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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Work, Gender and Witchcraft in Early Modern England

Philippa Carter

History and Philosophy of Science Department, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Correspondence
Philippa Carter, History and Philosophy of Science Department, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.
Email: pgbc2@cam.ac.uk

Abstract
This article revisits a question with which historians of early modern European witchcraft have long grappled: why was the average percentage of male suspects so small (approximately 10–30 *per cent*), and the percentage of female suspects so large? Drawing on recent studies by economic historians, it argues that this skewed gender ratio can be explained, in part, by the gendered patterns of work which obtained in early modern Europe. Focusing on England, it shows how four key variables – gender divisions of labour, occupational hazard, contact frequency and workplace sociability – combined to increase or decrease workers' vulnerability to witchcraft accusation.

Introduction

Why, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were so many witches women? Across mainland Europe, the British Isles and New England, an average of 70 to 80 *per cent* of all those tried for witchcraft in this period were female.[1] Their predominance as suspects is beyond doubt; it is the question of how to explain it that has divided historians of witchcraft for half a century by now. At the start of the 1970s, Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane famously explained the phenomenon as a structurally predictable fallout of societal change.[2] As economic hardship and nascent individualism tightened purse-strings, beggars' requests for alms provoked resentment and guilt in the hearts of those who refused them. These refusers of charity then read their own subsequent misfortunes as acts of malefic revenge. Women were likelier than men to end up begging to survive, especially as they aged, and therefore likelier to end up as suspects. So the argument went.

For other students of witchcraft, male misogyny – abundantly evident in certain demonological texts – was a sufficient explanation.[3] The next two decades saw a protracted battle between those who insisted that 'witch-hunting was woman-hunting', and those who insisted that it was not.[4] This was a live political conflict as much as a historical one: what was felt to be at stake was the validity of a

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feminist metanarrative in which women were – and had always been – the victims of a regime of male hatred, oppression and violence.[5]

This battlefield is now more or less deserted by scholars of early modern witchcraft; numbers were already thin on the ground by the mid-1990s. By then, the still-unexplained predominance of female suspects was receiving renewed attention from feminist historians, but the research agenda had changed.[6] The questions asked of the sources now focused on subjectivity, identity and sexuality.[7] In 1995, Diane Purkiss suggested that the skewed gender ratio was related to the context-specific psychic pressures endured by early modern women.[8] Socialised to identify as 'good' housewives and mothers, they held themselves responsible for the successful preservation of the household: its members, its resources and its boundaries. When the housewife failed in this duty, the witch provided 'a kind of anti-housewife, her own dark Other'.[9]

Offering a compelling account of why witchcraft suspects were female, interpretations of this sort were obliged to skirt around the question of why fifteen-odd *per cent* of them were male. As Lara Apps and Andrew Gow pointed out in their 2003 monograph on the subject, the fact that male witches had long been reduced to a footnote in the scholarship was also a legacy of the early political polarisation of the field.[10] Since then, several historians have enhanced our knowledge of the male witch stereotypes which were available to contemporaries.[11] They have also offered different interpretations of the gender codes at work; where Apps and Gow read male witches as feminised, Elizabeth Kent saw them as modelling a distinctively malign masculinity.[12]

For all of the balance and complexity which these historians have lent to our understanding of gender and witchcraft, the statistical fact of the skewed gender ratio remains a puzzle. We now have an abundance of explanations for the predominance of female suspects; so many, in fact, that what starts to look remarkable is the fact that 'any men came to be accused at all'.[13] In the English context, case studies of male suspects by Kent and Malcolm Gaskill have suggested why *some* did.[14] Like their female counterparts, these individuals were seen by their neighbours as selfish, unneighbourly, foul-tempered, vindictive, envious or untrustworthy. Yet the question of why more men did *not* fit this capacious bill remains.

Looking at witchcraft through the prism of work, this article offers a new angle on the skewed gender ratio among suspects. It argues that this ratio was determined – among other factors – by gendered distributions of work-related risk. As my focus here is on the social and symbolic structures which produced these patterns, I have chosen to use gender as my category of analysis.[15] I do so on the understanding that sex assignment via physical examination was – and remains – most newborn infants' first non-consensual entry into that world of constructed difference.

For early modern newborns, this was a moment which delimited a narrow range of possible futures. This was especially true of their employment opportunities: some doors were opened, others closed for good. 'Women's work' differed from 'men's work'; that much was common knowledge.[16] This article examines how that ideational difference shaped people's working lives, focusing on four variables: gender divisions of labour, occupational hazards, contact frequency and workplace sociability. Ranging across male- and female-dominated fields of work, it explores how these variables combined in each to create varying degrees of vulnerability to witchcraft accusation. While both men and women could be put at risk of accusation by the nature of their work, it argues, the combined odds were substantially worse for women.

The fact that I am able to make these claims is thanks to three decades of research on early modern labour. This article builds, in particular, on ground-breaking studies of women's work by Jane Whittle, Mark Hailwood, Charmian Mansell and Amanda Flather.[17] These historians have given us a firmer sense of who was doing what in the streets, fields, farmyards, marketplaces and households of preindustrial England. We now have a much more detailed picture of the daily lives of men and women than was available to Purkiss in 1995, one which allows us to ask why workers became witches. The answers, I hope, will hold insights for historians of witchcraft *and* work.

TABLE 1 Accusers and suspects by gender.

	Female		Male		Unknown		
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	Total
Accusers	500	62.3	232	29	70	8.7	802
Suspects	855	89	105	11	0	0	960

Witchcraft on paper

This article is concerned only with the development of suspicions among neighbours, and not with any subsequent trial proceedings. Most studies of English witchcraft have been based on the judicial records generated by the trials, and on the cheap pamphlets which narrated them. Yet, as Marion Gibson has shown, these are highly mediated texts, variously shaped by the leading questions of officials, the legalese of clerks and the marketing instincts of publishers.[18] They offer, at best, refracted echoes of the voices of the trial participants.

With this in mind, I have based this study on a different corpus: the manuscript casebooks kept by the medical practitioner and astrologer Richard Napier (1559–1634). Officially the rector of the parish of Great Linford in Buckinghamshire, Napier gained his reputation, not as a preacher, but as a 'physician both of body and soul'.[19] Over the course of a four-decade career (1597–1634), Napier listened to reports of suspected bewitchment in at least 1,714 out of 69,725 consultations.[20]

It is important to bear in mind that this figure amounts to only 2.5 *per cent* of the total of Napier's documented consultation hours. It was rare for interpersonal conflicts to end up as witchcraft accusations: blows, insults and threats of litigation were far commoner outcomes. And, as judges of foul play, Napier's clients were far from indiscriminate. An affliction had to strike them as peculiarly 'strange' for the possibility of witchcraft to come under consideration.[21] Even then, it took time – and often dashed hopes of recovery – for fears to harden into accusations. Seeking redress at a local court was a risky strategy; at worst, it could backfire as a counteraccusation or a defamation suit. Naming suspects in Napier's study was probably something of a halfway measure: the cleric-turned-astrologer was a local authority on witchcraft, but he also knew how to be discreet.

