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**Unruly Men, Improper Patriarchs:
Male Witches in Colonial New England**

By

Rachel Elizabeth Lilley

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Rachel Elizabeth Lilley
July 13, 2011

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The Faculty of
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Abstract

Set against the backdrop of the now infamous seventeenth-century witch-panic in Salem, Massachusetts, this thesis argues for a new conceptualization of the men who were accused of witchcraft. Rather than considering men as adjuncts to female actors in this narrative, or feminizing them to explain the accusations against them, this thesis argues that it was often their performance of hyper-masculinity put them at risk. Despite this focus, this thesis knits together a complex web of contextual and behavioral threads to explain accusations of witchcraft made against men in colonial New England. Additionally, this thesis argues that the writings of American demonologists like Cotton and Increase Mather illustrate an intellectual continuity between Old World and New, one that did not balk at the idea of male witches.

To my academic mentors, who offered endless wisdom, kindness, and insight. To my friends, colleagues, and loved ones who kept me grounded and filled my life with laughter. Most importantly, to my family, without whose love, support and understanding this would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

Theories and Historiography

*“Seeing as both [sexes] are subject to the State of damnation,
so both are liable to Satan’s snares.”¹*

Thomas Cooper’s response to the question of who might become a witch makes clear that not all seventeenth-century demonologists believed witchcraft to be the strict province of the female sex, but that both men and women could fall prey to the temptations of the Devil and the evils of witchcraft. Indeed, as was true in late seventeenth-century Europe, a number of men in seventeenth-century New England were clearly tempted, or at least their contemporary accusers thought they had been. Unfortunately, their stories are sorely under-represented in the scholarship on New England witchcraft. These men are either ignored altogether, or are mentioned only to immediately discount them as anomalous to the larger narrative of the persecution of female witches. The few scholars who have explored this issue have modeled one of three main theories onto their narratives of male witches. First, many historians argue that men were primarily accused as “secondary targets” of women who were accused. These men often had “witch-wives,” making them guilty of witchcraft by association. Second, men were sometimes accused because they did not fit the social or gender roles prescribed to them. They were too feminine, too masculine, or failed to meet the expectations of a masculine gender role, such as husband or father. Finally, because men were accused more often when charges of witchcraft were connected to other criminal charges, especially in Europe, some historians contend witchcraft charges against men should therefore be considered separately from charges made against women. Even Stuart Clark, in his seminal work on witchcraft and demonology, argued that male witches would have been

¹ Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witch-Craft* (London: 1617), 180-181.

“literally unthinkable” to early modern European demonologists.² However, subsequent historians such as Malcolm Gaskill, Laura Apps and Andrew Gow, and Elizabeth Kent have demonstrated that the early modern “everyman” found male witches to be just as “thinkable” as female witches, if not just as likely.³

Men are important in the historical witchcraft narrative because they were as tightly bound by societal mores as women; too many missteps and they too could fall victim to accusations of witchcraft. If they were bad neighbors, poor patriarchs, or overly “hot,” men (to use contemporary parlance), they could be caught up in the expanding web of a witch-panic as they were at Salem. Failing to adequately perform to the gender standards set by Puritan society, men could be accused of witchcraft, but this failure was certainly not the only cause of charges of witchcraft. While gender performance functions as the *primum mobilum* in this work, it should be noted that improper gender performance alone would not result in accusations of witchcraft.

I. Theorizing Gender

Some of the key underpinnings of this work are the gender theories of Joan Scott and Judith Butler. As one of the preeminent scholars of gender history, Joan Scott’s theories continue to inform the works of other gender historians. In her article, “Gender: A Useful

² Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.

³ Malcolm Gaskill, “The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict and Belief in Jacobean England,” *Historical Research* 71, no. 175 (June 1998): 142-172; Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003). Gaskill’s, “The Devil in the Shape of Man,” and Apps’s and Gow’s *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, both argue, using the oft-cited, and often gender-neutral, language of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, that male witches were indeed entirely within the realm of the possible to early modern demonologists and, more obviously, lay people. Second, Gaskill and Apps and Gow, following in the footsteps of Brian Levack’s third edition of his foundational work on European witch-hunts, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, illustrate that there was likewise nothing in the legal definition of a witch that indicated that men were exempt from accusation. These studies are important not simply because they put male witches more firmly and equitably back in the European witchcraft narrative, but because these ideas and beliefs about witchcraft would have been carried across the Atlantic by the Protestant men and women who would settle in New England.

Category of Historical Analysis,” Scott argues that the term “gender” should refer to the “relationship between the sexes,” not to signify men or women in exclusivity.⁴ Scott defines gender as the link between two propositions: it is a “constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences,” and is a “primary way of signifying power.”⁵ The perceived differences to which Scott refers are those physical actions and external attributes that signify gender within the constraints and constrictions of a particular culture. A related facet of Scott’s further definition of gender are the “normative concepts” that seek to restrict the meaning of “culturally available symbols that evoke multiple representations.”⁶ These “normative concepts” are the standards and ideals of gender set by a society which serve boundary-setting functions within that society, seeking to limit, delegitimize, or even eliminate any gender multiplicities. Boundary-setting ensures that a particular gender identity, a certain type or definition of masculinity for example, becomes or remains dominant. These ideas are instructive in considering colonial New England witchcraft cases because accusations were used, in part, to constrain or punish alternate expressions of both femininity and masculinity.

Despite presenting her own theories of what gender is and how it should be studied, Scott takes issue with attempts to “theorize gender,” as this too often results in oversimplification. As she argues, applying models leaves out the important stories-within-stories of gender, the “alternative,” “deviant,” or non-dominant masculinities, for example. Patriarchy theorists who have, Scott suggests, “directed their attention to the...male ‘need’ to dominate the female,” leave out the ways in which certain masculinities dominated others

⁴ Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1067.

⁶ *Ibid.*

and the ways in which women are often complicit in enforcing both masculine and feminine boundaries.⁷

Additionally, patriarchal theory “analysis rests on physical difference.”⁸ This is problematic, Scott argues, because it “assumes a consistent or inherent meaning for the human body.”⁹ As Elizabeth Dillon’s fascinating study of the feminized body of the male Puritan convert illustrates, Puritan conceptions about the proper and improper ways of imagining and writing about the male body were not static. These concepts shifted over time, and cannot be assumed to resemble present-day conceptions.¹⁰ It would be unwise therefore to assume that gender roles and expectations remained the same throughout the seventeenth century, whether in England or New England.

Two years after Scott’s work, Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* in which she developed the theory of a “performative construction” of gender. As Butler argues, gender is “an ongoing discursive practice...open to intervention.”¹¹ In essence, Butler contends that gender does not exist beyond its physical expressions or performance.¹² Publically performed “words, acts, [and] gestures...produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body.”¹³ In

⁷ Scott, 1058.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. 1059.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, “Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ: the Feminized Body of the Puritan Convert” in *A Centre of Wonders: the Body in Early America*, eds. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 129-144. Dillon’s article investigates the literary language that feminized the body of the male Puritan convert. Dillon explains the imagery used by Puritan men in poetry and other religious literature followed in the “footsteps of a century of rhetoric describing the Puritan convert...as the Bride of Christ” (129). Not only does he suckle at the figurative breast of Christ, imbibing spiritual nourishment, but is also imaged as the spiritual wife of Christ, a Biblically derived image, filled with the “seeds of his Grace” in order to “bring forth the fruits” of it (129-130). By the turn of the eighteenth century, however, these images and representations would fall out of vogue as ideals of masculinity changed.

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), viii, 33.

¹² Ibid. 25.

¹³ Ibid. 136.

other words, Butler suggests that there is no gender without expression of it. Gender has no root of its own but is entirely a cultural construct of publically performed acts, “sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.”¹⁴ It is this connection between the performance of gender and accusations of witchcraft, especially against men, that is one of the key contributions of this thesis.

II. Masculinity in Theory and Context

Having set our gender foundations generally, we can narrow our scope to focus more closely on the construction of masculinity. Denise Riley deconstructs both the use, and refusal, of the terms “woman” and “women” by feminist historians.¹⁵ As Riley argues, the “instabilities of the category of ‘women’ are the *sine qua non* of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object [and] despoiled of a fight.”¹⁶ Yet these temporalities and instabilities are not limited to “women.”¹⁷ The “impermanence of collective identities” can also be a source of distress and trouble for “man” and the masculine, forcing historians to consider men in the complex geographic, temporal, and social context in which they existed.¹⁸

Joy Parr’s article “Gender in Theory and Practice,” bears out this argument. Parr calls for a “tolerance of ambiguity,” or the acceptance of the historical subject in their “multiplicity” rather than focusing on one facet of their identity alone.¹⁹ By way of an example, Parr explains that “being simultaneously a worker, a Baptist, and a father, one is

¹⁴ Butler, 136.

¹⁵ Denise Riley, “Does Sex Have a History? ‘Women’ and ‘Feminism,’” *New Formations* 1 (1987): 35-45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Joy Parr, “Gender History and Historical Practice,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 76 (1995): 354-376.

never solely or systematically any of these.”²⁰ Parr’s method considers the subject as an intersection of, and interaction between, multiple identities. Applying her theories to witchcraft accusations, it becomes clear that it is illogical and inadvisable to consider one part of a man’s identity – father, husband, laborer, minister or layman – as the sole reason for a witchcraft accusation, when surely there were several factors working in conjunction. Thus it was not just improper performance of masculine gender roles, but a combination of contentious social behaviors and damning social connections that caused men to be accused of witchcraft.

Alexandra Shepard and Elizabeth Foyster address ideas similar to Parr’s in their discussions of the construction of masculinity in early modern England. The premise of Foyster’s work, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage*, is that “new histories” of men are important because they integrate the “private lives of men in the home as sons, husbands and fathers.”²¹ Foyster argues that in the seventeenth century failure to achieve the idealized, “hegemonic masculinity” was the source of “subordinate masculinities.”²² Unable to achieve the ideal, some men were relegated to subordinate masculine positions on the fringe of society.²³ The targeting of these subordinate masculinities, Foyster contends, was the “inevitable product of a system of gender relationships which insisted on male self-control and male control of female chastity.”²⁴ These masculinities on the fringe, outside the boundaries of idealized behavior, would have

²⁰ Parr, 361.

²¹ Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (New York: Longman, 1999), 3.

²² *Ibid.* 5.

²³ *Ibid.* 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 211.

been vulnerable to both condemnation, and attempts to corral them back within the margins of an acceptable masculine script. Accusations of witchcraft could work in just this way.

Alexandra Shepard's *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* also calls for an understanding of "gender differences *within* each sex [and] of those *between* them," contending that the contribution of a history of masculinity is an "appreciation of the multi-faceted nature of gender identities beyond the binary opposition of men and women."²⁵ She considers this especially applicable and important in the case of early modern England, where "stark hierarchies of age, social status, and marital status were deeply in-grained."²⁶ Shepard, like Scott, argues that those who define patriarchy as the "systemic domination of women" by men do not account for the "generational dimension" of patriarchy.²⁷ Not just women but younger men also fell under the government of male heads-of-household.²⁸ These "context-related differences" between men were as stark as those between women.²⁹ Shepard's work illustrates that historians should not consider "men" an umbrella term under which all men exist equally. Rather, different expectations existed for men at different stages throughout their lives, and thus they could move beyond the bounds of expectations in different and unique ways depending on their age and station.

Toby Ditz brings the idea of multiple masculinities home to colonial America. In the colonies, as in Europe, masculinity and the larger gender order was primarily concerned with differentiating men from other men, defining masculinity so that men knew what was

²⁵ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.* 5.

expected of them.³⁰ Rather than being “co-produced” with femininity, Ditz argues that masculinity was constructed in terms of other masculinities. Additionally, like Shepard, Ditz contends that men and masculinity must be located on a complex, multi-relational continuum upon which men negotiate their identities throughout their lives.³¹ Finally, Ditz concludes that too often historians have failed to account for the ways in which women participated in defining and defending the boundary between normative and deviant masculinities.³²

Women helped to police gender borders, partnering with men in supporting the project of proper gender performance, and punishing those men who over-stepped the bounds of propriety. Thus, for example, in Puritan New England, we not only see women accusing other women of witchcraft, but women accusing men as well, illustrating that these accusations were a way of shoring up standards of both femininity and masculinity.

Patriarchy, Power, and the Household

There were many networks of constraint for men living in Puritan New England. Within the home, men were bound by certain expectations, expectations that had germinated in Protestant Europe. The Protestant Reformation in Europe had demoted the celibate ideal, placing in its stead the ideal of a pastoral family. Martin Luther had argued against the idea of celibacy as the highest expression of religious piety, in part because it was an unachievable and therefore dangerous ideal for most of the laity.³³ Without marriage beds acting as a safety valve for the lusts of the common folk, Luther argued, the “sickness of the

³⁰ Toby Ditz, “The New Men’s History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History,” *Gender and History* 16, no. 1 (April 2004): 1-35.

³¹ *Ibid.* 4.

³² *Ibid.* 7.

³³ Susan Karant-Nunn, “The Emergence of the Pastoral Family in the German Reformation: the Parsonage as a Site of Socio-religious Change,” in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, eds. C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schutte (New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 2003), 79-99.

libido would run rampant through the streets.”³⁴ Luther was also very public about his affection for his wife and promoted the idea of a loving and intimate union as the ideal for married households.³⁵ These aspects of the pastoral ideal were especially revolutionary. Prior to the Reformation, Catholic priests had often lived with mistresses in illicit relationships that could not be held up for emulation among the laity. After the Reformation however, the clergy were not only expected to marry, but also to “esteem, assist, comfort and provide” for their spouses.³⁶ In Catholicism, the Holy Family had provided an ideal, and altogether unattainable, template for the lay family; in Protestantism, the model was the more achievable clerical or pastoral household.³⁷ Within Protestantism then, piety and sexuality were not mutually exclusive as long as they were located in the “new locus of chastity,” the marriage bed.³⁸ These ideas were carried across the Atlantic by the Puritans who would settle in Massachusetts, and we see it in their definitions of both the ideal family and the ideal man.

John Demos has pointed out that in colonial Massachusetts, the family as institution was of critical social importance, acting as business, school, “vocational institute,” church, and “welfare institution.”³⁹ As in the Protestant pastoral ideal, wives were considered subject to their husbands, and there was a societal expectation of “peaceful and harmonious” cohabitation.⁴⁰ It was likewise expected that husbands’ love for their wives must be “like

³⁴ Karant-Nunn, 82.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 92.

³⁷ Ibid. 93.

³⁸ Ibid. 98.

³⁹ John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 81, 183-184.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 93.

Christ's to his church: holy for quality and great for quantity."⁴¹ Within these familial institutions, men, and more specifically fathers and husbands, were held to certain standards.

A man "demonstrated [his] worth in the domestic context of service to his family and community. Such 'serviceableness' or 'usefulness' secured him his place and status as an adult man."⁴² Traits considered 'manly' were "not generally physical... [but] moral and psychological."⁴³ Among such traits were "maturity, rationality, responsibility, self-control, and courage."⁴⁴ Rather than being innate qualities genetically inherited by virtue of being born sexually male, these were qualities which were acquired through careful shepherding in a man's youth and constant reinforcement and vigilance as an adult.⁴⁵

Full manhood was achieved not just through control of one's own body however, but also through proper, rational control of the bodies of one's dependents, be they young children, wives, or servants.⁴⁶ Thus, to achieve full manhood, colonial New England men had to be married, property-holding *fathers*.⁴⁷ With fatherhood came a "special moral stature and a set of heightened moral obligations."⁴⁸ Father-husbands were expected to provide not just for the physical, but also the spiritual well-being of their wives and children.⁴⁹ Indeed, in Plymouth, Massachusetts men were bound by law to provide religious instruction to all

⁴¹ John Robinson, *The Works of John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1851), 20, quoted in John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 91.

⁴² Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: the Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2.

⁴³ Anne S. Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 19.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 19.

dependents in their household, including servants.⁵⁰ Should these household dependents not be properly cared for, or not properly prepared to take their places as members of the church and community, responsibility would be placed squarely on the shoulders of the head-of-household.

In maintaining household order, the use of force was permissible, but was to be done rationally, without passion, and only in order to give correction to unruly wives, children or servants.⁵¹ Ann Lombard ties the use of force more specifically to the defense of that which lay at the heart of colonial manhood: property, and the protection and enforcement of its boundaries. Regardless of the reason behind the use of physical force, Lombard makes clear that it was bound by some expectations and limitations.⁵² As the Protestant pastoral ideal had set out, men were to love and esteem their “help mate.” If they acted out of passion, or overstepped the bounds of appropriate correction, they could expect censure, by the community and/or by the state.

Mary Beth Norton’s *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* illustrates this overlapping of public and private in colonial New England, and how this overlap brought the state past the threshold of every home.⁵³ One of Norton’s primary arguments is that the colonies of the Chesapeake and New England evolved differently because each community had distinct understandings of the relationship between family and state. The Chesapeake, Norton contends, was essentially a proto-Lockean society, where governance was founded in the consent of the governed. The New

⁵⁰Lombard. 22-23.

⁵¹Ibid. 117.

⁵²Ibid. 125.

⁵³Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

England colonies, on the other hand, functioned under Filmerian principles. Robert Filmer, writing in response to contract theory's attacks on the centrality and importance of the family as a unit of society, rooted his ideas about the family in James I's principle of absolute monarchy. Filmerian social hierarchy held that:

Just as a father's power over his children does not stem from their consent...so the king's power is not derived from the consent of his subjects, but from God alone. The state...is a family, and the king its father...kings are accountable to God alone and...they can never be resisted by their subjects.⁵⁴

To Filmer, all male household heads were kings of family-sized kingdoms, with the same, albeit scaled-down, powers of the monarch.

Norton argues that this Filmerian world view of colonial New England "offered no unambiguous guidelines for separating public and private and little consistency in the application" of what guidelines they did have.⁵⁵ The explicit connection between state and family, and the belief that the well-ordered household was fundamental to a well-ordered state, was part of what blurred the line between public and private in New England.⁵⁶ Since the Filmerian world view so closely tied private and public, family and state, "events inside the seventeenth-century household took on societal significance...a male household head who wielded his authority inappropriately...[could] face prosecution for misbehavior."⁵⁷

Thus it is perhaps easy to see why men in New England were more likely to be accused of witchcraft, as compared with, say, the southern colonies. Under Filmerian principles, they were under close scrutiny in general; their public actions were under the purview of the local magistrates and church leaders, and those that took place in private were

⁵⁴ Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. J.P. Sommerville (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ix.

⁵⁵ Norton, 46.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 402.

also held up for public review. Additionally, under the Filmerian system private acts that over-stepped the bounds of propriety were that much more threatening. Men who “polluted” their households were seen to be, by extension, polluting the state. This pollution could lead to inter-household conflict.

Beyond the Household: Village and Society

Indeed, we see that a man could be as much at fault for his extra-household behavior as that which took place within his home. Social conflict theorists Kai Erikson, Robin Briggs, and Alan Macfarlane explain why this might have been so. Kai Erikson explains that the “deviant individual violates the rules of conduct which the rest of the community hold in high respect; and when these people come together to express their outrage over the offense...they develop a tighter bond of solidarity.”⁵⁸ Erikson defines deviance as “conduct which the people of a group consider so dangerous ...that they bring special sanctions to bear against the persons who exhibit it.”⁵⁹ The deviant is one who transgresses the boundaries of the group by violating acceptable behavior; how and why the group goes about setting him/her to rights tells us something about the “nature and placement of [the group’s] boundaries.”⁶⁰

This idea of boundaries is an important one. Male and female witches created conflict within their communities by transgressing the boundaries of “neighborliness,” crossing the lines of acceptable gender behavior, or both. Accusations of witchcraft were “special sanctions” meant to inform them, and indeed the watchful eye of society, of their misdeed. It was, in other words, an instructive act meant for both accuser and accused. As

⁵⁸ Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: a Study of the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

Alan Macfarlane and subsequent others have argued, accusations of witchcraft provided both a means to sever social contacts with those suspected of witchcraft, and a salve against the conscience of those who wished to sever those ties.⁶¹ After all, if a person was convicted of witchcraft their accusers could then feel completely justified in having denied them neighborly courtesies. It provided a means to simultaneously show poor performers the error of their ways, and teach those who observed both the boundaries of acceptable behavior and the penalties that would be meted out should they fail to fall within those boundaries.

Robin Briggs similarly associates witchcraft accusations and neighborliness, and ties the eventual decline in witchcraft accusations to an increase in freedom of mobility. However, in the small, intra-connected and intra-dependent towns and villages of early modern Europe, this freedom was not so easy to come by, a fact that Briggs argues played a “vital role in breeding charges of witchcraft.”⁶² Witches were the “enemy within,” members of the community “whose reputations were built up over many years by an insidious process of rumor and gossip.”⁶³ Furthermore, Briggs contends that witchcraft must be viewed both in its culturally- and psychologically-constructed context.⁶⁴ Witchcraft beliefs “respond to deep human needs or anxieties... [to] explain misfortune... [and] articulate some of our deepest fears and to express our latent suspicions of other people.”⁶⁵ These two theories certainly fit the colonial New England model, where communities were intimately tied by bonds of marriage and blood, religious affiliation, and mutual reliance. While it may have been

⁶¹ Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: a Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 1970), 197.

⁶² Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 3-4.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

relatively easy to pick up and move, it was not so easy to do so without inspiring mistrust, and it was similarly difficult to leave charges of witchcraft behind.

