Cunning Folk and Wizards

In Early Modern England

University ID Number: 0614383

Submitted in part fulfilment for the

degree of MA in Religious and Social History,

1500-1700 at the University of Warwick September 2010

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my undergraduate and postgraduate tutors at Warwick, whose teaching and guidance over the years has helped shape this dissertation. In particular, a great deal of gratitude goes to Bernard Capp, whose supervision and assistance has been invaluable.

Also, to JH, GH, CS and EC your help and support has been beyond measure, thank you.

Cunning folk and Wizards in Early Modern England

Witchcraft has been a reoccurring preoccupation for societies throughout history, and as a result has inspired significant academic interest. The witchcraft persecutions of the early modern period in particular have received a considerable amount of historical investigation. However, the vast majority of this scholarship has been focused primarily on the accusations against black witches and the punishments they suffered. Due to the useful sources left from trials involving allegations of black witchcraft, this focus is understandable. However, this ignores the considerable network of white witches, or cunning folk that can be found in sixteenth and seventeenth century English records. This project will consider the origins of cunning folk's powers, their occupation and social status and the gender differences between practitioners. It will also explore the activities white witches were involved in and what tools they used to carry out their practices such as healing, finding lost goods and predicting future events. It will discuss many of the most commonly requested spells and forms of magic and will look at the devices that were used to fulfil these. The position of higher magicians will also be discussed, looking at the well educated men, who dabbled in white magic through subjects such as astrology and alchemy. Finally, after establishing the skills and situation for cunning folk overall, the final part of this dissertation will consider the persecution cunning folk and wizards faced in this period. It will look at their position in the law and the criticism they faced from contemporaries. I aim to offer an original perspective on white witchcraft in this period; revealing its relevance to the historical study of witchcraft in which it is often overshadowed.

Introduction

> **A great many of us when we be in trouble, or sickness, or lose anything, we run hither and thither to witches, or sorcerers, whom we call wise men… seeking aid and comfort at their hands.**
>
> [Bishop Hugh Latimer, 1552][1]
>
> **If men have lost anything, if they be in any pain or disease, then they presently run to such as they call wise men.**
>
> [Anthony Burgess, 1656][2]

Bishop Latimer and Anthony Burgess' comments reveal the dependence much of the early modern population felt towards cunning folk and wizards. Despite this, historical research on witchcraft has been dominated by work focused on maleficient or black witchcraft. Historians have on the whole left the cunning folk and white witches of the early modern period on the sidelines of the society they inhabited. As Robin Briggs observes, 'witches have haunted the human imagination with remarkable persistence. Destructive and malicious figures, they have always represented the opposite of all positive values'.[3] There have, however, been a few significant attempts to rectify this situation. Keith Thomas was perhaps the first to truly delve into the topic in his *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Other noteworthy works are Owen Davies' book *Popular Magic* and Alan Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*. Often, historians of

[1] *Sermons by Hugh Latimer*, (ed.) G.E. Corrie (Cambridge, 1844), p. 534 cited in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), p. 209.
[2] A. Burgess, CXLV *Expository Sermons upon the Whole seventeenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St John* (1656), p. 95 cited in Thomas, *Religion,* pp. 209-10.
[3] Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London, 1997), p. 3.

black witchcraft mention cunning folk and wizards, but they are relegated to the sidelines of the more widely researched maleficient power.

This focus on black witchcraft leaves an important element of early modern English society unexplored. There seems to have been a very large number of white magical practitioners in England in this period. As Robert Burton stated in 1621, 'Sorcerers are too common; cunning men, wizards, and white witches, as they call them, in every village, which, if they be sought unto, will help almost all infirmities of body and mind'.[4] Alan Macfarlane has suggested that there were 'at least forty-one [who] both lived in Essex and acted as cunning folk'.[5] However, as he notes, it is difficult to obtain information on cunning folk as most people did not report them, because they felt they were doing good.[6] Also, 'it is difficult to obtain any quantitative estimate of how many people actually did go to cunning folk or in what percentage of all cases of illness, suspected witchcraft, or theft [they] were consulted'.[7] Perhaps it is because there are so few primary accounts that white witchcraft has been relegated to the fringes of historical investigation. However, despite the difficulties retrieving sources from this period, there is enough information to demonstrate the significant impact that cunning folk and wizards had on the everyday lives of the early modern English people. This dissertation will piece together primary and secondary information on these magical practitioners, so often forgotten, to explore their impact on and role within this period.

[4] Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) cited in Thomas, *Religion*, p. 209.
[5] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), p. 115.
[6] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 115.
[7] Ibid.*,* p. 120.

At the time good witches were known by a variety of names and titles, which included: 'wise man or woman, cunning man or woman, witch (white or black), wizard, sorcerer, conjurer, charmer, magician, wight, nigromancer, necromancer, seer, blesser, dreamer, cantel, soothsayer, fortune-teller, girdle-measurer, enchanter, incantantrix and so on'.[8] However, 'they were referred to most frequently as "cunning" (that is, skilful or knowledgeable) men or women'.[9] This medley of titles can cause historians some difficulties when researching their presence in the early modern period. As Macfarlane notes, the terms involved in this topic 'are notoriously difficult to define. There is no consensus of opinion on their meaning, either among present-day historians and anthropologists or among writers living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'.[10] Davies notes that, in addition, the definition of magic is difficult to establish but he believes any 'useful understanding must be tied to the cultures of the people being studied in specific periods and places'.[11] As long as we are clear on the definitions that will be used to investigate these magical practitioners within this dissertation, the situation will be less problematic. I will predominantly use 'cunning folk', 'white witch' or 'wizard' to refer to the magical practitioners I am describing. But what was the difference between these practitioners and those that practised black witchcraft, or *maleficium*? Christina Larner states that 'Witchcraft is the generation of supernatural power with or without particular performances and is therefore an umbrella term'.[12]

---

[8] Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005), p. 26.
[9] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London, 1997), p. 66.
[10] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 3.
[11] Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford, 2009), p. 2.
[12] Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 9.

Beneath this umbrella term there were two very separate types of magic: black and white.

Black magic is the use of supernatural powers to cause harm and destruction to objects, people or animals. The black magic they cast during this period was termed *maleficium* and involved curses, weather magic and ritual sacrifices. By contrast, white magic is the use of magical knowledge and powers for good purposes.[13] Some of the main examples of the good magic they cast, for their own benefit and for others, included love magic, healing, and divination to tell the future and to find lost goods. Brian Levack gives a good summary of the aims and powers of white magic:

> White magic can be productive, in the sense of helping crops to grow or women to bear children; it can be curative, in the sense of healing a person who is ill; or it can be protective, in the sense of preventing some misfortune from occurring or warding off some evil spirit or witch.[14]

The ways they acquired their powers differed as well. Black witches were believed by many to secure their powers from the Devil, after making a pact with him. The origins of white witches' powers were a much more contentious topic. Some people believed that, like maleficient witches, cunning folk derived their magical powers from the devil. However, by contrast, others believed their good magic was angelic in origin.[15] The motives behind their work also differed. White witches may have carried out their work purely to help others, or they may have been driven by financial needs. Though many did not take any

[13] David Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society; Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London, 1992), pp. 187-8.
[14] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1996), p. 6.
[15] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 126.

payment and even those that did, did not earn very much.[16] Black witches on the other hand were seen as predominantly driven by malice, anger and revenge.

Although there were clear differences between the practices of black witches and cunning folk, there were grey areas where the distinction between good and bad became blurred. For example, love magic could be particularly tricky. In essence it was good magic, employed to maintain marriages and create good social relationships. However, if a wizard forced someone to love them with magic or aided an adulterous affair the magic became maleficient in nature; as Levack states, 'one person's gain in love might easily be another's loss'.[17] He notes that there were also difficult situations with healing, for example if the wizard harmed someone in order to protect himself, or if he cured a patient by moving their disease to someone else.[18] These grey areas did not help the cunning folk of this period to win acceptance by their critics. Many clergy, especially puritan writers, believed that there was no distinction between good and black magic as all magic came from the Devil.

As previously noted, this subject has been overshadowed by the persecution of black witches in this period. It is therefore a prime topic for further exploration. The cunning folk and wizards of early modern England are an invaluable tool to use in exploring the differences between elite and popular belief. The popularity they enjoyed can reveal a great deal about what the people of the period were willing to put their trust and faith into. Also, the

[16] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 126.
[17] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt,* p. 6.
[18] Ibid., p. 6.

treatment they received in the law can tell us a great deal about the authorities' general approach towards deviant groups within the society. Thus by exploring in greater detail the lives of cunning folk we can gain a deeper understanding of the world that surrounded them. By studying those consigned to the fringes of society, we can better comprehend the values and beliefs of those shaping the norms. This dissertation will draw on a range of primary sources, such as churchwardens' presentments, court records, pamphlets, diaries and almanacs. This will then be linked to secondary research to present a general survey of the position of cunning folk and wizards in this period. I will be asking where their powers were thought to come from, and why people would travel many miles to see a particular cunning man. Why were they such prominent and popular figures for many people? What needs did they meet, that other groups in society were unable to satisfy? To do this, it is important firstly to establish who those that claimed to be cunning folk and wizards were. The first chapter will consider the origins of cunning folk's powers, their occupation and social status and the gender differences in practitioners. The second chapter will then examine the techniques and tools used by white witches and wizards. It will discuss many of the most commonly requested spells and forms of magic and will look at the devices that were used to provide these. The third chapter will consider the position of higher magicians, those who were well educated and dabbled in white magic alongside astrology and alchemy. Finally, after establishing the skills and position of cunning folk overall, the fourth chapter will consider the persecution that cunning folk and wizards could also face in this period. It will look at their position under the law, and the criticism they faced from contemporaries. I hope to show how the situation changed for

cunning men and women across this period and why cunning folk and wizards are an important topic for historical investigation.

I

Who were White Witches and Wizards?

Only bad witches are ugly [Glinda The Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, 1939]

The quote above reflects the general depiction of good and bad witches in mythical and folklore representations and is part of the reason 'the witch and the magician are absent from the stage of real life, and have been relegated firmly to the realm of fantastic fiction'.[1] Over the years, numerous plays, stories and films have cemented unrealistic and fairy-tale depictions of both black and white witches, so that, as Robin Briggs remarks, modern 'ideas of the witch have been simplified to the point of caricature'.[2] These characterisations can be detrimental when attempting to discover the true nature of white magic in the early modern period. When removed from these stereotypical depictions, who were the people who practised white magic in this period? Most people today are familiar with the Halloween costume representations of black witches: tall black hats, green skin and a hearty cackle. However, representations of wizards and white witches have been more wide ranging, with the wizened magical beings of the Lord of the Rings trilogy and most recently the young and popular wizard; Harry Potter. However, neither of these portrayals really embodies the characteristics of the cunning folk of early modern England. So just who were these men and women?

---

[1] Geoffrey Scarre, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe* (Basingstoke, London, 1987), p. 1.
[2] Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London, 1997), p. 20.

Because there is generally a lack of sources written from the cunning folk's perspective in this period, a great deal of the information available is based on the opinions of others. Although those that dabbled at a higher level of magic were educated and have therefore left information for us to examine, the majority of cunning folk were often illiterate and left very little paper evidence of their existence. In addition, white witches and wizards also deliberately left very little information surrounding their magical practices. Their operations were often verbal, and carried out by them at the time of the patients' consultation, leaving no written records. However, there are some surviving descriptions. For example John Aubrey notes a cure for thrush: 'Take a living frog, and hold it in a cloth, that it does not go down into the child's mouth; and put the head into the child's mouth 'till it is dead; and then take another frog and do the same'.[3] For toothache, he states, 'take a new nail, and make the gum bleed with it, and then drive it into an oak'.[4] The lack of written records was perhaps because of a fear of persecution, or to maintain a sense of mystery for their clients.[5] It may also have been to protect themselves from competition. All in all this has meant that historians interested in the extent of cunning folk and their treatments in this period are faced with a difficult situation. However, despite the sparse primary sources, there is still a significant amount for us to learn from them.

[3] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1857), pp. 137-8.
[4] Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, p. 138.
[5] Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005), p. 29.

Origins

The beliefs that surrounded the origin of cunning folk's supernatural powers are important to discuss, undoubtedly these beliefs were integral to the respect and success that the white witch or wizard achieved. If they were unable to prove they possessed supernatural skills, either through inheritance or magical expertise, they were unlikely to achieve the prestige they needed to maintain regular clients. Perhaps the simplest way to become a cunning man or woman was to inherit magical gifts and herbal knowledge from a relative. According to popular superstitions, this natural power was believed to be particularly strong if they were born at a certain time or in a certain position in their family. For example, 'seventh sons and daughters...were believed to possess innate powers to cure conditions, and, not surprisingly, cunning-folk often claimed to be so blessed'.[6] Yet, these innate supernatural abilities generally only resulted in a specific magical power, rather than the full range of cunning expertise.[7]

The magical powers white witches and wizards claimed to be able to harness were not always believed to have been inherited. In fact, many cunning folk asserted that their powers were a gift (or curse) from another supernatural being. The most common claim was that fairies had bestowed the witch or wizard with the abilities they now used for good.[8] We can see an example of this in a Scottish trial in 1633 involving a white witch named Issobell Sinclair. The details of Issobell's case state that she admitted that she was attempting to

[6] Owen Davies, *Popular Magic, Cunning-folk in English History* (London, 2007), p. 70.
[7] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 70.
[8] Ibid.*,* p. 70.

protect cattle on Halloween and that to do so she was using 'linen cloth and the hair of the beast'.[9] However, she divulged that whilst carrying out her magic she 'was with the pharie…[who] gave her second sight to know if any fey body are in the house'.[10] Thus Issobell claimed that fairies had aided her in her magic and as a result, she was found guilty and executed. This Scottish example of white magic involving fairy aid reveals similar characteristics to those displayed in England, demonstrating the pervasiveness of fairy belief. A similar account was of nineteen-year old Ann Jefferies, who claimed to have had an encounter with the fairies.[11] Ann was from a poor family, and was 'apprenticed as a domestic servant to a substantial yeoman family in the parish of St Teath'.[12] She stated that in 1645 she had been knitting in the garden of her employer Mr Pitt when 'there came six persons, of a small stature, all clothed in green, upon which she was frightened into a convulsion. During her long continued illness, she frequently cried out that she saw the fairies'.[13] Moses Pitt, the son of her employer, later recounted that upon her recovery, she developed the ability to heal the sick by touch.[14] Ann claimed that this encounter was the first of many fairy meetings and she believed that they were always with her.[15] Her cures became very famous and despite taking no money for her services, 'she always

[9] Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller and Louise Yeoman, 'The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft', (4 August 2010) Case of Issobell Sinclair, 28 February 1633.
[10] Goodare, Martin, Miller and Yeoman, 'The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft'.
[11] Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England* (1903), p. 134.
[12] Peter Marshall, 'Ann Jefferies and the Fairies: Folk Belief and the War on Scepticism' in Later Stuart England' in Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (eds.) *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England, Essays in Celebration of the work of Bernard Capp* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 127.
[13] C'L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1970), p. 305.
[14]Moses Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jefferies, now living in the county of Cornwall, who was fed for six months by a small sort of airy people call'd fairies, and of the strange and wonderful cures she performed with slaves and medicines she received from them, for which she never took one penny of her patients* (1696), p. 12.
[15] Katherine Briggs, *A Sampler of British Folk-Tales* (London, 1977), p. 153.

had sufficient for her wants, and ceased to eat the victuals provided by her master, being fed by the fairies'.[16] This pervasive belief in supernatural power bestowed by magical creatures is also a feature of the Shakespearian play *The Tempest*. In it the powerful magician Prospero is assisted by the fairy-like spirit, Ariel. Prospero, having saved Ariel from imprisonment at the hands of the witch Sycorax, employed Ariel as his servant. The following excerpt from the play reflects the relationship between the wizard and the spirit:

> **PROSPERO**
>
> ...Come away, servant, come. I am ready now.
>
> Approach, my Ariel, come.
>
> *Enter ARIEL*
>
> **ARIEL**
>
> All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come
>
> To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
>
> To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
>
> On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong bidding task
>
> Ariel and all his quality.[17]

As with Issobell Sinclair and Ann Jefferies, Prospero utilises Ariel's magical skills to aid his own work. However, in the play the balance of power lies clearly with Prospero, while in Issobell and Ann's cases the power was gifted by the fairies rather than ordered. The appearance of this type of magical relationship

[16] Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 305.
[17] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, (ed.) David Lindley (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 108-9.

in Shakespeare's work suggests the extent to which this was a popular belief associated with white witches and wizards in this period. Davis has found that this connection to fairies died out after the early modern era; a phenomenon he believes was directly related to a decline in popular belief in fairies, which meant 'fairies carried less and less weight as sources of magical power'.[18]

It is also important to consider why there was a general need and popular support for cunning folk in early modern England. As previously suggested, it is difficult to establish why cunning folk had such wide appeal, but historians have made some suggestions. Macfarlane proposes that changes in the role and status of the clergy post-Reformation increased the need for white witches and wizards.[19] Before the Reformation, the clergy were fulfilling many of the roles cunning folk would later undertake, such as cursing thieves, providing supernatural protection, resolving quarrels within the local community and helping to heal and tend to the sick.[20] For instance Ewen describes one example of the type of healing supplied by a white witch for her local community. He notes that Anne, wife of Thomas Greene of Gargrave, Yorkshire, was asked for advice by John Tatterson when he was suffering with earache.

> "She told him that black wool was good for it, but he said that was not the matter". Whereupon she crossed his left ear three times with her garter, and "got some hair out of his neck, without his consent". Going home he suffered more pain than before, and, returning told her "to look

[18] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 70.
[19] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), p. 130.
[20] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 130.

to it, or he would look to her". Having crossed his ear three times again, she promised that it would mend, and... it did.[21]

Although post-Reformation these kinds of actions were condemned as popery by the church, there was an undeniable support for them from the populace. This illustrates the important social roles white witches and wizards performed in early modern England. Some historians have started to describe the actions of cunning folk without referring to the magic they used. It has been suggested that although it was magical belief that drove them and their clients, their actions are similar to those we would see used by a counsellor today. As Robin Briggs has suggested, we can view witchcraft as a type of therapy, which often cured a patient through discussion and reassurance that was otherwise not supplied by society.[22] Macfarlane sums up this theory by stating that 'they foreshadowed modern psychiatrists in relating physical illness to disturbed social relationships. They interpreted the feelings aroused by disturbances in current, witchcraft, terms. Here they filled a vacuum and supplied a need'.[23] Thus, it is apparent that cunning folk and wizards filled an important social role that would have otherwise been left unsatisfied. However, even with inherited gifts, fairy-bestowed powers and important social functions, the cunning folk of early modern England had to do something more if they wanted to establish a higher level of practice; as Davis states, 'they had to get their books out'.[24]

---

[21] Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 329.
[22] Robin Briggs, 'Circling the Devil: Witch-Doctors and Magical Healers in Early Modern Lorraine', in Stuart Clark (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft, Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, London, 2001), p. 161.
[23] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 129.
[24] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 70.

