved around women’s sexual transgressions. Stephens further noted that necromancers were almost exclusively male and that their powers were not imagined as being derived from sexual encounters with demons.²⁶ Instead, men were generally the willing recipients of occult powers, which were granted to them by sealing a pact or signing a contract with the Devil.

What almost all witchcraft historiography from the 1970s to the early 2000s has in common is that they more or less confirm witchcraft as a polarized concept. Witchcraft, as a conspiracy against God and the Church, was “the ultimate in human evil,” and therefore was “sex-related to females in just the same proportion as sanctity, the ultimate in human good, was sex-related to males.”²⁷ The Church was and remains a male-dominated institution; God is male; Jesus and all of his disciples were male; saints are overwhelmingly male; nearly everything that was *good* was male. The most venerable woman in all of Christendom is Mary, the mother of Christ, but her narrative is dominated by her role in the immaculate conception of the savior. In other words, her claim to fame rests almost entirely on the absence of sex in her life; the Virgin Mary was the patriarchal, Christian ideological *good* woman: a chaste mother. The underrepresentation of women in the Christian canon and the tendency for theologians to fixate on the temptation of Eve make it easy to understand why women were so quickly associated with evil.

This polarization between male/ female and good/ evil explains why, up until recently, witchcraft historiography has been at something of a standstill when it comes to incorporating male witches into the narrative. Just as male witches had been “unthinkable” to demonologists, because they could not help but put women on the negative end of these diametrically opposed categories,²⁸ historians have struggled to move beyond methods and theoretical frameworks

²⁵ Stephens, 37.

²⁶ Ibid, 53.

²⁷ Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 61.

²⁸ A. Rowlands, ed., “Not the ‘Usual’ Suspects?,” in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 10.

which can do little but favor taking the perspective of female victims. The issue of male witches has been raised since gender entered the fray but has received comparatively little attention.

The first full-length monograph dedicated to a study of male witches was written by Rolf Schulte in 2000. In it, Schulte analyzed German folk legends, tracing the development of werewolves as the victims of bewitching to being almost analogous to witches. He demonstrated that male witches comprised roughly one quarter of the witch-hunt victims in the Holy Roman Empire, thus far from “secondary” or “auxiliary” to accused female witches. Most importantly, he concluded that Catholic territories had seen more men tried as witches than Protestant territories, and that the *Malleus* is uniquely misogynistic within the broader Catholic demonological tradition. He attributed this divide between Catholic and Protestant witch-hunts to differing conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The temptation towards magic – which inevitably implied succumbing to Satan – was linked to weakness of the mind, and Protestant demonologists were reluctant to categorize men as such.²⁹ Although they had not been aware of Schulte’s work in 2003 when their book was first published,³⁰ Lara Apps and Andrew Gow reached similar conclusions. They claimed that male witches had been “implicitly feminized” by contemporary demonologists, asserting that early moderns both associated weak-mindedness with the feminine sex and identified it as the primary cause of witchcraft. Thus, any men believed to be witches were weak-minded, easily seduced by the Devil, and therefore feminine.³¹

A 2009 anthology edited by Alison Rowlands provided another resource within the growing body of male witchcraft historiography. The book featured contributions from some of the most famed names in the field, including Rolf Schulte, Robin Briggs, Malcolm Gaskill, and Willem de Blécourt. Each chapter provided a short, regional case study of male witches in which authors problematize, rather than confirm, the gender of the accused. The authors also, when they could, took up Blécourt’s call to provide more specificity to each case study by differentiating between “local” witches and witches identified during denunciations – both of

²⁹ R. Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, trans. L. Froome-Döring (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). In a very recent article, Peter Leeson and Jacob Russ assert that the witch-hunts represent a “non-price competition” between Catholic and Protestant factions. The bulk of all European witch-hunts took place in areas with intense “religious-market contestation,” and public trials were a way for the competing churches to advertise their power and dedication to eradicating perceived threats such as witchcraft. P. T. Leeson and J. W. Russ, “Witch Trials,” *The Economic Journal*, 2017.

³⁰ L. Apps, review of *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, by R. Schulte, *Folklore* 122, no. 1 (2011): 105–6.

³¹ L. Apps and A. Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

which represented equally real threats to early modern people.³² These microstudies also offer honest attempts to elucidate various witchcraft mythologies and to distinguish between malefic and non-malefic magic. Rather than assuming that witchcraft had been “linked to gender-specific spheres of influence... that immediately exclude men from any analysis (such as housewifery or motherhood),” Rowlands proposes that “early modern... beliefs about witchcraft were linked to anxieties that coalesced especially around the practices of parenthood, neighborliness, and Christianity – categories that included both men and women.”³³ Simple as this may seem, her proposal has massive implications for the study of witchcraft and gender; rather than studying witches and witchcraft through specifically feminine concepts and experiences, the focus should instead shift to concepts of correctness and conformity to socially-established norms.

Cases of Male Witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592-1692 by Eliza Kent is the most recent full-length study of male witches and, incidentally, the work which most influenced the structure and methodology of the present study. Kent countered what she referred to as the “feminization model”³⁴ put forward by previous scholars – most notably Apps and Gow. While Kent incorrectly conflated Apps and Gow’s conclusions about how early moderns conceptualized male witches with the two scholars’ personal conceptions of male witches,³⁵ her study raised several valid points which have not been appreciated by previous scholars. While female witches were mostly charged with *maleficia*³⁶ to harm or kill, male witches were most often accused of enlisting the help of demons to find treasure, forecast the future, deceive, and, on rare occasion, obtain love. Thus, the ends to which men applied their supposed diabolic powers were explicitly concerned with advancing their social status or improving their environments. Female witchcraft tended to be localized and domestic, but male witches reportedly had connections to other witches across the British Isles, mirroring the vast economic networks of the masculine public sphere. Female witches were believed to learn their craft informally from older women, but male witches learned through the use of written texts. According to Kent, the English case suggests that a fear of male witches centered around

³² W. Blécourt, “The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period,” *Gender & History* 12, no. 2 (July 2000), 302.

³³ Rowlands, “Not the ‘Usual’ Suspects?,” 24.

³⁴ E. J. Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592-1692* (Brepols, 2013), 8-9.

³⁵ L. Apps, review of *Cases of Male Witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592-1692*, by E. J. Kent, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 10, no. 1 (2015): 97–99.

³⁶ The “standard acts maleficia” included causing bad weather (which generally caused crop failure), creating “discord between married couples,” attacking pregnant women, and causing harm or death to people and livestock. A. Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany: Rothenburg, 1561-1652* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 49.

anxieties about the abuse or perverse use of masculine power. Men accused of witchcraft tended not to be marginalized, but rather embedded within the social fabric of their immediate communities. Contemporaries did not describe male witches as feminized or “inverted” men, but rather exhibited exaggerated masculinity: they challenged masculine economic culture by being overtly self-interested and individualistic, and they were considered poor patriarchs, the heads of dysfunctional households which threatened to destabilize the rest of the local community.

Kent’s work challenges previous gendered approaches to the witch-hunts by construing the witch as a category which implicitly includes men. Her interpretation of the English witch-hunts is similar to that of Lerner’s: just as women who challenged socially constructed ideals of femininity were more likely to be accused of witchcraft, men were more likely to be accused if they exhibited behaviors which threatened patriarchal order or challenged socially constructed “masculine” ideals, such as economic moderation. Taken together, these analyses suggest that accusations of witchcraft revolved around the seemingly gender-neutral issues Rowlands referred to: parenthood, neighborliness, and Christianity. Or, more simply, witchcraft accusations were symptomatic of social deviancy.

Positing witchcraft as a gender-neutral issue may seem reminiscent of Trevor-Roper’s assertion that anxieties about social “others” had driven witch-hunts, but it is distinct in several ways. The criterium of parenthood, neighborliness, and Christianity themselves are gender neutral, and transgressing socially-established codes of conduct relating to these areas drew suspicion and ire. However, while Trevor-Roper regarded sex as inconsequential to the witchcraft accusations, Kent has approached the sex of the witch as the center about which early moderns defined social deviancy. Accused witches did not exhibit the qualities associated with some specific social enemy; more generally, accused witches failed to live up to socially-established expectations associated with their sex. Because the majority of accused witches had been women³⁷ it may appear as though early moderns defined “otherness” in strictly feminine terms but, as Kent has demonstrated, “otherness” and deviancy included a wide range of behaviors which applied to both men and women. In doing so, the long-upheld dichotomy between patriarchy/ male and oppressed/ female breaks down.

³⁷ It is notable that both Macfarlane and Thomas based their conclusions on case studies from early modern England which, as noted above, saw a higher percentage of female victims (90%) at the height of the witch-hunts.

Learned Magic and Gender

Compared to the historiography of witchcraft, far less has been written about learned magic. One of the leading scholars of pre-modern magic is Richard Kieckhefer. His first monograph published in 1976 was an analysis of popular and learned conceptions of witchcraft. However, he admittedly emphasized popular beliefs, since learned concepts – laid out in demonological treatises – had been thoroughly studied. He noted that it is often difficult to distinguish the beliefs of the “illiterate masses” when the only sources available had been “draw up by the literate elite.”³⁸ This has led to a general misinterpretation of theological discourses on magic as representative of the beliefs of the lay masses. Nevertheless, he concluded that “popular tradition” reflected concepts of sorcery, while the learned traditions of the clergy and judges emphasized diabolism and *maleficia*.³⁹ This in turn implies that the forced confessions given by accused witches had been mere reflections of the fictions “devised wholly by theologians and inquisitors.”⁴⁰ In 1989, Kieckhefer went on to present a broad overview of magic – demonic and sacred alike – and asserted that medieval magic represented a “crossroads” at which medieval religion, science, and popular culture intersect.⁴¹ Kieckhefer’s greatest contribution to the study of magic came in 1997 with his in-depth, ontological study of medieval necromancy. Using one magic manual (or miscellany) as his case study, he detailed how necromancy had been practiced by medieval magicians and, more importantly, traced the origins of heterodox necromantic rituals back to orthodox, Christian traditions.⁴² Even with this simplified description of one scholar’s work on magic, it is clear to see a methodological distinction between the treatment of witchcraft and that of magic: when the main subject is witchcraft the approach focuses on society and social interactions, whereas the study of learned magic focuses on practice and philosophical tradition.

Frances Timbers’s 2014 book, *Magic and Masculinity*, represents the first monograph dedicated to the study of learned magic and gender. Timbers examined the ways in which the men of early modern England used magic as a means to substantiate their masculinity. Magic was both a “supplement to and a substitute for other paths to manhood,” allowing “some men

³⁸ R. Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 2; Richard Horsley similarly noted that common conceptions about witchcraft are virtually absent from contemporary depositions; the witches sabbat, cannibalism, night-flying and pacts with the Devil were introduced by witch-finders. R. A. Horsley, “Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 4 (1979), 693.

⁴¹ R. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁴² R. Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

to rise above their natal social position and thereby enhance their masculinity.” Generally, magic was used to increase one’s financial wealth, bestow power or control over peers, and achieve honor and prestige in their local community. Like Kent, Timbers analyzed the individual lives several men, although her case studies were comprised of practicing magicians rather than accused witches.

Perhaps the most important take-away from Timbers’s work is her acknowledgement of multiple, concurrent masculinities during the early modern period and how these are reflected in the lives of magical practitioners. Here Timbers is clearly citing Connell who theorized that at any given time, in any given society, there is a multiplicity of masculinities rather than one, overarching masculinity. Within this matrix of many masculinities, however, there is a dominant or *hegemonic* masculinity which pushes back against marginalized pathways to manhood.⁴³ This why, for example, in a society which valued “self-mastery over lust, gluttony, violence and emotional expression,” we still see men who sought to confirm their masculinity in public settings “such as the workplace, the university and the alehouse where drinking, fighting and whoring were measures of a man.”⁴⁴ Moreover, while successful house-holding – especially control over servants, children, and female family members – had been the masculine ideal, some men sought alternative forms of manhood; gypsies and highwaymen specifically aimed at defying the hegemonic masculine household.

A Definition of Terms

Before delving into our case studies, it is important to first define and distinguish a few key terms and historical concepts. So far, I have named the primary subject of this study “masculinity.” Applying this term and searching for it within early modern sources may be controversial. Timbers has noted that the term “manhood” would be more appropriate for the given period as the term “masculinity” did not come into usage until the mid-eighteenth century. Manhood refers to the “exterior measure of a man in relation to both women and other men.”⁴⁵ As noted above, manhood in early modern England had generally been constructed in relation to householding and control over social and sexual subordinates. The centrality of the household as the barometer for measuring successful manhood has been a mainstay for historical studies of masculine culture and socialization. As some scholars have noted, the private household

⁴³ Connell, 37, 77.

⁴⁴ Timbers, 35.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 36.

functioned as the “primary unit of social control”⁴⁶ and as a “highly resonant analogy for the state”⁴⁷; one conduct book originally published in 1598 even referred to the household as “a little Commonwealth.”⁴⁸ However, such studies which place successful householding as the chief metric of early modern manhood rely heavily on domestic advice literature. While such sources are precious given the sheer numbers in which they have survived, they also tend to present an idealized manhood, fully realized by a very small cross-section of early modern men.⁴⁹

Masculinity, meanwhile, describes the “interior self-perception of a man, regardless of whether the man possesses the attributes of full manhood.”⁵⁰ The distinction between manhood and masculinity essentially comes down to a distinction between actions and character, respectively. The terms thus defined, I propose that researching early modern masculinity is not an ahistorical offense. Instead, I aim to move away from studies which focus exclusively on performed, external manhood and towards a study which incorporates internalized masculinities as subjective experiences. The absence of the term “masculinity” from the early modern English lexicon does not indicate that contemporaries lacked a concept that we now identify as “masculinity.” As will be made clear by the present study, early moderns did possess these interior self-perceptions, and these self-perceptions became manifest externally, either in their documents of their own “manly” achievements and qualities, or in their assessment of other men’s.

Throughout the present research, I have also taken care not to refer to any of the following men as “victims.” In general, witchcraft historians comfortably refer to all witches – both male and female – as victims. The connotation of this term within witchcraft and witch-hunt studies is often ambiguous, referring to all witches whether they had been informally suspected, formally accused, convicted, acquitted, imprisoned, or executed.⁵¹ “Victim” is a problematic term because it implies a series of judgements. While appropriately descriptive of some who became swept up in witch-hunts, using the word “victim” automatically leads us to

⁴⁶ K. M. Botelho, “Maternal Memory and Murder in Early-Seventeenth-Century England,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 1 (2008), 114.

⁴⁷ A. Shepard, “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500–1700,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005), 283.

⁴⁸ J. Dod and R. Cleaver, *A Godly Forme of Houshold Government* (London, 1621), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A67866.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

⁴⁹ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 18.

⁵⁰ Timbers, 36.

⁵¹ Schulte opted for a more concise term, “persecution victims,” to restrict the boundaries of his research to all individuals taken to court for witchcraft. Schulte, “Men as Accused Witches in the Holy Roman Empire,” in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 54.

take the side of the witch and to assume their innocence. After all, we do not refer to today's convicted criminals as "victims." Referring to all witches as "victims" implies that they were on the receiving end of injustice by their accusers and prosecutors which in turn leads to the implication that such accusations were either consciously constructed falsehoods or the result of runaway witch anxieties. While this was indeed the case for some accusations, adopting this blanket assumption about accusations automatically rejects the possibility that early moderns saw witchcraft as a genuinely dangerous reality threatening their communities. Lastly, there is a danger in presenting men, specifically, as victims of patriarchal social processes. Doing so presents a "monolithic concept" of patriarchy and obscures the various ways, times, and degrees to which men became beneficiaries of their patriarchal agency. We should instead remain mindful of the "muddled" and often contradictory ways in which men of all social milieus drew the patriarchal dividend.⁵²

Methodology and Sources

Following Kent's and Timbers's example, the present research aims to further explore early modern conceptions of masculinity by comparing profiles of male practitioners of learned magic to male witches. Kent based her conclusions on contemporary descriptions of men accused as witches, proving that contemporaries did not feminize them. Similarly, I will analyze early modern descriptions of male magicians and compare these to descriptions of men accused of witchcraft. This research also takes inspiration from Timbers's work by seeking to identify how magical reputations interacted with diverse social variables with both advantageous and adverse effects – how it provided livelihoods for some men and ruined the reputations of others.