Hyper-masculinity: The Bodies of “Hot men” and Accusations of Witchcraft

According to Galen’s humoral theory, men were full of hot, dry humors which made them prone to anger and violence. These were the qualities and the nature against which reasoned men fought a continual battle. Lyndal Roper has argued that, in seventeenth-century Germany, a defining characteristic of masculinity was its “sheer disruptiveness,” whose “routine expressions were a danger to civic peace rather than a prop of patriarchy.”⁶⁶ The *Hausvater* was “constantly suspected...of excess drinking, violence, and frittering away his goods.”⁶⁷ Yet not just men’s actions and expressions of masculinity were a threat; his “internal body could be imagined as a container of vice.”⁶⁸ The physical body that was filled with vice, contained also an excess of fluids which were, in turn, “dirty and polluting.”⁶⁹ Thus men’s bodies could be both polluted and polluting, in the same way that improper outward expressions of masculinity could pollute and be polluted.

Men’s actions therefore had to be circumscribed and disciplined. Roper uses early modern Germany’s Discipline Ordinances, which were introduced by civic authorities and influenced by reform ideals, to illustrate the ways in which masculinity and femininity were controlled, and more importantly, defined and understood.⁷⁰ These ordinances imagined men’s bodies as “potentially anarchic and undisciplined...In particular, the ordinances castigated male drunkenness because it led men to lose control over bodily functions, and

⁶⁶ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3-4, 107.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 109.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 113.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 112.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 152.

represented their relinquishing of reason.”⁷¹ The ordinances also tried to enforce ideals of behavior for the aforementioned *Hausvater*. Yet the

Protestant patriarch proved remarkably reluctant to assume his moral mantle, frequently living it up in taverns and gambling his earnings away. In consequence, the authorities straddled an uneasy divide between wanting to invade the household and police the male miscreant, and treating him as a respected ally whose household authority would buttress their own.⁷²

Thus the household was precariously balanced on a knife’s edge. It was both a “school of godly life, the mirror of order and the microcosm of the state,” and the site of “violent marital fights, and its artisan ruler was likely as not a gambling drunkard.”⁷³ Though households were tasked with policing the boundaries of masculine behavior, authorities also increased the “scope for official intervention into the domestic” sphere.⁷⁴ This intrusion ruptured the “once...impermeable skin of the household...[opening] the interior world of the household...to scrutiny.”⁷⁵

Roper’s consideration of boisterous, violent, “hot” men illustrates the connection between this view of unfettered masculinity and its dangers, and the world of Filmerian New England. Father-husbands were expected to act as the reasoned moral center of the household, but authorities were ever on watch for signs that masculinity had broken its bounds and spilled out into the community at large. Men accused of witchcraft had not only “failed as members of a divinely ordained natural world and Christian community, but, implicitly they had also failed the test of manhood...they were poor providers and unable to cope as householders...[and] confessed to performing acts no decent man would

⁷¹ Roper. 153.

⁷² Ibid. 154.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

contemplate.”⁷⁶ In Puritan New England these men were often portrayed as contentious, violent, boastful men whose speech and actions put them at odds with the mores and expectations of Puritan society. It was these boundary-crossing actions or inactions that put them at risk of accusations of witchcraft. In Puritan Massachusetts, where moderation was a highly valued masculine trait, disruptive or hyper-masculine behavior was especially dangerous.

III. Witchcraft Scholarship

It is difficult to draw clear chronological distinctions in colonial American witchcraft scholarship. Witchcraft scholarship of the 1950s and 1960s often portrayed the accusers as mentally deranged and/or hysterical young women. Marion L. Starkey, for example, refers to the Salem accusations as the “childish fantasies of some very little girls [who]...depressed by the lack of any legitimate outlet for their natural high spirits, found relief for their tensions in an emotional orgy.”⁷⁷ The 1970s and 1980s find the historiographical waters murkier, however. Much of the work on witchcraft published in those decades shows a decidedly feminist bent. However, theories of social conflict and race were also put forward, positively complicating the colonial witchcraft narrative. Therefore it is more useful to consider American witchcraft scholarship in thematic groupings rather than chronological ones.

Misogyny, Patriarchy and Victimization: The Feminist Paradigm

Feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a subsequent wave of feminist historical scholarship that attempted to redress the absence of women in the historical narrative. Feminist historians re-examined the witchcraft theories of previous

⁷⁶ Malcolm Gaskill, “Masculinity and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-century England,” in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 171-190.

⁷⁷ Marion L. Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1949), 14.

decades and found them much wanting. They re-fashioned the female witch as a symbol of a history of male oppression, imagining her as either the victim of a systematic project of misogyny, or as a powerful agent working to subvert the patriarchal project by making illicit use of magic. Diane Purkiss has argued that the victim-witch was often presented as a “static, finished creature” in feminist discourse, her narrative an “account of the way things *always* are.”⁷⁸ The powerful, disruptive female witch, on the other hand, was presented as a sort of “proto-feminist,” standing up to her male oppressors and offering an example for her twentieth-century sisters to follow.⁷⁹ Joy Parr has suggested that these feminist historians, concerned that the study of masculinity would “perform ‘a vanishing trick’ on questions of agency and responsibility,” initially left men out of the “new” narratives of gender history.⁸⁰ These were, and continue to be, valid concerns.

Male historians, on the other hand, often avoid considering the male witch in their narratives. Diane Purkiss posits that this is because in constructing the identity of the witch, the male historian must pose the witch against himself. He must make an “other” of the witch, and thus represents the witch as female in order to avoid associating himself with those who have been victimized.⁸¹ Other male historians have taken a different approach. Stuart Clark argues that all over Europe cunning men were consulted “in cases of suspected maleficium, [and] any kind of misfortune, anticipated or experienced.”⁸² Yet Clark’s argument seems to suggest that while cunning, or learned, male witches were “thinkable” to early modern demonologists, the association between men and “feminine” magical practices

⁷⁸ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and 20th-century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

⁸⁰ Parr, 366-367.

⁸¹ Purkiss, 60-61.

⁸² Clark, 457.

(i.e. unlearned or innate) were not. Rather than simply making an “other” of the female witch, some male historians choose to construct male magic users as men of learning, connecting themselves to educated men while simultaneously distancing themselves from the oft-victimized female “hedge witches.”

Though she famously posited that witchcraft accusations were “sex-related...not sex-specific,”⁸³ Christina Lerner still maintained that the “question of to what extent and under what circumstances males got involved in witch-trials...is a diversion which distracts attention from the wider issue of female criminalization.”⁸⁴ Lerner contends that the female witch was “set by males as a negative standard for women.”⁸⁵ In order to ensure their own security and reinforce their identities, women were forced to “[join] in attacks on deviant women.”⁸⁶ Marianne Hester echoes Lerner’s sentiment, arguing that the “accusation of women was not merely a reflection of an age old stereotype...[but] one example of the ongoing mechanism for social control of women within a general context...of a patriarchal society.”⁸⁷ Both arguments raise valid and important points, but also some interesting questions. Could witchcraft accusations not be used against men in the same way? For example, might not “good” men have posed witchcraft-practicing men against themselves to reify their identities as good men, and more clearly delineated which men were “bad?” Could these accusations have been used to put disruptive or threatening men back in their places? This certainly seems to have been the case in Salem.

⁸³ Christina Lerner, “Was Witch-hunting Woman-hunting?” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (repr. 1984; London: Routledge, 2002), 205-212.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 208.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 209.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Marianne Hester, “Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch-Hunting,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (repr. 1996; London: Routledge, 2002), 276-288.

It could be argued that Carol Karlsen's landmark study of witchcraft in colonial America, *The Devil in the Shape of Woman*, is typical of feminist scholarship on witchcraft. However, Karlsen's work is also a complex and in-depth analysis of how women overstepped the bounds of acceptable feminine behavior, religiously or economically. Karlsen's social history of the witch-panic at Salem illustrates that women who improperly performed femininity and challenged the male-dominated social order could be targets of accusations of witchcraft.⁸⁸

Karlsen argues that historians must not only acknowledge the "sheer numbers" of women accused of witchcraft, but that this must be done in order to "counter the trivializing and glossing of both witchcraft and women's history."⁸⁹ Consequently, Karlsen focuses her attention primarily on the women who were accused because, as she argues, even during witchcraft epidemics, "women were still the primary objects of witch fear."⁹⁰ In Karlsen's narrative, male witches are mostly reduced to playing supporting roles to female witches. This is best seen in her treatment of George Burroughs, the erstwhile pastor of Salem Village who was often referred to as the "Ring Leader of them all."⁹¹ Karlsen's most extensive discussion of Burroughs comes at the end of her book where she suggests that women possessed by devils "enacted a power struggle" against the members of the clergy who, like

⁸⁸ Indeed, this thesis is, in several ways, in debt to Karlsen, as her investigation of the improper performance of femininity, and the consequences of that performance, mirrors my own study of hyper-masculinity, its dangers, and its consequences.

⁸⁹ Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (repr. 1987; New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xiii.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. 38.

Burroughs, were their “masters.”⁹² Possessed women, Karlsen argues, used the voices of devils to challenge the authority and legitimacy of church leaders.⁹³

In light of this assertion, one might argue that perhaps George Burroughs was central to the court room strategies adopted by women accused of witchcraft. Karlsen relates that Burroughs offered Mercy Lewis “all the kingdoms of the earth” if she would but become a witch and inscribe her name in his book.⁹⁴ Lewis may have invoked Burroughs in this way during her trial as a deliberate discursive strategy intended to exonerate her. By accusing a man of tempting them to the Devil’s service, accused women might illustrate that they had performed properly the female virtue of obedience. By deliberately disempowering themselves in this way, they were able to occasionally win freedom from the noose. It is clear that, because accusations against men were used in this deliberate way, the stories of men such as Burroughs are vital to a complete narrative of New England witchcraft accusations.

Beyond Misogyny: Conflict Theory’s Response to Feminist Theory

The eventual introduction of theories of race and social conflict further complicated the witchcraft narrative. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum locate the origins of witchcraft accusations in Salem within a wider social context that includes men and women, namely the conflicts between Salem Town and Salem Village, and between families in Salem Village. Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that “whatever else they might have been, the Salem witch trials cannot be written off as a communal effort to purge the poor, the deviant, or the

⁹² Karlsen, 246.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 241.

outcast.”⁹⁵ The accusations likewise were not the results of one or two recent squabbles, but were patterned upon “years of factional strife in Salem Village.”⁹⁶ Political developments in England that translated into charter disputes in Massachusetts contributed to the fear and anxiety that were the sparks for the Salem witchcraft epidemic.⁹⁷ In essence, the men and women of Salem were living in a socially volatile time, and struggled to find their place in it. Men are included in Boyer and Nissenbaum’s narrative as part of an entire community grappling with social conflict. They present witchcraft accusations not as a “gender war,” but rather as evidence of an entire community in conflict.

John Demos’s *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* also focuses on how social conflict may have played into the witch-panics at Salem. Demos, despite finding a “profound connection between witchcraft and womanhood,” is significant as the first male historian to consider men accused of witchcraft in colonial New England.⁹⁸ Demos states that, of the twenty-two men accused and tried for witchcraft, eleven were secondary targets, victims of being related or married to a woman accused of witchcraft.⁹⁹ The remaining eleven men accused of witchcraft were singled out because they were young men given to “reckless and boastful talk of supernatural power.”¹⁰⁰ Only two of the twenty-two men are discussed in any substantial detail: John Godfrey of Andover and Henry Wakely of Connecticut. Interestingly, Demos makes no mention of a major male player in the New England witchcraft episodes. What of George Burroughs, who fits neither of Demos

⁹⁵ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: the Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 33.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 180-181.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 181.

⁹⁸ John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 63.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 60.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

strictures about men accused of witchcraft? No female associated with Burroughs was accused of witchcraft, though women associated with him were among the accusers. Additionally, while Burroughs was certainly a cantankerous and contentious individual, never well-liked by the majority of his congregation, he was not a young man when he was accused and he had been the town's minister.

Demos does argue however that making witchcraft accusations “a single plank in a platform of ‘sexist’ oppression” is far too easy an argument, and too simplistic an explanation.¹⁰¹ In fact, many accusations of witchcraft were made by women against other women, not by men against women. This proves, according to Demos, that something more than simple misogyny was at work, or if so, it was a misogyny that both women and men engaged in.¹⁰² Like Boyer and Nissenbaum, Demos's work is illustrative of the beginning of a shift away from the female victimization paradigm. Though he admits that women were the primary targets of witchcraft accusations, Demos moves away from the suggestion that women were targeted as an act of patriarchal oppression.

The New Paradigms: Race and Religion

Following more broad historical shifts in the 1990s, the focus of witchcraft scholarship shifted from gender to race. A theoretical bridge between gender and race arguments, Richard Godbeer's *The Devil's Dominion* contends that “colonists perceived witchcraft as a primarily female phenomenon,” suggesting that even when men were known to be practitioners of the occult arts, men of the court or clergy may have been “disinclined”

¹⁰¹ Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 63.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 64.

to prosecute them simply because they were men.¹⁰³ However, Godbeer connects this epidemic outbreak of witchcraft, in part, to the Indian Wars of the late seventeenth century.¹⁰⁴ Colonists' fears of physical attack by Native Americans manifested themselves in accusations of spiritual attacks by witches.¹⁰⁵

Published a year later, Bernard Rosenthal's *Salem Story* not only considers the men who were accused of witchcraft but, like Godbeer, introduces racial explanations for the accusations made against men. Rosenthal suggests, for example, that George Burroughs may have been seen as somehow racially impure because of his close interaction with Native Americans on the Maine frontier, and this may have led to his being accused.¹⁰⁶ Rosenthal also focuses on Burroughs's alleged dissident religious views, claiming they were at the heart of witchcraft accusations against him.¹⁰⁷ The ultimate significance of Burroughs, according to Rosenthal, is not that he was a man accused of witchcraft, but that the scandal over his religious views introduced baptism into trial proceedings for the first time.¹⁰⁸ After Burroughs's trial, the question of baptism, and the renunciation of a Christian baptism at the Witches Sabbat, became a central theme in the Salem trials.¹⁰⁹ Rosenthal maintains this may suggest that accusations against Burroughs were a way for the clergy to assert authority over other wayward parishioners. While Rosenthal admits that accusations against Burroughs were met with some suspicion, he posits this was because Burroughs was a minister, not

¹⁰³ Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 186-191.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 191.

¹⁰⁶ Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 149.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 130.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 132.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

because he was a man.¹¹⁰ The significant aspects of Rosenthal's work are these new takes on the subject of witchcraft, and his nuancing of the narrative by tying fears of racial impurity, with religious dissent, and social conflict.

Expanding upon the arguments made by both Godbeer and Rosenthal, Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare: the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692* ties accusations to events occurring on the frontier, namely the conflicts between the colonists and Native American populations. Norton investigates how the waxing and waning of these events affected both the number of accusations and their outcomes. She argues that many scholars have overlooked the impact of these "day-to-day" events, contending that "the dramatic events of 1692 can be fully understood by viewing them as intricately related to concurrent political and military affairs in northern New England."¹¹¹ Specifically, Norton is referring to the Second Indian War between the French and Native Americans, and the English colonists during the latter part of the 1600s. The residents of Essex County, Massachusetts were on the front lines of this conflict, and it "dominated public policy and personal decisions alike."¹¹² According to Norton, the impacts of the Second Indian War on the intricate web of interpersonal relationships resulted in witchcraft accusations of epidemic proportions. Norton deeply investigates the case made against George Burroughs, tying the accusations against him primarily to his involvement in various frontier disputes, suggesting this involvement may have somehow brought his racial purity into question and thus left him vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft.

¹¹⁰ Rosenthal, 138.

¹¹¹ Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 5.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 4-5.

Witchcraft in the Twenty-first Century

Witchcraft scholarship of the twenty-first century, has witnessed a proliferation of studies about male witches, especially in Europe. Rolf Schulte's work *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, is a valuable compendium of statistical information on the subject. Lara Apps and Andrew Gow's *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* also puts the spotlight on male witches in Europe, suggesting both reasons for the accusations, and reasons for male witches' absence from the scholarly narrative. Elizabeth Kent's article, "Male Witches in Old and New England," is a fascinating comparative study of male witches and the reasons that some men may have been singled out as such. Kent's work however is one of the only which considers the men-witches of New England so fully. Additionally, Darren Oldridge's *Witchcraft Reader*, though it has gone into a second edition and includes a four article section on the relationship between witchcraft and gender, contains just one article, Kent's, that addresses the fact that men were also expected to function and conform within the limits of a gendered system. Alison Rowlands's compilation of papers presented at the 2006 conference, *Witchcraft and Masculinities in the Early Modern World*, is further evidence of a new focus on male witches in the new millennium.¹¹³ Yet none of these collected works make more than passing reference to the male witch in colonial America, though Elizabeth Kent is cited several times in Rowlands's introduction.

There is consensus among scholars of witchcraft that no one reason was behind charges of witchcraft made against any person in colonial New England. That being said, the primary focus of this thesis is how improper gender performance, specifically hyper-masculine behavior, made certain men vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft, especially

¹¹³ Alison Rowlands, ed., *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2009).

when these behaviors occurred during times of added societal stress. Men and women both had specific societal gender expectations and were punished for not conforming to these expectations. Unconstrained and/or non-normative masculinity was considered dangerous, and witchcraft accusations could serve boundary-setting functions, bringing men back in line with the dominant, accepted forms of masculine behavior. For men, it was often a combination of several factors, both contextual and behavioral, that led to their not only being suspected and accused of witchcraft, but being executed for it, especially during periods of witchcraft panics. A perfect storm of events and characteristics had spelled disaster for men like George Burroughs and John Willard. Inversely, the absence of one or more of these characteristics could mean that some men, like Reverend Francis Dane of Andover, Hugh Parsons of Springfield, and John Godfrey of Andover, who, by all accounts should have hanged, escaped the hangman's noose.

CHAPTER TWO

Contemporary Demonologists and the Male Witch¹

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”²

Such was the sentiment of witchcraft’s “golden” age, that period between 1550 and 1630 in which most European witch-hunts occurred. It is testament to a general feeling among contemporary Europeans that they were living in the end times foretold in Revelation, and served to color demonological texts with apocalyptic overtones. Moreover, these sentiments were not restricted to a small number of educated elites, but were “accessible to all English social groups,” and sermons of the period “[heightened] animosity towards witches...[by] encouraging the idea that their elimination was a kind of collective social penance.”³ Rooting out sinfulness and evil was a way, in the last days, to put one’s soul right with God. Evidence of this is clear in the teaching of English millenarians, who asserted that in order to ensure the Kingdom of Christ “all the ungodly must be killed.”⁴ The apocryphal atmosphere of both England and New England is another contextual clue to why witches, as the Devil’s minions, were believed to be everywhere and at work in all things.

The 1580s were a period of Puritan conflict in England. Pamphlets of the period reflect the increasing concern among the Gospelians that English society and politics had become ungodly. Written in 1579, Edward White’s “A Rehearsal both Strong and True” related the “heinous and horrible acts committed by Elizabeth Stile” and four other female

¹ As literate, educated men writing about the Devil, demons, witchcraft and divine judgment, the authors of the texts discussed in this chapter were demonologists, though they would not have referred to themselves as such.

² 1 Tim. 4:1 (King James).

³ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 380.

⁴ Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: Or, a description of the heretickes and sectaries of these latter times* (London: 1645), 120, quoted in Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 380.

witches.⁵ That these women were allowed to accomplish their fell deeds was payment, according to White, for the “manifest unpiety [sic] and careless contempt of God’s word, abounding in these desperate days.”⁶ Similar sentiments are expressed in “A True and Just Record,” a pamphlet published in 1582 by an author known only as “W.W.” The author contends that if there

hath been...any means used, to appease the wrath of God, to obtain his blessing, to terrify secret offenders by open transgressors’ punishments...this doubtless is no less necessary than the best, that Sorcerers, Wizards...Witches, Wisewomen...are rigorously punished.⁷

These texts evidence not only the demonological beliefs of sixteenth-century English people, but the polemical protests of Puritans against the ungodliness of the Church of England in the 1580s. The “manifest unpiety [sic]” to which White referred, and the “secret offenders” referenced by W.W., are not just witches and witchcraft, but those Protestants who still secretly held to ritualistic religious elements, or longed for beauty and ceremony to be returned to English churches. These texts deal as much with confessionalization as witchcraft.

Yet, however much Puritans may have liked to believe their voices spoke for those masses of English people who thirsted for a purer church and an uncorrupted government, the fact was that the Puritan voice was a dissenting one in late sixteenth-century England. Polemical pamphlets may have railed against a church and government corrupted by idolatry and licentiousness, but many everyday Puritans found it difficult to “live the doctrine.”⁸ John

⁵ Edward White, “A Rehearsal both Strong and True,” in *Early Modern Witches: Witch Cases in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Marion Gibson (London: Routledge, 2000), 33-40.

⁶ *Ibid.* 34.

⁷ W.W., “A True and Just Record,” in *Early Modern Witches: Witch Cases in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Marion Gibson (London: Routledge, 2000), 72-124.

⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 201.