Occupation and social status

The white witch or wizard's ability to delve into books in order to gain ancient magical potions and spells relied a great deal on their position within society. This position was predominately established and maintained through their occupation. As will be discussed in further detail in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the cunning profession lay on the fringes of acceptability in this period. As a result it was dangerous to profess your magical abilities openly, and many cunning folk maintained another occupation to hide their illicit profession.[25] There are numerous examples of the threat of persecution, such as the case of Anne Greene. As we saw, she offered her local community her healing abilities, but these were not always regarded favourably. The descriptions of the help she offered Tatterson and others are only available to us because she was accused of bewitchment. Ewen states that 'Three... bills were found: (i) for bewitching Elizabeth, wife of Amery Coggill; (ii) for bewitching John Tatterson; (iii) for bewitching Thomas Shutt'.[26] Fortunately for Anne, 'the verdict of the jury of life and death was "not guilty"'.[27] The fear of persecution was not the only reason for pursuing two occupations. Wizards may also have wanted to remain at the heart of village life because 'in their line of work it was important to be familiar with all the latest local gossip'. [28] As a result, several cunning folk ran drinking establishments whilst carrying-out their magical services. Perhaps because, alcohol reduced people's inhibitions

[25] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 75.
[26] Ewen, *Witchcraft,* p. 330.
[27] Ibid., p. 330.
[28] Davies, *Popular Magic,* pp. 75.

and if they listened out for it, they could discover all the secrets they needed.[29] Additionally, many cunning folk followed two different occupations so that they could afford to support themselves financially. Although some men and women who dabbled in white witchcraft were able to earn a reasonable income, many either offered their services for free or charged very little. On the whole, those who were able to earn a good income with their magic were those proficient in higher magic like astrology.[30] The majority were most likely 'neither professional nor full-time practitioners' and carried out their role, serving a small rural community, more for 'the desire for prestige rather than [for] payment'.[31] By offering their services for a reasonable price, cunning folk were considered a favourable alternative to the expensive physicians of the period. This opinion can be seen in Thomas Cooper's The *Mysterie of Witchcraft*, where he states, 'help must be had, and what more ready then the *cunning woman*, especially seeing she doth it with so little cost?'[32] Although this shows that the low charges or free services cunning folk offered were popular, it was not the only reason they offered low fees. As previously mentioned, cunning folk held a precarious position in society and as a result 'they were less vulnerable to an action of fraud if they could show that their fees were voluntary'.[33] In 1614 the courts heard a case of fraud involving a cunning man. Mary Loveall had been left pregnant by a Suffolk man, who had promised to marry her before he left for home.

---

[29] Davies, *Popular Magic,* pp. 75.
[30] This topic will be covered in greater detail in the third chapter of this dissertation.
[31] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 127.
[32] Thomas Cooper, *The Mysterie of Witchcraft, The Second Booke/ Sathan Transformed into an Angell of Light, expressing his dangerous Impostures under Glorious Shewes. Emplified Specially in the Doctrine of Witch-craft, and such sleights of Satan as are incident thereunto. Very necessary to discerne the speci-Plague raging in these dayes, and so to hide our selves from the snare thereof* (London, 1622), p. 243.
[33] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 126.

> She was persuaded by an acquaintance William Matchwick to give him money and goods, so that he could pay a cunning man called "Jacke of Nubury" to fetch the man from Suffolk "whether he would or noe". She later gave Matchwick a sheet worth eight shillings, when he told an elaborate story about how he had drunk with the cunning man at Newbury, who had promised to "cause the devell" to bring the irresponsible father of her child "agayne upon his back".[34]

However, the cunning man was most likely fabricated and the whole tale an elaborate deception.[35] Hence, when money was involved in white witchcraft the situation could become more dangerous for both the client and for the practitioner.

In general, for cunning folk in this period 'career prospects in the profession depended heavily on access to knowledge' and without access to this knowledge the skills they needed would be out of their reach.[36] This access was dependent on the financial situation and educational level of the white witch or wizard, and there was unsurprisingly a divide determined by the level of education they could afford. As Davis notes, 'it was access to these literary sources that further militated against the labouring classes becoming cunning-folk'.[37] The ability to obtain magical information from books was crucial for cunning folk involved in areas such as astrology, alchemy and necromancy. All of these branches of wider white magical practice were considered high magic, an area dominated by the educated. Those in the lower echelons were as a

[34] Anthony Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London, 1975), p. 163.
[35] Fletcher, *A County Community,* p. 164.
[36] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 69.
[37] Ibid., p. 69.

result excluded from these areas, though, to be a white witch or wizard in this period, literacy was not necessarily essential. Often 'the mere display of numeracy, literacy and literature was enough to convince many clients they were party to exclusive occult knowledge'.[38] The spells and treatments they offered their clients were frequently verbal and physical rather than written. For example, Aubrey notes that in Hertfordshire and Kent 'they do put a cold iron bar upon their barrels, to preserve their beer from being soured by thunder'.[39] Keith Thomas suggests that although literacy was a factor in higher magic, 'village wizards' were unlikely to 'possess books, or... to rest [their activities] on a body of self-conscious theory'.[40] More often, a white witches' 'technique was learned verbally from some relative or neighbour'.[41]

Another way in which cunning folk's occupation could be affected by their social status was in the roles they would take alongside their magical profession. The financial and social status of the individual could significantly influence the roles he was able to take as a cunning man. For example, well-to-do craftsmen or tradesmen would be able to take time to fulfil their cunning role as well. In contrast, humble labourers would not have had the opportunity to 'provide round-the-clock service that people expected from cunning-folk'.[42] Social status could also play a role in who the clients felt that they could visit. For example, Davis has suggested that many of the people who visited cunning folk were farmers. Thus a farmer may have been reluctant to visit and pay a

[38] Davies, *Popular Magic,* pp. 69-70.
[39] Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, p. 140.
[40] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), pp. 271-2.
[41] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 272.
[42] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 69.

white witch or wizard whose social position was significantly lower than his own.[43]

Many people could acquire the basics that were needed for a magical profession by oral transmission within the 'secret, unchartered areas of peasant exchange.'[44] Or alternatively the 'close observance of other well-established cunning-folk also provided budding practitioners with ideas'.[45] As in many trades, parents often passed their knowledge onto their sons and daughters so they could take over their magical profession once they were gone. There are also many examples of white witches and wizards who claimed to have 'learned their trade as servants or pupils of esteemed practitioners'.[46] Owen Davies has found some examples of this, such as the 'Essex cunning-man William Hills...[who] was said to have been a pupil of the famed astrologer and almanac writer William Lilly. Anne Kingsbury, of Somerset, likewise said she had acquired treasure-seeking techniques from Lilly'.[47] These examples reveal the importance of passing knowledge between magical practitioners and also show the opportunities for those in the educated elites of society rather than the labouring poor. The occupation and status of cunning folk and wizards were therefore important elements in shaping the way they would carry out their magical duties.

[43] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 69.
[44] Wilby, *Cunning Folk*, p. 29.
[45] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 72.
[46] Ibid., pp. 72-3.
[47] Ibid., p. 73.

Gender

The obstacles facing cunning folk in this period in terms of social status, education and literacy skills may also explain the differences in the gender roles of white witches and wizards. The subject of 'gender' in witchcraft historiography has recently attracted considerable investigation, and has provoked a great deal of debate.[48] This discussion of gender in witchcraft is, like most of the historiography on this subject, centred on the experience of maleficient witches. In the research on black witchcraft, the general consensus is that it was predominantly women who were tried. As Sharpe states, 'around 90 per cent of persons indicted for witchcraft at the Home circuit assizes between...1563 and...1736 were women'.[49] The same pattern is not as apparent with white witches. Modern historians and contemporaries have both failed to agree whether it was men or women who were predominantly cunning folk in this period. Macfarlane has suggested that even people at the time were unsure, 'John Stearne wrote that black witches were nearly all women, while cunning folk "almost generally they be men". On the other hand, Thomas Cooper assumed that cunning folk would be women'.[50] Davis however believes that 'the majority, roughly some two-thirds, were male'.[51] The gender difference in this particular profession was perhaps as a result of the type of work the witch or wizard was involved in. As Macfarlane notes 'from the Essex evidence it seems

[48]Katharine Hodgkin, 'Gender, Mind and Body: Feminism and Psychoanalysis' in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 182.
[49] Jim Sharpe, 'Women, Witchcraft and the Legal Process' in Darren Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader* (Oxford, 2005), p. 289.
[50] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 127.
[51] Davies, *Popular Magic,* pp. 68-69.

that while men were more likely to be presented at court…(over lost goods and as healers) women were often consulted in the attempt to counter witchcraft'.[52]

Women were often unable to access the necessary education to achieve the knowledge they required to be cunning folk, consequently, Davies has noted that they were more likely to become fortune-tellers as an alternative.[53]. However, despite the disadvantages they faced, magic was a part of women's lives as much as men's. This is highlighted in John Aubrey's *Miscellanies* where he offers many examples of female participation in magic or fortune telling roles, for example:

> The last summer, on the day of St. John the Baptist, 1694, I accidentally was walking in the pasture behind Montague house, it was 12 o'clock. I saw there about two or three and twenty young women, most of them well habited, on their knees very busy, as if they had been weeding. I could not presently learn what the matter was; at last a young man told me, that they were looking for a coal under the root of a plantain, to put under their head that night, and they should dream of who would be their husbands: It was to be sought for that day and hour.[54]

Aubrey also noted that the 'women have several magical secrets handed down to them by tradition…as, on St. Agnes' night, 21st day of January, take a row of pins, and pull out every one, one after another, saying a Pater Noster… sticking a pin in your sleeve, and you will dream of him, or her, you shall marry'.[55] These

[52] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 127.
[53] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 71.
[54] Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, p. 131.
[55] Ibid., p. 131.

examples show that magic was involved in everyday life for many women, at all levels of society.

Those who became cunning women were often from higher levels of society or married into such families.[56] Source material is frustratingly sparse; but some records of their presence and of their work can be uncovered. In 1513 in Padiham, Lancashire, court records state that 'the wife of John Henryson, as the fame has it, practises fortune-telling and witchcraft. She admits the fame and must bring six testifiers'.[57] Also in Edmond Bower's *Witchcraft Condemnd*, Anne Bodenham is described as fulfilling the role of cunning woman to her local community in Wiltshire. Bower describes that:

> she would often tell those, that had converse with her of lucky and unlucky days... she was likewise addicted much to Gossipping (as the vulgar call it) to tell strange unheard of tales and stories of transactions, and things that have been, and might be done, by cunning and wife people; she was one that would undertake to cure almost any diseases, which she did for the most part by charms and spels, sometimes used physical ingredients, to cover her-abominable practices; she would undertake to procure things that were lost, and to restore stolen goods, upon which employments she was made use of by many people.[58]

---

[56] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 71.
[57] Paul Hair (ed.) *Before the Bawdy Court* (London, 1972), p. 128.
[58] Edmond Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived, or, Witchcraft condemn'd in Anne Bodenham : a servant of his, who was arraigned and executed the lent assizes last at Salisbury, before the right honourable the Lord Chief Baron Wild, judge of the assise : wherein is set forth her strange and wonderful diabolical usage of a maid, servant to Mr. Goddard, as also her attempt against his daughters, but by providence delivered : being necessary for all good Christians to read, as a caveat to look to themselves, that they be not seduced by such inticements* (London, 1653), p. 1.

Ewen also notes this case, stating that Anne who was 'formerly a servant to Dr Lamb of London... practised as a "cunning woman", curing diseases by charms and spells [and] discovering things lost and stolen'.[59] The discussions revolving around this case signify that women were part of the cunning folk of this period. Although they may have practised to a lesser extent and may have been limited in what they could offer because of their restricted education, they were still a significant element of white magic.

This chapter has demonstrated that the cunning folk of this period were from a wide spectrum of the early modern society. It has also noted that the practices that were followed were almost certainly affected by their origins, occupation, status and gender. It has made mention of the clients that visited the magical practitioners and it would seem that although they too were affected by their social status and gender, clients came from all levels of society. The sources surrounding the cunning folk's customers are sporadic, but it is an interesting topic worthy of future research. The next chapter will explore the various techniques and tools cunning folk and wizards had at their disposal.

[59] Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, p. 324.

II

The Techniques and Tools of Cunning Folk

> **A single relation for an Affirmative... [consultation, which can be] sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a thousand tales of forgery and imposture.**[Joseph Glanvill, 1666] [1]

It is clear that there was a substantial assortment of people who considered themselves white witches or wizards. However, despite their apparent sizeable presence, the populace would often travel many miles to see particular cunning folk, passing others on their way.[2] What made one white witch more reputable than another? Perhaps the key to understanding this is to delve into the techniques and tools that were harnessed by the cunning folk in their magical work. The techniques they used varied a great deal, some used prayers and simple charms, whilst others used more intricate and complicated means.[3] Before exploring the methods and apparatus used by the cunning folk, we should consider the types of problems they were generally employed to solve. James Sharpe has suggested that there were four main ways that cunning folk provided help for the people of this period. First, they were able to help find lost or stolen goods, and if needed were able to help establish who had taken the goods. Secondly, they could offer healing and remedies for various ailments, both natural and supernatural in origin. They were also able to use divination or fortune-telling to predict future events in a person's life. For example Aubrey

[1] Joseph Glanvill, *A philosophical endeavour towards the defence of the being of vvitches and apparitions* (1666), pp. 33-34.
[2] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), p. 121.
[3] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London, 1997), p. 67.

found that, 'in Barbary... wizards... smear their hands with some black ointment, and then do hold them up to the sun, and in a short time you shall see delineated in that black stuff, the likeness of what you desire to have an answer of'.[4] Furthermore, cunning folk were frequently engaged to determine whether a maleficient curse had been cast, then to remove the curse and to find the culprit.[5] This fourth role was perhaps their most important, and gained them a significant amount of business. Although these were the most common examples of the kind of work cunning folk were involved in, they do not reflect all of their skills.

General Tools

Though there were distinct variations between the practices of different witches and wizards, some techniques and tools appear to have been of frequent use. The first impression the cunning man or woman made on their client was vital and as a result they often used magical aids to create a mysterious allure and atmosphere. In order to establish what Macfarlane terms a 'psychological advantage', wizards would often dress in elaborate costumes and fill their rooms with mysterious apparatus to meet their client's expectations.[6] This would encourage them to trust and believe in their skill. As Keith Thomas suggests, the 'cunning man's greatest asset was his client's imagination; and in view of what is known today about the potentialities of any cure in which both doctor and patient have complete faith, its power cannot be

[4] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1857), p. 130.
[5] Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness,* p. 67.
[6] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 124.

disregarded'.[7] The aesthetic ambience the wizard established was coupled with equally important verbal introductions. The client would often be greeted with a warning from the cunning man that they had arrived just in time to receive help.[8] This may have been designed to heighten the sense of drama, or instead to provide an excuse should the magical aid fail.[9] With the initial interest established, the wizard would proceed to enquire after the reason behind the client's visit. The way in which they dealt with this situation was as important as the opening sequence because, whether they believed in their own abilities or not, they needed to sustain their clients' support and curiosity. The next stage of their treatment was dependent on the reason for their client's visit as different problems required very different treatments.

Theft/Stolen Goods

One important role that cunning folk fulfilled for their clients was finding goods that had been stolen or misplaced, and in the former case, they were also often employed to uncover the culprits. Keith Thomas has stated that other than healing, this was the most common request made of cunning folk's powers, perhaps because it was 'a matter for which society made very little alternative provision'.[10] There were numerous methods by which white witches and wizards could search for misplaced items and the people that may have taken them. One of the most popular techniques was the use of the sieve and shears.[11]

[7] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), p. 248.
[8] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 122.
[9] Ibid., p. 122.
[10] Thomas, *Religion,* pp. 252-3.
[11] Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness,* p. 67.

John Aubrey gives a clear description of this process, which involved little effort and no particular magical skill to accomplish.[12]

> The magick of the Sive and Sheeres…The Sheers are stuck in a Sieve, and two maydens hold up y^e^ sieve with the top of their fingers by the handle of the shiers: then say, By S^t^ Peter & S^t^ Paule such a one hath stoln (such a thing), the others say, By S^t^ Peter & S^t^ Paul He hath not stoln it. After many such Adjurations, the Sieve will turne at y^e^ name of y^e^ Thiefe.[13]

There were a number of variations on this type of technique, popular in the period. One example was the key in the book, which as Thomas describes simply involved placing a key in a chosen part of the book (often the Bible) with the names of possible suspects written on paper and slotted in the hollow section of the key. 'When the paper bearing the name of the thief was put in, the book would "wag" and fall out of the fingers of those that held it'.[14] We have records of cunning folk using such techniques, for example at Elgin, Morayshire, Scotland, in 1724. The court records state that, 'Agnes Urquhart, who… confessed herself guilty of charming by making use of the Bible and key for finding out things that were stolen, which she has done frequently, and also taught her daughter the said art, [was] to be publicly rebuked before the congregation'.[15] Although this is a Scottish example, it reveals how widespread these practices were.

