

Manhood, Witchcraft and Possession in Old and New England

by

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To my parents  
Gary and Nancy Gasser

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## INTRODUCTION

From the end of the sixteenth century to the start of the eighteenth, struggles among English Anglicans, Puritans and Catholics resulted in warfare, the execution of royals, and riots over prayer books and altars. The same controversies that dominated the political, religious, social and cultural climate of early modern England and colonial New England shaped witchcraft and demonic possession cases, which in turn revealed local versions of these tensions in smaller battles, executions, and riots. To be sure, legal prosecution of witches was relatively rare in the Anglo-American world. But witchcraft-possession cases—because of the way they merged crucial sectarian arguments with a subject of considerable popular interest—were widely published and disproportionately influenced political and religious discourse. Each instance of suspected witchcraft or affliction by devils had the potential to reveal cosmic truths about the extent of the Devil’s powers, the possibility of miracles in a post-apostolic age, and God’s favor for those He empowered to restore order.<sup>1</sup>

English witchcraft differed from that of continental Europe in several ways, the most important of which were related to Catholic doctrine and law. In much of Europe, for example, inquisitors interrogated accused witches without requiring the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> To differentiate their practice of dispossession from Catholic exorcisms, Puritans claiming their emphasis on prayer and fasting rather than holy water or relics more precisely reflected the rite as it was described in the Bible. In Mark 9:14-20, when a young afflicted man was brought to Jesus, Jesus stated that such a demon was only expelled through prayer and fasting.

those who accused them.<sup>2</sup> In many cases, applications of torture were used to extract confessions from the recalcitrant. The image of the European witch being burned at the stake persists today; many presume that witches in England and New England were also burned, rather than hanged.<sup>3</sup> This archetypal witch image is invariably female. While historians differ about the precise ratio of male to female witches across Europe, scholars agree that approximately seventy-five to eighty per cent of executed witches were women.<sup>4</sup> Unlike European witches, Anglo-American witches faced trials under England's accusatorial legal system. Witnesses were required to appear in court to testify

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive view of England's laws in comparison with Europe, and Catholic versus Protestant witchcraft overall, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 521-559. For the influence of continental witchcraft on England, see Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism: A Concise Account Derived from Sworn Depositions and Confessions Obtained in the Courts of England and Wales* (London: Heath Cranton, Ltd., 1933), 41-48. For an explanation of the particular role of Catholicism in European—particularly French—witchcraft-possession cases, see Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004), 4; 64-69; 125-126.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Thomas explains that witches in England were hanged, except in cases of petty treason such as murdering their husbands or masters. See *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scriber, 1971), 443, 2n.

<sup>4</sup> This ratio fluctuated considerably depending upon the location and outbreak. At times the executed were nearly exclusively female; in certain areas of Scandinavia and Russia, however, witches were predominantly male. For estimates on the numbers of executed witches, see G.L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 277-284; Thomas, 535-536; Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Chatto, 1975), 253-254; Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Longman Press, 1995), 25; 124; Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., revised by Edward Peters (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 17-19, and James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press), 1996, 125. For the gender ratio in European witchcraft, see E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 118-121 and H.C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 178-186. For broader regional comparisons, see Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and magic in Enlightenment Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004). See also Valerie Kivelson, "Through the Prism of Witchcraft: Gender and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy," in Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, Christine D. Worobec, eds., *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 74-94. Kivelson writes that the "judicial process in Russia had elements in common with both the European Inquisitorial and the gentler English mode of investigation. As in England, the initiative in filing suits against witches remained the prerogative of the community, not the church or state... Women comprised only 32 percent of the 136 accused witches in Russian cases examined here, whereas in Western Europe and North America on average 80 percent were women," 81; 83.



against those they charged—in itself a regulating mechanism on the volume of cases that went to trial. The surviving records demonstrate that in popular belief and elite discourse English witchcraft was predominantly associated with *maleficium*: the practice by which witches (particularly female ones) used supernatural power to harm.<sup>5</sup> In England, male and female witches were more likely to have spirit familiars in the shape of real or fantastic animals, and were less likely than their European counterparts to confess to having had sexual relations with the Devil.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Protestant emphasis on the cosmic significance of visions, dreams, and personal temptation changed the articulation of the motives for and results of witchcraft.<sup>7</sup> Puritans’ obsession with the individual’s struggle to resist temptation, moreover, helped create a climate in which possession cases took on particular religious and political significance.<sup>8</sup>

As in Europe, though, English witch trials reflected the common belief that women were more susceptible to supernatural influence, and more often witches than men. Men and youths were also found guilty of the crime, and by shifting from witchcraft trials to representations of witchcraft-possession, this project extends its analysis to three main groups of participants and observers: men who were accused of witchcraft by possessed people, men who acted as if they were possessed, and men who published propaganda about possession cases. By examining men and *possession*, this dissertation pursues a broader view of the explicit and implicit cultural ideals at work

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas has shown that *maleficium* was far more central in England than in continental witchcraft belief, 438; 441-449.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 443-446.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 40-57.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Johnstone writes that Protestant demonic possession was increasingly “understood to be an internal dialogue in which Satan sought to undermine pious instincts by appealing to man’s natural corruption, and, most threateningly, by introducing doubts as to election.” See *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

during these exceptional moments. It focuses on witchcraft-possession cases in England and New England, and asks specifically about continuities and changes in how participants and observers understood the cases' implications. Recognizing that witchcraft belief was fundamentally gendered, but that the scripts drawn upon by male and female actors were not necessarily gendered in the same way, it argues that manhood played more of a role—and more complicated a role—in witchcraft and possession than previously recognized or explored.

Understanding these groups of men first requires an explication of the phenomena with which they were involved. I use the term “witchcraft-possession” to describe cases in which individuals performed the symptoms of demonic possession and accused human intermediaries of causing them. As D.P. Walker has pointed out, demonic possession cases so frequently involved at least some hint of witchcraft that it is difficult to separate the two.<sup>9</sup> Cases of straightforward demonic possession in which no human was named—or recorded as being named—were even more rare than witchcraft-possession cases, but explosively controversial because of the justification such performances offered to its supervisors. Men and boys who acted as if they were possessed were often young, apprentices, and/or religiously fervent. Like their female counterparts, possessed men had convulsive fits, and some combination of unnatural limitations (choking, an inability to eat or pray, an aversion to holy words or objects) or abilities (divination, flying, strength, flexibility or rigidity). Others channeled strange voices from within, spoke in languages they had never learned, or preached with astonishing eloquence about sin and redemption. Some performed drunkenness, blasphemy, and frivolity, while

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<sup>9</sup> D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (London: Scholar Press, 1981), 8-10.

others reported visions of angelic protectors as well as demonic torturers.<sup>10</sup> Readers of witchcraft scholarship often confuse possession with witchcraft; while the possessed defined themselves as innocents who *resisted* the devils' and witches' overtures, such close commerce with these maleficent forces could make them appear suspect.

The guilt or innocence of the possessed hinged upon beliefs about the precise nature of what was happening to them, something that was often controversial even at the subject's bedside.<sup>11</sup> Theologians addressed this question by differentiating between possession and "obsession"; the former suggested that a foreign spirit took control over the afflicted individual from within—a condition some suggested required the individual's consent—while the latter involved an assault from without.<sup>12</sup> The symptoms certainly suggested an assault, especially given the social and religious cues that prompted some of the most dramatic behaviors. As David Harley explains, "[b]ewitchment, or obsession through a witch, involved a relatively innocent sufferer, as did natural disease...In cases of possession or fraud, however, the person exhibiting the symptoms was guilty."<sup>13</sup> For those who gathered around the bedside of an afflicted person, though, these distinctions often blurred into one another, or were pushed aside in

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<sup>10</sup> Nathaniel Crouch, under his alias of R. Burton, described the standard set of symptoms in *Kingdom of Darkness: or the history of daemons, specters, witches, apparitions, possessions, disturbances, and other wonderful and supernatural delusions, mischievous feats, and malicious impostures of the Devil Containing near fourscore memorable relations, forreign and domestick, both antient and modern...* (London, 1688), A2v (EEBO image 5).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Godbeer points out that possession "constituted both abdication and recognition of responsibility." See *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113.

<sup>12</sup> For the theological differentiation between types of possessions, see Thomas, 478-480.

<sup>13</sup> David Harley, "Explaining Salem: Calvinist Psychology and the Diagnosis of Possession," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 1996), 307-330. For Harley's discussion of guilt and innocence of the possessed and obsessed, see 311-312.

the face of more crucial questions.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, besides the occasional charge of defamation, the possessed very rarely faced legal sanctions, even when they confessed to fraud.<sup>15</sup> I refer to this cluster of symptoms as “possession,” not to discount the theological distinction between possession and obsession, but to acknowledge the relative fluidity of the terms for the early modern people who used them.<sup>16</sup>

The guilt or innocence of the demoniac was especially important to those who sought to use possession cases as religio-political propaganda. Catholics had long recognized the utility of public exorcisms to gain converts, and the “hotter” sort of Protestants realized the same. In seventeenth-century England, Anglicans (loyal members of the official Church of England) found themselves in the unenviable position of needing to discredit these spectacles without offering a replacement to address the supernatural afflictions that continued to appear. The Anglican authorities worked hard to discredit and even destroy the Puritan men who attempted to heal the possessed

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<sup>14</sup> In the “Appendix to the fore-going Relation” of Thomas Sawdie’s possession case (1664), for example, the authors present the terminology as of secondary importance: “All acknowledge, that the word...signifies such as are afflicted, tormented, or vexed with Devils. Whether this be called an *essential*, or a *virtual Possession*, or whether a *Possession*, or an *Obsession*, I much care not, so it be acknowledged that the Devils acted in those bodies not onely Morally, but Physically, above the reach of humane power.” See *A Return of Prayer: or A Faithful Relation of some Remarkable Passages of Providence concerning Thomas Sawdie, a Boy of Twelve Yeares of Age...Who was possessd with an Unclean Spirit, and through the mercy by Prayer and Fasting, dispossesd and delivered...* (1664), 16. At the same time, writers such as Thomas Jollie maintained the difference when it suited their religious and political interests. See Jollie, *A vindication of the Surey Demoniack as no Impostor: or, A Reply to a certain Pamphlet Publish’d by Mr. Zach. Taylor, called The Surey Impostor* (1698), 30: “If the distinction of Obsession from Possession, be used among the Papists; is every distinction among Papists, a Popish Distinction? The Truth is, both Ancient and Modern Writers only make use of the Term Obsession as more proper.”

<sup>15</sup> One exception to this generalization is the fraudulent case of Katherine Malpass in 1621, who was sentenced to be placed in the stocks for two hours, and then incarcerated for about eight months. See Richard Raiswell, “Faking It: A Case of Counterfeit Possession in the Reign of James I” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, XXIII, 3 (1999), 44.

<sup>16</sup> David Harley cautions historians against eliding these terms, arguing that diagnoses of possession marked the failure of afflicted individuals to convince others that they were blameless victims of witchcraft, 311. I have found, as Keith Thomas states, “the epithets ‘possessed’ and ‘bewitched’ came very near to being synonymous,” 477. D.P. Walker adds that while he uses either “possession” or “obsession” when differentiation is possible, this “distinction of terms...was not observed by most sixteenth-century writers, who tend to use the two terms indifferently,” 7.

brought to them. Some high-profile possession cases resulted in religio-political pamphlet wars, in which the authors had to call upon every bit of honorable manhood, status and reputation at their disposal. Whether demonic or malefic in origin, the symptoms of possession followed a script recognizable to early modern observers even when there was disagreement about the cause. In the Protestant context, possession episodes often began with a young person questioning their salvation; their resistance to temptation produced a satisfying repudiation of Satan and a recommitment to God for both the demoniac and those who witnessed his or her fits. This was especially true when the afflicted named a suspect who had long been mistrusted, or who had inherited a reputation for guilt from suspected relatives. At the local level, possession was a frightening but powerful representation of man's struggle to live rightly in a world of temptations. For as long as the elite men who decided whether or not cases merited legal action were free to act upon these same impulses, witchcraft trials functioned (even if they did not flourish) in England.

In England, magistrates' responses to local witchcraft accusations were shaped by the definition of the crime. Queen Elizabeth presided over a new act against witchcraft in 1563, which made witchcraft a felony offense until its repeal in 1736.<sup>17</sup> When King James I took the throne in 1603, there was a degree of uncertainty about how the new monarch would respond to witchcraft-possession controversies. In James' *Daemonologie*, published in 1597, he claimed to write in response to the "fearefull aboundinge at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaves of the Devill, the

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<sup>17</sup> Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 39.

Witches or enchaunters.”<sup>18</sup> The book gave Puritans reason to hope that James might support their efforts to perform dispossessions and bring people toward a more godly way of life. *Daemonologie* was reprinted in 1603, but the promise of the book was soon overshadowed by James’ enthusiasm for questioning demoniacs sharply and ultimately revealing them to be frauds.<sup>19</sup> As befitted a monarch interested in consolidating his authority and his Church, James’ reversal stifled the turbulence possessions created.

As Michael MacDonald suggests, the aftermath of James’ involvement in possession cases had a dampening effect on the appearance of new cases, but did not prevent them.<sup>20</sup> This was also true across the Atlantic, where English Puritans (among others) set up their new colony in New England. The Puritans who landed in Plymouth in 1620 were English men and women whose belief in the proximity of the invisible world increased their sense of vulnerability to the daunting worldly challenges of the transatlantic crossing and conflicts with Indians. Not all of those who landed at Plymouth were Puritans, but popular belief in witches, omens, and apparitions provided a common ground among the settlers that may not always have been reflected in meetinghouse attendance or official church membership.<sup>21</sup> There were relatively few recorded cases of witchcraft for the first several years of settlement, but in time the court

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<sup>18</sup> James I, King of England, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into Three Bookes* (Edinburgh, 1597), A2r (EEBO image 2). Kittredge calls the second editions—there were two—a “mere bookselling speculation,” and points out that unlike other reissues for which James included lengthy and defensive prefaces, *Daemonologie* shows no evidence of the King’s involvement, 280-281.

<sup>19</sup> For the political and religious context for the controversy, and James’ involvement, see Michael MacDonald, ed., *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London* (New York: Routledge, 1991), xxi-xxvi.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xlvi-lv.

<sup>21</sup> David Hall refers to some of Puritan New England’s citizens as “horse-shed” Christians, after the idea that some men would wait out the sermon in conversation nearby, but apart from the congregation. See David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 16-17.

records described the evolution of long-simmering suspicions into English-style trials.<sup>22</sup> By the time of New England's most famous witchcraft outbreak in Essex County (Salem) in 1692-1693, clergy on both sides of the Atlantic continued to argue that belief in devils and witches was an extension of belief in the soul; after all, witches and demoniacs were mentioned in scripture, and to doubt the supernatural realm contributed, they believed, to atheism. The trials in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were unusual in some ways; confessing witches were saved from the gallows so that they could name their confederates. But New Englanders, from the lowly to the elite, drew upon gendered assumptions deeply embedded in the Anglo-American cultural legacy.

Like many outbreaks, the New England trials came to a fairly abrupt end, but they did not represent the last gasp of credulity there or in England. In 1697, for example, another witchcraft-possession controversy erupted in England that pitted religious factions against one another in much the same manner observed a century before. Trials continued through the first two decades of the eighteenth century, and it was not until the 1740s when skepticism dominated the published conversation. Of course popular belief in witchcraft, and the occasional appearance of demonic possession, did not end with the official trials. The traditional association between women and witches continues to shape perceptions of historical male witches and those who argued their cases in print. The three groups of men involved in possession cases—as accused witches, as demoniacs themselves, and as propagandists—demonstrate that the gendered foundation of Anglo-American witchcraft-possession was both flexible and indispensable.

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<sup>22</sup> For the periodization of New England's witchcraft activity, see Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 19-45.

This project is a transatlantic, cultural history of manhood and witchcraft-possession that works to join methodologies of feminist scholarship with early American and early modern English history. Historians can be uncomfortable with feminist scholarship's conscious scrutiny of present relations of power, and its use of such findings in reading the past. For example, to search for ahistorical feminists in the seventeenth century, or to reduce events as complex as witchcraft outbreaks to simple misogyny would overlook the significant differences between the early modern and modern cosmologies. But just as scholars of witchcraft in New England may find the social, cultural, and legal foundations for colonial witchcraft-possession by reaching back to England, those interested in gender, and the roles women and men played as possessed persons, accusers, and accused witches, may similarly find the roots of the subject across the Atlantic. I argue that gender is as crucial to understanding the men in witchcraft-possession as the women. Rather than exclude gender as a category of analysis because of its instability and inconsistency, close reading of published possession accounts reveals how men "unmade" their enemies as men, defended their own interests, and struggled to gain or maintain gendered power.

Chapter 1 establishes the project's grounding in feminist theory and gender history, and situates it within existing scholarship on women, men, manhood, and witchcraft. That most witches in England and New England were women has been thoroughly established; gender analyses of witchcraft and possession, however, do not appear to have gained contemporary scholars' full confidence. There appears to be an implicit debate about the utility of gender in witchcraft studies, and Chapter 1 intervenes



in a subject customarily seen as caught between the interests and methods of History on one side, and Women's Studies on the other.

Chapter 2 analyzes the case of the *Witches of Warboys* (1593) in order to compare how one man—John Samuel—was unmade as a man into a witch alongside his wife and daughter. While his wife was the primary suspect in the case, followed closely by their daughter, John managed to assert a kind of resistance that was particular to his position as a man. The interconnections between men and women in this case illuminate the ways gender operated in the construction of the Samuel family as dangerous antitheses to the community's values. Chapter 3 explores the English pamphlet controversy over the role of exorcism or dispossession at the close of the sixteenth century, focusing specifically on the struggle between Anglican chaplain Samuel Harsnett and Puritan minister John Darrell (1599-1602). It considers the ways that gendered language and conventions played a role in their struggles to assert a version of witchcraft-possession that was supportive of their political and religious commitments. The battle to defend their own manhood and reputation was a crucial part of the rhetoric; the authors, participants in the dispossessions and "enemies" were all constructed through gendered language and imagery.

Chapter 4 provides a transatlantic analysis of witchcraft-possession cases; the implications of New England's comparative economic and religious homogeneity appear to have been offset by the challenges of forging a godly community beset by both external and internal dangers. This chapter examines broad trends in possession cases, including their role in religio-political propaganda and the ongoing arguments throughout the seventeenth century about differentiating possession from physical and mental illness.

The subsequent New England chapters consider the extent to which gender and gendered language remained salient in the production and interpretation of witchcraft-possession after the transatlantic crossing.

Chapter 5 analyzes the case of George Burroughs, a New England man accused of witchcraft in 1692. Like John Samuel a century before, Burroughs was “unmade” as a man (and a minister) before his execution as a witch. Despite the differences between Warboys in the 1590s and Salem Village in the 1690s, similar elements of manhood’s prerogatives and vulnerabilities shadowed Burroughs’s unmaking. Chapter 6 analyzes the pamphlet war that ensued between Puritan minister Cotton Mather (the son of Increase Mather) and merchant Robert Calef over a possession case in Boston in 1693. When Calef published his critique of Mather, in 1700, he daringly echoed aspects of Harsnett’s criticism of Darrell; Calef used gendered language and imagery to present the possessed girl, observers and even Mather himself as promiscuous, disorderly and deluded. Even in Puritan New England, possession cases provided an opening for challenges to hierarchical authority that could not always be contained.

Throughout, this dissertation considers gender’s role in witchcraft-possession for male witches, writers and demoniacs, but not by separating them from the women afflicted and accused alongside them. Gender histories of the early modern world may focus primarily on one sex, but it would be inappropriate to eliminate one in order to see the other. Though gender was an essential part of men’s experiences in witchcraft-possession cases, it was characterized by malleability and flexibility. This inconsistency, rather than render manhood beyond the scope of historical inquiry, makes it all the more important for historians to recognize. This investigation into gendered language and the

“unmaking” of men takes up an integrated gender history of men in early modern England and colonial New England in hopes that both men and women may come more clearly into view.

## CHAPTER 1

### MANHOOD, WITCHCRAFT AND POSSESSION

When Increase Mather, the eminent Puritan minister of colonial New England, published his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684),<sup>23</sup> he included a variety of “Remarkable” events designed to impress God’s particular wonders on the mind of the reader. One of these stories describes the house of “William Morse in Newberry in New-England” which was “strangely disquieted by a Daemon” in 1679.<sup>24</sup> Mather reports that Morse, his wife and their grandchild suffered from assaults by an invisible hand and saw their household goods destroyed and flung about wildly. What began as the haunting of a family home, however, eventually narrowed in on the particular spectral affliction of “the Boy.” Mather wrote that he was continually pricked with pins, spindles and knives, and violently thrown from his bed and toward the fire.<sup>25</sup> Even more distressing were the Boy’s mental disturbances, as when he “made for a long time together a noise like a Dog, and like an Hen with her Chickens, and could not speak rationally.” Later, after struggling to speak, the Boy said “there’s Powel, I am pinched,” and explained that his tongue, which hung out of his mouth, “‘twas forced out by Powel.”

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<sup>23</sup> Increase Mather, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences: Wherein, An Account is given of many Remarkable and very Memorable Events, which have happened in this last Age, especially in New-England. By Increase Mather, Teacher of a Church at Boston in New-England.* (Boston in New England Printed by Samuel Green for Joseph Browning, And are to be sold at his Shop at the corner of the Prison Lane, 1684). This text is more commonly known as *Remarkable Providences*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 142 (Early English Books Online [EEBO] image 87).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-149 (EEBO images 87-90).

Later the Boy said “Powel carried him” above houses, that “Powel had him into the Barn, throwing him against the Cart-wheel there,” and that “Powel would not let him eat.”<sup>26</sup> The Boy screamed, threw stones, ate “Ashes, Sticks, Rug-yarn,” and, soon after, his grandparents and the assembled company saw a spirit in “the likeness of a Blackmore Child” and heard voices.<sup>27</sup> After describing these events in detail, Mather ended the narrative abruptly. He reported that “a Seaman” came to Morse and said that people were wrong to suspect Goodwife Morse of witchcraft. Instead, the Seaman proclaimed, the Boy was the problem. Morse agreed to let the Seaman take the Boy to his own house to try to cure him, an arrangement that lasted only one day. Mather closed with an assertion that the cause of “strange disturbances” was unknown, but “some (as it has been hinted) did suspect Morse’s Wife to be guilty of Witchcraft.”<sup>28</sup>

The nineteenth-century historian George Lincoln Burr pieced together several important details about this episode that help to flesh out Increase Mather’s brief account.<sup>29</sup> He writes that Mather likely received the account in a letter from the Reverend Joshua Moodey of neighboring Portsmouth. In addition, Burr cites court records which reveal that the boy’s name was John Stiles, and the Seaman’s was Caleb Powell—the very man named during the boy’s fits.<sup>30</sup> The knowledge that the Seaman and Powell were one and the same, a fact not initially clear in Mather’s account, suggests possible motivations for Morse and Powell’s actions. While Mather ended his account

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 151 (EEBO image 91).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 153-154 (EEBO images 92 and 93). “Blackmore” suggests that the spirit resembled an African child. The devil was commonly described as a “black man,” in continental Europe and beyond, a designation that could refer to clothing as well as skin color.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 154-155 (EEBO image 93).

<sup>29</sup> George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of the witchcraft cases, 1648-1706* (New York: C. Scribner’s, 1914).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 31, 1n. Burr explains that the additional details survived in records that were reprinted in the nineteenth-century. See for example Joshua Coffin, *History of Newbury* (Boston, 1845), p. 122-134; W.E. Woodward, *Records of Salem Witchcraft* (Boston, 1864), II, 251-261.

with the suspicion of Goodwife Morse, Burr adds that her husband brought Powell up on suspicion of witchcraft the following day. In fact, Caleb Powell was indicted for witchcraft and tried but, as Burr records, Powell “succeeded in clearing himself...at the cost of Goodwife Morse” who “had long been suspected by her neighbors.” Goodwife Morse was indicted, tried in Boston, found guilty and subsequently sentenced to death. Nonetheless, Burr notes that she was granted a reprieve, and was allowed to return home (after over a year in prison) under the condition that she not travel far from home.<sup>31</sup>

This fascinating episode raises a host of issues for readers interested in the relation between witchcraft, possession and gender for men and women. What happened in Newbury that observers interpreted as supernatural interference with objects, bodies and minds? Did neighbors suspect Goodwife Morse of destroying her own home? Why did Stiles name Powell as the one who harmed him, and why was Powell able to deflect these charges so successfully? In addition to these tantalizing questions there are others that demonstrate the challenges historians face when attempting to evaluate this sort of source. Even questions of basic terminology are uncertain. For instance, would contemporaries have seen Stiles as bewitched or possessed? Bewitchment entailed an affliction caused by a witch’s malefic ability to direct the powers of the Devil, and could include anything from sickening livestock and interfering with chores to harming or murdering children or adults. Straightforward demonic possession, on the other hand, involved no human intermediary. Both were recognizable through the victim’s ritualized performance of physical and psychological feats that surpassed their natural capabilities. John Stiles did not report temptation to sign the “Devil’s book,” nor did devils’ voices

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<sup>31</sup> Burr cites the *Records of the Court of Assistants*, I. (Boston, 1901), 159, 189-190 as the source for the information about Goodwife Morse’s conviction and release, 31, 1n.

speak from within him. Still, his behavior resembles many aspects of a demoniac's fits, and Mather's repeated references to "daemons" are also suggestive.

In addition to these questions of definition and interpretation, there are questions for gender historians interested in the role of manhood in instances of witchcraft-possession. We are accustomed to seeing gender as one of the explanations for women's preponderance among those accused and executed for witchcraft; should we see the accusations of men like Powell as similarly influenced? How should the reader regard the interpretive pens of Joshua Moody and Increase Mather, who recorded the events in ways that served their own interests? While this brief narrative raises as many questions as answers, it introduces a male witchcraft suspect, male writers who filtered the events through religious and political lenses, and what resembles a male demoniac (one who exhibits the symptoms of demonic possession). Historians have long recognized that not all witches were female, but only recently has considerable attention been paid to the ways that manhood—those culture-specific ideas about what constituted a successful or unsuccessful man—played a role in possession cases or for the three groups of men mentioned above.

In this dissertation, I investigate published representations of men in early modern England and colonial New England in order to determine the various, and often contradictory, consequences of manhood in witchcraft-possession. The chapters are organized chronologically and spatially to establish the continuities and changes in this sort of cases across a century and the Atlantic. Gendered language and assumptions often stray from the surface of these narratives, but they reveal that male witches and demoniacs consistently struggled to position themselves (or were positioned by those

who wrote about them) in relation to honorable manhood.<sup>32</sup> The subject of demonic possession has received far less scholarly attention, especially in terms of gender, than witchcraft, its near-relation. And even in the literature about witchcraft and gender, scholars have only recently begun to examine the role of men and manliness in the trials. How then did men, as gendered subjects with access to gendered language, struggle to affect the outcome of these cases as accused witches, propagandists, and demoniacs? To write a gender history that attempts to sort out the entwined projects of asserting, contesting and unmaking manliness in possession, one must first note some of the existing scholarship that engages with gender, men or witchcraft in early modern English and colonial New England.

Like many gender historians, I draw from feminism a language with which to describe early modern women and men while weighing prescriptive literatures against what we know of material lives “on the ground.” In the 1970s, a few feminist writers published studies that helped redirect inquiry into the subject but which faced extensive critique for their methodological limitations. In many cases, these criticisms were valid, as some oversimplified their historical subjects as victims of a monolithic and hegemonic patriarchy, or as female healers and midwives targeted for their challenge to male dominance.<sup>33</sup> I find this scholarship as inadequate as my colleagues, but because the field

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<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth A. Foyster discusses “manhood” and “honourable manhood” as distinguishable but related qualities in *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999), 28-48.

<sup>33</sup> Among those most frequently cited disparagingly are Margaret Murray’s *The witch-cult in western Europe: a study in anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921) and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, *Witches, midwives, and nurses; a history of women healers* (Oyster Bay, N.Y., Glass Mountain Pamphlets; Detroit: Black & Red, 1973).



of women's and gender studies<sup>34</sup> has developed considerably in the interim, we can confidently turn our attention to new, rather than old, problems.

One of the great contributions of women's history has been the development of a body of theory that explores masculinity and recognizes men as gendered subjects alongside women. As gender historians consider the previously uninterrogated status of manhood and masculinity in history, they can profit from much scholarship initially intended to explore gender for women. These sources can illuminate masculinity as well if scholars avoid simple reversal and reinscription; it will be crucial instead to employ an adaptive process that weighs contingencies in the evidence and historical context. For example, Denise Riley's comments about the category of "woman" can help historians think about the category of "man":

To put it schematically: "women" is historically and discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; "women" is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned so that the apparent continuity of the subject of "women" isn't to be relied on; "women" is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, "being a woman" is also inconstant and can't provide an ontological foundation.<sup>35</sup>

Riley qualifies her formulation of "woman," emphasizing the ways that the category cannot be viewed as immutable or stable even as it applies to one particular woman over her lifetime. Especially useful for this study is her point about its synchronic and diachronic inconstancy; this formulation can encourage historians to look at "man" as a similarly constructed entity. By turning our attention to historically lived manhood, we

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<sup>34</sup> So called here to acknowledge the discipline's roots in the women's movement, with the addition of "gender" to acknowledge the ways that that discipline has changed and expanded over time. Women's Studies departments have been a home for scholarly work about men and masculinity for many years.

<sup>35</sup> Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 1,2.

can see that its vicissitudes represent processes of contestation related to those undergone by women. Manhood inevitably operated differently, due to its different relationship to patriarchal power, but as the other side of a shared phenomenon.<sup>36</sup>

One of the challenges of an integrated gender analysis, by which I mean one that examines constructions of men and women, is to keep both in view while simultaneously locating and articulating their differences. Studies of witchcraft in early modern England and colonial New England, for example, need to acknowledge the ways these communities were organized into patriarchal hierarchies—not to claim that all men were patriarchs, but to acknowledge that their *potential* to be patriarchs differently shaped their lives in comparison to their female counterparts. We could thus add to Riley’s formulation by stating that while “being a woman or man” was not constant for early modern subjects, we can locate moments of their lived experiences that were tied firmly to their communities’ recognition of them as (more or less successful) women or men.<sup>37</sup> By applying such a gender analysis to men, we stand to gain important insights into the forces that shaped history at the micro- and macro-level. Equally promising is the way that new insight into manhood will promote a better understanding of womanhood as well; the histories of men and women, and of masculinity and femininity, promise most when they are not separated by historians in a way they rarely were in life.

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<sup>36</sup> Foyster describes the relational nature of patriarchy, and men’s inconsistent relationship to the maintenance of power as a cornerstone of identity, 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> I emphasize evidence of lived experiences not to reify an essential, common reality for the subjects, but instead to study the ways that contemporaries altered their configurations of manhood and womanhood in the face of what they believed to be supernatural interference.

Joan Scott, while articulating why gender is a “useful category of historical analysis,” has addressed the critical overlap among axes of power.<sup>38</sup> She refers to the ways that feminists commonly analyze race, class and gender in recognition of the political and material ways that these categories related to oppression, and secondly to demonstrate a “scholarly understanding that inequalities of power are organized along at least three axes.” While the grouping of the three together implies that they were on par with one another, Scott points out that neither “race” nor “gender” rested on an overarching definition grounded in theory.<sup>39</sup> In their attempts to address the shifting meanings of “gender” throughout history, feminist historians necessarily investigate the ways that meanings of “womanhood” and “manhood” were mutually constituted by language and culture. To apply these principles to a history of witchcraft requires that historians pay close attention to the gendered cultural and religious underpinnings of witchcraft ideologies, as they influenced the ways that men and women constructed themselves and others as victims, demoniacs, and witches. To separate men from women, and early modern manhood from womanhood, compromises an analysis of the varied workings of these uncommon but influential episodes of supernatural intervention. Rather than treat manhood as an independent social marker, it behooves historians of manhood to engage with various ways that gender mattered—even in moments in which it mattered as much as, or less than, other factors.

As scholars have taken up the subject of manhood, they have applied tools of feminist inquiry in widely varying directions. Mark Breitenberg’s 1996 study of “anxious masculinity” in early modern England, for example, provides a useful starting

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

point from which to consider the implications of this new focus. He explains that masculine subjectivity is “constructed and sustained by a patriarchal culture—infused with patriarchal assumptions about power, privilege, sexual desire, the body—inevitably engenders varying degrees of anxiety in its male members.” Furthermore, his book “pursues the confrontation between the ‘natural’ superiority of men and the profound costs of maintaining that superiority.”<sup>40</sup> While Breitenberg does not address witchcraft, the kind of imperiled manhood he articulates holds implications for historians’ interrogation of male participants in the trials. This sort of analysis represents a crucial stage in the process of unpacking what was previously an essentialized category, and Breitenberg’s approach demonstrates very well the insufficiency of monolithic definitions of patriarchy. Still, by naturalizing anxiety within manhood, the reader can easily lose sight of its other guises and strategies. Though useful as a starting point, it limits our view of early modern men’s options and seems unsatisfactory in the complex terrain of witchcraft-possession.

Using “anxiety” in early modern societies as a focus of inquiry need not fall into this predicament, however. Kathleen M. Brown’s *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs* (1996) for example, profitably integrates those patriarchs’ apprehensions alongside those of their subordinates and superiors, wives and mistresses, servants and slaves.<sup>41</sup> Her case study of William Byrd II of early eighteenth-century Virginia, for example, demonstrates that while the Virginia patriarchs were not

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<sup>40</sup> Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

representative of “regular” folk, their relations with others shaped notions of honor and legitimacy that later influenced men and women of English, Indian and African descent:

A man who was simultaneously a husband, father, slaveowner, and Council member needed to respond appropriately to difficult challenges inherent in each relationship. Ultimately, each tried the same quality: his ability to communicate power over others by appearing to have power over himself. Authority derived not simply from a man’s power over his wife, children, slaves, and lesser men but also from his ability to subdue in himself those qualities he attributed to subordinates: passion, weakness, and dependence.<sup>42</sup>

Though Brown’s subject is colonial Virginia, her view of the tensions caused by shifting gender relations resonates for early modern England and New England.<sup>43</sup> The kind of rich analysis that Brown achieves, despite the confines of the extant sources about lower-status subjects, suggests that witchcraft scholars may also be able to use a kind of integrated gender analysis of men and women to gain insight into a culture in its entirety.

Other scholars have noted the limitations of depicting men as incapacitated by anxiety, even as they share Breitenberg’s interest in locating masculinities, anxious and otherwise, in history. Lynne Segal’s response to selected men’s history and masculinity studies texts manages to highlight some of these concerns.<sup>44</sup> In her response to R. W.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 319-320.

<sup>43</sup> Historians have posited an early modern “crisis” in gender relations in England. Frances Dolan suggests that the period from 1550, peaking in 1650, and ending by 1700 saw particular stresses in gender relations. After this period women’s influence decreased, Dolan contends, because as they were less feared they subsequently became less powerful. See Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1770* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 18. The legitimacy of the idea of a crisis of gender relations is taken up by David Underdown, “Taming of the Scold: Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England” in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson, eds. *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Martin Ingram, “‘Scolding Women Cucked or Washed’: a Crisis in Gender Relations in Early Modern England?” in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, eds., *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> Lynne Segal, “Masculinities; Manhood in America: A Cultural History; A New Psychology of Men; Unlocking the Iron Cage; The Men’s Movement, Gender Politics, and American Culture,” *Signs*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), 1057-1061.

Connell's *Masculinities*, for example, she succinctly demonstrates how his study successfully complicates masculinity while remaining mindful of the persistence of patriarchy's relevance for male subjects.<sup>45</sup> Connell's achievement, in Segal's view, is his acknowledgement that despite common perceptions of masculinity as fraught and imperiled:

men collectively still have overwhelmingly greater access to cultural prestige, political authority, corporate power, individual wealth, and material comforts than women—whatever the costs, confusions, and insecurities of individual men or groups of men. Despite all the recent feminist critique, and despite all the documented gender upheavals or “crisis tendencies” in men's lives, the hierarchical structuring of gender through relations of dominance is still secured by the symbolic equation of masculinity and power.<sup>46</sup>

This approach, grounded though it is in a study of modern American masculinities, articulates a premise that holds promise for its early modern counterpart. Testing this guiding theoretical framework as a lens through which to view early modern England and New England allows historians to look in new ways at the under-examined category of manhood.

Correspondingly, gender historians of early modern England and colonial New America can benefit from the contributions of Toby Ditz. In articles from 2000 and 2004, Ditz astutely outlines ways that some recent American men's histories rely upon methodologies that emphasize men's relations and competition with other men to the extent that they eclipse the subjects' relative position to women.<sup>47</sup> It is very difficult get

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<sup>45</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Segal, 1058-1059.

<sup>47</sup> Toby L. Ditz, “The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History” (*Gender & History*, Vol. 16 No. 1 April 2004, 1-35; Ditz, “What's Love got to do with it? The History of Men, The History of Gender in the 1990s, *Reviews in American History* 28 (2000) 167-180.

at the nature of historical manhood and to acknowledge its many incarnations and contradictions without losing sight of its ties to male privilege. This is particularly so, Ditz states, because the “indicia of power, such as whiteness and manliness, tend to disappear from analytic view precisely to the extent that the power they designate is hegemonic.”<sup>48</sup> Like Segal, Ditz values aspects of Connell’s work, such as his articulation of the “patriarchal dividend” and its multivalent operations in American society. Connell’s limitations, according to Ditz, result from his emphasis on masculinity as “fundamentally about differentiation among men,” which downplays the ways that “masculinity articulates with femininity to conform the ‘privilege, power, and authority’ that men have over women.”<sup>49</sup> Ditz explains that this emphasis, like a representation of men essentially incapacitated by anxiety, runs the risk of replicating many of the limitations of works in which men’s gender was erased, overlooked, or assumed to be universal.<sup>50</sup>

Ditz praises scholars who avoid some of these oversights by sensitively examining their methodologies and “initial orienting assumptions.” Some of these interrogate compulsory heterosexuality, the overlap between manhood and racial hierarchies as well as gendered ones, or the ways in which misogynist backlash appear to answer real or perceived threats to patriarchal privileges. Most relevant to this dissertation is Ditz’s praise of studies that do not exclude women from analyses of men; she contends that a comparative approach is particularly useful for getting at the ways

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<sup>48</sup> Ditz, “What’s Love got to do with it?” 167-168.

<sup>49</sup> Ditz, “The New Men’s History,” 3. For further analysis of the multiple facets of gendered hierarchy in early modern England, see Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750. Volume I: The English Phallus* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 3-7; and on the difference between manliness and masculinity, 217-219.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

that men invoked symbolic or real women as a way to enforce their position.<sup>51</sup> Ditz calls for more attention to “the mutual construction of masculinity and femininity, gendered power, and challenges to it,” an approach that can benefit scholars of witchcraft and possession as well.<sup>52</sup>

While the contemporary literature of witchcraft-possession generally lists gender as an important contributing factor, in another sense gender can appear to be everywhere and nowhere. An implicit debate has emerged as to the viability of gendered analyses in witchcraft scholarship. In an understandable effort to demonstrate that no solitary causal explanation can adequately explain phenomena as complex as witchcraft trials, scholars appear particularly motivated to purge the field of gender-only approaches to witchcraft belief and trials. The question “is witchcraft an historical subject to which a gender analysis may profitably be applied?” appears often to be translated into a question of whether a gender analysis may profitably be applied if any other historical factors can also be said to apply—something responsible scholarship invariably reveals. Perhaps due to a desire not to replicate the shortcomings of early women’s history approaches to witchcraft, the sex (or, in fact, the gender) of an accused witch is often regarded more warily than his or her age, social status or relations with neighbors. These latter factors, more “real” to most historians than the slippery territory of gender, are preferred for the way they illuminate measurable trends about the past and involve fewer, or less troubling, theoretical and methodological implications.

Possibly for these reasons, case studies depicting moments in which gender appears to be subordinated to age or social status have been presented not as evidence of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 16-25.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 26.



gender's malleability and elusiveness, but rather as evidence of gender's ineligibility as a category of analysis for serious historians. Not all historians see gender as a central theme in their inquiry; neither is such a universal commitment necessary or desirable. But feminism's contribution is more far-reaching and intricate than many admit. As Riley and Scott's comments make plain, feminism has long dedicated itself to recognizing (and, in its activist component, in addressing) systems of power and oppression. While sexism is key among these, other hierarchical categories, such as race, class and sexuality, fall within the rubric of feminism's concerns.<sup>53</sup> Women's studies has moved, for instance, from a reclamation of female historical actors to analyses of the varied ways that gender the social construct has fractured previously universal views of "womanhood." Additionally, the recognition of women's varied genders, gay/lesbian theory and sexuality studies has led to scholarly interest in manhood. We are thus in the position to analyze gender for men in a way that profits from the long tradition of feminism, but does not merely use the language of feminism to conceal men's different relation to institutional power. Even today, the existence of many different kinds of "men," and their suffering in countless situations of injustice, does not counteract the fact that men in patriarchal or post-patriarchal societies live with (or alongside) learned awareness of its privileges and burdens.

In this sense men's history, or rather a gendered history of men, benefits by comparison to another recent line of inquiry: studies of whiteness. As with men, people read as "white" commonly exist in historical works as an unmarked category, with experiences held to be normative and universal. By applying an analytical framework to

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<sup>53</sup> The blindness and indifference of feminism to racism, classism and homophobia has lessened, or at least changed, over time, as blindness and indifference to those issues have changed in other disciplines.

whiteness, we gain a sense of the many different and contradictory ways it has granted powers in particular societies. Just as the existence of poor and marginalized whites does not render analyses of racism invalid, so too the existence of “unmade” or oppressed men does not invalidate analyses of gender in terms of patriarchy. Instead, gender history and whiteness studies help scholars of various disciplines recognize the particularity of their subjects and engage more intricately with the ways that people fell between the poles of victimhood and agency.<sup>54</sup> While focusing on manhood, witchcraft and possession, I intend to remain mindful of the myriad ways that gendered assumptions lay at and beneath the surface of witchcraft-possession discourse. Male participants in possession cases, like their female counterparts, used gendered language and strategies when it suited their interests. Embedded in these published articulations of guilt and innocence, and legitimacy and fraudulence, lie some of the central components of gender for early modern men and women in old and New England.

### **Writing about Witchcraft-Possession**

Most historical texts that deal with demonic possession in England and New England insert them within broader studies of witchcraft and magical beliefs.<sup>55</sup> For example, D.P. Walker’s foundational study of possession cases in England and France

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<sup>54</sup> Some useful sources in whiteness studies include: Amanda E. Lewis, “‘What Group?’ Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of ‘Color-Blindness,’” *Sociological Theory* 22:4, December 2004; Wayne Brekhus, “A sociology of the unmarked: Redirecting our focus,” *Sociological Theory*, (1998), 16 (1), 34-51; Michelle Fine, et. al eds., *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance* (New York: Routledge Press, 1993); Ruth Frankenberg, *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Derald Wing Sue, “Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism: Making the ‘invisible’ visible,” *American Psychologist* Vol 59(8), November 2004, 761-769.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969) and Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

(1981) analyzed the political, religious, and cultural dimensions of controversial exorcisms. Subsequent texts demonstrated the importance of these along with demography, literary conventions and post-Reformation tensions.<sup>56</sup> Using these texts as a foundation, this dissertation addresses the aforementioned question, “how did men, as gendered subjects with a gendered language, struggle to affect the outcome of possession cases as accused witches, propagandists and demoniacs?”

If Keith Thomas’ *Religion in the Decline of Magic* (1971) helped usher in a new age of serious scholarship about witchcraft and occult belief in early modern England, Carol Karlsen’s *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987) did the same for witchcraft and gender. While the book focused on New England, its use of historical methodologies in pursuit of a gendered argument influenced scholarship across the Atlantic as well. Karlsen’s was a gender history firmly grounded in evidence; her analysis of the cultural, demographic, and economic bases for witchcraft accusations drew upon court records, trial transcripts, manuscripts and published documents pertaining to witchcraft for the whole of New England, from European settlement to 1725.<sup>57</sup> Twenty years later, many of Karlsen’s arguments remain important in witchcraft scholarship, and some have been

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<sup>56</sup> See D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits* and Jonathan Westaway and Richard D. Harrison, “‘The Surey Demoniac’: Defining Protestantism in 1690s Lancashire,” in R.N. Swanson, ed., *Unity and Diversity in the Church* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996); Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004) and Philip C. Almond, ed., *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Michael MacDonald, ed., *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, 1991; Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism* (2006).

<sup>57</sup> In addition to published sources, Karlsen used a variety of manuscript and court records including *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 6 vols., ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: W. White, 1853-1854), the Samuel Wyllys Papers, Supplement: Depositions on Cases of Witchcraft Tried in Connecticut, 1662-1693, Photostat copies of the Wyllys Papers, Annmary Brown Memorial, Brown University Library, Providence, RI (manuscript volume, Archives, History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT), and Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977).

expanded in subsequent works.<sup>58</sup> Karlsen found that age, marital status, and inheritance patterns influenced women's likelihood of being accused, tried and executed for witchcraft.<sup>59</sup> By tracing religious and cultural beliefs about women's susceptibility to supernatural influence, along with the particular testimony offered by possessed and non-possessed accusers, Karlsen made a strong case for the need for serious historical engagement with gender. In a final chapter, she considers the "afflicted girls," those accusers who performed possession symptoms; in New England, this was almost exclusively a female group, though their ages varied more than their common title suggests.<sup>60</sup> By treating the possessed accusers as a separate group, Karlsen was among the first to question the role that the afflicted played in witchcraft trials, particularly in terms of gender and the ultimate loss of momentum that brought them to a halt.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1990s, witchcraft scholars invoked gender more frequently and more prominently. Christina Lerner's studies of Scottish witchcraft were particularly influential, given her meticulous attention to an understudied region. The aspects of Lerner's work that appeared to most frequently cited were her statements that "witch-hunting" could not be reduced to "woman-hunting," and that witchcraft "was not sex-specific but it was sex-related."<sup>62</sup> By emphasizing that it was the crime, witchcraft, that was being hunted and not women, Lerner addressed early feminists' generalizations (and overstatements) about the misogynist underpinnings of European witchcraft trials. The

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<sup>58</sup> Karlsen mentioned Esther Forbes' unpublished work on the connections between witchcraft in Essex County, Massachusetts, and the Indian Wars on the Maine frontier. This theme was taken up again, and considerably expanded, by Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Karlsen, 64-67; 70-74; 102-103; 209-211; 291-293.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-185; 224.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 222-253.

<sup>62</sup> Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: the Witch-hunt in Scotland*, (London: Chatto & Windus), 1981, 92; 102; 197.

repetition of Lerner's comments simultaneously corrected previous misconceptions and suggested to some that the role for gender in witchcraft studies itself had been discredited.<sup>63</sup> Lerner's work cannot be reduced into the previous statements, however, as elsewhere she acknowledges the overwhelming association between the crime and women, and the implications of that association.

Clive Holmes' "Women: Witnesses and Witches" (1993)<sup>64</sup> addresses women's participation in the trials without overlooking ways this could coexist with, or even perpetuate, misogyny and patriarchy. Holmes rereads Lerner's work and illustrates how it need not diminish gender's broader significance; he manages to acknowledge the shifting and inconsistent role of gender in many instances without implying that this compromises its relevance. Holmes investigates three ways that women participated in English trials: as witches, witnesses against suspected witches, and searchers of accused women's bodies. He concludes that their participation, even when avidly in pursuit of other women's prosecution as witches, carried weight only to the extent that it reinforced the interests of elite men in the clergy or judiciary. These elite men emphasized or downplayed particular aspects of the testimony based upon their own expectations and investments.<sup>65</sup>

Holmes also questions why it was that the number of female deponents rose in the century after 1590, a transformation he attributes to elites' changing emphasis on witchcraft as a malefic force "involving mysterious human ailments and death... Women, attendant at the sick-bed of the victim, were well placed to describe the mental anguish

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<sup>63</sup> See for example Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Clive Holmes, "Women: Witnesses and Witches," *Past and Present*, No. 140 (Aug., 1993), 45-78.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

and mortal physical torments inflicted by the witch.”<sup>66</sup> Women’s increasing participation, Holmes asserts, demonstrated not an increase in women’s real influence in the legal system, but rather the ways that their testimony matched elite expectations. Women’s testimony appeared to “acquiesce in and reinforce theories of witchcraft, developed by theologians and lawyers, which emphasize female weakness—the greater susceptibility of women to temptation; their greater sensual depravity.”<sup>67</sup> In this way Holmes demonstrates that women’s active participation in witchcraft trials did not signify an absence of misogyny, but rather its reinforcement through the words of those whose performance of successful womanliness helped distance them from the charges they leveled at others.

By presenting women’s shifting and inconsistent involvement in witchcraft-possession cases, Holmes demonstrates that the evidence does not allow any easy conclusion about how gender mattered for women across the board. He writes:

All witnesses, but particularly those girls who described their possession and the matrons who discovered the genital marks, ratified the misogynous rationalizations proffered by the divines to explain the preponderant numbers of women accused of witchcraft. Their testimony apparently confirmed that women were the weaker sex, more easily seduced by satanic temptation. But the machinery in which they became involved, often at the instigation of men, was created, controlled, and ultimately discarded by the magisterial and clerical elite. . . . We can show that female participation as witnesses in the English trials was extensive and, proportionately, growing the in the seventeenth century. But the social meaning of these figures is not so easily read. They certainly do not eliminate “gender” or “misogyny” as key categories for any discussion of witchcraft beliefs and prosecutions.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

Holmes' article remains important because of the way it acknowledges that gendered power played an important role in witchcraft belief and prosecution despite its contingency and inconsistency. He recognizes the gendered nature of some of witchcraft's central contradictions; women were accusers and accused, mouthpieces of the elite and independent voices, temporarily empowered by witchcraft's conventional script and tarred by it.

Because historians know that men could be witches despite the pervasive association of witchcraft with women, we are consequently prepared to recognize that the existence of male witches does no more to discredit the possible presence of misogyny than the existence of women who accused other women. As with "patriarchy," historians need to use caution when invoking "misogyny," lest the term distract from the many instances in which official or prescriptive reproach of women fail to reflect lived experience. Still, when used in a qualified sense both terms remain useful to the extent that such attitudes were available and, at times, in operation. Furthermore, a similar emphasis on the complexity and contradiction of men's roles in the cases encourages historians to see how men could be similarly made and unmade at the behest of those with the power to pursue or dismiss the charges. Such an approach also allows for recognition that men, like women, could accuse others as a way to buttress their own position in the (patriarchal) hierarchy. It seems clear that, despite the extent to which the deck may have been stacked against particular individuals, a witchcraft case was a contest in which both sexes could win and lose. This in turn may provide a foundation for an investigation of the ways that men, even those who were "failed" patriarchs,

nonetheless maintained some of those privileges as they navigated the gendered terrain of witchcraft-possession.

In contrast, Malcolm Gaskill's "The Devil in the Shape of a Man" (1998)<sup>69</sup> invokes gender more guardedly. He notes favorably that historians have moved beyond a simple reading of witchcraft trials as male-led misogyny, and approves of works that situate some women as active participants in the trials as witnesses and as accused witches who fought to redirect the proceedings. Gaskill concludes that the active participation of women, and the possibility of their own ambivalent agency when accused, disproves claims that the trials resulted from misogyny. This claim appears to presume that women could not, or would not, assert patriarchal order (however creatively and ingeniously) over others. While he acknowledges demonological texts that refer to women as the primary practitioners of witchcraft, Gaskill goes on to conclude that historians need to be cautious of presumptions of misogyny or of a crisis of gender relations. He writes:

Prosecution for witchcraft was more than just a strategy by which insecure men subjugated innocent female victims, if only because, in terms of legal redress for injury and loss, more women were actually beneficiaries of witchcraft legislation than were its victims. More importantly, a gender-persecution model underplays the assertiveness and independent thinking displayed by early modern women, both witnesses and witches.<sup>70</sup>

Historians have long seen a women-as-victims approach as insufficient, and Gaskill is right to promote more nuanced studies of women's involvement and complicity in the trials as a way to see various ways that communities handled charges of supernatural

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<sup>69</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, "Devil in the Shape of a Man": Witchcraft, Conflict and Belief in Jacobean England," *Historical Research*, vol 71, no. 175 (June 1998), 142-171. The title undoubtedly refers to Karlsen's *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*.

<sup>70</sup> Gaskill, 144.



influence. To gauge the extent to which women were “beneficiaries” of witchcraft legislation seems problematic, however, given the broader implications of communities’ use of witchcraft ideology to reinforce patriarchal norms and customs. It seems likely that the women who testified successfully against those they believed had harmed them or their families would have seen themselves as victors, but should we?

An analysis of these implications need not necessarily devolve into a discourse of woman hating and midwife hunting. Nor is it necessary to apply a modern conception of a feminist consciousness onto early modern women to imagine that the benefits of their support for patriarchy were circumscribed and fleeting. The question is not whether witchcraft was good or bad for women, of course, but how historians ought to view the women and men involved. In the end Gaskill’s challenge to the misogyny-only approach could prove profitable, unless by lauding women’s assertiveness we bypass their fact of their confessions and deaths—or even more interestingly, their investment in a system that allowed them momentary access to power through their construction of another as a witch. Would such a direction ultimately be any more productive than the (admittedly insufficient and misleading) over-emphasis on misogyny as a motivation for accusations?

Gaskill endorses the study of witchcraft for “what it reveals about contemporary popular mentalities...For this reason male witchcraft is as relevant as female...indeed, its very atypicality even promises to expand our understanding of the meanings which ordinary people attached to witchcraft in the early modern period.”<sup>71</sup> Such an approach stands to offer a good deal to histories of witchcraft; microhistories and case studies can illuminate new possibilities, and even exceptions help us to see how variable the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 146-147.

outcomes in such cases really could be. The focus appears to shift, however, when Gaskill analyzes a 1617 witchcraft case involving a non-marginal man accused of witchcraft. The case, he points out, “demonstrates that the Devil could sometimes assume the shape of a man, and that the place of gender in witchcraft accusations requires careful contextualization and an awareness of its subtleties, complexities and contingencies.”<sup>72</sup>

The case leads Gaskill to conclude that the reason a man could be prosecuted for malefic witchcraft despite the “strong association between women and witches” was explained in part by the fact that “contemporary definitions of the witch were varied and vague, especially over the question of gender.”<sup>73</sup> While demonstrating that there was room in early modern England for a male malefic witch, Gaskill appears hesitant to emphasize gender’s significance. Citing Christina Lerner and Stuart Clark, he states that “[w]itches and women were never equated; women were strongly associated with witchcraft in the same way they were associated with the negative poles of many binary oppositions central to early modern thought.”<sup>74</sup> These same negative binary associations with women frequently arise in witchcraft cases and in witchcraft history, yet it is not clear whether Gaskill would approve of histories that interrogate them as part of an analysis of witchcraft as a predominantly female crime.

Instead, Gaskill suggests other more reliable factors as worthy substitutes for an emphasis on gender:

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 161. Writing about demonologists, Stuart Clark has stated that their continual associations of witchcraft with women were conventional, and “the merest of clichés.” He argues that because the misogynistic elements of demonology were unoriginal, they did not represent a particular interest on the part of authors to pursue women as witches. *Thinking with Demons*, 113-115.

Hence we return to the more fundamental question of how any witch, irrespective of gender, came to be prosecuted, and the broader explanatory model proposed above. In all prosecutions, three basic intersecting factors can be identified: the existence of conflict, the prevalence of witchcraft beliefs, and a legal framework which allowed the former to be legitimately expressed and resolved in terms of the latter.<sup>75</sup>

By proposing these three frameworks as the soundest foundation for witchcraft studies, Gaskill effectively transforms a study of gender in male witchcraft into one that questions the utility of such a study. By asserting that “social relation was more important to accusers than sex, status, physical appearance or even supposed maleficent power,” he opens up a space that could lead to interesting studies of social relations that include an analysis of gender and deference with a patriarchal framework, but it is more likely that readers will conclude that gender is irrelevant. In a sense, Gaskill’s initial engagement with gender as the focus of serious historical inquiry appears transformed into an argument for its marginalization.

Gaskill sees these three factors—conflict, witchcraft belief and law—as foundational, and adds, “these must suffice as the lowest possible common denominators for all witchcraft prosecutions. If we try to pin down the dynamics of witchcraft more precisely we risk creating an explanatory framework unable to accommodate awkward variations which emerge from the archives.”<sup>76</sup> Whereas the subject’s age, social status and interpersonal relations can be remarked upon as factors regardless of their primacy, it appears that gender must either be entirely relevant or entirely irrelevant. Few would argue that the existence of accused witches who lived peaceably with their neighbors discredits the concept of interpersonal relations as a factor in witchcraft suspicion. I

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

suggest that gender, like these other factors, was always present and relevant even when it did not supercede, or even match, the others' importance. Even if witchcraft and possession had not been deeply gendered, both explicitly and implicitly, in the early modern mind, the gender of the participants would have mattered in subtle and overt ways at every stage. Now that most historians recognize the greater degree of variation among witches, gendered and otherwise, we have a particular obligation not to undo the work of those who "found" gender for women in witchcraft and allowed it to shape some of their readings of the past. To take our male subjects seriously as gendered beings requires that we not separate them from their context, predicated as it was upon their complex web of relations with others both superior and inferior. Instead, we can use an increasingly complicated view of gender in witchcraft as motivation to find the very particularities that compromise the utility of overarching explanations.

Gaskill's hesitation regarding gender suggest more than the caution that all historians must use when attempting to draw conclusions about early modern evidence. His article provides an example of the ways that historians have increasingly brought gender into their methodological arsenal while subtly advocating its disregard. The nature of this critique is particularly subtle because of the extent to which the language of gender historians has been co-opted in order to more effectively dismiss them. For example, historians disinterested in or hostile to gender analyses may write of the problematic implications of binary gender models, or of assumptions of utter dominance or victimization by either sex. These interventions, while legitimate, often criticize claims no longer made by academic witchcraft scholars or effectively transform the focus

from one that values the complexity of gender in the early modern world to one that views its complexity as the root of its inadequacy.

Willem de Blécourt's "The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period (2000)" provides a rare acknowledgement that historians are engaged in an argument over the validity of gender as a category of analysis in witchcraft studies.<sup>77</sup> Following Holmes, De Blécourt suggests that the frequent invocation of Christina Larner's work—often out of context, he asserts—by those who find her statement that witchcraft was "sex-related but not sex-linked" supportive of their attitude toward the subject. The selective use of Larner's research has contributed, de Blécourt writes, "to an (intentional) misunderstanding between (predominantly male) witchcraft scholars and feminist witchcraft theorists, with the result that a feminist approach has not been sufficiently integrated into witchcraft research."<sup>78</sup> While equally critical of feminist scholars who insufficiently grounded their claims in evidence, de Blécourt reinterprets Larner's approach in a way that does not replicate her assumption of a clear line between "woman" and "witch." He finds her statement that "all women were potential witches" more profitable, since it allows historians to question what transformed a woman from a potential into an actual witch or, as he puts it, "when and how was a woman turned into her contrast, into a non-woman?"<sup>79</sup> This change in emphasis, which better utilizes Larner's work, has the additional benefit of opening possibilities for gender historians of witchcraft rather than removing them.

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<sup>77</sup> Willem de Blécourt, "The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period," *Gender & History* 12 (2000), 287-309.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 289; Larner, 92.

<sup>79</sup> de Blécourt, 291.

This approach allows historians to consider the centrality of gender to the creation of male and female witches without requiring it to be the only important factor. Ultimately, De Blécourt demonstrates that the relevance of gender is not really a question of evidence, but rather of underlying assumptions about the utility of a theoretical framework for historians and what would constitute contradictory evidence. His engagement with these questions and willingness to directly address these trends in witchcraft scholarship could encourage an increased openness to alternatives that will benefit early modern scholarship in general. This project asks how gender provided a way for some men and women to be sufficiently “unmade” as to achieve not only their redefinition as witches, but also enough differentiation from appropriate manhood or womanhood as to allow the wider community to comfortably jettison them from membership.

### **Writing about Men**

The appearance of scholarly work focusing on men as gendered subjects in early modern England and colonial New England has made possible a more sophisticated conversation about manhood. Alexandra Shepard’s recent work on the history of manhood in early modern England, for example, is a detailed analysis of advice literature, medical representations of manhood, domestic conduct literature, Cambridge University criminal records, and evidence of bad behavior, violence and struggles over social credit.<sup>80</sup> She argues that:

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<sup>80</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

manhood and patriarchy were not equated in early modern England, and should not be elided by gender historians. While men were often better placed to benefit from them, patriarchal imperatives nonetheless constituted attempts to discipline and order men as well as women... To understand the social practice of patriarchy in early modern England, we need to be far more aware of precisely which men stood to gain, which women stood to lose, and in which contexts. Conversely, we need to identify instances both when women benefited from, and men were barred access to, patriarchal privileges. Finally, it is important to ask whether gender was ever eclipsed by other determinants of status and identity in ways which rendered it temporarily irrelevant.<sup>81</sup>

It seems safe to say that manhood and patriarchy were *equated*, though certainly not exclusively, universally or without variation. The majority of historians today accept a more complicated early modern picture than simple male dominance over victimized women, and in many ways Shepard's work is a fine example of work that takes seriously the important obligation not to *elide* manhood and patriarchy. Because most historians understand that men as well as women were subjected to patriarchy's regulatory efforts to maintain order and deference, we seem less in danger of returning to that model. I also agree with Shepard that worthy gender histories ought to investigate men who lost influence and women who gained it through the exercise of patriarchal powers. Demographic and economic data as well as court records can show us how incredibly varied "manhoods" could be depending upon their particular context. And reducing men's gendered experiences to anxiety or women's to unmitigated oppression is less interesting on all counts. The ways in which women could take up privileges in some situations and also participate in the reinforcement of patriarchal prerogatives as witnesses and witches seems far more fruitful.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 1; 4.

Few historians, surely, would doubt whether there were “ever” moments in which factors other than gender were at the fore. It may be profitable, however, to emphasize that gender would be rendered only “*temporarily* irrelevant”; just as men accused of witchcraft did not cease to be men by dint of that accusation, their age and social position—no matter how central to the outcome of the case—did not erase their position as men. We cannot subsume age and social status in gender alone, and neither can we subsume gender in considerations of age and social status. Indeed, if we were to follow Shepard’s methodology completely, we would apply her detailed analysis to women as well as men, to the benefit of women’s history overall. There were differences of age and social status and reputation that separated women, too, and in the contest of a witchcraft or possession case there were both women and men who challenged and perpetuated patriarchal order. It may not be possible to pin down many of these individuals for very long before they appear less as winners or losers and more as competitors.

Shepard uses prescriptive literature and court records to show that manhood (like womanhood, I would add) was contested, challenged and reinscribed. Similarly, witchcraft-possession narratives reveal a variety of axes on which a man's viability could turn. Her study allows us to get a larger picture of available “manhoods” in early modern England, and her subjects may be more representative of “regular” people’s lives than what we learn from witchcraft-possession. But if we are concerned with patriarchal societies, we need to consider how that organizing principle shaped language, knowledge and power and in turn influenced the agency of early modern men and women. Witchcraft narratives communicated dominant ideologies of gender alongside other salient factors, and so I have chosen to study the contest over manhood and patriarchy



among men but not as a separable phenomenon from women or ideas about womanhood or witchcraft. Would it even be possible to look at men "apart" from women in this context, given the ways that the very terms of debate and its theological underpinnings were grounded in gendered (and other) binaries?

Shepard is right that "[t]o discern the full complexity of the workings of gender in any society we need to be as aware of the gender differences within each sex as of those between them." It would be insufficient, however, to emphasize relations among one sex at the cost of their relations with the other—certainly when the society in question was a patriarchal one. For historians to remain conscious of power (which Shepard acknowledges is important), they must not allow relations among men to eclipse their relations with women. Shepard asserts that the differences between men were as pronounced as those between women, but that they have been insufficiently explored by “gender historians of the early modern period, who have primarily approached masculinity as a product of relations between men and women.”<sup>82</sup> As beneficial as close investigations of men’s relations with other men are, it is critical to study men’s relations with women as well as with the subordinates and superiors of both sexes whose behavior constituted an important component of success or failure at honorable manhood.

Shepard rightly cautions historians against falling into the trap of seeing men primarily as anxiety-ridden; she points out that it would be dangerous to assume “that there were only two options for early modern men: they either achieved manhood in the normative—or hegemonic—mode as dominant patriarchs (in terms of effectively managing a household through controlling themselves and their subordinates) or they

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 5.

failed in this endeavour.” Shepard demonstrates throughout her book that an approach that equates manhood with total patriarchal control would cause scholars to miss the myriad other possibilities. She also points out that men who failed to have their own household could nonetheless find “plenty of ways in which to assert their manhood.”<sup>83</sup> Each of these points can profitably be applied to studies of witchcraft and possession. It is interesting that everyone can agree upon these problems with binary models of gender; I maintain, though, that studies of men alongside women would manage to achieve greater detail and complexity for men *because* we maintain more of the context in which they lived. To pay adequate attention to the relations among men, as Shepard advocates, requires an examination of their relations with subordinates and superiors of both sexes.

As a kind of parallel study to Alexandra Shepard’s, Anne S. Lombard’s *Making Manhood* (2003) similarly investigates the nature of manhood and relations among men, though her subject is colonial New England.<sup>84</sup> Like Shepard, Lombard does not address witchcraft directly, and she analyzes gender among men to illustrate gradations of successful manhood and its changes over time. Lombard is careful to avoid an oversimplification of early American gender conceptions, but the approach can at times appear problematic. She writes that “manhood in the early modern era was not defined as the opposite or the complement of womanhood, as it is today.” This formulation provides a foundation for her emphasis on a hierarchical model of manhood, but given the general acceptance that early modern gender models were binary (though not without their own flexibilities and innovations) it seems hard to ignore the ways in which

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>84</sup> Anne S. Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing up Male in Colonial New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

positive, manly virtues were the opposite of negative, feminized weaknesses. Lombard says as much herself, when she points out that sermons and obituaries:

most commonly listed maturity, rationality, responsibility, self-control, and courage as the qualities men should strive for. Similarly, the writers of secular books advising boys in how to succeed in life emphasized the same virtues of rationality, moderation, and self-control. Other seventeenth-century English sources, too, suggest that manliness was the opposite of sensual indulgence or ‘effeminate’ longings for pleasure.<sup>85</sup>

Lombard has acknowledged here that successful manhood was consistently defined against feminine weaknesses. But by composing her study as she does, she implies that gender development for males could have taken place outside of the context of men’s superior position to women.