Winthrop, future governor of the Massachusetts plantation, complained that “all experience tells me that in this way...is the least company, and that those which do walk openly in this way shall be despised, pointed at, hated of the world, made a byword, reviled, slandered, rebuked, made a gazing stock, called Puritans.”⁹

Puritanism from the 1560s was dually “associated with innovative and subversion.”¹⁰ The former because of the radical changes they called for in England, both politically and religiously, and the latter because these changes often situated them on the fringe of English society. Puritans themselves detested the moniker with which they’d been saddled because to them it meant schism, thus associating them with other “separatist” groups like the Anabaptists.¹¹ Regardless of how they wished to be viewed however, by the end of the reign of Elizabeth the “idea was commonplace among intellectuals of the Puritan as curious, silly, and hypocritical.”¹² Yet what these pamphlets by White and W.W. evidence are sentiments of the persecutions perpetrated against them by God, in the form of witches, and by man, in the form of the Church of England, Parliament, and the king. They speak to the evils of the Devil and witchcraft, but clearly speak to something more, namely the evils of ritual and popery. This emerging Puritan movement and the flurry of polemical pamphlets also linked witchcraft and ungodliness in ways that expanded the parameters of witchcraft and ignored the gender division. W.W.’s document, for example, mentions wizards and sorcerers, terms used to refer to male magic users.¹³

⁹ John Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1970), 1:159.

¹⁰ H.C. Porter, *Puritanism in Tudor England* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1970), 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 5.

¹² *Ibid.* 7.

¹³ W.W., 73-74.

Yet few scholars of witchcraft recognize how ephemeral the boundaries of contemporary demonological ideology were. Stuart Clark contends that witchcraft, “like so many other aspects of early modern thought, turns out to be reliant on binary thinking.”¹⁴ This binary, Clark argues, made it “literally unthinkable...that witches should be male.”¹⁵ For early modern demonologists,

witches were female because the representational system governing them required for its coherence a general correlation between such primary oppositions as good/evil, order/disorder, soul/body, and male/female; they were the female who, by behavior inspired by the master of inversion, the Devil, inverted the polarized attributes accorded to the genders in...early modern culture.¹⁶

Yet men too could invert gender attributes. For example, performances of both genders could be, and were, inverted at Carnival celebrations. In the liminal space of Carnival, the raucous celebrations that preceded the Lenten season of fasting and abstention, what otherwise might be considered uncouth or socially dangerous behavior was permissible and useful. Genders and classes aped and mocked each other in order to air grievances and relieve tensions that had built up during the year. During Carnival, the

son is shown beating his father, the pupil beating his teacher, servants giving orders to their masters...the laity saying Mass or preaching to the clergy...the husband holding the baby and spinning while his wife smokes and holds a gun.¹⁷

Only during Carnival was the “reversal of the relations between man and man, whether age reversal, sex reversal, or other inversion” legitimate.¹⁸ It was when these inversions fell outside the boundaries of this ritualistic liminal space, that both men and women could be punished.

¹⁴ Clark, 119.

¹⁵ Ibid. 130.

¹⁶ Ibid. 33.

¹⁷ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (repr. 1978; Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 268.

¹⁸ Ibid. 268.

Lara Apps and Andrew Gow also disagree with Clark's binary view of early modern witchcraft beliefs, arguing that "early modern theorists were unperturbed by male witches because they were already familiar with them in the guise of ancient and medieval heretics and sorcerers."¹⁹ In fact, they contend that early modern demonological texts, were "chock-full of references to famous magic-users from classical, biblical and secular sources."²⁰ Simon Magus and the magicians of the Pharaohs are mentioned in several works, including Ulrich Molitor's *De Ianiis* (1489), and Thomas Cooper's *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617).²¹ Gregory of Tours' *The History of the Franks* contains an account of the "foul acts of necromancy" practiced by a man named Desiderius.²² *The Munich Handbook*, written sometime in the fifteenth century, was a necromantic manual "written in clerical Latin, [deploying] common Christian formulas, and [calling] on...demonic names derived from a range of ancient Near Eastern sources attractive to the intelligentsia of late medieval Europe."²³ This long tradition of male witchcraft made the idea of male witches plausible in both popular culture and among the educated elite.²⁴ Furthermore, Apps and Gow argue that demonological texts do not, in fact, represent witches as strictly female.²⁵ Why, Apps and Gow wonder, if the "conceptual correlation between witches and women was as strong as

¹⁹ Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 118.

²⁰ Ibid. 122.

²¹ Ibid. 124.

²² Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 483-485, quoted in Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 125.

²³ Karen Jolly, "Chapter Three: The Practice of Magic: Popular and Courtly Traditions," in *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, eds. Karen Jolly, Catharina Raudvere, and Edward Peters (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), 27-72.

²⁴ Brian Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe* (rep. 1987; Edinburgh: Pearson Education Ltd, 2006), 143.

²⁵ Apps and Gow, 38.

Clark suggests...were there any male witches at all?”²⁶ Clark’s assertion, they conclude, corresponds with neither “real world” instances of men being tried as witches, nor the theoretical demonological tracts that refer to male witches.²⁷

A number of studies further illustrate that early modern Europeans could indeed envision witchcraft as a gender-neutral phenomenon that could lead to accusations against men. William Monter’s study of sixteenth-century Normandy illustrates, for example, that men-witches were not relegated to the fringes of early modern European geography or thought, but could and did exist at its very heart.²⁸ Normans, according to Monter, “behaved as ordinary subjects of the king of France...dowered with typically French institutions.”²⁹ Yet for all their alleged normalcy, between 1564 and 1659, of the 381 Normans tried for witchcraft, 278 were men.³⁰ Between 1595 and 1614, the apex of witchcraft trials in Normandy, 137 men were tried, compared to 56 women.³¹ Of the accused men whose occupations are clearly listed in the trial evidence, the majority were identified as shepherds, with priests as the second most commonly identifiable occupation.³²

Monter ties the accusations made against clerics to the end of the Wars of Religion in France, suggesting that priests whose confessional leanings were unclear, or those who strayed too far from orthodoxy, were at risk of accusation.³³ Of one such priest, tried at Falaise, authorities remarked that they were unsure to what religion he prescribed,

²⁶ Apps and Gow, 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ William Monter, “Toads and Eucharists: The Male Witches of Normandy, 1564-1660,” *French Historical Studies* 20, no. 4 (1997): 563-595.

²⁹ Ibid. 564.

³⁰ Ibid. 584.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. 581-582.

³³ Ibid. 582.

considering he had “made his house into a brothel and had had five or six bastards.”³⁴ What Monter leaves unconsidered is the long tradition of a fear of clerical conspiracy and priestly necromancy. Since the Middle Ages, priests, clerics and monks had been targets of allegations of necromancy.³⁵ It was their learning, and their access to a wide variety of religious and secular texts, that made them dangerous.³⁶ The ability to read and write was as mystical as the transfiguration clerics and priests performed at the Holy Mass, especially in a world where literacy was a privilege enjoyed by only a select few. It was believed that, given opportunity and curiosity, a priest or cleric might fall victim to the sins of necromancy.³⁷ Thus, the idea of a “clerical underworld” would have been foreign to neither the Normans of Monter’s study, nor to the Puritans in New England, a century later.

Priests were on the narrow margin between good and evil, having at their disposal the knowledge to use either God’s power or the Devil’s, to profane as well as sanctify. This liminality could have made them suspect. Shepherds, whose worst offence was often profaning the Eucharist, were at risk, according to Monter, because of Normandy’s “economic history...and folklore.”³⁸ However, Monter explains that the “paucity of reliable studies on either subject” makes connecting Norman folklore or economy with witchcraft difficult.³⁹

Apps and Gow illustrate similar connections between occupation and witchcraft. They relate the story of Chonrad Stoeckhlin, a herdsman living in Obertsdorf. Stoeckhlin was no typical herdsman, but worked as a horse wrangler, a position of some prestige given

³⁴ Monter, 582.

³⁵ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (repr. 1989; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 153.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 154.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 155.

³⁸ Monter, 581.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 581-582.

that horses signified wealth and status.⁴⁰ Stoeckhlin was also a healer, and was reputed to be able to identify individuals suffering under bewitchment, and the source of the bewitchment. While there is no clear connection between Stoeckhlin's employment as a horse wrangler, and the charges of witchcraft made against him, his work as a witch-finder and healer proved to be his undoing. Stoeckhlin claimed to be able to see bewitchments with the aid of a personal spiritual guide who came to him at night and flew him to a special place where he joined with other "phantoms of the night."⁴¹ The judges made the simple and obvious connection between this description and the witches Sabbat. Also working against him were the confessions of two witches, Anna Enzensbergerin and Barbara Luzin, who, not coincidentally, Stoeckhlin had accused of witchcraft early in 1586.⁴² In December of 1587, Stoeckhlin was burned at the stake after having been tortured into giving a full confession.⁴³

While the ratio of men accused to women may be somewhat unique in France, the idea of male witches was not unique to Normandy. Malcolm Gaskill's study of the accusations made against a middling Kentish farmer named William Godfrey suggests how a "sole example demonstrates how the Devil could sometimes assume the shape of a man."⁴⁴ Gaskill describes Godfrey as a man in his mid-forties, married with two children.⁴⁵ By 1617, the year in which he was accused, Godfrey was doing sufficiently well as a husbandman to begin "styling himself a yeoman."⁴⁶ Godfrey was no fringe member of society like Monter's wandering shepherds and unorthodox, heretical priests. He was, to outward appearances, a

⁴⁰ Apps and Gow, 53.

⁴¹ Ibid. 54.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. 56.

⁴⁴ Malcolm Gaskill, "The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict, and Belief in Jacobean England," *Historical Research* 71, no.175 (June 1998): 142-171.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 151.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

productive member of the community whose conflicts with his neighbors eventually got him into trouble.⁴⁷ What is worthy of note here is not that he was charged with witchcraft, but that conflicts with his neighbors had made him vulnerable to these charges.

Rolf Schulte's consideration of male witches in the Holy Roman Empire serves as a final illustration that male witches were considered possible by contemporaries.⁴⁸ Of the roughly 28,000 persons charged with witchcraft in the Holy Roman Empire between 1480 and 1760, almost 23% were men (6,500).⁴⁹ Over 60% of those charged with witchcraft in the Duchy of Carinthia during a similar period were men.⁵⁰ Many of the accused Carinthian men were itinerant beggars.⁵¹ Schulte links this to an economic depression and concurrent population explosion which caused beggars to become more aggressive in their efforts and therefore be seen as more threatening.⁵²

Monter, Apps and Gow, Gaskill, and Schulte emphasize several key themes in witchcraft cases in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. First, certain occupations placed men at the fringes of society. Healers and priests were at risk, like mid-wives, because of their intimate knowledge of the human body, and the spiritual realm, respectively, and the ability of both to harm as well as heal. The mobility of shepherds, and their control over the life and death of theirs and other families' livelihoods, put them at risk should those animals suddenly become ill. Lastly, beggars, as unproductive and highly mobile members of society, would have been also have been seen as threats.

⁴⁷ Gaskill, 158.

⁴⁸ Rolf Schulte, "Men as Accused Witches in the Holy Roman Empire," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 52-73.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 56.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. 59.

Second, all these studies emphasize the social element of witchcraft, and that conflict with neighbors, in addition to occupation, could put one at risk of being accused of practicing witchcraft. Finally, these studies reveal there were no impermeable ideological or geographic boundaries that prevented men from being accused of witchcraft. In New England, as in Old, certain occupations, social marginalization, and social conflict, could put anyone at risk of charges of practicing witchcraft.

Tracts by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century demonologists reinforce the idea that the theoretical foundations of witchcraft beliefs were elastic enough to allow accusations against men. Even the circumstances surrounding the most famously gendered witch-hunting manual indicate a broader, more gender-neutral conception of witchcraft. Innocent the VIII's 1484 Papal Bull is unequivocal regarding the possibility of male witches, stating:

It has recently come to our ears, not without great pain to us, that in some parts of upper Germany...many persons *of both sexes* [my emphasis], heedless of their own salvation and forsaking the Catholic faith, give themselves over to devils male and female, and by their incantations, charms and conjuring...ruin and cause to perish the offspring of women, the foal of animals, the products of the earth, the grapes of vines, and fruits of trees, as well as men and women, cattle and flocks and herds and animals.⁵³

Two years later, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger were commissioned by Innocent VIII to write the *Malleus Maleficarum* as a way to address this growing danger. Despite its pedigree, however, at its publication the *Malleus* was just one of a number of fifteenth-century treatises on witchcraft. How was it that the *Malleus* became the ideological touchstone of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century demonologists? Though the witch of the *Malleus* had begun as just one of a “large number of competing notions of what witchcraft

⁵³ Innocent VIII, “Papal Bull of 1484,” www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/witches1.html (accessed July 28, 2010).

was all about in the late fifteenth century,” it enjoyed a surge of popularity as sixteen new editions were produced between 1576 and 1670.⁵⁴ As Hans Broedel has argued, the *Malleus* enjoyed such popularity among early modern demonologists and other educated elites because the witches presented in the *Malleus* resembled most closely the witches that contemporaries encountered in real life.⁵⁵ The *Malleus* had become the “agreed upon starting point for the discourse on witchcraft, a position graphically illustrated by the collections of demonological texts that began to be produced in the 1580s.”⁵⁶ The witch of the *Malleus* was represented as the servant of the Devil, doing his nefarious bidding. He/she covenanted with him in exchange for diabolical powers, and attended the Witches Sabbat, an inversion of all sacred Christian ceremonies, to do him obeisance. The gender of the witch was of secondary consideration to the diabolical nature of the relationship between the Devil and the witch. Witchcraft skeptics, who denied that witchcraft existed, still used as a stock character the witch as he or she was presented in the *Malleus*.⁵⁷

Yet in answer to the question of whether the *Malleus* was purposefully misogynistic, created as a part of a project to oppress and/or contain women specifically, Broedel replies that the *Malleus* was “descriptive not prescriptive in nature.”⁵⁸ The *Malleus* certainly does evidence quite clearly the clerical misogyny of its authors and their contemporaries. Kramer and Sprenger, in considering why it was that “women are chiefly addicted to Evil superstitions,” say that “some learned men propound this reason; that there are three things in nature, the Tongue, an Ecclesiastic, and a Woman, which know no moderation in goodness

⁵⁴ Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 7-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 167.

or vice.”⁵⁹ Additionally, Kramer and Sprenger argue that women are more credulous, more lustful, more impressionable, and have “slippery tongues...unable to conceal from...fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft.”⁶⁰

However, these misogynistic overtones do not preclude men from being seen as witches. The tales of witchcraft presented in the *Malleus* were the experiences of the authors acting in their official capacities as inquisitors.⁶¹ The use of masculine forms of *maleficus* (harmful magic) and masculine pronouns reflects the fact that certain kinds of magic were either specifically associated with men, or were “indifferently ascribed to men and women alike.”⁶² So, for example, while love magic was considered the near-exclusive province of female magic users, men were often associated with “magical operations for which literacy and extensive book learning were pre-requisites.”⁶³ Concrete evidence of Kramer and Sprenger’s experiences with male witches comes from their presentation of trial models. In these sections, witches are often variably referred to as either male or female.

One of the main foci of the *Malleus* is the appropriate method for initiating trial proceedings and conducting the trials themselves.⁶⁴ Part III, “Relating to the Judicial Proceedings in Both the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts Against Witches and Indeed All Heretics,” often uses non-gender specific terms when discussing the steps to initiate legal proceedings against a suspected witch or heretic. This could be a pragmatic response

⁵⁹ Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. Montague Summers (London: Dover Publications, 1971), 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 42-44.

⁶¹ Broedel, 167.

⁶² *Ibid.* 174.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Sprenger and Kramer, 194-272.

illustrating the woman-witch/man-heretic binary described by Levack.⁶⁵ However, several sections of the trial script that Kramer and Sprenger provide for justices contradict this assumption.

First, in outlining how the deposition of witnesses against the accused should occur, Kramer and Sprenger provide a script for both judge and clerk, saying:

And the Notary or the Judge shall begin the process in the following manner...’In the year of Our Lord _____, on the _____ day of the _____ month..., N. of the town of _____...appeared in person at _____ before the Honorable Judge...and laid information to the Judge that N. of the town or parish of _____...had said and asserted that *he* [my emphasis] knew how to perform or had actually done certain injuries to the deponent or other persons.⁶⁶

Kramer and Sprenger again use the masculine pronoun in laying out the process by which witnesses should be examined on the day of the trial, scripting the interaction thus:

The witness N. ... was called, sworn and questioned whether he knew N. and answered that he did. Asked how he knew him, he answered that he had seen and spoken with him on general occasions...Asked concerning his reputation...he answered that in his morals he was a good (or bad) man.⁶⁷

Under the heading “The General Examination of a Witch or Wizard: and it is the First Action” the following script is provided for the judges:

The accused N. of such a place was sworn...and was then asked whence he was and from where he originated...Asked who were his parents, and whether they were alive or dead, he answered they were alive in such a place or dead in such a place. Asked whether they died a natural death, or were burned, he answered in such a way. (Here note that this question is put because...witches generally offer or devote their own children to devils, and commonly their whole progeny is infected.)⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Levack, 143. Levack explains that men were more likely to be accused of witchcraft when charges were linked with charges of heresy.

⁶⁶ Sprenger and Kramer, 206-207.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 211.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 212.

Here we see evidence not just of the use of the masculine pronoun, but the idea, later also seen in New England, that the guilt of one member of a family, in this case the father or mother, could sully the innocence of an entire bloodline.

Finally, Kramer and Sprenger set aside an entire chapter to discussing the “three ways in which Men and Not Women may be Discovered to be Addicted to Witchcraft.”⁶⁹ The first were the “archer-wizards,” men who profaned Good Friday masses by shooting arrows at a picture of the Crucifix.⁷⁰ Those arrows that struck their mark were imbued with the diabolical power to kill any man on whom the wizard “[bent] his will...yet it matters not where the man may shut himself up...the arrows which have been shot will be carried and struck into him by the devil.”⁷¹ The archer-wizard could shoot these magical arrows only once per day, and after those were exhausted could only “shoot with the same uncertainty as other men.”⁷² The other two classes of wizards “use incantations and sacrilegious charms so as to render certain weapons incapable of harming or wounding them.”⁷³ Like the archer-wizard, their power was derived from the “[mutilation of] the image of Christ crucified.”⁷⁴ For example, “if they wish their head to be immune from any wound from a weapon of from any blow they take off the head of the crucifix,” carrying it with them as a charm.⁷⁵ Kramer and Sprenger’s trial models and their discussions of wizards provide examples of the flexibility of sixteenth-century witchcraft ideology with regards to gender. They illustrate that men were not only vulnerable to accusations but that they were being accused, and tried, in real life, not just in theory.

⁶⁹ Sprenger and Kramer, 150.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 154.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Furthermore, these texts illustrates that demonologists were clearly willing to see men in powerful roles, even when they were accused of being servants of the Devil. Witches roles' were tailored to each gender, men and women each having their place. Perhaps men were portrayed as ring leaders of witch covens so that even in the inverted world of witches they were allowed to keep that thing which gave them honor and manhood – their mastery. While they may have owed their powers to the Devil, they were portrayed as forcing him, and other witches, to do their bidding. Thus these texts deftly craft an image of the male witch that corresponds to early modern notions of power, honor and masculinity.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the idea that men too could be accused of witchcraft would be even more clearly stated. William Perkins, from whom Massachusetts divine Cotton Mather would reverentially cite a century later, wrote *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* sometime in the 1590s. Less equivocal than even Kramer and Sprenger, Perkins stated in no uncertain terms his belief that both men and women could be witches. In response to men who were skeptical of the existence of witches, Perkins stated, "If any shall think it strange that *man or woman* should enter league with Satan, their utter enemy, they are to know it for a most evident and certain truth."⁷⁶ Perkins is even more blunt bearing on the case of male witches, stating: "I comprehend both sexes or kinds of person, men and women, excluding neither from being witches."⁷⁷ For, as Perkins argues, though Moses used the feminine form of witch when he ordered "Thou shalt not

⁷⁶ William Perkins, "A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft," in *The Work of William Perkins*, ed. Ian Breward (Appleford, England: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), 587-609.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 595.

suffer a witch to live,” this use “exempteth not the male,” and was meant to illustrate only that women were more susceptible to the wiles of the Devil.⁷⁸

There are more than mere echoes of Perkins’s sentiments in Thomas Cooper’s *The Mystery of Witchcraft*, published in 1617, a little over a decade before the Puritan colonists boarded ships for North America.⁷⁹ In several places, the wording is similar to the point of plagiarism. His definition of a witch, for example, reads: “A witch is a magician, who, either by open or secret league, wittingly and willingly, consenteth to use the aid of the Devil in working of wonders.”⁸⁰ Compare this to Perkins definition which states that a witch is a “magician who, either by open or secret league, wittingly and willingly, consenteth to use the aid *and assistance* of the Devil in the working of wonders.”⁸¹ This near-exact wording illustrates clearly Perkins’s influence on Cooper’s own work, and the theoretical continuity that we find in demonological treatises from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.

Similarities are found elsewhere in Cooper’s work as well. In his introduction to Chapter X, “Of the Subject of Witchcraft,” he says he has come to the “main subject and occasion of this treatise, namely to consider the practice of this mystery, to wit the witch, whether man or woman.”⁸² Here again his language is very similar to Perkins’s. As clear illustration of the long tradition of male witches on which contemporaries drew, Cooper lists the “Enchanters of Egypt, the Witch of Endor, Simon Magus...[and] Elimar the Sorcerer,” concluding that the “first question is [thus] resolved, namely that men, as well as women, may be subject to this trade [witchcraft].”⁸³ The Devil, “who hath several tricks and

⁷⁸ Perkins, 595.