These techniques were well-liked by the populace and some white witches, but cunning folk often carried out much more complicated methods of

[12] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 253.
[13] John Aubrey, *Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (London, 1881), p. 25.
[14] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 254.
[15] Paul Hair (ed.) *Before the Bawdy Court* (London, 1972), p. 153.

divination, which required more magical proficiency. Some white witches used crystal balls in order to see the culprit; they would ask the client to look into the ball and see if they recognised the features they saw.[16] Some cunning folk relied on astrology for this type of work and would attempt to give a description of the culprit from their findings.[17] Another method used was 'geomancy- interpreting the meaning of the pattern of dots produced by the random doodlings of the wizard in a state of semi-trance'.[18]

Many historians have suggested that the key to success in this type of work was for the cunning-person to surreptitiously gain background information from their clients in order to point them to their goods and the thieves. Thus Sharpe and others imply that these kinds of techniques 'tended to be most effective when the client of the cunning man or woman already had a shrewd suspicion of the identity of the thief'.[19] To acquire this knowledge the cunning man had various options. Some chose to ask their client to return to them in nine days, implying that this was in order to take time to decide whether or not they had the ability to help them. In reality, this time may have been in order for them to carry out a little investigation in their client's local community to gain insight into possible guilty parties.[20] Alternatively, they could ask their clients questions at the start of the session to elicit the necessary information. Others might watch their client while they were involved in techniques such as the sieve and shears or key in the book, and look for small

[16] Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness,* p. 68.
[17] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 255.
[18] Ibid., p. 255.
[19] Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness,* p. 68.
[20] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 124.

signifiers that revealed who they suspected.[21] For example, when they were running through the names of the people they felt could possibly be responsible whilst holding the shears, the client was likely, even if only subconsciously, to have a physical reaction to the name of the person they believed to be guilty.

It is unreasonable to suppose that all white witches and wizards were dishonest or that all the clients that visited them had a prior agenda.[22] However, it does seem very possible that some, at least, were cynical about the techniques they employed. Yet, regardless of the method they utilised, cunning folk appear to have held considerable sway in the community until the late seventeenth century.[23] As Thomas suggests, 'in a society which accepted the possibility of magic, the cunning man could thus provide both a deterrent and a means of detection'.[24] If you believed in the magic cunning folk claimed to wield you may have been dissuaded from committing a crime and if you already committed one, you may have confessed after being 'discovered' by magic.

Love Magic

Another important service cunning folk and wizards offered was magical help with problems regarding love and relationships.[25] Although it was perhaps a less frequent request, the ability to provide love magic was still an important feature of cunning folk's repertoire. People often went to them in search of spells and potions that could rectify a wilting relationship or persuade someone to fall in love. They were also asked to predict a person's future spouse through

[21] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 257.
[22] Ibid., p. 259.
[23] Ibid., p. 257.
[24] Ibid., pp. 263-4.
[25] Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005), p. 40.

divination or fortune-telling. We can see an example of this kind of magic in a court record from just before our period. In 1446 in Durham, Mariot de Belton and Isabella Brane were on trial for witchcraft. The record states, 'that they are witches, and practise the art, and they tell single women who want to get married that they can get them the men they want and long for'.[26]

This record suggests that, as will be discussed in more detail in a following chapter, this love magic was a skill that often forced white magicians into a grey area of magic and even sometimes maleficient enchantment. When upholding struggling marriages white witches and wizards might be well-regarded for using magic to restore a harmonious union. But if their magic was used either to force someone to love another in whom they had had no interest, or if they aided an adulterous liaison, then the wizard's magic would be considered maleficient. This fine line between good and bad in relation to love magic seems to have been drawn in accordance with what was positive or negative for the wider community. Maintaining a marriage was acceptable because it upheld social morals but inspiring adultery incited social disorder. Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers evidence of the complicated and tricky nature of love magic in this period. Written around 1595, Shakespeare may have been commenting not only on the difficult nature of love itself, but on the problems of involving magic in such personal affairs. In Act II Scene I Oberon, king of the fairies, asks Puck to find a magical flower which expels a juice that can be placed on a person's eyelids while they sleep, so that when they wake they will fall deeply in love with the first living creature they see.

[26] Hair, *Before,* p. 206.

OBERON

Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:

The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid

Will make or man or woman madly dote

Upon the next live creature that it sees.[27]

Oberon asks Puck to place the juice on his wife Titania's eyes as punishment for disagreeing with him, and he also encourages him to do the same to the lovers walking in the forest: Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena. However Puck gets the lovers mixed up and causes them more problems than before. In the discussion between Puck and Oberon after they have realised his mistake, we can see that Shakespeare is warning the audience about the difficulties of meddling with love. The characters recognise the seriousness of Puck's error and attempt to rectify the situation for the lovers involved.

OBERON

What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue

Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

PUCK /ROBIN

Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

[27] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ed.) Peter Holland (Oxford, 1994), p. 164.

About the wood go swifter than the wind,

And Helena of Athens look thou find:

All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,

With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear:

By some illusion see thou bring her here:

I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.[28]

The play ends happily once all is restored to its rightful place, but it reflects the contemporary worries surrounding magical influence within love. Although it was a service some people yearned for, it was equally one they feared.

Healing

Healing was one of the central roles fulfilled by the cunning folk and wizards of this period. It was also one of the areas in which witches' and wizards' techniques could most vary. With limited medical knowledge, insufficient food and a very unhygienic environment, the people of the period were constantly at the mercy of diseases.[29] This in turn meant that there was a high mortality rate in this period, particularly for infants.[30] Understandably, early modern people were desperate for aid when they or their relatives fell ill, and cunning folk were a popular medicinal resource. This fear of disease and death did not only relate to the individual and their families; people were equally fearful for their whole way of life. As Emma Wilby suggests, 'the delicate balance between food production and need was highly dependent upon the

[28] Shakespeare, *Midsummer,* pp. 193-2.
[29] Andrew Wear, *Knowledge & Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 11.
[30] Bernard Capp, 'Gender and Family' in Beat Kümin (ed.) *The European World 1500-1800: An Introduction into Early modern History* (Oxford, 2009), p. 39.

health of animals'.[31] This was because, in order to make a living, people needed the animals and their produce to eat, drink or sell; consequently 'for a poor family the loss, or even temporary unproductivity of an animal represented genuine hardship'.[32] Thus when the ailment of either a family member or livestock was so severe it could not be treated at home, the first port of call was often the local white witch or wizard. The healing they provided could be for both magically and naturally caused ailments, though requests for magical healing do seem to have been more frequent. Sometimes wizards would claim to specialise in dealing with certain ailments, while others would declare they were able to deal with them all.[33] Cunning folk became specialists in removing black witchcraft from victims, so much so that there are records of physicians sending their patients to cunning men and women when their own medical knowledge was exhausted.

To understand the techniques used by cunning folk for healing, it is useful first to consider some basic medicinal premises of the early modern period. Medical knowledge in this era was not very reliable and, as a result, many people were willing and desperate enough to try any other means to cure themselves or their relatives.[34] There was a thin line between magic and official medicine in early modern England, and when looking from a modern perspective it is often difficult to discover what types of healing constituted magic. As Keith Thomas notes, 'many seventeenth-century prescriptions which seem magical to us were in fact based on obsolescent assumptions about the

[31] Wilby, *Cunning Folk,* p. 32.
[32] Ibid., p. 32.
[33] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 210.
[34] Simon Walker, *The Witches of Hertfordshire* (Stroud, 2004), p. 67.

physical properties of natural substances'.[35] There were a number of general presumptions about the human body that were used as the bases of both official and unofficial healing. For example many at the time believed in the 'doctrine of signatures' that inferred that every herb or plant reflected the way it could be used by the way it looked.[36] Therefore, 'a yellow blossom indicated a likely cure for jaundice, or a root shaped like a foot became a remedy for gout'.[37] In her work on witchcraft in Scotland, Christina Larner has noted this overlap between what she terms official and unofficial healing.[38] She suggests that although official healing was scientific there were many elements of medicinal knowledge that were shared with magical practices. Larner observes that one might consider 'the wearing of an amulet as a cure for colic as unofficial medicine, but for the seventeenth-century wearer it was based on contemporary scientific assumptions'.[39] The situation in England was similar and this can make it difficult to distinguish between unofficial and official medicine. However, perhaps the main difference between the two was the wizard's willingness to identify a magical origin for a patient's predicament. Often they confirmed that the victim 'was haunted by an evil spirit, a ghost, or "fairy", or that he had been "overlooked", "forespoken", or in plainer language, bewitched'.[40]

The overall ambience that was created when carrying out other types of magical practice was equally important for the white witch when healing. As

[35] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 224.
[36] Ibid., p. 224.
[37] Ibid., p. 224.
[38] Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 139.
[39] Larner, *Enemies of God,* p. 139.
[40] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 219.

Thomas states, 'all three constituents of primitive healing were thus present at one time or another: the spell, the medicine and the special condition of the performer'.[41] Once their mysterious presence was established, they could continue with their magical healing. This could take many forms, but Thomas has found three central ideas underlying folk healing in this period:

> The first is that disease is a foreign presence, and this assumption was shared by official healers as well. The second is that religious language possessed a mystical power which could be deployed for practical purposes. The third was that the working of certain charms and potions owed their efficacy to the healer himself. It was this last belief which proved so deadly to the healer when inverted.[42]

With these beliefs as a foundation, the cunning man or woman would then proceed to cure their patient. There are many examples of cunning folk healing clients in court records, for example in London, 1480 John Stokys was listed as using 'magic spells for fevers'.[43] In 1623 in West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire, Richard Girton was presented in court 'for carrying his childe to be cured by the stroaking boy'.[44] Simon Walker notes that sometimes, cunning folk involved in healing were known as 'strokers' because, as the name suggests, they would stroke 'the afflicted area with a charm'.[45] One type of magic that was frequently called upon was the power of the written charm and religious words. The use of old Catholic prayer, often recited in Latin, was a well established remedy offered by cunning folk in this period. Not only were such

[41] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 215.
[42] Larner, *Enemies of God,* p. 139.
[43] Hair, *Before,* p. 80.
[44] Ibid., p. 50.
[45] Walker, *The Witches,* p. 65.

prayers believed to hold great healing power, but also it 'was common for those accused of charming or sorcery to deny the charge by asserting indignantly that they had done nothing by magic, but had merely helped people by their prayers'.[46] One example of this type of healing through written charm and prayers, involves a cunning woman named Margaret Neale in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, in 1597:

> She taketh upon her to cure diseases by prayer, and therefore hath recourse of people to her farre and nighe. *She confesses* that she useth a prayer to God, and then the paternoster the creed and an other prayer devised, and before theis she useth to washe… [Sentenced to stand in church] having a paper on her brest written in capitall letters, for witchcraft and inchantment, with a white rodd in her hand.[47]

Another example comes from Maidstone in Kent, in 1557,

> Cowdale being of the age of a hundred years is suspected of inchanntemente and wichecrafte and beinge examined saith that he helith people onlie by prayer havinge no respect to the manner of the sicknes appoinctinge v Pater Noster v Aves and a Cred to be seide…[48]

It is clear from both examples that old prayers were considered a powerful magical tool, though for some their appeal may have gradually faded. As Wilby notes, 'after the Reformation…many of the prayers traditionally used by cunning folk became controversial because they retained their Catholic

[46] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 211.
[47] Hair, *Before,* p. 133.
[48] Ibid., p. 176.

content'.[49] But, religious texts were not the only written charms that were given to patients; cunning folk also 'prescribed "Charms of words" to be used over the victim, [and] herbs, bags of seeds, or holy writings were also recommended to be worn by the victim'.[50] Keith Thomas has suggested that these treatments held even more magical power because many of the patients that were given them were illiterate. Thus the mystery was increased and as a result more likely to work.[51] The cunning man would often provide written charms in addition to 'magic rituals, prayers and herbal medicines, thereby appealing to the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of the sick'.[52] An example of this type of written charm can be seen below in Figure 1. This charm was found in a water bottle in a stable wall in a house in Ceridigion, west Wales.

Figure 1. Charm from Ceridigion West Wales in Brian Hoggard, 'Written Charms and the Occasional curse', *Apotropaios*, 3 July 2000. http://www.apotropaios.co.uk/written_charms.htm (13th July 2010)

[49] Wilby, *Cunning Folk,* p. 34.
[50] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 125.
[51] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 214.
[52] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 109.

The charm is fairly typical for the period, particularly with the abracadabra triangle visible in the bottom left-hand corner. Although the word 'abracadabra' today conjures up images of magicians pulling white rabbits out of hats and flowers from their sleeve in a jocular manner, the word had much darker and powerful connotations in the past.[53] Throughout the early modern period, the word was considered a powerful magical spell.[54] Because of such potent associations, the triangle was a common feature of written charms. There were numerous ways to write the abracadabra charm, two examples of which are in Figure 2. In the example on the left 'the word can be read from top left to top right, or from the bottom to the top right. And each letter forms part of a diagonal line'.[55] Both John Aubrey and Reginald Scot noted that the abracadabra charm could ward off fever.[56] As Scot remarked, 'Abracadabra written on paper, with a certeine figure joined therewith, and hanged about ones necke, helpeth the ague'.[57]

[53] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 150.
[54] Ibid., p. 150.
[55] Walker, *The Witches,* p. 60.
[56] Ibid., p. 60.
[57] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 109.

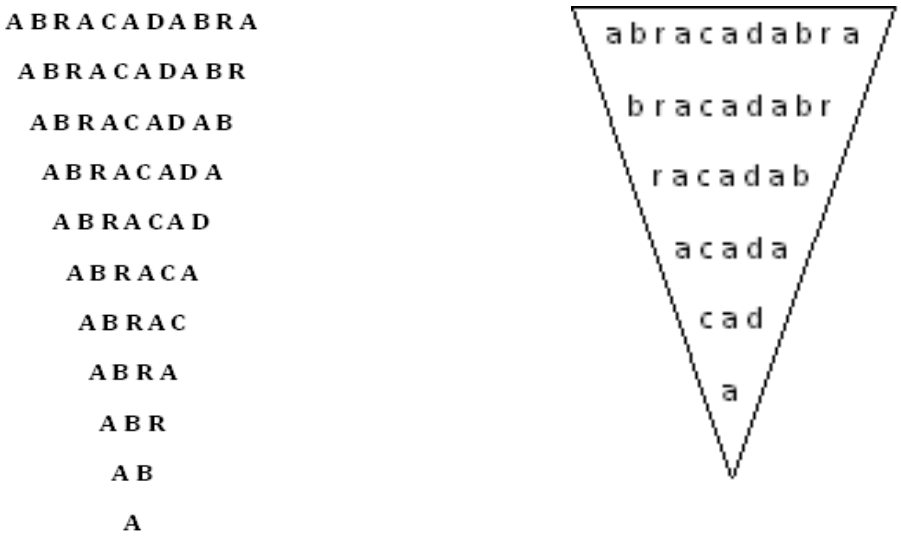


Figure 2. Two types of Abracadabra triangles used in many written charms.

There were numerous other types of written charms used by cunning folk that appeared frequently in this period. One example was a particular favourite in Lincolnshire, used to cure the ague,

> Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
>
> Nail the Devil to a post,
>
> Thrice I strike with holy crook,
>
> One for God, one for Wod and one for Lok[58]

In this charm the cunning man or woman has called upon both Christian and Pagan gods to cure the victim's disease. As Walker notes, 'Wod is the Saxon Woden, and Lok is the Norse Loki' and the start of the charm is recognisably Christian.[59] Aubrey gives two other examples of charms used during this period. He states:

[58] Walker, *The Witches,* p. 59.
[59] Ibid., p. 59.

> When I was a boy a charme was used for (I think) keeping away evil spirits; w^{h} was to say thrice in a breath,
>
> Three blew Beanes in a blew bladder,
>
> Rattle, bladder, rattle.[60]

He goes on to note that 'for a cure of y^{e} quarten ague the Physitian and Poet Samonicus prescribed this spell, *Mæoniæ Iliados quartum suppone tremanti*'.[61] It is apparent that there were numerous methods of writing charms, depending upon the type of magic that was required and the preferences of the magician himself. However, written charms were not the only means of dispelling disease or protecting from evil.

Potions and Protection from Black Witchcraft

Cunning folk not only provided verbal prescriptions but also offered potions to cure illness or protect from evil. There is much less evidence and information on potions in comparison with written charms.[62] However, in general, cunning folk seem to have used their expertise in herb-lore to create the potions. They appear to have made hearty use of, 'bay, rue, sage and rosemary'.[63] Potions were not only used for healing, many were also used for protection. In fact numerous potions reflect one of the primary roles of cunning folk and wizards in this period: their ability to identify maleficient magic and to cure it. This was one of their vital roles, and as Robin Briggs suggests, 'any truly rounded picture of witchcraft must incorporate the ways in which certain

[60] Aubrey, *Remains,* p. 12.
[61] Ibid., p. 125.
[62] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 110.
[63] Ibid., p. 110.

people established their claims to be able to read – or detect – witchcraft'.[64] As previously suggested, perhaps the principal reason for meeting a cunning man or woman was to combat a maleficient witch's curse. Cunning folk were the contemporary experts on preventative measures against black witchcraft and could offer a lot more help in this area than any physician. They not only offered protective charms and potions, but they could also identify and curse the witch.[65] Unlike the situation with written charms, which very rarely survive to today, a considerable number of Witch-bottles have been found.[66] Witch-bottles were potions created to break bewitchments and to cause the black witch, who cast it, harm. The archaeological aspects of this topic have hitherto been neglected in the wider historiographical study of witchcraft.[67] Yet such discoveries offer us tangible evidence of counter-magic used against maleficient curses. The bottles were known as 'bellarmines' and came in various sizes; see Figure 3 for an example.[68]

[64] Robin Briggs, 'Circling the Devil: Witch-Doctors and Magical Healers in Early Modern Lorraine', in Stuart Clark (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft, Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, London, 2001), p. 161.
[65] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 103.
[66] Walker, *The Witches,* p. 61.
[67]Brian Hoggard, 'The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft and Popular Magic' in Owen Davis and Willem de Blécourt (eds.) *Beyond the Witch Trials, Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester, 2004), p. 167.
[68] Hoggard, 'The Archaeology', p. 170.