There is certainly no evidence that any of the accusations heard by Napier ever ended in a trial. He simply wrote down what his clients said, with no apparent intentions for the scrawled results other than his own reference. These are not unmediated texts, then, but they get us closer to the words of illiterate accusers than do either the legal records or the pamphlets.[22] They also offer a wide geographical spread: while the majority of accusers lived within a 10-mile radius of Great Linford, the rest were thinly scattered across England.[23]

The ad hoc, unsystematic nature of Napier's record-keeping brings its own disadvantages: where some case notes are rich in detail, most are frustratingly brief. While at least 802 clients identified suspects in consultation with Napier, often all that made it onto paper was a list of names headed 'susp[ected]'. As such, while I offer a brief quantitative overview of the whole sample below, my qualitative analysis draws on a much smaller number of cases (130) in which Napier recorded the content of his clients' work-related suspicions.

Of this group of 802 accusers, 500 were female and 232 male; the gender of the remaining 70 was not recorded (see Table 1). Table 2 shows the relation of their gender to the types of accusation which they made. The commonest accusation, by far, was the infliction of disease or disability on adults over the age of twelve; in a quarter of these cases, the victim was suffering from a 'disease of mind' in addition to their physical complaints.

Harm to children under twelve featured in 108 accusations. Here, the gender ratio is obscured by Napier's practice of recording only the name of the patient undergoing assessment; in consequence,

TABLE 2 Type of accusation by gender of accuser.

	Female		Male		Unknown			
Type of harm	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	**All genders**	**% of all accusations**
Over-12s	471	68.7	203	29.6	12	1.7	686	79.6
Under-12s	31	28.7	23	21.3	54	50	108	12.5
Livestock	28	48.3	28	48.3	2	3.4	58	6.7
Dairying	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	1.2
All accusations	540	62.6	254	29.5	68	7.9	862	100

TABLE 3 Type of accusation by gender of suspect.

	Female		Male			
Type of harm	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	**All genders**	**% of all accusations**
Over-12s	748	88.8	94	11.2	842	77.3
Under-12s	110	90.2	12	9.8	122	11.2
Livestock	91	85.8	15	14.2	106	9.7
Dairying	19	95	1	5	20	1.8
All accusations	968	88.8	122	11.2	1090	100

most accusers of unknown gender were the anonymous parents of ailing children. While at least 28.7 *per cent* of all those reporting harm to under-twelves were female, the actual number was probably significantly higher. 58 accusations (6.7 *per cent*) centred on livestock death or disease; 10 (1.2 *per cent*) on disruption to dairying.

Among the 960 suspects identified by this group of accusers, 855 were female and 105 were male (see Table 1). Collectively, this group of suspects was accused of at least 1,090 separate counts of *maleficium*. Table 3 relates these suspects' gender to the types of harm of which they were accused. This provides us with a rough guide to the landscapes of witchcraft belief inhabited by Napier's clients. The next section explores how their accusations related to the jobs which they – and those whom they accused – did.

It is important to note that, although I have used occupational titles for brevity's sake, most of these jobs were not 'occupations' in our sense of the word. Living in what Alexandra Shepard has termed 'an economy of makeshifts', most of Napier's poorer clients survived by taking whatever work was available to them.[24] Even among the more prosperous, by-employment was the norm. This was especially true of women, most of whom had to balance unpaid domestic tasks with income-generating ones.[25]

Gender divisions of labour

Dairying

When discussing gender divisions of labour, the authors of early modern England's guides to estate management liked to draw a neat line along the household's threshold. 'House-worke' was for women; 'field-work' for men.[26] Whittle's and Hailwood's recent study suggests that, on the ground, gendered

working patterns were far more elastic and dynamic than this picture suggests. While most forms of work were gender differentiated, they concluded, the flexibility of the division varied according to the sector and the type of task.[27]

We start with the least flexible of these divisions: throughout central and Northern Europe, dairying was seen as an exclusively female occupation.[28] So, too, was the magical sabotage of its products, whether through theft, spoliation or disruption. Purkiss, Lyndal Roper, Deborah Willis and Christopher Kissane have noted the prevalence of these forms of dairy magic in locations as diverse as England, Augsburg and Shetland. All relate these forms of *maleficium* to the symbolic world inhabited by contemporaries – a world in which milk belonged to a female-coded domain of fertility, maternity and nourishment.[29]

Here, I want to return our attention to the basic modes of seeing and knowing which sustained this symbolic world. Napier's clients did not need familiarity with learned theories like 'sympathy' or the 'doctrine of signatures' to know that like attracted like.[30] A client who feared that she was barren, for example, worried that this was because she lived on barren ground.[31] These threads of correspondence ran everywhere: between milk-producers (bovine and human) and between dairy-producers and their products.[32] They helped to delineate the field of possibilities for accusers seeking suspects. The idea of a woman magically disrupting another woman's dairying was simply easier to imagine than that of a man doing the same thing.

But this did not make the latter prospect unimaginable. Napier's clients were guided by their symbolic systems, but they were not trapped by them.[33] In 1604, for example, the widow Goody Foulkes complained that she 'could never make butter this fortnight since shee mette with a bad fellow of Hansley that goeth about the countrye'.[34] This 'bad fellow', however, was the only male suspect explicitly identified as a potential dairying saboteur; the other sixteen were women. When her cheeses began to 'rise up in bunches like biles & … heave & wax bitter', Alice Gray suspected two of her female neighbours.[35] Eleanor Aylet, whose cheese smelt 'very ill', suspected at least ten of hers.[36]

If an associative link between female bodies and milk production was what had made dairying a female-dominated work domain in the first place, the work domain – with its attendant roles of 'dairywife' and 'dairymaid' – had, in turn, added new strands to this web of correspondences. It had linked housewives and servants to their milk cows, to their cheeses, and to one another. It had made dairy magic 'women's work'.

Household management

All ten of the accusers who complained of dairying problems were housewives; two attributed additional failures in brewing and baking to witchcraft.[37] This particular gender ratio is no great mystery: housewives were responsible for providing their households with a steady supply of beer, butter, cheese and bread, and their reputations rested on the quality and quantity of these products. When a housewife failed in any one of these tasks, Purkiss argued, it was easier for her to detect magical sabotage than to admit her own incompetence.[38] But the management of food also gave women power, a power which could breed suspicion in the hearts of those who possessed it *and* those who did not.