⁷⁹ Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617).

⁸⁰ Ibid. 177.

⁸¹ Perkins, 595.

⁸² Cooper, 176.

⁸³ Ibid. 180.

colors...[baits] each according to their several abilities and uses in the world.”⁸⁴ As men are “either more ambitions after honor, or curious after knowledge, so did Satan bait his devilish Art with more abundance of pompous and curious ceremonies” so as to appeal more to the “male sex.”⁸⁵

The works of both Perkins and Cooper make clear that male witches fell well within the ideological framework of early modern demonologists. Clearly, there was no rigid mental or theoretical barrier to accusing men of witchcraft. English men and women crossing the Atlantic in the early part of the seventeenth century carried with them this long tradition of belief in witchcraft. More importantly, they carried with them the belief that neither sex was exempt from the sin of witchcraft. The resonances of English demonological theory can be detected in the writings of divines such as Increase and Cotton Mather.

Born in 1639, Increase Mather graduated from Harvard in 1656 and returned to the Old World to get a Masters degree in Dublin.⁸⁶ By 1661 however he had returned to New England, and presently became the minister of the North Church of Boston, where he preached until 1701.⁸⁷ As early as 1679, Increase was urging ministers in the New World to consider “what evils had provoked the Lord to bring His Judgment on New England.”⁸⁸ These judgments, which included the Indian Wars, small pox, and the “decay of piety,” were clear signs of God’s displeasure at man’s sinfulness.⁸⁹ The presence of witches and witchcraft functioned in much the same way; it pointed to a falling away from the purer faith of the first generation of Puritan settlers, that the “city upon a hill” had fallen into vice and

⁸⁴ Cooper, 181.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 186.

⁸⁶ George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 3-4.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 4.

lukewarm piety. Increase's 1684 treatise, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, concerns itself less with witchcraft in theory, and more with the presentation of "real life" instances of witchcraft that Mather had either witnessed or heard about. Yet we still see traces of Cooper and Perkins here, namely in Increase's discussion of the stone-throwing demons that plagued one Nicholas Desborough of Hartford, Massachusetts.⁹⁰

In 1683, Desborough began to be "strangely molested by stones, pieces of earth, cobs of Indian corn, etc. falling upon and about him... Sometimes he met with them in his shop, the Yard, the Barn, and in the Field at Work."⁹¹ These occurrences "began soon after a Controversy arose between Desborough and another *person* [my emphasis], about a chest of clothes which the other said that Desborough did unrighteously gain."⁹² When the clothes were returned the "molestations" suddenly ceased and Desborough was never troubled in this way again.⁹³ Mather never makes note of the sex of the person who had a complaint against Desborough. We cannot guess at the reason for his reticence to name the person or their sex, but his use of the neuter "person" hints at the broad definition of "witch" laid out by demonologists like Kramer and Sprenger, Cooper, and Perkins. Like his English demonologist counterparts, Mather seems to have a generally fluid conception of "witch" as an ideological construction. Desborough's story also clearly illustrates the effects of social conflict in small communities like Hartford and Salem.

⁹⁰ Increase Mather, "An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences," in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706*, ed. George Lincoln Burr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 28-78.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 33.

⁹² *Ibid.* 34.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Increase's son, Cotton, expressed similar sentiments. Cotton was in his late twenties when he published his first major work on witchcraft in 1689, *Memorable Providences*. Like Perkins and Cooper, Cotton first responds to skeptics, stating:

It has also been made a doubt by some, whether there are any such things as Witches...But (besides that the Word of God assures us that there have been such, and gives order about them) no Age passes without some apparent Demonstration of it.⁹⁴

Having assured his readers that witches are not only real, but that each age suffers under their affliction, Cotton goes on to outline the occasion of his work. Mather was convinced his account of witchcraft in New England would

afford to him that shall read with Observation, a further clear Confirmation that There is both a God, and a Devil, and Witchcraft: That, there is no out-ward Affliction, but what God may (and sometimes doth) permit Satan to trouble His people withal: That, the Malice of Satan and his Instruments, is very great against the Children of God: that, the clearest Gospel-Light shining in a place, will not keep some from entering hellish Contracts with infernal Spirits.⁹⁵

Cotton, like his father, never explicitly connects one gender with the practice of witchcraft. However, in his later work, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, Cotton's inclusion of Perkins's text within his own suggests that Perkins's theories on witchcraft were as influential in the 1690s as they were in 1590s.

Against the apocryphal contextual backdrop of the New World, demonologists like Increase and Cotton Mather accessed the demonological texts of the Old World in a unique, but also familiar, way. Despite what some historians have argued, male witches were not unthinkable to early modern people. The writings of Kramer and Sprenger, Cooper, Perkins, and the Mathers bear this out. The witch of the *Malleus* was the progenitor of others who

⁹⁴ Cotton Mather, "Memorable Providences," in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706*, ed. George Lincoln Burr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 91-143.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 96.

came after, and the Mathers, like Perkins and Cooper before them, used this template both in their own writings and in their real world interactions with witches and witchcraft. The Mathers may have been the heavyweights of demonological texts in the colonies, but they were clearly influenced by the demonological texts of Old England. Ideologically and culturally they remained part of a world in which real world events could have heavenly and/or diabolical origins. Their writings illustrate the ideological continuity between sixteenth-century Europe and seventeenth-century New England, though the unique geographic, social and temporal context of New England meant that American demonologists used these texts in new ways.

The demonology and witch-hunt of Puritan Massachusetts was unique. The Puritan belief in themselves as the chosen people of God meant they saw themselves as doubly-chastised or threatened. The Devil threatened to cast down their “city upon a hill” by corrupting their communities from within by turning their neighbors to witchcraft. God too tried their faith and punished them for their unworthiness at every opportunity. Religious controversy, inter- and intra-village conflict, political disputes, and frontier warfare would have been signs of both the Devil’s work and God’s. Therefore, when the specter of witchcraft reared its head in Hartford and Andover and Salem, both Increase and Cotton would have immediately understood what was at work, and what was at stake. They had brought a readily available template with them, and it was a template which left room for men to be accused of witchcraft.

CHAPTER THREE “A King in Satan’s Kingdom”¹

“Glad should I have been, if I had never known the Name of this man; or never had this occasion to mention so much as the first letters of his Name.”²

The famous Puritan divines, Increase Mather, and his son Cotton, both wrote the key demonological texts of seventeenth-century America. It has been suggested that Increase’s texts are more measured than his son’s.³ According to Increase, proceeding with caution was best, in order to “prevent innocent ones having their Lives Endangered or their Reputations Ruin’d by being, through the subtlety and Power of the Devils, in consideration with the Ignorance and Weakness of Men, involved amongst the guilty.”⁴ In comparison, Cotton’s musings on witchcraft are a bit more rash, only occasionally tempering excitement with caution, especially, like his father, upon the subject of “spectral representation,” which Cotton referred to as “so feeble an Evidence.”⁵ Yet perhaps it is not surprising that Cotton’s writings are different from his father’s, as the young Mather found himself at the center of one of the greatest witch-panics of seventeenth-century America. Cotton’s descriptions offer a glimpse of the witchcraft beliefs of colonial New England, and his status as one of the premier contemporary writers on the subject lends his voice weight.

First published in 1692, Cotton Mather’s *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, includes a synopsis of the Salem witchcraft trials he witnessed. Yet, it also serves as a demonological primer, including work from such contemporary New England heavy-hitters

¹ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft: Being the Wonders of the Invisible World* (repr. 1692; New York: Dover Publications, 2005), 99.

² Ibid.

³ Marion Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 217.

⁴ Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience, concerning evil Spirits Personating Men, Witchcrafts, infallible Proofs of Guilt in such as are accused with that Crime*. (Boston: Benjamin Harris, 1693), 71.

⁵ Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather*, ed. Julius Tuttle (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1911), 1:151.

as Deodat Lawson and Matthew Hale. Also included in Mather's work is "An Abstract of Mr. Perkins's Way for The Discovery of Witches," in which Perkins states very clearly that one of the "Presumptions which do at least probably...note one to be a witch" is "if any *Man* or Women be notoriously famed for a witch."⁶ Likewise, Perkins states that "if the Party suspected be the Son or Daughter, man-servant or maid-servant of a known and convicted witch" this too can be cause for examination.⁷ These passages highlight two ideas considered earlier. First, that the idea of "common fame" should be a cause for suspicion illustrates the overlap of public and private; that which was private comportment could be made public, or "common," by the collectively wagging tongues of the community. Second, Perkins again makes clear that either men or women could fall under suspicion of witchcraft. Cotton's inclusion of Perkins's work in his own, as noted earlier, elucidates the ideological bridge that still connected the demonology of New England and Old.

Mather's work also includes a discussion of the horror of the witchcraft afflicting the "*First Born* of our *English* settlements."⁸ Against this "terrible Plague of Evil Angels," Mather urges his readers to "unite in our Endeavors to deliver our distressed Neighbors, from the horrible Annoyances and Molestations with which a dreadful Witchcraft is now persecuting them."⁹ Mather suggests caution, however, urging his people to "unite in such Methods for this deliverance, as may be unquestionably safe, lest *the latter end be worse than the beginning*," for

When there has been a Murder committed, an Apparition of the slain Party accusing of any Man, altho' such Apparitions have oftner spoke true than false, is not enough to Convict the Man as guilty of that Murder; but yet it is a sufficient occasion for

⁶ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 27.

⁷ *Ibid.* 28.

⁸ *Ibid.* 15.

⁹ *Ibid.* 15, 25.

Magistrates to make a particular enquiry... Even so a Spectre exactly resembling such or such a Person, when the Neighborhood are tormented by such Spectres, may reasonably make Magistrates inquisitive whether the Person so represented have done or said any thing that may argue their confederacy with Evil Spirits, altho' it may be defective enough in point of Conviction; especially at a time, when 'tis possible, some over-powerful Conjurer may have got the skill of thus exhibiting the Shapes of all sorts of Persons.¹⁰

Thus, much like his father Increase, Cotton Mather cautions that while spectral evidence may be a cause for suspicion, no case of witchcraft should hinge on it.

Cotton Mather himself claims to have suffered under maleficium of a most malevolent and nefarious variety. In the spring of 1693, his wife bore him a son, and though it was a "child of most *comely* and *heartly* look...[it] had such an obstruction in the bowels, as utterly hindred [sic] the Passage of its Ordure from it."¹¹ Sadly, the child died just a few short days after its birth. As Mather reports in his diary, the autopsy revealed that the lower end of the intestines were, surprisingly, "altogether closed up."¹² The curiousness of this condition, Mather writes, gave him "great Reason to suspect a witchcraft...because my wife, a few weeks before her deliverance, was affrighted of a horrible *Spectre*, in our porch, which Fright caused her Bowels to turn within her."¹³ Given the high mortality rates in New England and the rise in witchcraft cases at the time, it is not surprising that Mather looked to witchcraft to explain the unexpected death of a seemingly healthy child.¹⁴

Cotton Mather and his fellow Puritan settlers, shared a dual conception of witches and witchcraft. As in England, New Englanders' were concerned with the harm witches inflicted both on their physical bodies and their property.¹⁵ The second major source of unease was

¹⁰ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 26.

¹¹ Cotton Mather, *Diary*, 163.

¹² *Ibid.* 164.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Karlsen, 187.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

the covenant made between the witch and Satan, and the spiritual damage it could cause to the community.¹⁶ The confluence of these two concerns meant that witches were seen not only as threats to society, but as enemies of God.¹⁷

The witch's covenant with the Devil was the source of his/her power. By signing their names in the Devil's "Black Book," witches forfeited their souls, in return for access to supernatural powers.¹⁸ A witch's primary power was the ability to perform *maleficium*, that is, to harm others through supernatural means. Acts of maleficium were accomplished through various means, sometimes by a glance or a touch, sometimes through a curse or incantation.¹⁹ A witch's actions did not have to be witnessed to be suspect, nor did they necessarily have to have occurred in recent memory. The recollection of an unpleasant encounter with a suspicious person was often enough to link subsequent unexplainable events with witchcraft.²⁰ Trial evidence often includes witness recollections of decades-old events as evidence of a witch's maleficium.

Much of the maleficium perpetrated by witches revolved around the household and its occupants. Witches were believed to have the ability to cause sickness or death in humans and animals, to prevent conception or cause miscarriages, and to raise storms that could destroy crops.²¹ At the more mundane end of the spectrum of a witch's powers were the abilities to spoil beer, cause cows to stop giving milk, and hens to cease laying.²² Thus, in addition to the spiritual damage it caused, a witch's power threatened human life, property, and domestic activities, underscoring the precarious nature of colonial life. The harshness of

¹⁶Karlsen, 4.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid. 9.

¹⁹Ibid. 6-7.

²⁰Ibid. 7-8.

²¹Ibid. 6-7.

²²Ibid. 7.

life in the colonies also inspired an apocryphal atmosphere similar to that seen in England at the turn of the sixteenth century. These sentiments are evident in the sermons of Samuel Parris, minister at Salem Village in the 1690s.

The appearance of “Devils among our Churches,” Parris contented, should have served to “deeply [humble]” the congregation at Salem.²³ Parris reasoned:

If the Church of Corinth were called to mourn because of one incestuous person among them...how much more may [New England] Churches mourn that such as work witchcraft, or are vehemently suspected to do so, are among them.²⁴

Like his predecessors, in Europe and New World demonologists like the Mathers, Parris believed this witchcraft was due, in part, to the coming of the end of days. In a sermon preached in September 1692, Parris quotes from Revelation, saying: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them...And they that are with him, are called and chosen, and Faithful.”²⁵ The witchcraft present at Salem was proof that the world was at a point of crisis. All that was sacred was profaned in the practice of witchcraft, and its presence was a sign that the End was at hand. But Parris and his New England contemporaries had more cause than this to make them feel they were living in the last days.

Thomas Hutchinson’s *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay* illustrates just how tumultuous a decade the 1690s were for the colonists, saying:

The distress of the people, at the time of the arrival of the charter, is represented to have been peculiarly great. The sea coast was infested with privateers, so that few vessels could escape them; the inland frontiers east and west were continually harassed by French and Indian enemies; a late expedition against Canada had exposed the province to the resentment of France, [and] brought...heavy...debt upon the government...but the great misfortune was, an apprehension that the Devil was let loose among them, that many had entered into a league with him, and others were

²³ Samuel Parris, “Sermon on March 27, 1692,” in *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689-1694*, eds. James F. Cooper, Jr., and Kenneth P. Minkema (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1993), 197.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. 199.

afflicted, tormented, and the subjects of diabolical rage and fury. The minds of people...were seized with gloom and horror.²⁶

Hutchinson's litany of warfare and debt sets the historical stage upon which the events at Salem would play out. It was a community rife with discord and disaster, and ripe for a full-fledged witch-panic.

Salem Town was originally settled in 1626, a bustling seaport that exported fish and furs, and did a brisk business too in immigrants from England.²⁷ As coastal communities filled, immigrants began moving into the interior of the colony, settling an area that was originally referred to as "The Farms," but which would eventually become its own settlement, Salem Village.²⁸ By the 1670s there was considerable friction between Salem Town and Salem Village. Salem Town felt the villagers living in The Farms owed them taxes, while the Farmers "sought to avoid civic obligations in the distant Town."²⁹ Another source of contention was connected to the Villagers' request for their own meeting house. They complained that attending weekly church services in the distant Town center was a hardship and inconvenience.³⁰ In 1672, the Village was granted the right to establish its own parish, build a meeting house, and begin the search for a minister. Yet not until 1752 did the Village become truly independent; the Town continued to collect ecclesiastical expenses from them until that time.³¹

In addition to the touchy relationship between Village and Town, the colony of Massachusetts as a whole was in a state of uncertainty when it came to its own independence

²⁶ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Lawrence Shaw Mayo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1936), 2: 9.

²⁷ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 16.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

from England. Hutchinson recounts that in the early part of the seventeenth century hopeful Puritan emigrants were granted a charter from King Charles which

cost the company two thousand pound sterling. The principal undertakers were puritans: Planters and ministers...together with servants, cattle, and all necessaries for the beginning of a colony, were sent over; the expense of which was very great. Subscriptions were slowly paid, [but] a cloud arose very early, upon the affairs of the colony; but it was soon dispelled by a proposal from Johnson, Winthrop and several other puritans...to remove to America; provided they might carry the charter with them, and manage the affairs of the colony without any dependence upon such of the company as should remain in England. This, by some was thought irregular; but, after consultation, it was agreed to.³²

It was this desire for independence from England that would be the cause of eventual strife between England and Massachusetts. By 1638 a

formal demand was made of the surrender of their charter, which was refused, and other proceedings followed, which would have issued in a final decisive judgment carried into execution, and probably have proved fatal to the plantation, if the change in affairs in England had not [prevented it]. Upon this change, the colony became a favorite...Whilst Cromwell ruled, he shewed them all the indulgence they desired.³³

Between 1640 and 1660 the fledgling colony “approached very near to an independent commonwealth.”³⁴ Instead of making English laws the foundation of their own legal system, they preferred the laws of Moses.³⁵ This establishment of a completely separate system of laws and government, especially considering its composition, again putting their charter in jeopardy.³⁶ In 1665, commissioners were sent to “settle the bounds of the colonies and to make inquiry into their state in general,” but the residents of Massachusetts “denied their authority, and pronounced the commission a violation of their charter.”³⁷

³² Hutchinson, 1.

³³ Ibid. 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Massachusetts colonists also engaged in a “constant trade...with foreign countries for contraband and enumerated commodities,” something that “gave great offense” to the Crown and for several years they were threatened often with a revoking of their charter.³⁸ They endeavored, according to Hutchinson, to “exculpate themselves” from this latest charge against their attempted sovereignty, but to no avail. In 1684

by a judgment or decree in chancery, their charter was declared forfeited, and their liberties were seized...[and] they were forced to submit to superior power and to such form of government as King Charles the Second and his successor King James thought fit to establish.³⁹

A new charter was eventually obtained, and brought to the colony by Increase Mather, but the years of uncertainty must have left the colony well outside the good graces of the Crown. Moreover, the Crown’s interference had likely left a bad taste in the mouths of many colonists. This uncertainty, Bernard Rosenthal contends, exacerbated by “persistent threats from ‘Indians’...and a decline of power among the orthodox clergy,” were “ingredients for broad social instability providing fertile ground for the discovery of enemies in the invisible world.”⁴⁰

Richard Latner similarly argues that an “environment of divisive religious contention” was at the heart of witchcraft accusations in Salem Village.⁴¹ Though a meeting house was constructed in 1672, the church was not a “full-fledged, comprehensive institution” until 1689. Thus its ministers were not ordained and could not perform several important church rituals, including communion, “nor could they admit congregants to formal

³⁸ Hutchinson, 3.

³⁹ Ibid. 4.

⁴⁰ Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4.

⁴¹ Richard Latner, “‘Here are no Newters’: Witchcraft and Religious Discord in Salem Village and Andover,” *New England Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (March 2006): 92-122.

church membership.”⁴² The Half-way Covenant was also a source of contention, both among New England ministers, and between ministers and their congregations. Under the Half-way Covenant, adults who had been baptized but not yet made a formal, public declaration of “experiencing God’s free grace” could be partial members of the church, which allowed their children to also be baptized.⁴³ However, some ministers and parishes were calling for less inclusive membership regulations, both for partial and full membership, something that no doubt worried members of the church laity.⁴⁴ This, Latner argues, would have created divisions between those ministers who chose to institute these new rules and their congregations, but also between those church members who were full members and those who were only partial members, as only full members could take part in communion.⁴⁵

In addition, seventeenth-century Puritan leaders were “[confronting] momentous challenges: the loss of the first generation leaders and a deterioration in ministers’ status; a decline in church membership; the incursion of rationalism, materialism, and secularism; and diminishing religious enthusiasm.”⁴⁶ Enlightenment ideas then raging through Europe were likely at least partly to blame for these phenomena. The Enlightenment’s focus on observable phenomena introduced an alarming current of skepticism, one which some Puritan ministers may have found threatening and unsettling. Latner suggests that perhaps Parris’s and the Mathers’ willingness to prosecute witches was a result of these threats to their religion, and perhaps witchcraft accusations served as a way of showing their

⁴² Latner, 94.

⁴³ Ibid. 95.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 97.

congregation that the Devil was very much active in the world.⁴⁷ Perhaps, Latner argues, it was a way of bringing those questioning and doubtful souls back into the fold.

More than just enemies of the invisible world, Massachusetts colonists were also dealing with enemies in the physical world, namely the frequent incursions of local Native Americans against their northeastern borders. Published in 1699, Cotton Mather's *Decennium luctuosum* is a history of the war between the New England colonists, and the Indians and French. It provides a year-by-year account of King Philip's War, and also gives a glimpse of the affects of these conflicts on New England. Mather begins by saying "The Flame of War then Raged thro' a great part of the Country, whereby many whole Towns were laid in Ashes, and many Lives were Sacrificed."⁴⁸ He goes on to clarify, saying "the Fate of our Northern and Eastern Regions in that War was very different from that of the rest. The Desolations of the war had over-whelmed all the Settlements to the North East of Wells [Maine]."⁴⁹ By the early 1690s, Mather recounts that New England was

now quite out of Breath! A tedious, lingering, expensive Defense against an Ever-Approaching, and Unapproachable Adversary had made it so. But nothing had made it more so, than the Expedition to Canada; which had exhausted its best Spirits, and seemed it *Ultimus Conatus*.⁵⁰

Mather is likely referring to the same expedition mentioned by Hutchinson that had so drained the colony financially.