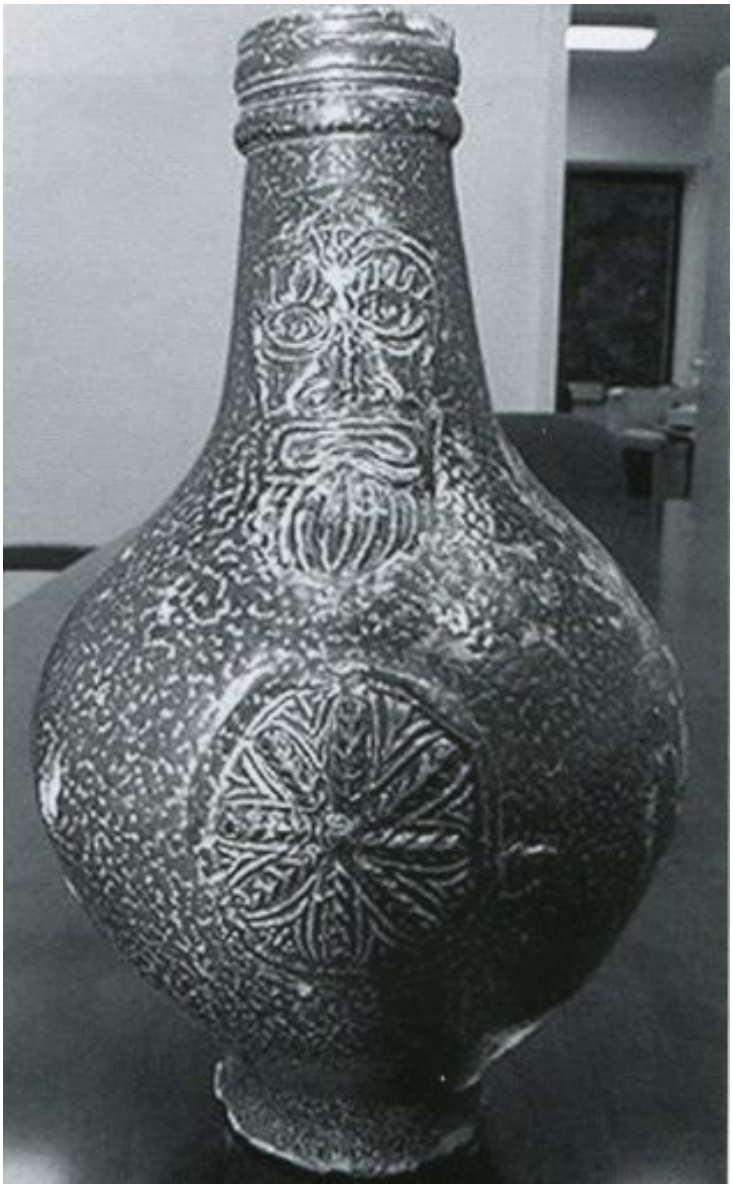


Figure 3- 'A seventeenth-century bellarmine witch-bottle from Felmersham, Bedfordshire. It tested positive for urine' in Simon Walker, *The Witches of Hertfordshire*, (Stroud, 2004) p. 96.

The bottles were used to counter the maleficient magic of a black witch. It was believed that by burying or burning the bottle the witch would be made to feel great pain and consequently would reveal herself, causing her magic to cease.[69] Generally the potions consisted of hair, urine (belonging to the victim of the curse) and pins, though other items have been found.[70] The contemporary Joseph Glanvill, who defended belief in the existence of witchcraft, mentions

[69] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 648.
[70] Ibid., p. 648.

witch-bottles in *Saducismus triumphatus*. He describes how a woman who had been suffering ill-health was told by a cunning-man that her disease was caused by a 'dead Spright'.[71] To combat the curse, he instructed her husband to 'take a bottle, and put his wife's Urine into it, together with Pins and Needles and Nails, and cork them up, and set the Bottle to the fire, but be sure the Cork be fast in it, that it not fly out'.[72] Glanvill goes on to describe how the cork did fly out and the counter-magic was unsuccessful, so when the cunning-man returned he told the husband to 'bury it in the Earth; and that will do the feat'.[73] After this, the wife soon recovered to full health. Brian Hoggard states that by 2004 '187 English examples of these bottles and other vessels...[had] come to light... Of these, 108 (58 per cent) are pre-1700, twenty-one (11 per cent) are post-1700 and fifty-eight (31 per cent) could not be accurately dated'.[74] These findings, particularly when combined with Glanvill's descriptions, would suggest that witch-bottles were a significant part of the wizard's armoury against black witchcraft.

Overall, there was clearly great variety in the techniques and tools employed by cunning folk in early modern England. However, there was also significant overlap between them. For example the power attributed to the word 'abracadabra' seems to have been universal, and was recognised even by those who did not wield magic themselves. The use of abracadabra is also related to the general reliance of white witches and wizards on written charms. These appear to have been one of the main preventative methods cunning folk used against disease and black witchcraft. Even when there were differences in

[71] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus* (1681), pp. 205-208.
[72] Glanvill, *Saducismus,* pp.205-208.
[73] Ibid., p. 208.
[74] Hoggard, 'The Archaeology', p. 170.

practices, the thinking behind them seems to have linked back to core beliefs shared by all cunning folk, and often by the populace in general. However, it may be that it was these variations in practice that meant people would travel many miles, crossing parish borders, in order to see a specific witch or wizard. Perhaps this was because they trusted the methods used by this cunning man more than others closer to home, or that the cunning man they visited had gained a good reputation in the area they needed help.

A question historians often ask in relation to witches' magic is whether or not they themselves believed in their power, or if it was all a deliberate and well planned fraud. However, this is difficult to answer, as there is very little direct evidence of cunning folk's private beliefs. Nevertheless, in all probability there were examples of both kinds of cunning folk. Some will have believed in their power whole-heartedly, whereas others will have used deception and sleight of hand to con their vulnerable clients. As Davis suggests, even with these con men 'this does not necessarily mean that either they or those who were aware of such tricks questioned the general efficiency of white witchcraft'.[75] This section has revealed how pervasive and needed cunning folk and wizards were. Their services, techniques and tools drew on the medical and social ideas of the time, whilst offering more than any other element of society. Perhaps their greatest asset was not any of their magical equipment or complicated spells but simply the faith that the people of England had for their supernatural expertise.[76] Moreover, the way in which white magic fascinated all levels of early modern society must have allowed cunning folk more freedom.

[75] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 129.
[76] Walker, *The Witches,* p. 67.

Without this faith in, and reliance on, cunning folk and wizards, their techniques and tools would have been rendered useless.

III

Higher Magic

We have seen in previous chapters that those who claimed to be cunning folk and white magicians were from a wide cross section of the early modern society. Although those that practised higher forms of magic have been mentioned previously, the focus of the dissertation so far has been on the cunning folk who practised lower types of magic. It is often difficult to distinguish between high and low magic, but in general this distinction was related to the level of education needed to carry it out. For example, as we have seen in the techniques and tools section, many forms of magic did not need any academic knowledge to understand and carry out, such as the sieve and shears method. A lot of cunning folk were rural practitioners who relied on an inherited knowledge of herbs and good people-skills. By contrast, there were some areas of magic that combined the supernatural and the highly intellectual, and these were considered high magic.[1] As Thomas suggests, 'by this period popular magic and intellectual magic were essentially two different activities, overlapping at certain points, but to a large extent carried on in virtual independence of each other'.[2] Owen Davies noted some significant differences between cunning folk and those that dabbled in higher magic,

> First, unlike cunning-folk, astrologers were overwhelmingly urban based. Second, by no means all cunning-folk practised or even pretended

[1] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London, 1997), p. 68.
[2] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), p. 271.

> to employ astrology. Third, cunning-folk dealt with a much more diverse variety of problems, such as vetinary advice. Fourth, although some astrologers, like cunning-folk, also practised herbalism, they did not operate in the same way.[3]

Higher magic is also predominantly associated with the elites of early modern society. This idea was well established in England by this period, perhaps in part, because of the King's touch. This is a practice which 'was initiated by Edward the Confessor and the full ceremonial was laid down in the reign of Henry VII'.[4] The power of this belief was very strong, and this can be seen in a letter sent to John Browne, who was collecting information about this kind of experience in 1683:

> Mr. *Brown*,
>
> ... I was very much afflicted with the Distemper vulgarly known by the Name of the *Kings-Evil*, from seven years of age, until the time that I received His Majesties most gracious Touch: I was so much afflicted with it, that at some times my Face would be so Tumefied, that I could hardly see out, or speak plain: my Cheeks and Neck were full of Glandules, and I had such a running Ulcer in my upper Lip, that at some times it appear'd like a Hare-Lip, and in a very bad condition I continued from the year 1648, until the year 1662, at which time all my Friends advised me to get the Favour of being Toucht: ... So ... I waited upon His Majesty as I was directed, and received His Divine Touch; which had so good effect upon me, that in two or three days I was very much at ease; and by that time I

[3] Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 235-6.
[4] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 228.

got home, which was within a fortnight, I was perfectly well, to the great Glory of God, the Eternal Honour of His Sacred Majesty, and the Lawful Heirs of the Crown, whom God preserve.

from

Your Humble Servant, Philip Williams.

From my House at the Globe in *Whites-Alley* in *Chancery-Lane London*, *Dec.* 10. 1683.[5]

Higher magic was almost entirely white magic, although as with all magic there were invariably actions that did not fit this pattern.[6] Levack offers a list of the various forms of higher magic pursued in this period:

> The most common forms of high magic are alchemy, which is the changing of base metals into precious ones, and divination (also known as conjuring) which is the use of various means to acquire secret or otherwise unknown knowledge. Astrology, the use of the position of the stars to obtain such knowledge, and necromancy, the use of the spirits of the dead for similar purposes, are the most commonly known methods of divination, but more than a hundred different methods, including scapulomancy (divination by inspecting animals' shoulders), dactyliomancy (by means of finger-ring) and oneiroscopy (by the interpretation of dreams) have been employed by various societies.[7]

[5] John Browne, *Adenochoiradelogia or, An anatomick-chirurgical treatise on glandules & strumaes* (1684), pp. 189-191.
[6] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1996), p. 7.
[7] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt,* p. 7.

One of the main subjects these higher magicians were involved in was astrology. At the time, astrology lay somewhere between science and magic in contemporary opinion. It seems to have blurred the line between magic and science, though many people appear to have seen it as white magic. James I in his *Daemonlogie* wrote:

> There are two thinges which the learned have observed from the beginning, in the science of the Heavenlie Creatures, the Planets, Starres, and such like: The one is their course and ordinary motiones, which for that cause is called Astronomia:... the law of the Starres: And this arte indeed is one of the members of the Mathematicques, and not onlie lawful, but most necessaries and commendable. The other is called Astrologia... the word, and preaching of the starres: Which is devided in two partes: The first by knowing thereby the powers of simples, and sickenesses, the course of the seasons and the weather, being ruled by their influence: which part depending upon the former, although it be not of it selfe a parte of Mathematicques: yet it is not unlawful... The second part is to truste so much to their influences, as thereby to fore-tell what common-weales shall florish or decay: what persones shall be fortunate or unfortunate: what side shall winne in anie battell: What man shall obteine victories at singular combate: What way, and of what age shall men die: What horse shall winne at matche-running; and diverse others have more curiouslie then profitably written at large...This parte now is utterlie unlawful to be trusted in, or practized

> amongst christians, as leaning to no ground of natural reason: and it is this part which I called before the devils schole.[8]

This extract from *Daemonlogie* reveals how astrology could be viewed as part of both lawful and illegal practices, and how some parts were seen as science while others were considered magic. This blurred position meant that many of the higher magicians, like their rural counterparts, occupied a precarious legal position. There are numerous examples of practitioners involved in these kinds of magical practice, and some of them held prominent authoritative roles, throughout the period. This chapter will look at the practice of higher magic by considering some of the people involved in its usage in early modern England.

One example of the permeation of magical beliefs into the higher echelons of early modern English society was John Dee. Dee was an important figure in Queen Elizabeth I's court, and was interested in astrology and antiquarianism. In 1566 he also commenced 'the practice of alchemy'.[9] Dee was a 'philosopher, mathematician, technologist, antiquarian, teacher and friend of people' and was linked to many of the important developments of the English Renaissance.[10] However, amidst all this, he was also 'a magician deeply immersed in the most extreme forms of occultism'.[11] As Peter French describes, Dee 'lived in a world that was half magical, half scientific. Astronomy and astrology were not yet completely separated... [and]chemistry was not fully

[8] James I, *Daemonologie* (ed.) G.B. Harrison (1597), pp. 12-14.
[9] R. Julian Roberts, 'Dee, John (1527–1609)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006.
[http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7418 (20 July 2010).
[10] Peter J. French, *John Dee, The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London, 1972), p. I.
[11] French, *John Dee,* p. I.

differentiated from alchemy'.[12] Dee had a thirst for knowledge and seemingly had no limits to the subjects he was fascinated by. Contemporaries appear to have had two very different views regarding Dee. Those in the elite and intellectual circles he mixed with held him in very high esteem. By contrast, many ordinary people were fearful of him and some believed that he was a black magician involved in sorcery.[13] As Keith Thomas observes, John Aubrey recalled 'how the Elizabethan astrologer, Thomas Allen, was maligned by the belief, "in those dark times", that astrologer, mathematician and conjurer were all the same thing'.[14]

One particular area of magic in which Dee seems to have been involved was divination. Divination was quite a broad aspect of early modern magic; this was usually referred to as scrying, and was separated into different strands, 'such as catoptromancy (divination by means of a mirror), crystallomancy (by a crystal), cyclicomancy or lecanomancy (by a cup or basin filled with liquid), hydromancy (by water in a natural body), onychomancy (by an anointed nail)'.[15] Dee appears to have relied upon the first method, catoptromancy that required a reflective surface or mirror. He used a '"show-stone", through which Edward Kelly and other mediums communicated with angels'.[16] In Figure 4 we can see some remnants of the tools John Dee used for this type of magical divination. The two smaller discs were originally accompanied by another two, which are believed to have been used to support 'the legs of Dee's table of

[12] French, *John Dee,* p. 2.
[13] Ibid., p. 4.
[14] John Aubrey, *Brief Lives* (ed.) A. Clark (Oxford, 1898), p. 27, in Thomas, *Religion,* p. 430.
[15] Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: a Necromancer's Manual of the fifteenth century* (University Park, 2006), p. 97.
[16] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites,* p. 97.

practice'.[17] The larger disc was used to 'support one of Dee's 'shew-stones', the polished translucent or reflective objects which he used as tools for his occult research'.[18] All of the items were engraved with magical signs and symbols related to Dee's occult studies and practices.

Figure 4- Original and recreated elements of John Dee's occult tools in British Museum, 'Dr Dee's Magic', Date Unknown, http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/d/dr_dees_magic.aspx (1 August 2010)

William Lilly wrote about John Dee in his autobiography, stating that 'he was a very great Investigator of the more secret Hermetical Learning, a perfect Astronomer, a curious Astrologer, a serious Geometrician; to speak truth, he

[17] British Museum, 'Dr Dee's Magic', Date Unknown, http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/d/dr_dees_magic.aspx (1 August 2010).
[18] British Museum, 'Dr Dee's Magic'.

was excellent in all Kinds of Learning'.[19] Lilly also notes that Dee was proficient in chemistry and that he and his companion were interested in 'the *Elixir* or Philosopher's stone; which neither *Kelley* or *Dee* attained by their own Labour and Industry'.[20] Despite this glowing tribute, Lilly added that 'Dr. *Dee* died at Mortlack in Surrey, very poor'.[21]

Like Dee many of the higher practitioners dabbled in magic alongside their other interests. They were often scientists or physicians whose interests strayed into the realm of magic, rather than 'professional' wizards. Richard Napier is another good illustration of such a figure. He was born in Exeter in 1559, and throughout his life was greatly interested in theology, alchemy and astrological medicine.[22] Elias Ashmole collected Napier's work, Ashmole was 'a generation younger than Napier, and together with his gayer, drunker friends William Lilly and John Aubrey, revered the obscure physician as a magus, a practitioner of prophetic and healing magic who was the embodiment of the hermetic tradition in England after John Dee's death'.[23] The following passage offers an insight into the practices Napier used in his magical medicine, and also shows the negative reaction many people had towards such techniques and healing.

> Mr Ashmole told me, that a woman made use of a spell to cure an ague, by the advice of Dr. Nepier; a minister came to her and severely

[19] William Lilly, *The Last of the Astrologers: Mr William Lilly's history of his life and times from the year 1608 to 1681* (ed.) Katherine Briggs (London, 1974), p. 94.
[20] Lilly, *The Last of the Astrologers,* p. 94.
[21] Ibid., p. 95.
[22] Jonathan Andrews, 'Napier, Richard (1559–1634)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2009. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763 (19 Aug 2010).
[23] Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam; Madness, Anxiety and Healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 14-5.

> reprimanded her, for making use of diabolical help, and told her she was in danger of damnation for it, and commanded her to burn it. She did so and her distemper returned severely: insomuch that she was importunate with the doctor to use the same again; she used it, and had ease. But the parson hearing of it, came to her again, and thundered hell and damnation, and frightened her so, that she burnt it again. Whereupon she fell extremely ill, and would have had it a third time; but the Doctor refused, saying, that she had contemned and slighted the power and goodness of the blessed spirits (or Angels) and so she died. The cause of the Lady Honywood's Desperation, was that she had used a spell to cure her.[24]

William Lilly is perhaps one of the best-known dabblers in white magic. Born in 1602, he became an astrologer, and at some points in his life also dabbled in higher white magic.[25] He wrote about some of his magical investigations and his interest in them. Lilly also describes how he first came to study astrology:

> It happened one *Sunday* 1632, as my self and a Justice of Peace's Clerk were, before Service, discoursing of many Things, he chanced to say, that such a Person was a great Scholar, nay, so learned, that he could make an Almanac, which to me then was strange: One Speech begot another, till, at last, he said, he could bring me acquainted with one *Evans* in *Gun*-

[24] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1857), pp. 135-6.
[25] Patrick Curry, 'Lilly, William (1602–1681)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16661 (20 July 2010).