In order to emphasize further the constructed nature of manliness, Lombard may overstate its non-bodily origins: “Manly characteristics,” she writes, “were not attributes that a male person would have been born with; they had to be acquired... They *did* believe that certain types of behavior were rooted in the male body. But the source of this behavior, the ‘passions’ (the rough equivalent of what we would call hormones), could endanger manhood and had to be mastered before manhood status could be claimed.”<sup>86</sup> It is important to remember, though, that these passions were supposed to originate partly in the weakness, irrationality and lack of self-control characteristic of women, children and youths. It seems relevant that this is what successfully manly men had to jettison from their characters before gaining respect as godly household heads.

Lombard argues that “claims to manhood in early New England were based less on having a male body than on having attained rationality, self-control, and mastery over

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 9.

whatever was passionate, sensual, and natural in the male self.”<sup>87</sup> This contention raises two issues: first, that the possession of a male body mattered to the extent that not having one made it nearly impossible to claim the privileges of manhood, though some women found ways to operate within this context; second, that despite the potential for every man to fall prey to his passions and weaknesses, those shortcomings were believed to be less “natural” to his body than to those of his female and subordinate contemporaries. Lombard’s approach, though an attempt to look carefully at various stages of manly development and contestation, is compromised by cutting those men off from the context in which they lived and asserted male prerogatives. Their communities granted them privileges or limited those privileges based on their gender performance, but we cannot imagine that sex did not matter to the way these men walked in the world. Even relatively “failed” men would nonetheless maintain influence over others that similarly unsuccessful women would not. Accordingly, divorcing them from women and subordinates limits the utility of the study for those interested in gender history. The fascinating complexity of gender roles in seventeenth-century England and New England provides us with countless examples of gradations in privilege, authority, and deviance; it would be a shame to begin these investigations only as we disconnect half of the population from the half against which they were constructed.

Lombard carefully articulates the benefits of a relational concept of gender while simultaneously assuring the reader that this neither exists in an historical vacuum nor overlooks relations of power. One of the most compelling realizations of this is her contention that “[p]atriarchal ideals of manhood...emerged not primarily to justify

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 9.

fathers' assertion of power over their sons, but out of a complex relationship between older and younger men that allowed them *both* to maintain a safe emotional distance from women.”<sup>88</sup> This is an exciting area of potential investigation for gender historians—not only because it acknowledges the need for men to assert power over women, but because it looks at how different kinds of men, in different positions, created and exercised power within the context of interactions with other men and women who themselves demonstrated varied levels of ideal manhood or womanhood. Later, Lombard describes how some men asserted appropriate manliness by demonstrating that they were not only not women, but also not boys.<sup>89</sup> By reserving sufficient attention to all of the players in these historical moments we stand to gain a uniquely detailed snapshot of some of gender's possibilities and prohibitions.

### **Writing About Men and Witchcraft**

In a 1987 article about the witch image in early modern Europe, G.R. Quaipe states that the simplistic gender explanation for witchcraft trials—as manufactured by bloodthirsty, elite men to oppress unruly women—is “little more than a backward projection by extreme feminists of their idealised future.”<sup>90</sup> While few contemporary scholars would support this sentiment, it does suggest an element of the academic gender debate that usually remains implicit: “feminists” might be dangerous. In the same year that Shepard and Lombard published their books, Lara Apps and Andrew Gow published *Male Witches in early modern Europe* to respond to the comparative lack of scholarship

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>90</sup> G.R. Quaipe, *Godly Zeal and Furious Rage: The Witch in Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 109.

devoted to the men who suffered in Europe's witch-hunts.<sup>91</sup> Their book analyzes the historiography of witchcraft in Europe, and is primarily concerned with demonological texts and the foundation they may have provided for gendered conceptions of witchcraft.

Like de Blécourt, Apps and Gow also provide a welcome acknowledgement of the current debate about gender in witchcraft studies, though they seem to view its implications differently. This may stem from the extent to which Apps and Gow appear to regard their project as a patently risky undertaking. To challenge a historiography chained to a "polarised, essentialising view of gender and its relationship to witch-hunting," they have to engage with "a strongly politicised discourse about witches: inside the academy and without, the female witch is a potent symbol of women's oppression by men and, rather paradoxically, of women's power." Having steeled themselves for a wave of backlash from "avowed feminists" and wiccans, they state their intention to "make what is hidden visible: not only male witches themselves, but also the historiographical structures and politics that exclude them as historical subjects. This may seem threatening to some readers, especially to those with a heavy investment in representing witches as essentially female, or in claiming the study of early modern witches as women's history."<sup>92</sup> Even while remaining aware of the scholarly and political implications of "seeing" witches as female or male, this formulation appears excessively cautious. Whatever heavy investments remain in the fields, presumably history and women's studies, few appear especially antagonistic to the study of manhood and witchcraft.

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<sup>91</sup> Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in early modern Europe*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 2; 5.

In order to outline the different sides of the debate, Apps and Gow mention feminist scholars' criticism of historians who fail to place women at the center of their work, or who otherwise communicate a kind of gender-skepticism. Apps and Gow agree with Diane Purkiss, for example, that some (male) historians have seemed unable to resist the continual refutation of Margaret Murray and others whose books about the misogyny of the witch trials were popular but methodologically flawed. They also appear to agree that in some instances male scholars have used language that "supports [Purkiss's] critique."<sup>93</sup> Apps and Gow further acknowledge that some eminent historians, such as "H.R. Trevor-Roper, Erik Midelfort, Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas, have all been criticised for their interpretations of women as witches and witch-hunting, which implied at certain points that women were at fault" for having been targeted as suspects.<sup>94</sup> Apps and Gow do not refute the charges against these scholars, though they emphasize that their work is generally sympathetic to the plight of the historical subjects. Their introduction to this controversy, though, implies that the attacks on these historians were, if not groundless, at least immoderate. "Feminist scholars," they write, "are eager to point out male academics' insensitivity to women and gender issues."<sup>95</sup> It is the eagerness of the charges, rather than the content, that rankles. Later, Apps and Gow

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 26. See Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 62-63. See also the aforementioned Margaret Murray, *The witch-cult in western Europe* (1921).

<sup>94</sup> Apps and Gow, 27. See H.R. Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, (London: Macmillan, 1967); Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684*; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London, Routledge, 1970); Thomas, *Religion* (1971). Karlson noted similar trends in Chadwick Hansen's *Witchcraft at Salem* (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 34-37; 58-61; 93-109; 119-120 and, to a lesser degree, in Richard Weisman's *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th-century Massachusetts*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 85-91 and John Demos' *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 86-94.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 27.

mention with some disappointment that while books by Macfarlane, Midelfort and William Monter acknowledge male witches, they later explain them away, in a sense, by depicting them as secondary targets—as relatives of female witches, victims charged primarily during mass hysterias, or targeted in areas where witchcraft constituted heresy.<sup>96</sup> Rather than pursue either group of male historians in much detail, though, Apps and Gow devote more attention to what they see as more significant: the enslavement of historical inquiry to rigid political investments on the part of feminist witchcraft scholars.<sup>97</sup>

The work of some feminist scholars provides Apps and Gow with a systematic explanation for the neglect of male witches in much of the witchcraft literature. Their response to medievalist Kathleen Biddick's summation of Carlo Ginzburg's *Ecstasies* is one such example. Apps and Gow condemn her "erasure" of the male witches by substituting the word "women" for "witches" in her paraphrasing of Ginzburg's work, though Ginzburg himself makes clear references to male witches. Based on this, Apps and Gow conclude that Biddick:

either willfully or unconsciously eliminated the male witches, who are out in plain sight in Ginzburg's text. If she did this willfully, distorting Ginzburg's argument along the way, it suggests a remarkable degree of arrogance; if her erasure of male witches was unconscious, it indicates that her feminist optics contain a blind spot. Either way, Biddick's inability to respect Ginzburg's sense of the term 'witch' demonstrates the power of the paradigm of the female witch and the discomfort scholars feel when confronted with male witches.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 29. See the aforementioned texts by Macfarlane and Midelfort, and also Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, 1976. Lyndal Roper has found similar connections between male witches and accused female relatives in Germany as well. See Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 26-29; 158.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 29-30. See also Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: The Witches' Sabbath in History* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990).



The same conclusions are brought to bear on Anne Barstow's word choices in *Witchcraze* (1994), in which she emphasizes the oppressive and misogynistic aspects of witch-hunting. Barstow, while mentioning her hesitancy to "drop numbers" of executed witches during her scholarship, lest she "kill these persons twice," subsequently states her desire to "ensure that the historical record finally acknowledges her [the witch's] death." Apps and Gow conclude that according "to her own standards, Barstow is killing some witches twice by speaking as if all witches were women."<sup>99</sup> If we imagine applying the same sort of conclusions onto the aforementioned male historians, they seem ill-fitting as well as inappropriate. One would have to inquire, for instance, whether gender-skeptical historians are blinded by "sexist optics," or if their omissions result from arrogance? Should the reader see their use of female pronouns in reference to witches as part of a manipulative disregard for male victims? But Apps and Gow never describe the limitations of those scholars with comparable vehemence. Nor do they link gender-skeptical historians to any kind of wider, systemic ideology that threatens the field. As apprehensive as Apps and Gow seem about becoming the focus of feminist recrimination, their approach appears far safer than lodging corresponding charges at the aforementioned historians based on parts of particular books. Interestingly, the unfairness of the latter charges is more immediately apparent than the former.

With a ring of finality that belies its interrogative format, Apps and Gow further question feminist scholars' motivation:

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<sup>99</sup> Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (San Francisco, CA: Pandora, 1994), 22. Barstow cites Joan Ringelheim, who gathered numbers of victims of the Holocaust, as the source of this concept. Ringelheim, "Women and the Holocaust: Taking Numbers into Account," a paper presented to the Women in Culture and Society Seminar, Columbia University, January 1986. It is possible that Barstow's use of "persons" may be derived from the original quote; even if it were, I remain unconvinced that Barstow's use of "her" in reference to the archetypal witch merits the full weight of Apps' and Gow's critique.

Why are historians so reluctant to take male witches seriously in their analyses of gender and witchcraft? In the case of some feminist scholars, the answer is probably relatively simple: they do not consider the persecution of men to be as important as the oppression of women, and the male witch does not carry the same symbolic power for them as the female witch does.<sup>100</sup>

The care Apps and Gow take in an earlier footnote to point out that “feminist scholars” are a varied group who cannot all be tarred by the same brush gets overshadowed by a more familiar image: the feminist as politically zealous and indifferent or hostile to men.<sup>101</sup> The sense of polarization increases if we apply to Apps and Gow the kind of word-by-word consideration they use with Biddick and Barstow. When they write that the “female witch has become a site for struggles over historical method and feminist politics,” for example, the reader learns that these are oppositional and irreconcilable. And the omission of male witches, they write, “is not restricted to feminist scholarship. Male scholars participate in the exclusion also.”<sup>102</sup> Here, the two groups are mutually exclusive as well as antagonistic. Such instances, though, should not invalidate Apps and Gow’s work. The debates they mention, and the more implicit ones that remain embedded in scholarly arguments, do need to be addressed. One hopes that historians in the field will be as candid as Apps and Gow in expressing the challenges they face when grappling with various theoretical and methodological interests; the result could allow us to find more integration than incompatibility.

The three main arguments of the book, despite the authors’ anticipation of controversy, seem reasonable. They argue first that male witches have been omitted from

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 39, 6n.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 26.

the historiography. Second, that “explanations of the dynamics of witchcraft prosecutions should be applied equally to both female and male witches.”<sup>103</sup> My aforementioned commitment to retaining a gendered analysis of interactions between men and women—and among men and among women—means that I am receptive to this approach. Applying the dynamics of witchcraft prosecutions equally to women and men makes sense so long as scholars remain open to the possibility of finding distinctions as well as overlaps. As important as it is to keep both men and women in view when analyzing witchcraft proceedings, we cannot imagine that the relation between their gender and power necessarily remained constant. The fact that the “making” of male and female witches were related does not mean that the processes were always analogous. For that reason, gender historians need to proceed cautiously when comparing the processes that made male and female witches.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, Apps and Gow state that “male witches could exist within the framework of early modern ideas about witches because they were implicitly feminised,”<sup>105</sup> a process that they take care to point out was neither literal nor based in sexuality. I have been willing to engage with the idea of feminization due to my interest in the ways male witches were “unmade” as men, which could potentially position them more closely with women and other subordinates. The authors’ formulation of feminization, though,

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>104</sup> See chapter two for an analysis of John Samuel’s journey from household head to witch, alongside his wife and daughter, in *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys arraigned, convicted, and executed at the last assises at Huntington, for the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton esquire, and diuers other persons, with sundrie diuellish and grieuous torments: and also for the witching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not been heard of in this age* (London, 1593).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 7.

depicts male witches as assigned “female” traits, such as foolishness and irrationality.<sup>106</sup> Their formulation emphasizes ways that men and women could come to be seen as witches on account of weakness, while frequently it was the inordinate power ascribed to them that made them so threatening. Apps and Gow do not overlook the powers ascribed to witches, but by presenting male (and female) witches as particularly marked by weakness they limit the variety of rationalizations available to their accusers.<sup>107</sup> It seems that the commonality between male and female witches in the English and New England records has less to do with constructions of mental or bodily weakness and more with the gendered process to which both sexes were subjected. Suspected witches were viewed as threats not because of their foolishness and irrationality, though these charges could co-exist with others at times, but because of their supernaturally-enhanced ability to disorder their communities and the patriarchal hierarchies on which they were based.

The limitations of “feminization” form the backbone of E.J. Kent’s recent article on male witches in old and New England.<sup>108</sup> Kent critiques Apps and Gow, and others, for attempting to “insert a masculine subject into a feminist historiography” and for ignoring differences between men and women in order to pronounce male witches as failures at masculinity. These historians, she contends, characterize “male witches as ‘weak-minded’, ‘passive’ and ‘powerless’, traits which stand in direct contrast to the way accusers described them.” Kent analyzes the Essex (England) court indictments to reveal “how English male witchcraft was distinct from the larger prosecution of female

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>107</sup> They state that witches “were feared for their power, but they were also understood to be subservient to the Devil in a very literal sense.” Ibid., 136.

<sup>108</sup> E.J. Kent, “Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680,” *History Workshop Journal* Issue 60, Autumn 2005, 69-92.

witches.”<sup>109</sup> While her approach promises to engage in detail with various constructions of manhood, it could come at the cost of sufficient acknowledgement of the interrelated nature of gender in both societies.

Kent found that male witches in the Essex outbreak were usually charged with non-malefic forms of witchcraft, such as enchanting, conjuring, charming and sorcery. Her findings further suggest that including such non-malefic definitions of witchcraft reveal more men (49%) independently accused of witchcraft, rather than falling victim after charges had been leveled at his wife or other female relative (32.5%). In addition, she states that the “middling social status of male witches can help to explain one of the distinctive features of male witchcraft—a generalized association between men and a bookish form of witchcraft.”<sup>110</sup> These associations, she notes, were rarely made with female accused, even though men were at times described along traditionally female lines. Rather than see the men accused of malefic witchcraft as “feminized,” though, Kent highlights the ways that men could articulate their questionable practices along the lines of elite occult sciences and even draw upon the work of famous men like John Dee—something that paralleled men’s ability to operate in the “masculine economic world” along lines of patronage and reputation.<sup>111</sup>

Kent provides four case studies of men accused of witchcraft in order to describe what she sees as particularly masculine types of witchcraft. She uses the story of John Lowes to provide a window into some of the Civil War-era pressures that helped contribute to the spike in witchcraft cases that took place in Essex (England) in the 1640s.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 69-70, 88n.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 71-72. Of men accused of non-malefic witchcraft in Essex, only two were labourers and two were husbandmen.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 72-73. John Dee was Queen Elizabeth’s personal astrologer.

In Lowes' story, Kent finds "a fairly acute fear of the masculine capacity to foster anti-social forces (recusants, witches and Anglicans) with the power they gained from institutional affiliation. The witchcraft narrative surrounding John Lowes is a story about male power...[and] a uniquely masculine image of institutional power run amok."<sup>112</sup> Kent sees a distinct masculine witchcraft in New England as well. In her case study of Hugh Parsons, a disorderly man accused of witchcraft in Springfield, Massachusetts in the early 1650s, Kent writes that "Parsons, whose words disturbed men's bodies and minds, whose presence disordered their households, seems to be a man in full possession of a compelling masculine authority... 'Feminizing' Hugh Parsons prevents any examination of a wider masculine context."<sup>113</sup> Kent also analyzes John Godfrey of Andover, Massachusetts, one of colonial New England's most socially disruptive male witches; Godfrey was itinerant, litigious and had a corrosive effect on his neighbors' peace of mind. Kent acknowledges that it would be hard to find a man "less ideally masculine," and outlines how he must have come to appear as an "intractable problem" to his contemporaries.<sup>114</sup> Kent states that while Godfrey's transgressions represented a challenge to appropriate masculinity, his inability to control himself "should not be theorized as feminization—it was a masculine state, a specifically masculine failure,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 78. She cites Diane Purkiss on this point as well, from "Desire and Its Deformities: Fantasies of Witchcraft in the English Civil War," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27: 1, 1997, 105.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 81. For another interesting interpretation of Hugh Parson's accusation in light of problematic manhood, see Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 158-189. She writes that his aggressive words "were forceful stuff, full of a kind of malign power. But not masculine power. For when he himself scolded, much as when he passively accepted his wife's heated words, Parsons failed to talk like a man. People must have wondered why, for example, he so often proved unable to transact business to his satisfaction. Such negotiations fell firmly within the compass of men's speaking roles... Instead, men such as Parsons spoke like women, and like discontented women at that."

<sup>114</sup> Kent, 83.

understood in relation to masculine ideals and with reference to a masculine body. Despite his manifest failures, Godfrey remained a masculine man.”<sup>115</sup>

Kent is right to point out that even though malefic witchcraft belief marked women as its main practitioners, men did not have to become substantively “like women” in order to be made into a witch. As profitable as her analysis is, her separation of male witches from their female counterparts relies upon a too literal understanding of “feminization”—though this may occur in part as a result of responding to Apps and Gow. Rather than reject the idea of feminization outright, however, it seems profitable to consider the ways that men who failed to overcome accusations of witchcraft had their masculinity “unmade” by other men in power. This “feminized” male witches in the sense that it distanced them from appropriate manhood and aligned them with characteristics long linked to female witches. These men did not need to be made into women, they simply needed to be unmade as men.

Speaking of accused men being “unmade” allows us to sidestep the pitfalls of an overly simplistic view of feminization. The origins of witchcraft accusations in differently gendered spheres are important to an understanding of how gender functioned in witchcraft cases for both men and women, but the processes of “undoing” decent men and women into witches were fundamentally related. It is important to remember that even though not all men were patriarchs or household heads (or even operating within the context of lawful, “respectable” manliness), even a subordinate man could count on a degree of male privilege when navigating witchcraft charges. Neither the ability of elite women to rule over male servants nor the fact of male subordination to other men

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 84.

constitutes a repudiation of patriarchy's influence on how they understood their world. Because of this instability, we can observe the "unmaking" of certain men through their representations in surviving published sources. When writers emphasized the dishonorable characteristics of particular witchcraft suspects, for example, their efforts reveal both an argument against their character and amplified those qualities that had already attracted the disapproval of others. An added benefit of maintaining a conditional place for feminization in the discussion of witchcraft will be not only to acknowledge its availability as a strategy, but also to prevent women's disappearance from gender histories. Ultimately I contend that we need not (and must not) erase women from witchcraft or possession in order to see the men.

Some case studies reveal men's resentment against other men who too aggressively competed in business, or who failed to model appropriate, customary charity or deference. In one sense these men's ability to wield power within their community marks them out as almost too successful at manhood. Yet this in itself was also a failure, to the extent that manhood was predicated upon moderation and self-control. While we may not need to be aware of *actual* women when analyzing cases like those of Lowes, Parsons and Godfrey, we do need to be aware of both womanhood and inappropriate manhood. Their accusations reveal a gendered vulnerability best understood alongside both contemporary gender norms and witchcraft conventions; we will not lose sight of these men by seeing their excessiveness as a kind of failure at the self-mastery at the center of early modern manhood.

Like female witches, male witches were accused of fomenting disorder, resisting their natural place in patriarchal hierarchy, subverting community relations and



disrupting the natural order. It seems logical that witches of both sexes were perceived to do so within the contexts early modern people understood to be their particular domain. Kent says men accused of malefic witchcraft were “overtly self-interested, assertive personalities who were problematic, not because they were marginalized outsiders, but because they were embedded in the relationships of their community...Accusers of male witches were mainly men who used accusations of witchcraft to police the boundaries of gender-community and the behaviour of their masculine fellows.”<sup>116</sup> These differences do help us see more about the particular set of circumstances within which many men were accused of witchcraft. Still, while the differences are important to understanding early modern men, they do not suggest that a study of male witchcraft could evolve wholly apart from that of their more numerous female counterparts.

The implications of Kent’s methodology create a bind for a writer invested in advocating the importance of manliness in witchcraft and possession—not as a replacement for study of women, but as a complement to it. My motivation to reassert the commonalities between male and female witches stems not from disinterest in the ways men’s lives differed from women’s, but from concern that an analysis of men isolated from women and other subordinates would achieve the opposite of its purported goals. In patriarchal societies, a men’s history that separates them from their subordinates and peers sacrifices too much. The privileges of patriarchy, which were directly founded upon appropriate mastery and management of a household, had to be undone so that men would appear not only sufficiently witch-like but also sufficiently unlike other, decent men. In this way, witchcraft accusations against men could achieve

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 85.

the same kind of conservative reinforcement of community values that accusations of female witches could. How would gender have been lived in early modern England and New England, if not in relational ways? Men “feminized” or unmade through the process of witchcraft accusation indeed did not become “fictive women,”<sup>117</sup> but it does not seem overly simplistic to acknowledge the extent to which male and female witches’ crimes represented related threats even when they originated in different spheres.

Most recent studies of witchcraft in early modern England and colonial New England recognize that not every man was a successful patriarch. Furthermore, men’s shortcomings—representing as they did the potential for the loss of privilege—were crucial in constructing male witches and mobilizing community opinion against them. But even contentious or disorderly men had a degree of credit among their peers that was formed along shifting and occasionally contradictory factors of age, social status and gender. Challenging the male-as-dominant, female-as-deviant binary is a first step in the interrogation of gender as a factor in accusations against men and women. But historians must remain mindful of ways that the nuances of male or female witchcraft may involve gender even when other factors are in play. The potential for a gendered history of witchcraft relies on our studying witchcraft cases as they were lived—in communities where men and women never remained wholly within differentiated gendered spheres.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

## CHAPTER 2

### A MAN UNMADE: JOHN SAMUEL AND *WITCHES OF WARBOYS*

The troubles began at Warboys (Huntingdonshire, England) in 1589, among the daughters and servants in Throckmorton household. The first signs of what was to come started simply enough, when “Mistris Jane, one of the daughters of the sayd Master Throckmorton, being neere the age of tenne yeeres, fell upon ye sodaine into a strange kind of sicknes and distemperature of body.”<sup>118</sup> Her symptoms included loud and vehement sneezing, trances and swoons, a swelling of her belly that would heave her above the restraining arms of observers, and a traveling palsy throughout her body. After two or three days neighbors came to visit the child, among whom was “Mother” Alice Samuel, who lived “in the next house on the north side of the said Master Throckmorton.” Jane grew slightly worse upon her arrival, and said to the woman holding her, “Grandmother, looke where the old witch sitteth (poynting to the sayd Mother Samuel) did you euer see (sayd the child) one more like a witch than she is?” The child’s mother evidently rebuked her and laid her down to rest, where she remained unsettled. The author reports that the “old woman,” hearing this, sat still and “gave never a word, yet looked very rufully, as afterwards was remembered by them that sawe her.”<sup>119</sup> We learn over time that Alice Samuel was an old neighbor of lower social status and, if

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<sup>118</sup> *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys*, sig. A3r (EEBO image 3). [Hereafter, *Warboys*.]

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A3v (EEBO image 4).

the authors are to be believed, a woman with some reputation for having a disorderly life and tongue. Perhaps she had frightened Jane and her sisters, either in their imaginings of her as a witch or through actual criticism or threats. That part of the background is unknown, but the response of the Throckmorton parents and community members overall suggests that however the girls chose their target, they had chosen wisely.<sup>120</sup>

The case of the Throckmorton girls is an excellent example of a witchcraft-possession case that reinforced existing popular beliefs about possession and codified certain practices within the genre. The Throckmortons' ordeal, published as *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys* in 1593, was widely read and used as a kind of manual in subsequent cases by both demoniacs and observing authorities. To illustrate the contentions of chapter one and the importance of keeping women in view while analyzing manhood, this chapter analyzes the narrative and outlines the initial accusations against Mother Alice Samuel and her daughter Agnes. Second, it considers moments in which gender and hierarchy influenced the perceptions and treatment of the men and women in this witchcraft-possession case; for example, how female bodies and underlying beliefs about them served both to demonstrate the validity

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<sup>120</sup> I do not intend to imply that their choice was a conscious and intentional fraud. It seems far more likely, given the cultural and religious position of the participants, that they came to believe in the situation they created. Even as they adapted and manipulated the situation, they likely felt fear of the Samuels and an urgency to pursue their conviction. Their "performance" of the symptoms also need not be a conscious fraud in order to nonetheless be calculated. D.P. Walker suggests, for example, that in some cases, disease and fraud could combine to account for the demoniacs' behavior. See Walker, 13-16. Nancy Caciola, in her study of European possession cases, forwards a "theory of spirit possession as a performative process of identity formation." See Caciola, "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Apr., 2000), 285. Similarly, Michael J. Braddick and John Walter suggest that "subordinate groups could manipulate legitimating languages as 'performances' to empower or protect themselves, and did so in ways that punctured the pretensions of power while avoiding the punishments that more overt resistance might provoke. But in doing so they were negotiating the terms, rather than the fact, of their subordination." See Braddick and Walter, eds. *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42.

of the girls' affliction and to substantiate the guilt of all three accused. Finally, it explores how Alice's husband John Samuel was differently undone, as a man, before his conviction and execution. The male witch image, which commonly involved aggression and disorderly relations with others, had notable similarities to and differences from the female image. Even though gender was malleable in the Warboys case, and alternately invoked or dismissed as suited the participants, it remained a central facet of the construction of accusers, observers, and accused.<sup>121</sup>

The influence of the Warboys narrative makes it particularly worthy of a close reading. When Samuel Harsnett, chaplain to the Bishop of London, sought to discredit Puritan John Darrell's dispossession of William Somers, he wrote that Somers had confessed that he "had heard and read some part of a very ridiculous booke, concerning one M. Throgmortons children (supposed to have been bewitched by a woman of Warbois) whereby he saith, that hee learned some points."<sup>122</sup> In 1600, Darrell noted that while Harsnett heaped his scorn on the participants in other possession cases, he was comparatively subdued about the Warboys case. Darrell tartly suggested that Harsnett believed the Throckmorton children were frauds, "yet he thought it best and most for his safety because they were the children of an Esquier, not to say so in playne termes...

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<sup>121</sup> Just as Braddick and Walter advocate for a broader conception of the "political" in early modern history, I seek to find gender for men in places that are not always read as gendered. They write of an "early modern power grid," and the profitability of using "micro-sociologies of power" to move beyond binary conceptions of power toward one more representative of the dynamism; both of these concepts are useful in considering the Warboys case. See Braddick and Walter, 38-40. Keith Wrightson similarly called for a broadening of the historical conception of the political in "The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England," in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 10.

<sup>122</sup> Samuel Harsnett, *A discoverie of the fraudulent practises of John Darrel Bachelor of Artes in his proceedings concerning the pretended possession and dispossession of William Somers...* (London, 1599), 93 (EEBO image 52).

considering whose children they were.”<sup>123</sup> Darrell also informed his readers that public opinion was on his side. He asserted that the Warboys case is “notoriously knowne, and so generally received for truth, as [Harsnett] himself dareth not deny it, though fayne he would, as appeareth by his nibling at them.”<sup>124</sup> These comments reveal how central the participants’ reputations were to the perceived validity of their case, and also how far-reaching the implications of even an individual witchcraft-possession case could be.

Historians acknowledge the influence of the Warboys case, as well. G.L. Kittredge provided an exhaustive overview of the important social connections enjoyed by the Throckmorton family, concluding that the “Warboys case, then, demonstrably produced a deep and lasting impression on the class that made laws. The gentlemen concerned were...intelligent, well-educated men, in close contact with one of the universities and with the capital.”<sup>125</sup> Barbara Rosen points out that it marked “the beginning of the tendentious, deadly serious literature of possession which swamps the market for years to come,” and James Sharpe notes that it served as a kind of manual for a feigned possession in 1604. While no records remain that place the text in seventeenth-century New England, the story apparently saturated popular views and later made its mark indirectly if not directly upon the colonists’ concepts of witchcraft-possession.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> John Darrell, *A Detection of that sinful, shamful, lying, and ridiculous discours of Samuel Harshnet...* (London, 1600), 21 (Early English Books Online [EEBO] image 16).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 (EEBO image 25). That the Warboys case appears in Harsnett’s and Darrell’s debate further demonstrates that while it initially may have contained, in D.P. Walker’s words, “no propaganda at all, except perhaps in favour of witch-hunting,” its existence contributed to what became a highly charged political and religious debate—in addition, of course, to its immeasurable local significance. Walker, 5.

<sup>125</sup> Kittredge, 304-311. Kittredge further notes that the Warboys narrative was cited approvingly by John Cotta in his 1616 and 1624 editions of *The Triall of Witch-craft shewing the true and right methode of the discovery: with a confutation of erroneous wayes...* (London, 1616), 77 (EEBO image 43).

<sup>126</sup> Rosen further wrote that the Warboys source “more than any other was the book which fixed the unhappy tradition of Puritan witchcraft—a tradition still valid and unchanged at Salem in the seventeenth century.” Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, 34; 213. James Sharpe points out that the Warboys case, along with a few others, was given to Anne Gunter’s father (1604) so that he might acquaint himself with the

*The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys* was published anonymously, but historians believe it to have been the work of more than one writer on the side of the prosecution.<sup>127</sup> It is a rich source, and provides insight into the familial, neighborly and communal dynamics that contributed to the eventual condemnation and execution of all three of the accused. While the accusing girls' possession performances can at times appear baldly manipulative to the modern reader, for the early modern audience the narrative likely provided frightening testimony to the ability of witches to channel the devil's power against their enemies.

Before continuing with the narrative, it is important to consider its place of origin and the sorts of people involved. Warboys itself was one of five adjacent villages that "comprised a wedge of land projecting from the gently rising uplands of Huntingdonshire to the island of Ramsey...On both sides of this wedge lay in medieval times the extensive fens, lush marsh grass and meadow at one place, and marshy bog and turf at another."<sup>128</sup> Like most early modern villages, Warboys had a history of considerable mobility alongside suspicion of itinerants and strangers.<sup>129</sup> Historian Anne Reiber De Windt traces these community dynamics in her article about the Warboys possession case as a

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symptoms he encouraged his daughter to counterfeit. Sharpe writes that Gunter's fits "were very heavily based on the descriptions of the sufferings of the Throckmorton girls in the tract dealing with the Warboys case. Print culture was joining with popular beliefs, helping to define witchcraft and to inform opinion on how both witches and those they bewitched acted, and on what could be done about such matters." James A. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A horrible and true story of deception, witchcraft, murder, and the King of England* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 62.

<sup>127</sup> Anne Reiber DeWindt concludes that Gilbert Pickering (the children's uncle), Robert Throckmorton (their father), the parson of Warboys and Judge Fenner were likely contributors. See pages 440-441 in De Windt, "Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions of the Ideal Village Community," *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct., 1995), 427-463. See also Rosen, 240, 2n.

<sup>128</sup> See page 84 in J.A. Raftis, "Social Structures in Five East Midland Villages: A Study of Possibilities in the Use of Court Roll Data" *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 1, Essays in Economic History Presented to Professor M. M. Postan (1965), 83-100.

<sup>129</sup> See 164-168 in Anne Reiber DeWindt, "Redefining the Peasant Community in Medieval England: The Regional Perspective," *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2. (Apr., 1987), 163-207.

reflection of community tensions.<sup>130</sup> The Puritan affiliations of the Throckmorton and Pickering families—Gilbert Pickering was Robert Throckmorton’s brother-in-law and one of the authors of the text—helps to explain the nature of the proceedings and the tone of the narrative.<sup>131</sup> She shows how Robert Throckmorton, esquire, appeared determined to wield influence and receive deference in a way that caused stress in a village unused to gentry presence. “By the time Throckmorton’s children were baptized at Warboys in the 1570s and 1580s,” she writes, “it had been about thirty years since an adult male representative of the Throckmorton family had resided in that village.”<sup>132</sup> Though the Throckmortons were the wealthiest family in the parish, De Windt points out that the possession case could not have come about if they had not considered themselves part of the community. Indeed, the greater remove between resident gentry and the lives of their tenants by the eighteenth century helped make the “psychological proximity necessary for witchcraft accusations...a thing of the past.”<sup>133</sup>

Along with the requisite psychological proximity, the Throckmortons and Samuels shared a physical proximity that calls to mind the countless witchcraft cases in which conflicts between neighbors incited suspicion and accusation. De Windt found that the Samuels, for their part, were an old yeoman family whose head, John Samuel,

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<sup>130</sup> De Windt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 429-431.

<sup>131</sup> Keith Thomas has noted that possession cases “frequently originated in a religious environment...It is not therefore surprising that so many cases of possession should have been reported among Puritans and Dissenters. Possession was seldom diagnosed in circles where religion was regarded as a thing indifferent.” Thomas, 480-481. It is worthwhile to consider as well the potential of Puritan doctrine and practice to be both conservative (“orthodox”) and revolutionary; see Peter Lake, “Order, orthodoxy and resistance: the ambiguous legacy of English Puritanism or just how moderate was Stephen Denison?” and Justin Champion and Lee McNulty, “Making orthodoxy in late Restoration England: the trials of Edmund Hickerlingill, 1662-1710,” in Braddick and Walter, 206-226; 227-248.

<sup>132</sup> De Windt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 437. Keith Wrightson wrote about a similar case in Essex (England) in the 1590s, in which “hostile reactions” to a Puritan family there related partly to their status as “newly established manorial lords...Elsewhere responses to the imperatives [of deference]...could exacerbate rivalries” in these communities. Wrightson, “Politics of the Parish,” 29-30.

<sup>133</sup> De Windt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 438.



was a fairly substantial member of the community. The narrative records that John Samuel “was tenant to Sir Henry Cromwell” (knight) in nearby Ramsey, a connection that plays a crucial role in the progression of the case.<sup>134</sup> De Windt also found, interestingly, that Samuel’s depiction as a disorderly man was not unfounded. Her analysis of the village court rolls reveals that Samuel was fined repeatedly for letting his animals wander free, insufficiently maintaining his hedges, and revealing the business of the village jury—an act that got him barred from future service.<sup>135</sup> We cannot know for certain the precise nature of the economic relationship between the Samuels and the Throckmortons, but it undoubtedly contributed to the context for the girls’ affliction from 1589 to 1593. Keith Wrightson has written about “the acceleration after 1580 of the upward trend in rents which had begun in the mid-sixteenth century,” which was often accompanied by a shortening of leases.<sup>136</sup> If John Samuel had been doing well, he may have benefited from “the fact that the powerful combination of population growth, increasing demand for agricultural produce and rising prices was creating a novel degree of commercial opportunity” for some yeomen and husbandmen.<sup>137</sup> Alternatively, Samuel may have shared the concerns of many small tenants, who “were less likely to be concerned with market opportunity than with gathering threats to the security of their existing position.” While many such tenants in England “had shared with the yeomanry the initial benefits” of “rising agricultural prices, by the early seventeenth century the

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<sup>134</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D3v (EEBO image 16).

<sup>135</sup> De Windt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 458.

<sup>136</sup> Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 184.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

fortunes and interests of the two groups among the manorial tenancy were diverging.”<sup>138</sup>

With an unmarried daughter and no recorded allies in the community, Samuel may well have been feared for the security of his landholding.

Even though De Windt is not centrally concerned with gender, her article provides a valuable foundation for a gender analysis by placing the Warboys possession case in context with broader trends in early modern English history. The appearance of the Warboys case in 1589, and its resolution in 1593, place it at a moment in which historians have seen as significant for witchcraft and possession overall.<sup>139</sup> We learn that neighbors and allies did not flock to defend John Samuel from charges of supernatural as well as worldly disorder, despite his relatively established position in the community. As we saw in the aforementioned studies by Apps and Gow, and Kent, this disorderliness was a trait shared by many of the male witches in English and New England witchcraft. In order to get at John Samuel’s transformation into a witch, I will consider the ways that his actions and representation in the text both overlapped with and differed from the gendered processes experienced by his wife and daughter. The root of the narrative lies

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 187-188.

<sup>139</sup> C. L’Estrange Ewen noted that “The most dangerous period was the decade 1598-1607, being the last six years of the reign of Elizabeth and the first four years of James I... when 41 *per centum* of persons indicted were sent to the gallows.” See C.L’Estrange Ewen, ed., *Witch Hunting and the Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A.D. 1559-1736* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., Ltd., 1929), 31. Lyndal Roper writes that there was a “dramatic peak in the 1580s and 1590s” in the witch-hunts of Europe. See *Witch Craze*, 16-17. Marion Gibson notes a contemporaneous shift in the witchcraft and possession narratives of early modern England; she writes that both “our view of witchcraft” and the genre of literature itself changed over time. “Before 1590, nearly all the pamphlet stories about witches show the witch taking revenge for an injury or insult, or else being denied something.” After 1590, however, Gibson found that “victims begin to deny that they provoked the witch.” In addition, a shift from publishing legal documents to narrative forms which seek to justify the actions of the authorities. She cites Barbara Rosen’s comment, that: “Ministers justify their beliefs; rich families protect their local reputations by ‘authentic versions’ of events; doctors defend their professional competency; judges display their own models of procedure.” See pages 47-49 in Gibson, “Understanding Witchcraft? Accusers’ Stories in Print in Early Modern England,” in Stuart Clark, ed., *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan/NY: St. Martin’s, 2001), 41-54; Rosen, 213.

in the onset of the girls' possession symptoms and the initial suspicion of Mother Samuel. Accordingly, I begin with her and then move on to her daughter, so that by grounding the narrative in the primary (female) suspects, we can most clearly see how John Samuel was unmade.

### **The Female Witches in Warboys**

Mother Samuel's appearance may have fit the traditional witch image, but Jane Throckmorton's claims were further supported by the way in which she and her sisters manifested recognizable symptoms of possession. The authors of the text take care to assemble the narrative along formulaic lines, both to establish the truth of the girls' claims and the appropriate procedures used by the adults. One of the factors that made the Warboys case a prototype was the fact that the Throckmortons sought the assistance of physicians rather than cunning people or priests, something which helped to establish the family as resistant to popular as well as popish superstitions. The doctors' diagnoses and ministrations, as well, reflected seventeenth-century attitudes about the body, humors and boundaries between natural and supernatural ailments.<sup>140</sup> After doctors evaluated the girls' urine, they considered possible natural causes for her affliction, such as worms, or "the falling sickness" (epilepsy).<sup>141</sup> But the doctors could not help Jane or, after the

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<sup>140</sup> For additional information about the doctors Barrow and William Butler, see Kittredge, 302.

<sup>141</sup> *Warboys*, sig. A3v (EEBO image 4). Gail Kern Paster states that (despite some sixteenth-century challenges) the dominant physiological paradigm was the classical theory of the four humors. "Early modern humoral theory encoded a complexly articulated hierarchy of physiological differences paralleling and reproducing structures of social (gender) differences." Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 16. See Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 191-192 and *Witchcraft and Hysteria* for an overview of pertinent medical beliefs and practices, xxix-xxx; Thomas, 543; D.P. Walker, 10-14.

symptoms and visions spread to her sisters, any of those suffering in the household. In this and subsequent witchcraft-possession cases, symptoms often started with young family members and then spread to others in the household who then directed the possession more or less along the lines of the standard script, depending upon the reception they received from adults.<sup>142</sup>

Before long an audience gathered in the Throckmorton home to observe the girls' afflictions and consider the cause. The text outlines the girls' suffering, cries and antics that demonstrated an almost mad indifference to their own safety. The one constant underlying their rapidly changing symptoms was their naming of Mother Alice Samuel as the one who harmed them; over time the sheer repetition of this charge must have added to observers' perception of its validity. Thirteen year-old Elizabeth now joined her sisters Jane (ten) and Joan (fifteen) in setting the tone. Their fits, which varied in length and intensity, only worsened when adults attempted to calm them. Joan soon introduced a pivotal development, that a spirit spoke in her ear, foretelling that all five sisters and also seven servants "should be bewitched."<sup>143</sup> Thus Joan introduced to the Warboys case the dynamic of communication with the afflicting spirits, something that fascinated observers and readers and ultimately proved so devastating to the accused. These spirits, named

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<sup>142</sup> Sharpe cites the Warboys case as an example of how possession symptoms could cross the line we would draw between childhood and youth. See J.A. Sharpe, "Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household: Age, Authority, and Possessed Young People," in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 191.

<sup>143</sup> *Warboys*, sig. A4v (EEBO image 5). The author of this section states his intention to omit the details of the servants' afflictions from the narrative for the sake of brevity. He writes, "And this may suffice to be known concerning the seruants, that when they first fell into their fits, they all cried out of mother Samuel as the children did, saying take her away, Mistris, for Gods sake take her away and burne her, for she will kill us all if you let her alone, hauing the same miseries and extremities that the children had, and when they were out of their fits they knewe no more than the children did, what either they had done or sayd." The servants, like the girls, were afflicted for about two years altogether. Throckmortons' daughters, given their social status, were a surely more reliable foundation on which to base a witchcraft-possession case than servants.

“Smacke,” “Catch,” “Pluck,” “Blew,” “White,” “Callico,” and “Hardname,” appeared frequently to the girls and spoke with them for “halfe and houre together.” They were, as the girls described them, figures of considerable ambivalence. At first the spirits manifested little more than the malice of their human sponsor, and the girls argued dramatically with these invisible tempters. In time, however, the spirits claimed that “they now waxed weary of their Dame mother Samuel,” and they took on roles more like accomplices than torturers. The spirits still had to do their Dame’s bidding, but they also provided the girls with information to help them resist the bewitchment. In fact, the girls reported that the spirits ultimately communicated the terms under which they would be cured. The familiar spirits also allowed the girls to externalize responsibility for their actions. It seems likely that Joan’s prediction about the number of afflictions in the household could have served as a kind of directive, if an implicit one, for the other girls. Those who lived in close quarters to such dramatic displays of suffering were understandably susceptible. Joan and her sisters envisioned a household struck down by the malice of a neighbor and were able to convince their parents, ministers, doctors and judges to share their vision. Perhaps, when the adults believed, it is no surprise that the other girls and servants did as well.

After the fits spread among the girls, an assisting authority figure arrived in the form of the children’s uncle, Gilbert Pickering, who compelled Alice Samuel, her daughter Agnes and one Cicely Burder, “who were all suspected to be witches, or at least in the confederacy with Mother Samuel” to come to the Throckmorton’s house.<sup>144</sup> Thus

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<sup>144</sup> Cicely Burder was a suspect and subjected to an early scratching test, but she is rarely mentioned thereafter [*Warboys*, sig. B1v; B2v (EEBO images 6, 7)]. A similarly shadowy figure is that of William Langley, whom Mother Samuel named in her confession as the source of her familiar spirits. She further

began a long process of tests, fits, prayer and countermagic that ultimately sealed the fate of the Samuel family. Soon after Pickering arrived, Lady Cromwell, the wife of Sir Henry Cromwell who was a knight in Ramsey, two miles from Warboys, also joined them. The arrival of Pickering and Lady Cromwell, and their interaction with the parties involved, changed the case's direction and significantly raised the stakes. Lady Cromwell was well acquainted with the Throckmortons, and came to offer her condolences for the illness of the children. The Throckmortons' close relationship with the Cromwells certainly helped to establish their reputation and forestall potential accusations of fraud or popery.<sup>145</sup>

After observing their fits, Lady Cromwell demanded to see Mother Samuel who, as mentioned previously, “durst not deny to come, because her husband was tenant to Sir Henry Cromwell.”<sup>146</sup> Lady Cromwell warned Mother Samuel to stop harming the children, which she denied having done. Later, Lady Cromwell snipped a lock of the old woman's hair and gave it to Mistress Throckmorton to burn. This traditional countermagical practice was believed to interrupt a witch's capacity to harm.<sup>147</sup> According to the narrative, “Mother Samuel, perceiuing her selfe thus dealt withall, spake to the Lady thus. Madame why doe you use me thus? I neuer did you any harme as yet.” After leaving Warboys, Lady Cromwell was haunted by this perceived threat, fell ill, and in a little over a year she died. During this time she suffered from fits that resembled

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claimed that he had carnal knowledge of her body [*Warboys*, sig. D3r (EEBO image 55)]. This last instance is noteworthy, since fewer English than European witchcraft-possession cases involved sex with the devil (or devil figure), but this is the extent of the reference.

<sup>145</sup> De Windt reports that Richard Cromwell had been the one to first lease land to Throckmorton's father in 1540. De Windt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 439.

<sup>146</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D3v (EEBO image 16).

<sup>147</sup> Rosen, 253-254; Thomas, 550.

those of the Throckmortons, and “that saying of Mother Samuel which she used to her at Warboys, which was, ‘Madam, I never hurt you, as yet’ would never out of her mind.”<sup>148</sup>

We cannot know what combination of natural and psychological factors caused Lady Cromwell’s death, but it is certain that her passing contributed to the Throckmorton girls’ legitimacy. Her death also brought the case to the felony level; without it the witchcraft statute in its current incarnation would not have considered the bewitchment of the girls in itself a capital offense.<sup>149</sup> It is probable that the girls, whatever state they were in, would have heard the news of Lady Cromwell’s suffering and death with considerable fear. It surely increased the onlookers’ certainty that this was the result of powerful and threatening witchcraft.

Subsequently, one of the authors stated “now did the spirits manifestly begin to accuse Mother Samuel to the children in their fits, saying it was she who bewitched them and...that whensoever they were in their fits and were either carried to Mother Samuel’s house, or she caused to come to them, they should be presently well.”<sup>150</sup> After a long period of experimentation and enforced proximity to the girls, Mother Samuel began to lose her will to resist the proceedings. The entire Throckmorton family allowed her to believe that a confession would provide a way out of the nightmare. The girls said they

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<sup>148</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D4v (EEBO image 17).

<sup>149</sup> The law of 1563 stated that there would be a penalty of death for any witchcraft practice or conjuring, and if any of the victims died. Injury or damage to goods and chattel received one year’s imprisonment with quarterly exposure on the pillory for the first offense, and death for the second. Later, in 1604, the law was changed again, adding the feeding of a familiar to the list of crimes punishable by death. See Montague Summers, introduction to Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), xviii-xx; Kittredge, 282-284. Scot’s book was first published in 1584, which Richard Weisman points out was the same year in which the *Malleus Maleficarum*—that work by Dominican priests that spelled out women’s propensity for witchcraft as a result of their lust—appeared in English translation. Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Massachusetts* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 11.

<sup>150</sup> *Warboys*, sig. C2r (EEBO image 18).

“would forgive her from the bottome of their heart, if she would confesse it that they might be wel...that they would intreate their parents and their friends (so much as in them lay) cleerely to forgive and forget all that was past.” The parents likewise said that they “would freely forgive her from their harts, so be it their children might never be more troubled.”<sup>151</sup> The tactics resemble brainwashing; Mother Samuel was occasionally denied food and subjected to long periods of intense prayer, weeping, exhortation, suggestion and veiled promises to end the ordeal if only she would confess and ask for forgiveness.

As the prayer and weeping sessions began to have their effect, Alice Samuel wept uncontrollably along with the girls. Finally, having been broken, she confessed to Master Throckmorton. Realizing that he had no impartial witnesses, he summoned neighbors to hear her confession and then, satisfied, let her return home on Christmas Eve. The next day, however, under the influence of her husband and daughter, she retracted her confession.<sup>152</sup> The ensuing struggle over her compliance, which will be explained in more detail presently, led the Throckmortons to shift their attention to her daughter Agnes.<sup>153</sup> Despite the relative scarcity of evidence against Agnes beyond guilt by association, and Mother Samuel’s attempts to protect her, both women were taken away to the Bishop of Lincoln. There Mother Samuel was examined and twice confessed. At this point the narrator breezily comments, “[n]ow that we have brought Mother Samuel to the gayle, wee will let her there rest in Gods peace and the Queenes, until the next

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., sig. F4v; G3r (EEBO image 24; 27).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., sig. G3v-G4r (EEBO image 28).

<sup>153</sup> DeWindt attributes these struggles to Robert Throckmorton’s urgent desire to assert his will in the community of Warboys as a recently-arrived gentry member who, like so many similarly positioned men, conflicted at times with customs and traditions in their localities, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions,” 444-446.



generall assizes day holden at Huntington.”<sup>154</sup> Thus the text reduces Alice Samuel to a type, or witch-figure, that stands in for her actual self. This may have been how her contemporaries saw her as well—it must have been easier to convict the archetype than the woman and neighbor.

Agnes’s “undoing” as a decent woman in the village shared much of the structure of her mother’s, and allows us to consider more broadly how gender operated in the case and set the context for John Samuel’s eventual arrival on the scene. Even though it was a convention of witchcraft prosecution that the daughters of witches were likely suspects themselves, the second part of the narrative describes Agnes Samuel’s transformation into a witch somewhat cursorily, as if the writers preferred to rest their argument on her mother’s more certain guilt.<sup>155</sup> The Throckmorton girls managed this shift in focus by claiming that the spirits now offered new information about the source of their bewitchment. Robert Throckmorton sprang into action. The text presents the transition in this way:

And to come unto the daughter, Agnes Samuel, who now commeth upon the stage with her part in this tragedie, you shall understand that she was left with her mother in the gayle...[until] Master Throckmorton made his request to the high Sheriffe and the Justices to baile this maide, and to have her home to his house, to see, if it might please God, whether any such evidences of guiltinesse would appeare against her, as had before appeared in the children against her mother.<sup>156</sup>

By this point in the narrative the reader, mindful of the success of these methods so far, has no doubt that “evidences of guiltinesse” will appear. The children were by now so dedicated to a successful outcome that a failure to convict Agnes might threaten the

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<sup>154</sup> *Warboys*, sig. H2v (EEBO image 29; 31).

<sup>155</sup> Karlson outlines the relations of male witches to female ones in *New England*, 3, 31, 40-41.

<sup>156</sup> *Warboys*, sig. H2v (EEBO image 31).

legitimacy of the entire case. Whatever conditions had initially supported their possession performance remained in place, and their psychological investment in the freedoms (and even the risks) of their fits may have been so great that they had no choice but to continue.

Once Agnes was installed in the Throckmortons' home, the girls continued to advance upon the new target. Their pressure and demands escalated much as they had for her mother, only by now the girls appeared more confident in their ability to persuade adults and authorities that their claims were legitimate. They demanded that Agnes remain nearby so that they could perform the same experiments that had implicated her mother. These experiments included brutally scratching Agnes's face and arms (which I will discuss presently), and coercing her to repeat formulaic commands to the spirits. In the latter instance, the Throckmorton daughters, led by Elizabeth and Joan in particular, demanded that Agnes utter oaths that culminated in a command that the spirits depart. These oaths, presumably a manifestation of the popular belief that only the source of the bewitchment could call off the afflicting devils, amounted in the end to a form of coerced confession. By submitting, the accused essentially admitted to being a witch and to having bewitched others, sometimes to their death. It was taken as proof of the test's validity that the girls' fits continued when bystanders repeated the oath, but would cease when the accused was made to say it.<sup>157</sup> Each of the Samuels was subjected to this experiment, but the narrator devotes the most space to its use in the girls' attempts to prove the guilt of the daughter, Agnes Samuel. These are some of the passages that seem the most transparently manipulative and tragic, and while the narrator of this incident

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<sup>157</sup> For tests such as the Lord's prayer, scratching, and touch tests, and the ability of people's pre-existing suspicions to be supported through such testing, see Thomas, 551-552.

acknowledges Agnes' pitiable situation he takes pains to make sure the reader ultimately sees all the Samuels as witches and not as victims.

Joan Throckmorton beckoned to her sister Elizabeth to join her in "listening" to the spirit's instructions. After succeeding in getting Agnes to repeat the oath, and recovering at that moment from her fit, Joan saw the significance the adults lent to this test; she accordingly reported that the spirit would torment her until additional oaths were taken. Joan also used this strategy to reinforce Mother Samuel's confession. By telling Agnes "the thing saith...that mine Aunt Pickering should have been well before this time, had you not bewitched her again since your mother confessed,"<sup>158</sup> she lent credence to Mother Samuel's previous confessions and the idea that Agnes and her mother both were guilty. Joan left nothing to chance; her spirit reported, a full three weeks before the Assizes session, that Agnes would be required to repeat three oaths in front of the judge:

The first must be as she is a worsen Witch than her mother in bewitching the Ladie Cromwell to death: The second as she hath bewitched mistresse Pickering of Ellington, since her mother confessed: And the third, as she would have bewitched mistresse Joane Throckmorton to death in her last weeke of great sicknesse: and the Spirit sayd all this is true, and shall be proved true hereafter<sup>159</sup>

The use of coerced oaths was so successful that they played a central role in the hearing at the Assizes on April 4, 1593. The girls convinced Master Justice Fenner to compel Agnes to repeat them and, as always, each recovered on cue and only when the targets of their accusations spoke the words. The oaths ensured that the Judge would find the Samuels guilty of a variety of offenses, and particularly the death of Lady Cromwell, which carried a capital sentence.

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<sup>158</sup> *Warboys*, sig. M1r (EEBO image 45).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. M3r (EEBO image 47).

The coerced oaths, which represent the apex of the Throckmortons' manipulation, also demonstrate ways that witchcraft-possession opened spaces that undermined gendered and hierarchical norms. For example, the oaths served to coerce some members of the Samuel family to testify against others. After much of Agnes' ordeal had already taken place, Jane reported that only John Samuel's attendance and pronouncement of an oath would heal her. Despite Master Throckmorton's attempts to procure him, Samuel refused and the girl had to go to bed still in her fit. The next day, Jane adjusted her strategy to take advantage of Agnes' presence and compliance. Jane stated that her spirit had laid out only three possible ways for her fits to cease:

either your father (speaking unto the maide [Agnes]) must come and speake these words to me, even as he is a Witch, and hath consented to the death of the Lady Crumwel: or you must confesse that you are a Witch, and have bewitched me and my sisters: or else you must be hanged: then the maide was willed to aske the childe whether she should come forth of her fit, whensoever, or wheresoever her father did speake these words to her: then the childe asked the spirite, and the spirite answered, that she should...<sup>160</sup>

In sum, either Agnes or her father had to confess to capital witchcraft—every option resulted in certain execution. This strategy probably sought to bring about Agnes' confession, as this was the best possible proof of witchcraft. While she never did confess, she gave into the demands of the Throckmortons and the court to repeat these oaths, and ultimately the result was the same. The narrator noted that Agnes stumbled at the phrase “deliver us from evil” in her pronouncement of the Lord's Prayer, a further sign of her likely allegiance with her mother in the bewitchment. The deference that Agnes owed her parents—and especially to her father—was subverted by the conventions

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., sig. N2v (EEBO image 51).

of witchcraft-possession and the official legitimacy given to Throckmorton's claims. Because the Throckmorton girls were able to compel the Samuels' speech and behavior, they were able to deny them the chance to perform appropriate gender and hierarchical deference; this was a crucial stage in their undoing.

By now the Samuels may have sensed the futility of the situation, and when the time came for the general assizes they alternately defended and implicated each other. Throughout, Mother Samuel seemed consistent only in her insistence on her daughter's innocence. Once Alice stopped trying to retract her confession to save herself, she notably rose to the defense of her daughter and not her husband. The narrator recorded:

And for that her husband would not confesse any thing of the witchcraft at the time of his death, nor of the privitie of himself or his daughter, as accessories to the same: it was demaunded of [Alice] whether her husband was privie to the death of Lady Cromwell or not: she answered, he was. Being demaunded, whether her husband was a Witch, or had any skill in witchcraft: She sayd, he had, and could both bewitch and unwitch: but touching her daughter, she would in no sort confess any thing, but sought by all meanes to cleere her.<sup>161</sup>

Once on the ladder, Mother Samuel confessed to every remaining charge and was hanged. Though Agnes did not resemble a witch as neatly as her mother, she succumbed in the same way to the quandary of witchcraft-possession. If Mother Samuel was the pivotal witch figure, Agnes was the lynchpin of the children's claims that their suffering was caused by a broader conspiracy. Once the court was convinced of the legitimacy of Mother Samuel's guilt, there was little Agnes or John could do to save themselves.

After their executions, the narrator reports the immediate recovery of the afflicted girls, which legitimated the judgment's veracity. Ultimately the Samuels' goods fell to

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., sig. O3v (EEBO image 56).

the Lord of the manor who “gave the money to the corporation of Huntingdon, who used it to finance an annual sermon on witchcraft.”<sup>162</sup> Although we cannot know for sure how resolution came to Warboys after the Samuels’ executions, the text suggests that townspeople and elites alike found a satisfactory explanation for the girls’ troubling behavior in the familiarity of the witchcraft-possession script. Their reintegration into the community reaffirmed crucial social and theological hierarchies and allowed the village to reaffirm its commitment to order and stability. The construction of the Samuels as a family that subverted gender and hierarchy was central to their destruction, and the women’s experiences provide a crucial backdrop for an analysis of John Samuel’s transformation into a witch.

### **Gender and Hierarchy in Warboys**

English witchcraft-possession cases reflected the European legacy of witchcraft as a practice equated with feminized sins of malice, discontent, and inversions of proper behavior. Because of their obvious disruption of gender and hierarchy it is tempting to base a gender analysis on the afflicted girls. The narrative ably demonstrates the extent to which the Throckmorton girls managed to wrest control of daily life from those whose solemn charge it was to maintain order; this reversal of the social order is what made possession cases so compelling and, ultimately, so threatening. For example, by noting that “above all things Elizabeth delighteth in play; she will pick out some one body to play with her at cards, and but one only, not hearing, seeing, or speaking to any other; but

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<sup>162</sup> Thomas, 457.

being awake she remembereth nothing,”<sup>163</sup> one writer points out how the girl’s fits enabled her to shrug off the tedious responsibilities of a godly life without having to accept the responsibility for having done so. While their chores were rarely mentioned in the text, it is certain that the normal household routine was significantly interrupted by the girls’ and servants’ affliction. It made theological sense that the afflicted girls shunned prayer and thrived during frivolous activities, as the Devil would, as a matter of course, encourage the opposite of godly behavior. Such lapses represented the sins of temptation; adults understandably associated these symptoms as proof of Satan’s ability to exploit their natural weaknesses.

The audience for *The Witches of Warboys* likely perceived Elizabeth’s resistance to godly reading and prayers as evidence of Satan’s interference, but we can see it as partly a performed resistance to authority.<sup>164</sup> On many occasions she was asked to read, and upon any mistake she received correction from someone nearby. But “she could not heare any that corrected her, though he had spoken neuer so loude, yet if hee had pointed to the place with his finger, or giuen some other signe, shee would have gone backe and reade ouer the place againe, sometimes reading it true, sometimes not.”<sup>165</sup> Elizabeth’s possession symptoms, like those of her sisters, allowed her to rebuff the correction of her elders and superiors. In addition to this subversion of social hierarchies, her actions demonstrate ways the possession script was open to innovations by the afflicted and to various interpretations by observers.

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<sup>163</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D3v (EEBO image 8).

<sup>164</sup> Carol Karlsen points out ways that young possessed girls found an acceptable outlet for their discontent in their antics and externalization of blame. See Karlsen, 125-128. Lyndal Roper, writing about Europe, emphasized the way that possession allowed demoniacs to voice emotions such as envy and anger, against which there was a deep cultural taboo. See Roper, *Witch Craze*, 61-63.

<sup>165</sup> *Warboys*, sig. C3v (EEBO image 12).

Scholars have shown that the psychological terrain of demoniacs is fertile ground for analysis,<sup>166</sup> but my main concern in this chapter is the gendered construction of the Samuels, and especially John, as witches. Before investigating the ways that John Samuel came to be viewed as a witch I consider specific moments in which witchcraft-possession in Warboys opened a space for challenges to the traditional gendered hierarchy and directly relied upon these disruptions to prove the case against the Samuels. I will focus on two instances in particular that reveal how the case allowed adaptations in hierarchical relations: the struggles between men over the compliance of Mother Alice Samuel, and the scratching experiment, which ascribed to female bodies the power to disrupt proper hierarchical relations but also to provide the evidence needed to restore them.<sup>167</sup>

In Warboys, we can see that conventions of witchcraft-possession influenced relations between Mother Samuel and the two men struggling to gain her compliance—her husband and Master Throckmorton. There are references to what we would call domestic violence in the Warboys case, and while this could not be considered part of the traditional witchcraft-possession script, it provides another angle from which to view how early modern conventions of household and community were disrupted in this context. Physical struggles between husband and wife, such as those between John and Alice Samuel, were not unheard of in early modern England. It was a husband's right to physically reprimand an unruly wife, so long as the abuse was neither so frequent

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<sup>166</sup> D.P. Walker writes that the Throckmorton girls' formulaic revulsion to holy language was also "for a child brought up in a pious family an effective means of avoiding endless prayers and sermons." D.P. Walker, 50. James Sharpe similarly asserts that possession symptoms provided a "license for bad behaviour." Sharpe, "Disruption," 198-199.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas outlines some of the tests used to determine witchcraft, including the scratching test, 543-544. See also Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (London: Longman, 1998), 102; 112-113.



nor brutal that it came to be viewed as excessive and destructive to the community.<sup>168</sup>

Access to lived power was not gendered as simply as the law and patriarchal custom claimed, though, and the Samuels' conflicts both reflect and controvert common assumptions about the allocation of power among men and women.<sup>169</sup> The Samuels' marital relationship, invisible until the advent of the case, was additionally compromised as outsiders became increasingly invested in observing and judging their behavior.

Throughout the text the authors cite both threatened and actual violence committed by John against Alice Samuel. When a group of Throckmorton sympathizers sought out Alice Samuel for interrogation but found her away from home, they “determined rather to follow her whither she went, then stay her returne, because her husband was a froward man, and would not suffer her to talke with any, if he might know it.” She begged the authorities to let her return home, saying that “her husband would beate her for long tarrying.”<sup>170</sup> Later, when Alice Samuel confessed, her husband gave “her a foul term—and with that would have striken her, had not others stood betwixt them.”<sup>171</sup> When John Samuel discovered that his wife had disobeyed his order not to go

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<sup>168</sup> It was considered acceptable, even necessary in some cases, for a husband to beat his wife when she behaved inappropriately. In skimmingtons, men were mocked for allowing wives to rule the household and only excessive beating would have been likely to attract negative attention from neighbors. See Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold,” (1985); Ingram, “Scolding Women cucked or washed,” (1994); Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars* (1994), especially Chapter 5; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), especially Chapter 6; Elizabeth Foyster, “Male Honour, social control and Wife Beating in Late Stuart England” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1996), p. 215-225; J.A. Sharpe, “Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England,” *The Historical Journal*, 24, 1 (1981), 29-48.

<sup>169</sup> Keith Wrightson writes that there was a “private existence of a strong complementary and companionate ethos, side by side with, and often overshadowing, theoretical adherence to the doctrine of male authority and public female subordination.” See *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 92.

<sup>170</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D4v (EEBO image 17).

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H1r (EEBO image 29). The quote continues: “The olde Woman perceving her husband thus fiercely comming towards her, fell downe presently in a counterfeit swoune before them all.” When Mother Samuel awoke, one of her neighbors “peradventure better acquainted with her fashions than the rest” assuaged their concern by assuring them that she would fully recover. The narrator reports that she

to the Throckmortons', "[h]e utterly forswore the matter, and presently fell upon his wife and beat her very sore with a cudgel—many being present—before she could be rescued by them."<sup>172</sup>

That her accusers and others committed to her conviction in this instance served as her protectors seems bitterly ironic; her weakness may have led her to throw her lot with those whose pious intentions resulted in her execution. In other circumstances, Mother Samuel might have expected some intervention if her husband's violence was perceived as excessive. Her resemblance to a witch, though, and the case's inexorable progress toward her conviction, diminished her chances for true assistance. Both constructions of Mother Samuel, as abused victim of her husband or as a malevolent witch, turned upon her performance of gender. But no matter how successfully she may have performed piety and submission, the existence of the witchcraft charge—given its association with wickedness and malice—served to undermine her claims for protection and sympathy.

Rather than see Mother Alice Samuel in terms of a victim/agent binary, it helps to consider how her position was uncertain and shifting throughout. In fact, the volatility of her invocations of gendered legitimacy granted her what little opportunity she had for self-preservation. Her husband, the Throckmorton children and the community at large victimized Mother Alice Samuel, and her ultimate internalization of the charges that led her to confess and be executed demonstrates the extent of her tragedy. Nevertheless, the witchcraft-possession framework allowed her fleeting moments of self-assertion. The

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did, implying that her counterfeited swoon would not fool observers for a second, unlike the legitimate swoons and fits of the Throckmorton girls.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., sig. F 1r (EEBO image 21).

beatings she endured suddenly captured the attention of observers; they intervened despite their certainty that she had harmed several children with demonic powers and bewitched Lady Cromwell to death. None of the bystanders seems to have questioned why a woman with access to the powers of Hell would allow herself to be abused by her husband.<sup>173</sup> Mother Samuel may not have been able truly to assert her own will in the case, but by alternating her allegiance between her husband and Master Throckmorton, she kept both men uncertain about the implications of her downfall for them.