John Demos suggests that an economic downturn as a result of these wars may have been partially at fault for the Salem Village witch-panic of the 1690s. Demos traces the

⁴⁷ Latner, 97. Rosenthal also refers to a "decline of power among the orthodox clergy," citing as evidence the civil authority's reaction to "The Return of Several Ministers," allegedly authored by Cotton Mather, in which the ministers urge caution in the use of spectral evidence as a primary means of conviction (Rosenthal, 3, 69). The court carried on as a before, suggesting that New England was not "contrary to contemporary popular stereotypes...a hegemonic theocracy...civil authorities had more power than clerical ones" (Rosenthal, 70).

⁴⁸ Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, (repr. 1699; New York: Garland Publishing, 1978) 11-12.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 79.

source of disruptions in market patterns in Massachusetts to the English Civil War and the subsequent decrease in trade and immigration.⁵¹ Demos argues that there are similar patterns evident in the American colonies in 1660s and 1690s.⁵² The attacks on the frontier, and corresponding drain on resources on the interior would likely have affected the economy of Massachusetts in much the same manner. Indeed, Hutchinson's reference to a "heavy debt upon the government" caused by the hostilities on the frontier suggests as much.

The colonists' belief that Salem and the other Puritan cities were to be as a "city upon a hill," ties together all of the preceding factors. Governor John Winthrop, in his famous speech aboard the New England-bound ship *Arabella*, proclaimed:

We are entered into a Covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission...Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath he ratified this Covenant...and will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it; but if we shall neglect the observation of these articles...and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions...the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us; be revenged of such a (sinful) people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a Covenant.⁵³

Puritan settlements were to be an example, but this also left them more open to diabolical attacks. Should they break their covenant and indulge their sinful natures, God would make visible his wrath against them. The attacks on the frontier, the frequent charter disputes, the religious unrest, the inter-community rivalry, and the economic hardships of the mid-1600s must have seemed very real evidence that they had indeed failed at their noble experiment and were deservedly experiencing God's divine punishment. Witchcraft cases were likely seen as further evidence of divine judgment, as the Devil was allowed to do nothing

⁵¹ John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 376.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ John Winthrop, *Life and Letters of John Winthrop*, ed. Robert C. Winthrop (New York: De Capo Press, 1971), 2:18.

excepting it was God's will. As John Higginson, the pastor at Salem Village in 1697, writes in his introduction to John Hale's "A Modest Inquiry,"

Knowing that secret things belong to God...what God is doing we know not now...only in the matter of Witchcraft, which on the Humane side, is one of the most hidden Works of Darkness, managed by the Rules of the darkness of this World, to the doing of great spoil amongst the Children of Men: And to the Divine side, is one of the most awful and tremendous Judgments of God which can be inflicted on the Societies of men, especially when the Lord shall please for his own Holy Ends to Enlarge Satan's Commission.⁵⁴

Like their forefathers in Old England, New Englanders felt a need to expunge witchcraft from their communities to prove their righteousness. Perhaps they felt this pressure more acutely considering they felt the eyes of the world to be upon them. As early as 1640, witchcraft accusations begin to appear in trial records in New England. As in England, there are instances of men being accused. Though there are several instances of witchcraft accusations made against men in New England in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Cotton Mather pays special attention to one in particular in his writings on witchcraft: the Reverend George Burroughs. Bernard Rosenthal suggests one of two reasons behind Cotton Mather's dogged determination to convict Burroughs, despite the fact that much of the evidence against Burroughs was of the spectral variety, something in which Mather put little store. First, Mather, motivated by close ties to the authorities conducting the proceedings, may have felt pressure to support them in their verdict.⁵⁵ Second, Rosenthal argues that Mather's "hostility to the theological force symbolized in Burroughs was enough to overcome his legal scruples."⁵⁶ The testimonies asserting demonic baptism performed by Burroughs, and his profane use of devilish sacraments, inverted the sacred rituals and

⁵⁴ John Higginson, "Introduction to Hale's 'A Modest Inquiry'" in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706*, ed. George Lincoln Burr (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1914), 400.

⁵⁵ Rosenthal, 142.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

religious beliefs Mather held so dear. Indeed the motif of demonic re-baptism was integral to the Salem witchcraft proceedings and Burroughs, as the baptizer, was at its center.⁵⁷

Burroughs was essentially an inverted version of Mather: a poor patriarch and, perhaps worse still, a poor shepherd of his flock. He was an anathema to Mather, and perhaps this is what led Mather to throw out all his previous injunctions against the use of spectral evidence in his condemnation of Burroughs.⁵⁸

The accusations made against Reverend George Burroughs make for a fascinating case study in no small part because, at first blush, Burroughs appears to fit the ideal image of Puritan manhood and masculinity. The son of a wealthy English family, Burroughs was twenty-eight years old when he was called upon to minister to the congregation of Salem Village.⁵⁹ A graduate of Harvard, Burroughs served as a minister in Falmouth beginning in around 1674, but left in 1676 after the town was attacked by Indians.⁶⁰ From there he moved to Salisbury, Massachusetts, where he took a position as assistant to then-pastor John Wheelwright, perhaps hoping to replace the aging minister in the near future.⁶¹ However, disputes between Wheelwright and Major Robert Pike, and Burroughs's role in these

⁵⁷ Rosenthal, 143.

⁵⁸ The witch-panic that occurred at Salem is something of an aberration. Other communities, in Connecticut for example, experienced cases of witchcraft but never of the size or severity of Salem. Yet Salem is unique for more than just its scope. First, the Puritan context of Salem makes it unique from witch-panics in Europe. Puritans, who believed themselves to be God's chosen peoples, were uniquely mentally pre-disposed to see the scourge of witchcraft in their community as natural. Second, men like Cotton and Increase Mather, who otherwise embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment, argued for moderation and reasoned evaluation of charges of witchcraft, and scoffed at the use of spectral evidence, suddenly threw all these strictures aside. These educated and Enlightened men became just as caught up in the witch-panic at Salem as did everyone else.

⁵⁹ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 54. Burroughs was brought to Salem Village as a replacement for James Bagley, and was confirmed as the town's new minister after a trial period of indeterminate length (Norton, *Satan's Snare*, 125).

⁶⁰ Rosenthal, 54.

⁶¹ Mary Beth Norton, "George Burroughs and the Girls of Casco: The Maine Roots of Salem Witchcraft," *Maine History* 40, no. 4 (December 2001): 259-278.

disputes, made his ascension to Wheelwright's post impossible.⁶² Though Burroughs acted as the interim minister upon Wheelwright's death in 1679, the position was clearly never formally offered to him, as he began to look elsewhere for work, finally settling in Salem Village in 1680.⁶³ Tensions between Burroughs and his congregation soon surfaced however. By 1683 his salary was not being paid, and he soon stopped meeting with his congregation.⁶⁴ Burroughs was eventually summoned to court to answer for his failure in the role of town minister, and in March of 1683 Burroughs was driven from the village and returned to Falmouth, Maine.⁶⁵ Six years later, in 1689, Falmouth was again attacked by Indians, and again Burroughs survived. The parents of Mercy Lewis, one of Burroughs's eventual accusers and a key player in both the Salem and Andover witch-panics, were not so lucky. Mercy, left orphaned by the attacks, moved in with Burroughs as his servant.⁶⁶ Later in that year, or sometime in early 1690, Burroughs moved to Wells, Maine. Lewis left his service, relocating to Beverly, Massachusetts, and then to Salem Village.⁶⁷

In 1692, Burroughs returned from exile in Maine to meet charges of witchcraft in Salem Village that would ultimately be his undoing.⁶⁸ Unfortunately for Burroughs, confessing witches, the afflicted girls, and numerous neighbors testified to his diabolical

⁶² Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 124. Wheelwright and Pike quarreled over numerous things. Their dispute escalated to the point where Pike called for Wheelwright's demotion; in response, Wheelwright excommunicated Pike on a Sunday in early 1677 (Norton, *Snare*, 124). Eventually, the Massachusetts General Court weighed in, condemning both parties in an attempt to bring an end to the matter (Norton, *Snare*, 124-125). Regardless, Burroughs's support of Wheelwright would have put him on the outs with those members of the community who had supported Pike, and would not have allowed, perhaps, a majority decision for him becoming the new minister when Wheelwright died in November 1679.

⁶³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, 54.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 55.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 56. Norton, *Casco*, 269.

⁶⁶ Norton, *Casco*, 269.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 270.

⁶⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, 55.

powers.⁶⁹ In fact, no fewer than thirty testimonies were brought against him. The confessing witches, including Abigail and Deliverance Hobbs, Richard Carrier, and Mary Warren, testified that Burroughs came to them in the shape of “a little Black hair’d [sic] man,” inflicting “cruel pains and hurts” upon them if they refused to sign a covenant with the Devil.⁷⁰

Burroughs’s disordered home life was also put on trial. Those who claimed to have been bewitched by Burroughs testified they had been “troubled with the Apparitions of two women who said that they were George Burroughs’s two wives, and that he had been the death of them.”⁷¹ Indeed, Cotton Mather claims that Burroughs was “infamous for the Barbarous usage of his two successive wives, all the Country over,” and that their deaths had long been considered suspicious by many.⁷² According to the testimony brought by various witnesses, Burroughs had “[kept] his two successive wives in a strange kind of slavery...[and] brought them to the point of death, by his harsh dealings with [them].”⁷³

Several additional pieces of evidence worked to seal Burroughs’s fate. First, though Burroughs was a “puny man,” he had often done things “beyond the strength of a Giant.”⁷⁴ Six people testified that Burroughs had “performed such supernatural feats of strength as lifting a heavy gun at arm’s length with a single finger thrust into the barrel.”⁷⁵ On one such occasion witnesses reported watching in amazement as he lifted a seven-foot gun “so heavy that strong men could not steadily hold it out with both hands...with but one hand, and

⁶⁹ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 99.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 100.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 101.

⁷² *Ibid.* 101-102

⁷³ Burr, *Narratives*, 220.

⁷⁴ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 103.

⁷⁵ Boyer and Nissenbaum, 12.

holding it out like a pistol.”⁷⁶ Other witnesses asserted that he had been seen lifting barrels of molasses and cider in “very Disadvantageous Postures, and Carrying...them through...Difficult Places.”⁷⁷ Worse still, Burroughs made no secret of his strength; witness testimony suggests he flaunted it at every opportunity. Burroughs’s Puritan neighbors would have considered this boastful performance of hyper-masculinity unacceptable and dangerous.

Second, Burroughs made disturbing claims about having the very sort of supernatural powers that suggested a diabolical pact. Burroughs’s brother-in-law, John Ruck, claimed that Burroughs had boasted he was able to “know [Ruck’s] thoughts.”⁷⁸ When Ruck suggested to Burroughs that even the Devil could have no such knowledge, Burroughs replied, “My God makes known your thoughts unto me.”⁷⁹ Finally, Mather argued that Burroughs’s very contrariness and contradictory testimony was part of his eventual undoing. Indeed, Mather claims that never was there a defendant of such “Faltring [sic], Faulty, unconstant, and contrary Answers” as Burroughs.⁸⁰

For all these reasons Burroughs was found guilty and executed. Yet why was he singled out in the first place? He was a settled, married man, and had been the town’s minister. What traits or behavior could have been so threatening as to elicit not only accusations of witchcraft, but accusations that led to a conviction and execution? David Hall suggests that he may have attracted attention because he left one of his children unbaptized.⁸¹ Indeed, Cotton Mather castigated Burroughs for his “Antipathy to Prayer and the

⁷⁶ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 105.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ David Hall, ed. *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 6.

other Ordinances of God, tho [sic] by his Profession, singularly Obliged thereunto.”⁸²

Failure to baptize one of his children suggests that Burroughs may have had Anabaptist leanings, a religious group uneasily tolerated by Puritans in Massachusetts.⁸³ Thus in one fell swoop, Mather attacked both Burroughs’s ability as both a minister and a father.

Burroughs’s poor performance as a neighbor may also have been at issue. As Robin Briggs has argued, a key theme binding together European witchcraft accusations was the idea of “neighborliness.” Briggs explains the “popular image of a witch was that of a person motivated by ill-will and spite who lacked the proper sense of neighborhood and community.”⁸⁴ In other words, someone at risk of being charged as a witch was typically a person of “notoriously quarrelsome” character.⁸⁵ This image seems to hold true for George Burroughs. Accused in later testimony of being responsible for the deaths of Deodat Lawson’s wife and daughter, Cotton Mather suggested Burroughs may have sought revenge against those whom he “might have a prejudice [against] for his being serviceable at Salem Village, from whence [he] had in Ill Terms removed some years before.”⁸⁶ Burroughs’s past history in the village – his connection to the Indian Wars and frontier disputes, complaints about his ministerial wages, refusal to administer the sacrament, and ultimately, his refusal even to preach before his congregation – would certainly have pegged him as an un-neighborly fellow, something made all the more threatening and shocking given his social

⁸² Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 102.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Interestingly, the charter that crossed the Atlantic with Increase Mather officially called for a tolerance of religious sects. Although it drew of the line at protecting the rights of Papists, all other Christian sects were officially protected, including Baptists (Rosenthal, 132). Thus, as Rosenthal states, though George Burroughs could not be indicted for “behaving like a Baptist, no law prevented him hanging as a witch,” (Rosenthal, 132).

⁸⁴ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (rep. 1996; New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 102.

position in the village. Thus Burroughs's reputation as a less than ideal neighbor, and the "Ill Will" it caused, may have come back to haunt him.

Carol Karlsen's data comparing "outbreak" and "non-outbreak" demographics, might also be instructive in Burroughs's case. Karlsen describes accusations of witchcraft as endemic during this period, with occasional epidemic periods. Karlsen defines epidemic, or "outbreak" periods, as times of "intense witch-fear," when those accused of witchcraft were not let off with simple remonstrations, fines, or whipping, but were brought to trial, convicted, and sometimes executed.⁸⁷ During outbreak periods in New England, five or more people were brought to trial on charges of witchcraft per year.⁸⁸ In non-outbreak periods, three or fewer were brought to trial, and those who were tried during these calmer periods were more likely to escape the noose.⁸⁹ Karlsen's data shows that during outbreak periods, men were far more likely to be accused of witchcraft, and though they were less likely to be convicted, if convicted, they were almost sure to hang.⁹⁰ Furthermore, men convicted at Salem were especially likely to be executed. Of the six men executed in outbreaks between 1620 and 1725, five were executed in Salem.⁹¹ Of course, with twenty-two people ultimately caught up in the witch-panic at Salem, it is not surprising that we find more men were accused. Perhaps, in addition to whatever deviant or offensive behavior was stacked against him, Burroughs's was also a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

⁸⁷ Karlsen, 20, 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 29.

⁸⁹ Ibid..

⁹⁰ Ibid. 48-49.

⁹¹ Ibid. 51.

Could George Burroughs's deviation from prescribed gender roles have led to his being accused as a witch? His alleged mistreatment of not just one spouse but two, certainly seems to have contributed to his infamous reputation in the community. Although Massachusetts law stated in 1650 that "no man shall strike his wife, nor any women her husband," this law was only enforced when men overstepped the bounds of physical correction.⁹² When the correction of subordinates happened discreetly, inside the home and in a calm and reasonable manner, it was widely tolerated.⁹³ Burroughs's "Barbarous Usage" of his wives, however, had clearly breached the private space of his home. The spilling of this private discord into public space not only left him open to ridicule as a man who could not properly control his wives or his temper (and therefore unable to properly govern his household), but also tainted the public space of the community and thus was doubly threatening. Perhaps then the witchcraft accusations made against Burroughs were a legal way to constrain and/or punish gendered behavior his neighbors regarded as deviant and dangerous. In other words, witchcraft accusations against men such as Burroughs may have served to further sharpen the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable masculine behavior in Puritan Massachusetts.⁹⁴

The idealized notion of the pastoral family may have also played a role in the accusations against Burroughs and his eventual demise. The expectation that the pastoral family should function as a "model of piety and decorum" for its parishioners was a result of the Protestant reformations of the sixteenth century.⁹⁵ Pastors and their wives were expected,

⁹² Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 74.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 90.

⁹⁴ Erikson, 196.

⁹⁵ Karant-Nunn, 79-99.

by their church superiors and the laity alike, to be shining examples of both religiosity and domestic bliss. Burroughs's relationship with his wives fits no such model. Nor was his alleged reluctance to baptize his children in keeping with either the ideal of fatherhood, or the paradigm of the pastoral family. Perhaps, like the priests accused in Normandy, the accusations against Burroughs were symptomatic of a simmering fear carried over from the Old Country: namely that the Devil had minions and converts placed at the highest levels of the Church, all the better to pervert and ensnare men's souls. His alleged unorthodox religious views, evidenced by his failure to baptize his children, may have also made him vulnerable.

Finally, Burroughs's connection to frontier hostilities, as Mary Beth Norton has suggested, may have further complicated matters. Abigail Hobbs, in her deposition on April 19, 1692, admitted to having been recruited by the Devil at "the Eastward [Falmouth] at Casco-bay [sic]" three or four years prior (i.e. sometime between 1688 and 1689).⁹⁶ This would have overlapped with Burroughs's own residency in Falmouth, no small coincidence. The Devil, Hobbs testified, had appeared to her in a shape "like a man," and offered to "give [her] fine things" if she would "make a covenant with him."⁹⁷ Having made her covenant, the Devil "bid her to hurt folks," none other than Mercy Lewis and Ann Putnam.⁹⁸ In a subsequent examination on May 12, 1692, Hobbs mentions Burroughs for the first time, claiming that Burroughs forced her to afflict persons other than those in Salem Village. Though she claimed she could not remember their names, she testified that they lived "at the

⁹⁶ "Examination of Abigail Hobbs, April 19, 1692," in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 2: 405-409.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 405-406.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 407. Ann Putnam was the daughter of John Putnam, and Mercy Lewis was living in the Putnam household as a servant.

Eastward” and included “such who lived at the fort side of the River about a half a mile from the fort, toward Capt. Bracketts.”⁹⁹

This corroborates a vision Ann Putnam had on April 20, the day after Hobbs’s first examination. In her vision, Ann deposed that

on 20th of April 1692: at evening [I] saw the Apparition of a Minister at which [I] was grievously afflicted. . . presently he told me that his name was George Burroughs and that he had three wives: and that he had bewitched the Two first of them to death: and that he killed Mist. Lawson because she was so unwilling to go from the village and also killed Mr. Lawson’s child because he went to the eastward with Sir Edmon and preached so to the soldiers and that he had bewitched a great many soldiers to death at the eastward, when Sir Edmon was there. And that he had made Abigail Hobbs a witch.¹⁰⁰

“Sir Edmon” refers to Sir Edmund Andros, governor of the Dominion of New England, and leader of the troops fighting against the French and Indians until he was ousted from the position in 1689.¹⁰¹ The unfortunate coincidence that Burroughs had been present at several major defeats at the Eastward, and had lived to talk about it, appears to weigh heavily against him. Likewise it can be no coincidence that it was Ann Putnam, living cheek-by-jowl with Mercy Lewis, former employee of George Burroughs and orphaned survivor of the attacks on Falmouth in the 1680s, had this vision.

Burroughs’s case is unique, and not simply because he was a man who stood accused of witchcraft. Burroughs also does not fit the models so often applied to male witches. The secondary target theory suggests that the men most likely to be accused of witchcraft were

⁹⁹ “Examination of Abigail Hobbs, May 12, 1692,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 2: 410-412.

¹⁰⁰ “Ann Putnam, Jr. v. George Burroughs,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 2: 164.

¹⁰¹ Norton, *Casco*, 263.

those closest to women who were accused.¹⁰² Likewise, men who defended the accused or questioned the necessity of the proceedings or the rulings of the court were also suspect.¹⁰³ According to Carol Karlsen's data, of the roughly forty men who were accused during the Salem witchcraft outbreak, almost half were the male relatives of accused women.¹⁰⁴ However, Elizabeth Kent has argued that the kinship networks of colonial New England cast suspicion on this theory.¹⁰⁵ She contends that the "chain migration of families, intermarriage, and small communities created dense kin networks in New England," resulting in a situation in which "all New Englanders were more likely to be related to a witch."¹⁰⁶ George Burroughs, who had no witch-wife, or even a witch-relative, is a clear example that illustrates the secondary target model cannot be applied to all men who were accused of witchcraft in colonial New England.