> *Powder-Alley*... that was an excellent wise Man, and study'd the *Black Art*.[26]

As was discussed in Chapter One, many cunning men and women gained their magical skills and knowledge from other practitioners and this seems to have been the case with Lilly. However, the relationship between him and his magical adviser appears to have soured after a disagreement over practice. He recalled:

> The Occasion of our falling out was thus; a Woman demanded the Resolution of a Question, which when he had done, she went her way; I standing by all the while, and observing the Figure, asked him why he gave the Judgement he did, sith the Signification shewed quite the contrary, and gave him my Reasons, which when he had ponder'd, he call'd me Boy, and must he be contradicted by such a Novice! But when his Heat was over, he said, had he not so judged to please the Woman, she would have given him nothing, and he had a Wife and family to provide for; upon this we never came together after.[27]

This account confirms the dishonest practices of some cunning folk, a characteristic that many authorities in this period were concerned about. But Lilly's stern response to this fraudulent practice reflects his strong belief in the integrity of astrology. After this dispute with Evans, Lilly seems to have been even more determined to master the techniques of astrology. He stated, 'I apply'd my self to study those Books I had obtain'd, many times twelve, or fifteen, or eighteen Hours Day and Night; I was curious to discover, whether

[26] Lilly, *The Last of the Astrologers,* p. 21.
[27] Ibid., p. 23.

there was any Verity in the Art or not'.[28] Throughout his works, he details many encounters with clients whom he aids with his astrological expertise. He also discusses some of the situations in which he utilised his skills and some instances when he felt it would be dangerous or unwise to do so. For example, he notes that 'King Charles the First, in the Year 1646, *April* 27, went unto the *Scots*... Many desired my Judgement, in the Time of his Absence, to discover the Way he might be taken; which I would never be drawn unto, or give any direction concerning his person'.[29] Lilly was certainly aware that his work was controversial, and commented on some of the negative responses they provoked. He recalled that 'there were many lewd *Mercurys* printed both in London and Oxford, wherein I was sufficiently abused, in this Year 1646...The Presbyterians were, in their pulpits, as merciless as the Cavaliers in their pamphlets'.[30] He notes as one illustration of this negative backlash:

> The Words concerning me, were these;
>
> *From th'Oracles of the* Sibyls *so silly,*
>
> *The curst Predictions of* William Lilly,
>
> *And Dr. Sybbald's Shooe-Lane* Philly,
>
> Good Lord, deliver me.[31]

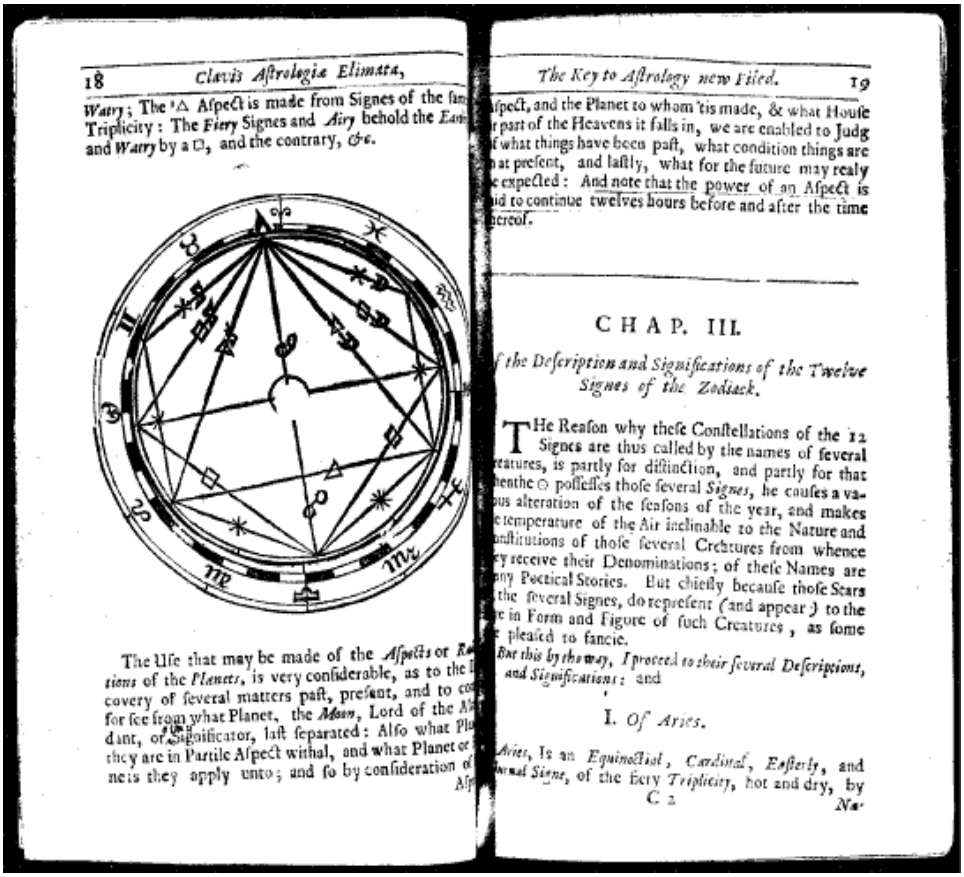
William Lilly was an important figure in astrology, and can illustrate many of the factors associated with cunning men and women in this period. He certainly dabbled in higher magic, but it seems that, like many, he believed it was

[28] Lilly, *The Last of the Astrologers*, p. 23.
[29] Ibid., p. 53.
[30] Ibid., p. 53.
[31] Ibid., p. 53.

scientific rather than magical. He is a good example of the negative response to cunning men and wizards in this period, a subject that will be covered more fully in the following chapter. But he also clearly reveals the sharing of information between higher magicians in the advancement of astrology and similar subjects.

Like Lilly, Henry Coley was greatly influenced and guided by another more experienced practitioner. He was born 18 October 1633 in Oxford, the son of a joiner. Throughout his early life he taught himself mathematics, astrology, Latin and French in his spare time.[32] In '1669 he published the fruits of his astrological studies as *Clavis astrologiae, or, A Key to the Whole Art of Astrology'.*[33] His work was well received, especially by William Lilly 'who hailed it as complementing and completing his own *Christian Astrology'.*[34] As a result of the success of the *Clavis,* Coley decided to 'launch an annual almanac in 1672, which he continued, under various titles, until his death'.[35]

[32] Bernard Capp, 'Coley, Henry (1633–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5899 (4 Aug 2010).
[33] Capp, 'Coley, Henry'.
[34] Ibid.,
[35] Ibid.,



18 *Clavis Astrologiæ Elimata,*

Watry; The ☽△ Aspect is made from Signes of the same Triplicity: The *Fiery* Signes and *Airy* behold the *Earthy* and *Watry* by a □, and the contrary, &c.

The Use that may be made of the *Aspects* or *Rela-tions* of the *Planets*, is very considerable, as to the discovery of several matters past, present, and to come; for see from what Planet, the *Moon*, Lord of the Ascendant, or Significator, last separated: Also what Planet they are in Partile Aspect withal, and what Planet or Planets they apply unto; and so by consideration of Asp-

The Key to Astrology new Filed. 19

Aspect, and the Planet to whom 'tis made, & what House or part of the Heavens it falls in, we are enabled to Judg of what things have been past, what condition things are in at present, and lastly, what for the future may realy be expected: And note that the power of an Aspect is held to continue twelves hours before and after the time thereof.

CHAP. III.

Of the Description and Significations of the Twelve Signes of the Zodiack.

THe Reason why these Constellations of the 12 Signes are thus called by the names of several Creatures, is partly for distinction, and partly for that when the ☉ possesses those several *Signes*, he causes a various alteration of the seasons of the year, and makes the temperature of the Air inclinable to the Nature and constitutions of those several Creatures from whence they receive their Denominations; of these Names are many Poetical Stories. But chiefly because those Stars in the several Signes, do represent (and appear) to the eye in Form and Figure of such Creatures, as some have pleased to fancie.

But this by the way, I proceed to their several Descriptions, and Significations: and

I. *Of Aries.*

Aries, Is an *Equinoctial*, *Cardinal*, *Easterly*, and *Nocturnal Signe*, of the fiery *Triplicity*, hot and dry, by

C 2 *Na-*

Figure 5- A page from Henry Coley, *Clavis astrologiae elimata, or, A key to the whole art of astrologie new filed and polished*, (1676)

The admiration between Coley and Lilly was mutual, so much so that after Lilly became seriously ill in November 1675, Coley helped him to complete his annual *Merlini Anglici Ephemeris*, and 'after Lilly's death in 1681 Coley continued the title himself'.[36] Figure 5 shows a page from Henry Coley's *Clavis astrologiae elimate* which reveals some information on his astrological practices. It also discloses the links between astrology and white magic. Coley stated that from 'what House... part of the Heavens...[the aspects of the planet being studied] falls in, we are enabled to judg of what things have been past, what condition things are at present, and lastly, what for the future may realy

[36] Capp, 'Coley, Henry'.

be expected'.[37] Coley's career reveals the importance of passing knowledge between magical practitioners and furthermore shows the greater opportunities for those in the more educated parts of society. The social status and learning of cunning folk and wizards was an important element in shaping the way they would carry out their magical practice.

Another good example of a practitioner who incorporated white magic into his work was William Drage. Drage had an apothecary's shop in Hitchin, and offered medical services to the local community. He rejected a lot of the official medical practices of the time and instead 'regarded the planets and stars as a key part of the natural order, significant both in causing disease, and in its treatment; plants, stones and minerals were all governed by the planets, and remedies should be applied only after taking proper account of astrological conditions'.[38] He was well read and knowledgeable on this subject and he drew from both European and domestic sources. 'Amongst the "preservatives against witchcraft" recommended by Drage were rosemary, mistletoe, ivy, coral, rue and lapis amiantes (asbestos in solid stone form)'.[39] Despite growing scepticism towards witchcraft, Drage firmly believed it was a significant factor in causing disease. He was particularly interested in possession and he discussed the ways in which this could be diagnosed and cured.[40]

> Those that vomit, or void by stool, with greater or less torments, Knives, Scissors, Bryars, Whole Eggs, Dogs Tails, crooked Nails, Pins, Needles,

[37] Henry Coley, *Clavis astrologiae elimata, or, A key to the whole art of astrologie new filed and polished* (1676), p. 19.
[38] Bernard Capp, 'William Drage', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (http://www.oxforddnb.com).
[39] Simon Walker, *The Witches of Hertfordshire* (Stroud, 2004), p. 64.
[40] Capp, 'William Drage'.

> sometimes threaded, and sometimes with Hair, Bundles of Hair, pieces of Wax, pieces of silk, live Eels, large pieces of Salpeter; conclude they are bewitched; and that such have been vomited, or voided by stool, and that from witchcraft.[41]

This quotation taken from his work entitled *Daimonomageia* depicts the key beliefs surrounding demonic possession in this period and reveals Drage's firm belief in its existence. In another passage he advises the reader how to diagnose and help a victim of possession.

> The Reader is here to be advertised, that he mistake not; He must inquire what went before, what was eaten, and if a suspected witch was offended: Secondly, He must consider whether such might not be generated in the Body: Thirdly, He must see how many such strange things they vomit or egest.[42]

Like Drage, the antiquary Abraham de la Pryme had an interest in white magic, though he would appear to have been involved in it to a lesser extent than those previously discussed. He is a useful example, nonetheless, because from the age of twelve he kept a diary that offers some good examples of higher magic. Pryme studied at Cambridge, where 'he did not confine his attention to the ordinary academic studies, but applied himself diligently to natural history, chemistry, and to what was then considered by many a cognate subject, magic'.[43] Perhaps this interest in magic stemmed from an experience expressed

[41] William Drage, *Daimonomageia* (1665), pp. 4-5.
[42] Drage, *Daimonomageia*, p. 5.
[43] Charles De La Pryme, 'Preface: Memoir of the family of De La Pryme' in Abraham De La Pryme, *The Diary of Abraham De La Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary* (ed.) C. Jackson (Surtees Soc. 54, 1870), p. xviii.

in one of the early comments in his diary. He describes in 1680 how his family had moved into a hall that had stood empty for 'a long while by reason of the great disturbancys that had been there by spirits and witches, of whome there are many dreadfull long tales; but however we have not...heard or seen anything more than ordinary'.[44] This subject continued to intrigue him at university and until 1693 he seems to have been interested in studying practical elements of magic.[45] In 1692 he wrote:

> Yesterday I was at Mr Hall's the bookseller, asking for a magical book, - "Zouns," says he "Doct. you'l raise the divel," at which I laughed. "But hark you," says he, "I have a friend about 7 miles off who has lost a great many cattle by witchcraft, and he is now in the town at the Three Tuns, prathee go with me thither to him, and tell him what he shall do to save the rest?"[46]

Although he was still studying at this point and declined to help because he did not know how, this incident reveals the type of assistance people wanted from higher magicians as well as from cunning folk. Not everyone believed this type of magic was positive however, and there is also a clear illustration of this in De La Pryme's diary. He writes on 8 January 1693 that 'this day I received a very kind tho'a very severe letter from the famous Mr. Edm[und] Bohun... He persuaded me exceedingly to desist from all magical studdys, and lays a company of most black sins to my charge, which (he sayd) I committed by

---

[44] De La Pryme, *The Diary,* p. 5.
[45] C. E. A. Cheesman, 'Pryme, Abraham (1671–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004.
[http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22852 (20 Aug 2010).
[46] De La Pryme, *The Diary*, p. 22.

daring to search in such forbidden things'.[47] This letter appears to have affected Pryme significantly and as a result his practical interest in the study of magic seems to have dissipated. There are still sections of his diary that do however offer insight into continuing interest in white magic.

These men reveal much about the role of higher magic in early modern England. The literature of the period also throws some light on this type of magic. We have already seen how Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* was imbued with magical references, in particular focusing on elite involvement. Prospero, the powerful wizard at the centre of the play, is introduced as a Duke who has lost his lands and title. This fact becomes apparent to the audience when Prospero reveals the truth of his banishment to his daughter Miranda.

PROSPERO

Tis time

I should inform thee farther. Lend thy hand,

... Sit down;

For thou must now know farther.

...

Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,

Thy father was the Duke of Milan and

A prince of power.

MIRANDA

Sir, are not you my father?

PROSPERO

[47] De La Pryme, *The Diary*, p. 27.

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and

She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father

Was Duke of Milan; and thou his only heir

And princess no worse issued.

MIRANDA

O the heavens!

What foul play had we, that we came from thence?

Or blessed was't we did?

PROSPERO

Both, both, my girl:

By foul play, as thou say'st, were we heaved thence,

But blessedly holp hither.[48]

In this scene we, like Miranda, witness the revelation that her father was a Duke. This revelation also means that he is an elite magician. The involvement of this character in the play may have been Shakespeare's acknowledgement of the participation of higher levels of society in white magic. The play was written in 1610-11, therefore he may have been aware of John Dee's involvement in the Elizabethan government and his dabbling in white magic and was perhaps commenting on such a character. Shakespeare may also have been influenced by contemporary characters such as Rudolf II of Hapsburg who had a penchant for occult sciences.[49] Rudolf appears to have been particularly interested in the study of alchemy, as were many in this period, and he followed the work of numerous contemporary alchemists.[50] Although Shakespeare may not have

[48] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (ed.) David Lindley (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 98-100.
[49] R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World* (London, 1973), p. 197.
[50] Evans, *Rudolf II*, pp. 196-207.

consciously been commenting on these men, the character of Prospero does reveal the prevalence of higher magic in this period.

Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist* is also a good illustration of the elite connections involved in magic. The play focuses on two conspirators who are given a good opportunity when Lovewit is forced to leave his home in London due to an outbreak of plague. His Butler, Jeremy sets himself up as 'Captain Face' and enlists the help of Subtle and a prostitute, Dol Common. Subtle poses as an alchemist and the play centres on the various visitors who come to Subtle for help, not realising they are being scammed. By using the decadent setting the cunning man gives his clients the impression that he is of great worth and social standing.

FACE

When all your alchemy, and your algebra,
Your minerals, vegetals, and animals,
Your conjuring, cozening, and your dozen of trades,
Could not relieve your corps with so much linen
Would make you tinder, but to see a fire;
I gave you countenance, credit for your coals,
Your stills, your glasses, your materials;
Built you a furnace, drew you customers,
Advanced all your black arts; lent you, beside,
A house to practise in -

SUBTLE

Your master's house?

FACE

Where you have studied the more thriving skill

Of bawdry since.

SUBTLE

Yes, in your master's house.

You and the rats here kept possession.[51]

Despite being a counterfeit cunning-man, the elite character the group create can reveal a great deal about popular expectations. They assume that the cunning man will seem more convincing and authoritative if he appears to have a high social status.

This chapter has explored the extent to which white magic permeated all levels of early modern society. Although we shall see in the following chapter that interest in magic at the higher levels of society dissipated rapidly, we can see it had a considerable impact for some time. All of the men who have been discussed appear to have been well educated and this social position and male dominance confirms the findings from the first chapter. Those involved in the magic termed 'higher' were predominantly those with financial and social access to the information, while those without such access were left to the lower levels of magical practice. Although there was a divide, the two different types of magic reveal how prominent cunning folk and wizards were in this period. Moreover, expertise does seem to have filtered down from one level to

[51] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (ed.) F.H. Mares (Welwyn Garden City, 1967), pp. 14-5.

the other, affecting the practices of both groups of cunning folk. The higher magicians discussed in this chapter also show the importance of personal contact between magical practitioners, for most of the men discussed here were heavily influenced by the work of another. Once again this would seem to emphasise the findings of the first chapter, and suggest that despite the intellectual gap between rural cunning folk and their higher counterparts, there were also many similarities in their practices.