Though Alice's confessions served to seal her fate, the timing of her admissions, retractions and reaffirmations suggest a desire to protect her daughter that overrode her obligations to either her husband or Throckmorton. There is too little evidence of Mother Samuel's inner life in the narrative for us to know her motivations with any certainty. However, the arc of her confessions begs the question of whether or not they were her last attempts to assert control over the proceedings for Agnes' sake. When Mother Samuel returned home after her first confession, her husband and daughter convinced her to retract it. The narrator recorded Master Throckmorton as saying to Alice Samuel, "I will not let passe this matter thus, for seeing it is published, either you or I will heare the shame of it in the end."<sup>174</sup> When Throckmorton found that she still refused to confess the next morning, he took her by the hand and let her know that his suspicions now extended to her daughter, Agnes:

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<sup>173</sup> Perhaps this did not appear contradictory because it was customary for a woman to submit to a husband's beating, within reason. Writers were accustomed to accounting for inconsistencies in the nature of witches' and the Devil's powers.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. I4r (EEBO image 29). This is a tantalizing suggestion of the role that the publication of possession narratives played even before the case had concluded. If later published cases bred controversy and elite skepticism, here is an example that suggests that participants recognized the implications of publication early on. De Windt lends this statement additional significance, as evidence of Throckmorton's dependence upon Alice's confession to reinforce his version of the case's reality. De Windt, "Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions," 442.

He sayd that both shee and her daughter should that day (by God's grace) goe with him to my Lord the Bishop...So he presently sent for the Constables, and charged them with the mother and daughter and willed them to provide for the journey. When the olde woman perceived preparation for the journey, and the Constables in a readinesse, Master Throckmorton also putting on of his boots, she came to him and sayd, Master if you will goe with me into the parlour, I will confesse all to you alone.<sup>175</sup>

Mother Alice Samuel's submission likely stemmed from a desire to prevent her daughter's transport to the jail. It is possible that she saw Master Throckmorton's overture as a gesture of good will, and thought a full confession would distance her daughter from the taint of the case. She told Throckmorton that "I would never have denied it but for my husband and daughter, who sayd that I was a foole in confessing of it, and that it had been better for me to have died in the same estate I was in, then to confesse my self a witch, for now everie bodie will call me Old Witch whilst I live."<sup>176</sup> Rather than have Agnes be called a witch in the community, she confessed to the man who let her believe that this would prevent his pursuit of them both. After her confession was repeated and overheard by some neighbors who hid out of view, Throckmorton "caused the olde Woman with her daughter to be carried the same day to my Lord, the Bishop of Lincolne, and there he examined her with her daughter."<sup>177</sup> While her efforts to exert her will within the confines of the case proved futile, she might still have believed that her confession might prevent her daughter from becoming a target.

Much as she had in the instances of abuse by her husband, Alice both exploited and was exploited by her interactions with those overseeing the case. In her willful

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<sup>175</sup> *Warboys*, sig. I4r-I4v (EEBO images 28-29).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. I4v (EEBO image 29).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. H1r (EEBO image 29).

moments she managed to redirect procedure and resist the control of others even though her actions played into her enemies' hands. She may have transferred her allegiance from her husband to Master Throckmorton because she believed that the latter held more power to prevent Agnes' incarceration. Throckmorton's success depended on his ability to convince Mother Samuel not to act as a proper wife, yet the authors needed to decry her lack of deference as a chief sign of her degradation, as well.

Once Alice Samuel adopted the role of witch, she gained the community's attention and admitted in her final confessions that she did have supernatural powers to harm. These last compromises, though they made her easier to execute, provided her with a psychological alternative to utter powerlessness—especially after it became clear that she could neither escape conviction nor save her daughter. Having negative power may well prove more attractive than having none at all. So while Mother Samuel's fate ultimately reinforced patriarchal views of women and witches, her attempts to alter her relations with those in power, selectively internalize the charges against her and participate in judicial matters demonstrate how even the victims of witchcraft-possession cases could assert themselves. Her failure to obey her husband helped secure Robert Throckmorton's victory in this case, and the contest for her submission was played out between the two men as a contest of manhood. A successful head of household maintained a dominant position in relation to his family and dependents. The Warboys case pitted John Samuel, who was already seen as disorderly, against Robert Throckmorton—a wealthier, more powerful and well-connected man. Their clash demonstrates that witchcraft-possession conventions contained inherent challenges to

gender and hierarchy, and that the outcome could turn on the actors' ability to prevail on these terms.

The second example of contested gender and hierarchy in witchcraft-possession is the way that female bodies served as both passive and active manifestations of bewitchment—something starkly revealed by the scratching experiment conducted by the Throckmorton girls on the accused. For their part, the girls' own bodies served as sites for the kind of subversion of conventions and manners that witchcraft-possession made not only possible but also “necessary.” For example, during one of Jane's fits, an author recorded the actions of one Master Whittle, “lying in a manner with his whole body waight over her, to hold down her belly, fearing that she would have burst her back.”<sup>178</sup> Jane's afflicted body, disconnected momentarily from her senses, writhed on a bed under the full weight of a grown man. Given the lascivious aspersions that skeptics cast on such tales, the authors surely knew that to report such moments risked misinterpretation.

As fruitful as explorations of the afflicted girls' bodies can be, I focus here on the ways that the bodies of accused witches were believed to betray their guilt. The alternatively sickening and curious ritual of scratching is particularly revealing because of the way it juxtaposed (and made mutually dependent) the innocent bodies of the girls with the demonic bodies of the accused. Like burning the hair of a suspected witch, drawing blood, usually from the face or hands, was commonly believed to limit his or her power to harm.<sup>179</sup> Ostensibly used to relieve the symptoms of the afflicted, in Warboys the scratching test was used as a way for the girls to reinforce belief in the Samuels' guilt.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., sig. B2r (EEBO image 6).

<sup>179</sup> Thomas, 544. Dolan writes, “Since letting blood from the witch was thought to cure her victim, this practice also confirms a complex identification between the witch's body and that of her victim.” *Dangerous Familiars*, 188.

As with the coerced oaths described previously, this experiment was first tried successfully on Mother Samuel, and once her fate was sealed the girls turned their attention to Agnes.<sup>180</sup> The girls first expressed desire to scratch Agnes in their fits,<sup>181</sup> and soon they claimed that the spirits “forced” them to conduct the tests. The scratching tests highlight the ambivalent powers of female bodies (primarily) to both threaten and reinforce patriarchal interests.

Joan was the first to articulate her need to scratch, and she did so in terms that excused her for the vicious act she was about to commit. During conversations with her afflicting spirit, Joan insisted she would not harm Agnes unless she was compelled to do so; indeed, as the narrative progressed the authors place considerable emphasis upon this supposed inner conflict. Elizabeth followed suit, saying to Agnes:

O thou yong witch, O thou yong Witch, fie upon thee, fie upon thee, who ever heard of a young Witch before? and thus she cryed with such vehemencie of speech, and eagernesse of scratching, so that both her strength and breath fayled her. When she had breathed a while she fell upon her againe, and said that this was her sister Joane’s divell...that made her to scratch her, for said she, I would not have scratched you, and it was full evill against my will to doe it, but the divell maketh me to scratch you, stretching out my armes, and bending my fingers, otherwise I would not doe it.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to the banal cruelty of the scratching experiments, the reader is struck by the ways it enabled the girls to lead observing elites toward their desired conclusion. That the spirits supposedly named Mother Samuel, and later Agnes, as their “mistress” served to prove the allegations and set an unavoidable trap for the accused. Joan and Elizabeth,

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<sup>180</sup> *Warboys*, sig. B1v (EEBO image 6).

<sup>181</sup> Jane Throckmorton blindly scratched at her coverlet repeating, “Oh that I had her, Oh that I had her.” *Ibid.*, sig. B2r (EEBO image 6).

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K4v (EEBO image 41). Here Elizabeth refers to one of the “devils,” or afflicting spirits, not the Devil himself.

under the watchful eyes of Henry Cromwell and supporters, staged an astonishing scratching performance with Agnes in which they merged their reluctance and eagerness to scratch. They seethed with fury at Agnes just moments before kneeling beside her to pray and exhort her to renounce her evil ways.<sup>183</sup> They demanded that the adults present them with the maid's hands, drew copious amounts of blood, and then made a production out of washing, cutting and burning their nails as a precautionary measure. In essence, they ran rampant as Agnes, sidelined by the narrator but unforgettably at the center of the madness, simply wept and begged for mercy.<sup>184</sup>

Jane Throckmorton, who was only nine years old, instigated an additional scratching experiment with Agnes that reinforced her sisters' claims and made some new ones as well. At first Agnes backed away from Jane's advancing fingers,

but the child followed still upon her knees, saying to her, that [it was] as good to take it now, as at another time, for she must fetch blood on her, and she must have her pennyworths of her, saying farther, that she knew that she did now crye, (which indeed she did) but she could not heare her (for so much the spirit told her before) because she should not pitie her, when the childe was wearie and windlesse she left scratching, and wiped that little bloud and water together, which came from [Agnes's] hand upon her own hands.<sup>185</sup>

This gruesome image helps to reveal the complex psychological realm inhabited by the afflicted girls, particularly in Jane's assertion that she must not feel pity for the woman she assaulted. Instead, she articulated a sense of entitlement to Agnes' flesh and blood; buoyed by the adults' acceptance of the authority of the spirits' "voices," the girls were

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<sup>183</sup> Sharpe points out that possession cases allowed children a rare opportunity to chide adults for their behavior, essentially reversing the direction of years of religious training. Possessed youths, caught in a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood, were particularly likely to vent frustrations in this way. See Sharpe, "Disruption," 200; 205.

<sup>184</sup> *Warboys*, sig. M4r-M4v (EEBO image 48-49).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. N2r (EEBO image 50).



able to perform a convincing possession. In Warboys, the bodies of the accused were sites of power and weakness, of malice and vulnerability. Mother Alice's confessions may have spared her further tests, but Agnes remained to be broken. While Agnes never did confess, it is difficult to imagine the trauma of these events, held as they were in front of the community that every day became more confident in her guilt. The basis for the efficacy of the scratching test resided in the truths revealed by the women's bodies; the response of the girls to the witches' blood was presumed to be "natural," and hence undeniable proof.

Even after the scratching, oaths, confessions and executions, the dead bodies of the accused women continued to prove their guilt. Lest the reader fear the possibility of a wrongful conviction, the writers described the way that Mother Samuel's body irrefutably told its own story. Directly after the Samuel family was hanged, the Jailor and his wife stripped their dead bodies and found on Alice Samuel:

a little lumpe of flesh, in manner sticking out as if it had been a teate, to the length of halfe an inch, which both he and his wife perceiving, at the first sight thereof meant not to disclose, because it was adjoining so secret a place, which was not decent to be seene: yet in the ende, not willing to conceale so straunge a matter, and decently covering that privie place a little above which it grew, they made open shewe thereof unto divers that stood by.<sup>186</sup>

The spectacle of Mother Samuel's body, marked as it was by devilish influence, provided witnesses, judges and readers with assurance that her guilt—and by extension that of her family—was unquestionable. The presence of a teat on which familiar spirits were believed to suck, and its location in her genitals, suggests the sexual component of

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., sig. O3v-O4r (EEBO image 56).

witchcraft-possession infrequently seen in English cases.<sup>187</sup> In addition, by stripping the bodies the jailor and his wife may have achieved more than a confirmation of guilt. The Samuels' exposure could also have served to dehumanize the corpses and emphasize for viewers that they were no longer afforded the dignities of proper folk. They had been proved witches and murderers; the community could now understand their expulsion in material as well as spiritual terms.

We have seen how in this case struggles for dominance were intertwined with early modern investment in gendered hierarchies. Female bodies, in themselves exemplars of and justifications for female subordination, represented weakness and permeability to demonic influence. Yet these same bodies could also contain enormous power, even in the clippings of hair and nails. From the contortions of possession symptoms to the power of blood to halt them, the Warboys case was a battle largely played out by female sufferers against other female sufferers. One of the gendered justifications for the maintenance of patriarchal social structure was that women's natural, bodily weaknesses required that men use their natural intellectual superiority to lead women and subordinates in a godly direction. Witchcraft-possession conventions blurred the boundaries between female weakness and power, and created an ambiguous social terrain. It seems likely that the expulsion of witches who had been undone as appropriate men or women helped communities recommit themselves to customary hierarchical relations. This conversion could be accomplished by the creation of male witches, as well.

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<sup>187</sup> Roper, *Witch Craze*, 54. Roper notes that in baroque Germany, diabolic marks were "often found around the genital area." The Continental accounts, derived from confessions prompted by torture, often involved a formula more marked by witches who flew to sabbaths and who had sex with the devil.

## John Samuel: Manhood in Warboys

All three of the Samuels had obligations to defer to superiors both at the community and family level. While their relations in the community obviously had considerable relevance in their struggle with the Throckmortons and Cromwells, depictions of their internal family hierarchy also played a role in their “undoing” as an honorable family. Moreover, individual family members were used to implicate the others, something made possible by the disruption of John Samuel’s ability to maintain proper gendered hierarchy in his household. This failure, which came about largely as the result of Throckmorton’s interference, was central to John Samuel’s construction as a witch.

Of the three, Mother Alice Samuel most closely fit the traditional witch image, and her confession was the lynchpin of efforts to attain the conviction of Agnes and John. The Throckmorton girls accomplished Agnes’s downfall partly by forcing her to state her connection to her mother explicitly: “I am a witch and a worse witch than my mother.” The writers of the narrative describe Agnes’ scratching and oath-making tests more comprehensively than those of her mother, possibly because they felt (as the quotation above states) that more was needed to convince the reader that Agnes was not only as wicked as her mother, but worse. John Samuel is a still more difficult case; he is both everywhere and nowhere in the text.<sup>188</sup> He comes to resemble a witch alongside his wife

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<sup>188</sup> At times Samuel appears less memorable than his female relatives, as in John Stearne’s treatise about the preponderance of women among malefic witches. He wrote “those of Warboyes were women, and but one man.” See Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft containing these severall particulars: that there are witches...together with the confessions of many of those executed since May 1645* (London, Printed by William Wilson, 1648), 11. Alternatively, at one point Richard Bernard singled him out: “So could Iohn Samuel the Witch of Warboys bewitch and unbewitch, as his wife confessed.” See Bernard, *A*

and daughter, but only after negotiating a different set of expectations and interactions. He is the first to be mentioned in the beginning of the text, as in the title promising “Witchcraft, practiced by John Samuel the Father, Alice Samuel the Mother, and Agnes Samuel their Daughter” and the “notable arraignment and examination of Samuel, his wife, and daughter.”<sup>189</sup> His status as head of the household may explain his primary position in these lists rather than the perception that he was the principal witch of the family. His very viability as head of household, along with the questionable nature of his control over his wife and daughter, becomes an open question in the document. This uncertainty further highlights how conceptions of problematic manhood could contribute to the apparent guilt of men accused of witchcraft.

The process of transforming a man into a witch was gendered, though it entailed more than “feminization” alone. This process was relatively implicit in comparison to its female counterpart, but it became a part of the witchcraft-possession script nonetheless. The Warboys narrative, for example, devotes a good deal of space to the construction of Alice Samuel as a kind of scold and Agnes as a daughter lewdly brought up. These characterizations helped explain to early modern observers in Warboys and readers elsewhere that these people were witches. John is similarly characterized as disorderly and depraved, though his faults primarily come across as aggression and reluctance to give due deference. The pamphlet states that John Samuel “spoke bluntly (as his manner was),” and “was rude in his behavior and...lowed in his speeches.”<sup>190</sup> Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane have argued that suspected witches were often abrasive types, and more

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*Guide to Grand-Jury Men: diuided into two bookes: in the first, is the authors best aduice to them what to doe, before they bring in a billa vera in cases of witchcraft...*(London, 1627), 156.

<sup>189</sup> *Warboys*, sig. A3r (EEBO image 3).

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. G3v; L2r (EEBO image 28; 42).

recent work on male witches has outlined the ways that men's disorder was formulated in terms of witchcraft alongside women's.<sup>191</sup> The behavior of the accused was surely relevant in witchcraft accusations, especially as it had the potential to mark some individuals out as excessively destructive to the community peace. But with so many cantankerous villagers to choose from, it is clear that other factors needed to come into play for witchcraft suspicion to persist.

While a man's disorderliness and litigiousness could contribute to his undoing, the established view of what constituted a man's unruly speech was not as evident as it was for a woman. The image of the scold, for example, had a long and detailed association with witchcraft, while its male counterpart—the barrator—had less cultural resonance.<sup>192</sup> As a result, it is more difficult to gauge at what point John Samuel's speech became problematic. It seems likely that his peers perceived his limits as a successful man, but would also have granted him a degree of leeway as any one who could be expected to defend the viability of his own household. One of the first major threats to this viability came when Master Throckmorton brought his children to the Samuels' in hopes of relieving their fits and convincing John to hand over his wife:

Master Throckmorton, perceiving that by no means he could get leave of old John Samuel for the old woman to come to his house, although he offered very largely for it; which was to allow him (if it came to ten pounds in the year) for the board and wages of the best servant in Huntingdonshire to do his business, if he would, in her stead, besides his promise and bond, if he would require it, for the well using of his wife while she was with him: he could find no other remedy for the health of

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<sup>191</sup> Thomas, 553-56; Macfarlane, 158-159; Kent 69-71.

<sup>192</sup> Both scolds and barrators were believed to cause disorder through aggressive speech or litigation. While the scold was an entirely feminine image and crime, barratry was mostly applied to men. For information about both, and an example of a female barrator, see Gowing, 1115-116; 122-123; 207-208. For the link between gendered speech and witchcraft in the New England context, see Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue*, (1997), especially chapter six.

his children but to carry them thither, which he did, who as soon as they came into the house were all presently well.<sup>193</sup>

Given the outcome of the case, it seems incredible that Master Throckmorton initially sought John Samuel's permission to remove his wife from their home and made an offer that so explicitly denotes the value of a wife's labor. Such an affront demonstrates that Throckmorton had a superior claim to Alice Samuel than Samuel himself; something that witchcraft-possession (and Throckmorton's higher social status) made possible. For these men, the case was waged not only at the girls' bedside or in the courtroom, but also in the front yard of the Samuel's home. At this point Samuel realized that he stood to lose the right to his wife's presence and labor as a result of the community's indirect sanction of Throckmorton's interference. This left Samuel's patriarchal status very much in question.

In the aforementioned confrontation Throckmorton, armed as he was with his five clear-eyed daughters, had the upper hand by being able to set the terms of the engagement. He believed that resolution would only come about through the Samuels' confession and prosecution, and does not appear to have seriously considered the possibility that his own household's disorder resulted from divine judgment or any source other than supernatural malice. Instead, he offered John Samuel a choice of disorders. First, Samuel could allow Throckmorton to remove his wife, thereby demonstrating Throckmorton's mastery of the situation and "undoing" John in the ways central to early

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<sup>193</sup> *Warboys*, sig. E4v (EBO image 21). It is not clear whether money was exchanged between the two men, though the fact that Alice was removed suggests this possibility.

modern definition of an adult man.<sup>194</sup> Alternatively, if John would not release his wife then Throckmorton would deliver the five girls into his household, which would similarly lend credence to the witchcraft charges and reinforce John's inability to police the boundaries of his household. Either he would lose his real and symbolic power over his wife by its transfer to Robert Throckmorton, or that neighbor with his five fit-prone daughters would overrun his own home. Clearly Master Throckmorton was the one in the position to insist, and his daughters and the village surely knew it.

In response, John Samuel expressed his resentment of the invasion by quenching the fire and "saying he would starve them, besides very many evil words, which came from him and his daughter at that time."<sup>195</sup> The narrators' depiction of this aggressive speech serves to paint Samuel as a flawed and angry man whose insufficient piety and deference in speech aided their construction of him as a dangerously self-serving character. The language also reveals John's struggle to regain control of his household, which would have legitimated his family's standing—not as the Throckmortons' equals but as viable members of the community. In fact, John Samuel's efforts to resist the Throckmortons' demands, and the presumptions inherent in the pre-existing script, led him to contradict the girls' claims. Though he was not ultimately successful, his resistance represented an entitlement he held as a man, whose nature, body, and speech were not so clearly or easily associated with witchcraft as for his wife and daughter. This

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<sup>194</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, points out that the early modern definition of manhood as control of women's sexuality left it open to endangerment. Also, she states that manhood in the seventeenth century was characterized by continuity of patriarchal ideology overlying shifting daily practices. She states that cuckoldry was one of the greatest threats to manhood and its maintenance of honor in the seventeenth century. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 210. The Warboys case reveals how John Samuel met with a fate even more extreme than the most confirmed cuckold, all from beyond the bounds of a sexual crime. Furthermore, Braddick and Walter write that "a household head's masculine authority... was thought to reside in the claim of self-government." See Braddick and Walter, 19.

<sup>195</sup> *Warboys*, sig. E4v-F1r (EEBO image 21).

discrepancy enabled him to resist his conviction not only passively but also actively; his reaction to the witchcraft accusations remained consistently defiant throughout. He did not believe the girls were genuinely afflicted, as his wife and daughter reportedly came to believe, and took an offensive stance.

For example, when John Samuel came to the Throckmorton home to check on Agnes, Elizabeth Throckmorton, logically extending to him the strategy that had served to implicate his family, expressed her afflicting spirit's desperate desire to scratch him. But this time it was not so easy to complete the experiment. The author reports that while she crawled toward him, saying, "I must scratch him, I must scratch him, on the sodayne she stopped, saying, I must not scratch him, looke you here, and shewed her hands how her fingers were shut up close together."<sup>196</sup> As Barbara Rosen states in her interpretation of the narrative, Elizabeth's "courage failed before his grim looks and she contented herself with lecturing him for an hour."<sup>197</sup> Elizabeth went on to weep and preach about Samuel, saying that "he was a naughtie man, and a Witch, and but for him and his daughter, his wives soule might have been saved."<sup>198</sup> In addition to displacing responsibility for Mother Samuel's imminent execution, Elizabeth directed at John Samuel the aspects of the possession script that she could most feasibly apply. It was too threatening to physically attack him as he glowered defiantly and attempted to paint the possession as a fraud—something she could not countenance even to herself. Notably, he was not compelled by the onlookers to submit. Unlike Alice and Agnes, who helplessly withstood the tests, John would not play his part.

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. L1v-L2r (EEBO image 42).

<sup>197</sup> Rosen, 287.

<sup>198</sup> *Warboys*, sig. L2r (EEBO image 42).



John Samuel not only opposed the experimentation, he also claimed that Elizabeth lied and actively strove to assert himself against the conventions previously established by the observers and ministers. The narrator reports that he said:

that she lyed, and so did all the companie, in saying he was a Witch, and he sayd that shee had been taught her lessons well enough...and would not be silent nor suffer the child to speak for anything until he was almost forced unto it by the child's father. Although [Samuel] might perceive very well, as also did all the company that the child could not hear him nor answer to any of his speeches, neither yet stayed her words at his talking in anything she intended to speak to him, although he greatly interrupted the same (if she could have heard him); but she neither heard him nor any other in the company, yet she saw him and his daughter and not any other.<sup>199</sup>

The passage reveals how extensively the script had been developed before John Samuel entered the Throckmortons' house. His refusal to accept the rules of engagement as they had been created appear jarring to the narrators and readers. The discrepancy between his reaction and his wife's might be explained in part by the different position he held as a man in his relations with the authorities; because there was less of a fit between his appearance and behavior and the witch image he could more easily afford to act aggressively in the Throckmorton house. There are ways that such behavior could have been interpreted as a representation of his innocence, while for his wife no manifestation of aggression (or much else, for that matter) would have meant anything but her guilt.

Just as contradictory gender expectations "interrupted" observers' perceptions of his scratching test, the oath test also operated differently for John Samuel than it had for Alice and Agnes. Master Throckmorton, ever mindful that prosecution would require successful demonstrations in front of witnesses, told Samuel that Agnes had succeeded in

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., sig. L2r (EEBO image 42).

commanding the spirits to depart from his children and demanded that he do the same. But John “said he would not, neither should any make him to speake them, and he would not be brought to it for any thing.” Master Throckmorton countered by saying that Samuel would not be permitted to leave the house until he did so for as long as Elizabeth continued in her fit, even if it should take a week. In an attempt to persuade him to follow suit, various onlookers repeated the oath “until in the end [Samuel] perceived that Master Throckmorton was resolute, not to suffer him to depart until he had spoken them, then he began to speak...the man had no sooner spoken the words, but the child presently arose, and was very well.”<sup>200</sup> In the face of demands from Master Throckmorton, the minister and esteemed neighbors, Samuel was ultimately coerced into his *de facto* confession, which gave Throckmorton what he needed. Unlike Alice and Agnes, however, John’s coercion sprang not from the sustained pressure of prayers and exhortation, but from direct orders from superiors in the eyes of the community at large. For all of his rights as a man and force of personality, John Samuel was compelled to participate in a ritual he believed to be false and a trap. While he remained the most consistently recalcitrant of all the Samuels, Throckmorton must have realized at this point that the proceedings would work to condemn John as well.

Rather than let the viability of the oath test stand alone, the girls helpfully provided corroboration from the spirit world. Joan asked the spirit whether John Samuel was a witch, and the:

spirit answered that he was a Witch, and would be a worse then either this young Witch is, or the olde witch her mother was, when they two are hanged, for then all the spirits will come to him, and he will doe more hurt then any have yet done, for saith the spirit, he hath already bewitched a

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., sig. L2v (EEBO image 43).

man and a woman, and to prove this, if the young witch shall charge the divel to depart from you at this present, even as her father hath bewitched two parties, you shall be presently well: so Nan [Agnes] Samuel did, and Mistresse Joane was well...<sup>201</sup>

Here again, the girls relied on the oath of one Samuel to implicate another, and emphasize that the ones who least resembled a witch were in fact the most evil. They used Agnes against her own father in a way that provides an interesting counterpart to the choice she had been granted earlier: either confess or implicate your father. Her compliance could on some level be viewed as a further failure of John Samuel's dominance over his family. He was undercut in this situation not only by his wife, who confessed despite the fact that he forbade it, but also by his own child, over whom he ought to have had authority. John Samuel was truly "undone" at this point as a head of household; in the eyes of his accusers, the narrator and early modern readers all that remained was the formality of securing official recognition of the experiments' significance.

Once they were all gathered in the court, Judge Fenner summoned John Samuel from among the other prisoners and had him stand in front of Jane Throckmorton. The Judge had been told about the oath tests, and first asked Samuel if he believed that he could by any means cause Jane to come out of her fit, which he denied. The Judge then told Samuel that he had been informed of a "charme made of certaine words," and that if he spoke them the child would be well. Samuel, however:

refused the same and sayd, I will not speake them. The Judge perswaded him, and intreated him, insomuch that the saide Judge, the rather to incourage the said Samuel, spake himselfe openly the charme, so did also

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., sig. M2v (EEBO image 47).

master Doctor Dorrington, and others then present (by the Judges appointment: ) yet he refused the same.<sup>202</sup>

Even as the case progressed in this favorable direction, the girls continued to reinforce the proceedings with their fits and proclamations. After many prayers the Judge willed Samuel to pray to God for the child's comfort, but whenever Samuel invoked the name of God or Christ, the children's head, shoulders, and arms shook violently. Through each of these developments the girls managed to further embellish their claims and convince the authorities of Samuel's guilt.

In what must have been the final blow to the Samuels' hopes (and judicial procedure), the Judge told Samuel:

that if he would not speake the wordes of the charme, the court would hold him guiltie of the crimes whereof he was accused: and so at length, with much adoe, the said Samuel (with a lowed voice) said in the hearing of all that were present: As I am a Witch, and did consent to the death of Lady Cromwel, so I charge the divell to suffer Mistris Jane to come out of her fit at this present. Which words, being no sooner spoken by the old Witch, but the said mistresse Jane...wiped her eyes, and came out of her fit: and then seeing her father, kneeled downe, and asked him blessing, and made reverence to her uncles that stood neere her...and wondering said: O Lord, father where am I?<sup>203</sup>

Once Samuel learned that he would be found guilty whether he spoke the oath or not, he relented in a loud tone, possibly meant to maintain his dignity in the face of the court's assumption of his guilt.<sup>204</sup> The narrative's dramatic culmination, which likely provided final assurance for the author and audience, reads today as contemptibly predictable. It

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., sig. D1v (EEBO image 54).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., sig. D1v (EEBO image 54).

<sup>204</sup> Braddick and Walter point out that because attempts "to perform the role of good father, good Christian or good landlord" were "subject to public appraisal and constraint...subordinates could negotiate the terms of their subordination by appropriating the legitimating languages which accorded authority in the performance of social roles." Braddick and Walter, 15-16.

seems particularly rich that Jane offered reverence to her father and uncles as soon as she awoke; perhaps this appropriately submissive offering served as a kind of atonement not only for her previously outrageous behavior but also for the way she and her sisters had so masterfully negated the deference John Samuel would have been owed by his daughter, wife, and community.

The ending, much like the narrative overall, places the most emphasis upon Mother Samuel's confessions; her surrender was the strongest proof the Throckmortons had, and her willingness to implicate herself and her husband (if not her daughter) was crucial to the case. Interestingly, John Samuel's capitulation to the oath test, which had been the focus of a most determined campaign, does not have pride of place in the conclusion. As husband and father to two witches, he might have been portrayed as a kind of master and director of their malice, second only to the Devil whose work ultimately lay behind their downfall. Instead, as if sensing how much more tenuously John Samuel presented a viable witch image, the writers wove him into parts of the narrative but never allowed the readers' attention to rest with him.

Not only did John Samuel resemble a witch less closely than his wife and daughter, but also the narrator's great pains to depict him as one suggests that there could have been a kind of hesitance to see him thus reduced. After all, his guilt represented more than the traditional image of the usurpation of power by a discontented woman; it demonstrated that demonic influence could also undermine those granted patriarchal rights and responsibilities. If John Samuel had still failed to cleave to the established social order despite those privileges, what confidence could the reader have that other basic components of civilization might not also be compromised? To mitigate those

fears, the narrator unmade John Samuel not only to justify his death but also to reassure the reader that he was an aberration. The reader is left with a comparatively tenuous confidence in his guilt, built as it was upon the ways that he was undercut by the rebellion of his wife and the betrayal of his daughter. The reader might have wondered, “what kind of man and head of household was he, to have been so thoroughly compromised by his family and discarded by the wider community?” The narrator partially answers this implicit question by presenting John Samuel (however typical his behavior might have been of his peers) as an inversion of a proper man. Once that had been accomplished, his guilt, and hence the legitimacy of his trial and execution, were assured.

### **A Family Unmade**

Over the course of *The Witches of Warboys*, the reader becomes acquainted with two families whose lives were transformed by the onset and expansion of witchcraft-possession phenomena. While no one case can stand as a representative example of all the ways that witchcraft-possession operated in early modern England, this one both reflected and reinforced several key aspects of the traditional script. Its notoriety, acknowledged in later pamphlet wars, assured that it remained largely uncontested even as the social climate for such cases grew less receptive. Even more valuable, however, is its reflection of the gendered assumptions that governed interactions among the accusers, the accused, and those who made meaning out of their words and actions.

While witchcraft-possession cases provided opportunities for the disruption of a wide range of social norms, their potential to undermine hierarchies of gender and age is particularly striking. On the one hand, these cases allowed communities to rally around

common values, to externalize negative qualities and, ultimately, to reinforce traditional (patriarchal) standards. On the other hand, however, these cases—even more so than straight witchcraft cases—held within them seeds of disorder that were exceptionally threatening. Individuals in low social positions could vault to positions of great influence at these moments, however ambivalent or self-defeating that influence might prove to be. At the end of *The Witches of Warboys*, despite what appears to have been the best efforts of the author to the contrary, the reader is reminded of the danger that John Samuel's downfall represents. When Samuel heard the Judge pronounce the indictments, he said “to his wife, in the hearing of many: A plague of God light upon thee, for thou art she that hath brought us all to this, and wee may thanke thee for it.”<sup>205</sup> His claim was all the more threatening for its truth: Alice Samuel's capitulation to the demands of her captors made her husband's accusation and conviction possible. Despite her subordinate position, he was unable to control her confessions and complicity in the experiments. She explicitly implicated him as a witch in his own right even as she sought to preserve her daughter from the same judgment. It is possible that early modern readers would have seen the outcome as a consequence of women's potential for subversive power. Others might have perceived John Samuel's downfall as an example of the way witchcraft-possession conventions encouraged female subversion even as they ultimately repressed it. Both possibilities threatened to destabilize early modern communities, and they lay dormant in the text until skeptics brought these aspects to the fore.

On the morning of the executions, John Samuel gave voice to his resentment in a final moment of retribution. When “godly men” visited the family in prison to exhort

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<sup>205</sup> *Warboys*, sig. D2v (EEBO image 55).

them to confess and repent, they likely sought not only hope for the Samuels' souls, but also the ultimate justification for their imminent executions. The narrator recorded that:

...mother Samuel being asked...whether she did not bewitch the Ladie Cromwell? She sayd, no forsooth I did not. Then her husband old father Samuel, standing behinde, and hearing her denie the same, sayd, denie it not, but confesse the trueth: for thou didst it one way or other.<sup>206</sup>

Read literally, this statement could suggest that John Samuel had come to believe that his wife was in fact a witch, or at least that she had somehow caused harm to the girls. It is possible that the long, oppressive ordeal had finally convinced him that what the world said was true had to be true. Alternatively, his statement could have been a demonstration of resentment toward his wife and the futility of resistance. In another way, it is possible that his accusation referred to the destruction of their family, which she had helped enable by her confession and willingness to answer the Throckmortons' demands. However we interpret this final statement, we see that John Samuel angrily blamed his wife for their defeat.

This final example further supports the premise that the “undoing” of John Samuel as a man and head of household was central to the process of sealing his fate within the confines of the witchcraft-possession script. It may have been necessary to achieve a differentiation between him and his neighbors, not to mention Master Throckmorton himself, before the accusations would stick. Once he was sufficiently “othered” from the community at large his destruction would appear less as a threat to patriarchy than a way to reinscribe its priorities. To the extent that these extraordinary circumstances required that communities address implicit social and cultural goals, the

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., sig. D3r (EEBO image 55).



Samuel family became a kind of sacrifice for stability and continuity. The process that turned John Samuel from head of household into a witch was gendered, even as it charted a different path from his body and behavior to his guilt from that of his wife and daughter. While men could come to resemble witches separately from women, male witchcraft was linked to female witchcraft despite its origins in differently gendered sins. John Samuel did not cease to be a man, or become a feminine man, but rather he was undone as a decent man; he came to represent an inversion to the appropriate manifestation of patriarchal order. Having stripped him of the standard protections and privileges of manhood, his adversaries found a way to transform his former privileges into proof of his guilt.

### CHAPTER 3

#### GENDERED LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH WITCHCRAFT-POSSESSION

In London in 1602, after a group of Puritan clergy successfully dispossessed a fourteen year-old girl, one of the attending ministers, Lewis Hughes, disregarded his colleagues' requests for secrecy and brought news of the remarkable feat to the Anglican bishop, Richard Bancroft.<sup>207</sup> Bancroft angrily criticized the secret enterprise as disruptive in the extreme and dismissed the godly group of ministers and witnesses as a "rout, rabble, and swarm of giddy, idle, lunatic, illuminate, holy spectators of both sexes, and especially a sisternity of nimps, mops, and idle holy women that did grace the devil with their idle holy presence."<sup>208</sup> Bancroft's comment echoed some of the earlier statements of his chaplain, Samuel Harsnett, who had provided the public voice of skepticism in response to the dispossessions performed by the Puritan minister John Darrell in 1599.<sup>209</sup> At that time, in response to pamphlets published on Darrell's behalf, Harsnett reported that it was through public dispossessions that Darrell "hath wonne his spurrs in the opinion of many, especially women." Furthermore, that those who published in Darrell's defense were "children indeed: to what ripenes in rayling thinke you they wil grow, by

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<sup>207</sup> Like D.P. Walker, I recognize the limitations of terms such as "Puritan" and "Anglican" for the varied participants in this conflict, and use them "for the want of a better term." D.P. Walker, 61.

<sup>208</sup> J. Swan *A True and Briefe Report of Mary Glovers Vexation, and of her deliuerance by the meanes of fasting and prayer. Performed by those whose names are sett downe, in the next page* (London, 1603). Quoted in Sands, 189. The girl, Mary Glover, was the subject of controversy that centered on medical as well as religious aspects. See Michael MacDonald, ed., *Witchcraft and Hysteria* (1991).

<sup>209</sup> Harsnett, *A discoverie...*(1599).

the time they be men?”<sup>210</sup> Harsnett further claimed that those who supported Darrell’s “juggling” did so in order to pursue a factional, “Presbyterian” agenda: “It were to be wished, that at the last they would leave this giddiness, or...thinke more reverently of those that be in authoritie.”<sup>211</sup> When Darrell sought to defend himself, he countered that any who believed Harsnett’s charges were like “Italian weomen” and the “credulous popularitie” in France who accepted their priests’ descriptions of the Huguenots as monsters, “whereupon the poore weomen and silly multitude, never requyringe nor examining the matter any farther, fell straight to a kinde of hissing & clapping their hands, with most bitter out cries and hatful exclamations against them, with fie on them wretches, fie on them wretches (1600).”<sup>212</sup> Even though the Commission of Ecclesiastical Causes in Lambeth had convicted Darrell of fraud in 1599, Hughes’s announcement served as a reminder that this had failed to prevent the godly from responding to instances of possession phenomena. Even the ascension of King James in 1603 and his supportive involvement with efforts to discover fraudulent possessions did not prevent the godly from seizing the opportunities such cases provided.<sup>213</sup> For propagandists, whether in support of Darrell or against him, gendered language was a pivotal device. As part of their larger project to forward their religious and political

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 3; 12 (EEBO images 6; 11).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 15 (EEBO image 12).

<sup>212</sup> Darrell, *A detection* (1600), 1.

<sup>213</sup> James’s involvement with the Anne Gunter case in 1605, in which Harsnett advised him regarding Gunter’s likely fraud, further galvanized the Church of England’s unsympathetic position regarding Puritan dispossessions. This attitude was formalized in Canon 72, which from 1604 made it illegal for a minister to organize private prayers and fasts or attempt any dispossession without permission from the Bishop. Thomas Freeman states that Canon 72 “effectively ended puritan popular exorcism.” He points out, though, that the “Church of England paid a price for canon 72 as fasting, exorcism and spiritual healing served to divide puritans and later dissenting groups from the established Church.” Thomas Freeman, “Demons, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrell and the Politics of Exorcism in late Elizabethan England,” in Peter Lake and Michael Questier, eds., *Conformity and orthodoxy in the English church, c. 1560-1660* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), 61. For the history of Reformers’ rejections of Catholic rituals, such as the exclusion of exorcism from the second Edwardian Prayer Book in 1552, see Thomas, 54-58.

objectives, writers on both sides attempted to discredit the legitimacy of their opponents by attacking, in various ways, their manhood.<sup>214</sup>

Early seventeenth-century challenges to witchcraft-possession were possible partly because of initial uncertainty about King James's opinion of bewitchment,<sup>215</sup> and partly because Richard Bancroft and Samuel Harsnett had the support of the anti-Puritan Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift (until his death in 1604, after which Bancroft took his place). The political and religious context for witchcraft-possession, though, had been set long before. The possession script had a series of classical, Biblical and European precedents that varied over time but maintained considerable continuity in popular belief. English historians have rightly focused on the ways that this controversy was an outgrowth of struggles for political and religious dominance between the Church of England and godly Protestants who found much of the official church's policies too popish for comfort. Following Keith Thomas' analysis of the political elements of these possession cases, D.P. Walker places Darrell's cases alongside contemporary French cases and notes the ways that they led to gradual reform of the legal profession.<sup>216</sup> Walker ably outlines the pertinent theological and medical issues, and considers the role of fraud as well. While no advocate of Darrell's efforts to find witches throughout

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<sup>214</sup> For this chapter I partly subsume age in gender, not to diminish its significance as a separate category of analysis, but to explore the ways it was linked to gender for men, who had to repudiate youth's conditions both concretely (through marriage, fatherhood, maintenance of a household) and intangibly (through moderation, autonomy and reason).

<sup>215</sup> While James published a warning about the prevalence of "detestable slaves of the Devill, the Witches or enchaunters" in 1597, just a few years later he devoted himself to an opposite course. See his *Daemonologie, in forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Bookes*. (Edinburgh, Printed by Robert Waldegrave. Printer to the Kings Majestie, 1597), sig. A2r (EEBO image 2).

<sup>216</sup> Thomas, 536-545; D.P. Walker, 1; 75-77. For additional insight regarding the ways this case subverted legal customs, see Corrine Holt Rickert, "The Case of John Darrell: Minister and Exorcist," *University of Florida Monographs* No. 9, Winter 1962 (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1962), 38-40.

England, Walker states that Darrell's treatment at the hands of the Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes was irregular and unjust.<sup>217</sup>

F.W. Brownlow takes an entirely different approach to Darrell and Harsnett's conflict.<sup>218</sup> While also focusing on religious politics, he presents Darrell as a deluded crank and Harsnett as a prescient humanitarian whose tactics were justified by a sincere desire to prevent fraud and the murder of innocents. Brownlow criticizes G.L. Kittredge, D.P. Walker and Stephen Greenblatt for presenting Darrell as the victim, and bemoans the fact that "Modern writers...are reluctant to believe this of Darrell, yet pious fraud is very common, and its perpetrators are usually persistent in self-defense."<sup>219</sup> I would maintain, however, that just because Darrell was mistaken does not mean that he was a fraud. I am convinced that he believed in the dispossessions, and that this helps to explain why the damning testimony by some of his demoniacs produced such bewildering cognitive dissonance. Brownlow appears to be open to a reading that allows for the coexistence of sincerity and pretense, but for Harsnett and Bancroft. He writes:

Bancroft's and Harsnett's skepticism was as much a psychological necessity for them as credulity was for the priests. It was their only defense, as ecclesiastics and individuals, against otherwise dangerous and inexplicable phenomena. Consequently they, like the [Catholic] exorcists, tolerate inconsistencies in their position that their own strong intelligence would otherwise reject.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> D.P. Walker writes that "the injustice of this trial and verdict is manifest," and points out the irregularity of elevating Somers's credit over Darrell's given the latter's "unblemished character," 64-65.

<sup>218</sup> F.W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; 60; 64.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. The particular case Brownlow refers to here is that of Father William Weston, a Jesuit who exorcized a group of young people in Denham in 1585-1586. Harsnett published *A declaration of egregious popish impostures to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties subiects from their alleageance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils. Practised by Edmunds, alias Weston a Iesuit, and diuers Romish priestes his wicked associates...* (London: Printed by Iames Roberts, dwelling in Barbican) in 1603, seventeen years after the event, to draw unflattering comparisons between Weston's exorcisms and Darrell's dispossessions. Many scholars have

It seems clear to me that this model applies to Darrell as well. Despite his strident tone and incredulity at the Commission's disdain for him, there is no evidence to suggest that Darrell did not believe his own godly message. For him consciously to lie about a matter of God's actions in the world is practically inconceivable. Instead, his faith filled in the gaps and accounted for inconsistencies.

Historian Thomas Freeman provides a useful overview of the political and religious implications of the struggles between Darrell and the Church of England. He writes that the controversy:

provides an excellent case study in the creation of orthodoxy in the Church of England through the struggles between conformists and dissidents... [and] provides an opportunity to assess the ability of the authorities in early modern England to suppress, or at least contain, dissent... Darrell was not opposed by Whitgift and Bancroft because he was an exorcist, but because his exorcisms sanctioned, even sanctified, crucial puritan practices and dogmas.<sup>221</sup>

Freeman tracks the ways that the Anglican authorities perceived Puritans as factional proponents of "Presbyterical conceits," and pays particular attention to the origin of prayer and fasting as a central component of Protestant dispossessions. The Anglican leadership perceived these strategies as threatening and attacked them because, as Freeman puts it, they recognized the "anti-hierarchical tendencies" and the "strong sense of communal solidarity" that puritan dispossessions provided.<sup>222</sup>

The roots of the controversy in 1599 over Darrell's involvement with witchcraft-possession cases can be traced to Darrell's first case, in 1586, when he was only twenty-

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noted that Shakespeare used Harsnett's *Declaration of egregious popish impostures* in "King Lear." See Greenblatt, especially chapter four.

<sup>221</sup> Freeman, 34-63.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

two years old. At that time he helped dispossess Katherine Wright, aged around seventeen, whose severe fits had raised the concerns of her family and Darbshire neighbors. Darrell went on to gain something of a reputation as a successful exorcist. In 1596, he and fellow minister George More went to Lancashire, where seven members of the esteemed Starkey household had become possessed. Mr. Starkey had relied on a “cunning man,” Edmund Hartley, who treated the children for a few years before he himself became the focus of their accusations of bewitchment, and was executed. Later in 1596, Darrell was called to perform another dispossession in Burton-on-Trent. This time the sufferer was thirteen-year old Thomas Darling, whose crisis of faith fueled a physical and theological struggle with the devil. The woman accused of bewitching Darling confessed, which lent the proceedings further credibility. In addition to leading prayers and fasts, Darrell exhorted the demoniacs, observers and the communities at large. The news of these remarkable instances of God’s triumph over the devil spread and reinvigorated the community’s piety. More broadly, Darrell’s success disproved Catholic claims that members of the Roman Church were the only ones to whom God granted this miraculous skill. In fact, Darrell’s success suggested that God might favor the “hotter sort” of Protestants for their efforts—a message that concerned and frustrated officials in the Church of England.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Despite the differences between Anglicans and Puritans, which come to such dramatic extremes during this period, it is easy to imagine them as diametrically opposed. In this case it is useful to remember, as Francis J. Bremer writes, the “three unifying aspects of the religious life of the period: the emphatic and united anti-Catholicism of the majority of Englishmen; the virtually universal commitment of the nation’s Protestant clergy to a Calvinistic theology; and the dissemination of these beliefs through oral sermons and a range of popular printed material.” See Francis J. Bremer, *Shaping New Englands: Puritan Clergymen in Seventeenth-Century England and New England* (New York: Twayne Publishers/Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995), 2.

Given these successes, and Darrell's assurance that God called him to this work, it is understandable that in 1597, at the behest of the Mayor of Nottingham, he agreed to provide his assistance once again. At first, the Nottingham case proceeded much as the others had, but its aftermath proved disastrous for Darrell and his colleagues. The demoniac in question, William Somers, was a twenty year-old musician's apprentice who was unsatisfied with his position. Like his predecessors, Somers's symptoms included dramatic fits and contortions that observers swore could only have been caused by supernatural means. Darrell managed, with the help of George More and godly neighbors, to dispossess Somers through prayer and fasting. Though Somers was shortly after repossessed, Darrell directed a final dispossession that left most, but not all, of Nottingham's residents mindful of the fearful power of God. Unlike the other communities Darrell had served, some in Nottingham and—importantly—London did not allow this success to stand. Indeed, the resulting controversy and Darrell's subsequent "unmaking" forever changed the climate for witchcraft-possession cases in early modern England and, by extension, colonial New England.

The conflicts between Darrell and the Church of England continue to offer insights into the struggles late sixteenth-century English politics, but this chapter focuses on the use of gendered language by the elite men who used them as propaganda. Throughout the controversy, for example, the godly defendants struggled to navigate rhetorically around the occasionally contradictory aspects of early modern manhood.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> For Darrell or More to defend themselves against the Commission's charges and legal prosecution they had to assert their scriptural and worldly legitimacy. On the other hand, they invoked an honorable "simplicity" and "weakness" as a counterpoint to their degraded and calculated opponents. The nature of this paradox had a basis in scripture; was Darrell a Christ-like martyr for love and mercy, or was he a



As opponents, John Darrell and Samuel Harsnett (and their supporters) engaged in gendered processes of self-assertion that rested on their ability and align their cause with proper manhood and demonstrate the failure of their opponents to do the same. They claimed to respect authority and denounce (feminized) disorder and vain self-interest. Their enemies, however, they depicted as inversions of honorable men; instead of deferring to appropriate authority, these men refused to accept the wisdom of their betters, were reckless in their emotions and actions, and eager to push themselves forward at the expense of others. In this way, the men who conducted and championed accounts of dispossessions came to share with accused witches a vulnerability to being “unmade” as men, as we saw for John Samuel in Chapter 2. Significantly, the sources demonstrate that even men of high status could be unmade on account of their participation in or defense of such cases. The disorder of possession cases, which had customarily led to a reinscription of patriarchal order, could now damage the men who claimed to represent and defend that order. These men, namely Darrell and More, became casualties of the struggle with other, more politically powerful men who sought to divest witchcraft-possession cases of their spiritual implications. While these authors used a variety of strategies, gender was inextricable from the language they used to shore up their own interests at their opponents’ expense.

The pamphlet war, which started with a defense of Darrell’s treatment of Somers and lasted until Harsnett’s 1603 condemnation of notorious Catholic exorcisms several years earlier, consists of fourteen publications. The entire series, and the important legal and political developments that followed it, could easily support additional book-length

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soldier of Christ, boldly defending the godly against Catholic and atheistic forces? The authors invoke both variants.

analyses.<sup>225</sup> I am interested in the extent to which gendered language figured in the debate—not simply as a reflection of the gendered nature of possession and witchcraft phenomena, but in the writers’ challenges to other men. Seeing how early modern conceptions of manhood contributed to the process by which a man could be “unmade” into a witch, did relatively highly positioned men who published about witchcraft-possession risk being similarly unmade? Furthermore, could we find gender even in a situation so explicitly based in arenas not usually read as gendered? Of the extant pamphlets published between 1599 and 1603, this chapter focuses on those most responsible for forwarding the arguments and strategies that characterized the debate as a whole.<sup>226</sup>

The first of these presents a sympathetic account of Darrell’s actions and ill treatment by the Commission, was published anonymously by “G.Co.” in 1598.<sup>227</sup> The second was written by Darrell himself, but published “without his knowledge” by a

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<sup>225</sup> In fact, one is forthcoming: Marion Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy*, (London, Pickering & Chatto Publishers, expected October 2006). <http://www.pickeringchatto.com/possession.htm>

<sup>226</sup> Sidelined here (and in the original controversy) are two documents by George More and Darrell, about their successful dispossession of the Starkey family in 1596. See George More, *A true Discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossession[n] of 7 persons in one familie in Lanchashire...*(1600) and Darrell, *A true narration of the strange and greuous vexation by the Devil, of 7. persons in Lancashire, and VWilliam Somers of Nottingham...*(1600). Two later documents responded to the Darrell controversy: Jordan’s *A briefe discourse of a disease called the suffocation of the mother...* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, dwelling at the signe of the Crosse Keyes at Powles Wharfe, 1603) about the Mary Glover case in 1602, and Harsnett’s *A declaration of egregious popish impostures...*(1603). See MacDonald’s *Witchcraft and Hysteria* for analysis of the medical and religio-political implications of the Glover case. Harsnett’s last contribution in 1603 rehashed the deeds of priest William Weston, and attributed his excesses to Darrell as well.

<sup>227</sup> [G. Co.] *A breife narration of the possession, dispossession, and, repossession of William Sommers and of some proceedings against Mr Iohn Dorrell preacher, with aunsweres to such obiections as are made to prove the pretended counterfeiting of the said Sommers. Together with certaine depositions taken at Nottingham concerning the said matter* (Amsterdam?, 1599). Freeman writes that G.Co. was probably a cleric from the Nottingham area who wrote after the York Commission had cleared Darrell of wrongdoing, but before the specific charges laid by the Lambeth Commission. Freeman, 45. Rickert writes that G. Co. was not the same person who wrote the introduction, 47.

supporter in 1599.<sup>228</sup> Abraham Hartwell published the third pamphlet later that year. Though ostensibly a translation from the French of Martha Brossier's fraudulent possession case, Hartwell's dedication to Richard Bancroft and references to William Somers demonstrate its pertinence to the controversy.<sup>229</sup> The fourth document, and arguably the most influential, was Samuel Harsnett's *A discovery of the fraudulent practices of Iohn Darrel* (1599), in which Harsnett used biting sarcasm in his pronouncement of the official anti-Darrell position.<sup>230</sup> This was followed in the same year by a pro-Darrell account introduced by "A.Ri." that indicted the Commission's disrespectful treatment of Darrell.<sup>231</sup> The sixth pamphlet was written by Darrell, and pointedly entitled *A detection of that sinful, shamful, lying, and ridiculous discours, of Samuel Harshnet...* (1600).<sup>232</sup> In it, Darrell inverted Harsnett's accusations in an attempt to convince the reader that the chaplain represented more of a threat to order than he ever had. John Deacon and John Walker's *Dialogicall discourses* (1601) and *Summarie answer* (1601) represented a challenge to Darrell from other godly ministers, a challenge Darrell answered in *Survey of Dialogicall discourses* (1602) and a *Replie* (1602), both of which followed Deacon and Walker's lead by focusing on the doctrinal foundation for

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<sup>228</sup> John Darrel, *A brief apologie proving the possession of William Somers. Written by Iohn Dorrell, a faithful Minister of the Gospell: but published without his knowledge, with a dedicatorie epistle disclosing some disordered proceedings against the said Iohn Dorrell* (Middleburg: R. Schilders, 1599).

<sup>229</sup> Michel Marescot, *A true discourse, upon the matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin, pretended to be possessed by a Deuill. Translated out of French into English, by Abraham Hartwell* (London, Imprinted by John Wolfe, 1599). See also D.P. Walker, 33-42; Ferber, 40-59.

<sup>230</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery* (1599).

<sup>231</sup> [A.Ri.] *The Triall of Maist. Dorrell, or A collection of defences against allegations not yet suffered to receiue convenient answer Tending to cleare him from the imputation of teaching Sommers and others to counterfeit possession of diuells. That the mist of pretended counterfetting being dispelled, the glory of Christ his royall power in casting out diuels (at the prayer and fasting of his people) may evidently appeare* (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1599).

<sup>232</sup> John Darrel, *A detection...* (England?, 1600).

the possibility of possession in the post-miraculous age.<sup>233</sup> As these men struggled to defend themselves and their religious convictions against fellow Protestants (and Catholics), they used gendered language to alternatively defend and malign the honor and manhood of the others. Correspondingly, the writers invoked individual and collective components of manhood in attempts to assert themselves as the more politically justified and socially ordered.

It can be difficult to “see” gender as distinct from politics and religion in the writing of early modern men. While their smear campaigns may not appear as fundamentally gendered as customary witchcraft beliefs, for example, the linguistic strategies they used to assert themselves were nonetheless grounded in gendered principles. To illustrate this, I examine four central ways that Harsnett, Darrell, and their supporters articulated their defense of themselves and attacks on their enemies; in each strategy, representations of viable and degraded manhood served as media for the authors’ own claims of legitimacy. The first strategy was their effort to establish their “credit” at the expense of their opponents, whom they aligned with Catholics, atheists, and other disreputable forces. This sort of credit relied upon a man’s relationships with other men, the “common report” of his character, and his ability to believably claim the traits of honorable manhood: independence, piety, and appropriate deference for authority. The slippery and contingent nature of these qualifications helps explain some of the vigorous clashes in the texts. A second strategy consisted of the writers’ attempts to represent their enemies as having a dearth of reason and excess of passions. In order to

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<sup>233</sup> John Deacon and John Walker, *Dialogicall discourses of spirits and divels...* (Londini: Impensis Geor. Bishop) and *A summarie answeare to al the material points in any of Master Darel his bookes...* (Londini: Impensis Geor. Bishop) in 1601. Darrell responded twice in 1602, in *A survey of certaine dialogicall discourses...* and *The replie of Iohn Darrell, to the answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker [...]*.

see gendered aspects of this strategy I focus in particular on representations of emotional and linguistic excess, and their connection to bodily and humoral excesses. While asserting their scriptural and manly authority, the writers distanced themselves from the unruly passions attributed to the bodies and temperament of women and youths.

A third strategy, and one used especially well by Harsnett, consisted of references to trade and occupation. By associating Darrell with “exorcists,” “tinkers” and “peddlers,” Harsnett aligned him with nuisances and enemies both internal and external. Because popular literature commonly ascribed crass motives to these tradesmen, Harsnett was able to mark Darrell and his supporters as similarly outside the community of respectable gentlemen. By comparing Darrell to a traveling peddler, Harsnett suggested that Darrell intentionally misrepresented his “wares” in order to deceive; this hypocrisy revealed qualities inimical to an honorable gentleman. The final strategy involved the writers’ claims that their enemies undermined the social order; these claims took on a variety of forms, but I focus on charges about the seduction and manipulation of subordinates. Because a repudiation of youth’s passions was particularly crucial for men who sought to serve as authorities in their own right, the image of a man who intentionally misused his authority appeared particularly threatening.<sup>234</sup> These charges of seduction, in addition, shrewdly blurred the line between a general exertion of undue influence and sexual transgression. These four themes served to illuminate gender’s intricate operation in early modern England, particularly in the ways it appeared and disappeared alongside sex, age, status and reputation. Rather than dismiss the bearing of

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<sup>234</sup> For additional analysis of the meaning of youth as depicted in early modern English drama, see Ira Clark, *Comedy, Youth, Manhood in Early Modern England* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2003); Hilaire Kallendorf, *Exorcism and Its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

gender for these men because it fails to explain the whole of the pamphlet controversy, we can see its changeability as a sign of its surprising durability and consequence.

### **Manly Credit**

The concept of “credit” was crucial in the early modern period, and a mechanism by which an individual’s relationship to his community might be defined and evaluated. Craig Muldrew has investigated this “highly mobile and circulating language of judgement,” which he calls the “currency of reputation.”<sup>235</sup> He traces the social and cultural significance of credit to its origins in economic pressures; as more and more people failed to meet their debts, and litigation soared from 1580 to 1640, “credit” provided an important alternate way to determine the nature of one’s relations with others. Muldrew writes:

the culture of credit can be said to have had the most influence on social relations was from about 1580, when litigation had reached its height and the concept of credit became pervasive in much discourse, to the early eighteenth century. It was in this economic crucible that the maintenance of the social ethic of credit as trust became so important...As a result, moral discipline and probity were increasingly stressed as part of an attempt to promote the virtues of thrifty behaviour on the part of all households...Inclusion within communities was thus increasingly defined in more negative and competitive moral terms.<sup>236</sup>

The period specified by Muldrew matches that under investigation here, and one can easily see why the increased moralization of individuals and families’ behavior could have considerable significance in the course of a witchcraft-possession case. The language of credit allowed people to articulate their position within communities, both as

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<sup>235</sup> Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 2-3.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

allies and opponents. Credit's social and economic meanings were inextricable from one another: "[b]ecause households were the basic economic unit, reputation had definite competitive economic implications, and this is why credit became synonymous with reputation."<sup>237</sup> Even though the social aspects of credit find a more prominent place in this study, it is important to remember the economic pressures that underlay the relations between the families involved in witchcraft-possession. The same "competitive piety in which householders sought to construct and preserve their reputations for religious virtue, belief and honesty"<sup>238</sup> that Muldrew describes could have life or death implications. A man gained honor and credit through piety, wisdom, and self-moderation. Even though not every man served as a household head, relations between masters of servants, and economic competitors, as all reflected on the legitimacy of a man's credit.

As Elizabeth Foyster explains, men and women in the seventeenth century did not speak of "masculinity" or "femininity" when pressing suits in church courts. Rather, "honour, reputation, credit, or a good name could be the rewards for men and women who upheld the ideals of patriarchy."<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, Foyster concludes that "learning how to achieve credit and avoid shame was essential in the process of becoming a man in early modern England."<sup>240</sup> Susan Amussen, who has studied the overlapping of gender and class in early modern England, further emphasizes the significance of credit for men. Its "equation of wealth and worth," she writes, served to clarify the boundaries of

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 148-149.

<sup>239</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (1999), 5.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 207.

respectability, particularly for members of the “upper sorts.”<sup>241</sup> As D.P. Walker and Thomas Freeman, among others, have effectively argued, controversies over Puritan dispossession held both symbolic and concrete implications for state-controlled religion, the autonomy of the localities, and the faith and allegiance of the people. Legitimate religious governance, like viable manhood, rested on a foundation of rationality, self-control, respect for authority and moderation. Accordingly, in the pamphlet war between Harsnett and Darrell the players relied upon shared cultural expectations and gendered language to press their claims. Though the writers did not place manhood *per se* at the center of their publications, their efforts to degrade or augment the reader’s confidence in Darrell’s reputation as a sober and godly man remain central throughout.

The authors emphasized manly credit from the very beginning of the controversy. “G.Co.” was the first to respond after Darrell’s and More’s trial and incarceration at the hands of the Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes. G.Co. complained that Darrell and More, “who are nowe imprisoned for giving testimonie to this truth, have bene both of them for manie yeares aproved godlie ministers, just, and simple hearted men, fearing God, of good reputation among the best Christians.” In contrast, “They that have accused, and prosecuted, against M<sup>r</sup> Dorrell be men that have blasphemed the Scriptures, Popish persons, and knowen enimies to the preaching of the Gospell.”<sup>242</sup> In addition to demonstrating the centrality of character within the debate, G.Co. offered a vision of the struggle with a clear sense of good and evil. By drawing the sides in this way, G.Co.

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<sup>241</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 152; 155.

<sup>242</sup> G.Co., *A breife narration...*, sig. A3r (EEBO image 3). Rickert writes that “the conduct of the ecclesiastical court in John Darrell’s case appears unusually high-handed. . . Darrell never heard the charges against him nor knew their basis or their extent; nor did George More, who was tried as an accomplice. The two defendants were not allowed to confer. . . Neither defendant was afforded the benefit of legal counsel. Witnesses were bribed, tricked, threatened, and otherwise suborned to give testimony,” 38-39.



established Harsnett and the Commissioners as trying to prevent people from profiting from the ominous lesson of the dispossessions. In addition to emphasizing the religious overtones of the controversy, G.Co.'s arguments touched on the credibility of both sides as witnesses. As Barbara Shapiro has pointed out, "witness credibility became central to the early modern trial" even though guidelines about the nature of credible witnesses were not always used consistently. "Clearly," Shapiro writes, "gender, property holding, social status, education, and expertise were part of the equation, as was the oath taken by witnesses and whether or not the testimony was hearsay."<sup>243</sup> While by the mid-eighteenth century English courts had moved towards the exclusion of hearsay evidence, Rickert writes Elizabethan courts relied upon it as "more reliable than the evidence of an eyewitness or of one who had been personally involved in the case."<sup>244</sup>

G.Co. depicted the Commission's treatment of Darrell as a gross manipulation of the customs surrounding manly credit. He decried the way that the testimony of William Somers, the recanting apprentice, was treated respectfully while Darrell and More were maligned and disregarded. Somers was young and unsettled; once under the control of Harsnett's associates, he not only admitted that he had counterfeited his fits but grew so "impudent" as to claim that Darrell had taught him to do so. While Somers initially vacillated between allegiance to Darrell and Harsnett, in time Somers submitted to pressure and asserted that the entire possession had been fraudulent. He went so far as to

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<sup>243</sup> Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 14-15. She adds that "women's testimony was probably trusted less than men's. The lesser value of women's testimony was embodied in the civil law. Although English women appeared as witnesses, they did not serve on juries...Assumptions about reliable testimony corresponded in a rough way to the existing social hierarchy in which noblemen and gentlemen were ranked above yeomen and merchants, and yeomen and merchants above poor husbandmen, servants, and the unemployed. But status considerations might be countered by others," 16-17.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; Rickert, 38.

demonstrate his fits upon request, which was devastating to Darrell. Nevertheless, Darrell maintained that Somers truly had been possessed and repossessed, or at least that the demonstrations for the Commission must not be the same as those witnessed by observers in Nottingham. G.Co. remarked that all of Somers's confession:

Mr Dorrell upon his othe denied, but Som[ers'] bare word (nowe growne to be a man of great credit, though he had confessed himselfe, heretofore to have bene a counterfeyt) was better beleived then Mr Dorrell a godlie, and faithfull man, of honest conversation, long approved by the best Christians, and ministers where he lived.<sup>245</sup>

The writer's indignation at this disregard for Darrell's position emphasized the Commission's partiality and illegitimacy. Here G.Co. bypassed specific political and religious disagreements between the Church of England and the godly to focus instead on the regard due to Darrell as an honorable man. He trusted that his readers would see the inconsistency of the Commission's elevation of Somers over Darrell as a greater threat to social order than Darrell's ministrations to the possessed.

Even when G.Co. more explicitly addressed political and religious factors, he expressed his enemies' shortcomings in ways that conveyed their ineligibility for honorable manhood and credit. According to G.Co., Darrell's enemies included:

Ministers of the Ghospell, who yet in theyr practize live Atheists, and make a skorne at the exercises of religion... and doe revile, and hate others because they refraine from swearing liing, filthie speaking, gaming, plaies, and such abhominations of this age where in we live. It is to be doubted, that neither the word, nor miracles can prevaile with those men.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> G.Co., *A breife narration...*, sig. B2r (EEBO image 6).

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C2r (EEBO image 10). G.Co.'s invocation of "miracle" unwittingly contributed to the problem Darrell faced regarding the question of whether or not he had called the dispossession a miracle or a "wonder." See Freeman, 50.

These complaints depicted the Commissioners and their witnesses as ungodly forces who countenanced sin by disparaging those who spurned it. This accusation implicitly echoed suspicion at the local level that those who questioned witchcraft prosecution might themselves be witches. But whereas witches' malice supposedly originated in their inordinate desire for more power than was their due, at the time of publication the Commissioners occupied the position of worldly supremacy over the godly ministers. G.Co. suggested that such atheistic rogues would deny even providences of God that contradicted their interests. In this way, the language of manly credit provided supporters of Darrell and More with a way to resist the Commission while appearing to support rather than challenge legitimate political and religious authority.