This research applies Connell's theory to a specific, limited historical context in order to identify multiple masculinities, including a hegemonic definition of masculinity and alternative or subordinate forms of masculinity. In doing so, I will be testing the "feminization model" just as Kent had, for it is my contention that none of the four men to follow had been implicitly feminized by contemporaries. Masculinity – and gender in general – is a textured experience defined by an endless number of historio-specific social conditions, internalized processes, and individual access to resources.

Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity generated much controversy during the 1990s. Realists and poststructuralists criticized the concept of masculinity (which tends to be

⁵² Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 19; A. Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1; Connell, 79.

equated with hegemonic masculinity) as ambiguous, essentialist, heteronormative, and unconcerned with issues of power.⁵³ This is difficult to reconcile with Connell's text as her model explicitly describes the asymmetrical balances of power shared between men who exhibit different types of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity and alternative forms of masculinity should not be understood as fixed, ahistorical sets of characteristics and qualities; hegemonic masculinity is the masculinity which occupies a dominant position within a specific spatial and temporal context and which "embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy." As such, hegemonic masculinity guarantees (or has the effect of guaranteeing) the dominance of men and subordination of women.⁵⁴ In the context of early modern England, prescriptive literature and conduct books – which "describe an imagined manhood" realized only by a small number of elite men⁵⁵ – perhaps best manifest the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Alternative masculinities represent similarly fluid categories – although the term "category" perhaps misrepresents what alternative masculinities describe. It may help to think of alternative masculinities as *a la carte* hegemonic masculinity: historical agents adopted and expressed qualities to which they had access to and which were relevant to their respective social context. This is not to say that historical agents should be expected to have adopted all qualities of hegemonic masculinity that were available to them. The individual lives studied here are inevitably colored with undocumented experiences and more intangible aspects of their personalities.

Within interdisciplinary historical research, the adoption of sociological models has become increasingly commonplace. Connell's theory in particular promises a more pragmatic approach to historical agents; it allows us to move away from generalized, macro-approaches and towards a micro-view of gender which emphasizes difference and particularities. Although not explicitly stated, the works by both Kent and Timbers aspire to this very goal: Kent set out to disprove the feminization model and Timbers highlighted the complex, sometimes unexpected relationship between men and patriarchy. Like Kent and Timbers, I have similarly followed Connell's lead by focusing on individual life-histories for is it only through individual narratives that we are able to recapture the ever-shifting social reality of gender.

⁵³ R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005), 836.

⁵⁴ Connell, 77.

⁵⁵ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 18.

The decision to study such men alongside witches may prove controversial. Historians have tended to separate witchcraft from non-malefic magic due to the divergent characters of the two magical concepts. Historians generally approach witchcraft as a legal, cultural, and social historical phenomenon, while learned magic – such as astrology, alchemy, necromancy, and other non-malefic forms of magic – have become subcategories of studies in religion, science, and literature. As such, studies of learned magic have tended to focus more on the philosophy and practice of magic, rather than its social functions and repercussions. However, comparing profiles of astrologer-physicians to witches will enable us to better observe how magic (and suspicions of magic) interacts with a more diverse set of social variables. Moreover, the distinction between learned and malefic magic is more a historiographical construction rather than an historical one; late medieval and early modern English sources use the terms “witch,” “wizard,” “conjurer,” and “cunning folk” quite interchangeably.⁵⁶ Even the astrologers examined here had been named “witches” by their enemies.

The two male astrologers of this study, William Lilly and Simon Forman, were two of the most high-profile practitioners of magic during the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively. The male witches observed here, Nicholas Stockdale, yeoman copyholder, and John Lowes, minister, were life-long residents of small towns in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, respectively. Lilly and Forman both attained upper-class status in their lives, enjoyed considerable fame and attention from their social betters, and, at some point in their lives, took up residence in London. Since this study will compare men of various socio-economic classes, different types of sources are available for each analysis. In the cases of Lilly and Forman, autobiographies play a large role in determining how both men sought to present themselves to their readers and what kind of image they tried to preserve for posterity. Lilly and Forman were the principal authors of their autobiographies with Lilly, at least, having also enlisted a friend for help in writing and composing his text.

The styles and conventions associated with the modern “autobiography” were not standardized during the early modern period, nor was the writing of one’s own life commonplace prior to the eighteenth century. During the 1950s, Dutch historian Jacques Presser (1899-1970) coined the term “egodocument” to refer to “those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an ‘I,’ or occasionally a ‘he,’ as the writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text.” Presser’s definition of egodocument originally encompassed texts such as diaries, memoirs, travel journals, personal correspondences, and

⁵⁶ Horsley, 695.

autobiographical narratives.⁵⁷ Historians have since broadened this definition to include documents produced by government bureaucracies, and often opt for terms such as “life-,” “self-,” or “ego-writing.”⁵⁸

Scholars have previously taken care to avoid autobiographies and other egodocuments in research due to their “quasi-literary status” and inherent partiality. To be sure, any personal account of events will be limited to one perspective – that of the experiencing historical agent – and thus liable to biases. Early modern autobiographers also represent a remarkably homogenous group. In a study by Michael Mascuch which examined a random sample of 135 British autobiographical texts printed between 1600 and 1750 – representing roughly one-third of the 450 surviving autobiographies from this period – autobiographies written by clergymen and professionals constitute a clear majority, followed by a small number of texts produced by yeomen and domestic servants. Male writers are also overwhelmingly represented, with only six percent of these texts having been penned by a woman. The proliferation of autobiographies written by male clergymen and male professionals may be attributed to the resources necessary to write such texts: adequate writing skills, time, and a place for writing.⁵⁹ Despite these limitations, the biases of both the author and their text are central to the present investigation. We should expect that the re-telling of certain events may be skewed by the author’s perspective, but egodocuments are useful for two primary reasons. For one, they likely provide the most accurate chronology of the author’s life available. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they reveal what qualities and values the authors wanted to associate with their name and what kind of legacy they hoped to leave behind. In writing an autobiography, the authors aimed to present the most idealized versions of themselves to their readers; the *actual* author is a mystery to the reader, but the ethos of the author comes to the fore in his life narrative.⁶⁰

In addition to autobiographies, both Lilly and Forman generated enough attention to have been featured in contemporary pamphlets and popular literature written by their supporters and detractors alike. Literature authored by their detractors, especially, are important for the

⁵⁷ M. Mascuch, R. Dekker, and A. Baggerman, “Egodocuments and History: A Short Account of the Longue Durée,” *The Historian* 78, no. 1 (2016), 11.

⁵⁸ Mascuch et al., 12; L. Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London: Simon Forman; Astrologer, Alchemist, and Physician* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 2005), 20.

⁵⁹ M. Mascuch, “Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600-1750,” *Social History* 20, no. 1 (1995), 49. Mascuch further claimed that the proportions of texts written by various social classes align with contemporary literacy rates.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 50.

present study as it will illuminate which aspects or qualities came under question in their efforts to discredit the two astrologers.

The witches, on the other hand, left behind no autobiographies, let alone other forms of documentation written by their own pen, and will prove most difficult for the present study. The primary sources used for Stockdale and Lowes are court documents produced during their various litigations in the court of Star Chamber. This court has a specific history within the English common law tradition and will be discussed later. However, it is important to remark on the disparity of available sources between the astrologers and witches, and how this study aims to reconcile this inherent incongruence.

The lack of first-person documents produced by these accused witches presents us with a major disadvantage. We cannot provide the same treatment to these case studies as we had with the astrologer-physicians because we do not have identical types of documents. For example, detailed life histories such as those provided by the astrologers cannot be reproduced for the witches studied here. What we *do* have are court documents relating to their respective legal battles: interrogatories, bills of complaint, and answers to bills of complaint. Such sources technically fall under the broadened definition of “egodocuments” which, as noted previously, includes documents produced by bureaucratic institutions.

This expanded definition is fraught with controversy, as much of the “ego” tends to be lost in these sources. To say nothing of their impersonal tone, such documents – especially those produced by courts – are always recorded by a scribe listening to an interrogation or deposition. Court stenographers today record the deponents’ dialogue verbatim, but the court scribes of early modern England would not begin to produce standardized, verbatim depositions until the 1730s.⁶¹ Even with the switch from transcribing depositions in prose format to dialogue, shorthand recorders may have taken some editorial liberties. For example, Thomas Gurney, a shorthand recorder during the mid-eighteenth century, admitted to regularly omitting “repetitive” statements from the defense or from witnesses.⁶² In addition, our reliance on court documents will limit the scope of relationships that we will see for the witches. The relationship between parties in litigation is generally antagonistic: one party launches a complaint and the opposing party tries to defend against the allegations. Stockdale and Lowes had experiences as defendant and complainant in their various suits, but the only relationships discernable from

⁶¹ H. Voth, “Time Use in Eighteenth-Century London: Some Evidence from the Old Bailey,” *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1997), 497.

⁶² T. Hitchcock and W. J. Turkel, “The Old Bailey Proceedings, 1674–1913: Text Mining for Evidence of Court Behavior,” *Law and History Review* 34, no. 4 (2016), 933.

these sources are those of conflict. The autobiographies by Lilly and Forman, however, reveal a more diverse network of relationships: conflict, admiration, affection, indifference, etc.

Ironically, the inequality of the sources at hand also provide us with the first point of analysis: that the lack of non-bureaucratic egodocuments attributed to the witches is indicative of their class difference. Lilly and Forman had been urban-dwelling professionals who specialized in a scientific (albeit contested) field of study; Stockdale and Lowes were by no means impoverished, but they were likely not resourced enough to produce autobiographies and diaries of their own. “Resources” need not refer only to their personal finances, but also to the amount of leisure time available for writing. Thus, the different sources attest to the levels of economic independence of each man.

Despite the mediated nature of court documents, glimpses of individual appeals to specific qualities may be read in between the lines or “against the grain.” Stockdale and Lowes may not have provided such detailed descriptions of themselves or of their neighbors as Lilly and Forman had, but their sense of self and assessment of others may be gleaned from what information they do provide in their complaints and depositions. As we shall see, their conflicts with their neighbors are often accompanied by accusations of “unlawful” or “malicious” activities. It seems almost too self-evident to remark upon, but these references to the unlawfulness and maliciousness of their opponents implies an appeal to their own lawfulness and benevolence.

Structure and Thesis Statement

This research is divided into three parts. In the first part, I analyze the astrologer-physicians, then turn my attention to the witches in the second part. Although Forman lived before Lilly, I have chosen to begin Part One with Lilly for two reasons. Lilly, although having never met Forman personally, dedicated an entire chapter of his own autobiography to describing the infamous astrologer who came before him. Lilly made the acquaintance of many practicing astrologers over the course of his life, but most received roughly a paragraph in his autobiography; his decision to describe Forman at length indicates the extent to which Lilly had been influenced by him. It is therefore helpful to become familiarized with Lilly first in order to contextualize his comments about Forman, which will be covered in our analysis of Forman. Moreover, Forman’s masculinity, as will become evident, nicely bridges the gap between the astrologer-physicians and witches.

All four case studies begin with the narrative of each man’s life, citing directly from relevant sources. Each individual narrative is followed by an analysis in which I reflect on the

specific characteristics and qualities to which they (and their contemporaries) appealed – both explicitly and implicitly – and how these masculinities were informed by their subjective experiences and social contexts. The first two parts conclude with a brief analysis of each pair of case studies, elucidating similarities and differences between the pairs, and determining whether each case study may be taken as representative examples of early modern astrologers and male witches in England.

In the third part, the four individual case studies are brought together in order to analyze the ways in which each man sought to align himself with specific components of hegemonic masculinity. I will identify similarities and overlap as well as distinctions and deviation. These distinctions are of particular interest, as they will indicate areas in which each man either rejected or failed to attain certain tenets of hegemony. I will present explanations for these distinctions based on the empirical evidence at hand and with respect to the historical context of each case study.

To be certain, this research will not focus on diverse practices of magic, such as astrology and malefic witchcraft. Here, magic serves as a lens to focus the way we approach early modern masculinities. How they were described – by themselves and their neighbors, in literature and depositions – demonstrates the hegemonic standards which determined the measure of the early modern man. These standards were not embraced wholesale by all men; in fact, we shall see that none of the four men examined can be said to have attained full hegemonic masculinity.

It is my contention that each of the four men were identified by themselves and by contemporaries as masculine agents, not feminine. Some of their specific activities and interactions with peers, however, either subverted or rejected key principles of hegemonic masculinity. They were therefore seen as a socially deviant, which provided the main source of the criticisms against them. Furthermore, both astrologer-physicians experienced a net gain in socio-economic class over the course of their lifetimes as a direct result of their magical reputations, while the male witches experienced either no change or a net loss. This suggests that the public pursuit of learned forms of magic in early modern England was less digressive from socially-established definitions of hegemonic masculinity than (allegedly) practicing witchcraft. By comparing these men – how they presented themselves and how contemporaries saw them – we will see cross-sections between magic and social variables such as gender, economic class, political persuasion, and social standing; we will identify which strategies accused witches employed to absolve themselves of their malefic reputations, and how astrologers justified their art and profited from their practices.

Part One: Male Astrologer-physicians

William Lilly (1602-1681)

William Lilly is one the most prominent magicians of the early modern period, surpassed in both fame and infamy perhaps only by his predecessor, John Dee (1527-1609). Much of what is known about his life comes from his autobiography, written in the final year of his life with the help of his friend and fellow astrologer, Elias Ashmole (1617-1692).⁶³

Lilly was born on May 1st, 1602, in the village of Diseworth located in north-western Leicester county.⁶⁴ Lilly's mother, Alice, was the daughter of an Edward Barham of Fiskerton Mill in Nottinghamshire, and Lilly's father, also called William, was a yeoman.⁶⁵ By Lilly's own account, the population of Diseworth was not educated, with the exception of his uncle Robert Lilly who had been sent to Cambridge by Lilly's grandfather.⁶⁶ Seeing his father's "back-slidings into the world," Alice always intended that her son would also become a scholar. Although the family "had much free land, and many houses in the town" purchased by Lilly's long gone, Lilly's father and grandfather sold these properties overtime so that the family became "wholly [dependent] upon a college lease."⁶⁷ By the age of 11, Lilly was under the instruction of a Mr. John Brinsley in Ashby de la Zouch. He was learning both Latin and Greek, and read classic works such as *Sententiæ Pueriles*, *Cato*, *Corderius*, *Æsop's Fables*, *Tully's Offices*, *Ovid de Tristibus*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Theognis* and *The Iliad*. In his autobiography, he described himself as a star pupil, noting that he could speak Latin when "few [others] could."⁶⁸

On the brink of adulthood, Lilly's fortune took a turn for the worse. At the age of 17, Lilly's mother died. When Lilly was 18, Brinsley was driven out of teaching in Ashby de la Zouch – presumably for his strict puritanism and discomfort with some aspects of the Anglican Church – and relocated to London. In the same year, the elder William's debts forced Lilly to leave his schooling for a year.⁶⁹ Lilly managed to escape his own impending poverty brought on by his father's debts when an attorney by name of Smatty took pity on Lilly and arranged for him to meet with a "gentleman who wanted a youth, to attend him and his wife, who could write."⁷⁰ Lilly went to visit his father in Leicester jail to ask his leave to go to London. His

⁶³ For the present research, I have studied the 1715 Baldwyn re-print published online by Project Gutenberg.