IV

The Persecution White Witches Faced

Death…is the iust and deserved portion of the good witch [William Perkins,1608][1]

George Fox, the leader of the Quaker movement, encountered a man in 1655 claiming to be a wizard in Bedfordshire. Fox states that whilst attending a meeting with a justice of the peace, John Crook, he came across Nicholas Greaton, who declared he was a 'trier of spirits'. [2] Greaton stated that he could tell people their fortunes, find their lost or stolen goods and identify the culprits of crimes against them. Fox was incensed by the wizard's claims and challenged him to prove his powers through scripture in front of the crowd. Greaton was so ashamed when he was unable to present solid foundations for his magical claims that he ran from the meeting. Fox was satisfied that he had managed to convince the people of the dishonesty behind the wizard's claims.[3]

In the previous sections of this dissertation we have seen who cunning folk and wizards were, the ways in which they went about their trade and the popularity and respect they gained. However, this chapter will consider the hostility they could also face. This will be explored by considering the two spheres in which white magicians faced criticism: in the law and from contemporaries. Before considering the legal situation for the cunning folk and

[1] William Perkins, *A Discourse of the damned Art of Witchcraft. So farre forth as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true Experience* (Cambridge, 1608), pp. 154-6 cited in James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London, 1997), p. 87.
[2] George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, (ed.) John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 207-208.
[3] Fox, *Journal,* pp. 207-208.

wizards in this period, it is important to consider the wider position taken against witchcraft. The law against witches in the early modern period was variable and went through several amendments. The law focused primarily on the black witch, but to many contemporaries, 'her white sister was equally as bad, because she too worked with Satan'. [4] Many even believed that 'in some ways the white was worse than the black, because whilst her deeds did not endanger the physical wellbeing of her clients, she put their immortal souls at risk'. [5] The negative view surrounding cunning folk in this period can also be seen in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which states that 'although it is quite unlawful... bewitched persons... resort to wise women, by whom they are very frequently cured, and not by priests and exorcists. So experience shows that such cures are affected by the help of devils, which is unlawful to seek'.[6] Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, also wrote that:

> evil spirits use witches to inflict such great loss of temporal possessions on their neighbours and innocent people, that they are, so to speak, compelled first of all to beg the witches for help, and then to submit themselves to the courses of action the witches take...I once knew someone who had settled in the diocese of Augsburg. Before he was forty-four, his horses had suffered the effects of harmful magic, one after the other. His wife became depressed, consulted witches, and, as a result of what they did, even though [their courses of action] were not

[4] Simon Walker, *The Witches of Hertfordshire* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 31-3.
[5] Walker, *The Witches,* pp. 31-3.
[6] Ibid., p. 33. The *Malleus Maleficarum* was not published in England until relatively recently. As a result, most people in England would not have had access to it at this time. However, the piece shows that the views of the English were in line with those on the continent.

wholesome, he did preserve from magical injuries the other horses he bought after that.[7]

This attitude towards cunning folk seems to have underpinned much of the legislation against witchcraft. This will be discussed further in this chapter to understand the extent to which white witches could face persecution.

The Law

The situation for cunning folk and wizards in law was not as clear as that faced by those accused of black witchcraft. Neither 'church nor state instigated a systematic campaign of suppression', but cunning folk did face some significant attempts to suppress their activities.[8] Up until the seventeenth century the law was predominantly concerned with the social disturbance white witchcraft could cause, rather than the heretical and religious implications.[9] One type of magic that they felt had a particular power to provoke social disorder was love magic, and as a result there are numerous records of ecclesiastical authorities hearing this type of trial.[10] For example, Ewen records an indictment in Yorkshire in 1680. It states, 'Kitchell Harrison of the City of York in the county of city of York... on 10 Nov... at Burstall, exercised divers incantations and conjurations and consulted evil spirits, with the intention of provoking Joyce Massey to illicit love'.[11] This was perhaps because, as previously discussed, love magic usually had the promise of maintaining social relationships, but also had the ability to split them. For example, a wizard could cast a spell to strengthen

[7] Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (ed.) P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester, 2007), p. 122.
[8] Owen Davies, *Popular Magic, Cunning-folk in English History* (London, 2007), p. 4.
[9] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 2.
[10] Ibid., p. 2.
[11] C'L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1970), p. 406.

the love in a struggling marriage, thereby reinforcing and upholding an important bond. However, they could use the same power to aid an adulterous relationship or to force someone to fall in love with the client. In this way a power that could be used to create harmonious social relationships could be inverted. Love magic was not the only type of enchantment the authorities feared could incite social disorder. Thief detection was also viewed with considerable concern.[12] This was not because of the magic itself, but because if the witch or wizard accused the wrong person they could cause serious social friction.

When English white witches did face legal proceedings they were generally tried in ecclesiastical courts rather than secular, and their penalties were thus usually spiritual.[13] Macfarlane states that 'cunning folk were... prosecuted as 'witches', especially at the ecclesiastical courts. Indeed, it is arguable that it was primarily against cunning folk that the visitation articles were directed'.[14] There are examples of these crimes in the Churchwardens' presentments in the *Oxfordshire Peculiars*. In the Banbury Peculiar on 10 September 1619 one presentment stated, 'for witchcraft sorcery charmes for help for people and cattell, we can say some what but for the more perfecting of our presentment we craue time till the next visitacon'.[15] As Macfarlane notes, 'in 1554 the Catholic Bishop, Bonner, had enquired "whether there be any that do use charms, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantments, false soothsayings, or any such-

[12] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 2.
[13] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1996), p. 11.
[14] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), p. 115.
[15] Sidney A. Peyton (ed.) *The Churchwardens' Presentment's in the Oxfordshire Peculiars of Dorchester, Thame and Banbury* (Oxford, 1928), p. 299.

like thing"'.[16] Similarly, in 1571 'Bishop Sandys asked for the presentment of "any that useth sorcery, witchcraft, enchantments, incantations, charms, unlawful prayers, or invocations in Latin"'.[17] These examples clearly demonstrate that the focus of the church's involvement in the prosecution of witchcraft was predominantly on white witchcraft. They were as against white witchcraft as black, but perhaps felt the legal provisions for white witchcraft were not as thorough as those against maleficient magic.

The early modern state was also interested in the suppression of witchcraft, and as a result laws were passed concerning both black and white witches. Two were particularly significant in demonstrating the position of the law towards cunning folk throughout the period. The first was the 1563 'Act agaynst Conjuracons Inchantments and Witchecraftes', which begins by noting how the absence of any previous laws regarding witchcraft had caused many problems. It then focuses on the concerns surrounding black witchcraft, stating that if any person was found guilty of the 'practise or exercise [of] any Witchecrafte Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie, whereby any pson shall happen to bee killed or destroyed' they would be put to death.[18] This section is focused on maleficient magic, though perhaps if any white witches' healing spells went awry, as we have seen occur, they may have also found themselves facing persecution. Although this clause is focused on black witchcraft, the final part of this statute seems to have been directly aimed at cunning folk and wizards. It stated:

[16] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft,* p. 67.
[17] Ibid., p. 67.
[18] C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials, The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A.D. 1559-1736* (London, 1929), p. 16.

> That yf any pson or psons shall from and after the sayd first daye of June nexte coming, take upon him or them, by Witchecrafte Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie, to tell or decleare in what Place any Treasure of Golde or Sylver shoulde or might bee founde or had in the Earthe or other secret Places, or where Goodes or Thinges lost or stolen should be founde or becume, or shall use or practise anye Sorcerye Enchantment Charme or Witchcrafte, to thintent to provoke any pson to unlaufull love, or to hurte or destroye any pson in his or her Body, Member or Goodes; that then every suche pson or psons so offending, and being therof laufully convicted, shall for the said offence suffer Imprysonment by the space of One whole yere wthout Bayle.[19]

Davis has suggested that cunning folk and wizards were in fact the central focus for the Act, but that after its passing, a 'fiery zeal of repression' was sparked against black witches rather than the Act's original targets.[20] This is perhaps a key example of the relationship between the populace and authorities when handling cunning folk. The populace seem to have, on the whole, regarded black witchcraft as the biggest threat, whereas in contrast, the authorities often seemed to have focused their efforts on clamping down on both types of magic. The laws passed often reflected this, as we can see in 1604 when the 'Acte against Conjuration Witchcrafte and dealing with evill wicked Spirits' was passed.[21] It went along very similar lines to the 1563 act passed in Elizabeth's reign. Once again it begins with a focus on maleficient magic, but the end of the Act would appear to be focused on removing cunning folk and wizards. As Davis

[19] Ewen, *Witch Hunting,* p. 17.
[20] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 7.
[21] Ewen, *Witch Hunting,* p. 19.

suggests this act embodied the view King James I had put forward in his *Daemonologie* a few years previously.[22] For example, in one of the chapters of the book, he states,

> Phi. But I pray you likewise forget not to tell what are the Devilles rudiementes.
>
> Epi. His rudimentes, I call first in generall, all that which is called vulgarly the vertue of wordes, herbe, and stone: which is used by unlawful charmes, without naturall causes. As likewise all kinde of practicques, freites, or other like extraordinaries actiones, which cannot abide the true touche of naturall reason.[23]

Up until the late seventeenth century the focus of the Law's efforts to quash white magic had stemmed from moral reasoning and fears surrounding social discord. However, over the course of the century the attitudes of the elites in authority began to change and so did their opinion of cunning folk and wizards. Although they were no more approved of than they had been previously, their precarious legal position had altered. The authorities became reluctant to use a law which they felt increasingly was erroneous or foolish. Instead they felt that a 'new law was needed, one that distinguished between witches and cunning-folk, and between reality and fraud'.[24] This change in opinion can be clearly viewed in the changes brought in by the 1736 Witchcraft Act. Under this Act all of the existing statutes against witchcraft and magic were repealed and new legislation was introduced, 'punishing such persons as

[22] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 8.
[23] James I, *Daemonologie* (ed.) G. B. Harrison (1597), p. 11.
[24] Davies, *Popular Magic,* p. 20.

pretend to exercise or use any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, inchantment, or conjuration'. [25] Anyone found guilty 'faced a maximum sentence of one year's imprisonment without bail, and quarterly appearances in the pillory on market days'.[26] This new Act practically erased the possibility of witchcraft as a reality but left cunning folk and wizards exposed to prosecution as frauds. Belief in supernatural agency was being replaced by suspicion and doubt amongst those in authority. The magical acts that previously were feared were now regarded as impossible and as a result anyone claiming to carry out such acts was considered deliberately fraudulent. So, where the legal situation became more positive for those previously accused of black witchcraft, it in turn became more difficult for cunning folk and wizards. As Davis states, 'cunning folk were... tried for what they could not practise rather than for what they could'.[27]

Contemporary Comment

It was not only from the law that cunning folk faced condemnation. Although, as previously seen, cunning folk were often respected by their local community for the skills they were able to offer, they were not always so welcome. As Larner has suggested, although the role of the local witch or wizard was powerful, it was 'two-edged'.[28] By openly admitting a supernatural power, cunning men and women left themselves vulnerable to accusations of black witchcraft. Should anything go wrong when they tried to heal a client, the situation could very easily be turned around against the practitioner.[29] What

[25] Davies, *Popular Magic*, pp. 20-1.
[26] Ibid., pp. 20-1.
[27] Ibid., p. 21.
[28] Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 138-9.
[29] Frederick Valletta, *Witchcraft, Magic and Superstition in England, 1640-70* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 195.

may have originally looked like an attempt to save a patient by using a potion could look like a deliberate attack if the patient died. This situation was made worse by the lack of any distinction in Canon law between black and white magic, which suggested 'that the healer...[could] be dangerous'.[30] We have seen some examples of the precarious position cunning folk and wizards inhabited throughout this dissertation. There are numerous others, for instance the case of Susan Snapper from Rye, who was said frequently to communicate with spirits 'and on one occasion was taken in a vision to meet the Queen of the Fairies who "would give her a living"'.[31] At first she was relatively popular in her community, for example, 'in 1607... she attempted to help the mayor in his last sickness with some "planet water"'. [32] However, 'Susan Snapper was too keen a publicist about the power of the spirits she commanded, awe turned to suspicion among her neighbours and in 1608 she was found guilty and condemned for witchcraft' .[33] Also, in Jersey 1585, Jeanne Le Vesconte was sentenced with 'the *art diabolique de sortilege*, "towards both persons and their goods, in infecting some, and curing others"'.[34]

As previously discussed, courts were worried about the possibility of fraud and deception in relation to the services offered by white witches and wizards. In the earlier chapters we have seen that throughout this period money was a dangerous subject for the cunning man or woman, and charging

[30] Larner, *Enemies of God,* pp. 138-9.
[31] Anthony Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London, 1975), p. 162.
[32] Fletcher, *A County Community,* p. 162.
[33] Ibid., p. 162.
[34] Darryl Ogier, 'Glimpses of the Obscure: The Witch Trials of the Channel Islands' in Later Stuart England' in Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (eds.) *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England, Essays in Celebration of the work of Bernard Capp* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 184.

for their services could often put them in a difficult position. However, as belief in supernatural power started to decline in the seventeenth century, predominantly among the elites, this appears to have become more of an issue. As authorities became increasingly sceptical about magical abilities, their fears about cunning folk changed. They no longer worried about the devil's impact and the possible destructive nature of magical powers, instead they were increasingly perturbed by the financial crimes cunning folk may have committed. The cunning man, George Sowton, is a good example of the hostility many felt towards wizards. Antony Fletcher has found that 'The Bench, believing that George Sowton, the Sompting butcher and magician, had by "the invocation of spirits and other dyvelise artes" deceived many people, had him bound over in 1605'.[35] Fletcher suggests that it is unclear 'whether the JPs had evidence that Sowton habitually overcharged or cheated his clients, or whether they merely distrusted his particular brand of faith healing'.[36] Whatever the reasoning, the charges do not seem to have affected Sowton's success in his local area. In Felpham, Sussex, 1623 John Walter was presented:

> for going to one Sowton, a charmer, and fetching from him a charme to cure the wife of Anthony Nashe. [Later, in 1624--] There is a common report that either Anthony Nashe or his wife did resort to one Sowton, and there was sent from him a bottell of water and a paper with crosses and characters upon it to be hanged about the womans necke.[37]

[35] Fletcher, *A County Community,* p. 163.
[36] Ibid., p. 163.
[37] Paul Hair (ed.) *Before the Bawdy Court* (London, 1972), p. 170.

Ben Jonson explored this world of faith and alleged fraud in his work, *The Alchemist*. The threat to cunning men of this period from the law is mentioned during an argument in the opening scene, Face tells Subtle;

> Away, this brach! I'll bring thee, rogue, within
> The statute of sorcery, tricesimo tertio
> Of Harry the eighth: ay, and perhaps, thy neck
> Within a noose, for laundring gold and barbing it.[38]

This quote references the position cunning folk held in the witchcraft acts, as sorcery was considered a maleficient deed. Jonson is particularly referencing the Witchcraft Act of 1542 which, like the later acts made specific mention of white witchcraft.[39] The act had lapsed before the 1563 act was eventually brought in to replace it. Another example of suspected fraud comes from Essex and shows that often those who visited a cunning man or woman and thought they had been tricked, were prepared to uncover the fraud:

> A Butcher in Essex, having lost some cattle, resolved he would go to a Cunning Man to find out what had become of his animals... This deceiving witch, seeing his opportunity of gaining a fee for the purpose in hand, used his Conjurations in a room contrived for his usual impostures. Presently, a confederate came in where the two men were, covered over with a bull's hide and a pair of horns on his head. The poor butcher, now sitting and looking in a looking glass made for that purpose, beheld it in the terrible object. It was made less clear to his eye than if he had looked

[38] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (ed.) F.H. Mares (Welwyn Garden City, 1967), pp. 20.
[39] Ewen, *Witch Hunting,* pp. 13-4.

> right upon the sight, but he was charged by the Conjuror not to look behind him, for if he did the Devil would be outraged.[40]

After the consultation the butcher followed the advice the cunning man had given him to find out where his cattle had gone. However, when the advice proved useless the butcher became suspicious of the wizard's techniques and planned a way to expose his fraudulent skills. He returned to the same cunning man and asked him to help him once again. However, this time 'the Butcher had appointed his boy to stand near at hand outside the house with a mastiff dog. At the Butcher's whistle, the boy, as he was appointed, let go the dog, which came in presently to his Master and seized upon the knave in the bull's hide'.[41] The butcher eventually called off the dog, but only when he felt that he had 'wittily discovered the cheating craft of Conjuring'.[42]

Not all attempts to expose fraudulent magical claims were successful, and sometimes the cunning man or woman succeeded in confirming their supernatural abilities. In Bald Meadow, Myddle, Richard Gough recounts an example of a failed attempt to catch out a cunning woman. He describes how Reece Wentlocke, who was renowned for misbehaving in his local area, went to visit the local white witch after one of his cows had been stolen. Gough states:

> that hee went to a woman, whom they called the wise woman of Montgomery, to know what was become of his cow; and as hee went hee putt a stone in his pocket, and tould a neighbour of his that was with him that he would know whether she were a wise woman or not, and

[40] Thomas Ady, 'An Essex Cunning Man Exposed' in Peter Haining (ed.) *The witchcraft Papers, Contemporary Records of the witchcraft Hysteria in Essex 1560-1700* (London, 1974), p. 191.
[41] Ady, 'An Essex Cunning Man Exposed', p. 192.
[42] Ibid., p. 192.

> whether she knew that hee had a stone in his pocket. And it was sayd, that when hee came to her, shee sayd thou hast a stone in thy pocket, but itt is not soe bigge as that stone where-with thou didst knocke out such a neighbour's harrow tines.[43]

This instance shows that cunning folk and wizards were sometimes able to confirm belief in their magical attributes, but more importantly all the previous examples show that they often had to prove their skills. It would be quite easy to see their popularity at a local level, and assume that was the general situation for cunning folk, but the populace, like the law, could be critical of the powers of white witches and wizards.

The primary fear for the populace appears to have differed significantly from that of the law and authorities. The law was focused on the moral and social implications of the practices of cunning folk. In contrast, the populace seem to have been focused both on fraud and on the possibilities of a white wizard's powers going wrong or turning maleficient. Love magic was undoubtedly a contentious area of magic but the lines surrounding healing could also become blurred, particularly if the white magician cured some victims by passing a disease or curse to another. This threat of transference could be used to do good as well as harm. For example, Ewen describes a case where a white witch used this type of magic:

> William Collingwood of Edlingham testified: Jane Carr of Lemendon told him that a child of hers having taken "a shrieking and crying", upon a

[43] Richard, Gough, *The History of Myddle* (ed.) David Hey (Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 207-8.

> woman saying twice, "here's a fine child". She called in Margaret Stothard, who took the child and spoke to it, and "put her mouth to the child's mouth and made much chirping and sucking", and said "she would warrant the child well enough". Margaret Stothard then sitting on a stone "began to rave herself and rift and gaunt", and after she left a calf went mad and had to be killed. She believed that the distemper had been taken "off the child and laid upon the calf".[44]

This case reveals how this type of magic could be used in a positive way, but people could be fearful of the negative possibilities of such power. Anne Ellis of Penley, Flintshire, was also involved in this type of confusion between positive and negative magic. Elizabeth Jeffreys testified on 3 June 1657 that when her daughter had fallen very ill about two years before, she had asked Anne to come and visit her. Elizabeth said that there was a rumour that Anne had harmed 'the son of Elizabeth Taylor' and believed there was a possibility that she had harmed her daughter as well.[45] When Anne came, Elizabeth described later how:

> Anne having blessed the child, it shortly afterwards recovered. Anne boasted that she could put any disease upon any one. The child, again falling sick with a swelling all over her body, told her mother that it was always so when Examinate [Andrew Ellis] fell out with Anne Ellis. The child died. Examinate further testified that Margaret, daughter of William Hughes, with other children, having taken bread from the house

[44] Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 323.
[45] Ibid., p. 332.