The writers who condemned Darrell invoked manly credit as well. In Harsnett's *A discovery of the fraudulent practices of Iohn Darrel* (1599), for example, Harsnett did his best to depict Darrell as a self-promoting impostor. For Harsnett it was not enough for Darrell to be wrong—in his formulation Darrell was wicked and degenerate, aligned with Papists and an utter hypocrite. Consequently, Harsnett continually called him a “dissembler” and “pretender,” and by doing so invoked an image of degraded and hypocritical manhood. Harsnett ably challenged Darrell's viability in one aspect of manly credit in particular; he presented Darrell as a man without the support of credible, gentlemanly peers. By doing so, Harsnett reached past Darrell to malign by extension the credit of his supporters, the demoniacs whom Darrell “cured,” and any sympathetic readers as well. Harsnett's criticism of Darrell's “adherents”—a synonym for “supporters” that manages to sound more sinister—was an important component of this strategy. According to Harsnett, Darrell's adherents were simple-minded townspeople

(namely women), slavish disciples, or respectable men who had been misinformed. By transforming a community of respectable gentlemen into base adherents, Harsnett painted their allegiance to Darrell as a sign not of his legitimacy but of his degradation. This approach allowed Harsnett to adapt his critique to the status of individual supporters of Darrell, without allowing any to escape his critical gaze.

Harsnett used a combination of propaganda and nice distinctions to defend the Commission's preferential treatment of William Somers at Darrell's expense.

Unsurprisingly, he presented the reputations of the men involved, either centrally or peripherally, in a way that best suited his goals. He wrote:

[Darrell's] friends, and likewise he himselfe, are greatly offended, that M. Darrell being a Minister, his oth may not be credited before the oth of a boy. But M. Darrels oath is greatly impeached by his denying of sondrie thinges, wherewith Somers chargeth him...M. Darrell in his *Apologie* (published since he was condemned for a counterfeyt) doth pretend that this was all which was laid to his charge...It were to be wished, that for his calling sake, [Darrell] could not otherwise have been charged herein...for in such a secret compact, the confession of Somers is of great moment, especially the same being not so bare, (as M. Darrell pretendeth,) but is strengthened with many such circumstances, as do argue the same in all likelyhoode, to be true.<sup>247</sup>

Despite Harsnett's tone, the witnesses to whom he refers primarily testified about the timing of Darrell's arrival, or their belief that he met with Somers alone. Harsnett lacked a witness to corroborate Somers's claims that Darrell trained the boy to enact a fraud, but he presented what he had as if it demonstrated the truth of the whole. Harsnett was a frequent and clever user of "in all likelyhoode," "it seemeth," and other phrases which hinted at the limits of the case against Darrell. Still, Harsnett's maneuvers provided a

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<sup>247</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 86–87 (EEBO image 49).

kind of justification for the elevation of Somers's word over Darrell's, though the Commissioners' tactics diverged from conventional social and legal practices.

Harsnett found other angles from which to demean Darrell's credit as well. He rejected Darrell's long-held reputation for honesty as being held among others who were themselves uncreditable. Harsnett dismissed most of these as women or fools who supported Darrell blindly, wickedly or irrationally. For example, he wrote that after Darrell's first dispossession, of Katherine Wright, he "thereby into some smal credit with the simpler sort: he became very peart and proud in that respect." In addition, Harsnett claimed that this allowed Darrell to win "his spurs in the opinion of many, especially women."<sup>248</sup> He also suggested that Darrell attempted to renew enthusiasm for his scam by attempting to convince residents of Nottingham that Somers' sister, Mary, was also possessed. Harsnett wrote that this new development, however ridiculous, "was very zealously followed by certain wives in that towne."<sup>249</sup> Harsnett further suggested that the minister allowed these foolish adherents to stoke his vanity, and that Darrell "doubteth not (it seemeth) but that if the worst fell out, his credite would bee sufficient to overweigh the boyes. Howbeit therein he hath overshot himselfe."<sup>250</sup> Even though Darrell's admirable reputation ought to have protected him from such indignities, the Church of England's greater political power brought a lifetime of godliness into question. By merging Darrell's status as a fraudulent exorcist and as a fraudulent man of credit, Harsnett made it nearly impossible for Darrell to use his credit to defend himself.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 2-B1v; 23 (EEBO images 6 and 16).

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 105 (EEBO image 58).

To leave no stone unturned, Harsnett also impugned Darrell's ability to judge the credit of others, as when he related how quickly Darrell accepted the news of Somers' likely possession "upon the rude report of a simple man, one Hugh Wilson, and upon a letter receyved by Wilson from his sister in law, one Mistresse Wallys." Harsnett later wrote that "M. Darrell was so confident upon so light a report," that he reportedly told someone before witnessing the boy's fits that Somers was possessed and that he, Darrell, would be able to dispossess him. "This M. Darrels confident bragging... being ioyned to his rash credulitie, doth make it probable, that eyther hee had layed his plotte with the boy before, or else that he knew verie well, how by his cunning to draw on the boy, for the serving of his turn, as he himselfe list."<sup>251</sup> From a failure to prudently judge the validity of others' reports, Harsnett managed to bring Darrell into focus as foolish, overtly self-promotional, and conniving. He linked Darrell's inability to discern legitimate credit to the insufficient honor and reason of his (lowly and female) supporters.

As effective as Harsnett's accusations about Darrell's adherents were, he made sure to address Darrell's more esteemed supporters as well, such as Master Ireton of Nottingham. I presume that Darrell's esteemed benefactor was German Ireton, gentleman, whose eldest son, Henry, went on to become a staunch Puritan, son-in-law to Oliver Cromwell, and Parliamentary general.<sup>252</sup> Harsnett took pains to undermine their association by shifting the blame onto Darrell. He wrote:

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 107-108 (EEBO images 59, 60).

<sup>252</sup> While relatively little is known about German Ireton, Henry Ireton's fame grew in the period of the war, as he negotiated between Cromwell, the army, and king, becoming a leading political theorist and pursuer of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* explains his struggles with Levellers within the army, and their charges that he and Cromwell were too obsequious to the king: "Ireton presented a trenchant argument against absolute religious liberty in the name of the magistrate's obligation to preserve peace and restrain sin. Animated by the vision of a godly commonwealth, he wanted nothing to do with the religious pluralism of the radicals." Ian J. Gentles, 'Ireton, Henry (bap. 1611, d.

M. Ireton, (being a man of very good parts, and yet somewhat overcarried in this cause, being unacquainted with the proceedings in it, & suspecting no evill) is one of the men, of whom M. Darrell and his friendes have greatly bragged. And it is true, that his credite wrought some inconvenience, through his facultie in believing those things which were told him: albeit his speeches still did relie upon this supposition, that if those things which he heard were true, then thus, and thus. Besides some indiscreet opposition in points of learning, did make him to say something, whereof more hold was taken, then peradventure he meant.<sup>253</sup>

This quotation provides an excellent example of Harsnett's ability suggestively to lead the reader toward desired conclusions. He treated Ireton with greater respect than any of Darrell's other supporters, and appeared unusually willing to grant him positive motives. Still, the passage reads as a kind of cautionary tale for men who would involve themselves with witchcraft-possession cases. Despite his position and reputation, Ireton came off as having acted foolishly or, at the very least, as having suffered a lapse of judgment. By taking the word of unreliable men, he invited damage to his own credit. Even though Harsnett closed with a reference to Darrell's unnamed supporters, the lasting impression was that Ireton allowed his words to be twisted and misused by dishonorable men. Harsnett appeared to apologize for Ireton, but the reader grasps that Darrell was not the only man made vulnerable as a consequence of standing against the established church in this matter.

To further separate Darrell from his associations with well-positioned men, Harsnett not only cast doubt upon the credit of those men—as we saw above—but also

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1651)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/14452, accessed 6 April 2007]. See David Farr, *Henry Ireton and the English Revolution* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2006); David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), especially 123-129; 140-149; 202-206.

<sup>253</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 143 (EEBO 77).

implied that the sensible among them were abandoning Darrell as fast as they can. He wrote that “In this place it is to be observed: how some of M. Darrells chiefe friendes have left him after a sort in two of the chiefest pointes of this whole action.” Even godly ministers, Harsnett attested, found doctrinal reasons to withdraw their support. Because of the contingent nature of honorable manly credit, Harsnett was able to make Darrell’s threat to other men’s credit more clear:

It might greatly be marvayled (by such as have not experience, how easie a matter it is, with faire pretence to seduce the simpler sort): what estimation and credite M. Darrell gat by this new forgery of Somers pretended repossession. Howbeit manie of the wiser sort, that were not possessed with the giddie humor of novelties, (covered forsooth with zeale and sighinges), did laugh this to scorne, as they did the rest.<sup>254</sup>

With the authority of the Church of England and its Commission at Lambeth behind him, Harsnett thus spelled out the stakes for men who might consider throwing in their lot with the godly—they, too, could be unmade. In Harsnett’s formulation, Darrell’s manipulation of the fools who supported him constituted a corruption that infected them all. Ultimately, men who published on Darrell’s behalf found themselves in an awkward position as it became evident that the Commission would not be swayed. Even if these men did not abandon Darrell, Harsnett’s assault on Darrell’s credit suggested they had.

The contingency of manly credit further allowed Harsnett to suggest that Darrell’s associations with rude people proved his degradation. Once again, Harsnett’s invocation of unnamed “adherents” provided a profitably vague site for the laying of blame. For example, Harsnett wrote “there was a rumor cast about the towne one evening, that the Devill had...dashed out [Somers’s] braines against a wall. This was of likelyhoode a

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 151 (EEBO 81).



simple devise of M. Darrels grossest friendes: but yet such as it was, it wrought for the time.”<sup>255</sup> Rumor, hearsay and the attribution of the worst deeds to unnamed assistants, allowed Harsnett to fling all the mud he wished. Ever astute, Harsnett anticipated and averted complaints about the esteem given to Somers’s oath. He wrote that Darrell “thought himselfe to have wonne such credite, as hee might say any thinge, were it never so absurde, without suspicion of falsehoode or iugling.”<sup>256</sup> Harsnett’s sheer repetition that Darrell intentionally misrepresented himself allowed him to suggest that Darrell’s credit rested on fraud, and that instead of exemplary, godly company, he relied upon base lackeys to pursue his interests. Thus Harsnett demonstrated, at Darrell’s expense, the ways a reputable man and his associates could be unmade.

The intensity of the pamphlet war in 1599-1600 reveals the extent to which its outcome remained uncertain. Harsnett’s critique was damning, and had the force of Bancroft’s sanction behind it. Still, many supported Darrell’s belief in the legitimacy of dispossession and its powerful message about God’s judgments. While those who wrote on Darrell’s behalf had to publish anonymously (and abroad, illegally), some risked sanction in order to contradict Harsnett’s claims. One such supporter of Darrell, “A.Ri.,” gathered together and published an account of Darrell’s unjust treatment at the hands of the Commission. The publication, *The Triall of Maister Dorrell*, contradicted Harsnett and sought to restore honor to Darrell and those with whom he associated.<sup>257</sup> To do this, the author inverted Harsnett and Darrell’s positions, and referred to scripture as a way to

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 191 (EEBO image 87).

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 224 (EEBO image 104).

<sup>257</sup> A.Ri., *The Triall of Maister Dorrell*, (1599). Freeman writes that “A.Ri.” seems to have been unconnected with Darrell’s usual supporters, and that the level of legal detail suggests that he may have been a lawyer. Freeman, 49.

enlarge the contrast between the two men and what they represented. He equated Darrell with Jeremy and Michael from the Bible—figures wrongly oppressed by forces of evil—and depicted Darrell as a martyr. One strength of this approach is the way it allowed the author to cite scriptural adjurations to respect hierarchy and one’s elders. For example, he included the following from the book of Timothy: “Rebuke not an elder but admonish him as a father, Receive no accusation against an elder but under 2 or 3 witnesses.”<sup>258</sup> Especially considering William Somers’s poor status, A.Ri. wondered how it could be that the word of such a “boy” could be taken more seriously than that of his obvious superior. “Somers,” he wrote:

is but one witnes, therefore not sufficient, especially against a Minister... The affirmative oath of a man of good birth, education, yeares & lyfe, much more of a Minister, should make light the oath of a lewd boy, especially with such as are accompted Guardians of the spiritualitie... Sommers is an unlawful witnes, beeing manifestlie guiltie of periurie (having by oath both denied and affirmed counterfeiting) as also of blasphemy: (if hee were a counterfeit) For hee said, he was God and Christ.<sup>259</sup>

By emphasizing scripture, the author elevated the discussion to a level on which Darrell could compete. Because of the Commissioners’ authority, Darrell was powerless to assert the rights that customarily would have been understood as his. Despite the best efforts of supporters like A.Ri., the nature of witchcraft-possession cases allowed Darrell the elder, father and minister to be undone by a “lewd boy.”

When Darrell himself responded to Harsnett’s accusations in 1600, he included many of the same concepts of scriptural and relational legitimacy in an attempt to redeem himself and his credit. In his rebuttal, entitled *A detection of that sinful, shamful, lying,*

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 5 (EEBO image 3).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 38 (EEBO image 20). The author cites “1. Timothy. 5.19” and “13. Elizabeth. Cap. 12.”

*and ridiculous discourses, of Samuel Harsnett,*<sup>260</sup> Darrell appeared frustrated and bewildered at the Commission's indifference to his testimony, petitions and promises to produce scores of reputable witnesses upon request. Darrell may have regarded Harsnett as his particular enemy, but he used William Somers's problematic credit to highlight the Commission's inexplicable and unjust proceedings. Darrell described Somers as "a young man about the age of 22 yeares: who first is knowne to be a notorious and infamous liar: for 4 times hath he varied with that double and false tongue of his: sometimes affirming, at other times denying all counterfeiting."<sup>261</sup> Being both young and a known liar, Somers ought to have posed little threat to a minister with as stellar a reputation as Darrell's. Despite Darrell's formulaic self-deprecation, his distress is palpable.

Darrell's indignation led him to write energetically on the subject. He maintained that Somers was genuinely possessed, as this was central to his larger arguments about God's work and the harm done by Harsnett and Bancroft's refusal to sanction it. Unfortunately for Darrell, Somers's willing capitulation to Harsnett made this claim nearly impossible to maintain. Accordingly, Darrell was forced to address the possibility that Somers had faked his possession. He adds that if Somers *had* counterfeited then he was not only a liar but also a blasphemer. This ought to have rendered Somers's credit doubly useless, but nonetheless Darrell found himself in the awkward position of having to convince those in authority to honor his own conventional right to authority. Darrell wrote that Somers:

is a forsworne wretch: for he hath sworne both wayes...he must needs therefore be forsworne. In regard heereof I answer that forasmuch as there is only one witnessinge against me, I ought not thereupon without further

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<sup>260</sup> Darrell, *A detection*, (1600).

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67 (EEBO image 39).

prooffe, neither by the “lawe of god, nor by the civill lawe,[”] be held as adjudged as guilty...and me thinketh were I a private man, in regarde of my education, yeares and life, I should be credited rather then Somers: much more being a minister of Christ Iesus and preacher of his gospel.<sup>262</sup>

Darrell’s repeated emphasis on the need for Somers to be “forsworne” shows that he remained hopeful that Harsnett and Bancroft might be forced to acknowledge the inadequacy of their witness. Despite Somers’s limitations, however, Harsnett was able to subvert customary understandings of manly credit.

At the mercy of these inconsistencies, Darrell went to great lengths to undermine Somers’s undeserved credit. He wrote that Somers was “as infamous and vile a youth as liveth I thinke this daye upon the face of the earth.” Darrell pointed out the contradictions of Harsnett’s position by asking if Somers’s “wordes be of such credit with [Harsnett] & some few others (for with few or none that are wise and godly I hope they be not) why should not his wordes sealed at other tymes with oathes and execrations be of like vallew?...he hath also varied somuch with that double and false tongue of his...and therefore is not to be beleaved in any thing he saith, nor his testimony to be admitted in any court of record.”<sup>263</sup> Here Darrell’s presentation of Somers emphasized his youth and “feminine” weaknesses of uncontrolled passions and tongues.<sup>264</sup> For such a youth to hold sway among learned Commissioners, he suggested, was tantamount to a concession of proper manly authority to the hopelessly disordered.

Darrell expanded this strategy to emphasize the risks of subverting standard, gendered hierarchies in this way. Darrell complained that the case against him:

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 67 (EEBO image 39).

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 83(EEBO image 47).

<sup>264</sup> References to Somers’s loose tongue could invoke feminized immoderation without necessarily making Somers into a feminized figure.

resteth only and barely upon So[mers's] credit, which I thinke is long agoe shamerfully crackt, and shivered both with wise men and with fooles...were So[mers's] credit better then it is, yet the tale which is tould us, is so unsavery or rather so absurd, & sencelesse, that me thinketh it is more then strange that any man of wisdom and iudgment should ever harken unto it, or embrace it as a truth...For marke I pray you: heere is a paltry boy brought in delyberating and consulting, as if he were a grave man of greate deliberation and advisement.<sup>265</sup>

By presenting Somers's credit as "crackt, and shivered" even with fools, Darrell echoed Harsnett's invocation of unreasonable adherents, modeling for the reader a more proper interpretation of events. To treat this "paltry boy" as if he were "a grave man" disrupted not only conventional hierarchical relations, but also the gendered conceptions on which a man's character could be weighed in order to determine where he fell within the social hierarchy. Moreover, Harsnett's policies made elite men, such as the judges and magistrates who oversaw the convictions of witches in Darrell's cases, similarly vulnerable. By implicating Harsnett and the Commissioners in these ways, Darrell provided not only a spiritual justification for his actions, but a worldly one as well. If the Commissioners' tactics were allowed to stand, Harsnett would have elevated a subordinate above his natural station. Darrell's sympathetic reader might thereby have come to see Harsnett and the Commission as representing a disorder nearly on par with witchcraft-possession itself. By invoking manly credit, Darrell, Harsnett and their supporters used a gendered language of order against disorder, and legitimacy against degradation. The concept of credit shifted in and out of gendered space, but remained inseparable from its basis in patriarchal expectations. The degree to which manly credit relied upon relations with other honorable men was both its strength and weakness; in

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 139 (EEBO image 79).

this controversy both sides could reasonably invoke a right to authority, and the contest between them came down to institutional power.

### **Manly Reason, Unmanly Excess**

Because both sides of the debate could invoke manly credit, the writers employed a second gendered strategy to emphasize that their opponents shared particular sins with women and youths, particularly insufficient reason and excessive language and bodies. As with manly credit, the ability to refute such accusations hinged upon an individual's ability to call upon the support of a community of respectable peers; a man's deficiency likewise could be proved if his supporters were themselves irrational or excessive. Accusations of irrationality and excess also allowed the writers to discredit their enemies by depicting them as inversions of proper men and invoking gendered assumptions about bodies and the humoral foundation of character. If an honorable man subjugated the heat of passions that characterized women and youths, then adult men who demonstrated excessive malice, heat and passions revealed themselves to be unfit gentlemen.

This strategy was put to exemplary use by Abraham Hartwell, who translated into English Michel Marescot's account of the fraudulent possession of Marthe Brossier of France. By dedicating the text to Richard Bancroft, Hartwell made no secret of his intentions to link that fraud to Darrell's cases. After explicitly citing the "late notable Accident, that happened at Nottingham," i.e. the William Somers case, Hartwell stated that "some others of the wiser and more stayed sorte" reserved their judgment, and that "persons of good Note and Qualitie," asked him to write the narrative "in the faith of an

honest man.”<sup>266</sup> Hartwell went on to characterize as less steadfast those who believed in Somers’ possession despite how “plainely, evidently, and manifestly it was proved...a mere Imposture and Cousenage.” Furthermore, these individuals refused to be “removed from the doubtfull humour which had usurped a predomination in them,” and had allowed themselves to be led into error by a “Counterfeit Cranke.”<sup>267</sup> In Hartwell’s formulation, any who believed in Brossier’s (or Somers’s) fraud became polluted by the possession’s illicit and disordered nature. In addition, they remained stubborn in their ignorance and refused to hear the reasoned arguments of their skeptical opponents, whose side was upheld by the courts and state. This continued credulity, then, constituted not only an irrational adherence to a delusion, but also vain self-importance that encouraged them to disregard the wisdom of their betters. That they were so misled, and failed to redeem themselves when corrected by the community of honorable men, further marked the credulous as failing to embody appropriate manhood.

Hartwell pointedly applied the Brossier narrative to the contemporary English situation, despite the fact that the original narrative had been written by French (Catholic) physicians. In spite of the Church of England’s need to depict the Church of Rome as the enemy, in this instance he approvingly published the words of men who recorded their

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<sup>266</sup> Marescot/Hartwell, A2r-A2v (EEBO images 2; 3).

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., A2v (EEBO image 2). This term appears in Thomas Harman’s *A caueat for commen cursetors vulgarely called uagabones, set forth by Thomas Harman, esquier, for the vtilite and proffyt of hys naturall countrey*. (London, 1567), in which Harman warns readers of the tricks of knaves and rogues of various types: “These that do counterfe[i]t the Cranke, be yong knaves and yong harlots, that deeply dissemble the falling sickness for the Cranke in their language, is the falling evill, I have sene some of these with faire writings & testimonials, with the names & seales of some men of worship in Shropshyre...” (EEBO image 15). Part of this text was reprinted in 1592 under a slightly different title: *The groundworke of conny-catching, the manner of their pedlers-French, and the meanes to vnderstand the same with the cunning slights of the counterfeit cranke*. (London : Printed by John Danter for William Barley, 1592). The references to fraudulent possessions, not to mention allusions to women through the slang term “conny,” make Harman’s work pertinent to this discussion.

hope that a resolution would prevent any further “hinderance of the Catholick Religion.” This uncommon alliance was based on the idea that prudent men must reveal the “falsehood, fraud, follie and superstition” that possession cases wrecked in their communities.<sup>268</sup> While attempting to understand the motivations of those who believed in Brossier’s possession—and, by extension, in William Somers’s—Hartwell’s translation suggested that those who believed did so “either through credulitie, or to follow the opinion of the people.” This was the first of several references to “the people” that aligned credulity with the lower sorts and reserved manly “wisdome” to gentlemen sensible enough to agree with leaders in religion and parliament.<sup>269</sup> Elsewhere he wrote of the absurdity of common tests for possession, which found defenders “not onely among the ignorant people; but almost in every estate.”<sup>270</sup> This formulation encouraged the reader to replicate the authors’ surprise that such beliefs found support at high levels, and further associated Darrell’s godly piety with “old women,” whose beliefs were laughable.<sup>271</sup> The narrative had to be published, the physicians contended, so that “there may rest no scruple or doubt in weaker minds...grounded upon too light coniectures.” Elsewhere, they wrote of using the testimony of “diverse men of qualitie” to confute the “slender and sleight reasons” for believers’ credulity.<sup>272</sup> It was common for writers to present themselves as pinnacles of reason and their opposition as fools, which effectively suggested the reader’s inclusion in the community of reasonable men should he comply. The physicians went so far as to posit that the wonders that observers witnessed in

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<sup>268</sup> Marescot/Hartwell, 2-3 (EEBO image 6).

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (EEBO image 6).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 2; 34 (EEBO images 6; 23).

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 (EEBO image 15).

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (EEBO image 6).



Brossier's presence might have originated in "vapours arising up into their braines;" an interesting example of how skeptical writers could pathologize credulous observers alongside the demoniac.<sup>273</sup>

Not long after Hartwell depicted belief in witchcraft-possession as irrational and disorderly, Darrell used the same strategies against his detractors—particularly Bancroft and Harsnett, who had just published *A discovery of the fraudulent practices of John Darrel* (1599). Darrell built upon the charges in Hartwell's translation by stressing both the irrational and excessive aspects of Harsnett's book, and ultimately linked these faults to a disorderly and wicked agenda. Darrell merged these strategies by questioning whether Bancroft and Harsnett even believed the charges against him:

Even...though many of the people of England doe in their simplicitie and rash credulitie verelie believe that [quoting Harsnett] *Somers & the rest have counterfeited, & I instructed them*, be cause of the silly reasons printed & published to that end by the B[ishop] of London and S. Harsnet: yet the B[ishop] & Harsnet which have invented & devised those sottish reasons, and framed a whole booke, for the smotheringe of the worke of God wrought upon these persons, can not but know and be in their consciences perswaded, that they have not counterfeited, nor I taught them.<sup>274</sup>

Here Darrell charged his enemies by name and contradicted Harsnett's accusations by inverting them. Darrell's references to "simple and rash credulitie," "sottish" and "silly" reasons evoked a strong customary association with women and fools.<sup>275</sup> Even while

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<sup>273</sup> This approach anticipates Edward Jorden's work about the Mary Glover case in 1602. In *A briefe discourse of a disease called the suffocation of the mother*, he articulated a natural, rather than supernatural, explanation for her symptoms. See MacDonald for details about Jorden's text, its context, and historians' use and misuse thereof, *vii-ix*.

<sup>274</sup> Darrel, *A detection...*, B1v (EEBO 6).

<sup>275</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* (New Edition) lists the following definitions spanning the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, many of which were closely linked to women and fools: "Helpless, defenceless; esp. of women and children; Weak, feeble, frail; insignificant, trifling; Unlearned, unsophisticated, simple,

posing direct religious (and hence political) accusations, both Darrell and Harsnett amplified them with gendered weaknesses instantly recognizable to the reader. By attending to gender for early modern men, we can see that the gendered charges also required fervent rebuttals.

After noting the “silly” reasoning underlying Harsnett’s book, Darrell portrayed Harsnett and his writing as revealing an unmanly degree of excess. He claimed, for example, that Harsnett “behaveth himself so ridiculously...with his colours of rhetorike, fyne quipps, & multitud of wordes & depositions.”<sup>276</sup> To invert Harsnett’s depiction of dispossession as a theatrical illusion, Darrell presented himself as a more reasonable man who did not need to rely on such sleights and slippery words. Darrell stated that Harsnett “doth not onely here but...els where...prattle and florish with emptie words” and, later, “used many wordes to smale purpose.”<sup>277</sup> In Darrell’s formulation, Harsnett the man became as excessive and irrational as his accusations; he reduced Harsnett’s arguments to “pretie jest[s]...wherewith he desiered belike to delight his reader.”<sup>278</sup> Darrell wrote, “I cannot be perswaded (for all this impudent & shameles discourse of S. Harsnetes, so bedecked and adorned with my L[ord] of Londons flowers) that they themselves in their consciences doe beleeve this knacke of knaverie against me in that sort as they have sett it downe.”<sup>279</sup> Darrell’s attempt to associate Harsnett’s excessively flowery writing with his character invoked gendered concepts of legitimacy that bolstered the religious and political themes. Clearly, Darrell’s response to Harsnett cannot be reduced entirely to a

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rustic, ignorant; Of humble rank or state; lowly; Lacking in judgement or common sense; foolish, senseless, empty-headed.”

<sup>276</sup> Darrel, *A detection...*, 5 (EEBO image 8).

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 97; 172 (EEBO images 54 and 95).

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 154 (EEBO image 86).

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A4r (EEBO image 4).

challenge to manhood. Nonetheless, they placed ideas of honorable manhood—and particularly its related qualities of unbiased, plain-speaking rationality—alongside other linguistic strategies, thus reinforcing the texts with recognizable, gendered images.

In addition to highlighting Harsnett's unmanly excess in language, Darrell suggested that Harsnett revealed his illegitimacy through excessive vitriol. According to Darrell, Harsnett's snide depiction of pro-Darrell witnesses stemmed more from hatred and partisanship than a concern about actual fraud. This partisanship compromised both Harsnett's and the Commission's judicial impartiality, and disregarded Queen Elizabeth's mandates for justice.<sup>280</sup> Darrell stated that Harsnett's "whole boke from the first leafe to the last, is written of such scoffing and raylinge characters, that it might seme rather to have bene compiled by Nash[']s] Pasquil...then any other of sobriety & iudgment."<sup>281</sup> Darrell's invocations of Harsnett's immoderate passions and avid anti-Puritanism demonstrated that he lacked the reasoned temperance required for both the pursuit of justice and honorable manhood.

By highlighting Harsnett's immoderate fury, Darrell likened Harsnett and his supporters to Biblical enemies, such as the Pharisees. This allowed Darrell more effectively to depict any dismissal of dispossession as a rejection of God's works:

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<sup>280</sup> Darrell sensibly invoked Queen Elizabeth as a way simultaneously to demonstrate deference and to blame Bancroft and Harsnett for failing to meet her criteria for leadership. He wrote, "One would thinke that the reverent fathers of the Church, should in their courses and iudiciall proceedings give their children (as they would have them counted)...an example and patterne of iustice and equitie: I have heard that amonge other the excellent graces of God upon her Maiestie, this is one that doth exceedingly grace both her person & her government, namely, that in the makinge and ordaininge of her Iudges, she doth among other things enioyne them this speciall charge..." Darrell, *A detection*, sig. B2r (EEBO image 6).

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 (EEBO image 15). Pasquil was a character of Thomas Nashe's, who authored satirical, anti-Puritan tracts during the Marprelate controversy of 1588-1590. Nashe responded, on the Anglican side, to several Puritan pamphlets that satirized the Church of England under Archbishop John Whitgift. Nashe also wrote *The anatomie of absurditie contayning a breefe confutation of the slender imputed prayeses to feminine perfection, with a short description of the seuerall practises of youth, and sundry follies of our licentious times* (London, 1589), the title of which serves as an example of the common association of the weaknesses of women and youths.

And as the pharises because of their extreame mallice against Christ, which must needs extend it selfe to his disciples...so also for that they could not indure that the people shold *beleewe in him*, but when any myracle was done that might cause or helpe forward that same, they were readye to burst for anger.<sup>282</sup>

By aligning Harsnett and the Commissioners with the Pharisees, Darrell managed to momentarily sidestep such sticky theological questions as whether dispossession was a wonder or a miracle. Instead, by presenting himself as a defender of God's judgment and saving mercy, Darrell managed at one stroke to paint Harsnett as a dangerous, atheistic force and himself as a humble martyr for Christ. This strategy also allowed Darrell to undercut Harsnett's claims to reason and moderation by distancing him from central components of manhood. Like the Pharisees, Darrell argued, Harsnett was ruled by an extreme malice that translated his antagonism to Darrell into an antagonism to God.

Darrell extended this strategy to many of the men who testified against him as well, depicting them as the same sort of nefarious "adherents" that Harsnett had ascribed to him. Just as Harsnett had claimed that Darrell's supporters were irrationally steadfast in their delusion, Darrell depicted Harsnett's witnesses as victims of immoderate and excessive passions. Darrell wrote that Harsnett discounted the testimony of his supporters "because they were brought to passe by such as [Harsnett] despiseth and hateth, and woulde faine have al men to hate and despise."<sup>283</sup> That hatred did not extend to Darrell's enemies in Nottingham, however, who were treated with respectful attention. One of Darrell's principal opponents was a M. Freeman, the Alderman in Nottingham. According to Darrell, Freeman was motivated not only by family loyalty (he was related

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<sup>282</sup> Darrell, *A detection*... 44 (EEBO image 28).

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 204 (EEBO image 112).

to the accused witch) but also by “mallice,” which led him to want to be “revenged” of Darrell. Indeed, Darrell wrote, Freeman “hated extreamely,” and refused to attend church services while Darrell led them. Similarly, he described the testimony of the town Clarke, M. Gregory, primarily as the result of “mallice.” To this characterization Darrell added that Gregory was “a popish mate against the work of god.”<sup>284</sup> Darrell represented a final opposing witness along similar lines, claiming “I did not know any living that did more deadlye hate me then M. Walton.”<sup>285</sup> In Darrell’s formulation, the men’s excessive anger marked them as incapable of impartial judicial inquiry. By juxtaposing himself against these detractors, Darrell took the part not only of martyr for Christ, but also of a moderate man of reason. By noting that “The *Disc[coverer]* sure taketh me to be a verye impatient man...yet he shall see that I wil answere him without any great cholera,”<sup>286</sup> Darrell merged gendered images of order and legitimacy alongside political, religious and cultural ones as a way to elicit the reader’s sympathies.

At times, Darrell invoked bodily humors to illustrate his enemies’ unseemly emotionality. In the humoral model, women’s bodies were associated with heated passions while men’s were presumed to be cooler and more rational.<sup>287</sup> References to the body played a central role in accusations of excess, and when Darrell referred to the heat of Harsnett’s anger he implied a kind of feminization that encouraged the reader to disregard his claims. Darrell instructed the reader to note Harsnett’s and Bancroft’s “doting partiality, that would be so hot and sweat somuch” about certain possession

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 120 (EEBO image 70).

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 144 (EEBO image 81).

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 153 (EEBO 85).

<sup>287</sup> For additional information about the humoral system and its gendered meanings, see Paster, especially 7-17.

cases while allowing the participants in others to escape relatively unscathed.<sup>288</sup> Darrell argued that Harsnett's excessive heat made him irrational: "It may very probably be gathered, that the thinge which hath vexed the *Disc[overer]* and made him sweate somuch about counterfeyting, is not the counterfeyting...nor his hatred and abomination to sinne...but his hatred against the instrumentes which god used in these great workes of his."<sup>289</sup> Darrell wanted the reader to see that Harsnett's misuse of his official position with the Commission proved that he lacked the temperate logic necessary in a man of authority. These quotations demonstrate that, even as political and religious concerns remained central, these writers embedded gender in their efforts to protect themselves and undo their enemies.

The language of irrationality and excess can be found in both pro- and anti-Darrell publications. For example, the *Triall of Maister Dorrell* (1599), a pro-Darrell pamphlet edited by A.Ri., provides another example of how gendered concepts could be interwoven seamlessly with broader political and religious arguments. Like Darrell, A.Ri. suggested that the Commission's ill treatment of Darrell and More stemmed from their excessive hatred. Accordingly, A.Ri. invoked gendered conceptions of decency and degradation even as he stated the political motivation for the Commissioners' silencing of these godly ministers. He wrote that:

there is some grudg against M. Dor[ell] & M. Moore though the cause be not readily perceyved...But indeed sundry causes may be perceived of all not willingly blinde. 1. The hatred w<sup>ch</sup> the L[ord] B[ishops] (Cant. & London) have against those that desire reform. of the church (among whom they accompt M. Dor. and M. Moore) whom they persecute more egerly then Papists.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Darrell, *A detection*, 11 (EEBO image 11). In particular, the Starkies of Lancashire.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 65 (EEBO image 38).

<sup>290</sup> A.Ri., 79 (EEBO image 40).

To such irrationally partisan, grudging, and hateful Commissioners, even the destruction of innocent men was acceptable. In effect, A.Ri. presented the Commissioners as having abdicated their right to manly credit because their malicious and immoderate scheming distorted their ability to serve God, country, and their community of gentlemanly peers. *The Triall* alerted the reader, implicitly, to the fact that the Commissioners could “unmake” Darrell despite the fact that his manly credit rested largely on the same components as their own. Thus the author suggested to the male reader that it was the Commissioners’ disorder, as an extension of Bancroft and Harsnett that threatened the community at large and possibly the reader as well. Because gendered notions of manly reason and moderation—and their problematic inversions—were so fundamental to articulations of legitimate power, the language of honorable manhood operated even in the political and religious struggles between the Church of England and the godly.

### **Trade and Occupation**

We have seen how writers on both sides invoked collective and individual markers of honorable manhood to dismiss their opponents and support their broader political and religious aims. Like manly credit, which applied to individual men but also depended upon relations with others, charges of unmanly irrationality and excess had both individual and collective components. Harsnett was particularly adept in his use of these strategies, and he brought a remarkable vigor and confidence to the page. One of his strategies deserves particular attention; by invoking commonly held notions of trade, occupation and profit, Harsnett found a way to disparage Darrell’s honorable manhood

that could not be so easily inverted and reversed. Harsnett drew upon a rich tradition of occupational stereotypes to vilify Darrell for his attempts to dispossess the demoniacs.

As Elizabeth Foyster notes, “Amongst the middling and lower sorts, a man’s identity was also closely linked to his occupational status, and the honour of certain trades and occupations was often proudly asserted.”<sup>291</sup> The absence of a respectable trade could contribute to a man’s degraded status, as Susan Amussen notes in reference to neighbors’ complaints about one Bernard Shipabarrow of Outwell in 1606. According to those complaints, he “liveth very suspiciously, not following any trade, or honest means to live as other men do.”<sup>292</sup> Darrell’s lack of a steady position as minister in a particular church left him open to Harsnett’s insinuation that he wandered about the country in search of a position and financial opportunities.<sup>293</sup> One of the central “occupations” that Harsnett attributes to Darrell is that of “Exorcist,” a term with damning, popish connotations. By using it, and drawing upon established views of Catholic exorcists, Harsnett simultaneously evoked popishness, insincerity and lewdness. In a section that explicitly dealt with a theological issue—whether Darrell claimed to be able to “discern” the origin of a possessing spirit—Harsnett employed trade imagery as a complementary device. He wrote:

It seemeth to be a matter very pertinent to the dignitie of an Exorcist, that he bee able to declare who sent the Devill into his patient. For men of that trade doe affirme, that sometimes it is God, sometimes holy men, and sometimes witches, that do send them... Whether witches can send Devils

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<sup>291</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 7-8. Foyster goes on to point out that in some contexts, the disorderly passions of young men could require as much regulation as that focused on women.

<sup>292</sup> Amussen, 172.

<sup>293</sup> Having inherited from his father, Darrell sold land and was able to live off the portion. Harsnett capitalized on this, and suggested that Darrell was hypocritical for allowing others to depict him as a poor pilgrim for Christ. It may be that coming in from without the community could make even an esteemed man appear suspiciously like an itinerant because he was separated from those who could vouch for his reputation.



into men or women (as many doe pretende) is a question amongst those that write of such matters & the learnede and sounder sort doe hold the negative.<sup>294</sup>

While Harsnett skirted the question of the possibility of possession in a post-apostolic age, the reader learned that Darrell's practices linked him to the exorcists of Europe. Just as priests claimed to have God's special dispensation for the adjuration of spirits, so Darrell sought to profit from the ignorance of the people. By labeling exorcism a "trade," Harsnett also suggested that Darrell's piety was nothing but a hypocritical screen for his greed and ambition. Furthermore, it unmade Darrell as a gentleman and man of learning, suggesting that he had to labor in order to support himself and his family.

Images of trade and occupation also provided Harsnett with a way to counter Darrell's invocations of scripture, his claims to greater piety, and his accusations that the Commissioners were atheists and contemporary Pharisees. As above, Harsnett integrated the language of trade into an important theological question: were prayer and fasting sanctioned by scripture as appropriate means for Protestant dispossessions, or did they replicate the follies of Catholic exorcisms? Harsnett associated Darrell with Catholic exorcists by asserting that while prayer was not so central to Catholic exorcism, the

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<sup>294</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 36 (EEBO image 23). By claiming so openly that the "learneder and sounder sort" did not believe that witches could send afflicting demons into their enemies, Harsnett came close to articulating a skepticism that in the early seventeenth century could still be branded atheistic, as to deny demons was considered by many to deny the possibility of the soul, and disregard the stories of demon possession in the Bible. Harsnett took care to say that witchcraft was real (though Brownlow doubts he believed it), and to ridicule the charges of "Atheisme" levied against the Commission for their resistance. Ultimately, however, Harsnett appears to be an important example (following in the footsteps of Reginald Scot) of a skepticism that assigned elite, manly rationality in contrast to a lowly, feminized, illogical credulity. The success of this imagery, over time, was central to the transformation of perspective in those who stood to most strongly affect the viability of witchcraft prosecution in England and New England—judges, magistrates, and clergy. See also Scot, 277-279 (EEBO images 153-154).

priests “are as earnest to make a trade and merchandise of it, as Maister Darrell.”<sup>295</sup> By labeling the act of prayer as “merchandise,” Harsnett aligned Darrell with papists and tricksters who swindled gullible customers. Harsnett continually placed his central theological points alongside images of hypocrisy and degradation, as if to use easily recognizable elements of dishonorable manhood to reinforce his case against Darrell and dispossession more generally.

By referring to trade and occupation, Harsnett also managed to apply the debased characteristics of others onto Darrell. He wrote that “When therefore these cosening merchants, doe tell men now a dayes, that they have cast devils out of any their children, servantes or friends: it is hereby manifest, what credite their wordes do deserve.”<sup>296</sup> He further asserted that, because possession cases are relatively rare, “the trades-men in that skil, have devised many wayes to keepe themselves in worke.”<sup>297</sup> These trade-related aspersions allowed Harsnett to strike at credit, manhood and character at once; surely no man with such manipulative business dealings would be credited among reasonable peers. Furthermore, the popular image of the profane, wandering tinker provided a familiar image for readers of the period’s satirical pamphlet literature and cast a questionable light upon Darrell’s motivations.<sup>298</sup> Harsnett painted Darrell as little more than a charlatan, much like Catholic priests. These “Exorcists of both kinds,” he wrote, “for want of worke are driven to their shifts: and like Tinkers walke up and downe from

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<sup>295</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 46 (EEBO 28).

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55 (EEBO 33).

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 59 (EEBO 35).

<sup>298</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* (New Edition) includes a long history for “tinker,” and provides the following definition: “A craftsman (usually itinerant) who mends pots, kettles, and other metal household utensils. The low repute in which these, esp. the itinerant sort, were held in former times is shown by the expressions to swear like a tinker, a tinker's curse or damn, as drunk or as quarrelsome as a tinker, etc., and the use of ‘tinker’ as synonymous with ‘vagrant’, ‘gipsy.’”

place to place, seeking to be employed. It is a matter of some difficultie to discover their shifts, and sleights to that purpose, they have so many; and by their experience doe manage them so craftily.”<sup>299</sup> Rather than a sober and well-respected minister, Darrell became a lowly, itinerant swindler. Vagrancy laws of the period show the suspicion in which itinerants were commonly held, and by this point in Harsnett’s text Darrell came to resemble, at least rhetorically, a character that every reader would recognize and scorn.<sup>300</sup>

Harsnett found several opportunities to link images of dishonorable trade to the allegedly popish aspects of Darrell’s “work” with demoniacs. In one sarcastic passage, he provided a long list of objects that priests in Rome presented as holy relics, such as “the cribbe that Christ was borne in: the thornes of the Crowne that Christ was crowned with: our Ladies hayre: the Chinne of Saint Iohn Baptistes father: some of Mary Magdalens hayre: a peece of the fatte of Saint Laurence: a peece of the arme, and some of the braynes of Saint Thomas of Canterburie, with many such trinkettes.” Harsnett then pointed out “many credulous and superstitious people are drawne to admire them. It is the manner of the Mountebankes in Italie, resembled by some of our Pedlers, when they open their packes, to set out their ware with many great wordes. Unto which kind of people, and seducing Mirabilistes, Maister Darrell in his practices with Somers, may well be resembled.”<sup>301</sup> Clearly enjoying the comparison he was drawing between Darrell and both foreign and local hucksters, Harsnett went on to state that “Whilest [Darrell] was thus jetting uppe and downe the place where Somers was playing his pranckes, and setting

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<sup>299</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 61 (EEBO 36).

<sup>300</sup> Kivelson notes that itinerant men such as minstrels and vagrants were frequent targets of witchcraft accusations in Russia. Kivelson, 80; 85. Some of the same anxieties appear to have manifested themselves in colonial New England as well, in the accusations against landless and abrasive men like John Godfrey.

<sup>301</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 219-220 (EEBO images 101;102).

out the boyes actions, as his chiefe Wares... a man may well remember the saide Romish Priestes in extolling their feyned Reliques, and the saide Mountebanikes, and Pedlers, in lying and cogging, to make the best of their packes.”<sup>302</sup> A few pages later, Harsnett returned to this effective charge by directly aligning Darrell with priests and lowly vagabonds. He contended that when Darrell “commaunded” Somers, a term that evoked the Catholic practice of commanding the devil to depart in the name of Christ, the:

simpler sort of people, ascribed great vertue and holines unto him. If the resemblances before made of M. Darrels practices in this point, to *Pedlers*, *Mountebankes*, and the Reliquemongers of Rome be not so fitte: then as you remember, Somers and Darrell dissembling and colluding together, thinke upon the pretie feates, betwixt Bankes and his horse. Indeed it was one of the greatest wonders that hapned in those actions at Nottingham, that so many were seduced by such palpable fooleries.<sup>303</sup>

Harsnett reiterated this comparison and added a well-known image of frivolous entertainment, thereby transforming the godly witnesses of Somers’s dispossession into a gullible, gaping mob. Bankes was a Scotsman who trained his horse, Morocco, to dance on his hind legs, stamp out the number shown on a thrown die, and to deliver objects to particular members of the audience.<sup>304</sup> By associating Darrell with exorcists, peddlers and street performers, Harsnett maintained that the dispossessions were less demonstrations of God’s judgment than entertainments calculated to deceive and extort. Throughout, the author further established Darrell’s dissolution by stripping him of the credit customarily granted to a minister by replacing it with something quite different and threatening.

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 221 (EEBO image 102).

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 225 (EEBO image104).

<sup>304</sup> Bankes’ dancing horse was something of a sensation in late sixteenth-century England and Europe, especially after an appearance at St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1600. William Shakespeare refers to Bankes’ dancing horse in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, (Act I, Scene II).

Harsnett relied upon images of trade, occupation and profit as a way to connote familiar characteristics of debased manhood such as greed and excessive self-promotion. He depicted Darrell as a profoundly disruptive force that wandered into Nottingham and sacrificed its peace and social order to forward his own interests. One only needed to consider the controversy and factions that developed among citizens and clergy in Nottingham and London as a result of the case to see witchcraft-possession's divisive effects. Harsnett likely strove to discredit Darrell in these gendered terms because they provided another way (besides religion and politics) to "unmake" Darrell as a man in the eyes of the readers and the Commissioners.

### **Manhood and Social Order**

Participants in this propaganda war used all three of the previous strategies—manly credit, irrationality and excess, and trade imagery—to evoke the gendered failings of their opponents. Each represented a threat to social order, which in a broad sense included political, religious and cultural conventions. A man's ability to maintain self-mastery in the face of such weaknesses served as an indication of his character. Because early modern manhood was defined in opposition to youth and womanhood, it was crucial for the writers to demonstrate to extent to which their subjects demonstrated or repudiated these qualities.<sup>305</sup> Because Harsnett and his allies were able to make such strong charges about the disorderly nature of witchcraft-possession, Darrell's side was forced to adopt a defensive posture. Even the Catholic physicians

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<sup>305</sup> Darrell and his supporters had to work particularly hard to demonstrate their respect of law and authority because the Church of England's control of the Stationer's Register meant that they had to seek publication abroad. Freeman writes that Bancroft's ability to "prevent his adversaries from having their works legally published in England" was one of his key advantages, 44.

involved in the Martha Brossier case, after all, noted that possession cases inevitably resulted in “great division and parts-taking among the people: as by the discourse ensewing all men of understanding may know.”<sup>306</sup> This potential for disorder provided the foundation of the Anglicans’ concerns about Puritan dispossessions, and anti-Darrell writers took pains to ensure that the reader recognized their greater claim to authority and stability.

This emphasis on social order allowed the writers to warn that only their protagonists stood between the reader and the profound disarray that would surely result should the other side prevail. They stressed the formidable nature of their enemies, as we have seen, by aligning them with Catholics, irrational and immoderate men, women, youths, and even the Devil himself. Despite the theological and factional import of the witchcraft-possession controversy sparked by the William Somers case, Harsnett’s “unmaking” of Darrell continually relied upon gendered strategies that marked him as one who subverted, rather than supported, customary hierarchical relations. Harsnett was aided in this project by the widespread cultural suspicion of apprentices—especially one as unsettled as Somers.<sup>307</sup> In order to unite the themes of this chapter, all of which can be subsumed in the enforcement of order, I consider as a final gendered strategy the

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<sup>306</sup> Marescot/Hartwell, 3 (EEBO 6).

<sup>307</sup> In an analysis of Shrovetide riots, Paul Griffiths writes that “apprentices” could have been “a convenient catch-all to categorize an otherwise mixed bag of apprentices and other ‘loose’ groups including unpaid soldiers and sailors, vagrants, and the unemployed.” Though Griffiths argues that statements about the dangers of apprentices can be overstated, especially given their diversity in “status, wealth, and occupational prestige,” the term did have broad connotation of disorder in early modern England. See Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), 160-169. See also Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 196-200.

accusations that Darrell or Harsnett manipulated customary hierarchies through the seduction of subordinates.<sup>308</sup>

In *A discoverie of the fraudulent practices of Iohn Darrel...* (1599), Harsnett claimed that Darrell behaved lewdly during his first dispossession on Katherine Wright in 1586. Specifically, Harsnett claimed that the young minister acted as a kind of seducer by lying on her body as she convulsed.<sup>309</sup> Though Wright did not offer additional testimony against Darrell, the Commissioners already had the willing testimony of William Somers, in which he claimed that Darrell promised him a release from service if he would counterfeit. These charges depicted Darrell as a kind of degraded solicitor, leading young people into lies and disregard for their responsibilities to parents, clergy, and even the law of God. For Darrell to have participated in such a practice, especially as a minister, would have proven him an utterly base man. Harsnett's accusation about Darrell's alleged impropriety with Katherine Wright also aligned Darrell yet again with mendacious Catholic exorcists, whose lusts were well documented in contemporary anti-Catholic propaganda.<sup>310</sup> To have lain upon Wright would have represented, at best, a shocking presumption on Darrell's part had he intended to emulate those who healed in

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<sup>308</sup> Cynthia Herrup describes the role that many of the same elements of manly credit under investigation here played out in the trial of the second Earl of Castlehaven, whose improper elevation of a servant over family members appeared to bother contemporaries more than the charges of rape and sodomy also laid at his feet. She writes sodomy was understood as a "failure of self-governance," and became a "synonym for intemperance...sodomy meant excessiveness, excessiveness meant instability," and onward from there. See Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Castlehaven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.

<sup>309</sup> There are similar examples of such lying on top of demoniacs during attempts to restrain them. See the *Witches of Warboys* (and Chapter 2), and the cases overseen by Jesuit William Weston. Another such case in New England involved Margaret Rule (see Chapter 5).

<sup>310</sup> As Sands writes, "The sexual implications of this episode were by no means unusual among cases of demon possession. Demoniacs frequently manifested behavior that onlookers could (and did) construe as sexual," 117-119. Harsnett made these charges even more explicitly when criticizing the behavior of Father William Weston with the youths in Denham in 1585-1586. Anti-Catholic propaganda in England also drew upon sexualized images of nuns and priests, and made the most of these associations when relating possession narratives.

Scripture by that method.<sup>311</sup> At worst, it suggested that Darrell made a show of piety but used the dispossessions to gratify his own unseemly desires. When the Commission first questioned Darrell about this event, he claimed not to recall it—after all, the case had taken place fourteen years earlier. Later, he testified that his wife had reminded him of the circumstances; he reported that his wife and other women had been present, along with another man as well. The company of these observers ought to have helped Darrell deflect accusations of impropriety, but Harsnett recorded this explanation as if it only enhanced their collective dissipation.

Darrell rebutted these charges in *A detection of that sinnfull, shamfull, lying, and ridiculous discours, of Samuel Harshnet* (1600).<sup>312</sup> He had the difficult task of contradicting the accusation despite his own inconsistent testimony about the event. He wrote:

in all this my dealinge with *Kat. Wright*, I had not (I thanke God) so much as an uncleane thought: neither did I lye on her in such manner as *Elias & Paul* sometimes did in the restoringe of two to life, nor yet in imiatation of them: all which I directly deposed before the *Bishop*. And that there was no uncleanes in acte, every one may be assured hereby, in that this said lyeing were their present, and eye witnesses theirof, my owne wife with other weomen, and for that another man also...lay together with me upon her...<sup>313</sup>

Darrell appeared desperate to rectify his initial confusion, to deny Bancroft's implications and discredit Harsnett's damning repetition of them. According to Darrell, Harsnett used this "shifte (a sluttish one) thinkinge theirby utterly to shame me, and disgrace me forever

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<sup>311</sup> For more about Protestant attitudes toward miracles in a post-apostolic age, see Thomas, 73-77.

<sup>312</sup> John Darrel, *A detection...* (England?, 1600).

<sup>313</sup> Ibid 189 (EEBO image 103).



vz. To make the world beleive that I am a vitious and uncleane person.”<sup>314</sup> As usual, however, Harsnett appeared to maintain the upper hand. As much as Darrell contradicted the charges, his lengthy responses failed to dislodge the tawdry implication from the reader’s mind. Darrell was caught because he lacked the influence to counter the Commission’s disregard of his supporters’ testimony and Harsnett’s poison pen. This episode exemplifies gender’s presence throughout this witchcraft-possession propaganda war—not simply because of the accusation of sexual impropriety, but because it linked beliefs about problematic manhood to women’s concupiscence, the immoderate passions of youth and the traditional satirical approach of hypocrisy.

Darrell was as aware of the overlap between the turbulent passions of women and youths as his detractors. He wrote that when Bancroft initially pressed him for an answer about that day fourteen years earlier, “I tould him that for the present I *did thinke* or imagin that I did it in some childish, foolish, and indiscrete imitation of the Prophet and Apostle: For quoth I unto him I was then young and had studied divinitie but a little while, and therefore it may be did fall into such an error and childish parte.”<sup>315</sup> Darrell’s invocation of his youth here served both as a way to condemn the act and also to excuse its commission. He wrote, “But suppose this latter weare true: yet seeing it was done so many yeares since, when I was little better then a child in understandinge, and that now beinge of riper yeares I am as farr from approving thereof, or practisinge the like as any man whatsoever, it must needes be I take it, and cannot be excused to be in the highest degree of mallice.”<sup>316</sup> While Darrell was willing to acknowledge the seriousness of the

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid 189 (EEBO image 103).

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 190 (EEBO image 103).

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 191 (EEBO image 104).

indiscretion, he begged the reader to reflect on his spotless reputation as a man. This appeal to honorable manhood largely fell short, however, because Harsnett so convincingly suggested that his credit had been misrepresented by base adherents. Because the Commissioners denied Darrell the opportunity to make use of his esteemed supporters, and in fact made support of Darrell dangerous for them, they managed to isolate and unmake him.

Darrell continually attempted to deflect these charges back onto Harsnett. For example, he painted the chaplain as a kind of seducer and manipulator of the demoniacs who were less willing than William Somers to implicate him, namely Thomas Darling and Katherine Wright.<sup>317</sup> Whereas Harsnett wrote of Darling as a lewd and fraudulent boy, Darrell placed him in a more sympathetic position. He wrote:

Heere it must not be forgotten how Darling a young stripling of those tender & unsettled yeares was dealt with and ensnared. He was for the space of a moneth in the Bishops house: duringe which time the Bishop and his Chaplaine with all their serches and devises were dayly and howerly in hand with the boy to wringe this confession from him...and then presently perceivinge him not to be for there purpose as Somers was, they retayning Somers, turned him out of the dores...Men sometimes of greater yeares and riper iudgment, have in such case ben too easily drawne from the truth to affirme that which is false and erroneous. How easily then might such a weake boy be perverted and seduced?<sup>318</sup>

The passage reminds us how closely early modern concepts of reason and strength were linked to age as well as sex. Darrell invoked a kind of “simplicity” here for both Darling and Wright; instead of dismissing them as fools, he presented them as guileless and

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<sup>317</sup> Thomas Darling, known as the “Boy of Burton” appears to have been of the “hotter sort” of Protestants himself. For his account, see *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill, who was arraigned and conuicted at Darbie at the Assises there as also a true report of the strange torments of Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteene yeres of age, that was possessed by the deuill...* (London: For I.O., 1597).

<sup>318</sup> Darrell, *A detection*, 180 (EEBO image 99).

vulnerable to influence. Such simplicity, the early modern reader would already know, made one open to the temptations of Satan or, in Darrell's formulation, more worldly tempters.

Darrell suggested a similar dynamic between Harsnett and Katherine Wright. He stated, "I trust S. Harsnet did therunto by his slyghtes and devises draw her & entice" Wright to change her testimony. He suggested that Harsnett had an unwholesome and unseemly influence over Wright, which reinforced his claims that Harsnett misused his authority in service to his malice and his Lord Bishop. Thus Darrell inverted Harsnett's images of seduction and manipulation and managed to conflate supernatural Devils—such as those who afflicted the demoniacs—with worldly ones such as Harsnett himself. Interestingly, Darrell often appeared to be at his strongest when he followed Harsnett's lead by posing practical or worldly arguments rather than strictly theological ones. For example, Darrell demonstrated not only that he lacked motive to manipulate Wright's case, but also that Wright's own interests would hardly have been served by such an arrangement. Darrell pointed out that:

Yf K. Wright have counterfeited, she hath therein spent the prime of her life, from the age of 17 untill about 30 thereby depriveing her selfe of many, if not all the comforts of this life, as societie, marriage &c. who can now in any reason thinke, that a younge damsell to my remembrance of a comely feature and personage, desirous enough (if not too much) of the pleasures of this life, would wittingly, and willingly, deprive her selfe of them all, and that for so many yeares together, and to such an end as heere is pretended.<sup>319</sup>

It seems likely that the reader would have found this a convincing argument. Because honorable womanhood entailed marriage, motherhood, and the management of a

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 186 (EEBO image 102).

household, an intentional fraud would have required her to not only deny herself social viability but would also have left her as a vulnerable dependent in her stepfather's home.<sup>320</sup> Why, Darrell asked, would Wright have intentionally deprived herself of all worldly pleasures in order to act out painful contortions and continue to do so even years after the crowds subsided? The pains Darrell took to praise her attractiveness and healthy orientation toward marriage, while sidestepping any suggestion of immoderate lustfulness, exemplified the dangers inherent in invocations of gendered character. The boundary between honorable and degraded womanhood was a fine one, and one best policed by neighbors and others who know Wright well; while Harsnett did not attempt to "unmake" Wright as a decent woman, his position made it possible for him to do so without risk of punishment. This reality must have been painful for Darrell, who ought to have been better positioned to defend himself than Wright, but who found himself unable to prevent the destruction of his own credit.

Gender was an enduring argumentative strategy throughout witchcraft-possession debates, and we need not interpret its occasional submersion in politics and religion as an argument against its relevance. Darrell relied upon gendered assumptions as one way to defend himself against the Wright scandal and to create a disorderly and factional image of Harsnett. He refuted Harsnett's depiction of him as an extremist; indeed, he was able to demonstrate that the Wright case provided neither the riches nor the fame after which he supposedly lusted. Regarding these alleged motives, Darrell wrote:

Had *K Wright* dissembled to have had the devil cast out of her by me...then must she have remained well, after I pretended to dispossesse her... but their was nothing in reason to leade me to perswad and teach her to counterfeite onely to be possessed with the devil and...for many yeares

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<sup>320</sup> Harsnett, *A discovery*, 279 [misprint of "297"] (EEBO image 140).

to dissemble. As this could not procure me in particular the prayse of men, and to be reputed to have some [quoting Harsnett] *rare and odd gifte in casting out devils*, but rather the contrary...so neither in generall could it further the *setting up of Presbytericall conceites*: seeing heere was no devil cast out by a *Presbitericall* man, to commend him, & his *conceits* to the world.<sup>321</sup>

Darrell's invocations of social and religious order can be seen as gendered because those concepts were themselves gendered. Clearly gender was not the only tool Darrell used, gender's embedded presence throughout the documents demonstrates its importance despite its mutability, and reminds us that gender for men was linked with their relations to—and repudiation of the weaknesses of—women and youths. Darrell needed to present himself as the godly martyr to Harsnett and Bancroft's atheistic scorn, but without overtly challenging legitimate authority. In the chaotic context of witchcraft-possession, Darrell used a gendered language of manhood and reason as one way to do this—and both he and his enemies did so when it best suited their interests.

Deacon and Walker's *Dialogicall discourses* (1601) and *Summarie answere* (1601) represented an attack on Darrell from within his own ranks—or at least, from other godly ministers. Historians disagree about the extent to which they may have been responding to pressure from Harsnett's camp.<sup>322</sup> Deacon and Walker were somewhat critical of the Commission's treatment of Darrell, but they also complained of the effects Darrell's dispossessions had on their congregations. As Freeman writes, "the controversy over Darrell's exorcism provided the enemies of the godly with an excuse to brand them

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 194 (EEBO image 105).

<sup>322</sup> Michael MacDonald describes Deacon and Walker as "hired pens," xxii; Brownlow writes "Bancroft encouraged them because, writing from much the same standpoint as Darrell's, they would expose his eccentricities, 73-75. Freeman writes "there is no evidence that Bancroft had anything to do with their entry into the dispute, and a number of considerations make it unlikely," 51.

at best as disorderly and mad, at worst schismatic and seditious. Also discernible in the books of Deacon and Walker is the resentment of established local clergy towards the spectacular success of an unconventional newcomer.” This indignation comes through clearly in *Dialogicall discourses*,<sup>323</sup> and calls to mind the tensions stirred in Warboys when the Throckmortons returned to a town accustomed to handling its own business without reserving the degree of deference due to a resident gentleman.

Deacon and Walker’s critique demonstrated the value of holding credit with a community of honorable men; the absence of such support made it much easier for detractors to merge questionable credit with accusations of social disruption. The same divisions among the godly that allowed Deacon and Walker to express their resentment of Darrell’s presumptions in Nottingham also provided them with a way to present themselves as noble defenders of order. They wrote that, as a result of their speaking out against Darrell, they expected to be:

Notoriously branded with the *blacke coale of unchristian reproches*...we do assuredly expect when their *Pulpits* shall ring out, and their *night crowing Pamphlets* proclaime to the world, that such two, are *quite falne from the brethren and their cause*, they know not well what: that they are become *Apostates, revolters, backsliders, formalistes*, and such as *fawne on the state*: and this onely, for that we favour not forsooth, these their *Cabalisticall conceits and phantasticall fooleries*.<sup>324</sup>

Deacon and Walker cannily anticipated some of Darrell’s rebuttals, and when he later did accuse them of fawning on the state, the accusation fell somewhat flat. These two ministers not only questioned the reality of possession and its theological foundations,<sup>325</sup> but also were better positioned than Harsnett to convince readers that Darrell was a threat

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<sup>323</sup> Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall discourses*, 271-273.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, A4r (EEBO image 4).

<sup>325</sup> Freeman, 52-53.

to the stable, if contentious, relationship between the “hotter sort” of Protestants and the Church of England. As an outlier, Darrell had presumed to step in where other ministers had long served as shepherds for their congregations; not all of the godly saw his dramatic success as a boon for the cause.

Deacon and Walker, in accordance with the style of the period, named the characters in their dialogue so as to make their stance particularly clear to the reader. It seems unlikely that Darrell would have found any of these characterizations desirable, whether *Philologus* “a Lover of talke” or *Exorcistes* “a coniurour or caster fourth of spirits and divels: and representeth those persons that doe hold (in these daies of the Gospel) a real, or actual possession of divels at the least.” Unfortunately for Darrell, the two admirable characters were cast in opposition to his own views of what had happened with Somers; *Physiologus* “representeth such persons as...are able to discover the grose and palpable absurdities, ensuing such phantastical & absurd opinions,” and *Orthodoxus* was “one of an approved or upright iudgement: and representeth all such illumined divines and others, as are able by the sway of reason, the authority of writers, and plaine evidence of scripture to censure the obiections, and very soundly to set downe the infallible truth.”<sup>326</sup> These characters denote many of the gendered aspects of possession controversy under examination here: excess, credit, reason, and manly community.

Darrell published rebuttals to Deacon and Walker’s texts, *Survey of Dialogicall discourses* (1602) and a *Replie* (1602), both of which followed Deacon and Walker’s lead by focusing on the theological aspects of the controversy. Darrell did not conclusively answer many of Deacon and Walker’s challenges, but emphasized that they were unable

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<sup>326</sup> Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall discourses*, A4r-A4v (EEBO images 12 and 13).

satisfactorily to account for scriptural instances of possession and dispossession. Darrell was thus able to suggest that their critique would create a slippery slope down which their congregants could fall, away from an appropriate interpretation of scripture. Rather than attempt to argue the small points of scripture with Deacon and Walker, Darrell took the simpler approach of including them in Harsnett's forces. The language of martyrdom may have been a device, but it seems clear that Darrell truly was bewildered and exhausted by his ordeal. Having weathered the earlier tracts against him, Darrell claimed to seek peace. Like "a tired & weather beaten bird," could he be blamed for seeking "some quyet corner to rest my selfe in, & to dry my feathers in the warme sunne? But it is not my lot, I thinke...For behold two new champions, that have been bucklinge on their harnesse these two or three yeares, with a proud swelling volume like a Spanish Armada."<sup>327</sup> In addition to this vivid invocation of an assault by an enemy of English Protestantism, Darrell depicted Deacon and Walker as hypocritical, excessive and false. In response to their complaint that he had published without official approval, Darrell wrote that Christendom had long depended upon godly men to publish against the wishes of some in authority. "Are you not then egregious Sycophants which doe vehemently condemn all the godly upon so foolish a conceyt? Are not such as you a flattering poison to Princes, which would transforme them from gracious governours, into hatefull Tyrants?"<sup>328</sup> Even as Darrell fought to defend himself and depict Deacon and Walker as lacking manly independence, he fell into the kind of argument already laid out before him by his opponents.

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<sup>327</sup> Darrel, *A survey of certaine dialogicall discourses...*(1602), A2r (EEBO image 2).

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, B1r (EEBO 5).



Ultimately, manly reason, credit and honor allowed these writers to assert the validity of their particular view of witchcraft-possession and the legitimacy of its proponents and detractors. Their gendered strategies coexisted with, and at times were subsumed into, broader concepts of social order applicable to all of the participants; all of them risked being demeaned and unmade. The crucial deciding factor was institutional power. Despite Darrell's allies, good credit and superior position to Somers in terms of age and social status, Harsnett and the Commissioners unmade him. Just as John Samuel's undoing made him a more viable witch, Darrell's undoing simultaneously reinforced patriarchal order as it demonstrated one man's vulnerability within that order. While Darrell's fate was far superior to that of John Samuel, he suffered an unlikely transformation from reputable godly minister to convicted fraud. Manly credit, traits of reason and excess, and images of seduction each provided a gendered means by which to complete that transformation.

## CHAPTER 4

### PASSING A CENTURY, CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

Whether struggling to prove or disprove a witchcraft charge, or arguing the validity of dispossession in pamphlet wars, men took care to lay claim to honorable manhood in terms of reason, self-moderation and respectability among honorable peers. As in Warboys (1589-1593), Darbyshire (1586), Lancashire and Burton-on-Trent (1596), Nottingham (1597), and London (1599-1603), men who participated in possession cases continued to employ gender a central linguistic strategy. The following century profoundly transformed the political, religious, and social landscape of England and New England. The same forces that wrought such extensive change influenced witchcraft-possession, but not by transforming the phenomenon by the eighteenth century into something that would have been unrecognizable to English men and women at the turn of the seventeenth century. Accordingly, gender remained a foundational medium for both support and criticism of witchcraft-possession even as the men who acted as if they were possessed invoked and discarded honorable manhood as it served their interests.