In the former camp were the fourteen of Napier's clients who believed that their troubles had begun with a suspect being denied alms. Between them, their suspicions had fixed on fourteen lone women and two married couples. In explaining this particular gender ratio, elements of Thomas' and Macfarlane's 'charity-refused' thesis do still have purchase. All eighteen suspects had desired something and been denied. At least three were described as 'old'; another lived 'by the almes of the towne'.[39] Those whom old age had reduced to dependence on alms *were* particularly vulnerable to suspicion, and there were more women than men among them.

But we should not leap to the assumption that every 'begging' suspect fit this profile. Some of the suspects named by Napier's clients had been ready to pay: one accuser reported that 'Goody Rowe

came to buy hony of her & she denyed it'.[40] Another suspect had pawned a sieve to her accuser 'for half [a] bushel of barley'.[41] The majority of Napier's clients spent their days 'making ends meet'; they lived in what Bernard Capp has described as an 'elaborate culture of loans, barter, and small favours'.[42] Food was one of this culture's fungible currencies, and women were over-represented amongst its distributors *and* procurers. They regularly 'begged' milk from one another, on the understanding that the balance would be settled in the end. Inevitably, the good relations sustaining this type of exchange sometimes broke down. When they did, the party framed as the 'beggar' may simply have been the one in whose court the ball had last stopped.

If the relative socioeconomic status of 'beggar' and 'refuser' was closer than the 'charity-refused' model suggests, feelings of mutual indebtedness can only have added insult to injury. This is evident in the many tales of tit-for-tat *maleficium* told by Napier's clients. One client complained that her neighbour 'came for a halpint of milke & because she had it not the cow that gave a gallon before … now [gives] litle or nothing'.[43] When both parties possessed symbolic control over the dairy and its products, fashioning a tale of poetic injustice like this one was all too easy.

Sometimes a witch's blockade on food supplies was even more direct. The suspect Joan Gill had gained a reputation as a witch because

> her husband did eate of a mess of milke which his wife would [wished] not he should have eaten of, & the spone wherewith he did eate his milke would not out of his mouth until his wife awaked which was gone to bed before.[44]

Gill's control of the household's resources – laudable in theory – had become an iron bit in the mouth of her husband. This was good housewifery gone mad. Nor is Gill the only suspect in this sample guilty of micromanaging food. In 1626, Joan Hore told Napier that she 'suspected one Goody George to do her harme' because the latter had 'made her to forbear milke & butter which she loved'.[45]

Food services

Napier's slip-up in Hore's notes is telling: it was not implausible that George might have forced her to *eat* milk and butter, rather than to forgo them. That year, another client had suffered precisely this fate. The twelve-year-old Margaret Foster told Napier that she suspected 'widow Millard', who had 'made her to drink agaynst her will'. She had 'neaver since [been] well'; three years later, she was still tormented by 'extreme grypings' in her insides.[46]

Twenty-five accusations of witchcraft in this sample follow the same pattern: the victim falls sick after being fed by the suspect. Why had these suspects pressed food on their neighbours? Food items could be handed over as tokens of credit or goodwill, but plenty were simply sold or bartered. Witches were not above using such workaday transactions to work evil. The suspect Gabriel Brawne had met his victim Mary Robinson 'on Sat last & sold fish to her', after which she had fallen sick 'of her shoulder'.[47] Yet Brawne, like the male butter saboteur, was the odd one out: the nine other suspected food-vendors named in this sample were women.[48]

Although we know that female vendors marketed all sorts of food, the range of these nine witches was limited: they sold milk, butter, cheese and apples. Mary Smith, for example, suspected Goody Denton because 'she fell sick a little after she sold butter to her'.[49] The housewife Elizabeth Marshal fretted over the fact that she 'did buy milke at a place where they suspect a bad woman'.[50] 'Clubber suspected to have her & that by her meanes she felte a core of these apples stick in her throat that shee bought of Goody Clubbers maid', Napier wrote of one accuser.[51] 'Did eat an apple given her by Alice Clarke & is ready to be choaked with it', he noted of another.[52]

We have already considered the symbolic association of women with milk. Apples were equally freighted with meaning in early modern England: all good Christians knew that Eve's original diabolic pact had been sealed with one.[53] Another reason for their frequent appearance in accusations, however,

may have been more prosaic. Napier's clients shared a common vocabulary of illness, and certain sensations had their own idioms. The apple was one. One of Napier's patients reported that he had 'something like a core of an apple swelling in his throate', another 'a thing as big as an apple in her throat'.[54]

These two rationales – the one biblical, the other bodily – were not as far apart as they might at first seem. In 1622, the travel writer observed of 'our first father Adam, whose wife tempted with the forbidden fruit', that as he

> swallowed it, the Hand of God stopped it in his throat, whence a Man hath a Bunch there, which women haue not, called by them Adams apple.[55]

God had left a lump of the forbidden fruit in Adam's throat, as a permanent reminder of his original sin. A lump in the throat, for Napier's clients, felt like an apple. Perhaps it *was* an apple; perhaps a morsel had gotten stuck on its way down. The sufferer's mind returned to memories of real apples, recently eaten, and to their sellers. It may have turned, too, to the pedlars of that original apple in the Garden of Eden: first the Devil, and then a woman.

Whether or not the victims were conscious of any of these symbolic resonances, the lumps and gut-gripings were impossible to ignore. Not every stomach cramp was met with equal suspicion. Napier's clients knew perfectly well that food poisoning usually had natural causes. In 1633, for example, a local widow informed him that her son and maid had gone temporarily blind after sharing a dish of wild parsnips.[56] In 1620, ratsbane 'made up in a pye by ignorance' had poisoned four diners in the neighbouring village of Stony Stratford.[57]

Fears of deliberate poisoning were also rife, and poisoning, like witchcraft, was seen as a 'woman's crime'.[58] The power to poison by magic alone merely extended a witch's range. Two suspects named by Napier's clients were reputed to have poisoned themselves to death.[59] The ostensibly non-magical method they had chosen for this particular crime had done nothing to diminish their reputations as witches; in fact, it had cemented them.

Healthcare

Food could kill, but then it could also cure. Medicated 'diet-drinks', possets and broths were mainstays of early modern medicine, used by housewives and physicians alike. It was when the consumer's health grew worse and not better – as it inevitably sometimes did – that the provider came under scrutiny. After taking 'spices sent to cure her', the thirty-two-year-old Agnes Richards had become 'blind for a tyme'. It was a healer known as 'Long Bess' who had provided Richards with the spices, and who was now her former client's prime suspect.[60] Another of Napier's patients thought himself 'bewitched with one a woman that gave his mother physick'.[61]

The business of making a substance which would end up part of a living body was dangerous. So, too, was removing parts, for nail and hair cuttings – in keeping with the doctrine of sympathy – were never truly severed from their original bodies.[62] Richards fretted that Long Bess's daughter had 'cut her neales & hayre'.[63] Precisely what a practitioner like Long Bess *did* was shrouded in mystery, and this could boost patients' confidence in her powers. But when some new episode of debility followed, their thoughts returned to what they had taken in, and what they had allowed to be taken from them.