> of Anne Ellis, she became very angry and muttered to herself. When Anne is displeased "she doth hurt".

In this example we can clearly see that a woman involved in healing was demonised after claiming to wield power over the health of the people around her. Although they were willing to accept her help when their relatives fell ill, they did not like the hints of a more maleficient power.

Many people agreed with the law's position on witchcraft but were driven primarily by their religious concerns. Some of the harshest critiques of cunning folk were by the puritan writers of the period. These writers were against all forms of witchcraft as they felt there was always a link to the devil, but they seemed to reserve most of their fury for white witches. The general premise behind this hatred was that although both kinds of witches had obtained their powers from the devil and in doing so had gone against God, the fact that the white witches and wizards 'used these powers under the pretence of doing good made them doubly worthy of censure'.[46] An example of this type of anger and dislike towards cunning folk can be seen in the writing of William Perkins. He stated that:

> It hath beene the ordinarie custome of some men, when they haue had any thing ill at ease, presently to go or send to some wise man, or wise woman, by whome they haue beene informed, that the thing is bewitched; and to winne credit to their answer, some of them haue offred to shew the Witches face in a glasse: whereof the partie hauing

[46] Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness,* p. 86.

> taken notice, returnes home, and detecteth the man or woman of witchcraft.[47]

He therefore felt that it was society's 'duetie, to abhorre the wizzard, as the most pernicious enemie of our saluation, the most effectuall instrument of destroying our soules… yea, as the greatest enemie to Gods name, worship, and glorie, that is in the world, next to Satan himself'.[48] Also, Perkins felt that cunning folk and wizards 'did "a thousand fold more harme" than "bad" witches; they were "the right hand of the devil"'.[49] Complaints about cunning folk were not just targeted at rural practitioners, higher magicians also faced criticism. As we have seen in a previous chapter, William Lilly was a renowned astrologer and also dabbled in white magic. This reputation meant that he too was targeted by those who felt magic was the work of the devil. A good example of this is John Vicars' piece entitled, *Against William Li-lie*.[50] In it Vicars denounces Lilly's work and suggests that Lilly is a liar who cons those who visit him for help:

> How vain, how light, how foolish, & how naught,
>
> Are all that praise Thee? & thy books have bought?
>
> ...To Li-Lie now, all men may well say, fie,
>
> Because your Name saies, twice, to you, you lye.
>
> ...Thus, Lies for weeks make- up a iust New-year;

[47] Perkins, *Discourse*, p. 208.
[48] Ibid., pp. 177-8.
[49] Ibid., p. 176, cited in Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons, The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), p. 464.
[50] See Appendix 1 for full text.

O brave! What Almanaker have we here?

This excerpt depicts his distrust of the lying astrologer who he believed fooled his gullible clients into following his advice. In a similar tone, James Primrose wrote disapprovingly about the presence of a wise woman at a sick man's bed.[51] He wrote about the white witch's tricks and bogus cures, and ended his poem with an Angel pushing the witch away from the bed in order to let the physician help. Primrose supported the medical profession, and despised cunning folk:

Loe here a woman comes in charitie

To see the sicke, and brings her remedie.

You've got some grievous cold, alas! (quoth she)

It lies sore in your bones, no part is free.

His pulse is weake, his vrine's colour'd high,

His nose is sharpe, his nostrills wide, he'le die.

They talke of Rubarb, Sene, and Agaricke,

Of Calsia, Tamarinds, and many a tricke,

...But loe an Angell gently puts her backe,

Lest such erroneous course the sicke doe wracke,

Leads the Physitian, and guides his hand,

Approves his Art, and What he doth must stand.

[51] See Appendix 2 for the full poem and the picture that accompanies his writing.

Tis Art that God allowes, by him 'tis blest

To cure diseases, leave then all the rest.[52]

In both these examples, the sense that cunning men and women were losing the prestige and power they once had seems clear. Both sources were written in the middle of the seventeenth century, and as previously suggested, by this point scepticism surrounding magical belief was growing amongst the elites. To some extent this will have spread through society and these sources reveal the pervasiveness of the scepticism cunning folk faced.

For the most part, cunning folk and wizards were not facing direct and physical attacks, but rather the slow and much more devastating loss of respect and reputation. As Deborah Willis suggests, 'consulting them came to be seen as backward "superstition", if not something darker'.[53] Terms concerning witchcraft became jokes and insults because the original meanings were removed from them. A faint echo remains today when we consider the light-hearted use of abracadabra and the romantic connotations of bewitching. The Quakers in particular were often subject to accusations of witchcraft and this meant that for many in the higher levels of society the power these magical practitioners once had was lost to insult and ridicule.[54] As a response to being declared sorcerers and witches, the Quakers taunted puritans like Immanuel Bourne with the same language. Bourne stated, 'Yea they call us Conjurers,

[52] James Primrose, *Popular Errours or the Errours of the people in matter of Physick* (1651).
[53] Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture, Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York, 1995), p. 92.
[54] Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York, 1985), p. 65.

Antichrists, witches, devils, liars'.[55] The terms associated with cunning folk and white magic, were used as everyday insults. By doing so, the power they had once wielded was significantly debased.

However, although it is clear that ridicule was a growing problem for the white witches and wizards of the time, many people still maintained their belief, well into the nineteenth century. It is perhaps more difficult to uncover this support because its roots were at the very bottom of society and, as previously noted, the written sources we can learn from today are shaped by the thoughts and opinions of the elites. So, while the authorities began to lose interest in, and respect for white magical practitioners, local popular support for cunning folk remained strong. For these people, Thomas has suggested that it can be assumed that a 'wizard was normally respected by his customers, and that only when one of them fell out with him was the matter taken up at a higher level'.[56] Even when the law was very strict people did not necessarily feel prosecution was the right way to handle cunning folk and wizards. For example, Ewen found that, in 1570, 'the gaoler of Canterbury Castle actually released a witch because he believed that she did more good by her physic than the preachers of God's word'.[57]

This chapter has shown that the persecution and hostility that cunning folk and wizards faced depended on the level of society making the judgement.

---

[55] Immanuel Bourne, *A defence of the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit speaking in them, as the chiefe iudge of controversies of faith ... with a vindication of that honour due to magistrates, ministers, and others ... in a relation of a disputation at Chesterfield in the county of Darby, between some ministers of the Gospell and James Naylor, an erring Quaker ... : with some animadversions upon a lying relation of that disputation* (1656), p. A2.
[56] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), p. 293.
[57] Ewen, *Witchcraft,* p. 69.

The law and the authorities changed their position over the period but were equally adverse to the practices of white witchcraft as that of black. Originally their distrust of cunning folk appears to have been because of moral and social reasons but later they experienced a growing sense of disbelief towards witchcraft practices. As a result of this turn, cunning folk and wizards were seen as deliberate fraudsters, while black witches were seen as innocent victims. The general populace were willing to agree with the harsher methods of the authorities when it came to fraud and transference but their support for cunning folk and wizards was strong. The white witches fulfilled roles in society that were seen as necessary, and because of this the people were far more interested in stemming black witchcraft than white. They saw no reason to persecute those that did them good. The persecution white witches faced was therefore somewhat outweighed by the overwhelming popular demand for such practitioners. Only when this need was met by alternative services in the later nineteenth century, did their niche disappear.[58]

[58] Davies, *Witchcraft,* p. 269.

Conclusion

> **A cunning-man, or a cunning-woman, as they are termed, is to be found near every town…and though the laws are occasionally put in force against them, still it is a gainful trade.** [Robert Southey, 1807] [1]

In the later part of the nineteenth century 'a Wells cunning-man told a couple to burn salt on their fire at midnight, and to repeat the following version of a well-known cursing rhyme:

> This is not the thing I wish to burn
>
> But Mrs. ___'s heart of _____ Somerset to turn
>
> Wishing thee neither to eat, drink, sleep nor rest
>
> Until thou dost come to me and do my request
>
> Or else the wrath of God may fall on thee
>
> And cause thee to be consumed in a moment – Amen.

After chanting this they had to walk backwards upstairs repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards, and then not to speak another word until they were in bed'.[2] This is just one example of the continuing presence of cunning folk throughout the nineteenth century. As Owen Davies observes, 'cunning-folk were one of the most influential but now little known groups of individuals in nineteenth-

[1] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991), p. 295.
[2] Owen Davies, *A People Bewitched, Witchcraft and Magic in Nineteenth-Century Somerset* (Trowbridge, 1999), p. 59.

century provincial society'.[3] Despite the many difficulties they had faced from authorities and contemporary critics, their importance within early modern society cannot be denied. Why this faded in the nineteenth century is an important question, but it is one best saved for future investigation.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, cunning folk commanded a significant amount of respect and support from much of the population of England at this time. Without this faith in their spells and treatments cunning men and women would have been unable to sustain their position for so long. This survival may also be related to the findings of chapter three. It is clear that white magic permeated the lives of even some of the highest intellectual elites, which must have made such practices more generally acceptable. The persecution and hostility they sometimes faced from contemporary authorities also reveals the extent to which the populace was often willing to defend cunning folk. Although the law placed cunning folk and wizards alongside black witches, the populace appear to have disagreed. As a result, white witches and wizards can reveal the underlying belief and needs of the people. Because the majority of sources we have from this period were left by those at the higher ends of society, who had access to education, it is easy to become clouded by elite ideas. Cunning folk and wizards offer us an opportunity to enter the mindset of all layers of society.

From the evidence discussed, it appears the main reason for the popularity of cunning folk was that they provided a myriad of services that were otherwise unavailable. One of the main services white witches provided was protection from black witchcraft. In the past the Catholic clergy had offered

[3] Davies, *A People Bewitched,* p. 27.

some support in such situations, but after the Reformation, the people of England were left without any official help of this kind. Protestantism still taught that these harmful supernatural powers existed but it offered no protection from them. With no police force, and no insurance companies, there was also a desperate need for help over lost or stolen goods. As a result cunning men and women became important figures. Although there were official medical services at the time, these were often very expensive or perhaps inaccessible so a witches healing magic was relied upon by many. Cunning folk and wizards provided services that people often had no other way of securing.

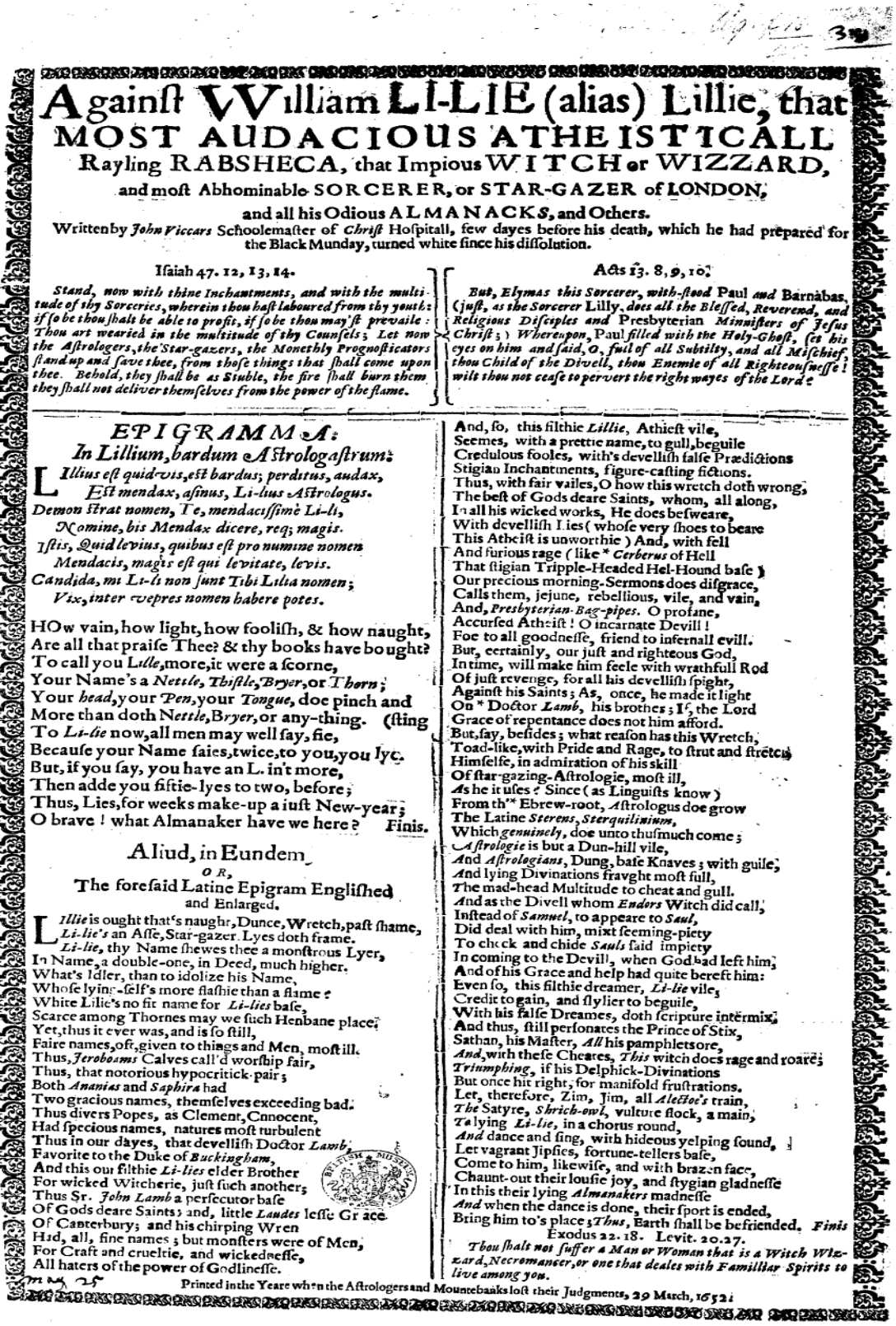
White witches and wizards did witness some changes in their position over the period. As we have seen, in the upper levels of society there was a significant decline in belief in the supernatural towards the end of the seventeenth century. However, although this made the authorities increasingly suspicious about cunning folk and wizards, many ordinary people did not share this outlook. Changes in elite attitudes did not dampen the widespread popular belief. Indeed, there are some cases where villagers were so desperate to rid their community of a witch that, with no law after 1736 to aid them, they resorted to lynching. The spell at the start of the conclusion shows that the belief in white magic was still prevalent in the nineteenth century. The scepticism of the elites had failed to completely filter through to all levels of society. The services cunning folk carried out were too important for the populace to lose faith. It was not until these services became redundant that the cunning man and woman lost their powerful image.

The cunning folk and wizards of this period in England are fascinating characters. They seem to have garnered a significant amount of support and yet they left very little paper evidence of their role or even their existence. As a result, there are elements of their history that will unfortunately be forever unavailable to the historian. However, the frustrating secrecy that often cloaked their practices, underlines the exciting nature of their role. As Thomas remarks, 'the practice of magic of any brand set the sorcerer a little apart from the rest of the community and although the wise woman might have hundreds of clients she was always perched precariously on the brink of social isolation'.[4] This epitomises the situation for the cunning man and reveals why this topic is so interesting and challenging. This dissertation has brought into the limelight an area of witchcraft that has mainly resided in the shadows. It has revealed the importance of cunning folk and wizards in understanding the social environment of early modern England.

[4] Thomas, *Religion,* p. 291.

Appendices

1.



Against William LI-LIE (alias) Lillie, that MOST AUDACIOUS ATHEISTICALL Rayling RABSHECA, that Impious WITCH or WIZZARD, and most Abhominable SORCERER, or STAR-GAZER of LONDON, and all his Odious ALMANACKS, and Others.

Written by *John Viccars* Schoolemaster of *Christ* Hospitall, few dayes before his death, which he had prepared for the Black Munday, turned white since his dissolution.

Isaiah 47. 12, 13, 14.

Stand, now with thine Inchantments, and with the multitude of thy Sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth: if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou may'st prevaile: Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy Counsels; Let now the Astrologers, the Star-gazers, the Monethly Prognosticators stand up and save thee, from those things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as Stuble, the fire shall burn them they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.

Acts 13. 8, 9, 10.

But, Elymas this Sorcerer, withstood Paul *and* Barnabas, (*just, as the Sorcerer* Lilly *does all the Blessed, Reverend, and Religious Disciples and* Presbyterian *Ministers of Jesus Christ*;) *Whereupon,* Paul *filled with the Holy-Ghost, (et his eyes on him and said, O, full of all Subtilty, and all Mischief, thou Child of the Divell, thou Enemie of all Righteousnesse! wilt thou not cease to pervert the right wayes of the Lord?*

EPIGRAMMA:

In Lillium, bardum Astrologastrum:

LIlius est quidvis, est bardus; perditus, audax,
Est mendax, asinus, Li-lius Astrologus.
Demon strat nomen, Te, mendacissimè Li-li,
Nomine, his Mendax dicere, req; magis.
Istis, Quid levius, quibus est pro numine nomen
Mendacis, magis est qui levitate, levis.
Candida, mi Li-li non sunt Tibi Lilia nomen;
Vix, inter vepres nomen habere potes.

HOw vain, how light, how fooliſh, & how naught,
Are all that praiſe Thee? & thy books have bought?
To call you *Lille*, more, it were a ſcorne,
Your Name's a *Nettle*, *Thiſtle*, *Bryer*, or *Thorn*;
Your *head*, your *Pen*, your *Tongue*, doe pinch and
More than doth *Nettle*, *Bryer*, or any-thing. (ſting
To *Li-lie* now, all men may well ſay, fie,
Becauſe your Name ſaies, twice, to you, you lye.
But, if you ſay, you have an L. in't more,
Then adde you fiftie-lyes to two, before;
Thus, Lies, for weeks make-up a iuſt New-year;
O brave! what Almanaker have we here? Finis.

Aliud, in Eundem

OR,

The foreſaid Latine Epigram Engliſhed and Enlarged.