This chapter takes a long and broad view of published witchcraft-possession cases in England and New England, and uses the experiences of male and female demoniacs to illustrate patterns of continuity and change throughout the tumultuous seventeenth century. From King James' ascension in 1603 to the English Civil War and

Parliamentary rule in the 1640s, and from the Restoration in 1660 to the turn of the eighteenth century, possession cases demonstrated that supernatural wonders continued to offer opportunity and risk. The English Civil War, the settlements in North America, fluctuations in witchcraft prosecution, and countless other political, religious, and cultural events make a comprehensive overview beyond the scope of this project. But by narrowing the focus to the articulation of manhood in published witchcraft-possession narratives, we gain an opportunity to view the continuities and changes in gender's operation in witchcraft-possession from early seventeenth-century England to early eighteenth-century New England. These exceptional moments show us what was possible, and how gender remained central even when at its most malleable and inconsistent. Lastly, these cases show how gender contributed to the ways that witchcraft-possession aided men in their pursuit of political and religious goals that changed across time and space but continually hinged on their ability to claim patriarchal privileges at the expense of their opponents.

The wonders of supernatural phenomena resonated as much with those who crossed the Atlantic to New England as with the English at home—if not more. From New England's first planting and controversies over political autonomy, through wars with Native Americans and economic and social diversification, witchcraft-possession reflected the tensions of Anglo-American colonization. First, I argue that men figured more substantially in *published* possession cases than they did in cases overall. Also, men who acted as if they were possessed were more likely to perform solitary demonic possession than their female counterparts, who often named a witch as intermediary. While some men in New England participated in outbreaks, possession in New England

was overall a more female, and more collective, phenomenon than in England. Second, I establish that the hostile climate instituted by the Church of England at the end of Chapter 3 persisted, but did not prevent cases' emergence and publication. Politics and religion remained at the center of witchcraft-possession publications throughout the seventeenth century, and authors continued to rely upon gendered strategies in defense of those interests. Third, I argue that developments in science and medicine influenced but did not supplant belief in witchcraft-possession. Credulous authors took pains to demonstrate familiarity with likely natural causes before denying their role in particular possessions. Evolving medical models, while intellectually important, did not in themselves bring about sufficient skepticism to eliminate witchcraft-possession belief. Finally, I consider the ways that not only witches but also demoniacs of both sexes were subjected to painful experiments designed to corroborate or challenge the validity of their affliction—a process that hinged upon observers' gendered assumptions about men and women's bodies.

This chapter looks at witchcraft-possession in England and New England from the end of the sixteenth century to the start of the eighteenth century. To draw comparisons across the transatlantic begs the question of how Englishmen in New England differed from their countrymen back in England.<sup>329</sup> David Cressy writes that even though the number of English people who traveled to American colonies was low enough nearly to escape notice, those who came “brought with them English notions of political order, religious seriousness, moral righteousness, literature, commerce and ‘civilization,’ and

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<sup>329</sup> Stephen Foster points out that “with all the emphasis on the radical and the creative in Puritanism, it is well to begin with a reminder of how many of its tenets were derivative, conservative, and traditional even in the most purely Puritan part of the Western world.” See *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), xvi.

adapted them to local conditions.”<sup>330</sup> To address the tendency of colonial American historians and English historians to remain cordoned off from each other, Cressy studied the migrant experience from England to New England and vice versa. Historians are aware, for the most part, of the connections between elite New Englanders and their English counterparts, but Cressy found that regular folk also remained tied to kin through “debts, obligations and inheritances.” He writes:

The early colonists were never as severely cut off as some have feared, nor did they fully turn their backs on old England. Migration, return migration, trade, kinship, inheritance, money and messages tied London to Boston, and sustained a community of interest between provincial Massachusetts and provincial England...New England culture blossomed not in wilderness isolation but in an informed counterpoint to its English roots.<sup>331</sup>

These connections made English colonists remain English, and they referred to themselves as such in order to distinguish themselves from other European settlers and Native Americans. Even the “hotter” sort of Puritan in New England inherited a tradition of witchcraft-possession lore that was influenced by beliefs of continental Europe. As we saw in Chapter 3, despite Protestants’ attempts to differentiate their practices of dispossession from Catholic exorcisms, common people retained images of witches’ Sabbaths and countermagic with foundations in European practices.

Many eminent New England Puritans maintained relationships with Nonconformists back in England, as well.<sup>332</sup> The ministers Increase Mather and his son,

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<sup>330</sup> David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), vii.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

<sup>332</sup> For a discussion of the contradictory message New England Puritans sent back home—that they rejected the English church as profane, but also that they remained loyal and related subjects—see Susan Hardman Moore, “Popery, purity and Providence: deciphering the New England experiment,” in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, eds., *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 257-259.

Cotton Mather, were particularly well connected. Increase spent four years in England advocating for the restoration of New England's charter, which led him to hold court with three kings and a queen.<sup>333</sup> Cotton Mather maintained correspondence with noteworthy men such as Richard Baxter, whose writings on witchcraft considerably influenced his own.<sup>334</sup> The work of Meric Casaubon, Henry More, and Joseph Glanvill were also formative for Mather; these men, as Barbara Shapiro writes, "applied the proof of fact to establish the existence of spiritual phenomena. Their concern was fueled not by a zeal to prosecute witches but by an aspiration to show the existence of spirit to an age that appeared to them overly attracted to mechanism and materialism."<sup>335</sup> Cotton Mather's drive to locate and record instances of wonders that defied natural explanation derived in part from the example set by Glanvill and More, and like them he argued that the possibility of fraud should not subject all reports of spirits to suspicion.<sup>336</sup> The Mathers can hardly be considered representative of New England's population, but they loom largely in the articulation of witchcraft-possession under consideration here.

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<sup>333</sup> The nature of the new charter, and the resulting controversy, is addressed in the next chapter.

<sup>334</sup> Richard Baxter, *The certainty of the worlds of spirits...Proving the immortality of souls, the malice and misery of the devils, and the damned, and the blessedness of the justified. Written for the conviction of Sadduces & infidels* (London, 1691). Cotton Mather also sought to remain connected to England through his pursuit, and eventual achievement, of membership in the Royal Society. Mather is better known for his writings about witchcraft, but he was committed to scientific interests. Cotton Mather found himself at the center of an intense debate regarding the efficacy and safety of vaccination in the early 1720s. See also Arthur Allen, *Vaccine: the controversial story of medicine's greatest lifesaver* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), Chapter 1.

<sup>335</sup> Shapiro, 180.

<sup>336</sup> Opposing views—that any number of witnesses would be insufficient to prove witchcraft, and senses were insufficient to divine the nature of spirits—were forwarded by John Webster in *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft: Wherein is affirmed that there are many sorts of Deceivers and Impostors, and Divers persons under a passive Delusion of Melancholy and Fancy...* (London, 1677); John Wagstaffe, *The Question of Witchcraft Debated...* (1669) and *The displaying of supposed witchcraft wherein is affirmed that there are many sorts of deceivers and impostors and divers persons under a passive delusion of melancholy and fancy...* London, 1677. See also Shapiro, 182; Thomas, 577-579.

To analyze phenomena so uncommon as witchcraft-possession cases invites questions about the potential limitations of narrowing one's focus too far. Even general studies of Anglo-American colonization can run aground of misleading terminology. For example, books about "Puritan New England" prompted Richard Archer to remind his readers that:

Not everyone was a Puritan, and English, and male, and a minister or a magistrate. Skeptics, lukewarm believers, Baptists, Anglicans, Quakers, Jews, shamans, practitioners of magic, and members of various sects dwelled in New England along with separatists and nonseparatists, congregationalists and presbyterians—collectively called Puritans. Massachusetts, Irish, Dutch, Pequot, Narragansett, Welsh, Wampanoag, French, Abenaki, Scots, west Africans, and Nipmuck were among the various people who lived side-by-side with English, who themselves displayed regional differences.<sup>337</sup>

The vitality of such diversity captures the imagination, and helps contain the impulse to generalize about the experiences of "New Englanders." Still, there is value even in the unrepresentativeness of witchcraft-possession cases, for the ways they amplify individuals and local interactions normally lost to history. This project returns to the Mathers and their peers not because they characterize New England's population, but because their disproportionate contribution to formal articulations of witchcraft-possession reveal a great deal about what was possible. Published witchcraft-possession narratives may not tell us as much about the beliefs of common folk as court documents, for example, but they reveal a great deal about men's perceptions of the natural and supernatural worlds.<sup>338</sup> Ideas of manhood, gendered order, and hierarchy, played a

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<sup>337</sup> Richard Archer, *Fissures in the Rock: New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Hanover, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>338</sup> Both Richard Gildrie and David Hall investigate the nature of popular belief in colonial New England. Gildrie writes that the ritual life of New England demonstrates both the influence of Puritan clergy and its

complex and essential role in New Englanders' perception and articulation of witchcraft-possession.

Gender, in all of its explicit and implicit forms, was one of the central systems through which varied parties in New England negotiated contact, coexistence, and conflict. There were profound differences in gender norms; among Europeans, for example, the Quakers' intentionally provocative inversions of gender and hierarchy contributed a great deal to Puritans' antipathy toward them.<sup>339</sup> Also, there was enough held in common among European and Native American populations to deepen misunderstandings over the differences.<sup>340</sup> Still, gender was one of the systems through which all those present in colonial New England made sense of their world, and that both enabled and impeded their relations with others.<sup>341</sup> The vast majority of the people in seventeenth-century New England shared an investment in the maintenance of order and social hierarchy in which gender was a primary contributor.

Social order was a vital lens through which New Englanders of all sorts understood themselves in relation to others. Foster emphasizes the preoccupation with

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limits. The celebration of Christmas, for example, was decried by both Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall—or, alternatively, they wrote favorably at times about how few people celebrated the pagan holiday—but the Massachusetts General Court had to repeal the ban on festivities in 1681 because it was “obviously unenforceable.” See Richard P. Gildrie, *The Prophane, The Civil, & The Godly: The Reformation of Manners in Orthodox New England, 1679-1749* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 111-114. See also David Hall's aforementioned discussion of “horse-shed Christians,” 16-17.

<sup>339</sup> For gender and the Quakers, see Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century: the 'Ingenious Quaker' and her Connections* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

<sup>340</sup> See Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 2-3. See also Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), and for the interplay between Europeans, Indians, and Africans in Virginia, see Kathleen M. Brown, especially “The Anglo-Indian Gender Frontier.”

<sup>341</sup> See Little's discussion of cultural cross-dressing on the Anglo-American frontier, 59-60.



order in England and New England, both within and beyond the Nonconformist community. Puritans, he writes, “envisioned a society of specialists bound together by mutual need and believed that any other arrangement would inevitably lead to chaos...The concept of order served equally well to defend all sorts of servile relationships between masters and servants, and even, when the need arose, the existence of human slavery itself.<sup>342</sup> It was widely believed that society, and particularly a godly commonwealth such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, hinged upon the maintenance of structured hierarchical relations. It was not only the Mathers and their cohort who upheld these priorities, though perhaps unsurprisingly they devoted considerable energy to the idea’s promulgation. Given the complicated web of relations every colonist had with his or her family, master, minister, judge, spouse, or servant, “regular” folk had reasons to police the nature of these boundaries as well. Furthermore, two men might shift in hierarchical relation to one another depending upon the particular circumstances of their interaction. Foster explains, for example, that a “magistrate stood superior to the minister when the latter appeared as one of his subjects but inferior to him when he himself functioned as a member of the minister’s congregation.” Another commonality between England and New England was in the concern elite men felt about “masterless men,” which prompted them to try to organize single men into family groups.<sup>343</sup>

Richard Archer notes that one can see how thoroughly men and women in colonial New England arranged their world according to social hierarchies by looking at meetinghouse seating arrangements. Assigned seats were clearly ranked; seats near the

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<sup>342</sup> Foster, 14. Foster cites the nature of the debate about slavery that resulted from Samuel Sewall’s anti-slavery *The Selling of Joseph* (1700).

<sup>343</sup> Foster, 36; 23-24.

minister had the highest status, while those in unassigned seats at the back had the lowest. Gender was one factor in determining one's position, along with age, length of church membership, marital status, wealth, familial connections, and reputation.<sup>344</sup> The function of these seating charts could hinge on gender, but it was not so simple as a grouping of rich men in front of poor men, who in turn out-ranked women. Men, women, and children were seated among others of their kind, rather than in family groups, which offered additional opportunities for parity. Archer writes that the "meetinghouse might be divided by gender, but it was divided equally. Except for the elders and deacons, women had as prominent seats as did men. Men might be considered superior to women in civil and domestic life, but men's and women's souls were equally capable of salvation."<sup>345</sup> However much this potential for spiritual equality influenced New Englanders' daily lives may be uncertain, but pew assignments provide a concrete example of gender's fluidity. At times gender acted as the principal factor in determining one's status, and at other times it could be subordinated to others.

Further evidence that seventeenth-century New Englanders retained much of England's cultural legacy—including explicit and implicit investments in gendered and other hierarchies—can be found in customary exercises of controlled rebellion against those hierarchies. Richard Gildrie has described the feasting and drinking that accompanied militia Training Days, for example. While the soldiers might celebrate the generosity of the officer who provided the meal, there was also the possibility for

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<sup>344</sup> Archer, 60. Age was another crucial aspect of social hierarchy, and invariably inflected by gender—as the depictions of youths as excessively passionate reveal. Archer cites the particular efforts in New Haven to control "lusty young men," by pairing younger men with elders during watches, so that "young and looser persons be as much seperated as may be: and that in each watch, with each young and less satisfying person, another more antient and trusty be joyned," 107-108.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

drunken rioting; in one case soldiers beat the officer with clubs. In addition, there were instances in New England of the kind of “rough riding” or charivari that constituted a public condemnation against a woman who dominated her husband, or a man who beat his wife too severely. In the early eighteenth century, “[e]ven after three generations of Puritan preaching and legal reforms” Gildrie writes, “the honor of families and ‘modesty’ of women were still being enforced in extralegal public ceremonies.” While domestic violence was not necessarily a characteristic that made a man appear to be a witch, it is interesting that charges of excessively “hard treatment” of wives plagued the reputation of John Samuel, George Burroughs, and John Willard—all executed for witchcraft.<sup>346</sup>

The challenge, then, is to acknowledge the diversity of colonial New England while pursuing what Bernard Rosenthal calls “reasonable conclusions...that do more than impose one more myth.”<sup>347</sup> The best way to avoid myth-making here is to state explicitly that this project does not pursue the causes of witchcraft-possession in England or New England. Instead, its intent is to delve into gender and manhood across witchcraft-possession’s broad terrain, and to locate the large and small ways it contributed to the shifts in ideology that led increasing numbers of elite men first to avoid, and then to reject and disparage what had been steadfastly, if controversially, within the realm of Christian doctrine. Throughout the seventeenth century and across the Anglo-American world, witchcraft-possession cases continued to resonate with ongoing political and

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<sup>346</sup> Gildrie, 123-129. Burroughs and Willard were executed on the same day in Massachusetts. Karlson mentions that George Jacobs, another male witch suspect, had been accused of “beating female servants with his staff,” 246. In a curious related case, testimony about the suspected witch Mary (Lewis) Parsons of Springfield, MA in 1656 contained references to her husband Joseph Parson’s “unmerciful” beating of one of his small children. See David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 104.

<sup>347</sup> Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7-8.

religious struggles. While changes in science and medicine shaped published possession accounts, local practice continued to reflect age-old suspicions about the bodies of demoniacs and witches. In old and New England, assumptions about men and women's bodies shaped credulity and skepticism even when gender appeared to be discarded and downplayed.

### **Men, Women, and Witchcraft-Possession**

Published witchcraft-possession cases reveal gender's malleable but indispensable role in the construction of likely witches, and in attempts to use the cases as religious and political propaganda. These trends appear throughout the seventeenth-century Anglo-Atlantic, as men and boys as well as women and girls performed possession symptoms. Gender served as an evaluative tool in other sorts of supernatural phenomena, as well. Reports of angelic visitations, for example, faced resistance from ministers who were hesitant to encourage prophets within their congregations. Increase Mather wrote that such visions, "I am perswaded, will...appear to be a Delusion of the Evil One, that pretends to be an Angel of Light." Yet in a treatise appended to that volume, he added, "[a]lthough it must be granted, that in the Dayes of the Gospel, Angelical Apparitions are not so frequent as under the Old Testament, nevertheless, some such there have been, and still may be."<sup>348</sup> One way out of the difficulty of evaluating legitimate angelic visions was to consider the sex of the visionary:

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<sup>348</sup> Increase Mather, *Angelographia, or, A discourse concerning the nature and power of the holy angels and the great benefit which the true fearers of God receive by their ministry: delivered in several sermons, to which is added a sermon concerning the sin and misery of the fallen angels: also A disquisition concerning angelical-apparitions...* (Boston, 1696), 64. See also the appended *A Disquisition Concerning Angelical Apparitions, In Answer to a Case of Conscience, shewing that Daemons oft appear like Angels of*

If these White Angels appear to Females only, who are the weaker Sex, and more easy to be imposed on, that renders the case yet the more suspicious. It was part of the Devils subtilty in the first Temptation, which he assaulted mankind with, that he began with the Woman; and he hath found such success, as to hold on in the same course. How many Woman have been famous in some former dark Ages on account of pretended Angelical Apparitions and Revelations?...If ever an Age for Angelical Apparitions shall come, no question but men, and not women only, will be honoured with their Visits, of which I hear little or nothing at present.<sup>349</sup>

Using gender granted elite authors the flexibility they needed to interpret angelic visions—like possessions—in ways that supported their religious and political claims at the expense of others. Protestant writers complained when Catholic used exorcisms to claim that Hell was filled with Protestants (see the example of William Perry, below), but they levied the same sort of arguments against Quakers and Catholics in return.<sup>350</sup>

Because prophetic visions held such profound implications, Protestants in England and New England worked to manage supernatural events, and used gendered strategies and language to do so.

The narrower political, religious, and economic spectrums in New England—not to mention the pressures of contact and conflict with Native Americans and French Canadians—necessarily cast a different tone over witchcraft-possession in the two regions. These different expressions, further discussed below, led to variations but not radical departures from the traditional witchcraft-possession script. Though the differences between published witchcraft-possession cases in the two regions prohibit a

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*Light, and what is the best and only way to prevent deception by them. All considered, according to the Scripture, Reason, Experience and approved History...* (Boston, 1696), 4.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 17. For a related argument about the association of women's godly visions with devilish delusions, see Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2003.

<sup>350</sup> Increase Mather added that "Mahomet's Angel, from whom he pretended to receive his new Religion was a Devil: For in the [Koran] there are contradictions, and therefore falsehoods which cannot proceed from a good Spirit," *Angelographia*, 13.

true comparison, a broad view of the evidence reveals both continuity and change in the gendered nature of these events. The smaller number and chronological concentration of New England's witchcraft-possession cases make a more comprehensive study possible; I draw upon Carol Karlsen's analysis of possession in New England to paint a fuller picture of its manifestations in both regions. In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987), Karlsen records seventy-eight possessed accusers, sixty-seven of whom were female (86%) and eleven of whom were male (14%).<sup>351</sup> Though Karlsen focuses on witchcraft-possession and not demonic possession, these numbers represent the vast majority of New England's possessions. There only appear to have been two straight demonic possessions in New England that were taken seriously. The first was a "boy from Tocutt" recorded in Richard Mather's diary, transcribed by his grandson Cotton Mather, and included in the latter's *Memorable Providences* (1689).<sup>352</sup> The second was a "certaine man from New England," whose severe trembling fits led Increase Mather to

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<sup>351</sup> Karlsen, 39-40; 222-251. I have included unnamed demoniacs when the sex was specified—a "poore boy," for example, is included, while "children" whose number and sex went unrecorded are omitted except for in cases in which they accompanied named demoniacs and establish that the primary individual did not act alone.

<sup>352</sup> Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences relating to witchcrafts and possessions a faithful account of many wonderful and surprising things that have befallen several bewitched and possessed person in New-England...* (Boston, 1689), 64-71 (EEBO images 38-41). There were two additional instances of possession-like behavior, both of which fall into other categories. The first involved Jonathon Dunen, Mary Ross and an unnamed woman (1681), who carried on in ways that resembled the religious "enthusiasm" of Quakers—naked dancing, self-proclamations as apostles, etc. The second took place in 1683, when Mary Hortado of Maine saw apparitions and experienced torments from invisible hands. Increase Mather included Hortado in *Remarkable Providences* (1684), which featured disasters and deliverances at sea, Indian wars, and other portentous events. Mather invoked witchcraft-possession—Hortado's narrative joins those of Ann Cole in Hartford, Elizabeth Knapp in Groton, and John Stiles' odd case cited in Chapter 1—but also a series of houses disturbed by evil spirits and apparitions, with which the Hortado case ultimately has more in common. See Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences*, 135-167 (EEBO images 79-96).

record them as “a sign of Satanical Possession.”<sup>353</sup> In this sense, Karlsen’s description of New England’s afflicted as “possessed by witches,” describes the predominant strain.<sup>354</sup>

Karlsen does not overlook male witches and accusers, but sets them aside as exceptions to the majority. However, there were men who did not appear to stage a full possession, but had symptoms and professed spectral sight in ways that significantly resembled those of possessed accusers. Some of these men reported that they lay paralyzed in their beds beneath the witch’s specter—in these cases the witches were always women—who pressed down upon them and prevented their movement and speech. Karlsen cites men like Bernard Peach, who claimed that Susanna Martin’s image came in through the window, tossed him about and lay upon him for nearly two hours, as one aspect of witches’ seduction.<sup>355</sup> Karlsen states that for men, “the closest parallel to being possessed was being bewitched in the night.”<sup>356</sup> Her formulation overlooks the (admittedly few) men who *were* possessed, such as the aforementioned Boy of Tocutt, and misses an opportunity to see how the night-visited men’s experience resonated with cultural understandings bewitchment and possession. While these men did not report pressure to sign in the Devil’s book, or continue perform symptoms convincingly for observers, their nocturnal apparitions meaningfully resembled the visions of possessed accusers who likewise described the appearance of their tormentors. *The Devil in the*

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<sup>353</sup> Increase Mather, *A Disquisition*, 19.

<sup>354</sup> Karlsen, 222.

<sup>355</sup> Other elements of seduction included the general cultural presumption of women’s seductive nature, the suggestions of carnal relations with Satan—as muted as they were in New England—and the long tradition of depicting old witches as seducing young women into the service of the devil. *Ibid.*, 134-141.

<sup>356</sup> SWP 2:562-563. There were other instances in which men claimed visions or communication with the Devil, but were not taken seriously by authorities. Even though these men could not be described as possessed, *per se*, their experience of congress with the Devil suggests that officials were less likely to perceive men either as witches—as Karlsen sees it—or as possessed. See for example the court records pertaining to John Broadstreet (1652) and Christopher Browne (1674). See Karlsen, 52; Essex Court Records 1: 265 and 5:426-427.

*Shape of a Woman* is most concerned with witchcraft-possession, but because this dissertation is concerned with the broadest spectrum of possession symptoms, it incorporates related behaviors—such as the night visitations—despite their lack of a recorded witchcraft accusation.

Published witchcraft-possession narratives in England and New England suggest that male demoniacs were more successful in convincing male gatekeepers of their claims without having to resort to witchcraft accusations. These differences likely reflected a combination of the observing ministers' expectations, the narrators' caution, and women's investment in the female witch image and its corresponding placement within the domestic realm.<sup>357</sup> This project does not attempt to pin down demoniacs' motivations or instances of fraud; rather it analyzes the gendered nature of the way the incidents were performed, interpreted, and recorded. Because possession cases were so politically and religiously significant, writers were motivated to use gender to make and unmake participants whether witches, demoniacs or ministers. Gender's flexibility as a linguistic weapon provided opportunities both for believers and skeptics.

Historians of witchcraft in Europe and America have found that women were disproportionately represented among the accused and executed for witchcraft; in some areas the imbalance was particularly acute. In the active southeast of England approximately 89% of witches in the assizes records of were women, and 78% of New England witches were women.<sup>358</sup> After breaking down the data for the possessed, it

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<sup>357</sup> See Roper's *Witch Craze* for an analysis of the European response to witchcraft in the domestic realm and childbirth, 127-159.

<sup>358</sup> James Sharpe builds upon Ewen's and Macfarlane's analyses of Home Circuit cases in Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex counties; Essex contributed by far the most. Sharpe adds that the proportion of women among the accused "rose to 95 per cent of the forty witches prosecuted after 1660."



becomes clear that *published* possession cases reflect a more moderate ratio of male to female demoniacs, but with consistently higher female participation on both sides of the Atlantic. Of 104 identifiable possessed individuals in English publications, forty-one were men (39%), and sixty-three were women (61%). Of the forty-nine possessed individuals in New England publications, twenty-one were men (43%) and twenty-eight were women (57%).

Table 1: Total Possessed Individuals<sup>359</sup>

	<u>England</u>	<u>New England</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total Possessed Individuals	104	49	53
Total Male Possessed	41	21	62
Percent of Total	39%	43%	41%
Total Female Possessed	63	28	91
Percent of Total	61%	57%	59%

Given the greater number of women involved in witchcraft cases, both as accusers and accused, this consistency in published representations of demoniacs is surprising. As Karlsen makes clear, court records and witness testimony reveal that female possession was far more common in New England.<sup>360</sup> Still, the published accounts in both regions

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See Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 107-108; 114. Karlsen writes that the “single most salient characteristic of witches was their sex. At least 344 persons were accused of witchcraft in New England between 1620 and 1725. Of the 342 who can be identified by sex, 267 (78 percent) were female,” 47.

<sup>359</sup> In this and subsequent tables, the data represent published sources.

<sup>360</sup> Karlsen, 223.

reflect this ratio—perhaps because the publications narratives had already been culled by the elite men responsible for evaluating and characterizing the cases.

One little-investigated aspect of possession cases is the proportion of demoniacs who acted alone to those involved in a shared, or collective, possession. The data reveal that gender was an important factor in an individual’s ability to stage a viable possession. In England, as discussed previously, forty-one of 104 demoniacs were male (39%). Of those forty-one men, twenty-five acted independently of other demoniacs (61%), and sixteen acted alongside others of either sex (39%)—a reversal of the breakdown by sex for the numbers of demoniacs in published English cases noted above.

Table 2: Total Male Possessed

	<u>England</u>	<u>New England</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total Male Possessed	41	21	62
Total Acting Independently	25	5	30
Percent of Total	61%	24%	48%
Total Acting with Others	16	16	32
Percent of Total	39%	76%	52%

In New England, of twenty-one published possessions involving male demoniacs, five acted independently (24%) and sixteen acted alongside others (76%). This represents a substantial difference in the ratio of independent to collective possessions performed by men in the two regions. Something made independent claims of possession less appealing, or available, to men in the colony; as possession was often an act of rebellion by the disenfranchised, the change might reflect the relatively improved situation faced

by many men in New England compared to their English counterparts. Alternatively, the change may reflect the extent to which gatekeeping men like Increase Mather were dubious about men’s claims of contact with devils even though they were not skeptics.<sup>361</sup> As Mather’s comments about angelic visitations made clear, contact with the supernatural world was something closely associated with women. At the same time, the preponderance of women was itself an argument against taking claims of supernatural affliction seriously. While the data may not isolate a definitive cause, they serve as a reminder of the ways that witchcraft-possession was something men and women often made together.

The gendered nature of individual and collective possession is further revealed by a comparison of female demoniacs who acted independently as opposed to acting alongside other demoniacs. Out of sixty-three female demoniacs in English publications, thirty-one acted independently (49%) and thirty-two acted with others (51%).

Table 3: Total Female Possessed

	<u>England</u>	<u>New England</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total Female Possessed	63	28	91
Total Acting Independently	31	4	35
Percent of Total	49%	14%	38%
Total Acting with Others	32	24	56
Percent of Total	51%	86%	62%

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<sup>361</sup> See note 322, above, pertaining to the ignored claims of John Broadstreet (1652) and Christopher Browne (1674). See Essex Court Records 1: 265 and 5:426-427; Karlsen, 62n, 322.

This near-even split for possessed females in published English cases changed a great deal in New England. In the colony, of twenty-eight published female demoniacs, only four acted independently (14%) and twenty-four acted alongside others (86%). These data clearly demonstrate that men and women chose, or were directed toward, different articulations of witchcraft-possession in England and New England.

Women in New England had a difficult time successfully pressing claims of independent possession. Elizabeth Knapp's inability to convince minister Samuel Willard of the guilt of the woman she accused of bewitching her in 1671-1672 exemplified the hesitation to take independent female demoniacs seriously.<sup>362</sup> Solitary female demoniacs had the best chance of being taken seriously when their cases no longer required legal action. When Cotton Mather wrote of a "very Pious Woman" who was became possessed after accepting food from a "Woman of Ill Fame," the narrative resembled a providence of God more than a precursor for a trial.<sup>363</sup> Even Mercy Short's successful possession case—the woman she accused, Sarah Good, was executed—failed to offset the general trend. Cotton Mather observed and recorded Short's ostensibly solitary possession, but it followed so closely on the heels of the Essex County outbreak that it cannot easily be separated from the larger panic. Furthermore, Sarah Good was one of the very first witches accused in Salem, a poor woman whose accusation did not generate much resistance from the community.<sup>364</sup> As a whole, these cases suggest that female demoniacs in New England who acted without wider support were far less likely

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<sup>362</sup> Samuel Willard, *Useful Instructions for a professing people in times of great security and degeneracy delivered in several sermons on solemn occasions* (Cambridge, MA: Printed by Samuel Green, 1673); Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences*, 140-142 (EEBO images 86-87).

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>364</sup> Karlsen, 36-38; 232-233.

to be believed, creating a persistent link between solitary possession and demonic possession.

That so few in New England became possessed without accusing a witch—notwithstanding the aforementioned Boy of Tocutt and the “certaine man of New England”—further marks colonial possession as distinct from its English counterpart. These two exceptions, besides representing three generations of the Mather family’s involvement in matters of witchcraft and possession, centered on male demoniacs and raised no immediate legal issues. In England, those who performed demonic possession without a witch intermediary were predominantly male. Of the twenty-one published English victims of possession in which no witches were named, sixteen were men (76%). Women accounted for the remaining five instances of demonic possession (24%). That New England’s male demoniacs moved away from this practice may reflect a greater preoccupation with traditional malefic witchcraft. As Karlsen notes, nearly “three-fourths of non-possessed accusers in the Salem outbreak, for whom *maleficium* was the central issue, were men.”<sup>365</sup> Neither demonic possession nor witchcraft-possession was strictly the territory of men or women. Still, male demoniacs appeared more capable of convincing gatekeepers of the veracity of their symptoms, perhaps because their bodies were believed to be less naturally susceptible to the passions, humors, and natural illnesses common in women.

These assumptions may have led both Puritans and Catholics to regard male subjects as more reliable foundations for propaganda, as their sex minimized some of the sexual overtones commonly ascribed to exorcisms. As in the Darrell cases, however, a

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 40.

male demoniac could still attract accusations of a kind of seduction that blurred the line between sexual and hierarchical impropriety. On the one hand, focusing on a male demoniac allowed authors to bypass charges that they had granted disproportionate attention to the ravings of silly women. Still, a young man's possession involved struggle against a restless or passionate nature—something that culture and the traditional witchcraft-possession script understood as gendered feminine. This could help to explain why more men than women appeared to perform demonic possession without naming a witch as an intermediary. Women's natural permeability to supernatural influence, their weakness, and malice made them believable as demoniacs and accusers, but also more vulnerable to suspicion of being in congress with devils. It was more difficult for them to perform a straight demonic possession to the satisfaction of observing male gatekeepers. Women's self-conception, and conception of other women, was steeped in the same assumptions that guided the elite men who pronounced the verdicts.

Like male witches, male demoniacs became involved in a phenomenon understood through gendered assumptions about women and womanly weakness. But at base, possession was a way to express and explain suffering and frustration for the discontented of both sexes. Most demoniacs experienced frightening and painful ordeals, and they and their families saw them as victims of a combination of worldly and supernatural malice. Like confessing witches, demoniacs drew upon traditional scripts and responded to cues given by gatekeeping men.<sup>366</sup> Still, demoniacs were in a position to make significant claims on behalf of local and global struggles, and writers who saw a

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<sup>366</sup> For a gender analysis of the varying nature of men's and women's confessions, see Elizabeth Reis, "Gender and the Meanings of Confession in Early New England," in Reis, ed., *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1998), 53-73.

larger purpose in their suffering had to reconcile the victims' fallibility with the importance granted them as representatives of the struggle between good and evil. Gender was one of the principal lenses through which both demoniacs and writers tailored the traditional narrative to fit particular objectives.

### **Possession and Religio-Political Propaganda**

Based upon published responses to cases involving the Throckmortons, Katherine Wright, Thomas Darling, and William Somers, we have a broad impression of the ways that English writers used gendered arguments to wage religious and political battles. The aforementioned exorcisms by Father William Weston in Denham (1585-1586) provided Samuel Harsnett with a convenient target for his satirical comparison of John Darrell's dispossessions to popish fraud even in 1603. There were long-standing jokes about the degraded nature of priests, and their behavior with nuns and young novitiates. The Church of England's response to the dispossession of Mary Glover (1603) provided a clear example of the ways that religious and political propagandists used gendered language as a principal strategy. Puritan propagandists complained not only about Harsnett's "slanderous penne," but also of his atheistic inclinations. "It is notoriously known," one wrote, "that S.H. himselfe hath disputed & preached dangerous poyntes, and how in his saide last booke he brocheth a conceapt as if there were no *Witches* at all; yea, it seemeth by his so dallyinge with *Modu* his Devill, that he [is] of minde ther[e] is no Devill at all."<sup>367</sup> Throughout the tumultuous seventeenth-century, writers of possession narratives continued to challenge the honorable manhood of their enemies as a

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<sup>367</sup> Swan, 65; 68.

way to pursue religious and political objectives. Witchcraft-possession cases both corroborated and challenged existing religious and political questions, a capacity that assured both their persistence and repression.

Because so much was riding on claims of legitimate demonic possession and dispossession, writers were driven to create stark, black and white categorizations of legitimate and fraudulent examples. Neither Anglicans nor Puritans denied the validity of Biblical possessions, and both sides navigated contentious points by comparing their opponents to Catholics. The high-pressure environment of witchcraft-possession propaganda led even some of the hotter Puritans to defend cases that had involved suspiciously “popish” procedures. John Darrell, for example, had been careful to deemphasize any potential resemblance between Puritan prayer and fasting and popular countermagic or popish ritual. Some who wrote on his behalf were not so discerning, however, and in their eagerness to make Darrell seem less like a rogue actor they cited cases in which participants resorted to popular magic or the sought advice of cunningpeople. In *The Triall of Maister Dorrell* (1599), for example, one “Mother Gillam” cured a child by advising her parents to burn a piece of the witch’s coat along with some of the child’s undercloth.<sup>368</sup> A man who believed his child had been bewitched to death consulted a cunningman and was shown the suspect’s image in a

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<sup>368</sup> A.Ri., 92-8; 99-103 (EEBO images 47-52). One example includes Mother Anne Kerke, had a long reputation as a witch. She cursed a woman in the street on the same day that one of the woman’s children became mysteriously ill and died. Later, the woman’s other child fell into fits after encountering Kerke, and subsequently improved when the witch departed. Several other families also reported that Kerke caused the bewitchment or death of their children, including a woman who had failed to invite her to a christening. In another case, a young woman named Joan Jorden accused Olive “Doll” Barthram of bewitching her. Joan claimed that Barthram caused her fits by sending three spectral toads, one of which a bystander threw into the fire and destroyed. Later, a cat spirit appeared to Joan and bystanders alike, introducing himself as “Gyles” before striking the girl in the face. In just over a month, Doll Barthram was condemned by the Lord Chief Justice in Bury St. Edmunds and executed. *Ibid.*, 94 (EEBO image 48).



glass. Given the hesitance with which Puritan clergy regarded any popular magic as superstitious popery, the inclusion of these cases in Darrell's defense reveals how desperately his supporters needed to corroborate godly interactions with the supernatural.

In addition to revealing the strained attempts Darrell's supporters made on his behalf, *The Triall of Maister Dorrell* reflected the lasting themes of the Warboys narrative discussed in Chapter 2. Anne Kerke, for example, allegedly bewitched and killed two children of a man named Nayler. His third child, Joan, charged Kerke and attempted to scratch her. Like the Throckmorton girls, Joan Nayler expressed confidence that this traditional countermagical tactic would relieve her, but when she advanced upon Kerke she found her fingers strangely shut up together.<sup>369</sup> It is difficult to tell whether Joan acted in direct imitation of the Warboys case, but other similarities suggest that some countermagical techniques had staying power. Attempts were made to cut and burn Kerke's hair, as Lady Throckmorton had done to Mother Samuel. In the Nayler case, however, the immediate results were more dramatic. The scissors turned in the servant's hand, and "the edges were so battered, turned, & quite spoiled, as that they would not cut any thing." In a final moment, the fire "flew from" the hair and left it unburned at the center of the blaze.<sup>370</sup> Like the Samuels, Anne Kerke was executed.

The uneasy marriage of Warboys-style countermagic and the godly emphasis on the sole use of prayer and fasting was one of the factors that enabled the Church of England successfully to criticize Puritan dispossessions. Darrell's downfall and the passage of Canon 72, which forbade ministers to organize prayers and fasting for

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<sup>369</sup> The same thing happened in 1616 when one Edmund Newton tried to scratch the witch who had harmed him; his fingernails suddenly became as soft as feathers. See Ewen, 231.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103 (EEBO image 52).

afflicted individuals without permission from the bishop, discouraged the godly from pursuing possession cases in an official capacity. Still, not long after the Darrell controversy, other witchcraft-possession cases emerged that demonstrated the Church of England's incomplete control. In 1601, for example, twelve year-old Thomas Harrison of Northwich may have been the only demoniac ever to receive official permission from the Bishop for his dispossession.<sup>371</sup> These ministrations failed to cure the boy, however, and later publications state that he continued to have fits for years. Harrison's affliction did not face the amount or degree of scrutiny as that of William Somers, perhaps because his champions were hesitant to press his case so publicly. The Anglicans' repression of Puritan dispossession had nonetheless made a significant impact on the overall climate for witchcraft-possession cases. For example, Ben Johnson's play *The Divell is an Asse*, first performed in 1616, invoked these cases as little more than manuals for teaching how to fake the symptoms of possession: "Did you ne're read, Sir, little *Darrels* tricks,/ With the boy o' Burton, and the 7 in *Lancashire*,/ *Sommers* at *Nottingham*? All these do teach it."<sup>372</sup>

Seventeenth-century pamphlet titles were particularly adept at capturing potential buyers' attention and communicating a suggestive series of ideas. The line between sensationalism and religious propaganda was often a blurry one. Consider for example the anonymous, four-page pamphlet entitled *Strange and Wonderful News from Bristol Being a True Relation, how several Sheep were found Killed near that City, their Bellies*

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<sup>371</sup> See John Deacon and John Walker, *A summarie answere...*, 71 and 75 (EEBO images 51; 53), and Kittredge, 301.

<sup>372</sup> Ben Johnson, *The Divell is an Asse a Comedie Acted in the Yeare 1616, by His Majesties servants...* (London, 1641), Act V Scene III, 57 (EEBO image 31). The play was apparently first performed in 1616, though not printed until 1631.

*being Ript Open, and their Fat only taken out of them, all the rest of the Carcass being left entire, in order (as it is to be Feared) to the Kindling more Dreadful Fires, for carrying on the Horrid and Damnable Popish Plot and Conspiracy for the Destruction of His Majesty, and the Protestant Religion and Government now Establisht by Law.*<sup>373</sup> The idea that Catholics were stealing sheep fat for seditious bonfires demonstrates the time-honored practice of making the news fit to print. But there were widespread fears underlying these stories; the notable continuity in such charges against witches, Catholics, and Jews demonstrate the importance of having Others on whom to pin blame for a wide variety of problems.<sup>374</sup> Witchcraft-possession narratives played off of these fears by merging assumptions about internal gendered disorder with fears of external assault from devils both supernatural and worldly.

Protestant writers saw the Roman Catholic Church and “enthusiastic” sects as demonic specters in their own right. Social and liturgical practices marked Catholics and Quakers, in particular, as possessed by the Devil, or at least deluded into doing his work in the world. One of the most widely read books of the period, beyond the Bible itself, was John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, more commonly known as his Book of Martyrs, which brought Protestant oppression at torture at the hands of “heathen emperours” and “Romish prelates” vividly to life.<sup>375</sup> Some Catholic exorcism narratives, such as the

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<sup>373</sup> Anonymous, *Strange and Wonderful News from Bristol Being a True Relation, how several Sheep were found Killed near that City, their Bellies being Ript Open, and their Fat only taken out of them, all the rest of the Carcass being left entire, in order (as it is to be Feared) to the Kindling more Dreadful Fires, for carrying on the Horrid and Damnable Popish Plot and Conspiracy for the Destruction of His Majesty, and the Protestant Religion and Government now Establisht by Law* (London, 1678).

<sup>374</sup> For European roots of these conspiracy theories see Roper, *Witch Craze*, 40-43; 74.

<sup>375</sup> John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes touching matters of the Church, wherein ar comprehended and decribed the great persecutions [and] horrible troubles, that haue bene wrought and practised by the Romishe prelates, speciallye in this realme of England and Scotlande, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande, vnto the tyme nowe present. Gathered and collected according to the*

possession of nuns in Loudun, France, were published in England to highlight the priests' trickery.<sup>376</sup> In 1613, Sébastien Michaelis' narrative about two possessed French girls named Magdalene and Louyese Capeau, was translated into English.<sup>377</sup> In the Preface, probably written by the translator, W.B., the narrator warned that Catholics used exorcisms to trick and convert witnesses as part of a broader Catholic conspiracy:

the Popish Priests, in all Countries where men will beleeeve them, are uniforme & like unto themselves, since that which was done covertly in England, in the daies of Queene Elizabeth, by the Devils of Denham in Sara Williams and her fellowes, is now publikely taken up elsewhere by men of no small ranke...it is but the jugling and crafty conveyance of a few masse-mongring Priests, and some of their women-disciples, who with a great deale of paines are wonne to their instructors lure...for the effecting of the purposes of their deceiving Schoolemasters.<sup>378</sup>

In addition to the direct reference to Denham, the author reiterates many of the anti-Catholic themes seen in Chapter 3. The text conveyed an image of England under siege by a devious enemy that was both external and internal. Like witches, crypto-Catholics could operate within English communities undetected by their good Protestant neighbors. Crafty priests were aided in their plots by their "women-disciples," whom they had

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*true copies [and] wrytinges certificatorie, as wel of the parties them selues that suffered, as also out of the bishops registers, which wer the doers therof...* (London, 1563).

<sup>376</sup> See for example *A relation of the deuill Balams departure out of the body of the Mother-Prioress of the Vrsuline nuns of Loudun Her fearefull motions and contorsions during the exorcisme, with the extract of the proces verball, touching the exorcismes wrought at Loudun, by order from the Bishop of Poict[iers] under the authority of the king. Printed at Orleans 1635. Or the first part of the play acted at Loudun by two diuels, a frier, and a nun. Faithfully translated out of the French copie, with some observations for the better illustration of the pageant* (London, 1636). See also Nicolas Aubin, *The Cheats and Illusions of Romish Priests and Exorcists. Discover'd in the History of the Devils of Loudun: Being an Account of the Pretended Possession of the Ursuline Nuns, and of the Condemnation and punishment of Urban Grandier a Parson of the same town* (London, 1703) and Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, Stephen Greenblatt, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>377</sup> Sébastien Michaelis, *The admirable historie of the possession and conuersion of a penitent woman Seduced by a magician that made her to become a witch, and the princes of sorcerers in the country of Prouince, who was brought to S. Baume to be exorcised, in the yeere 1610. in the moneth of Nouember, by the authority of the reuerend father, and frier, Sebastian Michaëlis, priour of the Couent Royall of S. Magdalene at Saint Maximin...* Translated into English by W.B. (London, 1613).

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1r-B1v (EEBO images 4-5).

seduced away from the proper authority of fathers or husbands. Like anti-Catholic tracts that traded in innuendo about unseemly relations among priests and nuns, and like the charges Darrell and Harsnett made about the seduction and manipulation of witnesses, the line between sexual and hierarchical seduction was often difficult to discern.<sup>379</sup>

“Silly women” may have been the prime targets of seducers who sought to use exorcism or dispossession to manipulate observers, but young men like Thomas Daring and William Somers continued to become involved in possession cases throughout the seventeenth century. In order to avoid some of Darrell’s troubles, Protestant writers focused on fraudulent Catholic exorcisms. One particularly influential case involved a boy named William Perry, who became possessed in 1620. Richard Baddeley, who published both the initial Catholic account and his own rebuttal (1622), described the boy as “the sonne of Thomas Perry of Bilson,” a yeoman; in much of the subsequent literature writers referred to him as “The Boy of Bilson.”<sup>380</sup> Baddeley built upon the kind of anti-Catholic rhetoric Harsnett had used in 1603 when rehashing the exorcisms performed by Jesuit William Weston.<sup>381</sup> In time, *The Boy of Bilson* became a Protestant archetype of

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<sup>379</sup> See for example Thomas Herbert, *Newes newly discovered, in a pleasant dialo[g]ue betwixt Papa the false Pope, and Benedict an honest Fryer, shewing the merry conceits which the Friars have in their cloysters amongst handsome Nuns, and how the Pope complains for want of that pastime, with the many shifts of his friends in England.* (London, 1641).

<sup>380</sup> R.B. [Richard Baddeley], *The boy of Bilson: or, A true discovery of the late notorious impostures of certaine Romish priests in their pretended exorcisme, or expulsion of the Divell out of a young boy... Upon which occasion, hereunto is premitted a briefe theologicall discourse, by way of caution, for the more easie discerning of such Romish spirits; and judging of their false pretences, both in this and the like practices.* (London, 1622). The text reprinted and contradicted a previous account by a “Mr. Wheeler,” now missing, entitled “A faithfull relation of the proceedings of the Catholicke gentlemen with the boy of Bilson.” The Bilson case was followed shortly by another important possession case, that of Edward Fairfax’s family in Yorkshire, in which six women were accused of harming three female and one male victim. See “*A Discourse of Witchcraft, by Edward Fairfax of Fewston, co. York, giving an account of experiences of members of his own family; 1621-1623,*” British Library MS 32,495.

<sup>381</sup> See Chapter 3 and Harsnett’s *A declaration of egregious popish impostures...* (London, 1603).

Catholic fraud, and was mentioned in legal and polemical texts throughout the seventeenth century.

In the original Catholic account, a priest sought to use the boy's suffering to bring the family into the Roman Church, and in Baddeley's response he claimed that degenerate priests had orchestrated the boy's dissembling. One of Baddeley's strategies was to describe Catholic exorcists as degraded men of low status. He dismissively referred to them as "Catholike Gentlemen (for so they stile themselves, albeit by their outward garbe one would rather suspect the[m] for Serving men & attendants...)." These priests were so corrupt that one did not have to be particularly discerning to discover it, "as that a very meane Herald, knowing the house they come of, may blazon their Armes; and so expose the[m] unto shame and laughter."<sup>382</sup> Baddeley's challenges to the honorable manhood of the Catholic gentlemen represented a pattern used in witchcraft-possession propaganda throughout the seventeenth century.

Even though Baddeley's preface strongly argued the Protestant case against Catholic exorcism, he appeared aware that the priest's sensational narrative might captivate susceptible readers. Therefore, Baddeley took the time to outline the doctrine that miracles had ceased after the apostolic age, which he reinforced with descriptions of the exorcism as the "lewd and ridiculous juglings of wretched men."<sup>383</sup> Over forty-five pages, Baddeley established the impossibility of miracles, challenged transubstantiation, and compared exorcisms to the kind of spectacle offered by Bankes' horse, Morocco.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., sig A3v (EEBO image 3).

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 1 (EEBO image 4).

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 19 (EEBO image 13). Baddeley used the example of Bankes' horse, mentioned in Chapter 3, to support his claim that demoniacs in Catholic exorcisms resembled animals trained to perform. He took

After instructing his readers to equate exorcism with a consultation with devils, Baddeley finally turned to the original Catholic account: “let us first suffer the Romish Priests to boast themselves a while of their miraculous power, in Exorcizing this Child, whom for a while you must imagine bee really bewitched and possessed of the Devill.”<sup>385</sup> Baddeley closed this section of the book with another reminder about the switch in narrative voice. “Heare we then the Priests Speake,” he wrote, lest the reader become caught up in the story that followed.

The Catholic account exemplified how male gatekeepers could direct a demoniac’s behavior to support desired religious outcomes at the expense of competing clergy. According to the Catholic author, William Perry wanted “his Parents, sisters, and brothers” to become Catholics, “out of which faith, by Gods grace, he said hee would never live or dye.” The priest wrote that “On Sunday also I exorcised him, but divers Puritans resorting to him, I could not have conveniency to come till towards night. All which day he had many fits, and I comming to him, learned of him that still while the Puritans were in place on Saturday, as also at other times.”<sup>386</sup> Here we see an unusually candid depiction of the struggle among competing groups of interpreters and experts, not to mention the boy’s own family. The complexity of these bedside negotiations exemplified the difficulty seventeenth-century priests and ministers faced in wrangling demoniacs into the format required by their theology. Just in case the witnesses, or the reader, missed the point, the priest described what happened when he:

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particular pleasure in pointing out that when Bankes had been accused of meddling with supernatural powers in France, he cleared himself by having Morocco bow down in front of a crucifix.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 47 (EEBO image 27).

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 50 (EEBO image 31).

commanded the divell to shew by the sheet before him, how he would use one dying out of the Romane Catholicke Church? [Perry] very unwillingly, yet at length obeyed, tossing, plucking, haling, and biting the sheet, that it did make many to weepe and cry forth. Then I commanded him to shew how hee did use Luther, John Calvin, and John Fox; which unwillingly he did performe after the same manner, but in a fiercer sort. Then I commanded him to shew what power he had on a good Catholicke that dyed out of mortall sinne? hee thrust downe his armes, trembled, holding downe his head, and no more.<sup>387</sup>

While the boy's reactions to the priest's prompts were predictable, given his allegiance to Catholicism at that time, it is revealing that bystanders were moved to tears. Their emotion provides a reminder that some continued to seek and find cosmic truths at the bedside of the possessed, even after the controversies surrounding Darrell's dispossessions and Weston's exorcisms a generation earlier. Perry's behavior allowed participants and witnesses actively to pursue the mysteries of religion. For those seeking answers amidst the chaos of seventeenth-century religious wars, voices of devils and spirits offered a rare kind of corroboration.

When Baddeley provided his own account of William Perry's discovery as a fraud, he completely reconfigured the images of the boy, his family, the priest, the ministers, and the accused witch. After Perry was caught putting ink into his urine to confound the physicians, he made a full confession and explained his dissembling in a way that met Protestant expectations. Rather than follow his parents' religious admonitions, as an honorable son should, William Perry had fallen under the seductive influence of a stranger. He confessed that he had met:

an old man, who called himself Thomas (but his surname I cannot remember) having a gray beard, russet apparel, and carrying a cradle of glasses or pots on his backe, who said unto mee after this manner: *Now, pretty Boy, where dwellest thou? dost thou goe to schoole? If thou wilt doe*

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 51 (EEBO image 31).



*as I shall teach thee, thou shalt not need to goe to schoole; for (Said hee) I can teach thee such tricks and feats, that the people that see thee, shall beleve that thou art bewitched, and so shall lament and pittie thee.*<sup>388</sup>

Not only did the boy's story reflect concerns about a subversion of the deference owed to a father and head of household, but it also played upon fears of strangers, the covert Catholic threat, and the weaknesses that made youths—like women—susceptible to the temptations of the Devil or his agents. The published confession depicted “Thomas” as an itinerant, with objects on his back that resembled a tinker's wares; thus Baddeley invoked Harsnett's critique of Darrell once again, but attributed the deception to a Catholic rather than a Puritan “mountebank.” Without the proper Protestant policing of essential social hierarchies of age, gender, and status, Baddeley's narrative suggested, Catholics would manipulate the young and disorder families, communities, and eternal souls. The priest had suggested that the family's resistance to the Roman Church caused their son's suffering, but Baddeley defended Thomas Perry, the father, as “an honest Husbandman of sufficient ability, innocent and ignorant of any practice in his child.”<sup>389</sup> Unlike the priest's manipulative cleverness, the senior Perry's honorable simplicity allowed Baddeley to emphasize the boy's fraud without tarnishing the credit of his Protestant-leaning family.

Baddeley's *The Boy of Bilson* underscored the ease with which witchcraft-possession cases could be mishandled, but criticized Catholic fraud rather than support Puritan dispossession. Having avoided the pitfalls into which Darrell fell, *The Boy of Bilson* went on to be mentioned in such influential texts as Richard Bernard's *Guide to grand jury-men* (1627) that was widely used as a legal handbook throughout seventeenth-

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 65 (EEBO image 36).

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 59 (EEBO image 35).

century England and in New England.<sup>390</sup> References to Perry's possession found their way into witchcraft texts, histories, and anti-Catholic tracts published in 1641, 1653, 1655, 1659, 1668, 1672, 1673, 1674, 1677, 1685, and 1691.<sup>391</sup> The case was even more explicitly resurrected in 1698, when Robert Howson published *The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson, or, A True and Practical Relation of the Imposter Susanna Fowles*.<sup>392</sup> Published on the heels of another contentious possession pamphlet controversy at the close of the seventeenth century, discussed below, Howson reflected aspects of Harsnett and Baddeley's use of gender in witchcraft-possession cases to pursue religious and political objectives.

After the flurry of published possession pamphlets at the turn of the seventeenth century, and the cases of the 1620s mentioned above, the impetus to pursue possession cases appeared to be somewhat diminished until the 1640s. Malcolm Gaskill writes that “between 1625 and the start of the civil war, there were just twenty-seven trials at the

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<sup>390</sup> Richard Bernard, *A guide to grand-iury men divided into two bookes: in the first, is the authors best advice to them what to doe, before they bring in a billa vera in cases of witchcraft, with a Christian direction to such as are too much given upon every crosse to thinke themselues bewitched. In the second, is a treatise touching witches good and bad, how they may be knowne, evicted, condemned, with many particulars tending thereunto* (London, 1627), 30-32 (EEBO images 26, 27).

<sup>391</sup> See Father Basile de Rouen, *The converted capuchin*... (London, 1641), sig. A2v (EEBO image 3); Arthur Wilson, *The history of Great Britain being the life and reign of King James the First*... (London, 1653), 107-112 (EEBO images 95-99); Francis Fullwood, *The church-history of Britain*... (London, 1655), (EEBO image 690); Richard Baxter, *A key for Catholicks, to open the jugling of the Jesuits*... (London, 1659), (EEBO image 22); John Dee, *A true & faithful relation of what passed for many yeers between Dr. John Dee*... (London, 1659), sig. C3v (EEBO image 12); Thomas Fuller, *The appeal of injured innocence*... (London, 1659), (EEBO image 150); David Lloyd, *Memoires of the lives, actions, sufferings & deaths*... (London, 1668), 440 (EEBO image 230); Sir Christopher Wyvill, *The pretensions of the triple crown*... (London, 1672) 61, 183-184 (EEBO images 34, 95-96); Edward Stillingfleet, *A second discourse in vindication of the Protestant grounds of faith*... (London, 1673), 656-657 (EEBO image 189); William Lloyd, *The difference between the Church and Court of Rome*... (London, 1674), 3 marginal note (EEBO image 3); John Webster, *The displaying of supposed witchcraft*... (London, 1677), 252, 265, 274 (EEBO images 134, 140, 146); John Rawlet, *A dialogue betwixt two Protestants*... (London, 1685), 28 (EEBO image 26); Richard Baxter, *The certainty of the worlds of spirits*... (London, 1691), 3 (EEBO image 11).

<sup>392</sup> Robert Howson, *The second part of the boy of Bilson, or, A true and practical relation of the imposter Susanna Fowles... who pretended her self to be posses'd with the Devil... [witnessed] by a great number of clergy, both conformists and nonconformists*... (London, 1698).

Home Circuit assizes...and of the convictions that resulted only two were upheld.”<sup>393</sup> It is interesting to note that a defense of John Darrell’s dispossession of William Somers was republished in 1641, when shifting power relations made it possible to argue his innocence of fraud and oppression by the Church of England. The pamphlet, *A true relation of the grievous handling of William Somers*, added no new content; its brevity and absence of new prefaces or epilogues suggests the extent to which its reception may have been uncertain. The reappearance of the Somers case could have reflected the ongoing support of Darrell’s adherents, or a canny anticipation of sales on behalf of the publisher.<sup>394</sup> Regardless, the reappearance of Darrell’s dispossession of Somers demonstrates the long life and cyclical character of witchcraft-possession publications.

The Civil War in England, and its highly charged religious and political turmoil, ushered in a period of high witchcraft prosecution—particularly in England’s Essex County, where the “Witch-Finder General” Matthew Hopkins traveled the countryside in pursuit of witches.<sup>395</sup> Gaskill writes that “By 1640, as Charles I fought Calvinists in Scotland and tussled with a reconvened Parliament at Westminster, the tide was turning” toward the kind of instability that created space for successful witchcraft prosecution. The activities repressed during Parliamentary control—feasting, dancing, Christmas, pre-

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<sup>393</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English tragedy* (London: John Murray, 2005), 32.

<sup>394</sup> John Darrell, *A true relation of the grievous handling of William Sommers of Nottingham being possessed with a devill shewing how he was first taken and how lamentable from time to time he was tormented and afflicted...* (London, 1641).

<sup>395</sup> See Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches: In Answer to Severall queries...* (London, 1647); [H. F.] *A True and Exact Relation of the severall Informations, Examinations and Confessions of the late Witches, arraigned and executed in the County of Essex...* (London, 1645). The latter contains the story of the servant of Robert Turner of St. Osyth, who accused many women, mostly, of having bewitched him. Nine of the accused were hanged, five were condemned but reprieved, and eight were remanded to the next assizes.

marital sex—appeared in witches’ confessions about the devil’s sabbaths.<sup>396</sup> Witchcraft-possession publications as a genre, however, appear to have fractured even more between godly and sensational intent by the 1640s. In 1641, for example, a pamphlet appeared describing the possession of Margaret Hooper in Durham, who saw a headless bear spirit that tumbled her through the house.<sup>397</sup> Luckily, her husband managed to dispossess her. This narrative appears to have been baldly copied from the story of one Margaret Cooper, who was tumbled by the headless bear back in 1584.<sup>398</sup> The recycling of the Cooper/Hooper narrative serves as a reminder that pamphlets were reconstituted in pursuit of further profits. In this case, changes were made to suggest that the event had taken place that year, rather than fifty-seven years earlier, thereby securing the sense of immediacy. Only the survival of the first publication reveals that this narrative was one of an unknown number of published cases that was not the new, separate instance it purported to be.

Several other witchcraft-possession publications from the 1640s appeared simultaneously to pursue spiritual and financial profit. Some described supernatural wonders that entailed possession symptoms but made no direct claims of demonic influence.<sup>399</sup> Others retained the clear and forceful language of propaganda, as in Joyce

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<sup>396</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 33; 45.

<sup>397</sup> Stephen Hooper et. al., *Most fearefull and strange nevves from the bishopricke of Durham, being a true relation of one Margret Hooper of Edenbyres, neere the river Darwent in the said bishopricke. Who was most fearfully possessed and tormented with the devill, as also in what ugly shape he first appeared unto her, how lamentably she was handled with this evill spirit, and at last how wonderfully the Lord delivered her* (London, 1641). See also Thomas, 491.

<sup>398</sup> *A true and most Dreadfull discourse of a woman possessed with the Deuill: who in the likenesse of a headlesse Beare fetched her out of her Bedd, and in the presence of seven persons, most staungely roulded her thorow three Chambers, and doune a high paire of staiers, on the fower and twentie of May last. 1584. At Dichet in Sommersetshire. A matter as miraculous as euer was seen in our time* (London, 1584).

<sup>399</sup> See, for example, the two cases described in *A most faithful Relation of Two Wonderful Passages Which happened very lately (to wit, on the first and eighth days of this present September, being Lords days) in the Parish of Bradfield in Berk-shire* (London, 1650). The first possession narrative involved a Berkshire

Dovey's Protestant possession in 1646. Dovey's recent religious awakening, and her mockery of men who attended her with crucifixes, demonstrate the partisan use to which her case was put.<sup>400</sup> Some witchcraft-possession pamphlets in the 1650s maintained the general script but approached the sectarian implications more guardedly.<sup>401</sup> Other writers struggled to convince judges and magistrates that their trials demanded official legal intervention. In 1650, the suffering of eleven year-old Margaret Muschamp and her eldest brother in Northumberland revealed both the longevity of traditional witchcraft-possession script and the difficulties of pursuing the cases in the courts.<sup>402</sup> Margaret suffered fits that she believed were the result of witches' malice. She dismissed doctors' remedies, making it clear that God had a larger purpose in allowing her affliction. The girl provided an unusually detailed angelic visitation and reported that her "Angels" or "good things" in the shape of birds advised and comforted her. Her claims grew to Throckmortonian proportions, as when she threatened that she would die if she did not receive a certain number of drops of blood from the accused. In time, when her accusations of two women and a man failed to result in sufficient legal response, despite the fact that one woman confessed, Margaret—or the narrator—aimed a direct challenge

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minister named Pordich, his wife, and several other women, who appeared to suffer from a kind of group delusion. The narrator added that a man named Everet, who was "suspected to be a Sorcerer or Witch," fell into strange fits in London at the same time. In the second, Goodman Snelling, his son, and an old man experienced fits, visions and gained miraculous skills.

<sup>400</sup> James Dalton, *A strange and true relation of a yovng woman possest with the Devill. By name Joyce Dovey, dwelling at Bewdley neer Worcester. With a particular of her actions, and how the evill spirit speaks within her, giving fearefull answers unto those Ministers and others that come to discourse with her...*(London, 1646), 2-3.

<sup>401</sup> See for example *The Witch of Wapping, Or An Exact and Perfect Relation, of the Life and Devilish Practices of Joan Peterson, that dwelt in Spence Island, near Wapping; Who was condemned for practicing Witch-craft, and sentenced to be Hanged at Tyburn, on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, 1652...*(London, 1652); Edmond Bower, *Dr Lamb revived, or witchcraft condemned in Anne Bodenham...*(London, 1653); Henri de Heer, *The most true and wonderfull narration of two women bewitched in Yorkshire* (1658).

<sup>402</sup> Mary Moore, *Wonderfull News from the North. Or, a true Relation of the sad and grievous Torments, Inflicted upon the Bodies of three Children of Mr. George Muschamp...*(London, 1650).

to the magistrates: “[t]hose that are to do us justice, will not: though they deny us justice, yet God can and will in his due time, grant us justice over them all.”<sup>403</sup> The Muschamp narrative grew in complexity and ambivalence as it went along, revealing the struggles of one family to receive “justice” from reluctant judges. This case reflected many of the popular witchcraft-possession beliefs and tensions in Warboys, only without the resolution. The shifting religious and political climate helped to insure that judges and magistrates would think twice before pursuing witches in the courts.

After the Restoration in 1660, Protestant witchcraft-possession narratives continued to decry the Catholic threat as a way to sidestep the dangerous contest between the Church of England and the Puritans. In one such narrative, a man named John Barrow apologized for having resorted to cunningmen, charms, doctors, astrologers, apothecaries, and Catholic priests before coming to rely solely upon prayer and fasting to help his possessed son, James.<sup>404</sup> The grateful father attributed all success to the Puritans, “a poor dispised People, whom the Lord owned as instruments in his hand, to do this great Work; to his eternal Praise I speak it; for the Lord saw their fastings, and heard their prayers on the behalf of my poor Child, at a wonderful rate.”<sup>405</sup> Barrow’s account of his search for a cure sounds pedagogical, given its scrupulous attention to Protestant dispossession practices as not only more correct, but also more efficacious than popular countermagic or popish charms. Barrow’s narrative echoed Darrell’s propaganda from

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>404</sup> John Barrow, *The Lord’s Arm Stretched Ovt in an Answer of Prayer: or, A true Relation of the wonderful Deliverance of James Barrow, the Son of John Barrow of Olaves Southward, who was possessed with Evil Spirits near two years...* (London, 1664).

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 12.

the turn of the century, but Barrow emphasized the common enemies of superstition and popery rather than baiting the Anglican authorities.

In the same year, a twelve year-old servant named Thomas Sawdie was also cured by Puritan prayer and fasting, though the author of his narrative recorded extensive debate about the possibility of natural causes for his fits.<sup>406</sup> The narrator pointedly attacked a religious enemy described as “Fanatick.”<sup>407</sup> By decrying religious sectarians, the Puritans found another way to capitalize upon the witchcraft-possession script without running into direct conflict with the Church of England. In Thomas Sawdie’s case, it was the Quakers, whose “possession” by:

deceiving spirits, can be attributed those wild extasies they are in, their falling down dead, the swelling of their bodies, and foaming at the mouth, &c. their fearful and hideous howlings and cryings, their wild and extatical singings, and frantick dancings, their running naked through Towns into Churches and private Houses, their violent and irresistible shakings...and all this transacted by a Power or Spirit, which themselves confess distinct from themselves, which also speaks distinctly and audibly in them...tyrannizing over them all in every thing, almost as much as the Devil doth over the poor Indians, &c.<sup>408</sup>

Possession remained a useful way to demonize enthusiastic sects like the Quakers, whose dramatic behavior and rejection of standard hierarchical relations capitalized on spectacular performances of faith and resistance to attract attention and potential converts. Concerns about Quakers and other sects were rampant in colonial New England, as well, which increasingly had to reconcile its Puritan legacy with the “[s]keptics, lukewarm believers, Baptists, Anglicans, Quakers, Jews, shamans,

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<sup>406</sup> *A Return of Prayer: or A Faithful Relation of some Remarkable Passages of Providence concerning Thomas Sawdie, a Boy of Twelve Yeares of Age...Who was possest with an Unclean Spirit, and through the mercy by Prayer and Fasting, dispossesst and delivered from the Servitude and Jaws of Satan...*(London, 1664), 3-5.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

practitioners of magic, and members of various sects” previously described by Richard Archer.<sup>409</sup>

The transatlantic dynamic of witchcraft-possession was even more clearly articulated in the 1690s, when the eminent Puritan divines Richard Baxter and Cotton Mather corresponded about their ongoing commitment to the use of supernatural wonders to convince atheists and Sadducees of the reality of spirits.<sup>410</sup> Baxter, who provided the preface to the 1691 edition of Cotton Mather’s *Late Memorable Providences*, demonstrated the transatlantic communication between Puritan divines, and their shared commitment to using wonders from the supernatural world to bring readers back to God. As a way of explaining why a place as godly as New England should face assaults from the Devil, Baxter asked:

Why did the Quakers here so fiercely Rail in the Streets, and in our Churches against the most Zealous Ministers (since silenced) in 1655 till 1660 in as bitter Language as the malignant Drunkards and Whoremongers did, and yet do; when as they have since then quite altered their publick Language here? And why is George Keith and his other Quakers from Pennsylvania, now assaulting the Churches in New-England? The Hunter knoweth where is the best Game.<sup>411</sup>

In this way Quakers became agents of Satan, just as witches, devils, and Indians often had in writings throughout the period. Mather echoed Baxter’s arguments in the body of his book, particularly when he replied to George Keith’s defense of Quakers against some of the charges made by Increase Mather, Cotton’s father. In exasperation at what he saw

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<sup>409</sup> Archer, 3.