⁶⁴ W. Lilly, *William Lilly's History of His Life and Times From the Year 1602 to 1681*, ed. E. Ashmole, 1715, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15835/15835-h/15835-h.htm>, 8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 20-2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 23.

father agreed in what is implied to have been an unpleasant exchange, as Lilly recounted that his father had always said that his son was “good for nothing.”⁷¹

In the Spring of 1620, Lilly arrived in London and entered the service of salt merchant Gilbert Wright and his wife. Wright, who later became Master of the Company of Salters in London, could neither read nor write and earned his living collecting rents. The work Lilly performed for the Wrights included going “before [him] to church,” attending him when he went abroad, cleaning his shoes, sweeping the street, helping “to drive bucks when he washed,” “fetch[ing] water in a tub from the Thames,” and pulling weeds. He considered such work drudgery but conceding that it was well-worth it for a master like Wright who “entertained him.”⁷² Indeed, Lilly seemed to have developed an excellent working relationship with his master, writing that his master had “great affection” for him.⁷³

Interestingly, Lilly became especially close to Wright’s first wife. In 1620, Mrs. Wright developed breast cancer which, over the course of a few years, gradually worsened. Empathizing with his ailing mistress, Lilly noted that she would not allow a surgeon to dress her breast, but instead had Lilly do it himself. By 1624, he even carried out some minor surgery, writing in his autobiography that, “with scissars, I cut all the whole breast away, I mean the sinews, nerves, etc. In one fortnight, or little more, it appeared, as it were, mere flesh, all raw, so that she could scarce endure any unguent to be applied.”⁷⁴ This account attests to the close relationship between Lilly and Mrs. Wright and Lilly’s burgeoning interest in the field of physick. Mrs. Wright’s sickness also exposed Lilly to an object which historians have credited with inspiring him to pursue astrology. Upon his mistress’s death, Lilly wrote that he found under her arm “a small scarlet bag full of many things,” including “several sigils, some of Jupiter in Trine, others of the nature of Venus, some of iron, and one of gold, of pure angel-gold, of the bigness of a thirty-three shilling piece of King James's coin.”⁷⁵ Around the circumference of one “sigil” was an engraving which read *Vicit Leo de tribu Judæ Tetragrammaton* +⁷⁶ and in the middle the engraved image of a holy lamb. In another sigil, the engraving around the circumference read *Amraphel*⁷⁷ followed by three crosses, and in the middle *Sanctus Petrus, Alpha* and *Omega*. Lilly claims that Mrs. Wright had initially obtained

⁷¹ Lilly, 24.

⁷² *Ibid*, 27.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 45.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 32.

⁷⁶ “The Lion of Judah Tetragrammaton”; “+” indicates when a user/ reader should perform the sign of the cross.

⁷⁷ Described as a king of Shinar in Genesis 14 who, together with the king of Elam, invaded the West and destroyed Sodom. R. W. Rogers, K. Kohler, and M. Jastrow, “Amraphel,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, n.d., <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1440-amraphel>.

these sigils from Dr. Simon Forman to help her husband fend off evil spirits who haunted him by “articulately provok[ing] him to cut his throat.”⁷⁸ It is unclear, however, how Lilly came to know this story, since he only discovered the sigils after his mistress’s death. It is unknown, for example, whether Mr. Wright was acquainted with this narrative and if he informed Lilly. Mrs. Wright presumably succumbed to her illness in 1624, as Lilly wrote of her death directly before his description the 1625 plague epidemic in London in which he made no mention of his mistress.

In 1626, Mr. Wright re-married a wealthy widow called Ellen Whitehaire. According to his autobiography, Lilly suspected that his master’s attraction to Ellen was financially motivated.⁷⁹ He went on to describe his new mistress as “corpulent, of but mean stature, plain,” having a “brown ruddy complexion... [and] no education,” yet overall “a very provident person... of good condition.”⁸⁰ There was little in the way of love between Wright and his new wife; Lilly described the situation as having been very uncomfortable, with Ellen often convinced that Wright was seeing other women whenever he went into London on business.⁸¹ The unhappy couple did not need to endure one another for long, for in May of 1627, Mr. Wright died, and in a scandalous move, Lilly – then aged 25 – proposed marriage to his mistress, a now twice-widowed and in her seventies. Lilly knew that such a move was bold, making note of the “disproportion of years and fortune” between his former mistress and himself. However, he wrote that Ellen had no intention to marry once again for wealth, but instead “desired an honest man.” Lilly promptly presented himself as such an honest man, promising to supply her with love and affection. In September, the two married in secret – a secret they kept for two years.⁸² Like the first Mrs. Wright, Ellen had also been very curious about men who practiced astrological magic and frequently visited cunning men with her queries. Lilly wrote that his mistress’s interest “begot in [him] a little desire to learn something that way,” but, lacking the means to buy books on the subject, Lilly set aside his interests, at least for the moment.⁸³

In 1632, Lilly heard of “an excellent wiseman” called Evans who “studied the Black Art.” Lilly met Evans soon after learning of him and Lilly’s description of the wise man is hardly positive; he implied that the man was impoverished and often drunk, and described him as “saturnine... addicted to debauchery...very abusive and quarrelsome, seldom without a black

⁷⁸ Lilly, 33.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 50.

⁸¹ Ibid, 28.

⁸² Ibid, 51-2.

⁸³ Ibid, 28-9.

eye.”⁸⁴ While Lilly noted that Evans “understood Latin very well,” he was disturbed by the fact that Evans owned no books with the exception of *Haly de judiciis Astrorum* and *Orriganus's Ephemerides*.⁸⁵ Evans’ lack of texts may be meant to imply that he was uneducated, or that he did not share Lilly’s respect for a formal education. Despite Lilly’s decidedly negative impression of Evans, the two came together several times over the course of seven or eight weeks and Lilly began to learn astrology by observing Evans in consultation with his clients. At the same time, Lilly began going weekly to Little Britain to buy books on astrology. This, he kept secret from Evans.⁸⁶

Lilly’s instruction under Evans ended abruptly after several weeks. During the last meeting between the two, a woman came to Evans with a question and asked him to set a figure in order to determine a resolution. According to Lilly, Evans gave the woman an answer that was contrary to what was revealed in the figure. After the woman left, Lilly asked Evans why he did not give the true answer. Evans, apparently slighted by Lilly’s challenge, became enraged, called him a “boy” and objected to being “contradicted by such a novice.” Once the situation had diffused somewhat, Evans explained that, “had he not so judged to please the woman, she would have given him nothing, and he had a wife and family to provide for.”⁸⁷ From that day on, Lilly ceased to visit Evans, choosing instead to apply himself to his books “many times twelve, or fifteen, or eighteen hours day and night,” in order to learn astrology.⁸⁸

The Downfall of England’s Prophet

Lilly’s account of his life up until this point is revealing because already it provides an insight as to what qualities Lilly valued in other people – especially the men in his life – as well as what qualities he hoped to associate with himself. One quality which recurs throughout Lilly’s narrative is that of honesty. Lilly described himself frequently as an honest man – either directly or by implication. When the newly widowed Ellen Wright expressed her desire to marry an honest man, Lilly promptly offered himself. Upon Mr. Wright’s death, the administration of Wright’s estate fell to the master’s elder brother. This elder brother then gave charge of the estate to Lilly and instructed him to settle all of Mr. Wright’s outstanding debts. Having done so, Lilly wrote that he “faithfully returned the remaining part unto [Wright’s brother]; nor had

⁸⁴ Lilly, 55-6.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 54.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 59.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 60.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 60-1.

one penny of the estate more than 20 pounds per annum, which was allowed [to him] by contract.”⁸⁹

In addition to describing his honesty and faithfulness, Lilly’s autobiography is also brimming with accounts of men whose dishonesty and deceitfulness act as a foil to Lilly’s character. For example, Lilly cited Evan’s false reading of a figure as the catalyst for their falling out and wrote that “for money [Evans] would willingly give contrary judgments.”⁹⁰ Lilly became an acquaintance of one Alexander Hart, a self-professed astrologer. Upon meeting Hart, Lilly posed three questions, all of which Hart answered incorrectly. Lilly ultimately described him as a “cheat,”⁹¹ and recounted an incident in which Hart failed to contact a spirit – a service for which he’d been paid 20 pounds – and refused to refund the fee to the client. Hart was indicted for this fraud, but through his connection he managed to avoid jail time and fled to Holland.⁹² Another would-be astrologer, referred to as both Captain and Dr. Bubb, Lilly described as “covetous, and of no honesty.”⁹³ A butcher, who had been robbed of 40 pounds, contacted Bubb who promised to help the butcher catch the thief. Bubb told the butcher where to go, on what day, and what time, instructing him to wait there until he thief revealed himself. The butcher followed the instructions, and the supposed thief turned out to be one of Bubb’s servants.⁹⁴ The narrative is meant to imply that this fraud Bubb had staged the whole event and had sent his servant to this location at this time, hoping to satisfy the butcher’s desire for justice. Just as a man’s dishonesty earned him a poor review in Lilly’s narrative, the honesty of men who the famed astrologer admired and respected were also always remarked upon. For example, he described John Bookers, who was apparently “designed for astrology,” as a “very honest man, [who] abhorred any deceit in the art he studied.”⁹⁵ John Scott, Lilly’s “partner” at one point, is described as “a very honest person.”⁹⁶

Another quality which Lilly emphasized in his evaluations of other men was their level of education. Perhaps not coincidentally, the same men Lilly described as dishonest were also described as uneducated. Meanwhile, positive figures in Lilly’s narrative – including himself – are described as having been educated in formal settings. Lilly’s first instructor in astrological magic, John Evans, was not directly described as uneducated. However, the way Evans is

⁸⁹ Lilly, 49.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 55.

⁹¹ Ibid, 61.

⁹² Ibid, 62-3.

⁹³ Ibid, 63.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 63-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 69-70.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 118.

described certainly gives the impression that he lacked the type of education which Lilly deemed appropriate for his practice. His description of Evans's poverty, for example, may be seen as an allusion to the man's ignorance: the crudeness of Evans's dwelling reflects the crude – almost primitive – character of the man himself.⁹⁷ Lilly followed up his observation of Evans's lack of books by commenting that when he entered Evan's house, Lilly thought he was "in the wilderness."⁹⁸ While Lilly admitted that his taciturn tutor could provide "the most piercing judgment naturally upon a figure of theft, and many other questions,"⁹⁹ he discontinued his sessions with Evans after their argument, choosing instead to continue his study of the astrological arts through the reading of books to which he applied himself "many times twelve, or fifteen, or eighteen hours day and night."¹⁰⁰ The fact that Lilly began to buy astrological texts before their falling out, and his decision not to tell Evans about these purchases, indicate that he may have been planning to leave Evans's instruction all along. Or, at the very least, he did not expect to remain his pupil for very long. This stands as evidence of Lilly's faith in learning through the study of texts and demonstrates that he viewed "bookish" knowledge as superior to the knowledge gained through informal means – in this case, by observation alone.

Lilly sang praises for one Nicholas Fiske who, although he did not attend university, was "very studious, laborious, of good apprehension, and had by his own industry obtained both in astrology, physick, arithmetick, astronomy, geometry and algebra, singular judgment."¹⁰¹ Lilly credits Fiske with having introduced him to "the best authors" which improved Lilly's study of astrology. However, Fiske's genius was not to outpace that of Lilly's. Despite Fiske's "exquisitely skilful" judgements, Lilly claimed that his colleague "would communicate his most doubtful questions unto [Lilly], and accept of [Lilly's] judgment therein rather than his own."¹⁰² Although Lilly at one point regarded his own education as "very mean,"¹⁰³ it is difficult to reconcile such self-depreciation with his many claims to genius, evidenced by his reportedly accelerated skills in Latin and Greek, his love of literature, and his ability to outsmart any of his peers.

Meanwhile, Lilly's critics also frequently referred to his honest reputation and education in their descriptions of him – or, more to the point, they denied that he possessed either. One

⁹⁷ Lilly wrote that he first met Evans, Evans had been lying on a bed, "if it be lawful to call that a bed whereon he then lay."

⁹⁸ Lilly, 54.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 60-1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 73.

¹⁰² Ibid, 73-74.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 129.

1652 pamphlet attacked Lilly for the first time in the title itself: *Lillye's Lamentations, or, England's feigned Prophet Discovered*. The anonymous author denounces Lilly as a “supposed Prophet,” “Scheam-setter,” and “a man better known by his Name then his honesty.”¹⁰⁴ The pamphlet has also graced posterity with savage early-modern burns in the form of puns, such as stylizing “Lilly’s” as “Lil-lies” and “astrologer” as “Ass-trologer.”¹⁰⁵ A few accounts of Lilly’s “Tricks of Art”¹⁰⁶ are included, none of which cast Lilly as a particularly honest-dealing man. One which specifically implicated Lilly as a fraud involves a man who had been advised to consult Lilly about several cows that had gone missing. Lilly took the case (“more for his money then any thing else”) and told the man that his missing cows had “fallen into the hands of a Butcher,” promising that he would see his cows “hang up in Butchers shops...”¹⁰⁷ The querent returned home only to find the missing cows in his neighbor’s yard.

The publication of this pamphlet places it right on the heels of the end of the English Civil War (1642 – 1651) which saw execution of King Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England (1649 – 1653) and Protectorate (1653 – 1659). Lilly’s predications regarding the conflict between the king and parliament generally indicate that his sympathies had been with parliament. Moreover, he counted several members of parliament as friends and clients. While we may not be able to identify the political allegiances of the pamphlet’s anonymous author, we do know that Lilly garnered even more negative press in second half of the seventeenth century. He had never been particularly secretive about his interest in astrology and was prepared to defend it as a legitimate component of the Christian ritual tradition. He even took a democratic position on the issue with the publishing of *Christian Astrology* (1648) in English and an annual almanac titled *Merlinus Anglicus* – which sold up to 30,000 copies per year – intended for a non-learned audience. The English Civil War and Interregnum saw a reversal of the tightened controls over the press characteristic of the Caroline regime which lead to a boom in the availability of printed materials on astrology and related forms of magic. The sudden wide-spread presence of magical texts at this time lead to their association with “radical sects” believed to be involved in the ongoing religious and political conflicts.¹⁰⁸

With his very public association with astrology and implied Parliamentary leanings, Lilly’s reputation further deteriorated with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In the same

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, *Lillye's Lamentations, Or, England's Feigned Prophet Discovered: Being a Brief Narration of the Severall Proceedings of Our Famous Country-Man Mr. William Lilly the Star-Gazer* (London, 1652), 1, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 3, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Timbers, 54.

year, Lilly was arrested and interrogated about his potential involvement in the execution of Charles I, but was released. In either 1600 or 1601, he was apprehended again, compelled to pay a fine of 13 pounds, and swore an oath of loyalty to the new king. Fellow astrologer, John Gadbury (1627–1704), a former friend and defender of Lilly’s, turned on him; in a 1661 edition of *Britain’s Royal Star*, Gadbury reported that he “understood more art before [he] was ever acquainted with Lilly than he was ever capable of learning in his life. Not withstanding his great fame for (doing nothing else in truth) but deluding the world.”¹⁰⁹ In response, Lilly wrote unfavorably about Gadbury in his autobiography. He claimed that they had grown “strange” after Lilly refused to teach him “what he was not capable of,” and took care to note multiple times that Gadbury had a second wife who “also had another husband.”¹¹⁰

Although written in 1681, Lilly’s *History of his Life and Times* would not be published until 1715, over thirty years after Lilly’s death. This first publication was soon followed by a second edition in the same year by the same printer, one “J. Roberts,” which was in turn followed by another re-print. In 1721, his autobiography was re-issued together with his biographical works on King James I and King Charles I, perhaps indicating some kind of effort to disassociate Lilly’s legacy from his parliamentarian past. In 1774, Lilly’s *Life and Times* was published once again, this time coupled Elias Ashmole’s autobiography, and released as *The Lives of Those Eminent Antiquaries Elias Ashmole, Esquire, and Mr. William Lilly*. The lapse in time between the writing of his autobiography and its first publication is best explained by Lilly’s plunge into disrepute: During the final years of his life, a slew of negative press followed Lilly, denouncing the once-esteemed astrologer as a “fraud and cozener, a mere cunning man, a sorcerer and devil-worshipper, and a wizard.”¹¹¹ One anonymous author in particular delighted in Lilly’s fall from grace, referring to him as an “Albumazer”¹¹² and “Quack,” who only dealt in “common Cheats” and had “Little knowledge... of Ptolomie.”¹¹³ To this day, Lilly remains simultaneously one of the most familiar and controversial figures in the canon of early modern English astrologers.

¹⁰⁹ J. Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford’s Flies: Miracles and the Pulp Press During the English Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 234-6.

¹¹⁰ Lilly, 86-7.

¹¹¹ Timbers, 54.