Physicians and apothecaries administered drugs too, of course, and barbers and surgeons removed body parts. But no witchcraft suspect in this sample worked in these male-dominated occupations. Jane Franklin, whose gangrened leg had been 'cut off by Mr Willowby' in 1632, still blamed eight of her female neighbours for subsequent 'pricking, twitching and shooting' sensations in her other leg.[64] Mr Willoughby's skills were apparently beyond doubt.

It was not surgeons, but 'irregular' practitioners – those without status, institutional protection or accreditation – who were vulnerable to suspicion. In this sample, six out of seven were female. Once

again, there was a male outlier: Joan Taylor professed herself 'troubled mutch in mynd for that she thought the last cunning man that tooke vppon him to cure her was a witch'.[65] 'Cunning folk' made up only a small fraction of witchcraft suspects overall, and it is significant that the one man who *was* accused had expanded the standard portfolio of services (finding lost property, detecting witchcraft, etc.) to include cures.

For an irregular healer, enhancing one's practice with shows of uncanny foreknowledge was a risky strategy. One 'Conning woman suspected' was known to 'call them by ther names that come to her for physick'; another told a client that 'she would never be healed'.[66] In the remaining cases, however, there is no suggestion that the practitioner claimed to be 'cunning'. It was simply their power over health which made them dangerous. Clement Seton, for example, who was troubled with a 'great sorenes [in] his privy partes', told Napier that one 'Goody Gilbord had it in cure & after leaving her & taking another to cure [it] it is thought she venomed it & wewitched him'.[67]

This dynamic is most obvious in the thirteen cases in which the suspect was involved in caring for the accuser in her childbed. Two of the suspects were midwives, and eleven gossips or lying-in attendants.[68] The enclosed pressure cooker of the birth chamber took its toll on the women inside. Goody Gale, whose daughter had 'watched a woman that lay in', blamed another lying-in attendant for using magic to cause the said daughter 'to bepisse the house to her great discredit'.[69]

Bladders emptied; tempers frayed. Joan Newman suspected her neighbour Frances Yardley, who at Newman's last lying-in had 'said when she took the cordiall drinke to bring her to her labour that she took a medson [medicine] to destroy her child'.[70] Mary Assop was convinced that Elizabeth Wakelin had bewitched her, for

> the woman was at her travell [labour] thus cursing her … [she] kneeled downe vppon her knees & prayed to god that Mary Ausoppe might never have her health so long as she had a tongue to speake agayn she sayd the plague of god light vppon her & all the plagues in hell light vppon her.[71]

Most of these gossips, however, had made no such bone-chilling speeches. They were simply there, feeding the mother, salving her belly, changing her linens, doing the kind of intimate bodywork which women were expected to do.[72] When she did not recover as expected – when she left the lying-in room still hurting in mind and body – the search for a cause brought her back to those moments of mutual labour.

Childcare

Women did the bodywork, not just for childbearing women, but for anyone who could not do it themselves: the sick, the elderly and the young. Historians have long noted the presence of nurse-keepers, lying-in maids and childminders among witchcraft suspects.[73] The predominance of women in childcare makes itself felt in this sample too: between them, 108 parents or guardians of sick children accused 110 women and 12 men. One accuser suspected 'Goody Fuller that keepeth [her] old mistress's child … the child pineth and consumeth and is very weake'.[74] The father of the ten-year-old Francis Archer suspected a woman who 'tooke him being a child & smatcht [smacked] it & the Chine bone began to goe in'.[75]

In a society in which one in five would die before their first birthday, feelings about infant health ran high.[76] When a child languished or died, the parents' gazes settled on anyone who had minded him or her, and the childminder's gaze settled on anyone else who might be blamed. The housewife Anne Gale had been hesitant when, in June 1621, her landlady had asked her to nurse her baby.[77] Gale had agreed, but the apprehension remained: she was 'very desirous to be safely delivered of this child and carefull [full of care that] it should doe well'.[78] For the first year, it did; then, she had fallen out with

her next-door neighbour Ellen Warner. The child had 'drouped … ever since', and showed no signs of recovery.[79] Gale's suspicions soon fixed on the younger Warner, who lived and worked in the house of a local midwife. Warner was the same lying-in attendant blamed for the pissing incident. It is likely that she, too, spent much of her time caring for infants.

Roper, Purkiss and Willis have shown how maternal fears could metamorphose into witchcraft suspicions.[80] Without a doubt, this was a component of most accusations involving harm to children. But, for Gale, who had three children over five, her success as a mother was probably a less pressing concern than her standing as an employee. Wet-nurses and dry-nurses bore as much responsibility for the lives of their employers' children as midwives, but without the high-value skills or accreditation. What respect they did gain rested on personal reputation, and one sickly, injured or starved-looking charge was enough to blacken it for good. At best, these women would lose clients; at worst, they might end up suspected of witchcraft. Convinced of their own innocence, they took a long, hard look at their co-workers.

Animal husbandry

The same was true of those workers whose charges were not children, but animals. Animals were most householders' highest-value possessions, and those who fed and watched them bore a heavy weight of responsibility. Failing cowherds and shepherds, like failing nurses, looked for someone else to blame. The sixty-three-year-old Thomas Coursey believed himself haunted by a witch because he kept 'some mens cattle & they dye soddenly & by ill fortune'.[81] John Johnson, who had lost a cow, suspected one 'Agnys Wat [who] kept his sheep two years before'.[82]

The term 'animal husbandry' can be misleading here: by Whittle's and Hailwood's estimate, women made up 51.7 *per cent* of all livestock workers.[83] The same parity of representation can be seen among accusers of livestock harm: 28 in this sample were female and 28 male. It should have been perfectly easy to imagine a witch of either gender harming livestock. Among the suspects, however, were 91 women and 15 men. Why, in a thoroughly mixed-gender sector, did the skewed gender ratio persist?