The second theory applied to the small but notable group of men who were accused of witchcraft in New England feminizes them in an attempt to explain the accusations of witchcraft against them. The assumption behind this theory is that to be accused of what was considered by most contemporaries to be a typically female crime, the man accused must have been considered feminine in some way. Elizabeth Kent convincingly rejects the theory of the feminized male witch, emphasizing that most men accused of witchcraft in colonial New England were indeed quite masculine, and that their condemnation stemmed not from feminine traits but rather improperly expressed masculine ones.¹⁰⁷ Kent finds three faults with the feminization theory. First, she argues scholarship that advances this theory does not

¹⁰² Karlsen, 3.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England," *History Workshop* 60 (2005): 69-92.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 69.

recognize that “as men, these witches had very different relationships to the legal, cultural, social and economic institutions of their day.”¹⁰⁸ Peter Rushton, in his article “Texts of Authority: Witchcraft Accusations and the Demonstration of Truth in Early Modern England,” supports this argument, stating that, in legal matters, “men were not only more literate, but more expert in grasping the technicalities of the law and its forms of self-presentation.”¹⁰⁹ Thus many men accused of witchcraft may have been able to secure a dismissal of their cases in the early stages, and therefore may not show up in court records at all.¹¹⁰ Rushton argues that this relative absence may have been a reflection of men’s “greater skill at issuing challenges” due to their better understanding of the law and legal system.¹¹¹

Kent also suggests that feminizing male witches “characterizes [them] as ‘weak-minded,’ ‘passive,’ and ‘powerless,’ [in] direct contrast to the way accusers describe them.”¹¹² In Burroughs’s case, not only was his extraordinary strength used as proof of a diabolic covenant, but also his status as the “ring leader” of the Salem witches. His abuse of his wives, though it would have ultimately feminized him according to the Puritan ideals of manhood, was also a masculine expression of power and authority. Thus, even as a witch, Burroughs performed masculinity.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Kent, 70.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Rushton, “Texts of Authority: Witchcraft Accusations and the Demonstration of Truth in Early Modern England,” in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Stuart Clark (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 21-40.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 23.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 23.

¹¹² Kent, 70.

¹¹³ Additionally, it should be noted that, generally, “when men confessed to becoming witches, they almost always implied that they bypassed women in the process, claiming that the Devil himself was responsible for their enticement,” (Karlsen, 136). Therefore evidence of male witches recruiting other men is far scarcer than evidence of female witches recruiting other women (Karlsen, 136). Thus it seems men maintained their masculine superiority by claiming to have gone straight to the Devil themselves; unlike women, men asserted they needed no intermediary to become a witch.

On August 19, 1692, George Burroughs was led to the gallows. The ability to correctly and confidently recite the Lord's Prayer had become a popular way to test the innocence of the accused, it being presumed that a servant of the Devil would find it difficult, if not impossible, to speak the Lord's name.¹¹⁴ When Burroughs concluded his scaffold speech with a flawless recitation of the Lord's Prayer, the assembled crowd seemed to turn in his favor. It was only the intervention of Cotton Mather himself that convinced both the authorities and the onlookers that the death sentence was justified.¹¹⁵ According to Robert Calef's account,

Mr. Burroughs was carried in a Cart with the others, through the streets of Salem to Execution; when he was upon the Ladder, he made a Speech for the clearing of his Innocency [sic]...as were to the Admiration of all present; his Prayer (which he concluded by repeating the Lord's Prayer) was so well-worded, and uttered with such composedness, and such...fervency of Spirit, as was very affecting, and drew Tears from many...as soon as he was turned off, Mr. Cotton Mather, being mounted upon a Horse, addressed himself to the people...saying That the Devil has often been transformed into an Angel of Light; and this did somewhat appeal to the people, and the Executions went on.¹¹⁶

Calef's account, though colored by his own distaste for the proceedings and his very vocal disagreements with both Increase and Cotton Mather, is a useful glimpse of the last moments of George Burroughs, who went to his execution without tears or appeals, but calmly and with reason, as a man.

But what of Samuel Parris, who followed Burroughs and then Deodat Lawson as Salem Village's minister and still occupied that post at the time of the trials? The witch-panic at Salem Village began in his household, after all. How was it that he escaped suspicion and accusation? Samuel Parris was born in 1653 in England to Thomas Parris, a

¹¹⁴ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 12.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Robert Calef, *The Witchcraft Delusion in England: Its Rise, Progress, and Termination* (rep. 1866; Roxbury: Elliot Woodward, 1700), 38.

cloth merchant. At Thomas's death in 1673, Samuel inherited only his father's modest property in Barbados.¹¹⁷ Samuel did not try to find his fortune in the tropics, instead immigrating to Boston in the 1680s, where he soon bought a wharf and warehouse.¹¹⁸ Sadly, his attempt to enter the world of commerce met with little success, and he settled instead on work in the ministry.¹¹⁹ By 1688, five years after Burroughs left for Maine, Parris entered into negotiations with Salem Village to become their new minister. His appointment to the post was not easily accomplished, however. Though Salem Villagers made the formal offer to Parris in late November 1688, Parris took his time providing a reply. Not until April 1689 did Parris and his new congregation conclude their negotiations.¹²⁰ Parris's stalling, and the detailed list of demands upon which he made his acceptance contingent, led to resentment among the Village congregation, and several subsequent meetings were called in order to hammer out the finer points of the contract. Eventually all was settled to everyone's moderate approval. The contract, however, was not put into writing until June, and several of the key details were either ignored all together or left vague, unbeknownst to Parris.¹²¹ In any event, Parris finally gave the ordination ceremony that formally and publically marked his position on November 19, 1689.¹²²

Parris, like his predecessor Burroughs, frequently went without pay. A petition made to the Court of Common Pleas held at Salem in December 1692, alleged that "several among us for several years [have] made no payment to our Reverend Pastor, and others as little as

¹¹⁷ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 154.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 155.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 155-156.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 156.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 159.

¹²² *Ibid.*

they pleased.”¹²³ The signers of the petition – Nathaniel Putnam, John Putnam, and Jonathan Wolcott – also alleged that the same dues-shirkers had likewise made no effort or payment toward the “reparation of the very meeting-house...so that by reason of broken windows...and others wide open, it is sometimes so cold that it makes it uncomfortable.”¹²⁴ With an unpaid minister and a meeting-house in disrepair it is little wonder that the relationship between Parris and his congregation was strained.

By 1695, the laity of Salem Village had drafted a petition against Parris. In it they stated they felt compelled to make “bold once more to trouble you with our humble proposals. That whereas there have been long and uncomfortable difference among us, chiefly relating to Mr. Parris.”¹²⁵ They had been “frustrated of [their] expectations” in their past requests for the Reverend Elders in Boston to supply them with a new minister, and they worried that if Parris continued in his post “our rent [would be] made worse, and our breach made wider.”¹²⁶ Eighty-four Villagers signed this petition. However, in the same year, 105 people signed a petition in support of Parris as minister, many of their names familiar from the trials in 1692.¹²⁷ Their support of Parris hardly contains glowing praise of his work, however. They say simply that the “removing of Parris will not in any way be for the

¹²³ “Petition of Salem-Village Church to the Court of Common Pleas (December 26, 1692),” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 255-256.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 255.

¹²⁵ “Anti-Parris Petition,” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 260-262.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 261.

¹²⁷ “Pro-Parris Petition,” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 262-263.

upholding of the Kingdom of God. For we have had three ministers removed already, and by every removal, our differences have been rather aggravated.”¹²⁸

These complaints were clearly a long time coming, and certainly colored Parris’s sermons. When he preached in late 1692, he was responding not just to the evil that had reared its head in the village but likely to his detractors as well. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum have argued that Parris’s “resentment against a way of life which attracted him but at which he had failed...[produced] an exaggerated concern for honor, dignity, and respect: those badges of status and deference which were most likely to be absent in a commercial environment” and it was this resentment that influenced his ultimately disastrous interactions with Salem Villagers.¹²⁹ Indeed, his sermons seem to reflect a sense of persecution, along with his desire for their respect and admiration.

In his ordination sermon, he reminds his congregation that there is “no better way in all the world than to take direction from the word of God, how we are each of us from this day forward to behave ourselves.”¹³⁰ Parris begins with a list of his responsibilities as minister to the parish, listing among them: to carry out his work as minister “not as a Lord but as a servant, yet not as a man’s but the Lord’s;” to be “zealous in my master’s service;” and, perhaps most importantly, to “make differences between the clean and the unclean, so as to labor to change and purge the one, and strengthen and confirm the other.”¹³¹ While in the last he is certainly referring to enemies of God such as witches, he is also likely referring to those of congregation who had not yet become full-fledged members. As for his flock, Parris

¹²⁸ “Pro-Parris Petition,” 262.

¹²⁹¹²⁹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 163.

¹³⁰ Samuel Parris, “Ordination Sermon at Salem Village, November 19, 1689,” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 184-187.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 187.

asserts they owe him “reverence,” and are to “bear me a great deal of love,” as indeed they are to love all ministers (though he specifies that, if possible, they are to “love [him] best”).¹³² Additionally, he informs them they are to “obey [him],” pray for him, and “endeavor...to make [his] heavy work...light and cheerful.”¹³³ It would seem from these passages that Parris is attempting to address the social discord in the Village. However, regardless of why he approached his relationship with his congregation in the way that he did, it seems clear that there was likely built-up resentment on both sides of the fence. Into this already highly charged religious atmosphere, the events of early 1692 would be as a match among powder kegs.

On January 15, 1692 Betty Parris, Samuel’s nine year old daughter, and her cousin, Abigail, both fell ill.¹³⁴ Reverend John Hale, pastor at Beverly, a town just to the northeast of Salem, described the girls’ afflictions in his “A Modest Inquiry” having personally witnessed their fits and “Distempers.”¹³⁵ The girls were “sadly afflicted,” according to Hale, being

bitten and pinched by invisible agents; their arms necks and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of Epileptic Fits, or natural Disease to effect. Sometimes they were taken dumb, their mouths stopped, their throats choked, their limbs wracked and tormented so as might move a heart of stone, to sympathize with them, with bowels of compassion for them.¹³⁶

¹³² Parris, “Ordination,” 187.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 18.

¹³⁵ John Hale, “A Modest Inquiry,” in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706*, ed. George Lincoln Burr (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 413-433.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Parris called in Dr. William Griggs, but the girls did not respond to any of his ministrations, and Griggs thus concluded that they suffered “under an Evil Hand.”¹³⁷ Parris made the logical connection, reasoning that he was being tested by God and so undertook

two or three private Fasts...one of which was held by sundry Neighbor Ministers, and after this, another in Public at the Village, and several days afterwards of public Humiliation...not only there, but in other Congregations for them. And one General Fast by Order of the General Court, observed throughout the Colony to seek the Lord that he would rebuke Satan, and be a light unto his people in this day of darkness.¹³⁸

Clearly, Parris was attempting to marshal not just the forces of Salem to fight Satan’s influence in his household, but the colony at large as well. Unfortunately, the situation did not improve, but became worse still when Betty and Abigail accused Tituba, an Indian servant of Parris’s household, of bewitching them.¹³⁹ With this the accusations began in earnest, casting an ever-widening net until not just Salem Village, but more than ten neighboring communities, including Andover, were caught up in what had become a full-fledged panic.

Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that though Parris neither “deliberately [provoked]” the panic, nor caused the “factional conflict which underlay” it, his was a “crucial role.”¹⁴⁰ Through his sermons, and his close involvement in the proceedings he “took the nagging fears and conflicting impulses of his hearers and wove them into a pattern overwhelming in its scope, a universal drama in which Christ and Satan, Heaven and Hell, struggled for supremacy.”¹⁴¹ He confirmed for colonists what they already suspected: that the Devil was at work in the world and had designs upon their noble experiment, their “city upon a Hill.”

¹³⁷ Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 19.

¹³⁸ Hale, 414.

¹³⁹ Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 177.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

On October 23, 1692, barely a month after the round of executions that sent George Burroughs to the gallows, Parris gave a sermon of reconciliation. He quoted from the Song of Solomon, saying: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.”¹⁴² The kisses mentioned, according to Parris, were ones of forgiveness, affection, and “approbation,” and were meant to “betoken love and good will... a hearty conjunction and cordial union between two parties... [and] a confirmation of... friendship.”¹⁴³ Using scriptural motifs of love, friendship, and reconciliation, Parris attempted to set right what had gone so horribly wrong in Salem Village, and to mend, or at least patch, the network of sociability torn apart by accusations and death.

Yet again: how was it that Samuel Parris was never accused of witchcraft? He’d certainly engendered no small amount of resentment in the community. In addition to the haggling over his contract, Parris also took a hard (and unpopular) line towards church membership, rejecting the Halfway Covenant.¹⁴⁴ Neither would have won him many friends in Salem Village. To add fuel to this fire, the witchcraft panic began in his home, illustrating his inability to control his dependents. Surely, Salem Villagers could not have failed to notice this. His household, like Burroughs’s, was expected to be a model of order and rectitude, something that Parris himself addresses in his ordination sermon, stating he understood it was his duty to “labor to be exemplary.”¹⁴⁵ Perhaps Parris used this attack to his advantage. His sermons seem to suggest a belief that God attacks holy men to test their

¹⁴² Samuel Parris, “Sermon of October 23, 1692”, in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 190-194.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 193.

¹⁴⁴ Latner, 98.

¹⁴⁵ Parris, “Ordination Sermon,” 187.

faith; perhaps his being targeted first served both to legitimize his holiness, and prove that the Devil did need rooting out in Salem, as he'd said all along.

These speculations aside, there seems to be no other evidence of poor social performance on Parris's part. He seems to have an otherwise unremarkable home life. There are no tales of the abuse of dependents, nor any rumors of supernatural powers, as with Burroughs. He is not mentioned negatively in the testimony of any of the witches, and when the occasional unnamed minister surfaces, no one makes the connection to Parris. Unlike Burroughs, Parris does not seem to have had enough deviant strikes against him to have come under suspicion. He was not well-liked perhaps, but seems to have generally conformed to all other prescribed norms. This may very well have saved his life.

An instructive counter-point to Burroughs's story, and parallel to Parris's, is that of Francis Dane, minister in Andover, Massachusetts, located just a few miles northwest of Salem. Like Salem, Andover had its fair share of religious contention and social discontent. Andover was originally settled in 1641 but, as in Salem, as the population of the town grew, the settlement became split into two geographic and demographic regions, one clustered in the North End and one in the South.¹⁴⁶ Each was populated by people from a distinct area of England, and residents of the North End and the South quarreled with one another frequently.¹⁴⁷ The most prominent source of dispute, however, was the location of the church. The church was located in the North End, and residents of the South End often complained of the lengthy commute required for weekly meetings and church services.¹⁴⁸ Proposals were made, first, to relocate the church to a more central location, and then, failing

¹⁴⁶ Latner, 107.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

that, to construct a second church in the South End.¹⁴⁹ The matter was never resolved, and the tension carried over into parishioners discussions regarding the continued employment of Francis Dane. Dane had been Andover's minister since 1648, but in 1682, when Dane was in his seventies, a complaint was lodged against him by his parishioners, who claimed that he was no longer "conducting regular services."¹⁵⁰ Dane protested but eventually a compromise was reached: he would stay on with reduced responsibilities and reduced pay, and an associate minister would be hired, a twenty-four year old named Thomas Barnard.¹⁵¹

Events at Andover came to a head in the Spring of 1692 with the illness of Joseph Ballard's wife. When she did not improve after some months, the townspeople began to suspect witchcraft, and sent for "two of Salem Village's afflicted girls to identify the guilty party."¹⁵² Barnard was supportive of the search to find the Devil at Andover; he "placed the meetinghouse at the disposal of the witch-hunters, offered prayers to sanction the examinations, and oversaw the use of the touch test."¹⁵³ Dane, however, was conspicuously absent from the proceedings, perhaps due to his own "precarious situation."¹⁵⁴ Numerous members of Dane's immediate and extended family were among the accused, including two daughters and five grandchildren.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, George Burroughs's accusation and conviction in Salem had "cast suspicion on Dane by introducing evidence that ministers might serve the Devil."¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ Latner, 107.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 107-108.

¹⁵² Ibid. 109.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 110.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 111.

Adding fuel to this fire, was the confession of William Barker in August 1692. Barker confessed that he had made a covenant with the Devil and attended witch-meetings at Salem. The goal of these witches, according to Barker, was to “destroy that place [Salem] by reason of the peoples being divided and their differing with their ministers.”¹⁵⁷ It was the Devil’s design to “set up his own worship, abolish the churches in the land, to fall next upon Salem and so go through the country...to pull down the Kingdom of Christ and set up the Kingdom of the Devil.”¹⁵⁸ If Salem was to be the first to fall, the townspeople of Andover, seeing similar events in their own community, might have feared that they were next.

Ann Foster’s testimony implicated Dane in the diabolical ministerial conspiracy, saying that at her witch-meeting in Salem there were two men besides Burroughs and one of them had grey hair.¹⁵⁹ But the testimony of both Mary Osgood and Dane’s daughter-in-law, Deliverance, defended Dane. Osgood stated that though it appeared she and Deliverance had carried Dane between them to the witch meeting, it was but the “shape of Mr. Dean [sic], the minister...to make persons believe that Mr. Dean [sic] afflicted.”¹⁶⁰ Deliverance Dane’s testimony corroborates Osgood’s. She claimed that “Satan’s subtilty [sic]” was behind the ruse.¹⁶¹ Finally, Dane’s daughter, Elizabeth Johnson, argued it was not her father at the witch meetings in Salem, but one John Buss, physician and minister of New Hampshire and Wells, Maine, who had recently been implicated in the testimony of William Barker.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ “Examination of William Barker,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 1:65-67.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 66.

¹⁵⁹ Latner, 113.

¹⁶⁰ “Testimony of Mary Osgood,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 2:615-617.

¹⁶¹ Latner, 114.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* “Testimony of William Barker,” 66.

Ultimately, Dane was never formally accused of, or tried for, witchcraft. Richard Latner suggests that Dane's position as an orthodox minister, and a turning of the tide of public sentiment about the trials themselves kept Dane from sharing Burroughs's fate.¹⁶³ This is likely the case. However it could also have been that he'd met with little trouble in his long-running position as minister of Andover. He was in his seventies before he incurred any resentment from the community about his performance, and his failure to meet the congregation's expectations could have been chalked up to advancing old age. His high standing in the community may have worked in his favor as well. Finally, unlike Burroughs's case, there seems to be no evidence against Dane suggesting improper performance of his gender roles. There is no hint of hyper-masculinity, or any serious deviation from his pastoral expectations. He is not accused of wife-beating, boastful or overly contentious behavior, or dissident religious views. Finally, much of the testimony in which he features seeks to protect, not implicate him. All these factors, positive mirrors to George Burroughs's negative ones, are likely what spared Dane in the end.

George Burroughs's case is a complex one. A man without a witch-wife, Burroughs defies the secondary target model so often applied to men accused of witchcraft. Nor can Burroughs be easily categorized as a man who attracted negative attention because of a feminized performance of masculinity. His actions, in fact, suggest that he was hyper-masculine, and it was this that was partly to blame for the accusations against him. Boastful feats of strength and the over-correction of his wives are all evidence of this hyper-masculinity. Yet, it was not only hyper-masculinity, but his overall gender performance that sent Burroughs to the gallows. Hyper-masculinity was just one facet of his performance. His

¹⁶³ Latner, 114.

improper performance of the pastoral ideal, in the role of *pater familias*, and as a neighbor also contributed to the accusations against him, and his eventual conviction. Thus it could be argued that men, like women, were seen by contemporaries as inverting or improperly performing their gender roles. Women were described as “cruel mothers,” causing children to sicken and die, livestock to run mad, household tools to break; men were characterized as “poor patriarchs,” ruling with passionate excess and unnecessary violence. Burroughs was all that a proper patriarch was not: he was boastful, violent, contentious, spiritually corrupt, and supernaturally strong. In the end, however, he was also masculine.

CHAPTER FOUR “An Army of Devils”¹

“On the day of his examination I saw Giles Corey...most grievously afflict and torment Mary Wolcott, Mercy Lewis, and Sarah Bibber and I verily believe that Giles Corey is a most dreadful wizard for since he has been in prison he...has come to me a great many times and afflicted me.”²

Such was the testimony of Ann Putnam Jr. on April 13, 1692. Just two days prior, the first complaint had been made against John Proctor. It may very well have been the accusation against Proctor, who was executed with George Burroughs on the August 19, which acted as the fulcrum upon which the balance of events at Salem tipped. Of the thirty-one cases brought before the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692, seven were made against men.³ Of these thirty-one cases, only four – Sarah Good, Elizabeth Proctor, Martha Corey, and Rebecca Nurse – fall before April 11, the date on which John Proctor was first accused. The remaining twenty-seven cases that went to trial come after this date, including the five additional men who were taken to trial at Salem. All six men – John Proctor, Giles Corey, George Burroughs, George Jacob Sr., John Willard, and Samuel Wardwell – were executed between August and September of 1692.⁴ Only two, George Burroughs and John Willard, were accused alone, without connection to a witch-wife or female witch-relative.

Both Proctor and Corey are temptingly complex characters of the drama that unfolded at Salem Village. Unlike some other male witches, much attention is devoted to their trials, both by Puritan contemporaries and historians. Yet, too easily and too often they have been held up as proof that men with witch-wives were the only men that truly were conceivable as

¹ Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*, 15.

² “Ann Putnam Jr. vs. Giles Corey,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 1: 241-242.

³ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 315-317.