¹¹² Presumably Abu Ma’shar (787-886, Latinized as Albumazar/ Albumasar), the Muslim astrologer.

¹¹³ Anonymous, *Lilly Lash’t with His Own Rod* (London, 1660).

Simon Forman (1552-1611)

One of Lilly's forerunners and a close-contemporary of John Dee was Dr. Simon Forman. Like Lilly, Forman's career as an astrologer-physician garnered plenty of negative press and controversy while simultaneously providing Forman with a respectable income and allowing him to move up the social ranks. However, the ways in which Forman responded to his detractors was markedly different from Lilly.

Although Forman liked to boast of his noble ancestors he, like Lilly, was a man of humble origins. He was born on December 30th, 1552, the fifth child of William and Marie Forman of Quidhampton, Wilshire. He described his parents as "well descended and of good reputation and fame"; Forman's great-grandfather was one Sir Thomas of Leeds, and his great-great-grandfather was Sir Thomas Forman of Furnifales.¹¹⁴

Forman began his schooling at the age of eight under Willian Ryddonte *alias* Ridear who, fleeing the plague in Salisbury, came to the Priory of St. Gilles and made the acquaintance of Forman's father. William Forman seemed to favor his son Simon above his seven other children and saw to it that he began his education. Unlike Lilly, who claimed to have been naturally inclined towards learning, Forman admitted that he struggled with spelling and asked Ridear to discontinue his schooling. In response Ridear beat Forman, who then applied himself more to his studies and eventually learned his letters. He was forced to discontinue his schooling at the age of eleven when his father died unexpectedly. According to Forman, his mother – who had no love for him – refused to send him back to school and kept him home to plough and gather fire wood.¹¹⁵

Luckily, Forman did not suffer long under his mother. At age 14 he apprenticed himself to Mathew Commin of Sarum. Commin was a hosier and merchant of cloth and various wares. Forman was apparently so successful as his apprentice that he was given charge of much of Commin's business. Part of the agreement between the master and apprentice included a provision which stated that Forman would be able to attend three years at grammar school. Commin, however, did not make good on that promise.

While Forman enjoyed a reasonably good relationship with his master, he was often in conflict with his mistress and a certain maid under their employ. In his autobiography he described an instance in which he beat a maid named Mary Roberts with a rod or stick until she was "black and blue alle over." When Commin returned and saw the state that Mary was in,

¹¹⁴ S. Forman, *The Autobiography and Personal Diary of Dr. Simon Forman*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, 1849, 1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 3-5.

Forman explained that she had “reviled him with many bitter wordes” when he had asked her to help him with the customers in the shop. The master judged Forman’s reaction fair, given the poor manner in which Mary had always treated him in the past. The mistress, however, was furious and wanted Forman beaten as well, but the master did not allow it.¹¹⁶

In addition to his conflicts with members of his master’s household, Forman also came to blows with other locals – namely, two “knavishe” sons of one Mr. Godfrie, a local innholder. These two Godfries – described by Forman as “boys” of uncertain age – one day taunted him and threatened to “have him by the eares.” Fearful and abashed, Forman walked away. Richard Kinge, a journeyman assisting at Commin’s shop, happened to see and shamed Forman for leaving such threats from boys unanswered. Forman then returned to the boys and beat them as well.¹¹⁷

Forman’s time as an apprentice was not all bickering and beatings, however. Despite his master reneging on their agreement to send Forman back to school, he did as much as he could to teach himself. He wrote in his autobiography that he was never idle and spent as much time as possible with his nose buried in books – so much so that Commin often scolded him and at one point even confiscated all of Forman’s Latin books. The aspiring intellectual was not deterred; as luck would have it, a young man named Henry began boarding with Commin and became bedfellow to Forman. Henry attended school during the day and passed his lessons along to Forman by night.¹¹⁸

At nearly 18 years of age – after six and a half years with Mr. Commin – Forman had a falling-out with his mistress which resulted in him leaving their service. It began when Mrs. Commin accused Forman of losing “a dossen of flax,” which he swore the mistress lost herself. The mistress tried to beat him for it, but Forman managed to dodge her blows. The master became involved and, perhaps in an effort to placate his wife, beat Forman even though he knew his wife was “a wicked, hedstronge, and proud fantasicalle woman.” This incident seems to have been the final straw for Forman, who soon after told Commin that he wanted to quit his service and study full-time. Commin thereupon granted Forman his indenture, releasing him three and a half years premature of his 10-year contract.¹¹⁹

Upon leaving the Commins’ service, Forman – just shy of 18 years of age – became a schoolmaster at the priory of St. Gilles. Six month later, he left this position to go to Oxford

¹¹⁶ Forman, 7.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 8 – 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 10.

where he became a “pore scholler” at Magdalen College.¹²⁰ Forman’s contentment with finally having arrived at Oxford quickly soured, however, as his benefactors, Sir Robert Pickney and Sir John Thornborough, were not the serious scholars that Forman had hoped for, noting that they were more given to drinking and wooing women than to learning.¹²¹

In 1574, prompted by Queen Elizabeth’s presence at Wilton, Forman quit Oxford and returned to Quidhampton and returned to teaching. In the same year, Forman, for reason unclear, was given the opportunity to give an oration before the Queen at Wilton. He went on to teach in various towns including Ashmore, Urenminster, and Dymsey until 1578. 1579 saw the start of Forman’s troubled adult life; it was in this year that he was robbed of all his “goodes and bockes,” imprisoned for 60 weeks, and defamed by one William Gilles. He was released from prison only to be returned at the beginning of 1580 where he remained until mid-July of the same year. In August, Forman made the acquaintance of Londoner Henry Johnson whom he cured of consumption. In September, he travelled with Johnson to the Low Countries, not returning to London until October.¹²² In November, Forman returned to Quidhampton again – staying some time at Newbury in between – where he remained until October of 1581 “curing sick and lame folks.”¹²³ At the end of October 1581, Forman wrote that he took up residence in Sarum and began practicing physick and surgery. This year seems to represent a significant shift or “comeback” for Forman as he described 1581 as the year in which he “began againe to live.”¹²⁴

In Forman’s autobiography, he wrote of one An Yene – most often referring to her simply as “A. Y.” – whom he met while he apprenticed to the Commin. This A. Y., apparently in love with Forman, often called on him at the Commin’s and asked the master to give Forman leave of his duties to “go rone” with her and her friends.¹²⁵ Despite A. Y.’s affections, Forman wrote that he never loved her in return as she loved him. Curiously, Forman wrote of woman, also referred to as A. Y., in his “diary” with whom he became acquainted with for the first in 1582. From the text it is unclear whether this A. Y. is also An Yene, and Forman therefore meant that he had become reacquainted with her; whether this a different A. Y.; or whether Forman intended to misrepresent his relationship with A. Y., assuming this A. Y. is indeed An

¹²⁰ Forman, 11.

¹²¹ Ibid, 12.

¹²² Lilly, writing of Forman in his autobiography, incorrectly stated that Forman “[took] his degree of Doctor beyond seas.” Forman would not earn his degree until some years later. Furthermore, Lilly claimed that Forman’s purpose of going to Holland was “to be instructed in astrology, and other more occult sciences.” Forman himself did not provide a reason as to why he travelled to the Low Countries.

¹²³ Ibid, 15.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 16.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 9.

Yene. According to Kassel, “A. Y.” refers to Anne Walworth (nee Young), a married woman with whom Forman had a romantic relationship. In 1585, Young gave birth to a son, Joshua Walworth, the alleged love-child of Forman and Anne.¹²⁶ Forman’s very specific notation of Joshua’s birth in his diary¹²⁷ gives weight to his paternity – or, at the very least, shows that he believed himself to be the father. The affair did not end happily: In 1587, Forman wrote that he and Anne had been “betraid,” presumably meaning that their affair had been discovered. The following year, the couple had a falling out, and in November “the cunstable cam for A. Y. and ther folowed moch sorowe after yt.”¹²⁸

The remaining years covered by Forman’s diary – up to 1602 – sees him constantly involved in disputes, the subject of slander, and frequently committed to prison. However, despite his recurring run-ins with the law and incessant in-fighting with his neighbors, Forman began to grow in wealth and credit, and in 1599 – at age 47 – married for the first time. His wife, Jean Baker of Kent, the niece of Sir Edward Monning, was 16 at the time.¹²⁹ During this period, he also recorded his continuing pursuit of magic, necromancy, and physick. In 1588 specifically, he wrote that “began to practise necromancy and to calle aungells and spirits.” In 1590, at “Al-hallontyd,”¹³⁰ he “entered the cirkell for nigromanticall spells,” something which he blamed for his misfortunes going into the following year. In 1593, he distilled “strong water” which he sold for profit, and in 1594 he “begane to practise the philosopher's stone, and... made vergin parchment and newe wrote [his] bock of magickqe.”¹³¹

Forman’s claims to increasing prestige are validated by the London College of Physicians’ response to his practice. The troubles began in 1594 when Forman received a notice of warning from College. In March, he paid “the doctors” a fine of five pounds.¹³² Kassel elaborated on this first encounter between Forman and the College, explaining that the College would have held a formal examination of Forman’s education, methods, and medical experience, with at least a portion of the interview dedicated to assessing his knowledge of Latin. Unsurprisingly, Forman was found sorely lacking any form of medical expertise and, along with the fine of five pounds, the College forbade him from continuing his illegal form of medicine.¹³³ Forman, however, not one to be deterred by something so trivial as *the law*,

¹²⁶ Kassel, *Medicine and Magic*, 33.

¹²⁷ “The 27. dai of March A. Y. was delivered at 10 min. past 7 A.M. of Joshua.” Forman, 17.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 19.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

¹³⁰ Presumably “All Hallows' tide,” a triduum spanning October 31st to November 2nd, comprised of All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day.

¹³¹ Forman, 19-23.

¹³² *Ibid*, 24.

¹³³ Kassel, *Medicine and Magic*, 75-6.

continued his practice, and thus remained a nuisance for the College. In November of 1595, the College levied another complaint against Forman resulting this time in a fine of 10 pounds and imprisonment for three weeks.¹³⁴ Less than a year later, he was once again sent to prison by the College, this time released after only two weeks. In 1598 “the doctor” arrested Forman again. The following year, Forman “condemned [the College] in lawe,” the result of which earned him a year and half of silence from them. In 1600, Forman was summoned to appear once again before the College and responded, not in person, but rather in writing.¹³⁵ Over the next couple of years, Forman became increasingly difficult for the College to pin down. By June of 1603, he went to Jesus College, University of Cambridge, where he, sponsored by William Ward and Thomas Grimston, obtained a license to practice physic and astronomy.¹³⁶

An Ill-Remembered Astrologer

Like Lilly, Forman also left behind egodocuments; in fact, during his life Forman is known to have penned at least four autobiographical works. The first and most extensive account, “The bocke of the life and generation of Simon,” which scholars generally refer to as his “autobiography,” was written in 1600, shortly after getting married for the first time at the age of 47. The entire account is written in the third person, from the perspective of someone observing his younger self as a God-like omniscient viewer. Around 1603, Forman wrote what has come to be known as his “diary.” This diary provides a sketch of Forman’s life from 1552 to 1602 and lists the major events of each year which are often given specific dates and times. Unlike his first egodocument, he chose to write this narrative in the first person. This diary also contained astrological figures from either the first or second day of January each year which, together with Forman’s chronological listing of each year’s events, creates a “retrospective version of a luxury horoscope with yearly revolutions” which he employed to “study the influences of the motions of the stars and planets on his life.”¹³⁷ In 1605, after the birth of his daughter, he wrote a family genealogy which stretches back nearly six hundred years, beginning with a Norman who served in the Roman Army during the eleventh century. After the birth of Forman’s son in 1606, he wrote a shorter account of his life, once again in the third person.¹³⁸

None of Forman’s autobiographical works were published during his lifetime and eventually ended up in the collection of Elias Ashmole. It would not be until 1849 that his

¹³⁴ Forman, 26.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 29-31.

¹³⁶ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 97; Timbers, 51.

¹³⁷ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 22.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 21-2.

autobiography and diary were published together by James Halliwell; according to the preface of Halliwell's edition, 100 copies were printed on "ordinary" paper while five copies were printed on thick.

While Forman achieved similar social status as Lilly would after him, Forman, in some respects, presented himself in very different terms to his future readers. The most evident difference ought to be Forman's strong penchant for conflict. Throughout his biography and diary, Forman wrote unabashedly – if not proudly – of his frequent physical confrontations. It is difficult to determine why he did not shy away or omit these details altogether. If we are to believe some scholars' contention that English elites held themselves to "higher standards of self-discipline," resisted provocation to physical violence, and sought to attain mastery of the self,¹³⁹ why would Forman have proclaimed his frequent brawls so boldly?

One scholar has noted that Forman's motivations for writing so many iterations of his life history remain unclear, as he "does not fit the mould of the English seventeenth-century Puritan diarist, tallying up and scrutinizing his acts before God, nor does his self-obsession figure in the history of modern individualism."¹⁴⁰ However, we may at least be able to hypothesize about Forman's motivations. As noted above, Forman penned two of his egodocuments shortly after the births of his daughter and son in 1605 and 1606, respectively. This may indicate that he had been motivated, at least partially, by a drive to pass down a part of himself and his life story to the next generations of Formans. The writing of the Forman family genealogy in 1605 and that fact that his autobiography begins by recounting his noble ancestry perhaps both lend support to this theory: Forman wanted to preserve an image of himself as a man of worth, descended from an ancient line of noble men. References to one's distinguished lineage was a central component of masculine honor during the medieval period, along with chivalry and qualities such as pride and assertiveness. By the seventeenth century, this medieval ideal gave way to a new dominant concept of masculinity colored by humanism, sobriety, rationality, and service to the crown and Anglican Church. This is not to say that lineage became obsolete within the matrix of masculine identity during the early modern period. Lineage simply became incorporated into a new form of masculinity which stressed temperance, godliness, and allegiance to one's state.¹⁴¹ However, Forman's frequent appeals to ancestry indicate that he retained the medieval view of lineage. His position as a social climber

¹³⁹ L. A. Pollock, "Honor, Gender, and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570–1700," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 1 (2007), 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 20.

¹⁴¹ Pollock, 3-4; R. A. Terry, "'Vows to the Blackest Devil': Hamlet and the Evolving Code of Honor in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1999), 1071.

– and eventual arrival to the middling class – may have also motivated this emphasis on lineage and family history; even if one did not consider Forman’s own deeds commendable, one could not dismiss the good stock from which he descended. Thus, Forman seems to have been an adherent of the medieval notion of lineage and noble ancestry.

Forman’s frankness about assaulting his female co-worker and neighbor’s sons represents another holdover of the masculine martial qualities expected of men during the medieval period. Both confrontations originated with some kind of verbal slight against Forman’s honor, and in both incidents, Forman clearly felt justified in responding with violence. His account of his attack on Mary Roberts is presented as long-overdue retaliation against a frequent harasser – a woman, no less – and his fight with the Godfrie boys as a man defending himself against the common rabble. While they did not come to physical violence, Forman’s later quarrels and legal troubles involving the London College of Physicians further exemplify his antagonistic tendencies. Even after being informed for the first time in 1594 that the College did not recognize or approve of his methods of physick, Forman continued his practice without a license for almost a decade, fully aware that doing so would inevitably result in further fines and possibly imprisonment by the College.