One possible answer is that the fallout of conflicts between men was easily deflected onto a female suspect. The shepherd Robert Neale, for example, told Napier that 'One Chapmans mother as he thinketh did hurte him after he fell out with her sonne about keeping of sheepe'. Neale had been frightened 'in the fild keeping his sheepe as he sayeth at the first with a woman & then a black thing appeared'.[84] When the servant George Bosworth fell 'extreme sick' in 1616, he suspected 'Anne Hammon Aunt to one that he pursued stealing of his masters bullockes'.[85]

Both men had fought with their opponents in a male-dominated field: shepherds and cowherds were usually male.[86] But the suspect was imagined avenging her kinsman back on her own turf: health management. Neale had turned 'light-headed'; Bosworth had contracted the 'new ague'. And although both suspects were envisioned as targeting their human victims' bodies, the same power was easily extended to livestock. The drenches, salves and poultices used to treat livestock diseases were staples of household recipe collections, and it was housewives who were expected to have the skills and ingredients ready to make them up in times of need.[87]

Occupational hazard

The six types of work examined here had this in common: the risks were high, and the stakes were high. The point is perhaps made best by comparison with two sectors which only rarely produced witchcraft accusations: fieldwork and crafts. Like animal husbandry, these were mixed-gender sectors within which some tasks were strongly gender differentiated, and others less so. In fieldwork, Whittle and Hailwood found men dominating in ploughing and mowing, and women in sowing and weeding. The guild system limited female participation in skilled crafts, but they dominated in textile production,

especially in combing and carding (87.5 *per cent*), spinning (97.9 *per cent*) and lacemaking (100 *per cent*).[88]

Yet these textiles jobs were no likelier than the male-dominated ones – like weaving – to furnish the content of witchcraft suspicions. Only one of Napier's clients, Catherine Hopkins, mentioned textile production in her accusation. Hopkins had 'sent two of her children' to the suspect 'to learne to make bone lace', and the suspect had refused to take them on.[89] Lacemaking seems incidental to this powerplay; the refused apprenticeship might have been in any craft at all.

Plenty of workplace accidents happened in fields, too. But in only two of Napier's consultations did the sufferer find grounds for suspicion in them. Badly injured by 'a sore fall from a mow [haystack]', Richard Laughton feared witchcraft. Yet the initial conflict had blown up, not in his fields, but on his doorstep: 'an old bagger [beggar] man' and his wife had been refused alms '& did curse'.[90] At the heart of this conflict was not haymaking, but, once again, the cross-purposes work of begging and conserving resources. In the other case, however, the witch *was* imagined targeting the husbandman in his own domain. When he and his workers 'broke there axe tree & their cart fell from a wheele & another was set after a strange manner', Giles Stokes suspected a male acquaintance named Ralph Hellier.[91]

Why did so few accusations take place in fields? The stakes of failure – starvation, poverty – were just as high in fieldwork as in dairying. Yet the hazards were of a different sort. The success of arable farming depended upon the conditions of the soil and the climate, and however poor these conditions became, they were endured by everyone alike. This was untrue of healthcare, childcare and food production. Death, disease and spoliation were individualised blights. Some households were hit harder, and more often, than others.

Witchcraft was not just highly targeted; it was also 'strange'. Strangeness – a numinous experiential quality which was rarely defined, but instantly recognised – was the strongest indicator of witchcraft which Napier's clients knew. As Sawyer has argued, there were certain bodily and behavioural symptoms which reliably produced this impression – among them, paralysis, lameness, wasting and madness.[92] Sufferers who were seized by sudden fits of shaking, swooning, writhing or screaming were described, again and again, as 'strangely handled'. The same was true of livestock. William Kilpine's complaint that nine beasts had died 'under his hand very strangly & sodenly quaking & trembling' is typical.[93] Although other phenomena – like Stokes' errant cartwheel – could strike observers as 'strange', none were as likely to do so as 'fits', 'strokes' or 'takings'.

Unpredictability, inexplicability, suddenness, strangeness – these were the qualities which made certain diseases so amenable to witchcraft suspicions. Anyone who worked in healthcare had to be ready to battle against them, these faceless enemies whose movements were nigh-impossible to predict. And the practitioners often lost. Whether or not they became suspects depended on their standing; midwives, surgeons, physicians and farriers were usually safe. Less reputable, more disposable healthcare workers were not. Whatever the practitioner's standing, however, the risk was inherent to the line of work.

Asking what made healthcare a high-risk sector invites presentism. In most conversations I have had about early modern witchcraft, I am told that now we *understand* what accusers did not: the actions of bacteria, the nerve signals causing convulsions, the transmission routes for foodborne illnesses. To a certain extent this is true – it is true, at least, that we have found naturalistic models which satisfy us. Had early moderns found their own naturalistic models completely satisfying, there would have been no 'strangeness' left for them to explain.

But it is worth attending to the models they *did* have. The process of 'corruption', for example, was central to their understandings of matter. Corrupt air or food corrupted the bodies that took them in; corrupt humours caused disease. Corrupt blood made wounds rankle; corrupt milk made ill-scented cheese. This was a natural process, of course, the necessary opposite of 'generation'.[94] But it was also *against* nature as God had intended it. It was the material expression of humanity's spiritual corruption. Only after the Fall had all living bodies been doomed to an inexorable crawl towards death and putrefaction.

Corruption was accepted as a reality of a fallen world, but its incursion was still a terrible prospect. The only known way to stave it off was to try to conserve the 'cleanliness', 'sweetness' and 'purity' of corporeal bodies, and this could involve anything from ingesting liquid gold to scouring pots with salt. Certain processes were especially vulnerable to corruption, and they demanded constant vigilance from their managers. Childbirth was one such process; dairying was another.[95] Gervase Markham warned the would-be dairymaid that her chief duty was

> the sweet and delicate keeping of her milke vessels … these must be carefully scalded once a day, and set in the open aire to sweeten, lest getting any taint of sowernesse into them, they corrupt the milk that shall be put therein.[96]

This is a reminder that nineteenth-century innovations like pasteurisation have taken much of the danger and uncertainty out of dairying. Early modern housewives were effectively tasked with maintaining a controlled environment using only salt and hot water. 'Cleanliness' really was vital. Even then, it was not always enough: corruption could creep in anyway. Its advance could seem too violent, too fast, unnatural, 'strange'. Milk which should have made good cheese went bad; fingers which should have healed rankled.

Material substances, as we have seen, were also gendered. Many corruptible and corruption-bearing products – poison, placentas, milk, apples – were coded as female. Iron and fire, on the other hand, were masculine substances, wielded by smiths, farriers and surgeons. They were also central to most forms of counter-magic: hot spits were thrust into milk, hair was burnt, iron-tipped arrows were shot into brewing vats.[97] Within nature, iron and fire cauterised wounds, purified metals and cleansed houses of plague. It made sense that they might stop the spread of the witch's unnatural rot.

Dairying, victualling, healthcare and animal husbandry were forms of work which dealt with corruption-prone, unstable, unpredictable matter. Worse, they involved turning some types of this matter into products (cheese, drugs) which would then end up ingested by other – equally corruptible, equally unpredictable – living bodies. The materials of fieldwork and craft manufacture were, by comparison, inert.