<sup>410</sup> Both men continued to criticize Catholic exorcisms, as well, though the Catholic threat appeared to be subsumed in the growing threats of atheism and sectarianism. In one example, Baxter reported that a girl in Utrecht scolded her mother for summoning monks to perform an exorcism. See Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, (1691), 109.

<sup>411</sup> Cotton Mather, *Late Memorable Providences*, A2r (EEBO 8). See also *A Strange and Wonderful (yet True) Relation of the Cursed and Hellish Design of Abraham Mason, a Pretended Quaker, to give himself to the Devil*, (1683/1700).



as Keith's faulty reasoning, Cotton Mather wrote, "But what Metal is this man's Forehead made of?" Cotton supported his father's argument that the Quakers were "indoubtedly possessed with evil spirits... We may, by this, judge whose servants the Singing Quakers are."<sup>412</sup> He also agreed with his father that the Quakers' shaking and antics directly resulted from their religious beliefs, which they both saw as blasphemous and delusional. While Cotton Mather was not above writing for effect, his use of Quaker books at the bedside of demoniacs demonstrated his confidence in the Quakers' demonic allegiances.

Since New England's first planting, its leaders had been gravely concerned with the challenges of maintaining godly behavior and conformity to accepted beliefs and practices. One early and well-known example is Anne Hutchinson's banishment in 1638 for encouraging Antinomian tendencies among the growing numbers of people—mostly women—who met at her house for study and prayer.<sup>413</sup> Hutchinson's greatest crime may have been to speak too authoritatively on church matters. As Karlsen has argued, Hutchinson provided John Winthrop and other elite men with a witch figure before witchcraft cases appeared with any force in New England.<sup>414</sup> Hutchinson's associations with Quakers like Mary Dyer, whose delivery of a deformed, stillborn child was seen by John Winthrop as a clear sign of God's disapproval, likely only increased the sense that Hutchinson was a danger to the godly community.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>413</sup> Selma R. Williams, *Divine Rebel: The Life of Anne Marbury Hutchinson* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston), 1981, 52.

<sup>414</sup> Karlsen, 14-19.

<sup>415</sup> Williams, 136-137.

Fear and repression of those who failed to conform to the proper sort of Non-Conformity had been a part of the New England colony since its inception. In 1654, Edward Johnson recorded a series of sects who posed a threat to New England:

First, the Gortonists, who deny the Humanity of Christ, and most blasphemously and proudly professe themselves to be personally Christ. Secondly, the Papists, who with (almost) equall blasphemy and pride prefer their own Merits and Workers... Thirdly, with the Familists, who depend upon rare Revelations... Fourthly, Seekers, who deny the Churches and Ordinances of Christ. Fifthly, Antinomians, who deny the Morrall Law to be the Rule of Christ. Sixtly, Anabaptists, who deny Civill Government to be proved of Christ. Seventhly, The Prelacy, who will have their own Injunction submitted unto in the Churches of Christ.<sup>416</sup>

Distrust of these groups centered on their challenge to orthodoxy and sanctioned patriarchal authority. New England Puritans were in the difficult position of having to express their own rejection of Conformity without appearing to take on the insubordination they attributed to the sectarians. Marginal sects had the greatest use for sensation and propaganda; already operating outside the dominant culture, they had more to gain by attracting attention. Challenges to gender norms and hierarchies were particularly shocking, and the Quakers' encouragement of women's public preaching and rejection of social deference resembled Native Americans' strange gender and religious practices. Quakers, Indians, and witches represented a combination of internal and external threats with profound implications for the survival of the colony. The possessed represented an intermediate population. Poised between temptation and godliness, they gave voice to rebellion and discontent and acted out the violence that awaited those who pursued the wrong path to salvation.

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<sup>416</sup> Edward Johnson, *A History of New-England. From the English planting in the Yeere 1628. untill the Yeere 1652...*(London, 1654), 8.

## Healing and Testing Possessed Bodies

In the early modern Anglo-Atlantic, magic, religion and medicine were thoroughly interconnected; popular countermagic often merged Christian prayers with traditional charms and amulets. Learned men believed the natural world revealed God's authorship and divine plan, and saw experimentation as compatible with Christianity. Puritan-minded men in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries worked to explore natural laws while reinforcing Calvinist principles, a project that occasionally produced tensions.<sup>417</sup> As Keith Thomas has shown, healing and dispossession were difficult to differentiate, in part because "there was the idea that disease was a foreign presence in the body needing to be conjured or exorcised out. There was also the belief that religious language possessed a magical power which could be deployed for practical purposes...regardless of the moral value of the operator; others depended upon the special qualities of the healer."<sup>418</sup> Despite the discomfort with which clergy regarded practices such as using the sieve and shears, or conjuring images in crystals, these and other techniques were employed throughout the early modern period to heal, find stolen goods, or divine the future.<sup>419</sup> In witchcraft-possession cases, the slippery division

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<sup>417</sup> Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). See also Jeffrey Jeske, "Cotton Mather: Physico-Theologian," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 47, No. 4. (Oct.-Dec., 1986) 583-594; Winton U. Solberg, "Science and Religion in Early America: Cotton Mather's 'Christian Philosopher,'" *Church History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Mar., 1987), 73-92; Michael P. Winship, "Prodigies, Puritanism, and the Perils of Natural Philosophy: The Example of Cotton Mather," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., Vol. 51, No. 1 (Jan., 1994) 92-105.

<sup>418</sup> One example of the latter includes the dissemination of "cramp-rings," which had supposedly been touched by the monarch and therefore helped to heal epilepsy and associated ailments. These rings were popular through the early sixteenth century but "abandoned immediately and without comment upon the ascension of Elizabeth I." Thomas, 182; 198-199.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-216. Unsuccessful interactions with cunningpeople could result in possession symptoms and charges of witchcraft, as when in 1652 one Christopher Wilson agreed to pay Joan Peterson if her remedies

between natural illness and bewitchment was critical, and authors of possession narratives almost always described visits from physicians, cunningpeople, or both. Developments in scientific and medical thought over the seventeenth century influenced the articulation and prosecution of witchcraft-possession cases, but failed to prevent their appearance or diminish their influence with local observers.

When physicians were called to the bedside of persons who appeared to be possessed, their primary task was to rule out the main diseases that produced convulsive fits: epilepsy, hysteria and melancholy. Thomas Darling, the “Boy of Burton,” was diagnosed as bewitched after physicians examined his urine. Other physicians, however, suggested the “falling sickness,” or epilepsy, as the cause of Darling’s affliction.<sup>420</sup> The latter two diseases—like early modern conceptions of the body and the humors that governed its health and character—were understood through a gendered lens.<sup>421</sup> One of the best ways to illustrate the ways the importance of hysteria and melancholy for witchcraft-possession controversy is to consider how Harsnett, Bancroft, and Anglican supporters used them to discredit Puritan dispossessions. As Michael MacDonald has made clear, their objectives and methods were primarily religious and political—as demonstrated by their emphasis on the impossibility of miracles or “wonders” in the post-apostolic age—but in cases too delicate for charges of fraud, their next most successful argument was to claim that the causes and solutions to Puritan possessions were natural. The witchcraft-possession case of Mary Glover (1602), whose dispossession produced

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were successful. They were, but he refused to pay. She threatened him, and soon after he fell horribly ill; Peterson was hanged just one day after her trial. See *The Witch of Wapping...* (1652).

<sup>420</sup> [Jesse Bee,] *The most wonderful and true storie, of a certaine Witch named Alse Gooderige...also a true report of the strange torments of Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteene yeres of age...* (London, 1597). See also Harsnett *A discouery of fraudulent practices*, 2; D.P. Walker, 52-57.

<sup>421</sup> D.P. Walker, 10-14; MacDonald, *xxvi-xxxiii*; Paster, 1-22.

the pointedly gendered language cited previously, resulted in a published articulation of this strategy. After capturing the attention of the highest authorities, Glover was visited by a series of physicians whose conclusions were mixed. The presiding judge ruled in favor of witchcraft, but one of the doctors who had been slighted—Edward Jorden—published his opinion that the girl was not possessed but suffered from “suffocation of the mother,” or hysteria.<sup>422</sup> Jorden argued that people commonly mistook hysteria for supernatural affliction, and explained that prayer and fasting worked not because of God’s intercession, but because of their power to influence the imagination of the afflicted.<sup>423</sup>

Melancholy was more commonly suspected than hysteria in instances of witchcraft-possession, but was predominantly understood to be a disease of men and the old. There was another version of melancholy, later termed “Maid’s, Nun’s, and Widow’s Melancholy,” but because this was believed to result from disordered menstrual blood it could not apply in cases where the demoniac—like Glover—had not yet reached menarche.<sup>424</sup> Hysteria, on the other hand, was believed to originate in the womb and become aggravated, as D.P. Walker writes, by “retention of semen due to excessive

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<sup>422</sup> D.P. Walker writes that the Judge, Sir Edmund Anderson, had condemned the woman accused by Thomas Darling to a year’s imprisonment, though she did not live to serve it. Anderson also countered Bancroft’s hesitance to convict another suspected witch with instructions to the jury about the scriptural basis of witchcraft, 56; 72. See also *Triall of Maister Dorrell*, 87-88; 99-103 (EEBO images 44-45; 50-52).

<sup>423</sup> MacDonald, xxviii-xxix. See also Veith, 120-129. Many witchcraft-possession cases include references to melancholy as a possible explanation: Robert Briggs (1574, quoted in Thomas, 482) was diagnosed with melancholy and received a bloodletting and purge; Richard Galis wrote that he “often Imagined with my selfe what straunge disease and greef it should be that so should (beeing whole in Body and not overcharged with sicknesse, although exempt of perfect remembrance) abate my flesh and weaken my Body,” Galis, *A brief treatise...*(1579), A4r (EEBO image 3).

<sup>424</sup> MacDonald, xxix-xxx. See also Richard Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy VVhat it is. VVith all the Kindes, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes, and Severall Cures of it...*(Oxford, 1621), 71-73 (EEBO images 82-83).

sexual abstinence.”<sup>425</sup> As MacDonald points out, Jorden’s innovation was to argue that hysteria could originate in psychological stress as well as from menstrual problems and sexual abstinence. Still, what appeared to many historians to be a rational, scientific argument against belief in witchcraft-possession was primarily an attempt to support Anglican propaganda.<sup>426</sup>

The Church of England’s attempts to challenge both Puritan and Catholic dispossessions by providing natural explanations for the behavior of the afflicted were complicated by the fact that skeptical writers had long used the same strategy. Johann Weyer, Reginald Scot, and John Cotta, for example, did not deny the possibility of witchcraft, but argued that natural illnesses were far more common than true demonic possessions. They extended this strategy to account for the best possible legal proof of witchcraft: the confessions of the accused. They wrote that old women, who confessed to being witches in the greatest numbers, were likely victims of the delusions brought on by hysteria and melancholy.<sup>427</sup> The devil, after all, could capitalize upon the despair of the sick, and need not cause illness in order to tempt invalids to despair. Separating the symptoms from their cause remained a sticky problem, but skeptical writers used gender both to support their arguments about natural illness and also to dismiss young demoniacs and confessing witches as silly, unruly, and delusional.

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<sup>425</sup> D.P. Walker adds that Galen had suggested a male form of hysteria as well, also caused by the retention of semen, 13.

<sup>426</sup> MacDonald, *vi*; xxx. See also the case of Anne Gunter just two years later, in which possible diagnoses of “suffocation of the mother” and the “falling sickness” accompanied charges of fraud. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter* (2000).

<sup>427</sup> George Mora, ed., *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991), 150-160; Scot, 30-34; Cotta 104-114; Veith, 109-111; MacDonald, *xxvii*.

Writers on both sides continually returned to the issue of the confessing witches as a part of the larger question of the legitimacy of witchcraft-possession; if the confessors could be reduced to melancholic old women, then it would be possible similarly to discount demoniacs. Thus defenders of witchcraft-possession like Nathaniel Crouch contradicted the idea that melancholy could explain witchcraft-possession phenomena. In *The Kingdom of Darkness* (1688), which he wrote under a pseudonym, Crouch criticized skeptics' disregard of the confessing witches. He wrote that, like Johann Weyer and Reginald Scot before them:

our Adversaries say [confessing witches] are all melancholy old Women who dote and bring themselves into danger by their own Fancies and Conceits...I demand...whether meer melancholy and imagination can put Powders, Ointments, and such like things into their hands; Can impress Marks and Teats upon their Bodies so deep as to take away all sence in that place...These real effects cannot be meer melancholy, for if a man receive any thing into his hand...there was some body that gave it him, and therefore the Witch receiving some real thing from this or that other shape which appeared unto her, it is an evident sign it was an external thing that she saw, and not a figure only of her malancholly imagination.<sup>428</sup>

Crouch did not take seriously the possibility that the real, external hands who delivered objects to confessing witches and demoniacs had been mortal neighbors, servants, or family members. Indeed, authors of witchcraft-possession pamphlets expressed indignation that any such suspicions would be aimed at the respectable families at the center of their narratives.

The same sort of argument remained in use through the 1690s, when godly men redoubled their efforts to use remarkable providences like witchcraft-possession to prove to an atheistic population that the world of spirits and devils was real. This transatlantic

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<sup>428</sup> Burton/Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness*, 169 (EEBO image 94).

project, discussed below, moved Puritan divines to point out that a few cases of fraud or disease need not compromise belief in the phenomena as a whole. They particularly defended the confessing witches because of their importance to legal prosecution. For example, Cotton Mather argued:

It is a vain thing, for the Patrons of Witches to think that they can Sham off this Argument, by suggesting that these Confessions did proceed from the deluded imaginations of Mad and Melancholy persons. Some of them were as free from distemperature in their Brains, as their Neighbours...that Persons whose Judgement and Reason has been free from disturbance by any Disease, should not only voluntarily acknowledge their being in cursed Familiarities with Satan, but mention the particular circumstances of those Transactions, and give ocular demonstration of the truth of what they say, by discovering the Stigmata made upon their bodies, by the Devils hand...and yet that all this should be the meer effect of Melancholy or Phrensie, cannot without offering violence to Reason and common Sense be imagined.<sup>429</sup>

Mather acknowledged the possibility of delusion by Satan and disease, but insisted that witches' confessions and the astonishing symptoms of the demoniacs ruled out the possibility of fraud.<sup>430</sup>

Debates about whether demoniacs' fits originated in natural illness were just as contentious, and despite physicians' emphasis on melancholy or hysteria, many observers continued to see the devil at work. Many of these issues were raised in the case of Faith Corbet, who suffered possession symptoms from 1660-1664. Corbet accused two women

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<sup>429</sup> Mather, *Memorable Providences* (1689), 186.

<sup>430</sup> In these matters Cotton Mather received support from his father, Increase Mather, who appended *A Disquisition Concerning Angelical Apparitions...* (Boston, 1696), to the *Angelographia* cited at the beginning of this Chapter. Increase expressed concern that "some who object that the Age wherein we live has no Demoniacks, or possessed persons, do from thence suspect the whole Gospel of Fabulosity or Imposture." Even though he favorably cited Meric Casaubon's observation "that some persons in the World by reason of an Unaccountable Epileptic humour, have been strangely disposed to Enthusiastical raptures & phancies," he contradicts those who suspect "the persons who suppose themselves to be attended with Angelical Apparitions, are only so imaginarily, or imposed on with Diabolical illusions" or disease, 1; 18.



of harming her, and struggled to convince the authorities of the legitimacy of her claims. The attending physicians were divided about the natural or supernatural origins of her illness, “some saying they were fits of the mother; others, that they proceeded from the Mother and the Spleen; others, that they were Convulsion fits &c.”<sup>431</sup> Corbet, surely expressing a sentiment familiar to many ill people in the early modern period, plead for “no more physick” while the women she accused remained free. In time, and with the support of her father, Corbet managed to sustain her case; one of the women confessed to witchcraft in 1669.

In the mid- to late-1660s, Northamptonshire physician William Drage approached witchcraft-possession in a more medical format. His *Daimonomageia* reflected the Neoplatonism of Henry More, and boasted of “Being Useful to others besides Physicians, in that it Confutes Atheistical, Sadducistical, and Sceptical Principles and Imaginations” (1665).<sup>432</sup> His definition of disease by witchcraft involved the traditional parameters—“a sickness that arises from strange and preternatural Causes”—and added that these powers were “in the use of strange and ridiculous Ceremonies by Witches or Necromancers.”<sup>433</sup> Drage’s use of “ridiculous” did not contradict his commitment to the reality of

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<sup>431</sup> Sir Matthew Hale, *A Collection of Modern Relations of Matter of Fact, concerning Witches & Witchcraft upon the Persons of People...* (London, 1693), 52-59.

<sup>432</sup> William Drage, *Daimonomageia: A Small Treatise of Sickneses and Diseases from Witchcraft, and Supernatural Causes...Being Useful to others besides Physicians, in that it Confutes Atheistical, Sadducistical, and Sceptical Principles and Imaginations* (London, 1665). This book was published soon after Drage’s wife, in Bernard Capp’s words, “embarrassed him in 1664 by turning Quaker.” Bernard Capp, ‘Drage, William (bap. 1636, d. 1668)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8016>, accessed 17 June 2007]. See also Drage’s *Physical Experiments: Being a Plain Description of the Causes, Signes, and Cures...To which is added a Discourse of Diseases proceeding from VVitchcraft...* (London, 1668); *A physical nosonomy, or, A new and true description of the law of God (called nature) in the body of man confuting by many and undeniable experiences of many men, the rules and methods concerning sicknesses or changes in mans body, delivered by the ancient physicians and moderns that followed them...* (London, 1664).

<sup>433</sup> Drage, *Daimonomageia*, 3 (EEBO image 3).

bewitchment and the diseases that proceeded from it, but it reflected the bind writers faced when attempting to defend witchcraft-possession with science and reason; their critics had not yet been able to out maneuver them, but the language had begun to reflect the strength of the gendered critique.<sup>434</sup> By characterizing the rites of witches or necromancers as “ridiculous,” Drage may have meant to evoke the futility of seeking power beyond the station one had been granted by God. As fruitless as those efforts may have been, beliefs about a witch’s ability to harm and to torture others with specters were not ridiculous in the least to those in the immediate community.

Critics of witchcraft-possession did characterize young demoniacs as “ridiculous,” though, and those who supported them took pains to defend their credit in many of the same ways they used on behalf of the dispossessing ministers. Drage exemplified this approach in his intriguing retelling of the possession of Mary Hall, who suffered from the attentions of two devils in 1664. In addition to tempting her with a new dress, Hall’s devils uttered blasphemy and caused her to have extreme convulsive fits. Drage wrote that “[t]he Maid is very young, and seems bashful, and modest; her Parents and Kinred [sic] are held by all very conscientious and honest People, and wealthy; so that they need use no such impostures to get money, nor would use such blasphemies and abuses of God to gain pity or admiration. Indeed many a Jugler, or Tumbler, may be use come nigh to imitate these things, but what can such a silly, young, bashful well-disposed, and religiously-educated Maid do in these things?”<sup>435</sup> Mary Hall’s bashful silliness argued against the possibility that her possession symptoms were fraudulent. In

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 40 (EEBO 22).

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 32-43 (EEBO images 18-23).

addition to her family's social status, gendered assumptions about her sex, age and body were crucial to Drage's ability to establish her possession as legitimate.

Drage revealed the medical implications of Hall's possession by describing how one Doctor Woodhouse cured her fits with a dose of opium, a remedy he had used successfully on other children thought to be possessed. Drage appeared divided about the implications of these physical cures for supernatural ailments, which he ultimately addressed by extending the same logic governing the possibility of fraud: just as the truth or falsity of Hall's possession did not prove that others were so, "[n]either are all Diseases natural, cureable by Natural Remedies; nor are all Diseases Supernatural, incurable by Natural Remedies."<sup>436</sup> The tone of ambivalence extended to the role of cunningpeople in cases of ailments that originated in witchcraft. Mary Hall told her attendants to consult a man named Redman, "(whom some say is a *Conjurer*, others say, *He is an honest and able Physician, and doth abundance of good*) he would cast them out. This *Redman*, by relation, is unlearned in the Languages, but hath abundance of Practice, and is much talked of in remote parts." Redman's good reputation had not always protected him from suspicion, however. Drage recorded that he had once been "sent to Prison for these things," but "the Judge could not for these things do any thing to him, and set him free; these do not deny but he may be a Witch (or Wizard as some will have men to be called) but do not prove he must be so."<sup>437</sup> In the end, while Drage clearly believed in witchcraft and possession, his interest in popular countermagical

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 41 (EEBO image 22).

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 39 (EEBO image 21). A cunningman's opinion was often an important step in the construction of a possession, even in fraudulent cases. For example, see the 1621 case of Katherine Malpass, whose father paid twenty shillings for one cunningman's services even though he knew his daughter was faking her symptoms. Raiswell, 41.

remedies and the use of opium on demoniacs demonstrated his openness to a broad spectrum of responses to supernatural interference.

Physicians questioned the natural and supernatural afflictions of male demoniacs, as well. As we saw in the aforementioned case of James Barrow (1664), his father admitted to having consulted cunningmen, astrologers, physicians, apothecaries and Catholic priests before finding success with the Puritans. One doctor told Barrow that he did not think the boy was possessed, suggested that the father had “fed him too high,” and recommended that he be sent to Bedlam. That same year, the case of Thomas Sawdie showed the range of options available to physicians and observers: “the swelling struck up into his neck and throat, most thinking that it was an imposture: some that it was wormes; but the apparition told the Boy that this was not sickness, but it was onely to deceive the people, that they might not suspect any other thing by him.”<sup>438</sup> For those who defended the legitimacy of possession, it was logical to point out that the devil would likely take advantage of natural illness to mislead skeptics. Sawdie’s master sent for “one Mr. Cary a Physician” who attempted to interpret the boy’s urine, which appeared to be “very full of black dust, and as it were rags of Brown Paper...and then he said it was bewitched.” This may have been as far as the physician was willing to go; if the affliction had a supernatural origin it by definition could not be cured by natural means, and such a diagnosis also released a physician from expectations of providing an efficacious remedy. Later, Sawdie’s uncle “carryed him to one...who said, that the Boy was overlookt. He gave him a Plaister, a Powder, and a little Bag to hang about his neck,

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<sup>438</sup> *A Return of Prayer...*(1664), 2-3.

and doubted not to cure him.”<sup>439</sup> When physicians removed themselves from witchcraft-possession cases, the families necessarily sought assistance from whomever might help them—dictated in part by their religious sensibilities and social status. Despite the evolution of medical models that could be used to address convulsive fits in the 1660s, the cases of Hall, Barrow and Sawdie reveal that popular countermagical and religious remedies remained as prevalent as they had been at the turn of the century.

This continuity is further demonstrated by the case of Thomas Spatchet, whose possession in the 1660s was not published until 1693, by Samuel Petto. Petto reiterated the aforementioned arguments—against skeptics’ claims that there were natural explanations for possession symptoms, and that the possibility of fraud meant fraud was prevalent. Petto explained that if “some strange Convulsive Motions may be from a Natural Cause, yet it is irrational to think that the Principal or chief of his unusual Fits should be reducible thereunto.”<sup>440</sup> Furthermore, many of Spatchet’s fits involved sudden and preternatural musical ability, something “[n]aturally impossible (without Super added strength) as far transcending his Natural power...[and] not proceeding meerly from a Natural bodily distemper.” As a way to anticipate charges of fraud, Petto argued against the “Atheistical and Irreligious Persons in this Age, which wou’d preswade us that all such matters are Cheats, or come only from a Natural Cause. If some be Cheats and Counterfeits, must all be so? Surely not...If some strange Convulsive Motions may be from a Natural Cause, yea even in this Person in part, yet it is irrational to think that the

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>440</sup> Samuel Petto, *A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful and Extraordinary Fits which Mr. Tho. Spatchet was under by Witchcraft...* (London, 1693), A4r (EEBO image 2).

Principal or chief of his unusual Fits should be reducible thereunto.”<sup>441</sup> The language of rationality pervaded the text, reflecting the gendered strategies of credit, reason, and moderation to offset potential critics. Like Darrell and his supporters nearly a century earlier, Petto included a partially veiled threat against those who would refuse to accept that the possession had been legitimate. “I would therefore Caution such as are Witch Advocates to take heed of being incredulous, Mockers and Deriders at such things,” he wrote, “lest they Lord leave them to find by sad Experience that there ar[e] such wicked Creatures in the World.”<sup>442</sup>

By the end of the seventeenth century, even as it became increasingly difficult for witchcraft-possession cases to progress through the courts, published propaganda continued to debate the implications of disease and natural causes in possession behavior. In the English pamphlet war over Richard Dugdale’s possession in 1697, for example, Thomas Jollie and Zachary Taylor argued bitterly over the origins and legitimacy of Dugdale’s possession. The skeptical Taylor derided the “presbyterians” for failing to consult physicians, presumably to hide the natural causes beneath the imposture.<sup>443</sup> In 1712 another pamphlet war erupted over the case of Jane Wenham, the last person in England to be condemned to death for witchcraft, though she escaped that sentence. Francis Bragge published several narratives that argued Wenham’s guilt and recorded her bewitchment of Anne Thorne. The suspect was put through many of the tests believed to prove a witch, with mixed results. Thorne scratched Wenham, and recovered when the

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., A4r (EEBO image 2).

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>443</sup> Thomas Jollie, *A vindication of the Surey Demoniack as no Impostor: or, A Reply to a certain Pamphlet Publish’d by Mr. Zach. Taylor, called The Surey Impostor. With a further clearing and confirming of the Truth as to Richard Dugdale’s Case and Cure...* (London, 1698), 27.

accused was imprisoned. Wenham offered to undergo the water ordeal, but this was not pursued; unfortunately for her, she stumbled when reciting the Lord's Prayer, something still considered convincing evidence of demonic influence. To challenge Bragge's account of the case, an anonymous skeptic claimed that those who believed in witchcraft were as silly and delusional as the old women commonly accused of the crime:

Now that the Vulgar should ascribe every thing that's a little surprising, to Witchcraft, is no wonder; but that Clergymen, Men suppos'd to have made some Improvement in Physick, should give into the little crude Notions of Nurses and Old Women, about Things which might easily be solv'd by natural Causes, is astonishing; but there is a Vulgus amongst the learned, who, because they cannot readily assign a Cause for the Event, as being less obvious to Sense, presently conclude it preternatural.<sup>444</sup>

Echoing the tone of witchcraft-possession propaganda from a century earlier, the author conflated godly credulity with feminine silliness and ignorance, and added more explicit links between credulity and "the vulgar." The contradiction here was that clergymen were educated, but still clung to ideas that were increasingly associated with the lower sorts. Characterizing witchcraft-possession as just another nurse's story contributed to the unmaking of men who sought to use witchcraft-possession as a tool for religious and political propaganda. Growing emphasis on natural causes, science and medicine drew new boundaries between demoniacs, authors and readers of witchcraft-possession narratives. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, as official willingness to prosecute waned, godly men continued to argue that the devil was afoot. In time, a combination of gendered and classed vulnerability would effectively remove official witchcraft-possession prosecution from the arsenal of godly ministers.

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<sup>444</sup> *A Full Confutation of Witchcraft: More particularly of the Depositions against Jane Wenham...proving that, Witchcraft is Priestcraft...*(1712), 42.

Because traditional popular magical beliefs enjoyed such longevity throughout the seventeenth century, witchcraft-possession narratives continued to include the advice of cunningpeople and the credulous and skeptical responses of those who observed the demoniacs' fits. Keith Thomas has described the many ways that suspected witches were subjected to violence throughout the early modern period; from scratching and beatings to arson and ducking, communities sought to strike back at those they suspected of harming their children, animals or livelihood.<sup>445</sup> It was commonly believed that witches had teats and devil's marks that were insensitive to pain and would not bleed, and accordingly many suspects were stuck with pins, needles or awls.<sup>446</sup> Cotton Mather expressed familiarity with these traditions: "[s]ometimes Persons have been tried for Witch-craft by hot, sometimes by cold water...sometimes by pricking them; sometimes by sticking Awls under their Seats, sometimes by their ability, or otherwise to repeat the Lords Prayer."<sup>447</sup> Mather associated these practices with superstitious, popish places despite the fact that the Lord's Prayer test was used in New England. What has been less investigated are the ways that the possessed were also subjected to painful experiments designed to test their trances, insensitivity, and supernatural rigidity, flexibility, and so forth. These experiments reveal explicit and implicit resentment against the possessed, ostensibly the victims of the devil or a witch's malice for resisting evil. Some of the tests

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<sup>445</sup> Thomas, 530-534. One typical example can be found in R.B. *Kingdom of Darkness*: "In August the same year 1649. One Elizabeth Graham was apprehended upon some threatning words she had spoke in her drunkenness to John Runkins wife...one Alexander Bags who was counted very Skilful in discovering Teats and Marks of the Devil, being sent for to her, came and found a Mark upon her back bone wherein he thrust a great brass pin of which she was not sensible neither did any blood follow when it was drawn out," 122.

<sup>446</sup> For a description of such practices, as well as sleep deprivation, see Matthew Hopkins, *The discovery of witches*, 4 (EEBO image 4).

<sup>447</sup> Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences*, 179.



were designed to assess whether the demoniac was truly possessed.<sup>448</sup> Others appeared to regard the punishment as worthy in its own right; the possessed performed their struggle with temptation in the open, and to reject the devil in them was to reject it in oneself.

Two early manuscripts demonstrate the curiosity mixed with revulsion with which observers described these extreme tests. In Edward Dynham's possession in 1626, the manuscript's author reports that "sometyme they thrust pins and nedles thorowe his hande and nostrills of which he is insensible neither dost there any blood appeare."<sup>449</sup> In 1629, one of Roger Sterrop's attendants wrote that "[i]n all his fittes (except in some fewe) hee was unsensible. I caused him to be pricked, verie deepe, with pinnes, & he never shrunk. One tyme I held a candle to his finger, till I greeved to hold it any longer, but hee never shrunk. Hee himself raked the fyre with his fingers, & never shrunk beeing in his fittes, & once or twyse hee cast himself unto the fyre, jumping in verie violently."<sup>450</sup> This struggle between the torment of the demoniac by the devil and by those who wanted to save him—coupled with the necessity of preventing the demoniac's self-destructive behavior—obscured the origin of suffering and left the roles of torturer and tortured unclear.

Both believers and skeptics subjected demoniacs to tremendous pressure to react in ways that were appropriate to the script: to the touch of the accused, to Latin prayers

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<sup>448</sup> In *A vindication of the Surey Demoniack as no Impostor* (1698), Thomas Jollie described various instances in which Richard Dugdale was tested: "John Hindle prickt a large Pin in his Feet, and he neither stirred nor complained at all...Robert Turner hath gone to the Hedg to get a Stake, to beat him with, but R.D. hath so made to him, that he hath broken, or stript the Rope, so that we have been forced to lay hold of him," 57; 64.

<sup>449</sup> *Evidence purporting to have been given at Taunton, Co. Som., against Edward Bull and Joan Greedie, 13 Aug 1626, being a long dialogue of the spirits possessing one Edward Dynham.* British Manuscript, Additional 36674, 189.

<sup>450</sup> *A true narration of the grievous affliction of Roger Sterrop of Somer Islands, who possessed a Devil many weeks together, & was delivered by the finger of God, Jan 13, 1629.* British Library, Manuscript Harley 6865, 7v.

or holy language, to holy objects, to productive labor, and to the incarceration of the accused, to name only a few. In one sixteenth-century dispossession account, John Fisher reported:

At the last Maister Lane called for [vinegar], whereat the sta[n]ders by marveiled, saying, that ye thing with much more had bene often tymes attempted, but to no purpose. Notwithstanding he ceased not to call styll for it, saying, that God might do that then, which he did not before, and so received viniger, put it into his mouth & blewe it into the Maydes nostrils, wherat she cryeth a Lady, Lady. He the[n] wiled her to cal upo[n] God, and the bloud of Christ & in these doinges she being astoni[sh]ed, he called againe for more viniger, Wherat she cried: No, no, no more for Gods sake.<sup>451</sup>

Lane then instructed her to say the Lord's Prayer, which she did, and after "this her deliveraunce" she called upon God, dressed, ate, and continued well to the great surprise of those who had long attended her. In some cases, like this one, the experiments drew upon traditional notions of how to make the victim's body inhospitable to the invading spirit. In others, the tests appear designed to force a recalcitrant faker to give up the charade. Because physical trials served both credulity and skepticism, the investigators' intent and the observers' perception were frequently unclear despite the efforts of writers to make unambiguous claims for the case's meaning.

At times parents and masters considered the possibility that a recalcitrant youth or saucy maidservant simply needed to have the devil shocked or beaten out. In James Barrow's case, his father repeated that he beat him sorely, but to no avail.<sup>452</sup> When Mary Glover was suspected of counterfeiting in 1602, Bancroft arranged for the suspect Mother

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<sup>451</sup> John Fisher, *The Copy of a Letter Describing the wonderful woorke of God in delivering a Mayden within the City of Chester, from an horrible kinde of torment and sicknes. 16 of February 1564* (London, 1564), B3v-B4r, (EEBO image 8).

<sup>452</sup> Barrow, 11.

Jackson to be brought into her chamber in disguise, and for another woman to wear Jackson's clothing. Despite this set-up, Glover reacted on cue to the touch of the woman she accused of harming her, something taken as deeply significant to the attending clergy. Even more astonishing for the Puritan dispossessors was the strange voice that appeared to come out of Mary's nose, and her remarkable insensitivity to pain:

The Recorder then called for a Candle, and a sheet of paper, which being lighted he held the flame to her hand till it blistered, the blister broke and water came out which dropt on the floor, the Maid lying senseless like a dead body, with the voice still coming out of her Nostrils saying, *hang her, hang her*. Then the Recorder called for a long pin which he held in the flame of the Candle till it was very hot, and thrust the head of it into her Nostrils to try if that would make her sneeze, wink, bend her brows, or stir her head, but nothing moved her lying still as dead.<sup>453</sup>

For the clergy who had long ago become convinced of Glover's true possession, her success at withstanding the tests revealed not her own fortitude, or even illness, but rather the power of the devil afflicting her. In Glover's case the stakes were extremely high, and one can only wonder at the physical and psychological conditions that contributed to her stoicism. Some of Glover's testers did not believe that her possession was legitimate, and her credibility hinged upon her ability to convince them otherwise.

The contemporary case of Anne Gunter, who was brought before the King and Anglican authorities, was exacerbated by the fact that her father forced her to swallow potions to enable her to fake her fits. Anne grew confused and disoriented, and genuinely ill as well as desperate to avoid her father's beatings. James Sharpe has explained the treatment Anne received not only at her father's hands but also from one Alice Kirfoote, who stuck numerous pins into Anne's arms and breasts, which caused her to bleed

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<sup>453</sup> R.B. *Kingdom of Darkness*, (1688), 18-19. For another example of burning, see Henri de Heer, who tried but failed to force apart the fingers of a demoniac using a nail and a hot coal. De Heer, 8 (EEBO image 6).

profusely. Sharpe writes that in Gunter's case, "[p]hysical brutality was added to psychological pressure. Her father beat her several times when she refused to simulate fits, and there was one especially violent incident, also recalled by other witnesses to the case...Her father was so incensed by her rebellion that he threw her to the ground and 'spurned' her, that is struck at her with the heels of his boots...Brian Gunter dragged her home saying, "'What, you scurvy harlot, will you not come home with me?'"<sup>454</sup>

Of course, possessions were by definition rough events, and hinged upon the struggle between the impulses of the devil and those who sought to restore the demoniac to someone culturally recognizable—who behaved in accordance with norms of age, gender, and social status. For example, in 1646 Joyce Dovey grappled with a godly young man over a piece of paper containing observations of her condition. She "fell upon him very violently, and would have taken the paper from him, but he contended with her very toughly...and after a long conflict, gave her the repulse, who having kept the paper without tearing, onely a little corner, but not a word torne off, he voluntarily threw it downe on the ground, saying, Devill thou hast not power to take it up, and so took it up himselfe and departed."<sup>455</sup> These struggles had notable sexual overtones despite the efforts writers made to emphasize the godly nature of the struggle. The presence of the crowd in the demoniac's bedchamber, locked in combat for the state of his or her soul, created a dramatic scene in which the frequently young victim spat out unsanctioned discontent at those whose job was to restrain, rebuke, and redirect. The ministers, and this young man, needed to restore the rebellious devil in Joyce Dovey to a proper understanding of her powers and position.

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<sup>454</sup> Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 10-11.

<sup>455</sup> *A strange and true relation of a yovng woman possest with the Devill*, 3-4.

This ritualized submission did not pertain only to female demoniacs, as Petto's analysis of Thomas Spatchet's possession in 1693 makes clear. Petto wrote that Spatchet had to struggle to accept God's will:

It pleased the Lord presently to leave him to some discontent of Spirit... this frame continued but a day and a night, and the next morning after the Lord convinced him of the evil of it, that he had been discontented with his hand, when he lay'd it so lightly upon him, in comparison of what he experienced formerly; he saw wisdom, goodness and mercy in God, even in leaving him to be discontented; the Lord turned this to his good and helped him against it, letting him see that contentment cometh from him; it is of the Lord to make a man contented in any Affliction: Content was the Lords and none of his, he could not quiet his own Spirit.<sup>456</sup>

Like many demoniacs, Spatchet struggled with the devils of their own discontent. After contending with clergy and attempting to externalize his temptations and sin, Spatchet was quieted and ready to submit to the Lord. This also meant he had to submit to the limitations of his own life, his place in relation to others, and accept that his lot was already set. As Carol Karlsen has noted, possessed girls in New England articulated a similar struggle against the limitations of their social position and prospects; their physical and emotional outbursts vented their resentment at those whom they had to serve and on whom they depended for charity.<sup>457</sup>

As the official climate warmed to skepticism, published accounts appeared to relish the cruelty acted out on demoniacs. Because of possession cases' political and religious significance, authors had always reveled in exposing fraud or atheism on the part of their opponents. But Harsnett's disparaging comments about Thomas Darling, and even William Somers, paled in comparison to the triumphant scorn heaped on Susannah Fowles, the "second Boy of Bilson" in 1698. Howson wrote that when she:

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<sup>456</sup> Petto, 12-13 (EEBO image 9).

<sup>457</sup> Karlsen, 125-130; 240-242.

was in one of her pretended Fits, they so contriv'd the matter as to have an Iron ready, red hot, which they put upon her Hand; at which she, in the middle of her Fit, cry'd out, *O Lord!* And thereby discover'd her self to be both an Impostor and a Notorious Lyar; for she had always said, *That she durst not name the Name of God or Christ...* as also, that when she was in her Fits, she was altogether insensible of what was done... Hereupon Lieutenant Barlow threaten'd her, that if she had any more Fits while she stay'd in his House, which was 24 hours, he would burn her again with the hot Iron, and inflict more grievous Punishments upon her; which she took into consideration, and has not been troubled with any since that.

When authors were set on proving that demoniacs' fits were fraudulent, they emphasized the subject's sinful nature rather than illness. In Fowles' case the author claimed that she seized upon hysteria as "a good Cloak, as she thought, for her preceding Imposture." In the end, Fowles was committed to Bridewell where, the author reported smugly, "she continues in perfect Health, and hath a very good hand at the Hammer."<sup>458</sup> Howson's comments call to mind those of the godly Richard Baxter who wrote that fraudulent possessions were generally conducted by two sorts of persons: those trained by "Papists Priests, to honour their Exorcisms" like the Boy of Bilson, or "Lustful, Rank, Girls and young Widows, that plot for some amorous, procacious Design, or have Imaginations conquered by Lust."<sup>459</sup> The twin specters of devious priests, lascivious women, and disordered youths, came to dominate published representations of demoniacs through the beginning of the eighteenth century. In this way, gendered conceptions of discontent, weakness, and disorder remained at the center of published articulations of possession phenomena.

Transferring suspicion from witches onto the possessed provided gatekeeping men with a way to preserve social authority without having to tread the tricky legal

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<sup>458</sup> Howson, 18.

<sup>459</sup> Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691), 3 (EEBO 11).

ground of witchcraft prosecution. By the eighteenth century, witchcraft-possession cases no longer offered the kind of divine authority that aided Catholics and Puritans in their attempts to gain legitimacy and converts. Instead, witchcraft-possession bred more strife than cohesion,<sup>460</sup> and was increasingly relegated to the realm of silly, foolish old women who believed in such things. The gendering of credulity in opposition to manly reason helped seal the fate of possession. Furthermore, the development of scientific and medical explanations contributed to elite men's reluctance to lead cases through official channels. An expanded sense of natural causes helped to defuse blame during witchcraft-possession cases by suggesting causes beyond fraud and demonic delusion. The hesitance to prosecute ultimately aligned belief in witches and demons with common people, women, and fools.

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<sup>460</sup> Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations: 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1997, 233-244.

## CHAPTER 5

### TO UNMAKE A MINISTER: GEORGE BURROUGHS IN SALEM

“Ann [P]utnam...testifieth and saith that on 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1692: at evening she saw the Apperishtion of a Minister at which she was greivously affrighted and cried out oh dreadfull: dreadfull here is a minister com[e]: what are Ministers wicthes to[o]...”<sup>461</sup>

-Deposition of Ann Putnam, Jr. against George Burroughs

When called to testify regarding the suspected witchcraft of Reverend George Burroughs, of Wells, Maine, forty-five year old Elizar Keysar supplied a story marked by the sort of fears that helped sustain the famous Essex County witchcraft outbreak in 1692. Keysar, while visiting the tavern where Burroughs was being held, fell into conversation with one Captain Daniel King. King asked Keysar to speak with Burroughs, whom he called a “Choice Child of god,” and predicted, “that God would Clear up his Inocency.”<sup>462</sup> Keysar replied that he suspected the rumors about Burroughs were true, and that the minister was “the Cheife of all the persons accused for witchcraft or the Ring Leader of them all.” Nonetheless, Keysar later returned to the tavern and entered Burroughs’s room, which led Burroughs to stare at him intensely. That evening, while at home, Keysar reported seeing:

very strange things appeare in the Chimney...w'ch seemed to mee to be something like Jelly that used to be in the water and quaver with a strainge Motion, and then quickly disappeared soone after which I did see a light up in the chimney aboute the bigness of my hand...upon Which I called

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<sup>461</sup> Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers [SWC]: Verbatim Transcriptions of the Court Records in three volumes* (Da Capo Press: New York, 1977), Volume 2.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, 177. Marilynne K. Roach writes that King served in the war on the Maine frontier. See Roach, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), 111.



the Mayd, and she looking up into the Chimney saw the same, and my wife looking up could not see any thing, soe I did and doe [very Certainly] [Concider] it was some diabolicall apperition.<sup>463</sup>

Keysar's testimony demonstrates the suggestibility of those whose worst fears and suspicions were borne out in the appearance of supernatural occurrences. He openly admitted his prior suspicions about Burroughs before witnessing the glowing lights in his home, and those presentiments do not appear to have troubled the court. After all, witchcraft suspicion often simmered for years, even generations, before gathering energy and resulting in actual prosecution. The lighted objects never took the shape of any person or spirit, but Keysar (and the maid, presumably) felt certain that the event was diabolical, and resulted from that long look from Burroughs. For some reason, Keysar's wife did not perceive the lights as they did. Outbreaks of witchcraft suspicion relied upon fear, along with other more submerged emotional impulses, for momentum and interpretation. But even when there was enough collective feeling to support the trials, and even when "male gatekeepers" were willing to grant the complaints a formalized airing in court, the experience of a witchcraft case varied greatly among individuals.<sup>464</sup>

This variety illustrates the extent to which such outbreaks defy singular explanations. Some accusers complained of traditional malefic bewitchment, such as harm to livestock, disruption of household production, and the sickness or even death of family members. Others, including those who served as catalysts for the Salem crisis, became "afflicted" and demonstrated the customary symptoms of the witchcraft-

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<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>464</sup> Mary Beth Norton uses this term to indicate the "crucial role of adult men in legitimizing the complaints of the afflicted persons... The heads of households in which afflicted young people resided composed the first such gatekeeping level; the next comprised the examining magistrates, and the third the judges and jurors," *In the Devil's Snare*, 72. Carol Karlsen writes that "[p]ossession expressed an underlying power struggle between the possessed and the authorities who were culturally sanctioned to interpret their experience," 244.

possession script.<sup>465</sup> The “afflicted girls” behaved as if they were possessed, but like the Throckmorton girls they managed to maintain an identity based on resistance, rather than capitulation, to the witches’ and Devil’s overtures. In addition to possessed and non-possessed accusers, the Essex County outbreak involved accused witches, their supporters and detractors, and convicted witches who either confessed or proclaimed their innocence. Keysar’s testimony, and the foundation laid for it by the possessed accusers who first implicated Burroughs, illustrates the kind of witchcraft-possession discourse that emerged during the crisis. Claims to manly honor, and other gendered strategies played a central, though inconsistent, role throughout New England’s witchcraft outbreak of 1692.

Though this gender analysis of George Burroughs’ transformation from man of God to ringleader for Satan necessarily highlights some elements of his story more than others, it constitutes one angle from which to view a complicated story. For George Burroughs, the transition involved a continual negotiation of ideas of manhood; reports of his violence and ambition stood in for the stories his children or friends might have told. Did Burroughs make only half-hearted attempts to defend himself as a way to belie accounts of his belligerence? Perhaps he hoped that humility would best suit the image of a clergyman facing censure from the community. Or did record-keepers highlight Burroughs’ apparent inability to answer the charges against him because this met their expectations of his guilt? Burroughs did not betray the anger or bitterness John Samuel

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<sup>465</sup> Karlsen analyzes the differences between possessed and non-possessed accusers; the former were predominantly female (approximately 86%) and in many cases did not know those they accused. Non-possessed accusers included more men, and frequently centered around *maleficium* or neighborhood tensions, 222-226.

had, but like Samuel he was unmade alongside women whose greater resemblance to witches helped shape his downfall.

When writing about the Essex County witchcraft trials, historian Bernard Rosenthal explained that to advocate a “unified theory” explaining the Salem witch trials would be to “distort [and] trivialize it...On the other hand, the events of 1692 are not merely chaotic: The methodological challenge is to find reasonable conclusions, generalizations at times, that do more than impose one more myth.”<sup>466</sup> The limitations of universal interpretations aside, the enduring use of gendered strategies by men to protect themselves or their interests in witchcraft-possession cases suggests that gender is a subject worthy of investigation. Gender remained a vital component of witchcraft-possession narratives even as it moved from the center to the margins and back again, and across considerable time and space. The role of manhood in witchcraft-possession demonstrates that gender is all the more revealing a category of analysis for its flexibility and elusiveness.

Because the scholarship of New England witchcraft is so extensive, some scholars have expressed concern that it places disproportionate emphasis on an unrepresentative incident. Perhaps even more troubling to historians is the hold that “Salem” retains on the popular imagination, and how far its meaning has traveled from the historical evidence.<sup>467</sup> Richard Archer, for example, writes that the preoccupation with Salem “has led succeeding generations to exaggerate the importance of witchcraft.” Furthermore:

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<sup>466</sup> Rosenthal, 7-8.

<sup>467</sup> The longevity of popular perceptions of witchcraft that have been debunked by historians (such as the belief that witchcraft accusations were designed to counter an underground pagan community, or that a great number of the accused were midwives), have particularly alienated the popular accounts of New

For most of the century, concerns about witches...only arose sporadically, and even then authorities seldom brought defendants to trial and found them guilty. The historical significance of periodic charges of witchcraft comes more from what it tells us about New England society than about the accused. Although it is true that New Englanders perceived witchcraft primarily as a female crime, that is no more evidence of misogyny than the comparable opinion that murder and assault by virtue of their being viewed primarily as male crimes indicates societal contempt for men.<sup>468</sup>

All but the last sentence represent important correctives to some of the popular views of New England—particularly regarding the perceived eagerness of judges to seek out and prosecute suspected witches. Archer's last point, however, disregards the peculiarly gendered nature of witchcraft as a female crime and the flexibility of misogyny in a culture organized around patriarchal principles.

Neither the existence of male witches nor the prevalence of women who accused other women discounts the extent to which witchcraft was linked with weaknesses particularly characteristic of women, such as malice and susceptibility to demonic influence. Contempt for murderers was, of course, considerable, and ministers exhorted their congregations to learn from their downfall. New Englanders also feared disorderliness and “masterless men,” and bemoaned drunkenness and frivolity from the moment they landed. All crimes, after all, represented capitulation to Satan's temptations and, as such, endangered the entire community. But witchcraft represented something far more grim, even in its sporadic incarnations. Every New Englander was susceptible to temptation, and had the capacity to murder. Even though witchcraft was “available” to men and women of all sorts, the implicit understanding of what made a person turn to

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England witchcraft from their historical counterparts. The theses above, cited in Chapter 1, were initially forwarded by Margaret Murray, and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English.

<sup>468</sup> Archer, 110. For a related argument, see Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 181.

witchcraft was inextricable from gendered weaknesses.<sup>469</sup> It was a crime connected by cultural legacy to the bodies and temperaments of its practitioners. Evidence of witchcraft could be found on the body, and guilt was revealed through speech, blood, marks and teats—all inseparable from that body. Even isolated cases of witchcraft suspicion had the potential to spread to others in a way that other crimes did not. And while general lawlessness could invite God's judgment upon the colony, witchcraft threatened to rot society from within, dividing and unmaking authority as it went.

This chapter analyzes the foundations of witchcraft-possession in New England, considering the cases and outbreaks that preceded the well-known Essex County/Salem outbreak in 1692. Next, it analyzes representations of Reverend George Burroughs, focusing on the role of manhood (including credit, manly community, and his particular brand of excess) in his unmaking by comparing Cotton Mather's representation of Burroughs' trial and conviction with some of the woman on trial; Mather chose Burroughs as the only man in his list of five case studies of witches in his *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). Third, this Chapter engages with the historiography of New England witchcraft, the trends of historical scholarship, and the role of gender therein. In New England as in England, more women than men were customarily suspected and tried as witches. Lastly, it examines the ways in which Reverend George Burroughs appeared

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<sup>469</sup> Elizabeth Reis has made the point that "[l]ay women and men feared hell equally," but women believed "their vile natures... would take them there rather than the particular sins they may have committed." Reis analyzed sermons, finding that ministers perpetuated the idea—and women internalized it—that they were less able to resist Satan's unrelenting pursuit of their souls. Furthermore, Carol Karlsen writes that "[w]itchcraft possession in early New England... was an interpretation placed upon a physical and emotional response to a set of social conditions that had no intrinsic relationship to witches or the Devil... the New England possessed were rebelling against pressures to internalize stifling gender and class hierarchies." Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 37; 164-168; Karlsen, 250-251. Social status was also an important factor in one's resemblance to a witch.

to be sacrificed on the behalf of other men, to stand in for their collective failures at manhood and mastery. Burroughs' destruction allowed his surviving peers to purge their failings along with his, thereby shoring up their right to authority in New England.

### **Foundations of New England Witchcraft-Possession**

Witchcraft cases were rare in early New England, particularly at the onset of colonization. Once the English survived the first generation, however, witch fears surfaced in communities across Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, New Haven, Connecticut, and the unincorporated northeastern territories that would become Maine. The well-known outbreak in Essex County was not the only one of its kind in New England, but it was the greatest in scale. Marilynne Roach summarizes the nature of the pre-Salem cases as follows:

more than 120 individuals (88 women and 32 men) were suspected of witchcraft in New England between 1638 and 1691, excluding those who turned out to be only Quakers...Some 121 trials involved 85 women and 36 men. Of these, 38 cases were slander suits brought *against* an accuser (by 27 women and 11 men). Spotty records for the 83 actual witch trials resulted in 11 to 17 executions, one or two of them of men, plus 3 guilty verdicts reversed (2 women and 1 man).<sup>470</sup>

Roach's numbers for the pre-Salem period inform us of some noteworthy trends: approximately 70 percent of those involved in witchcraft trials were women, and the number of executions for the entire colonial period equals that of the Salem outbreak, in which 20 were killed (19 were hanged, and 1 was pressed to death for refusing to plea). By excluding Quakers, Roach sets aside the suspicions against Mary Dyer and Jane Hawkins, whose support of Anne Hutchinson's Antinomianism heresies demonstrated

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<sup>470</sup> Roach, xx.

some of the religious and political aspects of witchcraft-possession seen in England.<sup>471</sup>

Gildrie writes that the incidence of witchcraft prosecution in New England followed, more or less, the same fluctuations of trials in England. “In the colonies,” he writes, “some 40 percent of those tried were executed from 1647 to 1662, a rate similar to England’s during the 1637-46 scare. Then, after 1662, the pace of trial and execution declined in both England and America.” He attributes some of the change after 1662 to the courts being “caught between the popular desire to prosecute and the narrowing theological definition of the crime.”<sup>472</sup>

There were a few important cases of witchcraft-possession that both reflected the traditional English script and altered its articulation in New England. The necessary ingredient, as the aforementioned English cases demonstrated, was the presence of receptive authority figures to diagnose the symptoms as supernatural and respond to the sufferer accordingly. In one case that took place from 1671-1672 in Groton, Massachusetts, the Reverend Samuel Willard observed sixteen year-old Elizabeth Knapp’s possession with caution.<sup>473</sup> Knapp experienced fits and visions matching those of the standard possession script, and ultimately named a woman in the village as the cause of her suffering. Willard recorded these accusations, but remained wary, and pursued neither Knapp’s leading statements nor the woman she named. After a long and intense negotiation, and an attempt to name another woman, Knapp confessed that the charges were untrue. She was forced to change her claims when Willard’s refusal to act

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<sup>471</sup> See Karlsen, 14-19.

<sup>472</sup> Gildrie, 166. The panic he refers to in England in the 1640s involved Matthew Hopkins, the Witch-Finder General. See also Gaskill, *Witchfinders*.

<sup>473</sup> Willard described Elizabeth Knapp’s possession in his sermon, “Useful Instructions for a Professing People in times of Great Security and Degeneracy” (Cambridge, 1673), and her story was reprinted in Increase Mather’s *Remarkable Providences* (1684).

on them made *her* the target of suspicion and exclusion rather than those she accused.

Willard was not a skeptic, but his conservative response demonstrated the caution with which ministers often approached suspected cases of witchcraft-possession.<sup>474</sup>

Willard's cautious response to Elizabeth Knapp was fairly typical of the reception ministers gave to possession cases. Willard thus provides a useful counterpoint to the dispossessions recorded by Cotton Mather, whose witchcraft-possession writing figures significantly in this and the next chapter.<sup>475</sup> Cotton Mather's responses to witchcraft and possession may not provide a representative account, but his involvement (along with his father's) greatly influenced the development of the American possession narrative. Mather's curiosity and piety contributed to his drive to perceive and record God's memorable providences in the world. He scrupulously recorded his efforts on behalf of several demoniacs, and sought—like Joseph Glanvill and Henry More in England—to use these astounding events to convince readers of the need to recommit to God's service.<sup>476</sup> His personal involvement in the case of John Goodwin's four possessed children, in Boston, began a fascination with the possibilities and dangers of communication with spirits. Mather's account of their suffering, in *Memorable Providences*, reflects aspects of the Throckmortons a century before. Mather took the

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<sup>474</sup> For a particularly in-depth analysis of Willard's treatment of Elizabeth Knapp, see Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, especially Chapter 4.

<sup>475</sup> Gildrie states that the Mathers' witchcraft writing before 1692 fell in line with Willard's caution. Both Increase Mather's *Remarkable Providences* (1684) and Cotton Mather's *Late Memorable Providences* (1691), he writes, "should be read as a collection of instances and arguments for a concerted clerical campaign to suppress witchcraft and discredit cunning lore." While I agree with the general trend he describes, I believe the aforementioned work by Cotton Mather shows signs of the credulity and curiosity that characterized his writing during the Essex County outbreak. Gildrie, 165.

<sup>476</sup> Even though Glanvill was an Anglican priest, his work considerably influenced Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) in George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914). See also Joseph Glanvill, *Sadducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions. In two parts. The first treating of their possibility. The second of their real existence...* (1682), Henry More, and other Neoplatonists of the Cambridge School.



eldest Goodwin, Martha, into his home so he could observe and test the nature of her condition. Martha did not disappoint; the thirteen year-old showed a remarkable degree of creativity and a flair for the theatrical. Whereas Willard had refused to accept Elizabeth Knapp's claims about what she was experiencing, Mather both followed Martha's lead and provided just enough information for her to adapt to his expectations.

It was highly important to the outcome of this case—and, by extension, the larger outbreak in Essex County in 1692—that the woman accused of causing Martha's possession confessed to being a witch.<sup>477</sup> A confession provided the best possible corroboration, and compensated for the legal uncertainties of witchcraft prosecution. The Goodwin case certainly reinforced Mather's sense that New England was under siege by the Devil's minions. The opportunity to interact directly with demons proved irresistible; what he learned only strengthened his resolve to use the case to make "Sadducees" and atheists aware of their folly.<sup>478</sup> Mather made sure to emphasize the similarity between the Goodwins' symptoms and those mentioned in canonical English texts, and later he linked other New England cases—like that of Mercy Short, discussed in the next chapter—back to the Goodwins. His sermons, and the publication of *Memorable Providences*, further disseminated the nature of the witchcraft-possession script.

The aforementioned cases provide crucial context for the outbreak that started in Salem Village and spread throughout Essex County in 1692-1693. They reveal that

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<sup>477</sup> Based on Mather's report about Goodwife Glover, and claims that dolls were found in her house, Chadwick Hansen writes that Goodwife Glover was one of New England's real witches: "There has never been a more clear-cut case of witchcraft." Hansen, *Witchcraft at Salem*, 20-23.

<sup>478</sup> Sadducees, like the Pharisees, were believed to have doubted the existence of the soul, angels, and the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23; Luke 20:27). The term was used by pro-witchcraft writers to dismiss those who challenged belief in the existence of witches or spirits. Kenneth Silverman writes that Sadducism "in the late seventeenth century became a code word for atheistical tendencies, and in the 1680s the target of a burgeoning literature." See Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 92.

general trends of English witchcraft-possession, such as the gendered witch image and relative caution on the part of gatekeeping men, remained in place. Just as in England, this caution occasionally gave way when some became convinced they were witnessing a true demonstration of the devil's work in their communities, and when momentum pushed latent fears and resentments to the fore. In this gendered analysis, the continuities between English and New England witchcraft are most revealing, even though American innovations appeared in witchcraft-possession cases in response to the particular pressures of the communities in which the afflictions originated. Witchcraft-possession cases in both regions gained their power from a combination of their adherence to the recognizable formula and responsiveness to quotidian pressures of households, neighbors, and social factions. That recognizable formula, with its suffering, resistance, ultimatum, and resolution, relied upon patriarchal principles of bringing afflicted individuals back under the power of proper authority: parents, masters, officials, ministers, Crown, and God. For men who became possessed and men accused as witches, their identities as demoniacs or witches depended upon their ability to lay claim to honorable manhood. That struggle to shore up their own claims to parts of patriarchal privilege comes through in their representations in published possession narratives.

### **The Trial of Reverend George Burroughs**

The Essex County witchcraft-possession outbreak began in January of 1692, in the home of Salem Village's minister, Reverend Samuel Parris. Instability throughout New England helped fuel the accusations; as Marilynne Roach writes, the outbreak began "during an eight-year war while Massachusetts steered an unauthorized government with a nearly empty treasury through the hazards of French imperialism, Algonquian

resentment, and English suspicion.<sup>479</sup> Because the initial accusations related to local conflicts and suspicions, residents on the Maine frontier ought to have been beyond the reach of the accusers in Salem and Andover. Reverend George Burroughs, though, had served as minister in Salem Village from 1680 to 1683. During that time he lived with his wife as a boarder in the home of the Thomas Putnam and his family. Putnam's wife and daughter, both named Ann, went on to become two of the most active possessed accusers in the Essex County outbreak. When he left Salem Village, Burroughs moved to Falmouth, Maine as minister, where he lived until he was forced to leave after it was destroyed by the Abenakis. Burroughs survived the assault, however, and returned to Maine to live in Wells. It was here that the thirty-nine year old minister was arrested, in May 1692, and transported back to Salem on suspicion of witchcraft. As Mary Beth Norton has shown, there were numerous connections between the accusers and Burroughs, not to mention the likely routes for gossip that contributed to his unmaking.<sup>480</sup>

When Cotton Mather wrote *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693), an explication and defense of the trials, he chose Burroughs as the first of his five particular case studies. The other four witches were women: Bridget Bishop, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth How, and Martha Carrier. Mather was not present at the trials, but he requested and received detailed transcripts in order to prepare the content for publication. As a result, *Wonders of the Invisible World* was the product both of Mather's expositional choices and the availability of documentation he considered sufficient for publication. The bookends of the list, Burroughs and Carrier, were reputed to have been promised

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<sup>479</sup> Roach, xxv. The particular political pressures that followed the struggle to renew the Massachusetts Bay Colony's charter are discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>480</sup> Norton, 126-128; 142.

positions as King and Queen of Hell, an interesting English spin on the nature of hierarchy in an underworld controlled by Satan and his demons. Burroughs made a logical choice for the potential King of Hell, given his status as minister. Though his leadership came to be seen as satanic rather than godly, his standing as a prosthelytizer, or seducer, was founded on his status as a man and minister.

While it may have been merely formulaic, Mather explained that he prepared the book in response to “a Command” from Stoughton’s government, and that he wrote “not as an Advocate but as an Historian.”<sup>481</sup> Because Mather was well aware of the controversial nature of witchcraft prosecution, and deeply invested in its providential significance, he took care to present the cases with the strongest possible evidence in favor of their guilt. In order to convict George Burroughs, a confession would have been best. But, lacking that, a preponderance of evidence from reputable witnesses would do. Regarding Burroughs, Mather wrote:

This G. B... was Accused by five or six of the Bewitched, as the Author of their Miseries; he was Accused by eight of the Confessing Witches, as being an Head Actor at some of their Hellish Rendezvouzes, and one who had the promise of being a King in Satans Kingdom, now going to be Erected: he was Accused by nine persons for extraordinary Lifting, and such Feats of Strength, as could not be done without a Diabolical Assistance. And for other such Things he was Accused, until about Thirty Testimonies were brought in against him; nor were these judg'd the half of what might have been considered for his Conviction: however they were enough to fix the Character of a Witch upon him...<sup>482</sup>

Mather wrote to convince the reader that there was overwhelming evidence against Burroughs, making it impossible for him to have been innocent. He did not list the

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<sup>481</sup> Burr, 214.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 215-216. Mather invoked John Gaule’s *Select Cases of Conscience*, which had been written in 1646 in response to the excesses of Matthew Hopkins in England. See Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646). Gaule believed in witches but advocated caution when attempting to discover them.

*amount* of testimony in this way for the four other witches, though he assured the reader that the evidence was sufficient. Moreover, Mather emphasized that Burroughs held more power and influence with Satan than regular witches; as a minister, Burroughs provided an ideal representative of the demonic mission to destroy New England and to erect the Devil's kingdom in its place—with French and Indians, no doubt, as his particular servants. Mather used Burroughs' case to establish the certainty of the witches' guilt and the legitimacy of the magistrates' and judges' procedure. While there were other individuals who better represented the traditional witch image of an old, malicious crone, Burroughs provided Mather with something more suitable to his larger argument about the presence of a widespread conspiracy to bring down the godly in New England.

Mather transcribed the testimony of the possessed accusers in a way that made the most of the circular logic of spectral evidence. A confession was the best possible evidence of witchcraft, and a spectral confession carried considerable weight despite the caution judges were supposed to use with such claims. As long as Mather believed the possessed accusers' visions of those who harmed them, he was able to record their claims in a way that established both their innocence and Burroughs' degradation. Mather recorded that one of the possessed, while "in her Agonies," testified that "a little Black hair'd man came to her, saying his Name was B. and bidding her set her hand unto a Book which he show'd unto her; and bragging that he was a Conjurer, above the ordinary Rank of Witches...[and] he inflicted cruel Pains and Hurts upon her, because of her

Denying so to do.”<sup>483</sup> The spectral Burroughs acted in the girls’ visions just as Mather would have expected a traitorous minister to behave. Instead of gathering souls together in the service of Christ, Burroughs attempted to seduce souls away from the commitment of their baptism. The seduction was a spiritual one, but the traditional witchcraft-possession script hinted at Europe’s more sexualized witch Sabbaths. In New England, the focus of the demonic service was a blasphemous Eucharist, but there was celebrating and drinking, and even magical traveling that harkened back to the “flying” so well documented in Catholic possession accounts.<sup>484</sup> As a minister, Burroughs made a logical choice for a potential “King in Satan’s Kingdom.”