As uncooperative as he was with the College and the regulations guiding their actions against him, Forman clearly wished to count himself among their numbers. As made evident by his own autobiography, Forman desired, above all else, a formal university education. He persistently tried to learn as much as he could whenever he could – either from his books or his peers who did attend university – but a formal education was continually kept out of reach by personal circumstance. This inability to attain a university education may have resulted in feelings of bitterness towards those who had become academically-trained physicians, which would then explain his recalcitrant attitude towards the College. Despite his outward antagonism, Forman tried to emulate his opponents in the London College of Physicians. In 1600, the same year that Forman began to elude the College’s grasp, he wrote that he had a “purple gowne... velvet cap... velvet cote, [and] velvet breches” made.¹⁴² A purple robe and velvet cap were the compulsory dress for members of the London College of Physicians. While donning the official garb may have been meant to further antagonize the College (and we can theorize that it did), this is perhaps more indicative of Forman’s desire to associate himself with

¹⁴² Forman, 31.

the status and authority of the College. After all, outward appearances, including apparel, were still the most prominent markers of social status during the early seventeenth century.¹⁴³

If he had not been controversial enough during his lifetime, Forman's reputation suffered even further after his death by his implication in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613). His alleged involvement had been deduced based on his association with the Countess of Somerset, Frances Carr (née Howard), and her servant, Anne Turner. During Howard's trial, it was shown that both she and Turner had consulted Forman, at one point even requesting from Forman a magical potion to both alienate Howard's husband at the time Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, and attract Robert, Earl of Somerset. A book containing the signatures of Howard and Turner were presented as further evidence of the pair having formed a pact with the devil, Forman acting as a sort of broker between the parties. For the next two centuries, Forman was memorialized in plays and novels as "the stock cunning man of old" whose unorthodox practices were "sinister and foolish in equal measure."¹⁴⁴

Despite his posthumous notoriety, Forman remained a prominent figure within the circle of late-Elizabethan and Jacobean astrologers. Lilly even dedicated an entire chapter of his own autobiography to Forman. His assessment was generally positive, noting that Forman had been "very observant" and moderately successful in his judgements, having reportedly predicted the troubles that would come of his acquaintance with the Countess of Essex.¹⁴⁵ Lilly is also credited with having sought out Forman's widow who related Forman's famous prediction of his own death. According to Jean Forman, she asked her husband one evening whether she would bury him. This was likely meant in a teasing manner, as Jean was a full 30 years her husband's junior. Forman promised his wife that she would indeed bury him, and that he would die by the following Thursday. Upon the day of his prediction, Forman went out onto the Thames, fell down, and died. According to Lilly, a "most sad storm of wind" immediately followed the death of this "singular astrologer and physician."¹⁴⁶ Forman thus became something of a mythical figure for students of astrology, despite his abrasive personality and controversial reputation.

¹⁴³ Timbers, 51; A. Shepard, "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580-1640," *Past & Present* 167 (2000), 89.

¹⁴⁴ Kassell, "Simon Forman: The Astrologer's Tables," *History Today*, 2011, <https://www.historytoday.com/lauren-kassell/astrologers-tables>. This controversy also explains why Forman's autobiographical works were published for the first time in the middle of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁵ At the time of her trial for the murder of Thomas Overbury, Frances Carr was married to Robert Carr, 1st Earl of Somerset, and was thus the Countess of Somerset.

¹⁴⁶ Lilly, 36-44.

Average Astrologers

The experiences and personalities of Lilly and Forman are very different in many respects. Forman, for example, comes across as very turbulent and combative, even in his own narrative; he was prone to antagonizing authority figures such as the College of Physicians by repetitively disregarding rules and regulations which threatened to prevent him from practicing his method of medicine. He had few positive relationships with women – perhaps due in part to his troubled relationship with his mother – presumably fathered at least one bastard, and married considerably late in his life. For the majority of his life, Forman was kept just out of reach of a formal education, obtaining a license to practice physic and astronomy at the age of 51. Lilly, on the other hand, has presented himself as a man of civility who avoided rather than instigated physical confrontation. He married young to an aging widow who left him a considerable sum after her death. This small fortune provided Lilly with the luxury to pursue formal studies virtually free of financial constraints.

Despite these difference, the life trajectories of the two astrologer-physicians were also very similar in some respects. Some resemblances, although inconsequential, are interesting to note. For example, both men were born into lower-Middling families of limited resources; both men also had one negligent or abusive parent and one doting parent who passed away before they reached adulthood. There are, however, a few similarities between the two men which are typical of the early modern astrologer-physician. Lilly and Forman both expressed a life-long thirst for knowledge and appreciation for classical education. Somewhat paradoxically, neither of the two went the traditional route and received a formal education during their young adulthood. Most of their studies in astrology and physick were done informally via two primary methods: through observation and through self-study of texts. Between the two, self-study seemed to be the preferred method for both men, indicating that they placed more trust in books than in informal tutors. Although prognostications such as nativities and interrogations were considered credible fields within natural astrology,¹⁴⁷ they were not recognized or encouraged by universities. This left many astrologers to pursue alternative paths toward the study of astrology and explains perhaps why Forman received a license to practice astronomy, the field tangent to astrology. The primacy of self-study also attests to the increasingly individualistic character of early modern England.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Kassell, “Simon Forman: The Astrologer’s Tables.”

¹⁴⁸ Mascuch, 45.

Part Two: Male Witches

This chapter marks a departure from the personal narratives of the previous chapter towards an examination of the lives of men through seventeenth century court documents. These documents are written in prose formant with all statements from complainants and defendants – including answers to interrogatories – recorded in third person. English legal documents are notoriously detached in tone and utilize highly formulaic legalese. Constructing depositions this way provides clarity and simplicity to often complicated narratives involving dozens of individuals, but does not represent how people actually spoke or thought. Critics of these sources refer to them as “scripts in a theatre of authority” which represent an unequal dialogue between the governed and those who govern. The potential power inequalities between recorders and deponents may imply that such sources are highly distorted by the biases of the recorders.¹⁴⁹

Central to the following case studies are documents produced by the court of the Star Chamber. This court, first established under Plantagenet and Tudor rule, received its name from the stars painted on the ceiling of the chamber in Westminster Palace where court convened. The power of the Star Chamber grew under King James I (1603-1625) and has come to symbolize, at least in part, the abuses of power by both James I and his son King Charles I (1625-1649). Over the course of the first half of the seventeenth century, the James I and Charles I began to use the court to suppress political opposition to the crown. The Caroline regime saw further changes to the court. For example, under Charles’s personal rule a total of three bishops of the Anglican Church were allowed to attend sessions of the court, compared with only one allowed by Elizabeth I. Contemporary puritans saw this augmentation of religious representation in the court as evidence that the court was being used “as a coercive instrument of religion.”¹⁵⁰ If the two addition of two bishops was not controversial enough, the court was frequently attended by William Laud (discussed shortly), whose attempts to reform the Church of England smacked of popery and Catholicism. Since its inception during the late middle ages, the Star Chamber seemed to be on a never-ending quest to extend its jurisdiction. Parliament objected to such overreaching, but never questioned its legitimacy or made any efforts to abolish it until the personal rule of Charles I.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ M. Gaskill, “Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England,” *Social History* 23, no. 1 (1998), 2.

¹⁵⁰ D. L. Vande Zande, “Power and the Demise of the Star Chamber,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 50, no. 3 (2010 2008), 336.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 333-4.

The primary purpose of the Star Chamber had been to see cases of possible breaches of the King's peace which included crimes such as riot, assault, intimidation, fraud, forgery, and perjury. The costs involved in bringing a case before the Star Chamber would have precluded all but the most dedicated and resourced claimants. Litigants paid for a legal representative which included the costs incurred for travel and lodging. Depending on the case it could take weeks, months, or even years to reach a resolution in court, so it is not surprising that the Star Chamber has garnered a reputation amongst historians as a "venue for gentry litigation." Nevertheless, people below the gentry are known to have made use of the Star Chamber in order to receive a slice of the king's justice.

Despite the inherent issues in using court documents as historical sources – particularly the "highly constructed and rhetorical"¹⁵² records of the Star Chamber – they are valuable sources for the present study for one primary reason. Here we are not intent on examining these records for what they might reveal about early modern English law and crime. Instead, we are interested in the mentalities of individuals, the "invisible or opaque realms of human experience,"¹⁵³ which lie hidden in plain sight. This method of reading sources against the grain will allow the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the commoner sort to come to the fore. Even if depositions and bills of complaint did not present an entirely truthful account of events, historians may assume that they reflect the ordinary machinations of everyday life; they were meant to be believable. In the following examination of Star Chamber records, we will see how accusers "wove together contrapuntal strands of witchcraft, gender, and law" in their accounts of male witchcraft.¹⁵⁴ Whether accusers personally believed in witchcraft or simply invented that part of their account, we can predict that they appealed to popular conceptions of witchcraft. Similarly, it will become evident that accusers described either the witch or crime in masculine, rather than feminine, terms.

Nicholas Stockdale (born c. 1570)

Nicholas Stockdale was a yeoman copyholder from Norfolk on the manor of Brancaster.¹⁵⁵ His legal troubles began in 1595 when he was first suspected of witchcraft. Some locals implicated

¹⁵² Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 26.

¹⁵³ Citing E. Muir and G. Ruggiero, Gaskill, "Reporting Murder," 2.

¹⁵⁴ M. Hailwood, "Popular Culture," in *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources*, ed. L. Sangha and J. Willis, Routledge Guides to Using Historical Sources (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 209; Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 26-71; Similarly, Phil Withington defended the use of depositional material, noting that it contains "unusually rich... observations, descriptions and asides... shedding often unexpected light on the ordinary lives, conversations and attitudes across England's streets, alehouses, parlours and neighbourhoods." P. Withington, "Company and Sociability in Early Modern England," *Social History* 32, no. 3 (2007), 292.

¹⁵⁵ STAC 8/276/25.

Stockdale in the murder of Thomas Skippon, a husbandman from the neighboring manor of Heacham, roughly eight miles west of Brancaster. In 1600, he was formally accused of witchcraft by John Richers (alias Glover), another yeoman from Fring, a village eight miles south of Brancaster. Richers alleged that Stockdale had bewitched a dozen each of his cows and sheep, which effectively led to the death of the sheep. This case went to the assize in July of the same year, but Stockdale was acquitted when the said sheep were discovered to have suffered from overeating.¹⁵⁶

The scarcity and general ambiguity of the sources leaves several unanswered questions. For example, none of the court documents or any other surviving documents indicate when Stockdale had been born, so we are uncertain exactly how old he had been when these first accusations came out against him. However, based on a later bill of complaint which we will discuss shortly, he was likely between thirty and fifty years of age during the first decade of the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁷

Stockdale was formally accused of witchcraft for the second time in 1602. In December of the previous year, Mary Skippon, the wife of William Skippon,¹⁵⁸ a husbandman in Heacham, fell ill and died the following February. As she lay on her deathbed, Edmund Cremer (alias Skryme), a Heacham yeoman, was known to have said that Mary claimed she had “never prospered since the tyme that her husband and [Stockdale] fell out.”¹⁵⁹ Is it difficult to determine whether this was something that the dying Mary had said, or whether this was an invention by Cremer. Throughout the early modern period, deathbed scenes have featured prominently in depositions relating to cases of murder or suspected homicide. Such scenes may have functioned as a means to identify murderers as it was believed that victims close to death were more likely to speak truthfully.¹⁶⁰ Regardless of whether or not Cremer had fabricated these claims, they must have gained enough currency to renew public suspicions that Stockdale was a witch. In March of the same year, one Margaret Headon of Heacham fell ill and died in two

¹⁵⁶ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 27-8; M. Gaskill, “The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict and Belief in Jacobean England,” *Historical Research* 71, no. 175 (1998), 167.

¹⁵⁷ In this bill, the complainant recounted the events of 1606, naming Stockdale, his wife Anne, and their son Edmund as the principal aggressors. This implication of Stockdale’s son indicates that he had been of adult age at the time. I have therefore estimated Stockdale’s year of birth at 1570. STAC 8/101/18.

¹⁵⁸ The relation between Mary and William to Thomas Skippon is unknown.

¹⁵⁹ STAC 8/276/25.

¹⁶⁰ Gaskill further suggests that “some witnesses fashioned impassioned speeches into extemporaneous dramas” in order to ensure the conviction of a suspect whose guilt was known by the local community. One 1718 murder witness even deposed that the victim cried out “he hath killed me” after her throat had been cut. Gaskill, “Reporting Murder,” 24.

months later. The villagers immediately suspected Stockdale of having murdered her by some occult means but lacked sufficient evidence to bring charges against him for witchcraft.¹⁶¹

Although documents relating to this trial and the 1600 trial have been lost, we know about each of these cases because in 1607, Stockdale filed a suit in the court of Star Chamber alleging that his enemies in Heacham “did maliciouslie conspire confederat and combine together” to orchestrate the events which lead to his arrest in 1602.¹⁶² According to Stockdale, his opponents enlisted one John Alowe to provoke a physical fight with him. During the confrontation between the two, Stockdale, “in defense of himself and for his owne safety” dealt a “small stroke or blowe withe a cudgell.” This conflict being part of a performance to build a case against him, he went on to allege that Alowe “did frame and counterfeit himselfe to languish as if the stroke of blow or hurte had bine mortall and deadlie.” This potentially deadly assault on Alowe gave Stockdale’s opponents such as William Watters – the constable of Heacham at the time – and Alowe’s wife, Alice, the pretext they needed to secure Stockdale’s arrest. Watters approached justice Sir Henry Spotman who determined that Stockdale would be arrested only if Alowe died. Although Alowe frequently made it known to Watters that he was recovered and well,¹⁶³ Watters moved forward by executing the warrant, and the confederates named in Stockdale’s bill of complaint brought three charges of murder by witchcraft to a different justice.¹⁶⁴ This second justice, one Doctor Redmaye, seemingly more sympathetic to the villagers’ cause than Watters, imprisoned Stockdale “as a notorious murderer witch and felon.”¹⁶⁵ In July of the same year, the case against him was brought to the assize but he was acquitted of all charges.

Interestingly, Stockdale’s 1607 Star Chamber suit is not the first time he accused the villagers of Heacham of conspiracy. A 1605 Star Chamber suit filed by Edmund Cremer (the Heacham yeoman who purportedly overheard Mary Skippon blame Stockdale for her illness) reveals that earlier the same year, Stockdale had brought charges of conspiracy in the court of the King’s Bench. In his King’s Bench suit, Stockdale’s allegations were the same as those which he would later bring to the Star Chamber. He alleged that the villagers of Heacham were conspiring against him and sought five hundred pounds in damages.¹⁶⁶ In the end, all of the living defendants were found guilty and required to pay forty pounds damages. Cremer’s Star

¹⁶¹ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 28.

¹⁶² STAC 8/276/25.

¹⁶³ This may be why John Alowe was not named as a confederate in Stockdale’s bill of complaint. Alice Alowe, however, was.

¹⁶⁴ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ STAC 8/276/25.

¹⁶⁶ STAC 8/95/18.

Chamber suit claimed that Stockdale had won this suit based on the false testimony of one Margaret Wood. Wood purportedly overheard Stockdale's enemies rejoice in his imprisonment as they expected to see him hang for the charges put against him. She further reported having heard Cremer say he "would not rest until he had hanged Stockdale and rooted out his posterity."¹⁶⁷ Cremer claimed that no such conversation had ever taken place, and that Stockdale had either bribed or forcibly induced Wood's testimony. In his answer to Cremer's charges, Stockdale recounted his previous legal encounter with Cremer, restating that he had previously been indicted for "murtheringe of one Mary Skippon by witchcrafte and sorcery and was afterwarde tryed and acquitted." He further answered Cremer's bill stating that "ther is no such person as the said Margaret."¹⁶⁸

Knowing that Stockdale filed suit against his conspirators in the court of the King's Bench, and knowing that he had been awarded several hundred pounds in damages for that case, begs the question: why did he bring the same charges to the Star Chamber in 1607?

Middling Yeomen and Reputation

Historians may be incorrectly surprised by the amount of litigation exercised by provincial yeomen and husbandmen during the early seventeenth century. However, when these professional identifiers appear in historical sources often do not reveal much – if anything – about social status or economic power. "Yeoman," for example, was legally defined as a "freeholder who could meet the qualification for voting in Parliamentary elections" but in has been used by contemporaries to refer to copyholders and tenant farmers who did not meet this requirement. Our understanding of the term only becomes less certain as British commentators throughout the early modern period continue to shift and redefine yeomen as a category which encompassed all men below the gentleman class.¹⁶⁹

Between the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, the worth of yeomen increased exponentially, outpacing inflation by a factor of ten. Prior to 1600, the median worth of yeomen was had been distributed evenly over the life cycle, with men reaching a peak worth of seven to eight pounds. From 1600 onwards, yeomen saw a base increase in median worth which further increased throughout the lifecycle to a peak median value of 50 pounds. The worth of husbandmen remained more evenly distributed over the life

¹⁶⁷ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 28.

¹⁶⁸ STAC 8/95/18.