Frequency of contact

There was, of course, a reason for the dearth of female smiths, farriers and surgeons in early modern England. These trades required specialist training, access to equipment and accreditation. The guild system was the gateway to all three, and female apprentices were rarely welcomed into male-dominated crafts and trades. Barred from confraternal membership, most women do not seem to have developed strong occupational identities. Where they did, the task of recovering them is not helped by the tendency of early modern clerks to identify women by marital status rather than occupation. Anne Gale called herself a 'nurse', but plenty of those who nursed others' infants would not have done so.[98] Nor would the job have been their sole source of income; with the low pay they received, it could not have been.

The precarious position of these by-employed workers in – or just outside – the hierarchies of field, workshop and household made them ideal scapegoats. The effect was worsened by the exigencies of 'making shift'. A poor single woman had to expect to combine multiple income streams and to make herself useful however she could. She might satellite several households simultaneously, helping the householders do laundry, watch children, feed invalids, prepare food and so on. The necessity of flexibility meant that she was likely to work, not in one high-risk sector, but in most of them.

'Making shift' also required substantial peer support. Poor neighbours asked one another for help, and stood ready to offer help in return. A daily stream of information, goods and services passed back and forth across these predominantly female networks. The next section explores the social dimensions

of this 'economy of mutual favours'.[99] But it is worth taking a moment, first, to consider the patterns of contact which it created.

Whether rich or poor, husbandmen, shepherds, craftsmen and their workers had something in common. They left home in the morning, went out into their fields and workshops, and stayed out for most of the day. The lives of housewives, maidservants, charwomen, almswomen, nurses and nurse-keepers, by contrast, were punctuated by small trips across the street. If their daily itineraries could be retraced on a map, the paths would criss-cross between neighbours' houses and their own, and between yards, gardens, dairies, bakehouses, wells, washing places and marketplaces.

If we were able to contact trace these workers, an equivalent pattern would emerge. A poor ploughman might spend an entire workday alone, or in collaboration with – at most – one or two ploughboys.[100] A poor charwoman, on the other hand, might leave her children with a neighbour in the morning, spend the day doing odd jobs in different households, and, on her way home, buy her family's evening meal from an alehouse-keeper.[101] Had she stayed at home, she would be the one answering the door to neighbours, wool-collectors, rent-collectors or pedlars.

When it came to suspicions of witchcraft, contact frequency mattered. For although charity refusal *was* a common ingredient in accusations, it was not a necessary one. In six cases in this sample, the householder actually *gave* the suspect what they wanted, but the outcome was the same. Goody Elizabeth Cockin complained to Napier that when the widow 'Jane Goodman craved Drink & she gave it to this Jane', she had been 'strangly & sodenly taken'.[102] After her nine-year-old son fell sick, the housewife Goody Odell suspected 'Goody Hall of Crowly that cometh & baggeth & hath it & departeth to their knowledge thankfull'.[103] Neither gratification nor gratitude were failsafe protections against suspicion.

The most fundamental mistake made by these suspects was not that they asked too many favours, but that they appeared at too many doors. In 15 cases in this sample, the accuser's only explicit complaint against the suspect was that they had 'come to the house'. Aylet's suspicions centred 'A pedler woman that comes to the house whether they will or noe, once a weeke, though they chide her & beate her away yet shee comes'.[104] The 24-year-old Edward Bricknell feared 'one goody Cooper' for 'when she came to see him unsent for, he was that day exceeding ill'.[105] Richard Haward suspected his neighbour Avis Holmes, 'for she useth to come often to his house, and one day he being well & working, fell downe sudenly & was dead for a tyme a while after'.[106]

In a thought-world in which correlation *did* imply causation, simply turning up at other peoples' houses uninvited was a risk. The more home calls an individual made in the course of their working day, the likelier it became that one of these encounters would precede, follow, or coincide with a 'strange' misfortune. And although some men's work did take them from door to door, there were few women whose work did *not* do so. Of the twenty-three unwelcome visitors in this sample (including jobseekers, beggars, borrowers, buyers and vendors), twenty-two were female.

Workplace sociability

Often, an errand provided an excuse for a chat, and vice versa: a social call could mask a request for a favour. When relations between neighbours were good, there was no need to distinguish between the two. This points us to a final gender-variable factor which made itself felt in witchcraft accusations: workplace sociability. The male-dominated tasks in animal husbandry, arable farming and crafts tended to be solitary, energy-intensive or both. Shepherds roamed alone with their flocks. Harrowing, ploughing and mowing was done either alone or in pairs. Even in company, farmers and farmhands were working at least a furrow apart, wielding heavy instruments, and guiding large draft animals.[107] This was not work which was conducive to chitchat. Most would have socialised *after* work: in alehouses, churchyards or in one another's homes.

For women, on the other hand, there was rarely a meaningful distinction between work and social life.[108] Low-intensity tasks like dairying, baking, knitting, spinning and weeding were best done in

company. Women would walk together to the local bakehouse, wash laundry together, spin together.[109] This constant proximity bred the kind of intimacy that would sustain them through the trials of the childbed and the sickroom.

But proximity was risky. Communal work, like door-to-door work, placed more actors on the stage. When the plot took a tragic turn, the kind of correlative logic we saw above positioned all these actors as potential suspects. Several of Napier's clients fell ill in the context of communal work: one victim 'was stroken & fell downe suddenly at the first wash'.[110] Elizabeth King told Napier that she 'washed with one that liveth with her daughter-in-lawe which is counted an ill woman & is mutch feared. This woman working with her had a great flushing in her face'.[111] *Which* co-worker ended up as the suspect depended on the reputations of the various candidates, but it was the working group which provided the pool.