⁴ *Ibid.*

witches, and the only ones to swing for it. Less frequently considered men like Hugh Parsons, John Godfrey, and John Willard allow for a more complicated modeling, both theoretically and chronologically, of witchcraft charges leveled against men. As neither feminized men nor men with witch-wives, these cases allow us to move beyond the witchcraft paradigms of the 1980s and 1990s. All three were men who challenged the definition of what it meant to be a man in Puritan Massachusetts. Their stories allow historians to more cogently connect concepts of idealized Puritan masculinity with allegations of witchcraft. Moreover, the trials of Hugh Parsons, accused in Springfield in 1651, and John Godfrey, charged many times in Andover between 1640 and 1655, illustrate that men were being accused of witchcraft more than forty years prior to the Salem outbreak. Along with John Willard, who was brought to trial in the Salem outbreak in 1692, these cases illustrate that men were accused of witchcraft during both outbreak and non-outbreak periods, and that, given the right conditions, could be found guilty and executed. While it might be tempting to include Reverend Francis Dane here with Willard, he better serves as a counterpoint to Burroughs in the previous chapter. As Dane seems by nearly all accounts to have conformed closely to the Puritan ideals of masculinity, he presents an image of a nearly-model minister, thus acting as the mirror image to Burroughs's immoral one.

Though allegations of witchcraft were also leveled at his wife, Hugh Parsons' case is significant for reasons which make his inclusion here appropriate. Hugh Parsons made his living as a brick-maker and wood-sawyer in Springfield, Massachusetts.⁵ In 1649, one Widow Marshfield charged Hugh's wife Mary with defamation for "reporting her to be

⁵ David Hall, ed., *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 29.

suspected for a witch.”⁶ The judge ordered that Mary be “well-whipped on the morrow” as punishment.⁷ In late February of 1651, Mary was accused of witchcraft in connection with the death of her children. Mary, in turn, claimed it was her husband who was the witch.⁸ It was Mary’s accusation against Hugh that stuck. Most subsequent testimony given by the Parsons’ neighbors was given against Hugh, not Mary. Complaints made against Mary seem almost an after-thought, as though in this case it was she who was the secondary target to Hugh. In total, thirty-five of Hugh’s neighbors came forward to testify against him.⁹ In early March he was examined twice before the Springfield magistrate, William Pynchon.¹⁰ At the second of these examinations, Mary Parson was called to testify against her husband.

In Mary’s and other neighbors’ testimony three common themes can be determined. First, Mary and several neighbors testified that Parsons, like Burroughs, was given to “threatening speeches” and had a nasty temper. Second, evidence was given by several neighbors and his wife of his bad business dealings. Finally, Mary Parsons accused him of being responsible for the death of their children, and several witnesses testified to his lack of emotion at their deaths. The themes in the allegations made by his wife and neighbors suggest several things. First, that Parsons was an unfeeling and violent patriarch, showing neither his wife nor children affection. Second, he was dishonest and incompetent in his business dealings, which adversely affected his relations with his neighbors. Finally, all three themes suggest that he was not what Puritans referred to as a “visible saint.” Puritans believed that while good deeds could not buy one a place in Heaven, doing good deeds

⁶ “Witnesses Describe Mary Parson’s act of Defamation,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 26-27.

⁷ Ibid. 26.

⁸ Ibid. 29.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. 30.

signified that one might be pre-destined for salvation. Thus the accusations made against Parsons were more than an attempt to re-instill and reinforce masculine gender ideals. As both Anne Lombard and Lisa Wilson note, to achieve full manhood a man had to be useful, and to be useful was to have a “competency,” or a profession. Hugh’s dishonest dealings put his competency in jeopardy, and thus Hugh was “incompetent” in a distinctly Puritan sense.¹¹ His non-election, in combination with his poor performance of masculinity, placed him at the fringes of the community, making him vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft.

The testimony that was given by Blanche and Rice Bedortha falls under all three aforementioned categories – threatening speeches, unneighborly behavior, and poor business relations. Blanche testified that two years previous she and Hugh Parsons “had some speeches about a bargain with my husband about some bricks.”¹² Blanche recounted that when she broached the subject of the bricks Parsons owed her husband, Parsons was “much [displeased]... [and] thereupon he said unto me Gammer, you need not have said anything, I spake not to you but I shall remember you when you little think on it.”¹³ Rice Bedortha corroborated his wife’s story, saying he was “much offended by Parsons words, but not surprised by them,” as he’d “often heard him use such threatening both against myself and others when he hath been displeased.”¹⁴ Samuel Marshfield testified to having overheard this threatening speech used against Blanche Bedortha as well.¹⁵ Blanche then testified that not a month after Parsons’ threat, while she was in childbed, she suffered a “soreness about her

¹¹ For more on this, see Lombard, especially Chapter 1 of her book *Making Manhood: Growing up Male in Colonial New England*, and Wilson’s book *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England*, especially her introduction and Chapter 1.

¹² “Blanche and Rice Bedortha recall threatening Speeches,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 35.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

heart and...under her left breast and on her shoulder and in her neck...like the pricking of knives.”¹⁶ These afflictions she attributed to the “said threatening speeches of Hugh Parsons.”¹⁷

Like Goodwife Bedortha, Mary Parsons testified to her husband’s economic failings and unneighborly behavior, suspecting him to be a witch “because almost all that he sells to anybody doth not prosper.”¹⁸ Mary cited the example of a bargain Hugh struck with Thomas Miller, after which Miller had “mischance of that cut in his leg.”¹⁹ Parsons had also got on the wrong side of Springfield’s minister, Reverend Moxon. Parson had promised to deliver a shipment of bricks to the Moxon household, but Moxon’s wife testified that when she questioned Parsons about the bricks owed her husband, Hugh replied that “if Mr. Moxon do force me to make bricks according to bargain, I will be even with him or he shall get nothing by it.”²⁰ Both she and John Mathews, another client of Parsons, testified that “these...speeches are very usual...when [Hugh is] displeased with anybody.”²¹ Both testimonies provide proof of Parsons’ inability to appropriately interact within the community, both economically and socially. He failed to prove his competency as a provider, and broke the bonds of courtesy by falling back on his business deals.

¹⁶ “Blanche Bedortha on afflictions in her body,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “Mary Parsons and Her Husband’s Bargains,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 33-34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 33.

²⁰ “A Dispute over bricks, threatening words and Mr. Moxon’s children,” *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 37-38.

²¹ *Ibid.* 37.

Like Burroughs, Parsons was also suspected of having powers beyond those of ordinary men. When Mary Parsons was asked “what reasons she had to suspect her husband for a witch,” she replied:

Because when I say anything to anybody never so secretly to such friends as I am sure would not speak of it, yet he would come to know it by what means I cannot tell: I have spoken some thing to [Mrs.] Smith that goes little abroad and I am sure would not speak of it yet he hath known it and would speak of it to me as soon as I came home.²²

Much as Burroughs had claimed to know the thoughts of Mr. Ruck, Parsons alleged ability to know the words and actions of others without having witnessed them smacked too much of the profane. Mary also accused her husband of having a volatile and inconstant temperament. She claimed he would often “come home in a distempered frame so that I could not tell how to please him; sometimes he hath pulled off the bedclothes and left me naked abed...sometimes he hath thrown peas about the house and made me pick them up.”²³

As a neighbor too, Parsons failed to meet community standards. In February 1650, a full year before he was formally accused of witchcraft, Parsons visited Sarah Edwards, wife of Alexander, to purchase some milk. Alexander testified that his wife told Parsons she could spare no more than a “half-penny worth” and sent him on his way.²⁴ Alexander continued, stating that “this was at a time when my cow gave three quarts at a meal, but the next meal the cow gave not above a quart and it was as yellow as saffron and yet the cow ailed nothing that I could discern...and so it did every meal for a week.”²⁵ George Colton

²² “Mary Parsons says why she suspects her husband,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 45-46.

²³ *Ibid.* 45.

²⁴ “Sarah Edwards describes a request for milk and its consequences,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 38.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

corroborated Edwards's story, testifying he too "saw the milk in strange colors."²⁶ Both men laid the blame at the feet of Hugh Parsons. Yet in both Sarah's and Alexander's testimony can be read feelings of guilt for not being able to provide Hugh with more than a "half-penny's worth" of milk though their cow produced so much at each milking. Clearly, both Edwards felt that Hugh had reason to seek revenge against them for having been treated in an unneighborly fashion.

Though it was Mary, not Hugh, who was eventually convicted of infanticide, several similar accusations were made against Hugh, positioning him further outside standards of masculinity, this time as a bad father. Several of his neighbors – George Colton, Jonathan Burt, Anthony Dorchester, and Benjamin Cooley – all testified that Parsons "showed no natural sorrow" for the loss of his child.²⁷ Indeed Colton testified that

Hugh Parson came into the Long Meadow when his child lay at the point of death: and that having word of the death of it the next morning...he was not affected with it but he came after a light manner rushing into my house and said I hear my child is dead but I will cut a pipe of tobacco first before I go home.²⁸

The Grand Jury, on May 12, 1652, found Parsons to "not [have] the fear of God before his eyes," having at "diverse times before and since at Springfield...had familiar and wicked converse with the devil and did use divers devilish practices and witchcraft to the hurt of divers persons."²⁹ They therefore declared that he was "guilty of the sin of

²⁶ "Sarah Edwards describes a request for milk and its consequences," 38.

²⁷ "The Death of Hugh Parsons' Child," "Witnesses Say Hugh Parsons did not grieve his dead Child," "More testimony about his lack of grief," "Other witnesses say Hugh Parsons showed no grief," in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 42-45.

²⁸ "More Testimony about his lack of grief," 44.

²⁹ "The Indictment and Jury verdict," in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 59.

witchcraft.”³⁰ However, just over two weeks later, the magistrates declared they did not “[consent] to the verdict of the jury in [the] Parsons case [and] do judge that he is not *legally* [my emphasis] guilty of witchcraft and so not to die by our law.”³¹

Parsons provides, according to the testimony against him, a perfect parallel to Burroughs’s case some forty years later. Just like Burroughs, he is portrayed as violent and contentious, and a poor household head. By poorly performing both publically in his economic interactions, and privately in his household governance, Hugh’s problems seeped into the public sphere. His ineffectual business dealings pegged him as a poor provider, and his lack of emotion over the death of his child suggested a nefarious connection with the child’s death, or at least an inhuman lack of feeling. Finally, all these actions were likely seen as proof of his non-election. He and his household were pollutants to the community and could not be allowed to carry on in such a fashion. The accusations of witchcraft made against him were a way to impose outside control over his household in an attempt to contain this pollution. They also served as a warning to Parsons that he had breached the bounds of Puritan masculine ideals. It can be surmised that he got the message: he does not appear in court again on similar charges.

Distinguishing between sinful guilt and legal guilt was a method magistrates used in the case of John Godfrey as well. John Demos’s analysis of Godfrey’s life and numerous trials underscores the idea that John Godfrey deserves special attention not only because he was man who was accused of witchcraft, but because he was without a “witch-wife.” In fact

³⁰ “The Indictment and Jury verdict,” 59.

³¹ “The Magistrates review the case and acquit Hugh Parsons,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 59.

he remained a bachelor for the whole of his life.³² Records outlining the particulars of Godfrey's life before he was accused of witchcraft are, at best, inconsistent, and more often completely missing. At closest approximation he was born around 1620.³³ By 1640, Godfrey was working as a herdsman for Mr. John Spencer in Newbury, Massachusetts.³⁴ It was here that he was first suspected of "conniving with the Devil."³⁵

At a deposition nearly twenty years after the event occurred, Mr. William Osgood, a resident of Salisbury and also an employee of Spencer, related an encounter he had with Godfrey while helping to build Spencer's barn.³⁶ Visiting the worksite, Godfrey told Osgood how he had been offered another position with a "new master."³⁷ However, when Osgood asked who the man was, from whence he came, and his name, Godfrey's answer was always the same: "I know not."³⁸ Perplexed by Godfrey's behavior, Osgood responded, "I am persuaded thou hast made a covenant with the Devil," to which Godfrey replied, "I profess, I profess," and began "[skipping] about."³⁹ This was just one such suspicious encounter. On another occasion, recounted in court by the Tyler family, Godfrey unsuccessfully attempted to catch a bird that had flown into the Tyler's home one evening.⁴⁰ When it was seen to vanish, all wondered aloud why it had flown in to begin with, to which Godfrey responded, "it came to suck your wife," suggesting that Godfrey was accusing Tyler's wife of being a

³² Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 36.

³³ *Ibid.* 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 37-38.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "William Osgood and John Godfrey's contract with the Devil," in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 119

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Job Tyler and family against John Godfrey," in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 124.

witch herself, and the bird her familiar.⁴¹ As turn-about was often fair play when it came to accusations of witchcraft, it is not surprising that Godfrey was accused so frequently.

For most of the rest of his life, Godfrey was a frequent feature of the Essex County court records. In 1642 and again in 1649, Godfrey filed suit twice against Richard Kent and Richard Jones for slander, winning both suits.⁴² While witchcraft was not mentioned in the depositions of either case, John Demos argues that, given Godfrey's history, it is possible that witchcraft was listed among the charges against him. Despite a long absence for most of the 1650s, Godfrey was in court every year from 1658 to 1675, sometimes several times per year.⁴³ His contentious and unceasingly litigious behavior could certainly have led to the charges that were leveled against him in the late 1650s, and further highlights how similar behavior led to the charges made against other men, like Parsons and Burroughs.

In early 1658, Godfrey filed a suit against Abraham Whitaker of Haverhill for debts unpaid.⁴⁴ Not coincidentally, in March 1659 a petition was submitted against Godfrey, alleging that

Whereas divers [sic] of esteem with us and as we hear in other places also have for some times have suffered losses in their estates and some affliction on their bodies also: which as they suppose doth not arise from any natural cause or any neglect in themselves but rather from some ill-disposed person.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Hall, 124.

⁴² Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 38.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Several Persons Complain Against John Godfrey," in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 116-117.

In response to these charges, Godfrey filed a suit of defamation in June of 1659. Though the jury essentially found in his favor, they also stated in their verdict that Godfrey was ‘by the testimonies...rendered suspicious.’⁴⁶

There were, in fact, so many charges leveled against Godfrey during his lifetime, and so many subsequent counter-suits, that it truly is a wonder that Godfrey’s neck remained unstretched. During his lifetime, Godfrey was in court on no fewer than 132 occasions, eighty-nine times as the plaintiff.⁴⁷ In summary, Godfrey was brought to court on various occasions on charges that included not only witchcraft, but “drunkenness, stealing... [and] ‘cursing speeches.’”⁴⁸ One deposed witness even testified they had seen a witch’s teat beneath his tongue when he yawned.⁴⁹ However, despite the many accusations of witchcraft, and the what-should-have-been damning evidence against him, in March 1665 John Godfrey was tried and acquitted of witchcraft. Yet, as the jury noted in its verdict, “we find him not to have the fear of God in his heart [such that]...to us [he is] *suspiciously* guilty of witchcraft but not *legally* guilty [my emphasis].”⁵⁰ Like Hugh, John had been given a warning, and like Hugh he seems to have taken it to heart, as his name does not appear in court records from this point.

⁴⁶ “*Ambiguous Verdict in Godfrey’s Suit of defamation*,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 116.

⁴⁷ Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 58.

⁴⁸ Hall, 116.

⁴⁹ “*Charles Brown and wife report John Godfrey speaking of witches*,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 118-119.

⁵⁰ “*John Godfrey is indicted and tried*,” in *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: a Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 128.

So, what can one say of Godfrey's character? First, he was litigious and argumentative to a fault, with a tendency towards 'cursing speeches.'⁵¹ Second, Godfrey was well known for his use of shocking and/or suspicious language when speaking with his neighbors. His conversation with Osgood regarding his mysterious "new master" is just one such example. Finally, as with William Monter's Norman shepherds, Godfrey's nomadic existence may have been seen as unusual or threatening and thus may have exposed him to accusations of witchcraft.⁵² According to court testimony, between 1640 and 1675 Godfrey had lived in no fewer than eight different towns, moving a total of fifteen times.⁵³ The 1659 witchcraft petition against him included a reference to this fact referring to him as, "one John Godfrey resident at Andover or elsewhere at his pleasure."⁵⁴ The tone of such an inclusion suggests that those who knew, accused, and tried Godfrey had taken note of his incessant wanderings and were none-too-pleased about it.

Yet despite all these strikes, John Godfrey was never once convicted of witchcraft. Given his character traits, this is indeed surprising. He was accused multiple times, exhibited strange and/or anti-social behavior, had neither a wife nor a permanent residence, and was believed by many to be suspicious of witchcraft, if not legally so. Elizabeth Kent argues that while Godfrey's aggressive behavior, outbursts of anger, and itinerant habits

describe an incapable man, this impotence should not be theorized as feminization – it was a masculine state, a specifically masculine failure, understood in relation to masculine ideals and with reference to a masculine body.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Hall, 116.

⁵² Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 51-52.

⁵⁴ "Complaint against John Godfrey for witchcraft," 116.

⁵⁵ Kent, 84.

Kent also suggests that Parsons and Godfrey were “masculine [counterparts] to the leaky, boundless body of the female witch,” but in place of the “polluting fluids of the maternal body, the body of the male witch leaked envy and anger, aggression and revenge, malice and spite.”⁵⁶

Both men clearly presented social and economic dangers and for this reason they, like Burroughs, were dangers to themselves, their families, and their communities. Yet neither man was seen as so dangerous as to be put to death for their crimes. It may have been the court’s decision to distinguish between sinful guilt and legal guilt that spared them. The charges against them may have been meant only to serve as a warning. Malcolm Gaskill has also considered the distinction between sinful and legal guilt at length, though he focuses his attention on England. Gaskill argues that trials for witchcraft waned in the 1600s because proving legally that witchcraft had occurred became increasingly difficult.⁵⁷ As Gaskill points out, the “evidentiary status” of witchcraft was its most important aspect.⁵⁸ But the court of public opinion and the legally binding judgments handed down in a court of law were, and are, different things indeed. The increasing skepticism of magistrates and other educated elites made the practice of diabolical witchcraft that much more difficult to prove.⁵⁹ However guilty their neighbors thought him them to be, Parsons and Godfrey could not be proven to be legally so in court.

Karlsen’s outbreak hypothesis may again be instructive in explaining why these two men escaped the noose.⁶⁰ The contextual setting of Salem in the early 1690s was much more

⁵⁶ Kent, 85.

⁵⁷ Malcolm Gaskill, “Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present* 98 (February 2008): 33-70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 37.

⁶⁰ Karlsen, 48.

volatile than that of Springfield and Andover in the 1650s. In his consideration of the witch-hunt that occurred in Hartford, Connecticut in the 1660s, Walter Woodward has argued that three periods of witchcraft prosecution can be discerned in New England: an

early period (1647-1663) of great danger for accused witches accompanied by rigorous prosecution by elites; a middle period (1663-1687) of increasing skepticism regarding witchcraft accusations...and a final period of prosecution (1688-1692) at Boston and Salem in which magistrates again became active in the persecution of the accused.⁶¹

It was the participation of powerful and skeptical men, namely John Winthrop Jr., that decided whether accusations of witchcraft exploded into a full-blown witch-panic in Connecticut.⁶² In the mid-1650s, Winthrop Jr. “intervened to see that accused witches were not executed...acted forcefully to protect the accused...[and] in the process, he established legal precedents” for the treatment of witchcraft accusations and the accused.⁶³ Many Connecticut magistrates followed Winthrop’s lead, “[adopting] the new policy of judicial skepticism.”⁶⁴ It was when they were left to their own devices, without the moderating influences of men like Winthrop Jr. in Connecticut and Governor Phips in Massachusetts, that things often got out of hand.⁶⁵ Phips convened the Court of Oyer and Terminer believing that he left the trials in the hands of some of the leading men of Salem, and that these men would proceed in a reasoned, logical manner. There he was mistaken. Puritan fears regarding the danger of unbridled masculinity had proved well-founded. The masculinity of men like Parsons and Godfrey had eventually seeped into the community, bringing unreason and disorder.

⁶¹ Walter W. Woodward, “New England’s Other Witch-hunt: the Hartford Witch-hunt of the 1660s and Changing Patters in Witchcraft Prosecution,” *OAH Magazine of History* (July 2003): 18-19.

⁶² *Ibid.* 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 18-19.

By the late 1600s, tensions had simmered long enough to reach a boiling point, and the danger of witchcraft was too great to ignore. John Willard, in addition to all his other failings, may have been a victim of such unfortunate timing. John Willard may have been the son of Simon Willard of Concord, a relatively affluent fur trader and land speculator.⁶⁶ If this is the case, his father would often have come into contact with Native American groups with whom colonists were frequently on bad terms. This may also have been the same Simon Willard who commanded a garrison of sixty men at Fort Loyal in Falmouth. On May 15, 1690, just one day prior to a Wabanaki raid that killed nearly two hundred people, Captain Willard marched from Fort Loyal on orders from Boston to relocate his soldiers to a site where they might be of more use.⁶⁷ His father's role in such an event may have placed John Willard in a precarious position in the community from the start. Yet, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that John Willard was connected to Simon Willard, whoever he may have been. Making matters more difficult, is the fact that John Willard appears in neither his wife's nor his own family genealogy.⁶⁸ This absence makes it problematic to construct as detailed a biography of Willard as of Burroughs. The testimonies given at Willard's trial, however, do illuminate several similarities between Willard and Burroughs.

Four days prior to Willard's arrest, Daniel Wilkins, Willard's wife's second cousin, fell ill and was unable to regain his speech for two days.⁶⁹ Mercy Lewis and Mary Wolcott, two of Salem's afflicted girls, were brought to his bedside and testified before those present that they saw the "said John Willard and Goodwife Buckley upon the said Daniel Wilkins

⁶⁶ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-village witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 163.

⁶⁷ Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 104-105.

⁶⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 163.