¹⁶⁹ J. V. Beckett, "The Peasant in England: A Case of Terminological Confusion?," *British Agricultural History Society* 32, no. 2 (1984), 113-4.

cycle after 1600 and were more comparable in value to pre-1600 figures. Thus, the gains experienced by yeomen far outstripped those enjoyed by husbandmen. This divergence in the fortunes of yeomen and husbandmen between 1550 and 1650 may be attributed to increased agricultural production and the development of “agrarian capitalism.” These valuations of worth varied by age and region, but yeomen of the early seventeenth were granted greater economic mobility which allowed them to invest in more and better-quality education.¹⁷⁰ The developing economic gulf between yeomen and husbandmen may then have resulted in growing tensions between the two vocations. As previously stated, suspicions of Stockdale’s witchcraft began with the murder of Thomas Skippon, a husbandman of Heacham. Stockdale allegedly fell out with William Skippon, another husbandman from the same village, and Mary Skippon cited this conflict as the source of their poor fortune.

This is not to say that conflicts were drawn exclusively along vocational lines. If relations between yeomen and husbandmen were tense, we can expect an even greater degree of infighting among yeomen as they were in direct competition with one another for resources – particularly for arable land which was necessary for investing in working stock and thus the accumulation of wealth. As we have seen, the majority of Stockdale’s accusers were yeomen and the wives of yeomen. A 1608 Star Chamber suit which specifically names Stockdale, his wife, and son attests to the competitive world of Brancaster yeomen.¹⁷¹ The complainant, Luke Cotton, yeoman, wrote that he had been granted “certen marshe growndes and medowe grownds” by the authority of Sir Charles Cornwallis, the lord of Brancaster manor and Lord Ambassador to Spain. Cotton claimed that the Stockdale family and other “riotous persons” had on several occasions “unlawfully assembled themselves” on the land in question, armed with pitchforks and staves. On one occasion, a large group consisting of nine women and one man entered the land and assaulted and “evilly intreate[d]” Cotton and his servant, George Master. Cotton claimed that the alleged rioters tied Master’s arms and legs and threw him into a lake “of dirte and myer” where he almost drowned. Stockdale was not one of the named accomplices in this incident, but his wife, Ann, was. On a separate occasion, Cotton wrote that all three Stockdales – Nicholas, Ann, and Edmond – trespassed onto his land again, this time finding his brother, William Cotton, and another servant ploughing. The Stockdale family began to assault the two men and Nicholas “being iraged did darte his pitchfork at... William Catton and did

¹⁷⁰ A. Shepard and J. Spicksley, “Worth, Age, and Social Status in Early Modern England,” *The Economic History Review* 64, no. 2 (2011), 493, 526-8.

¹⁷¹ STAC 8/101/18.

strike him on the necke with one tyne thereof, and with the other uppon his shoulder whereby he was in great daunger of his lyffe.”

The only surviving answer to this bill is that of Katherine Hammond, wife of Brancaster freeholder John Hammond. Hammond’s account of the alleged riots tells a very different story. She claimed that cattle owned by her husband were set out to feed on fields which, since “tyme out of minde,” had been used to graze the “commonable beasts and Cattell” of Brancaster. The fields Hammond referred to were, presumably, the same tracts of land that Cotton claimed to own, for he and his servant began to chase the cattle away. Hammond and Anne Branton – another defendant of the bill – rushed to the save the cattle. According to Hammond, the issue was resolved without violence and Cotton left in a “peacable manner,” adding that he had even dined with her and her husband sometime following the incident. Cotton’s renewed animosity regarding the incident was described as indicative of his “malicious disposition and desire of Revenge,” intended only “to vexe and molest” the neighbors of Brancaster. While she made no mention of Stockdale, Hammond’s answer demonstrates the competitive reality that many yeomen and their family members faced. As noted by Kent, competition for resources – particularly competition for land between masculine peers – “continually reproduced local power relations according to family allegiances, social and spatial networks, institutional affiliation, economic standing, political loyalties, and individual outlook.” Cotton’s complaint hinges on his ownership of the specified lands, and Hammond counters by claiming that the lands are held in common by the people of Brancaster and that the supposed “riot” was a misunderstanding. Whether we believe one or the other, the dispute exemplifies the local power relations of a “masculine middling sort.”¹⁷² Land was a key resource, thus land ownership was fiercely contested.

Power inequalities among neighbors of similar class and vocation may become even more distinct when witchcraft entered the fray. Accusations of witchcraft were not borne solely out of social relationships defined by poverty. Luke Cotton’s bill indicates that he had owned land, however contested his claims had been; according to a probate inventory record, the Skippons’ estate was far from impoverished; John Richers is evidenced to have been the wealthiest self-identifying yeoman among Stockdale’s accusers.¹⁷³ Stockdale’s economic status is not directly given in the evidence at hand, but we may theorize that he was a man of reasonable means. If the alleged conspirators had been plotting against him as he believed (and convincingly demonstrated to the court), it is likely because other yeomen stood to gain

¹⁷² Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 33.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 32-3.

something in the event that he was removed from the village, either by long-term imprisonment or execution.¹⁷⁴

If Stockdale's neighbors stood to gain from his downfall, he must have had something to lose, which may explain why he brought the same case to the courts of the King's Bench and Star Chamber in 1605 and 1607, respectively. While witchcraft accusations were not treated equally by all English courts throughout the early modern period, we do not see many of the accused ignoring such allegations. Most, like Stockdale, found a way to fight slanderous rumors and accusations and Stockdale's status as a resourced male enabled him to utilize the courts. Accusing someone of witchcraft was, whatever the reality of the accusations, an attack upon one's honor. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, masculine honor came to describe a man's reputation as defined by one's peers rather than an individual's internal virtue; it was a matter of public presentation rather than private expression. Duels remained a possible avenue for defending oneself against verbal slights, but it became more common to litigate for such matters. In 1558, the Star Chamber saw 67 cases of "injuries to honor." This number increased more than tenfold by 1603 with 732 cases.¹⁷⁵

What remains troubling about Stockdale's case is the clear geographic separation between the two primary issues he dealt with in court. The only surviving litigation coming from one of Stockdale's Brancaster neighbors is that of Luke Cotton's bill of complaint concerning rioting. Witchcraft accusations, however, came from inhabitants of Heacham and Fring. Why these accusations would be isolated to villages outside of Stockdale's own locale are difficult to ascertain. To be sure, this calls into question the previously discussed possibility that the conspirators of Heacham launched their accusations in the interest of procuring land. However, we may also consider the possibility that Stockdale's accusers did not necessarily aim to secure a net positive for themselves. Perhaps the goal had been to see Stockdale experience a net negative. Witch accusations and persecutions did not take place only at the individual level; whole communities, such as Heacham, often came together to lead the charge against those whom they perceived as threats to their village. In this sense, Stockdale may have been correct to accuse his enemies in Heacham of coordinating their efforts to have him convicted.

Stockdale's competitive behavior with his neighbors best exemplifies his reaching for hegemonic masculinity. Conduct books such as Dod and Cleaver's *A Godly Forme of Houshold*

¹⁷⁴ According to Gaskill, Stockdale's case illustrates "how malicious charges might be constructed [and] the plausibility of a legal defense of conspiracy." Gaskill, "The Devil in the Shape of a Man," 167.

¹⁷⁵ Pollock, 5-6.

Government repeatedly posit the husband as being solely responsible for “get[ting] money and prouision” for the household, avoiding borrowing money, and “cut[ting] off all vnecessary expences.” The authors noted that men are “naturally... inclined but too much to the loue of earthly goods” and tempered their emphasis on economic responsibility by writing that “goods are not of more estimation then is life or health, but it is a mans affection that doth rule.” They explicitly encouraged virtues such as sobriety, chastity, humility, honesty and patience for both men and women, and cautioned against bitterness, rivalry, and brawling.¹⁷⁶ However, these idealized, Puritan virtues seemed irreconcilable in practice and the pressure to accumulate more resources for one’s household generally won out.

¹⁷⁶ Dod and Cleaver.

John Lowes (c. 1565-1645)

John Lowes was the minister of Brandeston, a village in eastern Suffolk about 11 miles northeast of Ipswich, who became swept up in the East Anglian Witch Trials of the first English Civil War.¹⁷⁷ After decades of being suspected of witchcraft, he was tried and executed as a witch in 1645 at about 80 years of age.¹⁷⁸ As we shall see, there are some similarities between Lowes's legal troubles and those of Nicholas Stockdale. However, his education, position as a member of the parish clergy, and eventual conviction and execution as a witch distinguish him from the Stockdale case. The fact that Lowes's final trial and execution took place within the context of the English Civil War is also important. As noted by Kent, Lowes's long-standing reputation as a witch demonstrates how the language and beliefs associated with witchcraft could be "used to express notions of masculine evil centered upon a man who was fully identified with masculine privilege."¹⁷⁹ Lowes's advanced social position meant that he was able to benefit even more from masculine privilege – particularly from masculine institutions such as the courts and church – in order to fend off accusations of witchcraft. That is, until the Civil War broke out.

While we cannot reconstruct the details of Lowes's early life, we do know that he graduated from St John's College, Cambridge around 1593. For a brief period following graduation, he was a preacher at Bury St. Edmunds, but soon returned to St. John's for his Master of Arts.¹⁸⁰ In 1599, at the age of 34, Lowes married Margaret Holmes from Cotton, Suffolk. From around 1600 to 1601, he settled in Brandeston and became minister of the local parish.

Lowes's legal struggles began in 1614 when he filed a suit in the court of King's Bench. One Ellis May, Lowes's Brandeston neighbor, removed a hedge and built a pigsty next to a barn owned by Lowes. Lowes claimed that the filth from the pigsty caused the foundations of the barn's walls to rot. May pled not guilty and there seems to be no surviving result to the case.¹⁸¹ This suit sparked an inquiry the following year in which fourteen men were "sworn to inquire whether Lowes was 'a common barrectator and perturbator of the peace and a person of bad name, fame, condition, conversation, and disposition[...]' to the great disturbance of the

¹⁷⁷ Lowes identified himself as "Clerke" and "mynyster and preacher of Gods worde." STAC 8/200/27.

¹⁷⁸ This places Lowes's approximate year of birth at 1565 and all subsequent reckonings of age are based on this year. Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 67, 71.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 67.

¹⁸⁰ According to Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, Lowes's return to St. John's may have been prompted by controversy surrounding his refusal to "conform[] to the rites of the Established Church." C. L'Estrange Ewen, *The Trials of John Lowes, Clerk*, 1937, 1.

¹⁸¹ Ewen concluded that the case had likely been dropped.

neighbours.” This case was moved from the general sessions of the peace at Woodbridge – roughly 10 miles south of Brandeston – to the King’s Bench and is believed to have returned a verdict of not guilty.¹⁸²

The first accusations of witchcraft were brought against Lowes in the same year. Jonas Cooke, one of the jurors from Woodbridge, suspected Lowes in the witchcraft murder of his daughter, Mary Cooke. One Toby Barrow from Lowes’s local Brandeston shared Cooke’s suspicions and perpetuated rumors that the Brandeston minster was a witch. Their suspicions apparently did not result in a witchcraft trial against Lowes. Instead, Lowes brought suit against the two men, accusing them of slandering his good name. Both men were found guilty in July of 1615.¹⁸³

Despite having won this case, Lowes went further and filed a bill of complaint in the court of the Star Chamber the following year. Lowes alleged that his enemies – which at this point included the constable of Brandeston, Thomas Nicholson – had “out of causeles hatred, malice and rancor... [did] unlawfullie Combyne, Conspire, Confederate, and come together... [to] plott, purpose, and practise falselie” to bring charges of witchcraft and murder against him in the Suffolk assize court.¹⁸⁴ He cited the “false[] and unchristianlie” allegations that he had murdered Mary Cooke, claiming that the accomplices solicited Samuel Blenhassett, justice of the peace in Suffolk, to grant a warrant for his arrest. The conspirators then enlisted Thomas Nicholson to apprehend Lowes in the local churchyard following service, in sight of the entire congregation “for the more publick shame and disgrace.”¹⁸⁵ He noted that the conspirators also accused him of the poisoning murder of George Pulham; assaulting Brandeston husbandman John Scott with a cudgel; and abetting Brandeston spinster Ann Anson in the bewitching of cattle owned by Toby Barrow. The named accomplices attempted to suborn other testimonies and allegation from locals to support their growing case against Lowes. They solicited Robert and Katherine Hanna to accuse Lowes of the murder “by sorcerie and witchcrafte” of one Marrian Hanna who died in 1605, and they tried to enlist Joane Symons to accuse Lowes of murdering Robert Deddham in 1612.¹⁸⁶ Lowes had denied every charge and, in this new bill of complaint, stated that the grand inquest returned a verdict of “ignoramus.” Such a verdict technically describes a case which is not backed by sufficient evidence, but Lowes presented it

¹⁸² Ewen presumed that Lowes himself had this case moved in order to avoid possible influences from his neighbors in Brandeston. Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 68.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ STAC 8/200/27.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

as vindication of his innocence, delivering him “out of trouble and his life and estate out of the Clawes of most cruell Conspirators.”¹⁸⁷

Like many bills of complaint, Lowes made frequent references to his personal qualities such as loyalty, obedience, and honesty. However, his vocation as a minister and status as a university-educated professional seem to have amplified his appeals to positive personal qualities. Within the first lines of the bill, Lowes presented himself as follows:

a lawfull mynyster and preacher of Gods worde and so hath been the space of xv yeares last past, and hath from his infancie been tryaned up in vertue I by his labour industrie and perfection in learning graced with the degree of master of arts and proceeded out of St Johns College in the universitie of Cambridge. And afterwards his habilitie in Erudition and doctryne; honestie in the conversation of his lyf; And diligence in his function to instruct the people of God in true Religion and good manners, your majesties said subject was preferred and became lawfull incumbent of ye vicarage of Brandeston...

Lowes took care to highlight his education and role as an instructor of the “true religion,” perhaps knowing that doing so would win him favor. By extension, these appeals may also represent an attempt to connect with the authorities and higher-ups who were the intended audiences for this bill. It immediately marked Lowes as a public official and a man of letters so the authorities reading his bill may have seen him as one of their own rank and approached his case already inclined to rule in his favor.

One of the answers to the bill, submitted jointly by Jonas Cooke, Ellis May, and Toby Wade, painted an entirely different picture of the self-describing “beloved” minister. They claimed that Lowes was “of a turbulent spirit, being possessed with an humor of multitude of vexations therewith most grievously to vex and oppresse” the residents of Brandeston. Of Lowes’s education, they stated that they “doe verie much marvell” at the fact that such a “vexacious” man would claim such “vertuous erudition” and be “graced with the stile of Master of Artes.” Of his ministry, the defendants claimed that Lowes “seldom preaches, but when he dothe preach... he dothe teach strange and feareful points of doctrine not fitt in this most honorable place to be repeated.” This demonstrates that Lowes’s opponents specifically attacked the very same qualities which he appealed to in his bill in order to present himself as a man of worth and gain favor with the court. Cooke, May, and Wade express serious as to whether Lowes deserves to be styled as “Master of Arts.” While they do not state any specific “strange... points of doctrine” in their answer, they imply that his ministry strays from orthodoxy, thus countering Lowes’s claims of being the bearer of the true religion in

¹⁸⁷ STAC 8/200/27.