LIlie is ought that's naught, Dunce, Wretch, paſt ſhame,
Li-lie's an Aſſe, Star-gazer. Lyes doth frame.
Li-lie, thy Name ſhewes thee a monſtrous Lyer,
In Name, a double-one, in Deed, much higher.
What's Idler, than to idolize his Name,
Whoſe lying-ſelf's more flaſhie than a flame?
White Lilie's no fit name for *Li-lies* baſe,
Scarce among Thornes may we ſuch Henbane place;
Yet, thus it ever was, and is ſo ſtill,
Faire names, oft, given to things and Men, moſt ill.
Thus, *Jeroboams* Calves call'd worſhip fair,
Thus, that notorious hypocritick-pair;
Both *Ananias* and *Saphira* had
Two gracious names, themſelves exceeding bad.
Thus divers Popes, as Clement, Cnnocent,
Had ſpecious names, natures moſt turbulent
Thus in our dayes, that develliſh Doctor *Lamb*,
Favorite to the Duke of *Buckingham*,
And this our filthie *Li-lies* elder Brother
For wicked Witcherie, juſt ſuch another;
Thus Sr. *John Lamb* a perſecutor baſe
Of Gods deare Saints; and, little *Laudes* leſſe Grace
Of Canterbury; and his chirping Wren
Had, all, fine names; but monſters were of Men,
For Craft and crueltie, and wickedneſſe,
All haters of the power of Godlineſſe.

And, ſo, this filthie *Lillie*, Athieſt vile,
Seemes, with a prettie name, to gull, beguile
Credulous fooles, with's develliſh falſe Prædictions
Stigian Inchantments, figure-caſting fictions.
Thus, with fair vailes, O how this wretch doth wrong,
The beſt of Gods deare Saints, whom, all along,
In all his wicked works, He does beſweare,
With develliſh Lies (whoſe very ſhoes to beare
This Atheiſt is unworthie) And, with fell
And furious rage (like * *Cerberus* of Hell
That ſtigian Tripple-Headed Hel-Hound baſe)
Our precious morning-Sermons does diſgrace,
Calls them, jejune, rebellious, vile, and vain,
And, *Presbyterian-Bag-pipes*. O profane,
Accurſed Atheiſt! O incarnate Devill!
Foe to all goodneſſe, friend to infernall evill.
But, certainly, our juſt and righteous God,
In time, will make him feele with wrathfull Rod
Of juſt revenge, for all his develliſh ſpight,
Againſt his Saints; As, once, he made it light
On * Doctor *Lamb*, his brother; If, the Lord
Grace of repentance does not him afford.
But, ſay, beſides; what reaſon has this Wretch,
Toad-like, with Pride and Rage, to ſtrut and ſtretch
Himſelfe, in admiration of his skill
Of ſtar-gazing-Aſtrologie, moſt ill,
As he it uſes? Since (as Linguiſts know)
From th'* Ebrew-root, *Astrologus* doe grow
The Latine *Sterens*, *Sterquilinium*,
Which *genuinely*, doe unto thuſmuch come;
Astrologie is but a Dun-hill vile,
And *Astrologians*, Dung, baſe Knaves; with guile,
And lying Divinations fravght moſt full,
The mad-head Multitude to cheat and gull.
And as the Divell whom *Endors* Witch did call,
Inſtead of *Samuel*, to appeare to *Saul*,
Did deal with him, mixt ſeeming-piety
To check and chide *Sauls* ſaid impiety
In coming to the Devill, when God had left him,
And of his Grace and help had quite bereft him:
Even ſo, this filthie dreamer, *Li-lie* vile,
Credit to gain, and flylier to beguile,
With his falſe Dreames, doth ſcripture intermix,
And thus, ſtill perſonates the Prince of Stix,
Sathan, his Maſter, *All* his pamphlets ſore,
And, with theſe Cheates, *This* witch does rage and roare;
Triumphing, if his Delphick-Divinations
But once hit right, for manifold fruſtrations.
Let, therefore, Zim, Jim, all *Alecto's* train,
The Satyre, *Shrich-owl*, vulture flock, a main,
To lying *Li-lie*, in a chorus round,
And dance and ſing, with hideous yelping ſound,
Let vagrant Jipſies, fortune-tellers baſe,
Come to him, likewiſe, and with brazen face,
Chaunt-out their louſie joy, and ſtygian gladneſſe
In this their lying *Almanakers* madneſſe
And when the dance is done, their ſport is ended,
Bring him to's place; *Thus*, Earth ſhall be befriended. *Finis*

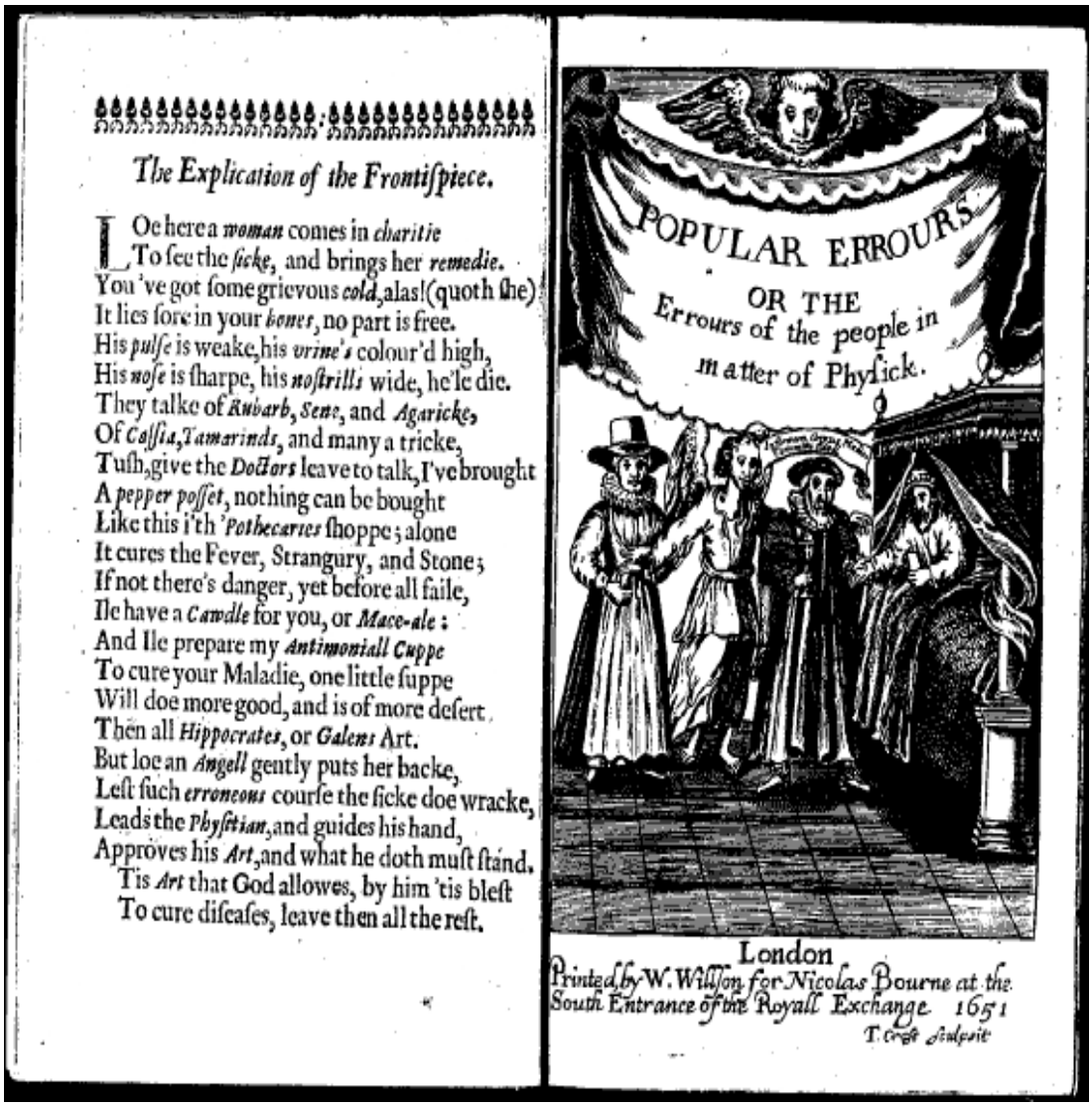
Exodus 22. 18. Levit. 20. 27.

Thou ſhalt not ſuffer a Man or Woman that is a Witch Wizzard, Necromancer, or one that deales with Familliar Spirits to live among you.

Printed in the Yeare when the Aſtrologers and Mountebanks loſt their Judgments, 29 March, 1652.

John Vicars, *Against VWilliam Li-Lie (alias) Lillie*, (1652)

2.



The Explication of the Frontiſpiece.

I Oe here a *woman* comes in *charitie*
To ſee the *ſicke*, and brings her *remedie*.
You 've got ſome grievous *cold*, alas! (quoth ſhe)
It lies ſore in your *bones*, no part is free.
His *pulſe* is weake, his *urine's* colour'd high,
His *noſe* is ſharpe, his *noſtrills* wide, he'le die.
They talke of *Rubarb*, *Sene*, and *Agaricke*,
Of *Caſſia*, *Tamarinds*, and many a tricke,
Tuſh, give the *Doctors* leave to talk, I've brought
A *pepper poſſet*, nothing can be bought
Like this i'th '*Pothecaries* ſhoppe; alone
It cures the Fever, Strangury, and Stone;
If not there's danger, yet before all faile,
Ile have a *Cawdle* for you, or *Mace-ale*:
And Ile prepare my *Antimoniall Cuppe*
To cure your Maladie, one little ſuppe
Will doe more good, and is of more deſert
Then all *Hippocrates*, or *Galens* Art.
But loe an *Angell* gently puts her backe,
Leſt ſuch *erroneous* courſe the ſicke doe wracke,
Leads the *Phyſitian*, and guides his hand,
Approves his *Art*, and what he doth muſt ſtand.
'Tis *Art* that God allowes, by him 'tis bleſt
To cure diſeaſes, leave then all the reſt.

POPULAR ERROURS.
OR THE
Errours of the people in matter of Phyſick.

London
Printed by W. Willſon for Nicolas Bourne at the South Entrance of the Royall Exchange 1651
T. Cross Sculpsit

James Primrose, *Popular Errours or the Errours of the people in matter of Physick,*

(1651)

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ady, Thomas, 'An Essex Cunning Man Exposed' in Peter Haining (ed.) *The witchcraft Papers, Contemporary Records of the witchcraft Hysteria in Essex 1560-1700* (London, 1974).

Bourne, Immanuel, *A defence of the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit speaking in them, as the chiefe iudge of controversies of faith ... with a vindication of that honour due to magistrates, ministers, and others ... in a relation of a disputation at Chesterfield in the county of Darby, between some ministers of the Gospell and James Naylor, an erring Quaker ... : with some animadversions upon a lying relation of that disputation* (1656).

Bower, Edmond, *Doctor Lamb revived, or, Witchcraft condemn'd in Anne Bodenham : a servant of his, who was arraigned and executed the lent assizes last at Salisbury, before the right honourable the Lord Chief Baron Wild, judge of the assise : wherein is set forth her strange and wonderful diabolical usage of a maid, servant to Mr. Goddard, as also her attempt against his daughters, but by providence delivered : being necessary for all good Christians to read, as a caveat to look to themselves, that they be not seduced by such inticements* (London, 1653).

Browne, John, *Adenochoiradelogia or, An anatomick-chirurgical treatise glandules & strumaes* (1684).

Coley, Henry, *Clavis astrologiae elimata, or, A key to the whole art of astrologie new filed and polished* (1676).

Cooper, Thomas, *The Mysterie of Witchcraft, The Second Booke/ Sathan Transformed into an Angell of Light, expressing his dangerous Impostures under Glorious Shewes. Emplified Specially in the Doctrine of Witch-craft, and such sleights of Satan as are incident thereunto. Very necessary to discerne the speci-Plague raging in these dayes, and so to hide our selves from the snare thereof* (London, 1622).

De La Pryme, Abraham, *The Diary of Abraham De La Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary* (ed.) C. Jackson (Surtees Soc. 54, 1870).

Drage, William, *Daimonomageia* (1665).

Fox, George, *The Journal of George Fox* (ed.) John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952).

Glanvill, Joseph, A philosophical endeavour towards the defence of the being of vvitches and apparitions (1666).

Glanvill, Joseph, *Saducismus triumphatus* (1681).

Goodare, Julian, Martin, Lauren, Miller, Joyce and Yeoman, Louise, 'The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft' (4 August 2010) Case of Issobell Sinclair, 28 February 1633.

Gough, Richard *The History of Myddle* (ed.) David Hey (Harmondsworth, 1981).

Hair, Paul (ed.) *Before the Bawdy Court* (London, 1972).

James I, *Daemonologie* (ed.) G.B. Harrison (1597).

Kramer, Heinrich and Sprenger, Jacob, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, (ed.) P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester, 2007).

Lilly, William, *The Last of the Astrologers: Mr William Lilly's history of his life and times from the year 1608 to 1681* (ed.) Katherine Briggs (London, 1974).

Perkins, William, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft so farre forth as it is reuealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true experience. Framed and deliuered by M. William Perkins, in his ordinarie course of preaching, and now published by Tho. Pickering Batchelour of Diuinitie, and minister of Finchingfield in Essex. Whereunto is adioyned a twofold table; one of the order and heades of the treatise; another of the texts of Scripture explaned, or vindicated from the corrupt interpretation of the aduersarie* (1610).

Pitt, Moses, *An account of one Ann Jefferies, now living in the county of Cornwall, who was fed for six months by a small sort of airy people call'd fairies, and of the strange and wonderful cures she performed with slaves and medicines she received from them, for which she never took one penny of her patients* (1696).

Primrose, James, *Popular Errours or the Errours of the people in matter of Physick* (1651).

Shakespeare, William, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ed.) Peter Holland (Oxford, 1994).

Shakespeare, William, *The Tempest* (ed.) David Lindley (Cambridge, 2002).

Vicars, John, *Against VVilliam Li-Lie (alias) Lillie* (1652).

Secondary Sources

Aubrey, John, *Miscellanies* (London, 1857).

Aubrey, John, *Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (London, 1881).

Briggs, Katherine, *A Sampler of British Folk-Tales* (London, 1977).

Briggs, Robin, 'Circling the Devil: Witch-Doctors and Magical Healers in Early Modern Lorraine', in Stuart Clark, (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft, Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, London, 2001) pp. 161-178.

Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours* (London, 1997).

Capp, Bernard, 'Gender and Family' in Beat Kümin (ed.) *The European World 1500-1800: An Introduction into Early modern History* (Oxford, 2009) pp. 33-43.

Clark, Stuart, *Thinking With Demons, The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997).

Davies, Owen, *A People Bewitched, Witchcraft and Magic in Nineteenth-Century Somerset* (Trowbridge, 1999).

Davies, Owen, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford, 2009).

Davies, Owen, *Popular Magic, Cunning-folk in English History* (London, 2007).

Davies, Owen, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester, 1999).

Evans, R.J.W. *Rudolf II and His World* (London, 1973).

Ewen, C'L'Estrange, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1970).

Ewen, C. L'Estrange, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials, The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A.D. 1559-1736* (London, 1929).

Fletcher, Anthony, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London, 1975).

French, Peter J. *John Dee, The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London, 1972).

Hodgkin, Katharine, 'Gender, Mind and Body: Feminism and Psychoanalysis' in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography* (Basingstoke, 2007) pp. 182-202.

Hoggard, Brian, 'The archaeology of counter-witchcraft and popular magic' in Owen Davis, and Willem de Blécourt (eds.) *Beyond the Witch Trials, Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester, 2004) pp. 167-186.

Hunt, Robert, *Popular Romances of the West of England* (1903).

Kieckhefer, Richard, *Forbidden Rites: a Necromancer's Manual of the fifteenth century* (University Park, 2006).

Larner, Christina, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000).

Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1996).

MacDonald, Michael, *Mystical Bedlam; Madness, Anxiety and Healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981).

Macfarlane, Alan, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970).

Marshall, Peter 'Ann Jefferies and the Fairies: Folk Belief and the War on Scepticism' in Later Stuart England' in Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (eds.) *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England, Essays in Celebration of the work of Bernard Capp* (Basingstoke, 2010) pp. 127-141.

Ogier, Darryl, 'Glimpses of the Obscure: The Witch Trials of the Channel Islands' in Later Stuart England' in Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (eds.) *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England, Essays in Celebration of the work of Bernard Capp* (Basingstoke, 2010) pp. 177-192.

Peyton , Sidney A. (ed.) *The Churchwarden's Presentment's in the Oxfordshire Peculiars of Dorchester, Thame and Banbury* (Oxford, 1928).

Reay, Barry, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York, 1985).

Rollison , David, *The Local Origins of Modern Society; Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London, 1992)

Scarre, Geoffrey, *Witchcraft and Magic in sixteenth and seventeenth Century Europe* (Basingstoke, London, 1987).

Sharpe, James, *Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London, 1997).

Sharpe, Jim, 'Women, Witchcraft and the Legal Process' in Darren Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader* (Oxford, 2005) pp. 289-302.

Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1991).

Valletta, Frederick, *Witchcraft, Magic and Superstition in England, 1640-70* (Aldershot, 2000).

Walker, Simon, *The Witches of Hertfordshire* (Stroud, 2004).

Wear, Andrew, *Knowledge & Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge, 2000).

Wilby, Emma, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005).

Willis, Deborah, *Malevolent Nurture, Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York, 1995).

Websites

Andrews, Jonathan, 'Napier, Richard (1559–1634)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; May 2009. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763 (19 Aug 2010).

Capp, Bernard 'Coley, Henry (1633–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5899 (4 Aug 2010).

Capp, Bernard, 'Drage, William', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (http://www.oxforddnb.com).

Cheesman, C. E. A. 'Pryme, Abraham (1671–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22852 (20 Aug 2010).

Curry, Patrick 'Lilly, William (1602–1681)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16661 (20 July 2010).

Brian Hoggard, 'Written Charms and the Occasional curse', *Apotropaios*, 3 July 2000. http://www.apotropaios.co.uk/written_charms.htm (13th July 2010).

British Museum, 'Dr Dee's Magic', Date Unknown. http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/d/dr_dees_magic.aspx (1 August 2010).

Roberts, R. Julian, 'Dee, John (1527–1609)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; May 2006. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7418, (20 July 2010).