As John Darrell had a century earlier, Mather emphasized the sensational spectral evidence that proved Burroughs’ guilt and held the most potential for propaganda. The possessed had often complained that the witches bit them, but when they made this complaint about Burroughs, some present claimed “such a sett of Teeth as G. B’s would then appear upon them, which could be distinguished from those of some other mens.”<sup>485</sup> Like John Samuel in Warboys, George Burroughs was accused primarily by possessed girls and young women. One of these accusers, Mercy Lewis, was a refugee from the Indian wars in Maine and a former servant of Burroughs; she proved to be an important source of information (and gossip) about the minister during his years in Maine. His specter came to her many times, to torment her and pressure her to sign his book. Mercy

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<sup>483</sup> Burr, 216. This statement also harkens back to the oaths initiated by the Throckmorton girls in Warboys a century earlier, in which they made Agnes state that she was a “worse witch than my mother.” As in Warboys, the presence of confessing witches provided a particularly strong foundation on which to build additional accusations.

<sup>484</sup> Thomas, 444-445.

<sup>485</sup> Burr, 216-217.

Lewis provided vivid testimony about Burroughs' particular spectral powers, reinforcing as she did so the court's certainty that he was a devilish seducer. She declared that:

mr Burroughs caried me up to an exceeding high mountain and shewed me all the kingdoms of the earth and tould me that he would give them all to me if I would writ in his book and if I would not he would thro me down and brake my neck: but I tould him they ware non of his to give and would not writ if he throde me down on 100 pichforks.<sup>486</sup>

Lewis' vision would have been instantly recognizable to her godly audience as the temptation Christ faced in Matthew 4: 8-9, "[t]hen the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, 'All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.'" Lewis had learned the verse's lesson very well, and she modeled Christ-like resistance by reminding Burroughs-Satan that he had no power to deliver on his promises. Like Satan, the Reverend George Burroughs (or at least his specter) represented a tempter who lured discontented sinners with promises of material goods and social influence. By dramatically resisting both discontent and temptation, Mercy Lewis strove to establish herself as a godly young woman in her own eyes and in the eyes of her community. There is an interesting overlap in the nature of this process and the one undergone by Cotton Mather, who was similarly afflicted by doubts despite having every worldly advantage in comparison to the possessed accusers.<sup>487</sup>

Other principal possessed accusers included Susannah Sheldon, who like Mercy Lewis had been a member of Burroughs' congregation in Maine, and Ann Putnam, Jr., with whose family Burroughs and his first wife had lived in Salem Village. These three

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<sup>486</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *SWP*, 169 (from the Essex County Archives, Salem, Witchcraft Vol. 2 Page 12).

<sup>487</sup> For more about the role of discontent in the behaviors of possessed accusers, see Karlsen, 240-242. For an analysis of the nature of satanic temptation in English witchcraft lore, see Thomas, 473-475. Cotton Mather's doubts and fears are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

possessed accusers, along with two others—Mary Walcott and Elizabeth Hubbard—convulsed in response to Burroughs’ glance and reported that however recalcitrant the earthly Burroughs might appear to be, his specter readily admitted to murder and witchcraft. Their accusations were joined by those of the aforementioned Elizar Keysar and the confessing witches Abigail and Deliverance Hobbs, who testified to Burroughs’s position of authority among the witches. Even though female accusers brought the greater proportion of evidence against Burroughs, the court also heard testimony from non-possessed men pertaining to Burroughs’s reportedly preternatural strength. Samuel Webber, Simon Willard, and Thomas Greenslit were Burroughs’ peers in Maine; they were about the same age, and reported rumors of his remarkable strength as they were disseminated both by strangers and by the minister himself. Burroughs boasted of brandishing heavy rifles at arm’s length that other men could barely lift, and handling entire barrels of cider or molasses in the same manner.<sup>488</sup> Their testimony revealed the primarily homosocial world in which Burroughs conducted business and served in the militia. That manly community stood at the ready to report both gossip and eyewitness testimony about Burroughs’ character and speech; unfortunately his boasting contributed to his unmaking.

The grand jury gathered on August 3, and the official trial of George Burroughs took place on August 5, 1692. Deodat Lawson, another former minister of Salem, traveled to Salem to witness the proceedings. He was joined by Increase Mather; it was the only trial that Increase Mather attended. Lawson’s presence was particularly important as his dead wife and daughter eventually appeared to the possessed accusers, in

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<sup>488</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *SWP*, 249.



addition to the ghosts of Burroughs's former wives. It was Ann, Jr. who first reported seeing the "Two women in winding sheats...they turned their faces towards Mr. Burroughs and looked very red and angury and tould him that he had been a cruell man to them. [A]nd that their blood did crie for ven-gance against him."<sup>489</sup> This provocative image made reference to the humors that governed emotions, and also the traditional idea that a corpse would run with fresh blood if touched by the murderer.<sup>490</sup> The court's receptivity to ghostly stories of retribution demonstrates the extent to which spectral testimony held sway, despite repeated cautions about its legitimacy as a source of suspicion, but not as a viable foundation for conviction.

Burroughs's first wife, Hannah, had died while he boarded with the Putnams. He had borrowed money for her funeral from the Putnams, as well. In 1692, Thomas Putnam testified that Burroughs had been unreasonably harsh with Hannah, despite the fact that she was a good and dutiful wife. The court also heard testimony about his conduct toward his second wife, Sarah. One Mary Webber, who had been a neighbor of the Burroughs' in Casco Bay, and "well acquainted with his wife...hath heard her tell much of her husband unkindness to her and that she dare not wright to her father to acquaint [him] how it was with her, and soe desired mee to wright to her father that he would be pleased to send for her and told mee she had beene much affrighted" both by her husband and by mysterious happenings at their house in the night."<sup>491</sup> Like John Willard, who was tried and executed at the same time as Burroughs, and John Samuel a

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 166. See also Norton, 150-153; 247-248.

<sup>490</sup> Keith Thomas describes the common belief in early modern England that this practice could work as a trial by ordeal. He adds that "both Reginald Scot and Francis Bacon were prepared to believe that it worked." Thomas, 220.

<sup>491</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *SWP*, 162. Mary Beth Norton points out that Burroughs' second wife, Sarah, was the sister-in-law of examining judge John Hathorn, which likely contributed to the judges' knowledge of gossip about the minister. Norton, 125.

century earlier and an ocean away, Burroughs was suspected of being a cruel and unruly husband. There do not appear to be enough wife-beating male witches to suggest that this was a widespread phenomenon, but it may be that such a sign of unrestrained passions—coupled with malice in the place of mercy—further cemented these men’s resemblance to witches.

The preponderance of evidence against Burroughs was possible because of the number and variety of witnesses who offered testimony about events both public and private. Some of the most damning information originated in private moments made possible by the general lack of privacy endemic to colonial New England. Burroughs’ vulnerability was increased considerably by the personal details offered by the Putnam family with whom he boarded years earlier. Burroughs would have been living with the Putnams because Salem Village lacked accommodations for him, and the payment irregularity was another product of Salem’s struggle to establish itself with a parish of its own. The Reverend Samuel Parris, in whose home the afflictions began in 1692, himself complained about the same sort of logistical challenges. While residents of Salem might not have consciously blamed Burroughs for having to board with the Putnams, such circumstances nevertheless weakened his position. Burroughs had not been able to act as head of his own household, and he demonstrated further inability to provide for his family by having to borrow money for Hannah’s funeral. The combined impression of the many public and private episodes reported by witnesses was of a man of suspect means and allegiances.

The nature of the testimony against George Burroughs, both by possessed and non-possessed accusers, demonstrates how men and women’s credit were interrelated.

Because the community was called in to testify about the common report of Burroughs' character, words, and deeds, he fell victim to his own boasting attempts to improve his image with others. He was more easily unmade as a man because of the combined forces against him: male and female, neighbor and fellow soldier, servant and wife.

The surviving depositions against George Burroughs contain little evidence of his own supporters. But as the aforementioned account by Elizar Keysar made clear, some men like Captain Daniel King advocated for Burroughs and defended his credit and piety. It appears that one of Burroughs' supporters contributed unintentionally toward his unmaking, by sending a letter containing some of Thomas Ady's skeptical arguments from *A Candle in the Dark* (1656). When Burroughs read this in court and claimed not to have copied it out of any text, those who recognized it chalked this up to yet another devilish lie.<sup>492</sup> This was not enough of a manly community to counter the charges against Burroughs, especially given the desertion of some previous supporters. Richard Gildrie points out that Burroughs was on the margins of the manly community in more ways than one. Maine represented not only the dangerous frontier, in which Burroughs would grow suspect because of his ability to survive Indian battles, but also a place "noted for its religious and moral laxity."<sup>493</sup> Whatever allies Burroughs had in Salem, or who had survived the wars in Maine, were not able to muster the volume or type of corroboration

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<sup>492</sup> Thomas Ady, *A Candle in the Dark: Or, A Treatise Concerning the Nature of Witches & Witchcraft: Being Advice to Judges, Sherifffes, Justices of the Peace, and Grand-Jury-men, what to do, before they passe Sentence on such as are Arraigned for their Lives as Witches* (London, Printed for R.I., to be sold at the three Lions in Cornhill by the Exchange, 1656). See also Ady's *A Perfect Discovery of Witches: Shewing The Divine Cause of the Distractions of this Kingdome, and also of the Christian World...* (London, Printed for R. I. to be sold by H. Brome at the Gun in Ivy-Lane, 1661). Norton posits that the man who delivered the excerpt may have been Captain Daniel King, 251.

<sup>493</sup> Gildrie, 172.

that would defend him against these charges. His specter had already confessed to everything witnesses most suspected and feared about this counterfeit man of God.

Like John Samuel in Chapter 2, George Burroughs found ways to parlay his privilege as a man and head of household into an attempted self-defense. Burroughs resisted the charges and proclaimed his innocence.<sup>494</sup> When John Hale reflected upon the trials in 1702, he wrote that Burroughs had been named so frequently that even Burroughs himself appeared overwhelmed by the case against him. Hale wrote that the minister “denied all, yet said he justified the Judges and Jury in Condemning of him; because there were so many positive witnesses against him: But said he dyed by false Witnesses.” This half-relenting, followed by the claim that those who charged him did so falsely, does little to resolve the question of Burroughs’ personal acceptance of his fate. Hale later added, to assure the reader, a conversation he had with one of the women who claimed to have seen Burroughs exhorting at a witch meeting. Hale stated that he “seriously spake to one that witnessed (of his Exhorting at the Witch Meeting at the Village) saying to her; You are one that bring this man to Death, if you have charged any thing upon him that is not true, recal[l] it before it be too late, while he is alive. She answered me, she had nothing to charge her self with, upon that account.”<sup>495</sup>

Burroughs, like John Samuel, was differently unmade as a man and into a witch than the women who (more numerous) accompanied him to the gallows in 1692. The differences between Burroughs’ unmaking and that of his female counterparts relates

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<sup>494</sup> Norton points out that Deodat Lawson’s explanation of Burroughs’ trial, written twelve years later, acknowledged Burroughs’ “vigorous exercise of the right to reject jurors seated in his case.” Norton, 246. See also Deodat Lawson’s appendix to the 1704 edition of *A Brief and True Narrative*, printed in Upham’s *Salem Witchcraft* (Boston, 1867), 2:535.

<sup>495</sup> John Hale, *A Modest Inquiry Into The Nature Of Witchcraft, and How Persons Guilty of that Crime may be Convicted...* (Boston: Printed by B. Green and J. Allen, for Benjamin Eliot under the Town House, 1702), in Burr, 421.

explicitly to his status as a minister and, as Norton has argued, with his embodiment of New England's fears of a traitor aligned with Indian and French enemies. He met the expectations of ministers and magistrates, who feared an organized covenant between Satan, devils and witches to challenge the survival of the colony.<sup>496</sup> He stood in for violent husbands, boastful neighbors, and suspiciously long-lived veterans of wars in which so many loved ones had been lost. Samuel Sewall recorded in his diary that on the gallows Burroughs recited the Lord's Prayer perfectly, and made speeches that "did much move unthinking persons" in the crowd cried out for him to be spared.<sup>497</sup> Robert Calef reported that Cotton Mather, memorably on horseback, chose this moment to remind the crowd that the men on the gallows had been convicted in a court of law, and the hangings proceeded as planned.<sup>498</sup>

### **Historians and New England Witchcraft-Possession**

While historians of witchcraft in New England have shared a broad preoccupation with its causes, they have differed over how centrally gender figured among them.<sup>499</sup> In writing the first substantive gender history of New England witchcraft, Carol Karlsen plumbed explicit and implicit cultural assumptions about women as witches, and the economic forces that helped explain the preponderance of women among the accused and executed. Karlsen has described the different nature of witchcraft during outbreaks like

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<sup>496</sup> For the history of the idea of the demonic covenant, and particularly its relative rarity in English as opposed to continental witchcraft, see Thomas, 438-439.

<sup>497</sup> See Rosenthal, 145-146. For background on the idea that a perfect rendition of the Lord's Prayer suggested innocence, see Thomas, 551.

<sup>498</sup> The veracity of this scene is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>499</sup> One of the most influential interpretations of the Essex County outbreak is Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's landmark study in 1974, which provides insight into the complex relationships in Salem Village and Salem Town by locating the residences and factional alliances of the accusers and accused. See Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Salem in 1692-1693, Hartford, Connecticut in 1662-1663 and Fairfield, Connecticut in 1692.<sup>500</sup> Outbreaks relied more heavily upon possessed accusers, though non-possessed accusers grew to figure largely in the evolution of all three. Her analysis of accusations, trials, and conviction and execution rates reveals that “it was only at the height of the Salem outbreak that the secular authorities relinquished to any significant degree their assumption that witches were women...Although six of the seven men who were executed for witchcraft in New England died during outbreaks, five of the six were hanged in Salem.”<sup>501</sup> The numbers reveal what was embedded in writings about Salem; witchcraft-possession was a gendered phenomenon in which women were particularly implicated. But in Salem, more than the usual number of men were discovered as enemies hidden within the godly community.

In addition to this demographic analysis, Karlsen explores the cultural assumptions about the gendered witch image embedded in ministerial literature. She demonstrates that that association of witches with women was entrenched to a degree that rendered its explicit articulation unnecessary.<sup>502</sup> Karlsen also outlines the contradictory nature of Puritan models of womanhood; misogynist demonology aside, the common account of women’s weakness, lust, and malice rested uneasily alongside gentler Puritan concepts of marriage and the family.<sup>503</sup> While Karlsen emphasized womanhood and its implication in witchcraft belief and prosecution, her study’s focus upon gender as a lens of analysis provides an example of evidence-based gender history for men. A

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<sup>500</sup> One notable exception is Richard Godbeer’s *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692*, and Karlsen, 20; 43.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

corresponding social history for male witches in New England has not been forthcoming, but would highlight even more the importance of granting a broad range of implicit gendered participation in these complex social phenomena.<sup>504</sup>

Regardless of the centrality of gender analysis, historians' interpretations of George Burroughs vary widely. While most agree that his status as a minister helped reinforce others' image of him as a leader of witches, they differ significantly about many of his other roles in the outbreak. Chadwick Hansen, for example, considers the possibility that Burroughs really did attempt to call upon the Devil to grant him the preternatural knowledge and strength about which he boasted. Hansen is sure that when Burroughs told his second wife "My God makes known your thoughts unto me," he intended all to know that he meant the Devil. "It is quite possible," Hansen writes, "that George Burroughs was a worshipper of that prince. Certainly he was no orthodox Puritan...But one cannot be certain. Perhaps he was only a liar who liked to boast of occult powers."<sup>505</sup> While it would have been *possible* for Burroughs and his contemporaries to seek power through demon worship, it seems very unlikely indeed. Nothing in Burroughs' testimony, even when recorded by men convinced of his guilt, supports this claim.

That Burroughs was not a particularly orthodox Puritan also caught the attention of Bernard Rosenthal, who suggests that Burroughs may have been a Baptist. Both

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<sup>504</sup> In *Entertaining Satan*, John Demos excludes the outbreak in Essex County but provides considerable insight into the psychological worlds of the participants, capturing the complex interpersonal relations that could have such pivotal significance within the context of witchcraft-possession. The book could not be considered a gender analysis, but it considers gender's role in Elizabeth Knapp's attempts to convince Reverend Samuel Willard that she was possessed, 99-131; 124-128. Furthermore, Demos engages with the gendered significance of reputation and sexuality, as in the case of John Godfrey of Andover, Massachusetts, 36-56; 86-91; 186-87; 293-295. Demos considers the possibility that homosexuality could have played a role in Godfrey's case, 50-51.

<sup>505</sup> Hansen, 76.

Hansen and Rosenthal point out that Burroughs was asked and answered questions about his failure to take communion, and to baptize any of his children after the eldest.

Rosenthal argues that both Increase and Cotton Mather likely reversed their previously cautious positions on witchcraft-possession prosecution because Burroughs's downfall allowed them to strike back against a dissident they could no longer challenge directly.

Rosenthal admits that there is no conclusive proof that Burroughs was Baptist, but he finds it significant that Cotton Mather, in the "Author's Defence" for *Wonders of the Invisible World*, wrote that he was required to justify Burroughs' trial in a way that was unnecessary for the subjects of his other case studies: Bridget Bishop, Susannah Martin, Elizabeth How, and Martha Carrier. He also notes that the backpedaling and justification that the Mathers had to do to justify Burroughs's execution opened the door for subsequent trials and guilty verdicts.<sup>506</sup>

Mary Beth Norton also sees Burroughs' fate as having particular significance for the trajectory of the outbreak. She agrees that Burroughs was the focus of displaced resentment, but locates it in his movement between Salem and the Maine frontier, his previous relations with some of the afflicted accusers, and the rumors that resulted from his ability to survive brutal Indian battles in which others were killed. Norton contends that Mercy Lewis and the other possessed accusers came to believe that Burroughs was in league with the French and Abenakis, and that as the future "King of Hell" he would lead those demonic legions against God's people in New England. In this way, Burroughs' connection to the Maine frontier was central to his unmaking as a man and into witch;

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<sup>506</sup> Rosenthal, 147.



that liminal position, in combination with his time in Salem, created a perfect storm of vulnerability.

Part of the reason that magistrates allowed the perpetuation of the outbreak, she argues, was to displace blame onto witches that could otherwise have rested with them for failing to adequately protect the frontier settlements. While Norton does not emphasize gender or manhood per se, she does consider the ways that men with ties to the northeastern frontier—like Reverend George Burroughs—came to resemble Indians and devils themselves, and in that way were held responsible for the colony’s devastating losses.<sup>507</sup> Norton sees Burroughs’ downfall as an important turning point, after which possessed accusers began more frequently to name “unusual suspects” alongside feared old or disordered women. And in Burroughs’ questioning, and after, the magistrates appeared comfortable with allowing the spectral visions of the possessed to stand in for a rigorous examination of the accused.<sup>508</sup> Men in authority, as gatekeepers of the official proceedings, adapted procedure in George Burroughs’ case. “Everything the magistrates did,” Norton writes, “singled George Burroughs out for special attention.”<sup>509</sup>

Rosenthal and Norton agree that something special was required to convict and execute George Burroughs; both interpretations elucidate the complex processes at play in Salem without necessarily negating the other. I would add another element: part of the reason that extra “work” was required in order to unmake George Burroughs rested

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<sup>507</sup> Norton, Chapter 4.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-153.

<sup>509</sup> Norton, 153. This special attention must not have applied to the minister in Andover, Francis Dane, who had been named as a suspected witch by several confessing witches. The charges against Dane were not pursued, however. See Gildrie, 176-177 and Rosenthal, 130.

on his status as a man and a minister.<sup>510</sup> If we keep gender for men in the picture, this moment in an unrepresentative witchcraft outbreak takes on additional depth. The Mathers and their peers among the judges and magistrates were motivated not only to displace blame for the Indian wars, and to vent their own indirect resentments against one who rejected rituals that were central to their own identity as the godly. Witchcraft had a sociological function, as well, that allowed communities to externalize evil and recommit themselves to patriarchal social order. The insecurity of the new charter and the terrors of warfare with the French and Abenakis created an instability that supported radical measures like witchcraft-possession. For a brief and exceptional moment, the voices of marginal (young, often female, afflicted) individuals had the power to be at the center, and decide matters of critical importance.

In Chapter 2, we saw how John Samuel appeared to be both everywhere and nowhere in the Warboys narrative. George Burroughs also appears to fade in and out of focus, as his detractors' representations occasionally stood in for him. Both Samuel and Burroughs were described as a leader of other witches, and "worse" than others who had confessed, yet they were also displaced in their texts by the female accusers and confessors who provided the most dramatic and pertinent testimony. After all, it was the specters' appearance to female demoniacs that made it possible to unmake and execute these men. Burroughs, in addition to trying to use Ady in his own defense, speculated about possible explanations for their accusers' symptoms, and suggested alternative explanations—for example, that their inability to speak his name meant that God

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<sup>510</sup> Norton analyzes some of the other men made into witches during the late phase of the Essex County outbreak, finding that their ties to the frontier likely endangered them as well. They were John Floyd, John Alden, and Philip English, whom she discusses in *In the Devil's Snare*, 140-148.

prevented them from naming him as a witch. Unfortunately, the script had already established that the girls' inability to name him resulted from his spectral punishment of them. Despite Burroughs' attempts, he was ultimately powerless to intervene with the process already in motion.

Even as he was being stripped of the rights of his sex, status, and profession, Burroughs was caught between advocating for himself and risking the appearance of an angry and discontented man. Norton provides an eloquent explanation of the related gendered social practices that shaped the final phase of the Essex County outbreak, when the accused in Andover began to confess. She writes that New Englanders:

placed a heavy value on consensus, on the need for individuals to concur with the majority opinion when pressed to do so by others. The accounts of the confessing Andover women emphasize their reluctant surrender to peers and superiors—"gentlemen," clergy, relatives—all of whom urged them to acknowledge their guilt, insisting that so many "good men" could not have erred in their judgment. . . In the end, then, the women (and some men) gave in to the larger group, as seventeenth-century New Englanders were expected to do.<sup>511</sup>

The possessed accusers had become disproportionately powerful because the "gatekeepers" granted them legitimacy. Throughout most of European history, to confess to witchcraft ensured a speedy execution. But in New England the confessors were held over, in hopes that they would reveal other, confederate witches involved in Satan's plot against the godly. The more the confessions matched the Puritan investment in self-abnegation, the harder it was to maintain the image of the suspects as Satan's minions.

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<sup>511</sup> Norton, 263-264. Foster makes a related comment, invoking Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930): "Men were supposed to condemn themselves, and they sinned all the more if they did not. As long as New Englanders continued to denounce themselves, as long as they were sure they had deserted their ideal, they were faithful to it. When they *stopped* bemoaning their worldliness and no longer felt a sense of guilt, at least one part of the Protestant ethic had finally given way to the spirit of capitalism," 125.

The witch trials did not end because the judges developed a more positive view of women. Nor did the judges seek to alter the gendered foundation of witch belief. For a time, the possessed accusers had provided a recognizable explanation (however sensational) for feelings and pressures without sanctioned outlets. In fact, the possessed had applied a set of assumptions based in custom but further developed by the same ministers and magistrates who later sought to curb them. When the process ceased to serve patriarchal interests, representatives of those interests—the gatekeepers—reclaimed control over the right to interpret the symptoms of the afflicted. For as long as the men at the top of the social order remained receptive to witchcraft-possession phenomena, women and men were unmade into witches together in a process that rested, explicitly and implicitly, upon gendered assumptions. But when the climate shifted, and important men changed their interpretation of the possessed accusers' symptoms, the voices of the afflicted and their demons were effectively silenced.

### **Sacrificing One for the Credit of All**

Like John Samuel, the Reverend George Burroughs did not represent a typical malefic witch. Burroughs appears to have been a boastful man who, as minister in Salem Village and later in Wells, Maine, did not have a particularly firm hold on the affections of his congregants. Whether or not the Salem villagers felt abandoned by his decision to leave them in 1683 is uncertain, but it is clear that he failed to create ties sufficient to counter the Putnams' damaging testimony in 1692. His ability to survive the wars on the eastward frontier, coupled with the suspect treatment of his wives, fed gossip that ultimately contributed to his undoing. Under other circumstances this gossip would have been unlikely to have such dire results—he had never been formally reprimanded for

mistreating his wives, for example. Burroughs does not appear to have been especially litigious, as some other male witches in New England.<sup>512</sup> Nor was he accused as an extension of a charge against a wife or relative, as many others were. The very qualities that ought to have protected him from suspicion—his sex and profession in particular—made him resemble too closely the kind of person Satan would enlist to lead the attack on godly New England.<sup>513</sup>

As momentum for the Essex County witchcraft trials dwindled, private conversations about their inconsistencies coalesced, especially after merchant Thomas Brattle circulated a manuscript that took the judges to task for granting the possessed accusers so much authority.<sup>514</sup> Brattle pointed out the uneven pursuit of some of the accused witches of higher social status. Such discrepancies suggested that the reputations of the “better sort” of spectral tormenter had been allowed to bear upon what Cotton Mather and others had articulated as providential mission. Brattle himself was wealthy, a merchant and member of the Royal Society. He was a treasurer of Harvard College, which may partly explain his respectful treatment of Increase Mather, who served as President—the other likely reason being Mather’s writing against the use of spectral evidence in *Cases of Conscience* (1693).<sup>515</sup> George Lincoln Burr’s insightful interpretation of a piece about Brattle in the *Boston News-Letter* provides a window into the nature of the man: ““he was known and valued for his Catholick Charity to all of the

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<sup>512</sup> John Godfrey is a good example. See Demos, 36-56; Karlsen 52-53; 57-60.

<sup>513</sup> See E.J. Kent for more about John Lowes, the man accused during the English Civil War whose access to institutional authority increased fears that he could be leading “recusants, witches and Anglicans,” 78; see also Purkiss “Desire and Its Deformities,” 105.

<sup>514</sup> “Letter of Thomas Brattle, F.R.S., 1692” in Burr, 167-191.

<sup>515</sup> *Cases of Conscience* was first published in Boston in November, 1692, and in London the next year. For more details of John Dunton’s sensational makeover of Increase and Cotton Mather’s work for their London publication, see Albert B. Cook, “Damaging the Mathers: London Receives the News from Salem,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 2. (Jun., 1992), 302-308.

reformed Religion, but more especially his great Veneration for the Church of England, although his general and more constant communion was with the Nonconformists.’ In other words, he was of the liberal party in religion and politics, an eminent opponent of the Puritan theocracy, and he did not escape the epithets ‘apostate’ and ‘infidel.’”<sup>516</sup> It seems likely that Richard Archer, given his calls for a more complex characterization than “Puritan New England,” would enjoy the intricacy of this formulation.

Thomas Brattle may have been all of these things, but in 1692 he knew the importance of basing his arguments on customary articulations of manly credit, reason, and social order. His central aim was to demonstrate that the trials contained “fundamental” errors, and that the credulity of “Salem gentlemen” had resulted in the use of methods that were little better than “sorcery.”<sup>517</sup> To establish a sound foundation for his critique, he emphasized his reluctance to challenge those in authority:

Obedience to lawfull authority I evermore accounted a great duty; and willingly I would not practise any thing that might thwart and contradict such a principle...and I am sure the mischiefs, which arise from a fractious and rebellious spirit, are very sad and notorious; insomuch as I would sooner bite my finger’s ends than willingly cast dirt on authority...Far, therefore, be it from me, to have any thing to do with those men...of a factious spirit, and never more in their element than when they are declaiming against men in public place, and contriving methods that tend to the disturbance of the common peace. I never accounted it a credit to my cause, to have the good liking of such men.<sup>518</sup>

Brattle’s self-fashioning here was formulaic, but skillfully established his resolve to respect authority and shun those of a more peevish spirit. Brattle’s liberal political and

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<sup>516</sup> “Letter of Thomas Brattle, F.R.S., 1692” in Burr, 167-168.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 170-171. The characterization of Salem versus Boston gentlemen was also used in the dialogic publication *Some Miscellany Observations On our present Debates respecting Witchcrafts. In a Dialogue between S. & B.* (1692), signed by “P.E. and J.A.” (likely John Alden and Philip English, two men who were accused). The dialogue is supposed to take place between two individuals, abbreviated as “S. & B.,” or Salem and Boston—the communities meaning to stand in for credulity and reason, respectively.

<sup>518</sup> “Letter of Thomas Brattle, F.R.S., 1692” in Burr, 169.

religious orientation may previously have attracted the enmity of his contemporaries, but he took care to present himself as driven to write by duty and conscience, lest a few men and “afflicted children” bring further shame to the colony.

Brattle blamed “the Salem gentlemen” for their lapses in judgment, the greatest of which was taking the afflicted accusers seriously. Brattle called these accusers both “afflicted” and “possessed,” and came closer than most New England writers to the term’s more negative connotations: that the Devil had full control of them.<sup>519</sup> Brattle was somewhat more oblique on the question of whether or not they must have granted their permission for this to happen. He was definite, however, that the afflicted “do hold correspondence with the devil, even in the esteem and account of the S[alem] G[entlemen]; for when the black man, i.e...the Devill, does appear to them, they ask him many questions, and accordingly give information to the inquirer; and if this is not holding correspondence with the devill, and something worse, I know not what is.”<sup>520</sup> The assumption that the possessed experienced their fits and torments as a result of their refusal to capitulate to the devil was the essential element of the witchcraft-possession script. For Brattle to invoke an alternative threatened to upset a system that had been functioning for months, and had already produced numerous convictions and executions.

Brattle criticized the possessed accusers not only because of their disproportionate influence, but also because they were the most vulnerable and expendable targets. Brattle did criticize the patriarchal gatekeepers in Salem, primarily to suggest their replacement by other patriarchal gatekeepers in Boston. But the young, mostly female possessed were ideal subjects on whom to place blame. If spectral visions were Satanic delusions, then it

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 172.

was folly to heed them. He did not need to add, given the depth of the cultural tradition behind him, that allowing distracted women and youths to shape formal policy profoundly inverted the proper order of things. Criticism of the trials had to be couched in terms that would not overtly threaten those who had pronounced the guilty verdicts and overseen the executions. Even a confirmed critic like Thomas Brattle appeared willing to let Burroughs stand in for the other gentlemen implicated in the tragedies unfolding in Salem Village, Andover, and surrounding towns heading to the Maine frontier.

When Brattle did challenge the judges who had allowed themselves to be so swayed by delusional inferiors, he repeatedly referred to the need for men “of sense” to reign in the folly of credulity. He suggested that his reader “be thankfull to God for it, that all men are not thus bereft of their senses; but that we have here and there considerate and thinking men, who will not thus be imposed upon, and abused, by the subtle endeavours of the crafty one.”<sup>521</sup> The main target of Brattle’s specific accusations was William Stoughton, who had been serving as chief judge until he left, in anger, over the acquittal of several condemned witches. “The chief Judge,” Brattle wrote, “is very zealous in these proceedings...very impatient in hearing any thing that looks another way.” This excess marked Stoughton right away as unreasoning, and governed by enthusiasms rather than a spirit of self-moderation. But Brattle added, “I very highly honour and reverence the wisdom and integrity of the said Judge, and hope that this matter shall not diminish my veneration for his honour; however, I cannot but say, my great fear is, that wisdom and counsell are withheld from his honour as to this matter,

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 174. Brattle later adds, “[n]ow, that the Justices have thus far given ear to the Devill, I think may be mathematically demonstrated to any man of common sense,” 182.



which yet I look upon not so much as a Judgment to his honour as to this poor land.”<sup>522</sup>

In order to offset the dangers of an unmanned leadership, Brattle reassured his reader that there was a manly community in Boston that could be trusted to lead the colony out of the morass of superstition. Brattle described those he named—the former governor Simon Bradstreet, the former Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth, ministers Increase Mather and Samuel Willard, and Major Nathaniel Saltonstall, who left the court out of dissatisfaction with the procedures—as “men for understanding, Judgment, and Piety, inferiour to few, (if any,) in N[ew] E[ngland].”<sup>523</sup> Having established his support for the august gentlemen of the colony’s government, Brattle moved the bulk of his blame onto the possessed accusers and confessing witches. Culturally, this was a more comfortable place for the blame to lie, perhaps even among the accusers and confessors themselves.

Brattle completely dismissed the testimony of the confessed witches in Andover, whose compliance had turned the confession from the best possible proof of witchcraft into a reason to question the proceedings. He depicted them as crazed and distempered, writing that “the brain of these Confessours is imposed upon by the Devill.”<sup>524</sup> After describing the judicial procedures in Salem, Brattle cited the numerous inconsistencies that resulted from reliance upon spectral evidence. He challenged the use of touch tests, and the conclusions that had been drawn on the basis of the afflicted accusers’ reaction to the glance of the accused, as “superstition and sorcery.”<sup>525</sup> The possessed, already the cause of considerable fear and confusion, were an ideal focal point for the imprecision of

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>524</sup> On this point Brattle echoed Reginald Scot, who had written that melancholy humors infected the brains of witches (whom he imagined to be primarily old women), thus rendering their confessions false. See Scot, especially Chapters 9-11.

<sup>525</sup> “Letter of Thomas Brattle, F.R.S., 1692” in Burr, 172-173.

the entire episode. “I am sure they lye, at least speak falsely,” Brattle wrote, in response to the idea that they could see their spectral tormentors with their eyes shut. “It is true, they may strongly fancye, or have things represented to their imagination, when their eyes are shut; and I think this is all which ought to be allowed to these blind, nonsensical girls.”<sup>526</sup> Even though Brattle had previously noted that “there are several young men and women that are afflicted, as well,”<sup>527</sup> at this critical point he reduced the sufferers to “nonsensical girls.” This formulation most clearly demonstrated the madness of allowing such testimony to lead the judgments of honorable gentlemen in charge of the colony.

The absence of any particular reference in Brattle’s manuscript to George Burroughs suggests that something about the minister made Brattle less invested in his redemption. As we shall see in Chapter 5, Burroughs, John Proctor, and John Willard each made final speeches at the gallows that witnesses described as moving and suggestive of their innocence. Brattle did not belabor these incidents; it would hardly have helped his case to emphasize further the likelihood that “innocent blood” had been shed.<sup>528</sup> Brattle mentioned Proctor and Willard but omitted Burroughs, whose perfect Lord’s Prayer and pious speech caught the particular attention of observers as different in politics as Samuel Sewall and Robert Calef. Perhaps Brattle chose not to include the minister’s unmaking in response to the “something special” it entailed.

Rosenthal claims that it was Burroughs’ dissidence, or status as a Baptist, that made him a likely candidate for his peers’ distaste, while Norton argues that important men in Massachusetts let Burroughs hang to offset their responsibility for failing to

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 188. He also wrote, “[t]his consulting of these afflicted children...seems to me to be a very grosse evill, a real abomination, not fitt to be known in N[ew] E[ngland],” 179.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 175.

protect the Maine frontier. It is possible that Burroughs also came to represent something constructive to the group of men who ought to have been his strongest defenders: the ministers. What Burroughs' execution had to offer that the others did not was his status as a minister—a man of God who ought to have had more claim than most to a predestined seat in heaven. Despite the diversity of colonial New England that Archer describes, Calvinism sat at the center of life and worship. Even those who worshipped differently, or who scoffed at the “hottest” Protestants would have had to grapple with the uncertain relationship between assurance and salvation. Massachusetts' godly elite sought to live and preach in a way that suggested their likely predestination; this in turn involved gendered performances of reason, piety, self-moderation and mastery of subordinates. Honorable manhood was inseparable from godliness; to fail at one was to fail at both. In a way, then, the execution of George Burroughs made an example of a man and minister who, despite his sex, position, and active self-defense, was revealed to be outside the bounds of God's chosen people.

New Englanders did not want to unmake their ministers or discard government; on the contrary, they were primarily a conservative force, whose investments in witchcraft-possession reflected their own investments in patriarchal order and stability. But the unmaking and execution of George Burroughs demonstrated that the presumed—though never assured—spiritual election of colonial elites could be overturned. Burroughs' downfall reminded both common citizens and other ministers of the uncertainties of election. Those who needed to believe in their own salvation, while remaining aware of their sinfulness, would necessarily wonder whether some of those who appeared saved were not. Burroughs' dramatic downfall allowed others to observe

that unenviable fate from a distance. To unmake a minister one first had to unmake a man, and in the testimony against George Burroughs, the possessed accusers provided spectral evidence that necessarily revealed him to be the opposite of an honorable man of God. Instead, he was a witch, a promised King of Hell, the murderer of wives and children, and the leader of a devilish army of French and Indians against Christendom. Without the support of the community of honorable men, Burroughs stood alone and unmade.

## CHAPTER 6

### GENDER IN NEW ENGLAND WITCHCRAFT-POSSESSION

“And now I suppose that some of our Learned *witlings* of the *Coffee-House*, for fear lest these proofs of an *Invisible-world* should spoil some of their sport, will endeavour to turn them all into sport, for which *Buffoonary* their only pretence will be, *they cant understand how such things as these could be done*, whereas indeed he that is but Philosopher enough to have read but one *Little Treatise*...may give a far more intelligible account of these *Appearances* than most of these *Blades* can give *why* and how their *Tobacco* makes ‘em Spit.”<sup>529</sup>

-Cotton Mather

During the course of the witchcraft-possession outbreak in Essex County in 1692-1693, nineteen people were hanged as witches, one was pressed to death for refusing to enter a plea, and accusations rose to the hundreds. When Governor Phips returned to Boston from the Maine frontier in January of 1693, he took over for Deputy-Governor William Stoughton and appointed a new Court of Oyer and Terminer. As the trials waned into March, young Mercy Short became possessed, reaffirming Cotton Mather’s belief in the presence of a dangerous witch conspiracy in New England. He described her case in a manuscript and circulated it privately.<sup>530</sup> Not long after, a woman named Mrs. Carver predicted that “a new storm of witchcraft would fall upon the country,” to

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<sup>529</sup> Cotton Mather, “Another Brand pluckt out of the Burning,” in Robert Calef’s *More Wonders of the Invisible World: Or The Wonders of the Invisible World, Display’d in Five Parts. Part I. An Account of the Sufferings of Margaret Rule, Written by the Reverend Mr. C.M.* (London, 1700), 9-10.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-258. The Mercy Short narrative, “A Brand pluck’d out of the Burning,” is a rich and fascinating source, illuminating as much about the girl’s nimble mind as Mather’s own expectations, hopes and fears. In response to his questions and direction, and doubtlessly informed by countless sermons, Short provided supernatural corroboration for Mather’s most ardent beliefs. Cotton Mather, “A Brand pluck’d out of the Burning,” (1693) in Burr, 253-288.

convince all doubters.<sup>531</sup> And in September, Mather witnessed the possession of a young Boston woman named Margaret Rule. He tended Rule and recorded her symptoms in another unpublished manuscript; the similarities between the cases, along with the testimony of the victims' "spirits," convinced him that the godly remained under siege.<sup>532</sup>

Mather's reluctance to publish these accounts suggests his awareness of the turning tide of opinion regarding formal witchcraft trials.<sup>533</sup> While we do not know how widely Mather distributed his manuscript, one copy ended up in the hands of Boston merchant Robert Calef, who had attended the prayer sessions at Rule's bedside with a skeptical eye. Calef subsequently embarked upon a long and bitter campaign to engage Mather in debates about witchcraft-possession and the legitimacy of the Puritan theocracy. Calef's reprinted Mather's manuscript, his own account of Rule, and both sides of their correspondence in a book entitled *More Wonders of the Invisible World*. Published in England in 1700, *More Wonders* drew its title from Cotton Mather's previous work, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). In the seven years since Mather first wrote the Rule manuscript, suspicion that the Essex County trials involved serious errors was even more widespread.<sup>534</sup> Capitalizing on this climate, Calef sought to unmake Mather by using many of the same elements of honorable manhood so central to the debates between John Darrell and Samuel Harsnett a century earlier; he questioned Mather's credit and honorable associations, suggested that excessive passion had

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<sup>531</sup> Diary of Cotton Mather, September 1693. Quoted in David Levin, *Cotton Mather: The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer, 1663-1703* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1978), 239.

<sup>532</sup> Burr suggests that Mather likely intended the Rule narrative, "Another Brand Pluckt out of the Burning," to serve as an appendix to *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). See Burr note 1, 207.

<sup>533</sup> Merchant Thomas Brattle and Baptist minister William Milborne, for example, circulated letters of protest about trial procedure and the use of spectral evidence. Burr, 165-190; Silverman, 111.

<sup>534</sup> Samuel Sewall, who served as a judge during the Salem trials, made a public apology in 1697 for his role in the proceedings. See Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Consciousness* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2005).

overtaken reason, and claimed that Mather's interaction with Rule had endangered proper social hierarchies. After Mather was forced to engage with his annoying detractor, he marshaled some of his peers to publish a rebuttal that sought to "unmake" Calef along the same lines.<sup>535</sup>

This Chapter examines the gendered nature of published witchcraft-possession controversy a century after the propaganda war between John Darrell and Samuel Harsnett. Just as Darrell and Harsnett had used arguments about witchcraft-possession to address broader religious and political objectives, New Englanders similarly invoked the supernatural as a way to debate their investments in the developing colony. This Chapter examines the extent to which central components of honorable manhood—manly credit, reason and excess, and the maintenance of proper social hierarchies—figured in Mather's narrative of Rule's possession, Calef's response, and the rebuttal by Mather's supporters. Of the categories analyzed in Chapter 3, only trade and occupational references figure less substantively in these New England texts.<sup>536</sup> Ultimately, it argues that the continuity between the English and New English pamphlet debates can be explained in part by the fact that both communities remained patriarchal; the writers invoked this privilege to justify their claims to honor and orderliness. Mather—like John Darrell before

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<sup>535</sup> *Some Few Remarks Upon a Scandalous Book, against the government and Ministry of New England, Written by one Robert Calef. Detecting the Unparallel'd Malice & Falsehood, of the said Book, AND Defending the Names of several particular Gentlemen, by him therein aspersed & abused...* (Boston, T. Green, 1701).

<sup>536</sup> A notable exception can be found in the dismissals of Robert Calef as "Weaver," by the men who published in Mather's defense. They wrote that Calef's book had been written "(with what help we know not) by one Robert Calef, who presumes to call himself Merchant of Boston; but we wish, Better Wares were vended, by this Merchant," *Ibid.*, 5. Later, they add that he doubtlessly "wants work, or he would not have troubled the world with such Trifles," 29. Mather added that "the Weaver (though he presumes to call himself a Merchant) was a stranger to all the Rules of Civility," and that Calef's main argument against possession was that "*a certain Weaver...won't Believe it*," 35-37. Kenneth Silverman calls Calef "the otherwise obscure...merchant, clothier, or dyer with whom Mather had some earlier acquaintance," and suggests that the enmity between the men was due in part to "class antagonism." Silverman, 130; 132.

him—remained convinced of the veracity of dispossession, but this conviction came with an increased vulnerability to being “unmade” as men. Because challenges to manly credit could so readily be transferred to one’s associates, elites on both sides of the Atlantic eventually distanced themselves from possession as propaganda, and increasingly defined themselves in opposition to such unruly phenomena.

Though many scholars cite Calef’s *More Wonders of the Invisible World* for the information it provides about New England witchcraft, few have devoted much attention to Margaret Rule. This may in part reflect authors’ primary concern with the underlying *causes* of the Essex County witchcraft trials, which had mostly ended by the time of Rule’s affliction. Those who take Rule into account usually do so to address the question of how much Mather may have encouraged witchcraft prosecution.<sup>537</sup> Marion Starkey and Chadwick Hansen, for example, include Rule’s possession in their explorations of Mather’s responsibility for supporting efforts to locate witches.<sup>538</sup> Starkey replicates Mather’s formulation of Calef as a “coffee-house witling,” who perpetrated “an injustice” on Mather’s reputation.<sup>539</sup> But at the same time, she relies upon Calef’s observations to substantiate her psychological assessment of Rule, concluding that a lapse into obscurity likely provided Rule with “privacy for her interviews with her ‘fellows.’”<sup>540</sup> Chadwick Hansen, whose primary concern is to redeem Cotton Mather from the charge of being a

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<sup>537</sup> Historians have argued for centuries about Cotton Mather’s responsibility for witch-hunting, depicting him variously as a fanatical, cautious, or ambivalent. For the former, see Charles Wentworth Upham, *Lectures on Witchcraft, Comprising a History of the Delusion in Salem, in 1692*, (Boston: Carter, Hendee & Babcock), 1831, and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: the Seventeenth Century* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939). For the latter, see Silverman, especially 97-137.

<sup>538</sup> Marion Lena Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949); Hansen, *Witchcraft at Salem* (1969).

<sup>539</sup> Starkey, 244; 246.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.



witch-hunter, calls Calef's claims "grotesquely false," and a "lie that has stuck to Mather for over two hundred and fifty years."<sup>541</sup>

Neither Starkey nor Hansen uses gender as a central category of analysis, but both look to "hysteria" as an explanation for the behavior of the afflicted—a diagnosis that relies upon gendered concepts of the body and mind.<sup>542</sup> Starkey's depiction of the afflicted girls in Salem as "no more seriously possessed than a pack of bobby-soxers on the loose," echoes Calef's gendered dismissals of Margaret Rule.<sup>543</sup> In the same way that their focus on hysteria leads Starkey and Hansen toward gendered readings of female participants, they also indirectly reproduce the importance of manly credit in the debates over the legitimacy of Rule's affliction. Starkey describes Mather's alarm when an afflicted person briefly named him as one of her spectral tormenters, concluding that "[w]hat unmanned him was the derision of the coffee-houses if this accusation ever got around."<sup>544</sup> Starkey may not have intended to address Mather's vulnerability as a man, but she demonstrates that his involvement with Rule's possession had the potential to compromise his credit with other men.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>542</sup> For more information on hysteria, see Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). Mitchell writes, "It is because of the hysteric's need to transmit unbearable feelings on to someone else that his hysteria cannot be manifested if he is on his own," 205. While this rings true for demonic possession, I have not placed hysteria at the center of my analysis in part to avoid the term's potential, when used universally, to obscure as much as it illuminates.

<sup>543</sup> Starkey, 46.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 245. Starkey writes that Calef was "a friend" of Thomas Brattle, whose critical letter about the Salem trials (1692) pointed out the worldly discrepancies between those who were executed and those who were granted clemency. See Burr, 165-190.

Chadwick Hansen also sees hysteria, in some cases “without question,” as the cause of possession symptoms.<sup>546</sup> Hansen’s main concern, however, is establishing that Mather sincerely believed the supernatural explanations for the suffering of the afflicted and acted to protect New England from demonic harm. Citing reports that some of the accused owned magical charms, Hansen argues that while “it is clearly true that the majority of persons executed for witchcraft were innocent, it is equally true that some of them, in Massachusetts and elsewhere, were guilty.”<sup>547</sup> He reminds the reader that nineteenth-century views of Mather as a superstitious zealot failed to take into account the widespread belief in witches’ existence. Having established Calef as a libelous hack and Mather as his innocent target, though, Hansen replicates as much about the man Mather wanted to be as the man he was. Hansen has relatively little to say about the question of Margaret Rule’s character, even as it holds relevance for the larger question of Calef’s legitimacy. But by vehemently repudiating Calef’s charges and defending Mather’s reputation, Hansen demonstrates the centrality of manly credit in the contest between them.

Nor do historical biographers of Increase and Cotton Mather devote much space to the Margaret Rule episode. David Levin’s *Cotton Mather: The Young Life of the Lord’s Remembrancer* (1978), Kenneth Silverman’s, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (1984), and Michael Hall’s *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (1988), for example, do not emphasize Rule’s possession or the resulting backlash when explaining the political and religious realities facing the Mathers during

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<sup>546</sup> Hansen, 15-20.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

1693 and 1694.<sup>548</sup> The omission is most noticeable in Hall; he describes Cotton Mather's interaction with Mercy Short, but quickly transitions to the Mathers' interests in angelic visitation and the conversion of Jews as forerunner to the coming millennium.<sup>549</sup> Levin, writing with Chadwick Hansen in mind, asserts that Calef "at best distorted the facts and at worst lied about them," and adopts unquestioningly Cotton Mather's designation of Calef as "the Sadducee."<sup>550</sup> Silverman provides a lengthier and measured analysis of the conflict between Cotton Mather and Robert Calef. He analyzes Mather's philosophy and psychology, arguing that his desire to honor the authority embodied in the judges—who happened to be friends and benefactors—drove Mather to support the trials at the nadir of their popularity.<sup>551</sup> While perhaps indirectly, all three authors demonstrate that components of honorable manhood played an important role in the Mathers' response to key religious and political conflicts at the end of the seventeenth century. By emphasizing the Mathers' concern for their reputation, and the extent to which these debates had serious implications for the men involved, they reveal manly credit to have been an important weapon, and target, of the men arguing witchcraft-possession in New England.

It is not necessary to arrive at a conclusion about Mather and Calef's comparative virtues to explore the implications of Margaret Rule's possession. Mather's sincerity and hubris, and Calef's courage and spite, all have a place in this study. I have more regard for Calef than David Levin, who appears to share Mather's distaste at finding himself

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<sup>548</sup> Levin (1978); Silverman (1984), and Michael Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1988).

<sup>549</sup> Hall, 273-275.

<sup>550</sup> Levin, 241-242.

<sup>551</sup> Silverman, 130-134.

forced to engage with the “scandalous misrepresentations” of such a one as “a Robert Calef.”<sup>552</sup> Even Silverman, who acknowledges that Mather failed to address some of Calef’s more pointed questions, calls him an “obscure, semiliterate Bostonian.”<sup>553</sup> Calef’s acerbic wit and recognition of the contradictions of witchcraft-possession demonstrated more than persistence, however, and the clarity of his prose occasionally surpasses that of his extraordinarily literate opponent. Furthermore, the published rebuttal to Calef’s book speaks to the efficacy of his argumentation. Still, it seems imprudent go as far as Charles W. Upham, whose nineteenth-century response to the “delusion” in Salem cast Calef as the heroic voice of reason.<sup>554</sup> More important than the “true” character of these men, for this project, was their use of gendered strategies to shape the meaning of Margaret Rule's possession.

Historians of witchcraft have long understood the importance of reputation and social relations for accused witches.<sup>555</sup> As in Chapter 3, manly credit was crucial to men who invoked gendered conceptions of legitimacy in their published propaganda about witchcraft-possession. Mather’s own words testify to credit’s importance, as when he prayed that God “would make *my name* and the *names* of both my *fathers* also, to become honorable among His people [and...] *requite us good*, for all the evil that we

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<sup>552</sup> Levin, 243; 248.

<sup>553</sup> Silverman, 100; 134.

<sup>554</sup> Upham, *Lectures on witchcraft*, (1831), 189. Upham accepts Calef’s view of Mather as a zealous partisan of witchcraft prosecution, attributing “vanity and credulity,” and ultimately “a proneness to fanaticism and superstition” to Mather, 103.

<sup>555</sup> In addition the aforementioned, classic studies by Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane, books informed by anthropological and sociological theories are particularly noteworthy. See, for example, Kai Erikson’s *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Wiley, 1966); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed* (1974); Gary Jensen, *The Path of the Devil: Early Modern Witch Hunts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

meet withal.”<sup>556</sup> The Rule episode further reveals how Mather merged his own sense of patriarchal privileges and responsibilities with those of the courts and New England’s elite. He presented Rule’s affliction as a fearful disruption of patriarchal hierarchy and simultaneously asserted his right to interpret it and restore order.<sup>557</sup> Ultimately, Mather’s attempts to use the Rule narrative to bring readers back to a profitable fear forced him to engage in a broader argument about the legitimacy of the New England he and his family envisioned, and made him vulnerable to detractors like Robert Calef.

### **Cotton Mather, Margaret Rule, and the Question of Credit**

From the start, Mather made it plain that Margaret Rule’s possession represented an extension of the demonic troubles previously seen in Essex County. He pointed out that Rule’s affliction shared many aspects of archetypal accounts, including visions of a “Black Man,” pinching, bruising, distortion of the joints, and “exorbitant Convulsions.”<sup>558</sup> Because such similarities helped legitimate Rule, Mather emphasized the ways her symptoms resembled Mercy Short’s “in almost all the circumstances of it, indeed the Afflictions were so much alike, that the relation I have given of the one, would almost serve as the full History of the other, this was to that, *little more than the second part to the same Tune.*”<sup>559</sup> Mercy Short’s possession led to a woman’s execution for witchcraft, and Mather had reason to expect that Margaret Rule’s case could be similarly

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<sup>556</sup> See Levin, 245.

<sup>557</sup> As Levin describes it, the “critical spring and summer of 1692 brought to a powerful climax Mather’s lifelong habit of converting political and religious conflicts into personal battles,” 203.

<sup>558</sup> Calef, 4 (EEBO image 10).

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (EEBO image 9).

received.<sup>560</sup> Instead, however, the momentum of the trials abated, and once the Court of Oyer and Terminer was dissolved and spectral evidence questioned, previous links between possessions, accusations, and arrests unraveled.<sup>561</sup>

Mather's efforts to buttress Rule's reputation illustrate the importance of credit and community relations. Because possession symptoms involved a rejection of prayer and embrace of frivolity and blasphemy, demoniacs had to convince observers that their behavior resulted not from sin but from efforts to *resist* the devil. Thus, when Mather recorded his interactions with demoniacs such as Martha Goodwin and Mercy Short, he praised their character and affirmed, when possible, the legitimacy of the families.<sup>562</sup> In this case, Mather wrote that Rule was a "Young Woman...born of sober and honest Parents," but added:

...what her own Character was before her Visitation, I can speak with the less confidence of exactness, because I observe that wherever the *Devils* have been let loose to worry any Poor Creature amongst us, the great part of the Neighbourhood presently set themselves to inquire and relate all the little Vanities of their Childhood...But it is affirm'd, that for about half a year before her Visitation, she was observably improved...[,] furiously concern'd for the everlasting *Salvation* of her Soul, and careful to avoid the snares of *Evil Company*.<sup>563</sup>

Mather emphasis on Rule's recent "improvement" suggests that her neighbors—likely members of Mather's Boston congregation—may not always have approved. Based on genealogical research in Maine, Marilynne K. Roach reports that Margaret "was the

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<sup>560</sup> In this point I differ from Levin, who writes that in "the spring of 1693 a successful prosecution for witchcraft in Boston was probably unthinkable," 231. Despite widespread concern about the trials, Mather found a group of people to gather in Boston to pray and fast on Margaret Rule's behalf.

<sup>561</sup> Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience concerning evil Spirits Personating Men, Witchcrafts, infallible Proofs of Guilt in such as are accused with that Crime...* (1693) helped discredit spectral evidence.

<sup>562</sup> Mather wrote about the afflicted children of John Goodwin in 1688-1689 and published it in *Late Memorable Providences...* (1691). John Goodwin, Sr. wrote in support of Mather's efforts on behalf of his children, and also contributed to the book attacking Calef, discussed below.

<sup>563</sup> Calef, 3 (EEBO image 9).

teenaged daughter of John and Emma Rule, driven with her parents from Saco, Maine, in her young childhood. Unlike Mercy Short's, her family was intact and fairly well off."<sup>564</sup> The extent to which Margaret was aware of her childhood experience of war and exile shared by her family and Short's is unknown. Her family's attendance in Mather's Boston church, and his penchant for using remarkable providences to instruct, suggests that a direct link between Short's fits and Rule's is possible. Still, Mather does not mention the Rule family in any detail. Even when Margaret Rule referred to Mather as a kind of spiritual "Father," the presence and relevance of her earthy father is uncertain. Given the importance of gossip in witchcraft and possession cases, Mather's protestations suggest that accounting for Rule's piety may have required some effort. Given Calef's published defamation of her character, it is curious that Mather's (aborted) attempt to sue Calef for slander was not joined by one from the Rules.<sup>565</sup>

Mather quickly directed the reader's suspicion away from Margaret Rule and toward a woman whom "pious People in the Vicinity" suspected of causing the torment. While Mather clearly suspected this "Miserable woman, who had been formerly Imprisoned on the suspicion of Witchcraft," he reiterated that "the hazard of hurting a poor Woman that might be innocent," prevented him from naming her.<sup>566</sup> Throughout, Mather expressed reluctance to draw conclusions about which he hinted there was no real doubt. He went on to describe Rule's torment at the hands of a total of eight specters:

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<sup>564</sup> Roach, *The Salem Witch Trials* (2002), 420. Roach cites Sybil Noyes, Thornton Charles Libby, and Walter Goodwin Davis, *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire*, 5 vols. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1972).

<sup>565</sup> The Mathers had Calef arrested for "scandalous libel," but neither minister appeared at the appointed court session in December. See Levin, 243-244.

<sup>566</sup> Calef, 3 (EEBO image 9).

whereof she imagin'd that she knew *three* or *four*, but the rest came still with their *Faces cover'd*...she was very careful of my reiterated charges *to forbear blazing the Names*, lest any good Person should come to suffer any blast of Reputation thro' the cunning Malice of the great Accuser; nevertheless having since privately named *them* to my self, I will venture to say *this* of them, that they are the sort of *Wretches* who for these many years have gone under...*Violent Presumptions of Witchcraft*...altho' I am farr from thinking that the Visions of this Young Woman were *Evidence* enough to prove them so.<sup>567</sup>

Scholars interested in ascertaining Mather's responsibility for encouraging witchcraft persecution could find evidence for more than one judgment here. But upon reaching Mather's caveat about the insufficiencies of spectral evidence, the point was overshadowed by the sensational details of Rule's suffering.

After bolstering Margaret Rule's reputation, Mather began to tarnish the credit of his detractors. He asserted that "It were a most Unchristian and uncivil, yea a most unreasonable thing to imagine that the Fitt's of the Young Woman were but meer *Impostures*: And I believe scarce any, but People of a particular *Dirtiness*, will harbour such an Uncharitable Censure." Having established that skepticism would render one both unreasonable and dirty, Mather further suggested it was an affront the good people of Boston. Rule's nine-day fast, for example, "was impossible to be dissembled without a *Combination* of...People unacquainted with one another to support the *Juggle*...he that can imagine such a thing of a Neighbourhood, so fill'd with Vertuous People is a *base Man*, I cannot call him any other."<sup>568</sup> Mather relied upon these same credible witnesses from the community to attest to the supernatural origins of Rule's symptoms. Many of those gathered in Rule's bedchamber saw her forced to swallow an invisible liquid,

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 4 (EEBO image 10).

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 5 (EEBO image 10).



smelled brimstone, saw a white powder she said was thrown into her eyes, observed her contortions and quickly-healed burns, and heard her foretell events taking place at a distance. Many also saw Rule float up toward the ceiling; some perceived, and one man actually felt, the invisible form of a “living Creature, not altogether unlike a Rat” at her bedside.<sup>569</sup> The extent to which these events were seen, heard and felt reveals that New Englanders’ fear of demonic malice remained palpable. Mather’s emphasis on reason, cleanliness of mind and spirit, and the collective credibility of the girls’ family and neighbors calls to mind Darrell and Harsnett’s struggle over the legitimacy of dispossession a century earlier. In New England, Mather’s ability to command the respect of his readers depended in part upon his maintenance of his credit as an honorable man.

Cotton Mather had prayed for, and received, a visit from an angelic spirit earlier in 1693. Just around the time of Rule’s affliction, he received another message from “good angels,” this time via a Salem woman named Mrs. Carver; they predicted that there would be a resurgence of witchcraft in Massachusetts sufficient to convince all doubters.<sup>570</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising that he was receptive to Margaret Rule’s reports of a benevolent spirit, clothed in bright white garments, which instructed her to pray and resist the devil. Mather wrote in his manuscript that good spirits had been recorded not only “in the Swedish, but also in the Salem Witchcraft” and, even more recently, that Mercy Short also had “the Communications of such a Spirit.” Mather further recorded that Rule told him that “the white Spirit” instructed her “Margaret, you

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 5-7 (EEBO image 10; 11).

<sup>570</sup> Silverman estimates that Cotton Mather’s visitation took place “probably during the possession of Margaret Rule—between roughly September 10 and the end of October, 1693,” 127.

now are to take notice that (such a Man) is your Father, God has given you to him, do you from this time look upon him as your Father, obey him, regard him as your Father, follow his Counsels and you shall do well.”<sup>571</sup> The man in question is certainly Mather himself, and the message from the white Spirit perfectly matched what Mather advocated not only for Rule but also for all of New England.<sup>572</sup> The ultimate message was to obey the wisdom of godly fathers and thereby please God; to disregard their authority was to do the Devil’s work. In this instance, Mather had not only scriptural weight behind his claims to authority—veiled though they were by a sort of attempted anonymity—but direct approbation from what might well be an angel from heaven.

Ministers often discouraged demoniacs’ claims of communication with good spirits, and for good reason. Not only did Protestants insist that miracles and angelic visitation had ended with the apostolic age, but claims of messages from heaven were notoriously difficult to contain, and disruptive. For an adult to receive angelic visits smacked of hubris or delusion. For a child, such a visitation had the potential to appear guileless; possessions likewise were constructed as supernatural visitations in which the afflicted were innocent victims of devils’ efforts to win their souls. Mather not only kept his personal angelic visitation private, but also recorded it in his diary in Latin, to obscure its meaning from potential readers. Witchcraft and possessions, however, offered Mather dramatic contests between good and evil that fit his millennial worldview and could more readily be used to convert unbelievers. His caveat, “I am not so well satisfied about the true nature of this white Spirit, as to count that I can do a Friend much Honour by

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<sup>571</sup> Calef, 8 (EEBO image 12). The Swedish case took place in Mohra in 1670, and was included as an attachment to John Glanville’s *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (1682).

<sup>572</sup> I agree with Burr that this “man” was “Mather himself, of course...there can be little doubt that the writer means himself.” Burr, 316 1n; 318, 1n.

reporting what notice this white Spirit may have taken of him,” does little to overshadow the fact that he differentiated this apparition from the others that caused the girl’s torment.<sup>573</sup> Rule’s white spirit so aptly articulated Mather’s sense of mission (and exceptionalism) that he simply reported the incident and allowed readers to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Mather used his account of Rule’s benevolent spirit to demonstrate his regard for proper hierarchical relations—the girl should look to her earthly Father (Mather) as a way to begin to look to God. Because he knew to expect resistance to this new possession, Mather was careful to anticipate the arguments of detractors. And, as a soldier for Christ, he understood his critics as the opposite: agents of Satan. Mather drew support from his relationships with important English divines such as Richard Baxter. These alliances lent him prestige and supported his claims to honor, credit, and authority.<sup>574</sup> Mather was compelled to write the manuscript despite “the hard *representations* where with *some Ill Men have reviled my conduct.*” He added:

No Christian can, I say none but evil workers can criminate my visiting such of my poor flock as have at any time fallen under the terrible and sensible molestations of *Evil-Angels*. . . I have been but a Servant of Mankind in doing so; yea no less a Person than the *Venerable Baxter*, has . . . in the most Publick manner invited Mankind to thank me for that *Service*.<sup>575</sup>

Here Mather presented himself as a messenger of God’s will despite the recrimination of “ill men” who persecuted him for offering assistance to those in need. In Chapter 3, we

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<sup>573</sup> Calef, 9 (EEBO image 12). This appears doubly so because of the way Mather “anonymously” refers to the compliments paid him by the spirits in Mercy Short’s affliction.

<sup>574</sup> See Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, (1691).

<sup>575</sup> Calef, 10-11 (EEBO image 13). Baxter provided the Preface for Mather’s *Late Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* . . . (London, 1691).

saw how John Darrell's acquaintance with men such as Sir German Ireton forestalled, but ultimately failed to prevent his unmaking because of the greater power of the Bishop and Church of England. Mather wrote from a position of greater security than Darrell; his family and allies held influence with New England's press and religious and governing institutions.<sup>576</sup> As with Darrell, however, Mather's enemies undermined this support by extending the irrationality and immoderation so easily attributed to demoniacs and priests to the elite supporters.

Because witchcraft-possession cases had so recently resulted in the conviction and execution of accused witches, Mather's battle to defend his credit in the wake of Margaret Rule's affliction necessarily involved the justification of those verdicts. Even as the Essex County trials ended, he attempted to shape this legacy by emphasizing that:

the Name of *No one* good Person in the World ever [came] under any blemish by means of any *Afflicted*, Person that fell under *my* particular cognisance, yea no one Man, Woman or Child ever came into any trouble for the sake of any that were *Afflicted* after I *had once begun* to look after 'em...and after that storm was rais'd at *Salem*, I offer[ed] to provide Meat, Drink and Lodging for no less than Six of the Afflicted, that so an Experiment might be made, whether *Prayer* with *Fasting* [would help].<sup>577</sup>

Mather insisted that he had protected innocents and encouraged the recommitment of lapsed Christians by recognizing witches as a serious threat. After Salem, he wrote, these results had profound implications: “[t]he Devil got just nothing; but God got praise; Christ got Subjects, the Holy Spirit got *Temples*, the Church got *Addition*; and the Souls

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<sup>576</sup> Michael Hall cites some support for the contention that “the Mathers, father and son, controlled the Boston press,” including the controversies in 1699-1700 over Bartholomew Green's unwillingness to print a pamphlet that blatantly contradicted Increase Mather's writing against recent liberal church reforms, and another disputed book eventually published in London: Solomon Stoddard's *Doctrine of Instituted Churches* (1700), 299-301.

<sup>577</sup> Calef, 11 (EEBO image 13).

of Men got everlasting *Benefits*; I am not so vain as to say that any *Wisdom* or *Vertue* of mine did contribute unto this good order of things: But I am so just, as to say I did not hinder this *Good*.”<sup>578</sup> Announcing this victory over some of New England’s witches allowed Mather to prove his dedication to God’s service, but his insistence served a psychological need, as well. To question the symptoms of the afflicted, or to reverse earlier verdicts, would have been far too threatening to his conviction that his actions had served a godly purpose.<sup>579</sup> Mather’s use of Margaret Rule’s affliction to shore up the legacy of the colony’s response to these remarkable providences centered to a large degree on issues investigated here: honorable manhood, reason and support of proper hierarchical relations on the one hand, and weak credit, excessive passions, and the subversion of proper, deferential relations on the other.