Brandeston. This was not the first time that Lowes had been criticized of spreading unorthodox doctrine. In 1594, while he had been a preacher at Bury St. Edmund's, he was summoned to appear before a church council at Ipswich for "not conforming to the rites of the Established Church."¹⁸⁸

Twenty-six years later, Lowes was thrust back into the court of public opinion with the publication of *A Magazine of Scandall* (1642). Throughout the pamphlet, the anonymous author related the more recent controversies surrounding Lowes along with an account of another discredited Suffolk minister, Thomas Fowkes. Fowkes lived in Early Soham, a village roughly two miles west of Brandeston. The author claimed that Fowkes and Lowes dwelt within a mile of one another and described them as "concomitants"; many of their alleged activities and personal sentiments are described collectively, in reference to both men. For example, the author claimed that both Fowkes and Lowes were men of dubious faith, having either no religion at all or shifting their views "as the wind blows." The author further proclaimed both men to be Papists who had "frequented the company of knowne popish Recusants, entertained some of them... lodged them... [and] have had the help, advise, and assistance of popish Recusants in many of their wild and abhominable actions." However, the reported crimes of the Suffolk ministers are markedly different: Fowkes was accused and convicted of murdering another man, earning him the title "mankiller," while Lowes's scandalous activities centered around his reputation as a witch and common barrator.¹⁸⁹

Interestingly, the previous allegations of murder by witchcraft against Lowes are completely absent from the pamphlet. In fact, details of Lowes's alleged witchcraft – what he was supposed to have accomplished using witchcraft – do not appear anywhere within the narrative. In the author's account of Lowes's misdeeds, the focus remains primarily on the ways in which he deceived or manipulated his parishioners either for the simple sake of troubling them or for his personal benefit. The author described Lowes as a "great Solicitor both at common law and spirituall" who had declared himself "to have more knowledge in the lawes of the Kingdome then the best Lawyers of them." He allegedly pressed competing parties to accept him as their arbitrator, "promising either party to doe what should be required" but in the end only "served his owne turne, and [took] mony of both parties." One example involving a tailor depicts Lowes as a something may only be described as a predatory. Lowes, having "[made] himselfe familiar and loving to the taylor" over the course of two years, sent for him

¹⁸⁸ Ewen further speculated that his appearance before the synod may have motivated his return to Cambridge around 1595 to pursue a Master of Arts. Ewen, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Anonymous, *A Magazine of Scandall*, 1642, 6-7.

on a Sunday morning and asked the tailor to mend a pair of his britches. The tailor did so, but just a few days later Lowes reported him to the court, citing a law with prohibited the mending of britches on the Sabbath day. This anecdote supports the author's frequent characterization of Lowes as a "pragmatick" man, capable of doing "more hurt in one houre than then the best Physitian can doe in a yeare."¹⁹⁰

While the author of the pamphlet is unknown, it is possible to deduce their potential motivations for writing the piece. Their account of the scandalous Suffolk ministers served primarily as a preface for a more salient narrative about the questionable moral character of William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633 to 1640. Following the ascension of King Charles I to the throne in 1625, Laud quickly became associated with the monarchy and, by extension, the controversial reform efforts which gave way to the English Civil War. He personally attempted to lead the reform movement referred to as Laudiansim, which, generally speaking, emphasized the importance of the clerical hierarchy and liturgical ritual. Additionally, Laud and his followers supported the partnered concepts of free will and salvation for all, which directly rejected predestination upheld by Calvinists. Unsurprisingly, Laud became identified as a covert papist. At the time of the publication of *A Magazine of Scandall*, Laud was imprisoned at the Tower of London. The author asserted that Laud was responsible for retaining "these two precious servants of his"¹⁹¹ in their ministries – despite repeated complaints from local parishioners – thereby making him accountable for the crimes they had had committed while in office. Laud's trial took place in 1645 and the prosecution read excerpts from his personal diary which seemed to provide evidence of his popish leanings, treason, and homosexual behavior. He was executed by beheading in January of 1645, after which Laud's enemies continued to come forward with incriminating evidence, including a horoscope drawn up by William Lilly which had been found among Laud's possessions.¹⁹²

Lowes's court battles and his later appearance in popular literature reveal a man whose community had suspected and accused him of witchcraft for the greater part of his adult life and who was adept at avoiding conviction. It is no coincidence that his luck took a turn for the worse on the eve of the English Civil War. In the following discussion, we will examine the matrix of sectarian politics and state authority to see how a man who exhibited all of the

¹⁹⁰ Anonymous, *A Magazine of Scandall*, 5-7.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 7.

¹⁹² P. J. Klemp, "He That Now Speaks Shall No More For Ever': Archbishop William Laud in the Theatre of Execution," *The Review of English Studies* 61, no. 249 (2010), 192-3.

hallmarks of masculine privilege had been brought down by allegations which he had successfully parried for so long.

Abuses of Masculine Power

Lowes's eventual trial and execution came at the hands of two famous "witchfinders," Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne. Ewen described Hopkins and Stearne as "puritanical fanatics" who, having lead a "death-dealing purification crusade" in the counties of Essex and Norfolk, arrived in Suffolk during the summer of 1645. Officially, instruments of torture were not permitted, so Hopkins employed methods such as starving, walking, sleep-deprivation, and swimming in order to obtain confessions. Due to the ongoing Civil War, regular justices were not on circuit, so a special commission of Oyer and terminer was established.¹⁹³ In this vacuum of authority, Hopkins managed to convince the inhabitants of Brandeston to swim Lowes which resulted in him confessing to having "made a covenant with the Devil" sealed with his own blood and for which he "received three familiars, which sucked on the marks found upon his body." This represents the first time that specifics about Lowes's supposed witchcraft were given. He further confessed to using his imps to sink a vessel near the port of Harwich, effectively widowing fourteen women as a result.¹⁹⁴ These confessions, although procured under torture, did not help his already poor reputation among his neighbors. Lowes was found guilty and hanged at Bury St. Edmunds alongside fourteen women and one other man who had also been charged with witchcraft.

The frequent use of the term "barrectator" (or "barrator") to describe Lowes is perhaps the best indicator as to what issues and concerns had been central to his public identity and growing reputation as a witch. In British common law, "barratry" describes a "fraudulent breach of duty by master of a crew of a ship"; instigating persistent litigation, often on groundless or falsified claims; and the "buying and selling church offices."¹⁹⁵ It is easy to see why Lowes came to be identified as a barrator. His education and position within the vicarage of Brandeston afforded him certain social and economic privileges which the majority of his neighbors did not possess.¹⁹⁶ These privileges gave Lowes greater access to judicial institutions at both the local and regional level. According to Ewen, he used the courts frequently, pressing many cases –

¹⁹³ Ewen, 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ M. Gaskill, "Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England," *Past & Present* 198 (2008), 53; Ewen, 7.

¹⁹⁵ *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "barrator," accessed May 11, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/barrator>

¹⁹⁶ Ewen noted that Lowes may have been relation to George Lowes, the former incumbent of the Brandeston vicarage which would have given him the added privileges of family/ name recognition. Ewen, 1.

beyond the cases examined here – against his neighbors throughout his lifetime.¹⁹⁷ Notably, neither Ewen’s research nor the available sources indicate that Lowes pursued litigation against his social equals. Instead, we see a village minister engaged in constant conflict with the commoner sort.

While English elites of the early modern period generally applauded man’s achievement of a formal, Christian education, non-elites did not value such an education in the same way.¹⁹⁸ Instead, Lowes’s university education was something more sinister and made him suspect, especially given his antagonistic treatment of his parishioners. In their answer to Lowes’s bill of complaint, the defendants described a man whose education functioned less as a testament to his intelligence and piety, and more as a tool which he used to “plague[] and molest[]”¹⁹⁹ his neighbors. Indeed, Lowes’s ability to manipulate the courts and move cases outside the jurisdiction of Brandeston demonstrates a certain degree of competence in handling litigation. Perhaps the pamphleteer was on to something when he described Lowes as “nimble as a dancer.”²⁰⁰ Even the witchfinder Stearne, in his book *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* (1648), remained skeptical of certain pursuits of knowledge and noted the possibility of being led away from God when he wrote the following:

Those that are given to over much curiosity, to seeke after vaine Knowledge, in pride of heart to goe beyond others, to understand secret and hidden things, to know things to come. Such are those, as not bounding themselves within the limits of reason, nor of Gods revealed will, fall fowle unawares upon the Devill, and are in great danger to be intrapped by him, and made his slaves by his inticements.²⁰¹

Stearne immediately followed this with his account of Lowes’s trial and the confession procured by Hopkins, but stopped short of explicitly commenting on Lowes’s education, the fact that he studied at Cambridge, and his styling of Master of Arts, which is curious. Directly following his account of Lowes’s trial, Stearne provided the narrative of one Henry Carrs, also of Suffolk, who he descried as “a Scholler fit for Cambridge, (if not a Cambridge Scholler) and... well educated” and who also confessed to keeping two imps. This may be an oversight on Stearne’s part, for he clearly meant to include the Brandeston minister within this category

¹⁹⁷ Ewen wrote that Lowes “stirred up many contentions among his neighbors as well at common law as in sundry ecclesiastical courts.” Ewen, 2.

¹⁹⁸ D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1-2.

¹⁹⁹ STAC 8/200/27.

²⁰⁰ Anonymous, *A Magazine of Scandall*, 5.

²⁰¹ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witch-Craft* (London: Wilson, 1648), 23.

of educated men whose “pride of heart” and lust for “secret and hidden things” lead them to form a covenant with the Devil.

When Hopkins asked Lowes if he felt any remorse “to see so many men cast away” and to “be the cause of so many poore widowes,” Lowes, according to Stearne, “swore by his maker, no, he was joyfull to see what power his Impes had.”²⁰² It is worth reiterating that Lowes confessed to witchcraft after being swum – a detail conveniently omitted from Stearne’s book. Having been tortured, his “confession” was likely crafted by the witchfinders for Lowes to repeat and accept the guilt thereof. The specifics of Lowes’s confession and the confession of Henry Carrs (and several of Hopkins’s other targets) are almost identical, hinting that the witchfinders were simply forcing accused witches to agree to having kept and nursed imps who carried out their malicious will. Lowes’s lack of penitence may be part of this forced confession, or it may be a fabrication by either of the witchfinders. In Stearne’s narrative, it seems to function as commentary about the minister’s evil malicious disposition which complimented Stearne’s warning about those whose quests for knowledge give them an inflated sense of importance: Lowes felt nothing about the lives lost as the result of his witchcraft, he was only delighted to witness the power of he was able to wield. The pride and vanity which accompanied Lowes’s educated background lead him to believe himself “to be equall, or rather above God.”²⁰³

Given the predisposition to distrust a university-educated minister (whose sermons were reproachful at best and popish at worst) in combination with his association with William Laud and, by extension, King Charles I, it is easy to see how these conditions resulted in Lowes’s trial and execution, particularly within the context of the English Civil War. His life-long reputation as a common barrator already marked him as a man who was not shy of abusing his position if he stood to benefit from it. This bore echoes of abuses of power at the highest levels of both religious and governmental institutions. The connections between Lowes, Laud, and popery fanned the flames of civil war which was, in large part, a war of religious and national consequence. Even prior to Charles I’s accession, English Protestants seemed anxious about a foreign invasion by Protestant Danes and Calvinist Scots. Chief among the suspected invaders were Catholics from Spain and France; there was a pervasive belief in the existence of a secret “Popish plot” which would destabilize England and return it to the realm of the Roman church. Religious anxieties became intertwined with concerns about national identity and ethnic difference. Charles I – who had a Scottish father, a Danish mother, a half-French grandmother,

²⁰² Stearne, 24.

²⁰³ Ibid, 23-4.

a French wife, several German nephews, and whose daughter was married to the Prince of Orange – was hardly recognizable as a symbol of Englishness. Parliament, however, “the body which was held to articulate the wishes of the entire realm – a body which was physically composed... of men drawn from every part of England,” was seen as the essence of English nationhood. Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, the king became the foreign “other” and enabler of papists within this opposition between crown and Parliament.²⁰⁴

Ironically, the same hegemonic masculine privileges which protected Lowes early in his career lead to his conviction and execution as a witch. This demonstrates the shifting nature of hegemonic masculinity as well as the pragmatism of early moderns in their acceptance of it. What’s more, we may further credit Lowes’s striving to maintain hegemony – i.e., his position in the local parish – as having contributed to his execution as it necessitated his continued residence in a community which had grown hostile towards him over decades.

²⁰⁴ M. Stoye, “English ‘Nationalism’, Celtic Particularism, and the English Civil War,” *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 4 (2000), 1115-6.

Typical Witches

Stockdale and Lowes's experiences and eventual fates as accused witches diverge from one another. Stockdale was a Norfolk yeoman of middling status. He responded to his accusers in court, was acquitted of all charges, and returned to the community which had accused him. Lowes, on the other hand, was a university-educated professional who held a prominent public office within his community. Like Stockdale, Lowes also used the courts to litigate his neighbors' accusations, but his legal bouts stretched over decades and in the end, he was convicted and executed as a witch. Despite these distinctions, their experiences may be described as typical of the accused male witch within their specific, individual contexts.

Although Stockdale's accusations came from a neighboring village, and although Lowes became part of a large-scale witch-hunt, both men may be described as what Blécourt referred to as "local" witches.²⁰⁵ Suspicions against them began organically rather than as part of a series of denunciations during a witch-hunt. Early accusations against both Stockdale and Lowes had been raised with respect to murder. Accusers from both cases did not themselves give details as to how the alleged murders by witchcraft took place. Instead, their guilt was simply implied by their accusers based on the poor relationships between the men and the victims' families; Stockdale was implied to have murdered Mary Skippon after falling out with her husband, while Lowes was accused of murdering the daughter of a juror who was affronted by Lowes's ability to manipulate the courts to his benefit. Further, early accusations of witchcraft against both men involved the murder of women. Alongside infertility, impotence, and the bewitchment of livestock, accusations of homicide feature prominently in early modern witchcraft. When female witches were accused of murder, their victims were generally romantic adversaries, former lovers, or children.²⁰⁶ As such, alleged murders by female witches had a typically domestic character. Murder victims of male witches has received comparatively little attention, but their victims almost never included anyone from these three categories. Instead, male witches were generally accused of murdering what we might classify as economic or social competitors. Stockdale's and Lowes's victims were female relations of men with whom they

²⁰⁵ Blécourt, 302.

²⁰⁶ Both Roper and Lerner have noted the heavily domestic character of female witchcraft. The murder of children and the unborn was particularly revolting and it represented a direct rejection of motherhood. Lerner, *Enemies of God*; Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*. Stephanie Spoto remarked on the witch as an inversion of the domestic, nurturing mother, writing that "[t]he cauldron, which was a domestic tool for the creation of food and nourishment, could then become inverted within the legend of witchcraft as it would then become the vessel in which poison was brewed." She went on to describe the physical space and other material objects associated with the female witch as uniformly domestic. S. I. Spoto, "Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power," *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010), 57-60.

were known to have poor relations with, and the untimely deaths of both women catalyzed accusations against them.

The accusations against both men hint at an undercurrent of competition for resources or power typical of provincial witchcraft trials. While Stockdale's immediate neighbors brought suit against him for riotous behavior, locals from neighboring villages accused him of witchcraft. His ability to fight back against both allegations indicate that he had been well-resourced enough to provoke what we might interpret as economic competition with the inhabitants of Brancaster, Heacham, and Fring. Cotton's allegations of riot also directly locate Stockdale within a context of competition for resources: Cotton's possession of certain lands, granted to him by a high-ranking diplomat, incited the Stockdale family to take up arms against him. However, Stockdale's answer to Cotton's bill does not survive, so we cannot be certain how he responded to this charge.

Witchcraft accusations against Lowes had arisen in tandem with his frequent litigation against members of his parish, which led to the minister cultivating a reputation as a common barrator. Lowes was not only well-resourced, he was also an educated public official who had an intimate relationship with and thorough comprehension of the courts. The outbreak of the English Civil War may have sensitized his parishioners to potential abuses of masculine power. These anxieties and Lowes's identification with institutional masculine privilege lead to his eventual trial and execution at the hands of radical witchfinders. Lowes's confession to causing a ship to sink is also a prominent feature of men accused of witchcraft. As noted above, women's witchcraft was generally domestic in character and contained within their immediate surroundings. Men's witchcraft, on the other hand, often transgressed the boundary between domestic and public. The crimes of male witches were a matter of regional or national concern as they threatened public networks of commerce and diplomacy. This comes as no surprise given that, during the early modern period, the social functions of men were still very much tied to the public sphere. Lowes's confession concerning the sunken ship focused on the lives lost and widows he had created, not on the financial loss caused by the sinking. However, the ship may symbolize the international power of the British realm, thus the sinking represents Lowes's dangerous reach beyond the limits of Brandeston.