⁶⁹ "George Herrick and Others v. John Willard and Sarah Buckley," in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 820-821.

and [Willard and Buckley] said they would kill him, and in three hours after the said Daniel departed this life.”⁷⁰ Ann Putnam additionally charged that Willard had, around the 25 of

April,

set upon me most dreadfully and beat me and pinched and almost choked me to death; threatening to kill me if I would not write in his book: for he told me he had whipped my little sister Sarah to death and he would whip me to death if I would not write in his book but I told him I would not write in his book though he did kill me: after this I saw the apparition of my little sister Sarah who died when she was about six weeks old crying out for vengeance against John Willard. I also saw the apparition of a woman in a winding sheet which told me she was John Wilkins’ first wife and that John Willard had a hand in her death.⁷¹

Finally, Ann claimed that Willard had told her that “he would kill Daniel Wilkins if he could but he had not power enough yet to kill him: but he would go to Mr. Burroughs and get power to kill Daniel Wilkins.”⁷²

On May 10, 1692, Constable Putnam of Salem was tasked with bringing John Willard before the magistrates to answer for “high Suspicion of Several Acts of Witchcraft done or Committed upon the Bodies of Sundry person in Salem Village to their great hurt and injury.”⁷³ Putnam reported that though he went to Willard’s house on May 12 to carry out said duty, he could not find Willard and was subsequently told by Willard’s “friends and relations...that to their best knowledge he was fled.”⁷⁴ Yet Putnam was tenacious in the

⁷⁰ “George Herrick and Others v. John Willard and Sarah Buckley,” 821.

⁷¹ “Ann Putnam vs. John Willard,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 851.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ “Warrant for Arrest of John Willard,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 819.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

execution of his duties, and Willard was eventually brought before the magistrates on May 18, having been apprehended at Nashaway the day before.⁷⁵

At least seven indictments were brought against Willard at his trial on the 18 of May; his accusers included Mercy Lewis, Ann Putnam, and Abigail Williams.⁷⁶ At his examination many of the afflicted present fell into fits, pointing at Willard and crying out that he bit, pinched and cut them.⁷⁷ When asked to confess his crimes, however, Willard seemed nonplussed, replying, “I shall, as I hope...be assisted by the Lord of Heaven...[who] in his due time will make me as white as snow.”⁷⁸

Yet many things did not go in Willard’s favor. Like Burroughs, Willard was accused by several witnesses of beating his wife, Margaret. Benjamin Wilkins, grandfather-in-law to Willard, testified that Willard “abused his wife much and broke sticks about her in [the] beating of her.”⁷⁹ Peter Prescott backed up Wilkins’s testimony, reporting that Willard had “with his own mouth told [Prescott] of beating his wife.”⁸⁰ Lydia Nichols and Margaret Knight testified together, corroborating what Prescott and Wilkins had already relayed, stating Willard’s wife had made a “lamentable complaint how cruelly her husband had beaten her. She thought herself that she should never recover of the blows he had given

⁷⁵ “Second Warrant for Arrest of John Willard,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 820-821.

⁷⁶ “Indictment v. John Willard, No. 1,” “Indictment v. John Willard, No. 2,” “Indictment v. John Willard, No. 3,” “Indictment v. John Willard, No. 4,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 830-834.

⁷⁷ “Examination of John Willard,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 823-825.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 823.

⁷⁹ “Examination of John Willard, Second version,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 3: 827-829.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 827.

her.”⁸¹ Though Willard requested that his wife be brought before the court to testify to his innocence, Peter Prescott replied that Willard “with his own mouth told [Prescott] of his beating of his wife.”⁸²

Willard was also accused of “dreadful murders,” and not just of the aforementioned Daniel Wilkins.⁸³ Ann Putnam Sr. testified that the shades of Sam Fuller and Lydia Wilkins had appeared at her bedside and named Willard as the cause of their demise.⁸⁴ At the same moment, Willard’s spirit also appeared and claimed responsibility for additional murders; the children of Aaron Way, Ann Putnam Sr., and Ezekiel Cheever had died by his hand.⁸⁵ This suspicion of infanticide was additionally troubling, as it portrayed Willard as the antithesis of the protecting and nurturing patriarch,.

Like both Godfrey and Burroughs, Willard was also accused of strange speeches and disturbing behavior. Elizabeth Bailey testified that she met Willard on the road while he was out looking for his oxen. He told her he was sure that “all the way from Francis Elliot’s house to his own home he verily thought that the Devil came before him or behind him all the way, which dreadfully frightened him.”⁸⁶ Yet when Bailey asked him why he thought that, Willard “answered he could not tell and immediately fell to singing.”⁸⁷

⁸¹ “Testimony of Lydia Nichols and Margaret Knight” in *Salem-village witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 64.

⁸² “Examination of John Willard,” 824.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 823.

⁸⁴ “Testimony of Ann Putnam, Sr.,” in *Salem-village witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 61.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ “Testimony of Elizabeth Bailey,” in *Salem-village witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 65.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

But perhaps the nail in the coffin for Willard came towards the end of his examination. The magistrate leaned on Willard, saying

Here round about they testify [to] your cruelty to man and beast and by your flight you have given great advantage to the law, things will bear hard upon you, if you can therefore find in your heart to repent it is possible you may obtain mercy.⁸⁸

Willard replied, “Sir I cannot confess that I do not know...I am as innocent as the child that is now to be born.”⁸⁹ The magistrate then asked if he could recite the Lord’s Prayer, and when Willard answer in the affirmative, the magistrate bade him to do so.⁹⁰ Willard, according to the clerk, “stumbled at the threshold,” and spoke what might have been part of the Nicene Creed, beginning with the words, “Maker of Heaven and Earth.”⁹¹ He made a second attempt and again failed. According to the court recorder, after this second attempt, Willard laughed and said: “It is a strange thing, I can say it at another time. I think I am bewitched as well as they.”⁹² He tried three more times, but failing each he pointed at his accusers and remarked: “It is these wicked ones that do so overcome me.”⁹³

Hard-headed and insisting on his innocence to the last, Willard is like Burroughs in more ways than one. Like Burroughs, and Parsons and Godfrey, Willard was known to make strange and/or threatening speeches. Additionally, according to common fame Willard was suspected of spousal abuse, something which undermined his proper performance of masculinity. There was, as with Burroughs, a suggestion that Willard had some connection, through his father, to the Indian Wars on the eastward. Finally, he was unable to speak the

⁸⁸ “Examination of John Willard, Second version,” 828.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 829.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “Examination of John Willard,” 825.

⁹³ “Examination of John Willard, Second version,” 829.

Lord's Prayer, and though the ability to do so had not spared Burroughs, perhaps it might have worked for Willard.

None of these men fit the masculine ideals of Puritan New England. Men were expected to command their households with reason and affection, conduct their business affairs with honor and honesty, and interact with their neighbors in an open and friendly fashion. Hugh Parsons, John Godfrey, and John Willard, like George Burroughs, failed at all these expectations. They were contentious, violent, boastful, greedy, patriarchs. Their hyper-masculinity made them dangerous, and the fact that they were frequently at the center of social conflict in their communities doubly condemned them. All these men allow for a re-examination of what it meant to be a man in colonial New England, and what the consequences could be for those men who crossed the boundaries of proper masculine behavior. Their stories force historians to reconsider the conceptions of male witches constructed by previous generations of historians.

EPILOGUE

“We see what the effect has been, and must be, when the affairs of life...are suffered to be under the control of fanciful or mystical notions. When a whole people abandons the solid ground of common sense...gives itself up to wild reveries, and lets loose its passions without restraint, it presents a spectacle more terrific to behold, and becomes more destructive and disastrous, than any convulsion of mere material nature.”¹

The trials in Salem in 1692, for all intents and purposes, marked the bringing to a close of witchcraft accusations and trials in America. There were a smattering of accusations made in the early 1700s, but for the most part the storm had passed. The increasing complexity of the legal apparatus may have served to spare some men, and it could have been the accusations leveled against some true luminaries of Salem’s social firmament, namely Governor Phips’s wife, that may have brought the panic to its conclusion. The skepticism that had blossomed in Europe may also have spread to the colonies diffusing the blind acceptance that had marked the first half of the panic.

In 1693, Governor William Phips had occasion to write to the Earl of Nottingham of his experiences during the trials at Salem. Phips claimed that upon his arrival at Salem he “found the prisons full of people committed upon suspicion of witchcraft,” and so called a “Commission of Oyer and Terminer to try the suspected witches, [for] at that time the generality of the people represented the matter to me as real witchcraft.”² Having set in place the legal mechanism he believed would bring the matter to a speedy end, Phips left to “command the army at the eastern part of the province for the French and Indians had made

¹ Charles Upham, *Salem Witchcraft, with an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects* (Boston: Wiggin and Lunt, 1867), 1: 468-469.

² “Governor William Phips to the Earl of Nottingham,” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 120-121.

an attack [there].”³ Upon his return however he found that “some were accused of whose innocency I was well assured...[and so] I put an end to...the proceedings, which I did because I saw many innocent persons might otherwise perish.”⁴ Phips believed that whereas the “delusion of the Devil did spread and its dismal effects touched the lives and estates of many...I have no new complaints...[and] this matter is now well composed.”⁵

Judge Samuel Sewall, who had been called in to assist on the Court of Oyer and Terminer, presided over the examination of George Burroughs on April 11. Sewall might have done well to recuse himself, as his attendance at Harvard had overlapped with Burroughs’s. He and Burroughs had even dined together in 1685, accompanied by none other than Deodat Lawson.⁶ Yet, despite this obvious collegiality, on August 19, the day of Burroughs execution, Sewall was absent, having accompanied Lieutenant Governor Phillips to Watertown to “[advise] the inhabitants at their town meeting to settle [on] a minister.”⁷ However, he spoke with Cotton Mather and recorded the events second-hand, noting in his journal that all “died by righteous sentence. Mr. Burroughs by his Speech, Prayer, Protestation of his innocence did much move unthinking persons, which occasions their speaking hardly concerning his being executed.”⁸ Thankfully, Cotton Mather was there to assist the crowd in setting aside their doubts.

It did not take long for these doubts to surface again however, much to Sewall’s dismay. In late 1696, Sewall’s diary relates a chance meeting with one Mr. Melyen. Sewall relates that Melyen “upon a slight occasion spoke to me very sharply upon the Salem

³ “Governor William Phips to the Earl of Nottingham,” 121.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. 122.

⁶ Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall’s Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Conscience* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 99.

⁷ Samuel Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall: 1674-1700* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1878), 363.

⁸ Ibid.

witchcraft.”⁹ Making mock of the court’s reliance on the testimony regarding George Burroughs’s strength, Melyen joked that if a “man should take Beacon Hill on [his] back, carry it away; and then bring it and set it in its place again, he should not make anything of that.”¹⁰

Even Sewall’s personal life seemed to incriminate him. On Christmas Day of 1696, Sewall and his wife buried their infant daughter Sarah, who’d taken ill suddenly, and just a few months before, in May, they had buried their unbaptized, “abortive son.”¹¹ So it was that on January 14, 1697, at the afternoon service of The North Church of Boston, that Sewall stood before his fellow parishioners as his minister, Mr. Willard, read the following:

Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes upon himself and family; and being sensible, that as to the Guilt contracted upon the opening of the late Commission of Oyer and Terminer at Salem...he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than any that he knows of, Desires to take the blame and shame of it, asking pardon of men, and especially desiring prayers that God...would pardon that sin and all other his sins...And according to his infinite Benignity...not visit the sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, nor upon the Land.¹²

Sewall had been divinely chastised and, through vigorous introspection, had traced it back to the sins he’d committed at Salem, as would any good Puritan.

Robert Calef’s *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, published in 1700, is much more critical in its assessment of the events at Salem, and is especially pointed in its attack on Cotton Mather’s role. Calef’s *Epistle* begins with:

Gentlemen, you that are freed from the slavery of a corrupt education; and that...can hearken to the dictates of scripture and reason...I am content that these collections of mine...should be exposed to public view in hopes that...you will see reason, as I do, to question a belief so prevalent as here treated of...And if the buffoon or satirical

⁹ Sewall, 431.

¹⁰ Ibid. 431.

¹¹ Ibid. 443-444.

¹² Ibid. 445.

will be expressing their talents, or it the bigots willfully and blindly reject the testimony of their own reason...it is no more than I expected of them.¹³

Calef argues that the Devil did indeed afflict the inhabitants of Salem, not by sending witches among them to do mischief, but rather in the shape of “pernicious notions...together with the accusations of a parcel of possessed, distracted or lying wenches.”¹⁴ These delusions spread throughout the land like a disease, and by its “echo [gave] a brand of infamy to this whole country throughout the world.”¹⁵ Playing no small part in the application of this baleful brand, was none other than Cotton Mather and his publication, *Wonders of the Invisible World*. According to Calef, Mather’s writings were self-aggrandizing and self-serving, designed to “[hide] from the reader the encouragements and exhortations to proceed...in effect telling the world that those executions at Salem were without and against the advice of the ministers” who had been party to the events.¹⁶ Calef calls this subterfuge a “manifest, designed travesty,” a colonial cover-up with a most tragic outcome.¹⁷ As a final parting shot, Calef complains that while Mather had been “very forward to write books of witchcraft, [he] has not been so forward either to explain or defend the doctrinal part thereof,” calling into question Mather’s grasp of the scriptural doctrine that might support claims of diabolical covenants that occurred at Salem.¹⁸ Clearly, the skepticism that had flowered in Europe in the 1660s, by the 1700s had spread to New England as well, and not just among the educated elite.

¹³ Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (repr. 1823; London: 1700), iii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* v.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* vi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 302.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 303.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 303-304.

By the early 1700s several of the afflicted girls also began withdrawing their accusations and apologizing for the roles they'd played in the trials. Many of them, however, blamed the Devil for their actions. Margaret Jacobs, both accused and accuser, called the accusations she made against George Burroughs and her grandfather, George Jacobs Sr., "altogether false" but done out of fear for her own life.¹⁹ Jacobs claimed it was the threats that she should be

put down in the dungeon and would be hanged, but if I would confess I should have my life; the which did so affright me, with my own vile wicked heart, to save my life made me make the confession I did, which confession, may it please the court is...untrue.²⁰

The family of George Jacobs Sr., executed with Burroughs on August 19 received seventy-nine pounds sterling in restitution.²¹

In 1706, Ann Putnam Jr., who had lodged more legal complaints than any other accuser save Mary Wolcott, prayed that she might be "humbled before God for that sad and humbling providence" that had caused her to act as an "instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away."²² She expressed also a belief that they had been innocent all along and that it was a "great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time."²³ She hoped she might be forgiven for doing something in

¹⁹ "Declaration of Margaret Jacobs to the Special Witchcraft Court Appointed by the Governor," in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 86-87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

²¹ "The Massachusetts General Court Makes Restitution," in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 122-123.

²² "The Confession of Anne Putnam When She was Received to Communion," in *Salem Witchcraft, with an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*, ed. Charles Upham (Boston: Wiggin and Lunt, 1867), 2: 510.

²³ *Ibid.*

ignorance, which had caused “so sad a calamity to [the accused] and their families.”²⁴ Ann died, unmarried, nine years later.²⁵

Less than a decade after the events at Salem, a Special Witchcraft Court was called by Governor Phips in order to decide a course of action for those who had suffered because of the trials. The restitutions were to be given to Stephen Sewall, Judge of the Special Witchcraft Court, who would distribute the funds as directed to “such of the said persons as are living, and to those that legally represent them that are dead.”²⁶ John Willard’s wife Margaret sent a petition to the Special Witchcraft Court in 1710 in order to recoup “what damage myself together with my aforesaid husband did sustain in our estate, besides...causing him to suffer death for such a piece of wickedness as I have not the least reason in the world to think he was guilty of.”²⁷ Though she claimed to trust the judges to guess at the damages due to her, her petition concluded with an addendum that states she “judges my loss and damage in my estate hath not been less than thirty pounds, but I shall be satisfied if I may have twenty pounds allowed me.”²⁸ She received twenty pounds in 1711.²⁹

Two petitions to the court were presented by George Burroughs’s children, George, Charles, Jeremiah, and Josiah. In the first, sent to the court in 1710, Burroughs’s children complained that what small part of their father’s estate was left to them was “lost and

²⁴ “The Confession of Anne Putnam,” 510.

²⁵ Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 310.

²⁶ “The Massachusetts General Court Makes Restitution,” 123.

²⁷ “Petition of John Willard’s Widow (September 1710),” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 65-66.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 66.

²⁹ “The Massachusetts General Court Makes Restitution,” 122.

expended,” having been used up by their mother-in-law in the care of their step-sister.³⁰ They judged that they were owed in the arena of fifty pounds, and this was the exact amount they received from Judge Sewall in 1711.³¹ In 1712 the children sent another petition to the court, complaining again that their mother-in-law “instead of sharing...what our father left and she had secured, [made us] to shift for ourselves without anything for so much as a remembrance of our father.”³² They left it to the Court to decide whether their mother-in-law had not “already received too much and the children too little.”³³ The court agreed, and in 1713 sent the children an additional six pounds sterling.³⁴

The reparations, recantations, and apologies evidence a clear shift in attitudes toward witchcraft in early eighteenth-century New England. Truly, the events at Salem had occurred under a perfect set of conditions that could not be replicated elsewhere in any case. Witchcraft allegations at Salem illustrate that, regardless of gender, witches were dangerous. Non-normative, disruptive, polluting behaviors were the sign of the Devil’s influence on both men and women. The men who were accused of witchcraft and ultimately executed were inverted images of the ideal Puritan patriarch: they were violent beyond reason; incompetent providers, both spiritually and economically; unfriendly and argumentative neighbors; and suspiciously guilty of witchcraft, if not always legally so. Men were held to gender expectations specific to their sex, and failing to meet those expectations could result in charges of witchcraft, just as it did for women. Yet more than gender performance is at work

³⁰ “Petition of George Burroughs’ Children (1710 or 1711),” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 88-89.

³¹ “The Massachusetts General Court Makes Restitution,” 122.

³² “Petition of George Burroughs’ Children (1712),” 89.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ “Response of the Committee (1713),” in *Salem-Village Witchcraft: a Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, eds. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (repr. 1972; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 90.

here. The context of Salem in the seventeenth century plays its own vital part. It was the perfect backdrop for a witch-panic so volatile that all previous conventions and precedents were abandoned. At Salem, anyone who failed to meet community standards – male or female, minister or laity, rich or poor, young or old – was vulnerable.

Similar to the shift in contemporary opinion about witchcraft at the end of the seventeenth century, a similar sea-change is evident among historians regarding the subject of male witches. Malcolm Gaskill, in a conference paper collected in Alison Rowlands's 2009 *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, argues there was “no reason in Scripture, law or classical precept why a witch should not be a man; in fact, Protestant clergymen writing about witchcraft between the 1590s and 1640s insisted that men were far from immune.”³⁵ The 2006 conference on male witches in early modern Europe that produced Alison Rowlands's collection evidences not just a renaissance of witchcraft studies, but one which allows for the inclusion of men in the historical narrative of witchcraft. This inclusion has breathed new life into the study of witchcraft, reviving it and moving it in new directions.

Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, for example, are collaborating on the forthcoming collection of Salem court records, *Records of the Salem Witch-hunt*. The authors argue that their collection will be “more accurate, more comprehensive, and organized differently from all preceding collections of similar materials, emphasizing the chronological unfolding of the events” rather than arranging items in “case-based”

³⁵ Malcolm Gaskill, “Masculinity and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 171-190.

categories.³⁶ Additionally, the editors have dated each document “according to when [it] was used and content added to it, and each transcription notes where the handwriting changes, with twenty-four of the most prominent recorders identified.”³⁷ In returning to the original documents as the source of their transcriptions, Burns and Rosenthal attempt to redress transcription errors and absences that have been perpetuated by many previous collections, and have also made “consistent reclamation of text that had been crossed out.”³⁸ This reassessing of the primary documents of the Salem witchcraft epidemic will surely result in new insights. Clear identification of the author of each court record, for example, could provide a fuller understanding of the motives for the language that was used.

However, many of these new works on witchcraft continue to ignore the normative pressures that were brought to bear on men, and the dangers associated with the improper performance of masculine gender norms. This thesis considers male witches in a way that hasn’t been done before, illustrating that a complex combination of context and behavior could result in the death of some men, and that the absence of those events or characteristics could result in their being spared.

Furthermore, it highlights the intellectual continuity between the New World and the Old, by pointing to the similarities in texts by such authors as Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, Thomas Cooper, William Perkins, and Cotton and Increase Mather. None of these documents hint that male witches were outside the bounds of possibility as some historians have argued, and the similarities between the demonological texts of the Old World, and those of the New, illustrate that beliefs about witches and witchcraft had crossed the Atlantic.

³⁶ Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, “Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 401-422.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 401.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 415.

This thesis reveals new avenues in gender studies as well, in that it looks at men as more than just as adjuncts to female actors, or as their oppressors, but as actors in their own right and as part of the same gendered system. Men were vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft for many reasons, and they were often, at least in part, distinctly masculine ones.

Making connections between Puritan ideals of manhood and masculinity, and charges of witchcraft, positions this thesis at the forefront of this newly revived scholarly movement. It presents a new interpretation that describes men who were accused of witchcraft not as feminine, but rather as hyper-masculine men, and investigates in detail just what it meant to fail as a hyper-masculine man in colonial New England.

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