From the start, Mather’s manuscript about Margaret Rule’s possession demonstrated a preoccupation with the case’s potential to endanger his credit and the authority of Puritan theocracy as well. The appearance of Robert Calef’s *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), in which he took Mather to task for his handling of Rule’s case and his credulity in supernatural matters, substantiated Mather’s insecurities. In 1701, Mather and some of his supporters published *Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book* in an attempt to undo the damage Calef had caused. All of the writers involved in this controversy—Mather, Calef, and Mather’s defenders—used gender to sharpen their arguments and to “unmake” their opponents as honorable men. Because I am interested in locating gendered strategies in published articulations of witchcraft-

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 12 (EEBO image 14).

<sup>579</sup> Levin makes a similar point about Mather’s investment of “an immeasurable quantity of feeling and belief in the millennial significance of both the new government and the wonders that had already entered New England from the invisible world,” 216.

possession, even when accompanied by or subsumed in political and religious strategies, I pay particular attention to overlapping claims about credit, reason versus excess, and disruption of social order.

### **Contesting Manhood: Debating Margaret Rule's possession**

Though Robert Calef made numerous theological challenges to Mather's claims about witchcraft and possession, the emotional weight of his book—and the most sensational part—was his retelling of Margaret Rule's possession. Overall, I see two central ways in which Calef challenged Mather, both of which were fundamentally gendered. First, Calef used claims about Margaret Rule's degraded nature to taint Mather by association. It was a relatively simple matter to question her character and reputation, and there was no easier way to discredit Mather's arguments than to suggest that he had been duped by a whorish dissembler. This dynamic illustrates how women and men's gendered legitimacy were interconnected, and that the liabilities of one could contaminate the other. The second gendered strategy was to unmake Mather as an honorable man in his own right. Given Mather's pedigree and prestige, this was a delicate proposition. But even an elite minister could be compromised by suggestions that his reason had been overwhelmed by passions, or that he had failed to maintain mastery of himself and subordinates. Mather's support for witchcraft-possession—an inherently disordered phenomenon—particularly compromised his ability to defend himself against such charges.

Calef joined the crowd in Rule's bedchamber—he claimed that there were thirty or forty people present—and described it in a way that discredited Rule and Mather both. While both Increase and Cotton Mather were present, Cotton Mather was the particular

target. In a tone both self-righteous and poisonous, Calef depicted Cotton Mather as a fool, at best, and as a lecherous witch-hunter at worst. He wrote that Mather, that while laying on hands in an attempt to free her from her tormenters, “rubbed her Stomach (her Breast not covered with the Bed-cloaths) and bid others do so too, and said it eased her, then she revived.”<sup>580</sup> Calef reported, as it was not clear at first which part of her body was cursed, that Mather and many of the bystanders placed their hands all over her. She “said that when they did it in the right place she could fetch her Breath, and by that they knew.”<sup>581</sup> Calef claimed that Mather not only participated in this charade, but also encouraged Rule’s concupiscence through his questioning. Calef recorded Mather’s interrogation of Rule as follows:

Q. Do you believe? Then again she was in a Fit, and [Mather] again rubbed her Breast, &c (about this time...an attendant assisted him in rubbing of her. The afflicted spake angrily to her saying don’t you meddle with me, and hastily put away her hand)...Q. The brushing of you gives you ease, don’t it? A. Yes. She turned her selfe and a little Groaned. Q. Now the Witches Scratch you and Pinch you, and Bite you, don’t they? A. Yes, then he put his Hand upon her Breast and Belly, viz. on the Cloaths over her, and felt a Living thing, as he said, which moved the Father [Increase Mather] also to feel, and some others.<sup>582</sup>

This exchange, among others, ably invoked the image of a lustful dissembler. And by rejecting the ministrations of the female attendant in favor of those of the men, Rule—rather than the ministers—appeared to orchestrate the spectacle. Even Rule’s location allowed Calef to cast aspersions about the proceedings. The “boudoir” scene was a trope of antifeminist satires, in which a woman’s private chamber allowed her to deceive, entrap, and conceal. Here, ballads and pamphlets claimed, women carried out

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<sup>580</sup> Calef, 13 (EEBO image 14).

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 15 (EEBO image 15).

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 13-14 (EEBO images 14; 15).

excretory functions and disguised their bodies with clothes and cosmetics that tricked men into believing they were beautiful and virtuous.<sup>583</sup> By presenting a lascivious Rule, lounging in a crowded bedchamber, Calef suggested an entirely different scene than the one Mather hoped the reader would see.

After presenting Rule as soliciting the touch of particular bystanders, Calef went on to claim that she used her affliction to arrange assignations with men:

Soon after [the ministers] were gone the Afflicted desired the Women to be gone, saying, that the Company of the Men was not offensive to her, and having hold of the hand of a Young-Man, said to have been her Sweet-heart formerly, who was withdrawing; she pull'd him again into his Seat, saying he should not go to Night.<sup>584</sup>

The Mathers' absence during this scene did not serve to clear them of responsibility for it; they took Rule's affliction seriously, and Calef made it appear so disorderly that it became ridiculous as well as threatening. This household was no "little commonwealth," in which parents monitored Rule's spiritual and physical state.<sup>585</sup> Rather there was a promiscuous crowd and a scheming young woman whose resemblance to a demoniac allowed her to flout standard rules of decorum. Calef showed the reader that the attribution of Rule's behavior to a demonic affliction made this disruption of hierarchy, sexuality, and sense possible. In this way, Calef managed to use Margaret Rule to

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<sup>583</sup> For a description of the meaning of the boudoir scene, see Nussbaum, 105. While this technique can be traced back to Juvenal's "Sixth Satire," it remained in popular use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some examples include Thomas Killigrew, *Parson's Wedding*, (1639), John Oldham, "A Satyr Upon a Woman who by her Falsehood and Scorn was the Death of my Friend," (1678); Robert Gould, "Love Given O'er: Or, a Satyr Against the Pride, Lust, & Inconstancy, &c., of Woman," (1680); Evelyn's *Mundis Muliebris* (1690), Richard Ames, "Folly of Love," (1691) and Ned Ward, *Female Policy Detected*, (1695). This trope lasted into the eighteenth century, and can be found in two of Jonathon Swift's famous poems "A Lady's Dressing Room," (1730) and "A Beautiful Young Nymph going to Bed." (1734).

<sup>584</sup> Calef, 14 (EEBO image 15).

<sup>585</sup> The comparison of the family to a "little commonwealth" originated in William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), and provided an important analytical framework for John Demos', *The Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). Rule's parents do not appear to have been present during the services on Margaret's behalf, as neither Calef nor Mather mentions them.



challenge in one stroke the notion of witchcraft, the trials, and the Mathers' defense of them.

Calef's unmaking of Margaret Rule's credit relied upon gendered concepts of womanly weakness, but some other gendered notions of womanly weakness ironically supported Mather's account as well. If Rule's sex, age, and demeanor supported Calef's dismissal of her as a whore, they also supported traditional assumptions about women's openness to witchcraft and demonic possession. Mather's response to Margaret Rule's symptoms grew out of a tradition that attributed to women a particular susceptibility to demonic influence. Mather explained the connection between witchcraft and women in terms reminiscent of the Bible, literary misogyny, and humoral theory:

I do believe that the *Evil Angels* do often take Advantage from *Natural Distempers*...the Malignant *Vapours* and *Humours* of our Diseased Bodies may be used by *Devils*, therinto insinuating as engine of the Execution of their Malice upon those *Bodies*; and perhaps for this reason one Sex may suffer more Troubles of some kinds from the *Invisible World* than the other, as well as for *that reason* for which the old *serpent* made where he did his first *Address*.<sup>586</sup>

In addition to providing a bodily explanation for the phenomena, his words reflect the cultural association that early modern people made between women and images of the witch and demoniac. Such associations also triggered implicit disgust and suspicion of female bodies that, while operating below explicit cultural messages, reinforced ideas about women—and womanly weaknesses—as a kind of internal threat to the godly community.

Calef drew on a related cultural tradition, linking women's fluid natures to a predilection for vices that could lead to witchcraft and possession. This allowed him to

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<sup>586</sup> Calef, 5-6 (EEBO images 10-11).

disparage Margaret Rule more effectively by calling upon assumptions of women's seductiveness and ability to be seduced. The question of women's desire to be possessed, whether sexually by men or spiritually by devils, was the subject of titillating uncertainty. Thus gender, whether in sermons or satirical pamphlets, supported both Mather's and Calef's claims about Margaret Rule. Accordingly, cultural assumptions about women factored significantly in men's ability to argue for or against witchcraft and possession. Furthermore, the ambiguities of the possession script left important questions, such as the innocence of the possessed individual, only partially addressed. Calef capitalized upon these inconsistencies, as Harsnett had, and thus found a way to challenge Mather despite the difference in their social standing.

Calef's second gendered strategy involved attempts to unmake Mather as a man in his own right. The effectiveness of this strategy can best be seen reflected in Mather's attempts to use notions of honor and manly credit in his own defense. In letters refuting Calef's accusations, Mather wavered between the related charges of Calef's partiality and his malice. He wrote that Calef's writings contained "a number of Mistakes and Falshoods; which were they willful and design'd might justly be termed gross Lies. The representations are far from true, when 'tis affirmed my Father and self being come into the Room, began the Discourse; I hope I understand breeding a little better than so[.] For proof of this...sundry can depose the contrary."<sup>587</sup> Mather particularly resented Calef's accusations that he, along with his father and others, "rubbed" Rule while she lay in some state of undress. To demonstrate further good breeding, Mather claimed to be angrier on his father's behalf than his own. Mather expressed frustration that his father's eminence

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid., 20 (EEBO image 18).

could be tarnished in this way. He wondered, “that a Gentleman that from 18 to 54 hath been an Exemplary Minister of the Gospel; and that besides a station in the Church of God, as considerable as any that his own Country can afford, hath for divers years come off with Honour...Knows not yet how to make one short Prayer of a quarter of an hour, but in New-England he must be Libell’d for it.”<sup>588</sup> He insisted that “Oath” would sufficiently vindicate his father, and moved—with equal vehemence but at greater length—to defend himself. Mather contradicted Calef’s claims about the manner in which he touched Rule, precisely where the invisible Imp had been perceived, and other matters both material and immaterial.

In these short passages, Mather invoked many of the pivotal aspects of witchcraft-possession controversy that hinged on reason, self-mastery, and other qualities constitutive of honorable manhood. First, Mather complained that Calef’s charges were false, and likely malicious. He then invoked his own superior breeding, which referred directly to a question of manners, but which indirectly reminded the reader of his greater eligibility to serve as interpreter of this event. Lastly, Mather noted that the advantage of pedigree granted him access to influential and reputable witnesses. These arguments allowed Cotton Mather to defend himself while simultaneously painting Calef as an outsider and threat to the established order. As we will see, however, these same strategies also created openings from which Calef was able launch additional assaults, and in which Mather’s reason, learning, and motives remained in question.

While asserting his superior credit, Mather relied upon another familiar gendered strategy: he invoked his reputation for reason and learning. In addition to his family’s

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<sup>588</sup> Ibid., 21 (EEBO image 18).

famously extensive library, Mather had studied at Harvard College, wrote and preached prolifically, and served as a minister along with his father at Boston's North Church. Mather stressed the preeminence of reason in his account of Rule's possession, and malice in Calef's, as an outgrowth of his superior status. Mather complained to Calef of the "divers and down-right mistakes, which you have permitted your self, I would hope, not knowingly, and with a Malicious design, to be receiver or Compiler of."<sup>589</sup> As a contrast, Mather offered the reader the benefit of his judgment, learning, and knowledge. To avoid charges that the girl's fits were the result of natural illness,<sup>590</sup> Mather stated that only Sadducees would believe such a thing about a body stuck full of pins. He added, "I think I may without Vanity pretend to have read not a few of the best System's of Physick that have been yet seen in these American Regions."<sup>591</sup> By basing his claims to expertise in supernatural matters upon sanctioned religious and medical texts, Mather both capitalized upon his strengths and also left himself vulnerable to Calef's intimations about excess, arrogance, and ambition.

In fact, Calef found several ways to use Mather's claims to manly credit against him. Calef's relative obscurity allowed him to present himself as the victim, struggling valiantly against a powerful and self-interested opponent. He fashioned himself as an earnest man who recorded only the scenes he witnessed, and "writ them down the same Nights in order to attain the certainty of them." By emphasizing his sincerity, Calef laid a foundation for his complaints that Mather's cries of slander and libel against him were

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 21-22 (EEBO images 19; 20).

<sup>590</sup> See MacDonald's introduction to *Witchcraft and Hysteria* about Edward Jorden's description of Mary Glover's possession in 1604—not long after Darrell's defrocking.

<sup>591</sup> Calef, 6 (EEBO image 11).

unjust.<sup>592</sup> Worst of all, Calef complained that Mather made “Pulpit-news” out of their disagreement, thereby abusing his position as minister in pursuit of his own interests. Claiming to maintain a more proper sense of authority and responsibility allowed Calef to appear orderly and temperate. Thus he was able to use Mather’s position against him, and to separate him from standard sources of respectable manly credit. Calef portrayed Mather as an outlier to sharpen his own claims and also to cast doubt upon the word of a man who would not normally face such challenges.

Calef’s use of gendered strategies was often subtle and ingenious. He used a measured tone to cast Mather as the unruly slanderer. By purporting to desire an honorable reconciliation, Calef depicted Mather’s unwillingness to answer him as arrogance. Calef complained that in Mather’s letters:

...such as see not with the Authors Eyes, [are] rendred *Sadducees and Witlin[g]s, &c.* and the Arguments that square not with the Sentiments therein contain’d, Buffoonary...To vindicate my self therefore from such false Imputations...and misrepresenting your Actions, &c. and to vindicate your self, Sir, as much as is in my Power from those Suggestions, said to be Insinuated, as if you wore not the Modesty, and Gravity, that becomes a Minister of the *Gospel*.<sup>593</sup>

Calef’s cunning formulations demonstrate that his wit, if less refined than Mather’s, made him more threatening than any standard coffeehouse witling. His pen rendered Mather’s dismissal of his critics into arrogance, implying that the minister had overreacted and misinterpreted what was “said to be” insinuated. What Mather called slander, Calef transformed into the justified correction of a minister who had failed to uphold the duties of his calling. In this configuration, it was Calef who respected the honor of the ministry, and its role in proper social order.

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 16 (EEBO image 16).

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 18-19 (EEBO image 17).

Mather must have been incredulous to find himself challenged on the strongest aspects of his good reputation. The Mathers were a premiere family with ties to the central political figures in the Massachusetts Colony, not to mention the Dissenting community in England. Increase Mather's work on behalf of the charter led him to meet and negotiate with two kings and a queen, and in his absence Cotton Mather served as adviser to the governor and political and spiritual matters. But Calef found a way to twist Cotton Mather's sophistication into a liability. Calef wrote:

I do request and pray, that if I err, I may be shewed it from *Scripture* or sound *Reason*, and not by quotations out of *Virgil*, nor *Spanish Rhetorick*. For I find the Witlings mentioned, are...far from answering your profound questions...Sir, (ye being the Salt of the Earth, &c.) I have reason to hope for a Satisfactory Answer to him, who is one that reverences your Person and Office.<sup>594</sup>

Here Calef separated himself from ignorant witlings Mather dismissed out of hand. In Calef's formulation, Mather was the one relying upon ungodly literature to cover up the lapses in his own reasoning, and whose failure to satisfy Calef's requests for clarification held a whiff of evasion. Thus Calef fashioned himself as a potential equal to Mather, not in social standing or clerical office, but rather as a gentleman requesting guidance in a matter of scriptural importance. Their battle to play up the strengths and downplay the weaknesses of their comparative positions relied as much upon notions of manly credit as upon specific points of demonology.

Still, beneath Calef's challenges to manly credit lay demonological questions that held serious implications for the cases' potential as propaganda. Therefore, Calef capitalized, both explicitly and implicitly, on familiar arguments about the extent of

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 19 (EEBO image 17).

witches' and devils' powers. A man of his times, Calef asserted, "[t]hat there are witches is not the doubt...But what this Witchcraft is, or wherein it does consist, seems to be the whole difficulty."<sup>595</sup> A full overview of pertinent demonology is beyond the scope of this study, but Calef's preoccupation with the scriptural basis for popular tests of witches and demoniacs led him to accept the writings of some experts, such as John Gaule, as "Truth" but to reject the others. For example, Calef criticized Mather's references to William Perkins and Richard Bernard,<sup>596</sup> taking the unexpected approach of criticizing them for failing to ground their points sufficiently in scripture. He softened his criticism of these men, to an extent: "It were to be unjust to the Memory of these otherwise Wise Men, to suppose them to have any Sinister design; But perhaps the force of a prevailing opinion together with an Education thereto Suited, might overshadow their Judgments, as being wont to be but too prevalent in many other cases."<sup>597</sup> In this way, Calef drew an unflattering connection between Mather and the writers on whom he relied, suggesting their credulity and insufficient godliness—a particularly rich accusation coming from a "so-called merchant." Thus Mather and his experts were collectively unmade as men, in a way that allowed Calef to claim temperance and rationality in contrast.

Rather than explore these canonical texts, Calef emphasized his dissatisfaction with Mather's failure to address the central points on which he had been challenged. Calef pounced upon Mather's dismissive offer of the use of his library as a replacement for argumentation, surely recognizing that Mather's participation dignified and perpetuated their debate. Calef worked to goad Mather into further correspondence:

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 17 (EEBO image 16).

<sup>596</sup> Gaule, *Select cases of conscience*, (1608); Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608); Richard Bernard, *A guide to grand-iury men*, (1627).

<sup>597</sup> Calef, 17 (EEBO image 16).

...(a little Writing certainly might be of more use, to clear up the controverted points, than either looking over many Books in a well furnish'd Library, or than a dispute, if I were qualified for it; the Inconveniences of Passion being this way best avoided) And am not without hopes that you will yet oblige me so far, as to consider the Letter, and if I Err, to let me see it by Scripture, &c.<sup>598</sup>

In characteristic form, Calef merged several key arguments at once. He managed to turn Mather's extensive library, which ought to have sustained his credit as a learned and reasonable man, into a sign of excess. As with his undue wordiness, Mather's "well-furnish'd Library" denoted Mather's wealth and connoted the ambition behind it. Calef then offered a slight self-deprecation to model modesty and regard for social hierarchy. Ultimately, he suggested that Mather's responses were predicated upon profane learning, inattention to Scripture, and an excess of wealth as well as words. By expressing a desire to avoid the "inconvenient passions" of a meeting—and all the humoral implications of such passions—Calef inverted customary understandings of honorable manhood to establish himself as the more reasonable man.

To bolster the impression of his sincerity, Calef expressed wounded surprise at Mather's defensiveness. In an extension of his bid to avoid "Inconvenient Passions," Calef made Mather appear to be the aggressor. He wrote: "you seem to intimate as if I were giving Characters, Reflections, and Libell's &c. concerning your self and Relations; all of which were as far from my thoughts, as ever they were in writing after either your self, or any other Minister."<sup>599</sup> One could read this as backpedaling, and therefore a kind of victory for Mather, but I see it as a perpetuation of the gendered contest in which these men were engaged. Calef's success at depicting Mather's haughtiness as evidence of

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<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 23 (EEBO image 19).

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 23-24 (EEBO image 19; 20).



immodesty and excess allowed him to translate Mather's well-grounded claims to superior reputation, learning and authority against him.

In response to Mather's invocation of his "breeding," which ought to have prevented him from instigating conversation at Rule's bedside ahead of his father, Calef was cleverly gracious even as he refused to legitimate Mather's version of events. He wrote, "[a]s to that which is said of mentioning your self first...and your hopes that your breeding was better (I doubt it not) nor do *I* doubt your Father might first apply himself to others; but my intelligence is, that you first spake of the Afflicted or Possessed, for which you had the advantage of a nearer approach."<sup>600</sup> Though not the most dire of Calef's accusations, this did constitute a direct contradiction of Mather's claims about events at Rule's bedside. Furthermore, it suggested both ambition and disorderliness—not to mention a disregard for deference—on Cotton Mather's part. Calef also found it convenient to use nice distinctions in his own defense, such as pointing out that he had written that Rule's breast was not covered "with the Bed-Cloths," as opposed to claiming that they were uncovered entirely. By downplaying the implications of his insinuations, Calef made Mather appear oversensitive, evasive and inconsistent. Calef also invoked his own adherents to support his (contradictory) claims about the extent to which Rule had been clothed. When Mather complained that Calef misrepresented and slandered him through his lascivious characterizations, Calef replied: "*I* am not willing to retort here your own Language upon you; but can tell you, that your own discourse o[f] it publicly, at Sir *W.P.*'s Table, has much more contributed to" assumptions of Rule's undress. Once again, Calef suggested that the inconsistencies were all on Mather's part.

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<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 23-24 (EEBO images 19; 20).

This comment also indicated that he knew gentlemen personally who dined the Governor Sir William Phips, of whom Mather was a particular supporter. By indicating that Mather was not the only one with highly placed connections, Calef's letter also suggested that he was not alone in questioning Mather's veracity and reason.

Calef also found ways to use the inherent inconsistencies and disorder of the possession script to his advantage. Attributing the worst faults to Rule made it easier to attack Mather by extension. When Mather complained about the slanders Calef attributed to Margaret Rule, Calef wrote that he was hardly to blame. Calef wrote: "if you be by the possessed belyed (as being half an hour with her alone (excluding her own Mother...)) *I can see no Wonder in it,; [sic] what can be expected less from the Father of Lies, by whom, you Judge, she was possest.*"<sup>601</sup> In this way Calef made plain the dangerous tendency of witchcraft-possession cases to grant disproportionate power to low-status individuals. Furthermore, Calef drew an explicit connection between the particular dangers of believing Margaret Rule and broader dangers for a society that allowed such individuals that degree of authority. The salacious image of Mather designing to be left alone with the girl reflected the kinds of accusations seen in anti-Catholic tracts since the late sixteenth century. John Darrell had had to defend himself against charges of seducing William Somers and Katherine Wright into false possession performances, and directed similar charges against his opponents for pressuring them to recant. Calef thus raised the specter of Catholic excess and carnality without having to do so directly.

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 25 (EEBO image 20).

Elsewhere, Calef more explicitly aligned Mather with base, popish influences. For example, he wrote that if Mather expected him to believe extraordinary stories about Rule floating toward the ceiling despite witnesses' efforts to pull her down, "the only advantage gain'd, is that which has been so long controverted between Protestants and Papists, whether Miracles are ceast, will hereby seem to be decided for the latter; it being, for ought I can see, if so, as true a Miracle as for Iron to swim, and that the Devil can work such Miracles."<sup>602</sup> By linking Mather's theology to popish delusions, which Protestants believed priests used to seduce witnesses, Calef managed to capitalize on the doctrinal uncertainties that had plagued John Darrell a century before. Darrell and his supporters had been forced to differentiate between miracles and "wonders," and account for the extent of influence God granted to the Devil; despite his position of relative security, Mather was unable to sidestep these thorny issues. In New England in the 1690s, involvement with dispossession risked slander even if Cotton Mather was never in the same degree of danger as John Darrell. It is clear that Calef's motives were complex, and included political and anti-theocratic objectives.<sup>603</sup> Gender was interwoven in the language and strategies used to contest witchcraft-possession, even in moments explicitly about politics and religion.

The Margaret Rule controversy forced Mather to confront the fact that the same conventions that made witchcraft-possession cases good propaganda also made them dangerous. By reprinting in 1700 excerpts from Mather's witchcraft writing from 1693,

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid., 25 (EEBO image 20).

<sup>603</sup> Richard Gildrie describes the presence of "anticlericalism" in colonial New England, as evidenced in refusals to pay the minister's rate—a local tax dedicated to his maintenance. Failure to attend public worship was another way to express anticlericalism, as was mockery, which varied in levels of explicitness and intensity. See Gildrie, 119-123.

Calef capitalized upon the less hospitable climate for witchcraft-possession. The marvelous events that Mather saw as incontrovertible proof of supernatural interference now sounded implausible, even ridiculous. For example, Mather claimed to have knocked away a set of invisible chains that bound Mercy Short. Calef inquired whether this feat “were done by the Power or Vertue of any ord’nance of Divine Institution,” or if Mather was suggesting it happened on account of “any Physical Vertue in that particular Hand.” Calef then adds, sarcastically, “[b]ut supposing that neither of these will be asserted by the Author, I do think it very requisite, that the World may be acquainted with the Operation, and to what Art or Craft to refer their Power of Knocking off of *Invisible Chains*.”<sup>604</sup> The possession script was generally flexible on such points, as inconsistencies could always be attributed to the Devil’s tricks. But Calef’s approach turned these assumptions on their head. If Mather could not adequately base his practices in Scripture, Calef suggested, his methods could not be correct, and he must have been deluded by the devils he sought to expel. Given the desire of most people to distance themselves from the trials of 1692-1693, it was more likely that readers would be receptive to Calef’s arguments. The inclusion of Mather’s earlier work provided a critique that Calef sharpened with direct comparisons to the popish and fraudulent narratives on which Protestant critics had long heaped scorn. Thus the very drama that served Mather’s interests at first—to startle readers back to God—undermined his interests at the last.

By claiming to be a kind of martyr, Calef could better defend himself against the inevitable charges of malice and slander. Emphasizing his commitment to the broader

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<sup>604</sup> Calef, 30 (EEBO image 23).

theological issues, as well as witchcraft-possession in particular, enabled him to appear reasonable, and in pursuit of the truth. Thus he stressed his determination to persevere despite the censure of his opponents. As to his initial reasons for writing, he explained, “I thought it my duty to be no longer an Idle Spectator; And can, and do say, to the Glory of God, in this whole Affair, I have endeavoured a Conscience voide of offence, both towards God and towards Man.”<sup>605</sup> This formulation turned Mather into a socially destructive force not unlike the witches he pursued. If, as Calef pointed out, both Mather’s actions and the witches’ resulted in delusion, disorder, and alienation from the true wishes of God. By linking these accusations to representations of Mather as deluded and self-aggrandizing, Calef invoked the language of honorable manhood to disparage the credit of one of New England’s most influential men. Mather clearly saw himself as a martyr for God, soldiering for justice despite the recriminations of profane, worldly enemies. But Calef’s unmaking of Mather allowed him to suggest that their roles were actually reversed. Mather’s reputation and influence, which ought to have protected him from these challenges, ultimately supported Calef’s complaints that Mather’s arrogance, ambition, and power had allowed him to manipulate proper social order in the service of his own interests over those of the godly community.

### **Contesting Manhood: Defending the Mathers**

Just after Calef’s book appeared in New England, in 1701, “several Persons belonging to the Flock of some of the Injured Pastors,” published a rebuttal. Seven men signed its Preface, including John Goodwin, whose possessed children Cotton Mather

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 30 (EEBO image 23).

attended from 1688 to 1689.<sup>606</sup> They wrote out of allegiance to Increase and Cotton Mather, and concern that an upstart merchant threatened to use controversy over witchcraft-possession as a way to challenge the leadership of the colony. And despite their formulaic protestations that the Mathers were not “the Authors, of this Composure,”<sup>607</sup> it seems likely that the gentlemen wrote at the behest of Cotton Mather. The text included contributions by both Increase and Cotton, and reiterated many of the charges Cotton levied against Calef in their earlier correspondence. As a whole, it contradicted Calef’s accusations by reasserting the credit, reason, and orderliness of the sanctioned authorities. By closing ranks in this way, they defused the threat of Calef’s book by unmaking him as an honorable man, using many of the same strategies used by Harsnett and Darrell a century before. They presented Calef as an unruly outlier motivated by excessive malice and passions, a disorderly enemy of God and authority, and a man lacking reason and credit. Their signatures demonstrated their willingness to rally around these ministers and the authority they represented. While the Mathers were hardly typical New Englanders, and possession cases were certainly not common, the Margaret Rule incident allowed elite Boston gentlemen to demonstrate that they would not abdicate authority to a troublemaker even in the wake of such extraordinarily divisive episodes. Their arguments reveal both the centrality and flexibility of gender; unmaking one’s enemies as men remained a potent, if risky, tactic.

In the Preface, the authors respond in two main ways. First, they defended all that Calef impugned. They reinforced the credit of judges, magistrates and ministers,

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<sup>606</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 1-4. The other signers were Obadiah Gill, John Barnard, William Robie, Timothy Wadsworth, Robert Cumbey, and George Robinson. Mather published the story of the Goodwins’ possession in *(Late) Memorable Providences* (1689).

<sup>607</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 10.

particularly the Mathers, as men of piety, reason, and moderation. This entailed a defense of witchcraft-possession, but also of the other targets of Calef's criticism: the renewed charter Increase Mather had helped orchestrate in London, and Cotton Mather's laudatory book about the life of Sir William Phips.<sup>608</sup> The authors linked Calef's complaints about Margaret Rule and Cotton Mather to what constituted a challenge to the government as a whole. They wrote:

The Book is full as is thought by Good men, of Scurrilous Reflections on the Government, as well as the Ministers of the Countrey. And First, for the Government; the tendency of the Book is to perswade the People, that the Judges of the Land; are the Unjustest, Cruellest and most Blood-thirsty men; Our Wise men (sayes he) becoming Fools...and the Honourable Lieutenant Governour...called for the Prayers of the Countrey, That what soever mistakes on either hand have been fallen into, referring to the late Troubles raised among us by Satan, and his Instruments, through the awful Judgments of God, he would Humble us therefore, and Pardon us.<sup>609</sup>

By moving past Margaret Rule, the authors shrewdly rested their defense of patriarchal order on the important men in power. Calef's challenge, they argued, was just the sort of threat to the established order that ambitious, angry men always made. Calef would have his readers see wise men as fools, but these men wrote to demonstrate that Calef's views sought to turn the world upside down; the resulting chaos, they suggested, would suit the merchant just fine.

The second strategy was to attack Calef's credibility on individual and relational levels; they disparaged him as disorderly and malicious, and cast aspersions on the motives and character of his supporters. They depicted any who believed Calef's charges

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<sup>608</sup> For detailed analysis of Increase Mather's work to secure the new charter, see Hall, *The Last American Puritan*, especially Chapters 7 and 8. See also Cotton Mather, *Pietas in patriam: the life of His Excellency Sir William Phips, Knt. late Captain General and Governour in Chief of the province of the Massachusetts-Bay, New England...* (London, 1697); later included in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702).

<sup>609</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 6.

as an “unguided multitude,” so infected with the book’s “venome” that neither reason nor counterargument could sway them from error. They portrayed Calef as one of New England’s internal enemies, with “Abettors,” content to “whisper” slanders about their betters, an anxiety heightened by witchcraft and Indian wars. In contrast, the authors presented their book as a defense of unity; they wrote so “that there maybe no more Slandering, and Reviling, and Reproaching one another, but that we may be all bound in the Bands of Unity, Singing the Song of the Glorious Angels above.”<sup>610</sup> Echoing Cotton Mather, they claimed to write as servants of God chastising an enemy whose delusions served the Devil. “New England,” they wrote, “was once a place, in which the Feet of them that brought the Good Tidings of the Gospel were beautiful. But there is now sprung up a Number, who seem to be of another Spirit: No wonder then if those who are Faithful to Christ and His Interest, are Reproached and Maligned by them that serve His greatest Enemy.”<sup>611</sup> Thus they transformed Calef from a man respectfully requesting clarification on scriptural matters to an instrument of demonic and worldly dissolution. Like the witches whose trials he questioned, Calef’s illegal publication marked him as the antithesis of proper patriarchal order.

The authors invoked the language of manly credit and community, linking the Mathers throughout the text to emphasize that they were joined in God’s service and united against Calef’s “Malignant Calumnies and Reproaches.” Therefore, they wrote, “it is but Justice for us, to joyn them in our Vindicating of them.”<sup>612</sup> This linkage may

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 2; 25.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 32.



have been an attempt to contradict rumors that the two were divided over the appropriate response to witchcraft-possession.<sup>613</sup> They assert that: “Our Mr. Mather the Younger”:

Must not be troubled if Ill-men, that Revile his most Reverend Father, shall give him a proportionable share in their malice. There are more Fiery Darts shot at this worthy Person, by the hand of Robert Calef, than at any one... We shall but displease him, and it may be some will think it flattery, if we should pretend to write the Character which this worthy man deserves; those that are even his Enemies, being Judges.<sup>614</sup>

The authors praise Cotton Mather not only by attesting to his excellent qualities, but also by suggesting that his modesty led him to be more concerned about his father’s reputation than his own. While a Puritan could not view his life or works as assurance of God’s grace, they remained likely signs of election. Cotton occasionally betrayed a struggle to maintain the humility necessary for a godly Puritan, a weakness Calef highlighted to devastating effect.

To contradict Calef’s charges, the authors document Cotton Mather’s eligibility for honorable manhood. All who know him, they write:

look upon him to be a worthy Good man, as a Scholar, and a Gentleman, who would not willingly write a thing that is False...and that he spends his life in Studies, that he might do Good to all sorts of men...Calef himself does confess as much as this comes to; and others that are displeas’d at Mr. Mather for his being so significant in the Service of the Churches, yet when they are out of their angry fits, will confess the same.<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> Increase Mather’s *Cases of Conscience concerning evil Spirits Personating Men...* (1693) contributed to this impression. Fourteen ministers signed its Preface, but Cotton Mather did not. His own *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) was coming to press, in which he supported the Judges’ rulings. Levin writes that Cotton “could not understand the ‘raging asperity’ with which people treated him after he had refused to sign the preface...[but] the bitterest result for him was ‘the great slander...that I run against my own father and all the ministers in the country,’” 219. Increase later added a postscript to *Cases* in which he denied any substantial disagreement.

<sup>614</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 32.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

After establishing Cotton Mather as a scholar and honorable gentleman, the writers attest to Mather's beneficent intentions. Whereas Calef and his sort wrote out of malice, Mather's service to the colony was beneficent. This in itself helped support the authors' view of Mather's nobility and honesty. They also suggested that Mather's "significance" explained his critics' resentment. These bitter men, unable to produce legitimate challenges to Mather's name, collapsed instead into "angry fits," in which they—like children—temporarily surrendered their reason. Later, the authors claimed that because Calef was unable to challenge the reputations of Mather's supporters, he similarly "gives a Kick at these great men"<sup>616</sup> as if struggling against the elders who sought to restrain his unreasoning fits. The authors depicted Calef's adherents as petulant children, as well, and linked their lack of self-moderation to their lower status. They were "little men" who did not know "what it is to attend in the Court of Kings." Cotton Mather called them "Infatuated men," who "have only laid themselves open to the Resentments of Good men...and (while we were far from doing or wishing them any Hurt) they have Hurt themselves a Thousand Times more than either of us."<sup>617</sup> Like children having tantrums, Calef and his supporters lashed out against the restraining hands of men whose wisdom better suited them for leadership.

The reference to the "Court of Kings" constituted a response to one of Calef's more explicitly political barbs—his criticism of the new charter attained for Massachusetts by Increase Mather in 1692. While Margaret Rule's possession served as the centerpiece around which Calef structured his challenge to Cotton Mather, his invocation of the charter marked him as a critic of both Mathers. The main thrust of his

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 12-14.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 27; 70.

criticism was that Increase had capitulated too readily—despite four agonizing and expensive years attempting to secure Massachusetts’ traditional privileges. In response to Calef’s charges that Increase “procured a Charter for Sir William to be Governour, and himself Established Praesident of the Collidge,” Increase asked in *Some Few Remarks*, “Can there be greater Nonsense mixed with Malice!” He added, I suppose that all Reasonable Men will own, That Reproaches cast on me, for my Expensiveness in the Publick Service, are most Ungrateful and Unworthy.”<sup>618</sup> It may be that Increase protested too much; Levine suggests that there was general grumbling about the chapter, especially by followers of Elisha Cooke, who had never supported concessions of Massachusetts’ independence to royal oversight.<sup>619</sup> But according to Increase, not “so much as one Vertuous or Sensible man” failed to find Calef’s book vile. This rejection of Calef, or its attempt, by the manly community was made more complete by Increase Mather’s assertion that “although the absurd man be one of such Extream Unreasonableness, that some of this best Friends have told me, that they have long ago signified unto him, that for that cause, they did not wonder, that no Minister did care to be concerned with him.”<sup>620</sup>

As discussed above, the contributors to *Some Few Remarks* provided a series of explanations for Calef’s flagrant slanders. Hints of tensions between “better sorts” and their social inferiors, for example, pervaded the text but remained indirect; the arguments about reason and malice, however, remained right at the surface. Just as complaints about Calef’s unreasonableness encouraged readers to see him as an unruly child, their

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 21; 28.

<sup>619</sup> Levine, 191.

<sup>620</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 35-36.

complaints of his malice also conjured an image of a youth subservient to his excessive passions. Invocations of malice played such a central role in *Some Few Remarks*, particularly in Cotton Mather's contributions, that to document their presence can be tedious. At the same time, its sheer variety and repetition establishes its importance. The authors challenge Calef to "vent thy malice; speak what thou hast to Accuse them of; they shall come off with flying Colours"; "It must needs be Malice that has invented such a Ridiculous Story"; "What reason then, has this man to speak so Falsely, and Maliciously, of him?" Cotton Mather wrote: "perhaps my great Adversary always had certain people full of Robert Calefs Malignity, to serve him with Calumnies and Reproaches"; "His Malice (like that of Him, whose Instrument he has herein made himself) has here gone beyond his Wit." Lastly, "to see such a Man and such a Book treat me with such Brutish Malignity," led Mather to pray "[t]hat Malice it self may never hiss with the least Colour of Reason any more."<sup>621</sup>

Cotton Mather took a great deal of comfort in the idea that his persecution, which he felt so pointedly, demonstrated his worth. His confidence in the imminence of the millennium led him to believe that Satan would increase assaults against the most ardent servants of God.<sup>622</sup> Thus he wrote, perhaps in an attempt to convince himself, that "(through the Grace of Christ) we can Desire all the Malice of all our Enemies." The authors reinforced this notion by depicting Calef as a serpent. "Spit on, Calef; thou shalt be like the Viper on Paul's hand, easily shaken off, and without any damage to the Servant of the Lord."<sup>623</sup> Mather believed that godly New England stood poised at the end

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 11; 25; 32; 39; 40; 42; 47.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid., 22.

of history, and any who attempted to thwart its mission must ultimately face God's wrath. The authors shared his view of Calef's demonic allegiance, writing that the arguments in his book were "inhumane, and fit for none but a Servant of the worst Master... One would have thought, that the Fear of God (if he has any) should have darted that Scripture into his mind... Exod. 22. 28. *Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Ruler of thy People.*"<sup>624</sup> Unlike the Mathers' righteous anger, Calef's "venome" resulted from excessive rage and hate. Such humoral, constitutional weakness differentiated him from honorable men and marked him as lacking the self-mastery and reason necessary for authority. These characterizations show Calef as a devilish force, and can be extrapolated in a way that led him to resemble a witch as well. Cotton Mather declared that Calef's comparison of Margaret Rule's symptoms to those of Quakers and frauds was "as Dangerous and as Damnable a position, as ever dropt from the Pen of man: 'tis fit only to be written with a Quill of an Harpy."<sup>625</sup> Like a witch or scold, Calef's malicious and blasphemous words gave proof of his discontent and evil designs on others.

The Mathers' ability to summon the honorable manly community to their defense was a crucial factor in their ability to weather not only Calef's book but also the dissatisfied mutterings in Boston for which it provided a public forum. For this reason, the authors of *Some Few Remarks* take care to differentiate Calef from the men he critiqued. This strategy, to the extent that it established Calef as an inversion of his worthy targets, was inextricable from their argument that Calef advocated the destruction of all they represented. His goal, they write, was "to render the Land, and the Judges obnoxious (tho' all the Learning that he and wiser men than he, pretends unto, is

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 57. See Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue* (1997).

insufficient to dive to the Bottom of the matter.”<sup>626</sup> Increase Mather defended his handling of the new charter along similar lines. He emphasized its gains, “for which better men than Robert Calef are of Opinion, that the Countrey owes me Thanks.” He added “after the Charter was finished, several Right, Honourable Persons said to me, they were glad of what was gained.”<sup>627</sup> Cotton Mather used the same strategy, as in response to Calef’s criticism of his witchcraft publications. He highlighted the support his works received from eminent divines as Richard Baxter, whose preface to *Memorable Providences* bespoke its correctness. Mather further defended that volume as “not only ordered by the Governour, to be Published, with Terms of the highest Respect, but also was Perused and Approved by as Eminent persons as any in the Countrey.”<sup>628</sup> These examples demonstrate the customary link between honorable manhood and social order. The contributors to *Some Few Remarks* argued their legitimacy, gathered together the names of honorable men who recognized them, and used those names to buttress themselves against assaults from an outsider.

Just as Calef had compared the Mathers’ work with Margaret Rule to fraudulent Quaker and Catholic possessions, Cotton Mather and his defenders depicted Calef as an unsettling force whose attacks on New England’s judges and patriarchs aligned him not only with worldly enemies, but even Satan himself.<sup>629</sup> Traditional aspects of honorable manhood, credit and community were mobilized in both directions to oppose the unreasonable claims of malicious subordinates. Each accusation that Mather and his defenders levied at Calef simultaneously served to shore up the Mathers as the positive

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<sup>626</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 7.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

end of the binary. When Cotton Mather wrote in defense of his behavior after the “Storm was raised at Salem,” he emphasized his selfless generosity that emerged from a desire to be of service to God and all those who suffered for Christ’s sake. Despite this generosity, though, Mather asks:

how came it then to pass, that many people took up another Notion of me? Truly, Satan knows. Perhaps ‘twas because I thought it my Duty always to speak of the Honourable Judges with as much Honour as I could; (a Crime which I am generally...this made people, who Judge of things at a Distance, to dream that I approved of all that was done. Perhaps also my Disposition to avoid Extrems...causeth me generally to be obnoxious unto the Violent in all parties. Or, perhaps my great Adversary always had certain people full of Robert Calef’s Malignity, to serve him with Calumnies and Reproaches.<sup>630</sup>

Not only did this passage establish Robert Calef as an agent of Satan, it reinforced Mather’s own position as a respectful member of godly society who was as willing to offer appropriate deference as to expect it from others. The qualities of honorable manhood Mather exemplified were nowhere so clearly articulated as in his claim to be by nature a man who shunned the weakness and immoderation of extremes. Just as these arguments were inherently linked to the religion and politics of New England, they were also inherently gendered. Mather’s self-fashioning in the quotation above made use of readers’ customary association of the positive qualities as constitutive of honorable manhood, while the passions, excessiveness, malice and discontent of his enemies were believed to be rampant among youths, women, children, and Catholic, Quaker, and Indian enemies.

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 39-40. Even Mather’s formulation of the storm “that was raised at Salem” demonstrates the convenience of the passive voice. Even in that brief phrase, his determination not to be misconstrued as a witch-hunter made a palpable appearance.

Perhaps to reassure himself as well as the reader, Mather asserted that Calef's efforts amounted to nothing; whatever stir the book made upon its appearance had passed. Mather claimed that: "[p]eople at first were a little eager to see the Book, as they would be to see a *Prodigy* for they generally reckoned it to be a very *Prodigy* of wickedness. But they are now satisfied, That if he should go on to write never so many more such Volumns, they would lye upon his hands; no sober people would vouchsafe to look upon them."<sup>631</sup> One cannot help but notice how Mather's prediction provided a version of an idealized future. He imagined himself, and not Calef, as the producer of books that would attract the attention and appreciation of people of substance. He cautiously dared to dream that he might be as the great cedar in Ezekiel—the text given to him in his own angelic visitation—whose branches (books) shot out across great distances and elevated him above all others.<sup>632</sup> Mather thirsted for this vindication, but despite having all the privileges of elite patriarchal status, his defense of the judges and the witchcraft trials accomplished the kind of blot on his credit that Calef intended.

Mather's frustration with this state of affairs led him to vacillate between dispassionate reason and profound resentment. At times his expression of moral superiority coexists, uneasily, with his desire for revenge:

All we have to add is That we would *Bless and not Curse those who Persecute us*, and fervently Pray to God, for His Best Blessings on the very *Worst* of all our *Persecutors*... That though they may oblige us to *Defend* our selves, we hope, they shall not provoke us to *Revenge* any

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>632</sup> Levine eloquently summarizes the ways that the verses from Ezekiel 31 carried both a flattering and an ominous message. The angel Mather saw said "so many things he had been yearning to hear...a prophecy that fulfilled all the most ambitious hopes he had dared to imagine or to articulate in prayers...But the very next text that the angel chose to praise him reminded Mather of his own dangerous pride, the possibility of eternal retribution, and the political and economic disaster that threatened New England," 106-108. Silverman notes the "potency" Mather desired. That, along with the verse's emphasis on "long branches" that "shot forth," led to him suggest that "the angel in effect promised him a transatlantic penis," 129.



wrongs they may do unto us. And if any by their Envious Vexing and Carping...do...make *New-England*, the only Countrey where it is a Crime for *Innocency* to have a *Vindication*, we Forgive *these* also, and *Pray*, That they may be forgiven.<sup>633</sup>

Mather encouraged the reader to lift their eyes from the messy realm of New England to heaven, and offered his detractors a self-abnegating charity. When he made more overt threats, Mather invariably invoked God's likely judgment upon those who sought to ruin His most beloved servants.<sup>634</sup> Overall, *Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book* provided a platform from which Mather could reiterate his self-concept as part of God's plan for New England and characterize his detractors as Satan's instruments. His attempts to remain humble despite the grandeur of this self-concept were sincere, and one cannot help but find his struggle to sustain his vision of New England against escalating change somewhat poignant. For despite having the last word, and all earthly advantages, Cotton Mather does not emerge from these documents as the victor. Historians know little about Robert Calef outside of his book and the location of his grave,<sup>635</sup> but no matter how dastardly a figure Calef may have been, Mather had not managed to answer him even on the scriptural points most central to the justification of dispossession.<sup>636</sup> In time, Mather's defense of witchcraft and possession marked him as one brand of Puritan father—immensely honorable and venerated, but no longer a representative to whom much of Boston would look for leadership.

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<sup>633</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 70-71.

<sup>634</sup> Cotton Mather wrote in *Some Few Remarks*: "I am veryily perswaded, that the Holy Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve, will at some time or other [punish him] for this his deliberate wickedness," 42.

<sup>635</sup> Burr writes that Calef "was chosen an assessor, in 1710 a tithingman. It was perhaps about this time that he retired to Roxbury, where in 1707 he had bought a place and where he was a selectman of the town when, in 1719, death found him. There...a stone still testifies that "Here lyes buried the body of Mr. Robert Calef, aged seventy-one years, died April the Thirteenth, 1719," 295.

<sup>636</sup> Silverman writes that Mather's attempts to rebut Calef's pointed questions about dispossession came across as "about one page of obfuscation, evasion, and contradiction," 134.

## **Patriarchy and Possession**

Cotton Mather used manly credit and honor to buoy his claims to patriarchal privilege, even as his defensiveness revealed his insecurities about himself and the future of New England. The continuity between these documents and those from the Harsnett-Darrell episode a century earlier demonstrates that gendered language remained central in published witchcraft-possession writing. The problem for New England's theocracy, at least those who favored Increase Mather's new charter but opposed the liberal church reforms of the Brattle Street Church,<sup>637</sup> was that witchcraft-possession retained its use as a tool for conversions, but also made participants vulnerable to accusations that they had fallen victim to the very sins the dispossession sought to purge. Because Cotton Mather saw himself as fighting a war against Satan, he unmade critics like Robert Calef as dark inversions of himself—much as the witch image inverted honorable womanhood. Mather's sense of demonic opposition was strengthened by the sense that even his recent victories over the enemy were far from complete. David Levin writes, "society was moving beyond the control of the people who called themselves the Lord's. Yet the central fact that marks 1692-93 as the end of Cotton Mather's most effective political action is the separation of the political world from the world of spirits"<sup>638</sup> that took place when Governor Phips overruled the Special Court of Oyer and Terminer. While it would be misleading to claim that Bostonians moved toward skepticism as a result of a more "modern" or scientific mindset, the institutionalization of religious tolerance in 1692-

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<sup>637</sup> See Michael Hall's explanation of Brattle Street Manifesto (1699) that led to controversy over access to the press and the appropriateness of certain Anglican practices in New England churches, 292-301.

<sup>638</sup> Levin, 232.

1693 ushered in a period of increasingly secular political language.<sup>639</sup> Gendered language was one of the tools men used in the struggle to preserve themselves amid change—to lay claims to appropriate patriarchal order, mastery of subordinates, and the reason and self-moderation necessary for leadership.

In his self-defense, Cotton Mather excerpted Thomas Jollie's *Surey Demoniack* (1698), which described a recent, controversial English possession case. The case in Surrey followed a pattern that Mather recognized as only too familiar. Jollie, who publicized the ordeal, found himself in a pamphlet war with one Zachary Taylor, who depicted the entire episode as a fraud.<sup>640</sup> Mather gave a standard tribute to his "Reverend Friend Mr. Thomas Jolly," and cited the "many Credible men" who confirmed the impossible feats performed by the young demoniac, Thomas Dugdale. After thousands of witnesses, and many days of prayer and fasting, the young man was delivered. But, Mather wrote:

as he was a very Vicious Fellow before his Possession, so he was not much mended after his Deliverance. When the Tragedy was over, one Zachary Taylor, Printed a Virulent Book, (Just like our Calefs) which affirmed unto the Nation, That the... whole Business of Dugdale, was a Cheat, and a Sham, and a Combination of the Roman-Catholicks and the Non-Conformists, to put a Trick upon the Nation: and Reviled that Reverend man of God, Mr. Jolly, as Guilty of much Falsity, and Forgery,

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<sup>639</sup> Both Levin and Michael Hall describe this secularization as a partial explanation for the end of the witchcraft trials and the Mathers' particular influence. Levin writes that the new charter's institution of a royal governor, and "the enfranchisement of men who were not Congregationalists, became the most effective wedge that divided secular and religious affairs," 232. Michael Hall writes that Increase Mather's intentions aside, after the new charter a "franchise based on church membership and a government elected entirely within the colony gave way to a franchise based on property and a government supervised and directed from London," 252.

<sup>640</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 43-44. See also Thomas Jollie, *The Surey demoniack: or, An account of Satans strange and dreadful actings, in and about the body of Richard Dugdale of Surey...* (London, 1697) and *A vindication of the Surey demoniack as no imposter* (1698); Zachary Taylor, *The Surey impostor: being an answer to a late fanatical pamphlet, intituled The Surey demoniack* (London, 1697) and *Popery, superstition, ignorance, and knavery, confess'd, and fully proved on the Surey dissenters*, (London, 1699).

and Blasphemy...and as worthy to have his *Tongue bored through with an hot Iron*, and other Infamous passages, that can't be Numbered.<sup>641</sup>

There are a series of notable continuities in this passage. The familiar construction of the protagonist's honor and the antagonist's malice, for example, is immediately apparent. Mather's dependence on the honorable men to attest to the spectacle, likewise, was a commonplace. His comment about the "vicious" nature of the young man demonstrates one of the script's flexibilities as well; for the boy to recant (as William Somers had) could demonstrate his susceptibility to Devilish temptation, and not necessarily compromise the ministers' godly lesson. Taylor's linking of Jollie's "Non-Conformists" with Catholics reflected the English script more than its recent American offshoot. While "popishness" remained a serious concern, it normally leaked through the door of the Anglican practices now officially tolerated in the colony. The threat of actual Catholics had, for the most part, been replaced by Quakers, or worse: Native Americans.

If the Mathers perceived their enemies to be Satan's instruments, then Native Americans afforded a particularly fearsome enemy. Contact and conflict with Native Americans profoundly shaped colonists' realities in material and symbolic ways—including their perceptions and descriptions of the Devil. One intriguing aspect of this discrepancy between the Old and New English expression of witchcraft-possession is its appearance at the beginning Cotton Mather's description of Margaret Rule's possession. Before introducing Rule, Cotton Mather related a story of a man whose brush with evil spirits served, alongside Rule's narrative, to exhort readers to live more godly lives. Indeed, Mather's title for Margaret Rule's manuscript, *Another Brand*

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<sup>641</sup> *Some Few Remarks*, 43-44.

*Pluckt from the Burning*, could apply to Christian Indians whose acceptance of Protestantism might save them from damnation.

Mather justified the story of this pious Indian as a “fit introduction” to his narrative of Rule’s possession because of the correlation between the Indian’s experience of demonic temptation and those reported by the afflicted in Essex County. This continuity helped him to address the waning enthusiasm for the outcome in Salem by providing assurance that the witnesses and judges had acted rightly. The figure of the pious Indian allowed Mather to offer his readers a familiar moral lesson about the impieties of professed Christians in comparison to a redeemed “savage.” He wrote that this man, “notwithstanding some of his *Indian Weakness*, had something of a better Character of Vertue and Goodness, than many of our People can allow to most of their Countrey-Men that profess the *Christian Religion*.”<sup>642</sup> The Indian’s struggle against his “Indian Weakness” represented the same ordeal that Mather’s English audience experienced, despite differences of degree, or nature.

Mather wrote that when this Indian realized he was near death, he called his “Folks” around him, urging them to pray and, as Mather put it, “beware of the *Drunkenness*, the *Idleness*, the *Lying*, whereby so many of that Nation disgrac’d their Profession of Christianity.”<sup>643</sup> After these noble preoccupations, including the humble acceptance of God’s will in the recent death of his son, the Christian Indian saw an apparition of a “Black-Man, of a Terrible aspect, and more than humane Dimensions, threatning bitterly to kill him if he would not promise to leave off Preaching.” When refused, the specter softened his approach and told the Indian that he would leave him in

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<sup>642</sup> Calef, sig. B1r (EEBO 8).

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (EEBO image 9).

peace if he would only sign in his book. When the Indian called upon God for protection against “the *Tempter*...the *Daemon* Vanish’t.”<sup>644</sup> Mather assured the reader of the story’s legitimacy because it “is a Story which I would never have tendered unto my Reader if I had not Receiv’d it from an honest and useful *English* Man, who is at this time a Preacher of the Gospel to the Indians.” The greater credit to be given to this Englishman (possibly John Eliot, who acted as a missionary among New England)<sup>645</sup> reminded the reader that there are men who can be trusted to pass along true stories about supernatural activity—Mather himself among them.

Mather’s lionization of this exceptional Indian resembled his praise for pious women.<sup>646</sup> Both English women and Indian men—for Indian women were largely invisible in Mather’s writing—had to work against their natural susceptibility to demonic influence. Paradoxically, the “simplicity” of women and Indian men could also sweeten their faith, allowing them to exemplify an admirable piety. Still, the archetypes of the pious Englishwoman and Christian Indian were far less compelling than their inversions, which combined the malevolence of witches and demons with titillating (implicit) uncertainty about how their bodies figured in their degradation. While explicit cultural messages validated the piety of Englishwomen and of Indians who had adapted to life in Praying Towns, both remained targets of suspicion.<sup>647</sup> They could be easily joined in

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<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 2 (EEBO image 9).

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 2 (EEBO image 9). John Eliot translated the Bible into the Massachusetts language in 1663, and later a grammar of that language in 1666.

<sup>646</sup> See, for example, Mather’s *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion. Or, The character and happiness of a vertuous woman: in a discourse which directs the female-sex how to express, the fear of God, in every age and state of their life...* (Cambridge, 1691).

<sup>647</sup> John Eliot’s mission among the Massachusetts led to the institution of seven “Praying Towns,” but after King Philip’s War, the populations were decimated either by starvation or containment on Deer Island. See Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians before King Philip’s War* (Cambridge, MA:

Mather's version of Rule's possession because women and Indians shared a gendered and weaknesses that increased their potential for great piety and great evil. For the sake of New England's future, colonists had to commit themselves to following the leadership of honorable, earthly superiors. Mather claimed the right to interpret the afflictions of the Christian Indian, of Mercy Short, Margaret Rule, and the others in Essex County; in his providential thinking the survival of the colony depended upon the triumph of patriarchal hierarchy over other men's attempts to claim that right of interpretation.

As with most of Mather's arguments, Robert Calef found a way to twist it to his advantage. In a reference to Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, Calef suggested that the real wonder was that the Essex trials had continued as long as they had, taking the lives of innocent people upon such slender grounds. The alternative "Wonder" that Calef to conclude his narrative, purported to be an account of what an "Indian told Captain Hill, at Saco-Fort." Right away, Calef brought the reader back to the ongoing battles on the Maine frontier against French and Indian allies, and of Calef's criticism of Sir William Phips' aborted attempt to capture Quebec.<sup>648</sup> Calef merged his critique of the established patriarchal hierarchy in Massachusetts with his condemnation of witchcraft trails and dispossessions. Calef reported:

The Indian told him that the French Ministers were better than the English, for before the French came among them there were a great many Witches among the Indians, but now where wer[e] none, and there were much Witches among the English Ministers, as Burroughs, who was Hang'd for

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Harvard University Press, 1999); Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>648</sup> Calef took Mather to task for writing positively about Sir William Phips's failed attempt to take Quebec; an argument that sunk to the level of the precise amount of artillery used, Calef 145-148. Saco, Maine, was the site of serious battles between English and Indians since King Philip's War in 1675 to the 1720s.

it... Were I disposed to make reflections upon it, I suppose you will Judge the Field large, enough, but I forbear, as above.<sup>649</sup>

In this way Calef linked the English practices in the colony to the troubled military campaign against the Indians. This allowed him to construct a stronger critique of Mather's laudatory biography of Phips, and to link his disparagement of the minister and the witchcraft trials to a general incompetence. It was particularly assertive to suggest that the witchcraft trials Mather praised had contributed to Indians' preference of French Catholics over English Protestants. If Reverend George Burroughs truly had been a witch, as Mather maintained, then it became difficult to answer this "Indian." More than a criticism of the governing body's military campaign—thought it was—Calef suggested that rather than carry out Mather's millennial purpose, the trials had in effect served the Devil's interests. The causes of Mather's delusion were his unmaking: excessive passions, ambition, insufficient reason, and reliance upon degraded adherents. It is telling that both men found an image of an Indian man to suit their objectives. Calef might simply have been following Mather's form, to provide a kind of bookend for their debate. Still, Mather's "Pious Indian" image was pedagogical precisely because it was an image that would strike readers as an anomaly. Despite Mather's use of the image as a reminder of the universality of sin and the importance of a "good death," Calef's Indian would have sounded more familiar, real, and threatening.

By 1700 the Essex County witchcraft trials had been over for seven years, and there had been no subsequent outbreak to fulfill Mrs. Carver's prediction. Rather than dramatic wars between angels and devils and an impending millennium, New England

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<sup>649</sup> Calef, 25 (EEBO image 20).



was left with factionalism and bickering over church policies. The raids on New England settlements by French and Indian allies remained a terrifying and puzzling manifestation of the mysteries of God's will. How could Cotton Mather square the outcomes of the Essex County outbreak against his predictions? What did it mean for his credit if the community no longer looked to him to interpret the providential significance of supernatural signs? The aborted libel suit against Robert Calef left a notable silence; for all the talk of outrage, malice, and God's terrible judgments, Calef and his sort lived on in a Boston that became more their city than Mather's, and may have been for some time. While neither Mather nor Calef was irreparably unmade by their published arguments, both likely suffered slights as a result. Gender had informed their language of attack, and it surely continued to govern their ongoing efforts to advocate for themselves and their interests. Cotton Mather continued to publish prolifically, and Calef retreated into silence. By continuing to behave how he had before the witchcraft-possession outbreak, each man completed his argument in favor of his commitment to order, reason, and deference to his rights and responsibilities in the community. The gendered language of manhood was flexible enough to support Mather and Calef's opposing arguments about possession, and also their opposing reactions to its decline. As Elizabeth Foyster writes, manhood "in the seventeenth century was characterised by neither sudden transformation caused by crisis, nor by stasis. Rather, it was a history marked by the endurance of patriarchal ideology, which overlay the constantly shifting daily practice of gender relations."<sup>650</sup> This persistence helps to explain how the gendered strategies employed in England and New England around witchcraft-possession remained in use by all parties:

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<sup>650</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 210.

demoniacs, accused witches, and those who published propaganda. Even as witchcraft-possession remained associated with female weaknesses and proclivities, men became involved as men alongside women who often served as exemplars or foils for themselves. Given what was at stake, it is not surprising that participants would use gendered cultural assumptions when it best suited their interests. The inconsistent and occasionally contradictory nature of their use of gender only further recommends it to historians as a necessary lens through which to view the Anglo-Atlantic.

## EPILOGUE

### PATRIARCHY ON THE SIDE OF DECLINE

That witchcraft-possession in the Anglo-American context was a predominantly female phenomenon can be seen, for example, in traditional beliefs about women's susceptibility to supernatural influence and the consistently higher numbers of female accused and executed witches. The thoroughly gendered nature of the crime, and the methods used to detect and prosecute it, has provided scholars with a lens through which to observe how early modern people reacted to tensions within families and communities. Still, to classify witchcraft-possession analytically as "something female" obscures some of the ways these cases functioned; for men accused of witchcraft by the possessed, men who acted as if they were possessed, and men who published propaganda about the cases, much of the contention centered around claims to honorable manhood. These uses of manhood—as well as related concepts of order, rationality, and mastery—were characterized by a remarkable degree of continuity across time and space. This dissertation, trusting that the reader will accept the existence of male witches, demoniacs, and propagandists, turns from locating them to analyzing their representations in published sources that transmitted messages about legitimate and degraded manhood. Even though gender for men was malleable, and occasionally superceded by other concerns, it remained inextricably linked to the men who were implicated by, experienced, or observed witchcraft-possession.

Men whom the possessed accused of being witches, like John Samuel and Reverend George Burroughs, were made to face neighbors and officials who were open to the idea that they had sought power from the Devil at the risk of their eternal souls. Their accusers reported spectral torture at their hands, and the timing of the fits and recoveries contributed to observers' certainty of their guilt. Men accused of being witches were somewhat better positioned than their female counterparts, given the weight of cultural tradition that associated witchcraft with women. Still, men were sinners whose lusts could get the better of them, and as witches they might logically take positions of authority among other witches. These two men, discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 respectively, do not provide a representative overview of male witches, nor are their stories meant to contradict or supercede scholarship about female witches. But their experiences demonstrate that languages of manhood mattered in these moments, and provided both tools to free and to condemn the accused. Men who were accused of witchcraft by the possessed had to assert their rationality and mastery without appearing angry, resentful, or overly ambitious. In the end, status as an honorable man with good credit among other honorable men had the potential to redeem the accused, but it rested uneasily on public opinion and temperament. It may have been more difficult to unmake a man into a witch than to do the same for a woman, but the experiences of these two case studies reveal how centrally gender participated in that process.

Demonic possession was largely identifiable because of its formulaic adherence to a traditional script, and therefore men and boys who acted as if they were possessed attempted to execute the same set of symptoms as female demoniacs. Still, published possession narratives reveal that men and women were granted leeway in different

aspects of possession behavior. For instance, male possession was more often solitary, and without accompanying charges of witchcraft. In New England, this appears to have changed, as more men became involved along with others—representing either a tacit choice or a condition imposed by the gatekeeping men evaluating their claims. While witchcraft-possession was a predominantly female phenomenon on both sides of the Atlantic, New England’s instances of possession appeared to involve women even more exclusively than England’s. Just as witchcraft-possession continued to resonate with central political and religious controversies throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, gendered assumptions about demoniacs’ bodies and temperaments continued to shape their ability to lay claim to a legitimate possession.

The men who published propaganda about witchcraft-possession cases were drawn in by the powerful grasp these episodes held with popular imagination. Possessions were dramatic enactments of the struggle between God and Satan, and between sinful temptation and godly redemption. Ministers who attempted to remind their congregants in every sermon of these cosmic contests might achieve more at the bedside of a demoniac than through years of preaching. What’s more, written accounts of possession *sold*, allowing ministers to spread the word more effectively (and cost-effectively) than before. This sensationalism was possession’s appeal, but also its great risk. As Puritan ministers John Darrell and Cotton Mather discovered, even their stellar reputations and deep conviction in the veracity of what they observed was not enough to protect them against accusations of being crass liars, lascivious manipulators, or chattering, womanish dupes. In Chapters 3 and 6, we saw how witchcraft-possession pamphlet warfare raised the stakes for those who participated, and that gendered critiques

accounted for many of the central strategies to authenticate or disprove demoniacs' claims.

This dissertation pursues a transatlantic, cultural history of manhood in witchcraft-possession, by using gender as a central category of analysis even while acknowledging the relevance of social class, religious tensions, and other factors. Even as particular episodes incorporated colloquial pressures—and the religious and political conflicts from which the cases were inextricable—gender's ongoing function in these cases demonstrates the continuing salience of patriarchal order as an organizing principle. It ought not compromise gender's relevance to point out the ways that it operated inconsistently, influencing some men and women more than others. Since early modern colonists had to justify their beliefs and actions in accordance with their own cosmology, they were under no pressure to be explicit when implicit invocations worked just as well. Nor did their use of gender need to be clear even to them, any more than the influence of other aspects of their culture and paradigm needed to be denoted in order to be enacted.

There can be no single cause for the decline of elite credulity in witchcraft-possession; each instance was an incredibly complex blend of interpersonal relations, religious fervency, and official temperaments. But continuities in the role of gendered language, invocations of manhood, and strategies for “unmaking” men and women into witches suggests that gender remained central to possession argumentation throughout the period and through a shift of patriarchal interest from credulity to skepticism. By keeping both men and women in view while analyzing witchcraft-possession, historians gain a more complex view of the many shades of gendered strategies utilized in these times of crisis. An integrated gender history also allows for an acknowledgement of

patriarchy that does not obscure the different relations of power among men and youths, and among women and girls, parents and children, and masters and servants. It restores dynamics of power to discussions of witchcraft prosecution without insisting that patriarchal interests would only be served in one way—by the oppression of women by men. In fact, patriarchy in the early modern Anglo-Atlantic was as complicated as the population itself, with all of its shifting alliances and fortunes. Manhood and gender were inextricable from cases of witchcraft-possession, and provided explanations for outcomes as varied as redeemed innocence and justified executions.

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*Gortonists, and other heretiques. Their manner of gathering of churches, the commodities of the country, and description of the principall towns and havens, with the great encouragements to increase trade betwixt them and old England. With the names of all their governours, magistrates, and eminent ministers.* London, 1654.

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father, and frier, Sebastian Michaëlis, priour of the Couent Royall of S. Magdalene at Saint Maximin. Translated into English by W.B. London, 1613.

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*spirits, the force of charms, and philters, with other abstruse matters.* London, Printed by J.M. and are to be sold by the booksellers in London 1677.

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