Part Three: Multiple masculinities

Connell's theory laid out in *Masculinities* proposes the existence multiple, concurrent forms of masculinity which are borne out of gendered socialization and socio-economic inequalities. In addition to acknowledging the multiplicity of masculine identities, Connell proposed that scholars identify relationships between various forms, such as dominance, subordination, and alliance. These alternative or subordinate masculinities are always constructed in relation to a hegemonic form of masculinity, which itself is not obtained automatically and can be disrupted when confronted with shifting social conditions.²⁰⁷

In my application of Connell's theory, it is not my intention to provide a one-word label to the masculinities of the men studied here. As we have seen, their conditions and subjective experiences navigating patriarchal society for all four men were different and their resulting masculinities reflect that. It is therefore more constructive to acknowledge the diverse, overlapping, and contradictory ways in which the four men presented themselves and perceived their masculine identities in relation to their historio-specific contexts. Connell promised that historical research on masculinities would lead "via institutions to questions of agency and social struggle"²⁰⁸ and this research confirms that.

Education

Three of the four preceding men – Lilly, Forman, and Lowes – made constant appeals to their levels of education throughout their lives. Lilly and Forman especially referred to education in their assessments of themselves as well as other figures. This nicely complemented their professions and pursuits into the fields of astrology and physick. Connell has noted that the natural sciences "[have] a gendered character" and that science in the West in particular have been "culturally masculinized." This was not meant only as a comment on the persons (men) generally associated with scientific practices, but also of the "impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, [and] the reproduction of its internal culture," all of which we may attribute to the social dominance of men in the gendered western world.²⁰⁹ The contested status of astrology within the scope of early modern natural science marked it as a field in which only the chosen few were able to uncover its secrets, which in turn bolstered the masculine images of the bookish men who studied it. Lowes, who possessed a Master of Arts from St John's College, was able to align himself with a more orthodox

²⁰⁷ Connell, 37.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 30.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 6.

education. This also contributed to bolstering his masculine image by associating himself with the prestige and authority of a formal educational institution; an association with one of the best-respected universities was something that only select men could boast of during this period. In this sense, Lowes's university education was equally as unattainable as Lilly and Forman's independent studies of astrology, and we see that all three men played to the benefits of their respective educational trajectories.

Stockdale, on the other hand, made no documented appeals to his education and the Katherine Hammond's answer also gave no reference to his level of learning. This likely indicative of Stockdale's comparatively lower social standing. One likelihood is that he had lacked the resources necessary to pursue a formal or textual-based education and his profession simply did not demand such learning; another possibility is that the education he had was vocational and experience-based and thus irrelevant sources of masculine image-building in the minds of early moderns.

Demographic distinctions

It is also important to note the demographic divide between the four men. Lilly and Forman had been born in small rural villages in Leicestershire and Wiltshire, respectively, but moved to London as adults. Urban centers were perceived to offer greater opportunities for work, especially for aspiring scholars and professionals; by the end of the seventeenth century, one in ten Englishmen lived in London.²¹⁰ London was also the ideal place for astrologers as the city's many printers, book sellers, and antiquaries provided the texts and materials necessary for their studies. Once in London, they became embedded within a network of elite, educated professionals, making friends and enemies of high-profile public figures.

Stockdale and Lowes lived their entire lives in their rural towns, with the exception of Lowes's time spent at studying in Cambridge. Lowes's Master of Arts from his prestigious alma mater did not impress as many of his provincial neighbors as it might have had he lived in a metropolitan area. As discussed above, it had quite the opposite affect: Lowes's references to his elite schooling – particularly during litigation – made him more untrustworthy and the planted seeds of suspicion for future accusations against him. We may even see Lowes's fate at the gallows as a direct result of his rural surroundings: The absence of an immediate, close-knit network of like-minded elites like those which Lilly and Forman enjoyed in London left Lowes in a vulnerable position. The disruptions in the courts caused by the English Civil War

²¹⁰ T. Munck, *Seventeenth-Century Europe: State, Conflict and the Social Order in Europe, 1598-1700*, Second (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 201, 193.

were more acute in rural areas which may also explain why witchfinders like Stearne and Hopkins had been able to prosecute so many witches in East Anglia.²¹¹

Gentlemanly civility

The four men observed here are also split evenly in terms of civility. Lilly and Lowes present themselves as peaceable men who resolved conflicts without violence or through the use of courts. Lilly's autobiography is brimming with accounts of his own kindnesses to friends and enemies alike. For example, accounts of his own physical violence – even the threat of physical violence – are absent from Lilly's narrative. In addition, he claimed that he always afforded supporter-turned-detractor John Gadbury "many civilities" even after their estrangement from one another. While litigation may be seen as form of social violence in the way it disrupts and threatens to ruin the lives of the parties involved, Lowes's frequent employment of the courts to settle his disputes is representative of the shift away from medieval martial prowess to early modern self-control observed to by both Shepard and Timbers.²¹²

Forman and Stockdale stand in stark contrast to Lilly in Lowes as both men cultivated a reputation for acting violently. As discussed above, Forman's shameless admissions of assault may be implicitly linked to his continued adherence to the medieval ideals of masculine militarism and self-preservation at all costs. Notably, both incidents of assault recounted in his autobiography had been against social inferiors: a woman in the service of his mistress and boys who had been presumably younger than himself. Stockdale's alleged assault of William Cotton cannot be confirmed based on the sources available, but his known assault of John Alowe and other charges of riot lend their support to Stockdale's enemies, casting the yeoman as a man inclined to rage and violence. However, their motivations towards violence are somewhat distinct. Forman was defending himself against verbal abuse (and at least does not appear to have ever come close to killing someone). Assuming Stockdale's testimony about his fight with Alowe had been true, he had been similarly provoked, but by trespassing onto Cotton's land, he would have been the instigator in that conflict. So, while both men may be observed to use violence as a means to defend themselves and their reputations, Stockdale's riotous behavior and attack on William Cotton indicate that he resorted to violence in his competition for resources.

²¹¹ Although Stearne estimated that he and Hopkins executed 200 witches, Gaskill has contended that this figure is likely an exaggeration to reinforce the reality of witches against the criticism of skeptics. M. Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008), 1079.

²¹² Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen?," 292; Timbers, 1.

Householding

Masculine householding – what Shepard termed “patriarchal manhood”²¹³ – and mastery over female sex have also been prominent qualifiers of hegemonic masculinity. Again, all four men examined seldom referred explicitly to these qualities. The most direct example might be Lilly’s implication that Gadbury’s wife was engaged in at least one extramarital affair. During the early modern period, a woman’s chastity had been regarded as her “highest value”; in turn, a man’s inability to protect his wife’s chastity (and by extension, maintain exclusive access to his wife’s sexuality) would represent one of his greatest humiliations.²¹⁴ As Kent suggested, early modern masculine identity was not to be assumed to have been overwhelmingly defined by “cuckholdry anxiety.”²¹⁵ However, the volume of popular literature and stage dramas featuring cuckolds and “wittols”²¹⁶ produced in England between the late sixteenth century and first half the seventeenth evidences that contemporaries saw cuckoldry as a shame and failure on the man’s part. Lilly’s non sequitur quip about Mrs. Gadbury’s other husband clearly plays to this sentiment.

Interestingly, Lilly’s first marriage to his widowed mistress Ellen Wright represents a subversion of the traditional model of the masculine householder. Rather than being the domestic dependent of her new husband, Ellen essentially became Lilly’s benefactor; upon her death six years after their marriage, she left everything to Lilly, a fortune he estimated to have been worth “very near to the value of one thousand pounds.”²¹⁷ Marrying far beyond one’s economic class was not uncommon for either men or women, but this lavish inheritance provides further clarity as to why the union was so controversial: it allowed Lilly to live luxuriously and circumvent the duties expected of the masculine householder.²¹⁸ He married twice more in 1634 and 1655 but wrote precious little about either in his autobiography. He gave neither of their names and openly admitted to being unaffected by his second wife’s passing as “she and her poor relations [cost him] one thousand pounds.”²¹⁹

Forman’s relationship with women was more complicated from the beginning. By his account, his mother abused him for no reason other than that he was favored by his father.

²¹³ Shepard, “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen?,” 291.

²¹⁴ J. Panek, “‘A Wittall Cannot Be a Cookold’: Reading the Contented Cuckold in Early Modern English Drama and Culture,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001), 66.

²¹⁵ Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft*, 16.

²¹⁶ Defined as a man who is “aware of and complaisant” about his wife’s infidelity while a “cuckold” was assumed ignorant.

²¹⁷ Lilly, 76.

²¹⁸ Shepard wrote that a man’s worth could be communicated in monetary terms, taking into account their ability to support themselves and their family without relying on charity. Shepard, “Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy,” 83, 89.

²¹⁹ Lilly, 166.

During his employ under Matthew Commin, he assaulted a female employee and feuded constantly with Mrs. Commin which culminated in his leaving their service. Later in life, he garnered a reputation as a womanizer, noting his various sexual encounters with women in his diary. His affair with Anne Young was particularly volatile; in his diary, Forman took note of the several times at which the two fought, broke up, and reconciled only to fight and break up again. Nevertheless, Forman did achieve the outward accoutrements of patriarchal masculinity. He ran a profitable practice, invested in real estate, married a young girl from a noteworthy family, and had one legitimate son survive the cradle.

The sources available on our two witches do not illuminate much on their householding aspects in explicit terms, but we may make a few observations. Stockdale was married and had at least one son. Both his son and wife were accused of riot alongside him, and Mrs. Stockdale had even been accused of rioting on a separate occasion without her husband present.²²⁰ This evidences that Mrs. Stockdale had taken on an active role in protecting the family's interests and, by extension, engaged in competition with their neighbors. Lowes's wife, however, is absent from the sources; it is unknown if she responded to the accusations against her husband or how she fared following his execution – assuming she was still alive by then, which is also unknown. Historians of witchcraft and male witches have noted the tendency for accusations to focus on dysfunctional family dynamics. Male witches, if not guilty of witchcraft, were often described as poor patriarchs who accumulated large debts and brought vice into the family.²²¹ The household as the smallest social unit provided a powerful metaphor for the management of patriarchal authority and the danger of dysfunctions spreading throughout the community. However, neither Stockdale's nor Lowes's households can be described as "dysfunctional." Neither home was associated with gambling, drunkenness, adultery, or theft. Their homes and families did not come across as unhappy or quarrelsome; in fact, the three Stockdales represented a united front against their more fortunate neighbors. A more accurate description of the relationship between patriarchal manhood and the male witches examined here might be that their personal and family activities contradicted early modern communal codes of conduct and masculine virtues; they were aggressive, overly self-interested, and economically competitive.²²²

²²⁰ STAC 8/101/18.

²²¹ R. Walinski-Kiehl, "Males, 'Masculine Honor,' and Witch Hunting in Seventeenth-Century Germany," *Men and Masculinities* 6, no. 3 (2004), 265.

²²² E. J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680," *History Workshop Journal* 60 (2005), 75, 81.

Conclusions

What the hosts of Fox News referred to as “alpha males” may be readily identified as men who embody the current hegemonic masculinity of the West; it is constructed in terms of aggression, confidence, dominance, self-reliance, strength, and stoicism. Men are encouraged to aspire towards employment which either provides them with independence from higher authority, or is characterized by rugged, manual work. It is neither useful nor the intent of this research to determine whether something like alpha or hegemonic masculinity is good or bad. Instead, we should acknowledge that hegemonic masculinity is not attainable for all men, that most men are likely to outright reject some of its tenets, and as a result we live in a world of multiple masculinities. Masculinity, like all social constructions, cannot be applied to the lived world as an objective concept, but is instead colored by subjective experiences and social, economic, and historical circumstances.

Likewise, the four men examined here indicate that hegemony was something of a unicorn for early moderns: perpetually sought out, but ultimately unattainable. What is perhaps more important than their varying levels of success reaching for hegemony is the diverse and context-specific ways in which their efforts were thwarted, thus relegating them to an alternative or subordinate masculinity.

Lilly and Forman saw considerably more success than the witches because their path to masculine hegemony – astrological magic – “masked deceit with the trappings of learning and art.”²²³ Less cynically, we may observe that their magical practices were controversial and contested by both religious and secular authorities, but at the same time drew the attention of many social elites. These high-profile clients exhibit a shared cultural fascination with astrology and were eager to have their fortunes told by way of nativities. Their social embeddedness within London’s network of urban elites granted them some unofficial protections against their detractors. Both openly studied and practiced astrology; the services they provided were well-sought after, allowing both men to turn a reasonable profit and move up the urban social orders. This demonstrates that astrology was less socially antithetical to hegemonic masculinity than malefic witchcraft because astrology at least was derived from a “scientific” educational context, complete with texts attributed to ancient writers. However, other aspects of their personal lives – such as Lilly’s unorthodox initial approach to householding and Forman’s strong penchant for belligerence – disqualified them from the educated, urban-dwelling gentleman’s hegemonic masculinity of early modern London.

²²³ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 161.

Education was a non-option for Stockdale, although it would have likely counted for far less in his rural community. His reputation for economically competitive behavior and alleged violent attacks against his neighbors, more than any lack of education, was irreconcilable with a puritanical culture which emphasized humility and sobriety. The case of Lowes, on the other hand, best demonstrates the malleability of masculinities in the face of shifting social contexts. He frequently appealed to his education in litigation against his parishioners in order to underscore his elevated status. However, his education became a prominent point of the attacks against him. Rural inhabitants and witchfinders such as John Stearne often described education variously as a source of over-indulgent pride which leads one away from God, or as a tool with which one oppresses their social inferiors. Thus, one of the markers of urban or pre-Civil War hegemony was re-cast as an indicator of overtly aggressive, vain, and abusive applications of masculine authority.

Above all, we see that none of the behaviors or qualities which prevented the four men from achieving hegemony can be described as feminine, nor were they described as feminine by their contemporaries. Instead, the criticisms against them indicate that they represented exaggerated, overly self-interested, economically irresponsible, unchristian, and aggressive masculinities. Although coming short of hegemony, the four men may be described as “complicit” in that they all participated in and benefitted from patriarchal processes.²²⁴ While gender histories have already focused heavily on aspects of femininity – due in large part to the influence of second wave feminism – future studies of *femininities* would nicely complement existing scholarship. Christina Lerner, for example, did not refer explicitly to dominant or hegemonic femininity, or to alternative and subordinate forms. However, her conclusion that the witch-hunts had targeted women who failed to adhere to the patriarchal standard of womanhood certainly resembles Connell’s model of the relationship between hegemony and social reproductions of patriarchy. Women’s rejection of patriarchal ideals, such as a childrearing and subordination to men, caused them to fall outside of the purview of hegemony and therefore made them more susceptible to suspicions.

While it may be tempting to classify some of the masculinities of the four men studied as “toxic” – particularly those more prone to aggression – I would advise against it. “Toxic masculinity” as a turn of phrase describes the phenomenon of men’s emotional repression and the misogynistic, homophobic, violent behaviors which result from it; it is so deeply connected

²²⁴ Connell, 79.

to post-modern North American and European masculine ideals that it would be out of place in an early modern setting.

Still, some of the concerns expressed by early moderns still resonate today. The MeToo movement bears distant echoes of the English Civil War and its anxieties about the abuses of masculine power; some high-profile Hollywood executives and actors have been shown to use their star power to leverage sexual favors or cover up sexual assault while their subordinates were powerless to bring charges against them. Even when these stories do make it to the news cycle, we see a considerable amount of backlash against the victims rather than their assailants. Within the broader debate about toxic masculinity, concerns about householding have been raised as toxic behaviors may be perpetuated and handed down from generation to generation. Children are still raised and socialized along gendered lines: boys are told be aggressive and nurtured on themes which take place in the public sphere (law enforcement, sports, military, etc.). Meanwhile, girls are instructed in the art of meekness and their play generally focuses on domestic themes (householding and childrearing). This gendered socialization is informed by patriarchy which in turn perpetuates the production of hegemonic and alternative masculinities – including toxic masculinity.

Moving forward, the multiplicity of masculinities – and of all genders – must become a central concern for scholars of history and gender. Connell's theories carry significant implications which reach well beyond the scope of the present research. Applying her concept of multiple masculinities can help us to uncover some of the hues and textures of gender which defy singular, all-encompassing definitions and have therefore fallen from view. It imparts a much-needed human element in our quest to understand human experiences, past and present.

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