The lack of separation between work and sociability also meant that every work-related conflict damaged a relationship. In consultation with the seventeen-year-old Joan Lord, who had been 'sodenly taken mopish & foolish', Napier wrote, 'Elisabeth Bagly squabbled with this wench being at there worke & neaver since well'.[112] Another seventeen-year-old, Elizabeth Smith, 'was brought home from service' after falling into a 'raging' madness. The family suspected witchcraft; of the suspect, Napier commented circumspectly that 'A servant in the house fell out with her & with a great stick broke her hed'.[113]

Entry to female working groups was by invitation only. The exclusion of a potential co-worker was a common seed of witchcraft suspicion. This was especially true of lyings-in: the mother's selection of gossips could cause deep injury to the uninvited.[114] Yardley, whose mind-games had terrified Newman, 'was not sent for to come to her labour & therefore when she was afterward sent for would not come'.[115] Sybil Fisher suspected a midwife who 'would not meddle with her because she was not first sent her'.[116]

Rejecting a work invitation – like any other form of denial – readied rejector and rejected for the roles of accuser and accused. Goody Rachel of Elstoe complained that 'ever since Goody Slone was denied to bake with her', her six-year-old son had been 'lame in the knees'.[117] Goody Robotam suspected 'One Mrs Wensford [who] did threaten her child for denying [refusing] to bake with her'.[118] It was after Catherine Hopkins turned away Mary Lea's two children, who had hoped to learn lacemaking, that her own child had begun quaking and trembling 'once a day sometimes twice a day … & can do no work'.[119]

Once, in this sample, it was the suspect's outright refusal to participate in this culture that sowed the seed. The farmer's wife Elizabeth Bachelor complained to Napier that 'the woman suspect will not come to any of their howses'.[120] But few women cut themselves off so entirely. The dance between accuser and suspect was usually more intimate. Yardley told Newman that the cordial she had taken was an abortifacient. 'Yet when she came afterward', Newman reported, Francis 'did kisse her & none of the rest did'.[121] Argentine Mather, who had spent a year crippled by 'straung gryping pulls' in her chest and back, suspected Goody Norrice 'that did curse her & yet cometh to visit'.[122] Women's work – characterised by proximity, frequent contact, sociability, shared risk and mutual aid – could produce lifelong friendships. But it could also produce volatile compounds of love, hate, guilt, blame, distrust and dependence. The merest brush with a neighbour was enough to set a witchcraft suspicion alight.

Conclusion

The clustering of women and men in particular sectors, I have argued, created distinctly gendered distributions of risk. Historians of the period have long agreed that female labourers were treated less favourably than their male counterparts; in 1988, Judith Bennett famously summarised premodern women's work as 'low-status, low-skilled, and low-paid'.[123] Less has been said, however, about how this gendered siloing of labour may have heightened the exposure of female workers to certain types of risk.

The degree of risk was important, but so, too, was the nature of that risk. In agriculture, the hazards were known quantities, and the misfortunes were evenly distributed. In healthcare, by contrast, the hazards were often unpredictable, and the misfortunes highly individuated. When a client's confidence in a medical practitioner waned, it was all too easy for them to see in new and 'strange' symptoms a design every bit as bespoke as the initial treatment plan.

Gender divisions of labour were more flexible in some sectors than in others.[124] But this flexibility had its own skew: a shepherd like John Johnson might hire a woman to watch his sheep, but housewives did not draft in men to feed children, nurse invalids, or milk cows. This meant not only that women made up at least 50 *per cent* of the workforce in these high-risk sectors, but that they also worked across *more* of them.

Women's predominance in these sectors fed back into the same pool of symbolic correspondences which had placed them there in the first place. Just as it endowed blacksmiths with a power over metal, it endowed women with a power over health.[125] But maintaining nourished, healthy households meant managing substances which were peculiarly liable to 'corrupt', to act 'strangely', or to produce 'strange' effects. The gendered symbolism of iron, apples and milk drew the associative net between the objects and their human managers tighter still.

Building on Purkiss' work, this article has treated the material, the social and the symbolic as parts of a whole. Where Purkiss focused on the housewife-accuser, I have sought to show how certain female- *and* male-gendered work roles increased the likelihood of their occupiers becoming accusers, suspects or both. In claiming that gendered working conditions had a bearing on the skewed gender ratio seen in most early modern witchcraft trials, I am not seeking to offer a new monocausal explanation for the predominance of female suspects. To echo Robin Briggs, we must be ready to accept that there were 'many reasons why'.[126] It would be artificial to sever the questions posed here from the themes of maternity, fertility and sexuality explored by Roper, Purkiss, Willis and many others.

If this thesis makes any advance on the work of these scholars, it is in its accounting for the fact that most suspects were women *and* that some were men. The existence of male witches was no surprise to Napier's clients. It made sense to Robinson to suspect the man who sold her fish; it made sense to Taylor to suspect the cunning man who had failed to cure her. Both suspects had provided services to their future accusers; both had been working in high-stakes, mixed-gender sectors at the time. A fishwife or cunning woman might just as easily have suffered the same fate. But only rarely were men accused of causing harm in female-dominated work domains. The owners of dried-up milk cows and the parents of sick children could think of likelier suspects.

Comparable studies of continental witchcraft – especially in areas where male suspects dominated – would be illuminating. Without wishing to resurrect English exceptionalism, inquisitor-led witch-hunting does seem to have sustained collective grievances (over crop damage, for example) in a way that England's accusatorial system did not. The patterns of accusations were different, but they were doubtless no less connected to the working lives of accusers and suspects. Two major studies of work in preindustrial Sweden and South-West Germany, for example, could inform our understanding of the gendering of witchcraft in these areas.[127]

The approach taken here may, in turn, shed new light on the history of work. This article has considered witchcraft accusation as a potential fallout of certain kinds of work-related incident, likeliest to occur in certain high-risk lines of work. Relatively rare, but potentially fatal, it was only one of many gender-differentiated occupational hazards. Steve Gunn's and Tomasz Gromelski's recent survey of Tudor coroners' records, for example, has shown that women made up the majority of all those who drowned.[128] This is less of a mystery than the skewed gender ratio explored here: it is because they made up the majority of those standing in rivers washing clothes. There is more to be said about the gendering of occupational risk in early modern England. The history of witchcraft is now a well-furrowed field, but historians of work may yet find the odd green shoot in it.

ORCID

Philippa Carter https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7689-9022

ENDNOTES

[1] Alison Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe', in Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 449.

[2] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 163–76; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), pp. 658–79.

[3] Andrea Dworkin, *Woman-Hating* (New York: Dutton, 1974), ch. 7.

[4] See Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender', pp. 450–53.

[5] There are radical feminist historians who subscribe to this narrative and who nevertheless reject unhistorical interpretations of the witch hunts. See Katharine Hodgkin, 'Historians and Witches', *History Workshop Journal* 45 (1998), pp. 271–77.

[6] Hodgkin, 'Historians and Witches', pp. 273–75.

[7] Lyndal Roper's *Oedipus and the Devil* (New York: Routledge, 1994) is often credited with resetting the agenda.

[8] Diane Purkiss, 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, The Body, The Child', *Gender & History* 7 (1995), pp. 408–32.

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[10] Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 5, 29–33.

[11] Elizabeth Kent, 'Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593–1680', *History Workshop Journal* 60 (2005), pp. 69–92; Alison Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[12] Apps and Gow, *Male Witches*, pp. 127–37; Kent, 'Masculinity', pp. 86–7.

[13] Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict, and Belief in Jacobean England', *Historical Research* 71 (1998), p. 142.

[14] Malcolm Gaskill, 'Masculinity and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities*, pp. 171–190; Kent, 'Masculinity', pp. 69–92.

[15] The classic formulation remains that of Joan Wallach Scott: 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), pp. 1053–75.

[16] See Michael Roberts, '"Women They Are Words, Deeds They Are Men": Images of Work and Gender in Early Modern England', in Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds), *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 122–80.

[17] Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The Gender Division of Labour in Early Modern England', *Economic History Review* 73 (2020), pp. 3–32; Charmian Mansell, 'Beyond the Home: Space and Agency in the Experiences of Female Service in Early Modern England', *Gender and History* 33 (2021), pp. 24–9, Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007).

[18] Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of English Witches* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1999).

[19] Quotation in Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 32.

[20] These figures derive from the metadata of Lauren Kassell et al. (eds), *The Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634*: *A Digital Edition*, https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk. (Accessed 25 June 2023).

[21] Ronald Sawyer, '"Strangely Handled in All Her Lyms": Witchcraft and Healing in Jacobean England', *Journal of Social History* 22 (1989), pp. 461–85.

[22] Sawyer, '"Strangely Handled"', p. 463.

[23] For a regional breakdown, see https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/search?sort=sort-date;f2-entity-question-asked=Personal%20affairs::Personal%20relations::Witchcraft%20suspect;f3-residence=England.

[24] Alexandra Shepard, 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern Economy', *History Workshop Journal* 79 (2015), p. 12.

[25] Shepard, 'Crediting Women', pp. 1–24.

[26] Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments, or the English Huswife* (London: R. Jackson, 1623), pp. 1, 190–91.

[27] Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', pp. 25–27.

[28] Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', pp. 16, 30.

[29] Christopher Kissane, *Food, Religion, and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), ch. 6; Roper, *Oedipus*, pp. 137, 207–211; Purkiss, 'Women's Stories', p. 420; Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 33–9, 52–5.

[30] For James Frazer, this was a cardinal rule of 'sympathetic magic'. See Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 52–4.

[31] Kassell et al., 'CASE21091', *Casebooks digital edition*, https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/cases/CASE21091. All subsequent references give the searchable case identifiers used in this edition.

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[33] Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender', p. 459.
[34] 'CASE20586'.
[35] 'CASE27937'.
[36] 'CASE79115'.
[37] 'CASE79116', 'CASE35003'.
[38] Purkiss, 'Women's Stories', p. 414.
[39] 'CASE21644', 'CASE54713', 'CASE64809', 'CASE30888'.
[40] 'CASE37381'.
[41] 'CASE59495'.
[42] Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 55.
[43] 'CASE58279'.
[44] 'CASE19664'.
[45] 'CASE63039'.
[46] 'CASE67826', 'CASE70332'.
[47] 'CASE22485'.
[48] Whittle and Hailwood estimate that women made up around 60% of all food-vendors. Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', p. 20.
[49] 'CASE46313'.
[50] 'CASE57726'.
[51] 'CASE12256'.
[52] 'CASE58544'. For more bewitched apples, see 'CASE48623', 'CASE17265', 'CASE49363', 'CASE48635'.
[53] Genesis, ch. 3.
[54] 'CASE32463', 'CASE27938'.
[55] Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (London: Henry Fetherstone, 1625), book 2, p. 1478.
[56] 'CASE76404'.
[57] 'CASE50153'.
[58] Randall Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2008), ch. 4.
[59] 'CASE38469', 'CASE75892'.
[60] 'CASE68355'.
[61] 'CASE46520'.
[62] For Frazer, this was explicable as the 'law of contagion'. See *The Golden Bough*, pp. 52–3.
[63] 'CASE68355'.
[64] 'CASE78298'. See also 'CASE18529'.
[65] 'CASE21860'.
[66] 'CASE77227', 'CASE43862'.
[67] 'CASE32526'.
[68] Since the publication of Barbara Ehrenreich's and Deirdre English's *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* (1972), the idea that female healers were singled out for persecution has been written off as a feminist fantasy. For an overview, see David Harley, 'Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-Witch', *Social History of Medicine* 3 (1990), pp. 1–26. While I agree with Harley that accusations against midwives were rare, my (admittedly small) sample suggests that irregular healers *were* at higher-than-average risk.
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[70] 'CASE31936'.
[71] 'CASE30527'.
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[73] Roper, *Oedipus*, ch. 7; Purkiss, 'Women's Stories', pp. 417–25; Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender', p. 463.
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[80] Roper, *Oedipus*, ch. 9; Purkiss, 'Women's Stories', pp. 416–25; Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, ch. 1.

[81] 'CASE50170'.
[82] 'CASE75057'.
[83] Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', p. 17.
[84] 'CASE26988'.
[85] 'CASE42796'.
[86] Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', p. 17.
[87] Louise Curth, *The Care of Brute Beasts* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 84–5.
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[89] 'CASE69424'.
[90] 'CASE64241', 'CASE64809'.
[91] 'CASE20192'.
[92] Sawyer, '"Strangely Handled"', pp. 468–69.
[93] 'CASE12455'.
[94] See Nick Hopwood, Lauren Kassell and Rebecca Flemming (eds), *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), Part II.
[95] Purkiss, 'Women's Stories', pp. 412–20.
[96] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 178–79.
[97] 'CASE58279', 'CASE80096', 'CASE48912'; W.W., *A True and Iust Recorde* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1582), sig. E3.
[98] Shepard, 'Crediting Women', p. 6.
[99] Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 56.
[100] Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 84.
[101] Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 78.
[102] 'CASE54678'.
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[107] Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 83–4.
[108] Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 52.
[109] Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 52–4.
[110] 'CASE54611'.
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[112] 'CASE50908'.
[113] 'CASE44433'.
[114] Gowing, *Common Bodies*, ch. 5.
[115] 'CASE31936'.
[116] 'CASE15014'.
[117] 'CASE43281'.
[118] 'CASE59992'.
[119] 'CASE69424'.
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[124] Whittle and Hailwood, 'The Gender Division', pp. 3–4.
[125] Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender', p. 458.
[126] Robin Briggs, '"Many Reasons Why": Witchcraft and the Problem of Multiple Explanation', in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 49–63.
[127] Sheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Maria Ågren (ed.), *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); 'The Gender and Work Research Project', https://gaw.hist.uu.se/what-is-gaw/research+project/. Jonathan Durrant, Edward Bever and Laura Kounine touch on aspects of 'making a living' in their studies of the German trials, though only Kounine cites Ogilvie's study. See Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender and Society in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Philippa Carter is an Assistant Professor in the History of Health and Medicine before 1800 at the History and Philosophy of Science Department, Cambridge, and a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College (UK). She studies the social and cultural history of early modern Europe, with interests in medicine, natural philosophy, law and religion.